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The concept of *bodhicitta* in
Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*

Francis Brassard

Faculty of Religious Studies
McGill University
Montreal, Canada.

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Abstract

This thesis is a contribution to the study of the interpretation of the concept of *bodhicitta*. This concept is a technical term of frequent occurrence in Buddhist Sanskrit literature. Within the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, *bodhicitta* is closely related to the spiritual practices of the Buddhist aspirant to enlightenment. Specifically researched is Sāntideva's use of this concept in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, a text known to have been composed around the 8th century. The form of this study is as follows: first, a survey of the various interpretations of the concept of *bodhicitta* suggested so far; secondly, an analysis of its possible functions in the context of the spiritual path of the aspirant to enlightenment; thirdly, a discussion of what I believe to be an appropriate understanding of *bodhicitta*. An argument will be made that the path to realization consists in cultivating an awareness of the reality described by the concept of *bodhicitta*. Such cultivation should bring one to the realization that what is described by it is indeed the only possible reality. This means that *bodhicitta* is the means to as well as the description of the goal to attain.

Cette thèse se voit être une contribution à l'étude de l'interprétation du concept de *bodhicitta*. Ce concept est un terme technique qui est souvent utilisé dans le contexte de la littérature sanscrite du Bouddhisme. Chez les adeptes du Mahāyāna, *bodhicitta* est étroitement lié à leur pratique spirituelle. De façon plus spécifique, j'ai l'intention de faire une recherche sur l'utilisation de ce concept par Sāntideva dans son oeuvre intitulée *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, un texte qui aurait été composé aux environs du 8ème siècle. La forme de cette étude est la suivante: premièrement, un survol des différentes interprétations du concept de *bodhicitta* suggérées jusqu'à présent; deuxièmement, une analyse des diverses fonctions possibles de ce concept dans le cadre de la pratique spirituelle de l'aspirant à l'illumination; troisièmement, une discussion relative à ce que je crois être une compréhension adéquate de la signification du concept de *bodhicitta*. La thèse défendue consiste à dire que le chemin de la réalisation est un développement d'une prise de conscience de la réalité décrite par le concept de *bodhicitta*. Une telle prise de conscience nous amène à nous rendre compte que cette réalité est justement la seule réalité possible. Ceci signifie que *bodhicitta* est à la fois le moyen et la description du but à atteindre.

Abbreviations

A	Āṅguttara Nikāya
Abhidhk	Abhidharmakośa
BCA	Bodhicaryāvatāra
BHS	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary
D	Dīgha Nikāya
E	English translation
G.S	The Books of the Gradual Sayings
G.Vy	Gaṇḍavyūyasūtra
HSG	A Higher Sanskrit Grammar
M	Majjhima Nikāya
MA	Madhyamakāvatāra sūtra
M.L.S.	The collection of the Middle Length Sayings
MMK	Mūlamadhyamakakārikā
Paṭis	Paṭisambhidāmagga
PED	Pali-English Dictionary
Pra.vi.si.	Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi
S	Samyutta Nikāya
Sāl	Sālistambasūtra
SED	The practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary
Ss	Sikṣāsamuccaya
Sn	Sutta Nipāta
Vibh-a	Vibhaṅgaṭṭhakathā
Vism	Visuddhimagga
Vv	Vigrahavyāvartanī
Y.S	Yoga sūtra

Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to understand the meaning of the concept of *bodhicitta* by analyzing the characteristics of the spiritual path suggested in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, a text of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition known to have been composed in Sanskrit by the Buddhist philosopher Śāntideva (8th CE), and commented on by the Buddhist scholar Prajñākaramati (10th CE).

The expression *bodhicitta* has usually been translated by *thought of enlightenment* or *desire of enlightenment*. Sometimes the word *enlightenment* is substituted by *awakening*. According to the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, this concept is closely related to the spiritual practices of the Buddhist disciple (bodhisattva).

When one considers all the traditional Buddhist sources mentioning *bodhicitta*, including the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva, it is somehow difficult to get a general picture of what exactly this concept is. It appears that *bodhicitta*, although a technical term within Buddhism, has acquired various meanings due to the diversity of contexts in which it is employed. In the tantric tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, for example, this concept has obvious metaphysical connotations, whereas, in some Sanskrit texts of the Mahāyāna tradition, it has been argued that it assumes a more functional character on account of being understood as a resolve to attain realization. In other texts also, *bodhicitta* seems to have ethical implications when it stresses the bodhisattva's altruistic motive to become awakened.

Scholars who attempted to define the concept of *bodhicitta* have done so mainly on the basis of a linguistic analysis of the expression *bodhicitta*. This is of course an important aspect of its study, but it might not be sufficient. The word *bodhicitta* often occurred with expressions such as "the arising of *bodhicitta*," "the production of *bodhicitta*" or "the cultivation of *bodhicitta*." I believe that these expressions refer to specific events or characteristics of the bodhisattva's spiritual practice. In this circumstance, I think that one should first take into account those characteristics if one wants to understand the full significance of the concept of *bodhicitta*. What this means is that one should identify the spiritual model or

paradigm in which the concept of *bodhicitta* is articulated. In other words, one should determine the spiritual function of this concept and how it is working for the spiritual development of the bodhisattva.

There are other scholars who went further than just doing a semantic analysis based on linguistic data and precisely suggested a spiritual context to the concept of *bodhicitta* by which it could be interpreted. These scholars, who incidentally have been, and in certain cases, still are, committed to their respective Buddhist traditions, have provided a valuable contribution to the understanding of the spiritual implications of *bodhicitta*. Yet, I believe that their interpretation is not fully satisfying with regard to explaining or integrating some of the events associated with the occurrence of this concept. The models they have suggested for the spiritual path of the aspirant to enlightenment do not appear to be appropriate because too many aspects related to the use of *bodhicitta*, especially in the context of Sāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, remain unclear. In other words, their suggested spiritual models defining the function of *bodhicitta* do not, I believe, correspond to what Sāntideva had in mind when using this concept in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Sāntideva is without doubt an important text within the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition dealing with the bodhisattva's path to enlightenment. This text is a collection of about nine hundred verses divided into ten chapters, three of which specifically deal with *bodhicitta*. It also exists in the Tibetan and Chinese versions and at least nine commentaries and summaries have been made upon it. Prajñākaramati's commentary is probably the most comprehensive. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is very popular among the Tibetan Buddhists who still use it today as a source text of their tradition. Judging from the number of translations in French, English and German, this text has also had a certain appeal in the West, probably because of its apparent similarities with the well-known Christian text *Imitatio Christi* of Thomas a Kempis. For all these reasons, I think that this text is very appropriate for the study I want to undertake. I also believe that it could be used as an important source of information for understanding the concept of *bodhicitta* in the wider context of the Mahāyāna Sanskrit literature dealing with the spiritual path of the bodhisattva. To my knowledge, such a study of the concept of *bodhicitta*, with specific reference to the characteristics of the spiritual path suggested in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, has not been done so far.

This thesis puts forth two claims with regard to Buddhist religious or philosophical concepts such as that of *bodhicitta*. First, contrary to what has been

argued by Michael Pye¹ in the context of a discussion on the doctrine of *upāya* (skillful means), some Buddhist ideas and doctrines are more than just provisional means skillfully designed by the Buddha or the Bodhisattvas for the benefit of the unenlightened beings. Michael Pye's idea is that "the 'answers' which Buddhism apparently offers, such as the teaching of cessation or nirvana, are devised entirely in terms of the problem and they are not intended to have any particular meaning beyond the attainment of the solution."² And he further explains: "This is because every form of religious language, when conceived in terms of skillful means, is first allusive and then disposable."³ This is supposed to "apply not merely to the preliminary suggestions of the religious system, but above all to its fundamental assumptions and final terms."⁴

This interpretation seems to overlook that some Buddhist concepts did remain over a long period of time and, as it appears to be the case with *bodhicitta*, instead of being disposed of, were raised to a status of utmost importance within the Mahāyāna tradition. Of course, it could be argued that these concepts are maintained for the sake of the unenlightened and that they are discarded only at the moment when enlightenment is reached. The difficulty with this argument is that it cannot be contradicted unless one has experienced enlightenment. I believe that it is nonetheless questionable because, while assuming that there is some kind of consistency and unity at the level of the experience of enlightenment--and this should be true for all the different paths and to a lesser extent the means to enlightenment--it has been so far difficult to find an agreement on that point from people who have indeed adopted these different paths. What is more current in each of these paths, however, is a consistency between the means to achieve their respective experience of enlightenment and the ways to describe such experience. For the followers of the Madhyamaka tradition, for example, the concept of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) is certainly an antidote to a person's mental and emotional attachment to the phenomenal world, but it is also their privileged way to describe reality as they view it ultimately. Therefore, I assume that religious language may be more than just a skillful means; it is also a standard or a measure of the authenticity of the religious experience. In other words, religious concepts are not without referents.

¹Pye, Michael. *Skillful Means: A concept in Mahayana Buddhism*. London: Duckworth. 1978.

²Pye (1978), p. 5.

³Pye (1978), p. 101.

⁴Pye (1978), p. 101.

Secondly, the path to realization consists precisely in cultivating an awareness of what religious concepts refer to. Not all concepts of a tradition may serve as a basis for this cultivation: only those that are meant to encompass all aspects of one's dualistic experience of the world. The idea that "All is Suffering (*sabbam dukkham*)," which is the First Noble Truth of Early Buddhism, is such a concept because it is meant to cover every moment of existence. Realization of this truth, which means that one acquires a direct or intuitive knowledge of the three characteristics of reality as perceived, i.e., causing suffering, impermanent and devoid of substance, is usually brought about by cultivating or developing an awareness of these three characteristics. With this realization, one knows: "Birth is finished, the holy life has been led, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here" (*khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyāti*).⁵ In other words it is considered to be the final deliverance from suffering.

This thesis is divided in three parts. The first part is a survey of the modern and traditional views of the concept of *bodhicitta*. It also includes a discussion of the methodology I intend to adopt and a presentation of the text to be analyzed, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and its author Sāntideva. The purpose of this part is to give a general idea of what the concept of *bodhicitta* is, its various interpretations as well as to show why I believe that the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is an appropriate text for the study of this concept.

The second part discusses the spiritual function of the concept of *bodhicitta* in the context of Sāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. I will be looking at the various ways to understand its spiritual function. *Bodhicitta* could be viewed exclusively as a desire for realization or simply as an object of concentration. I will argue that these two views are inappropriate. When *bodhicitta* is perceived as the expression of one's desire to help all beings, it could be viewed as the basis for the cultivation of awareness. Many examples in the Buddhist tradition speak in favor of this cultivation of awareness as a valid model for the understanding of the path to realization and indeed, this model appears to be the most adequate to explain the meaning and function of the concept of *bodhicitta* and its relationship to the spiritual path described in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

The third part is a discussion of the cultivation of awareness and of how *bodhicitta* serves as its basis in the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. This

⁵D, I-84 [E: Walshe (1987), p. 108].

cultivation of awareness has three aspects that I have identified as renunciation, conversion and contemplation. Contemplation is defined as the maintenance of the awareness of what is described by the concept of *bodhicitta*, renunciation is the acknowledgment of and the efforts to avoid the obstacles that are likely to disrupt that specific awareness, and finally, conversion is the desire and commitment to redirect one's mind towards it. The cultivation of awareness is also constituted of various elements. These elements are the *pāramitās* or the well-known Perfections that make up the bodhisattva's path to realization. The practice of these Perfections is, however, not to be seen as preliminary steps to the arising of *bodhicitta* but, rather, it is fully integrated in the cultivation of awareness as well as remaining an integral part of the spiritual experience it brings about.

By writing this thesis I wish to contribute to our understanding of the nature and function of the concept of *bodhicitta* and its relationship to the spiritual path suggested in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. I think that our present understanding concerning the concept of *bodhicitta* is too general and above all, rests on unsubstantiated assumptions regarding the spiritual context in which it is articulated. Therefore, I believe that, by providing a picture of the spiritual path to which *bodhicitta* belongs, we may have a better comprehension of the various circumstances of its occurrence. I do not intend to provide a complete translation of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, but only of the passages relevant to my research and argumentation. To understand the difficult or important passages, I referred to Prajñākaramati's extensive commentary, to its Tibetan version as well as to their translations in European languages.

Chapter one

BODHICITTA AND THE SPIRITUAL PATH OF THE BODHISATTVA

1. Methodological considerations

Bodhicitta is a technical term of frequent occurrence in Buddhist Sanskrit literature. Within the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, this concept is closely related to the spiritual practice of the Buddhist aspirant to enlightenment (bodhisattva). The term *bodhicitta* is a Sanskrit compound composed of the words *bodhi* and *citta*. The feminine verbal noun *bodhi* usually means, in the Buddhist context, the state of being *buddha* or the quality in virtue of which one is *buddha*, i.e., awake. In general, this term means: perception, comprehension, knowledge or wisdom.⁶ Modern translators have therefore considered either the word *enlightenment* or *awakening*⁷ as a suitable rendering for it. As for the Sanskrit term *citta*, the situation is a little bit more complex. This term has a long history of use dating back to the Vedic literature. It is also extensively employed in the Upanishads and in Buddhist canonical literature. This term has consequently acquired various technical meanings in the course of the development of Indian philosophy and psychology. For the purpose of the present introduction, let us just mention the most basic and common meanings used. These are: mind, thought, attention and also, desire, intention or aim.⁸ Similar to the English word *mind*, as in the expressions “to keep in mind” and “she changed her mind,” the term *citta* has therefore either a cognitive or a conative connotation. Consequently, Buddhist scholars, depending on their interpretation of the words *bodhi* and *citta*, have suggested the following

⁶SED, p. 1169.

⁷According to Richard Hayes, the term *enlightenment* has been borrowed from a European movement that tried to appropriate Asian ideas. He has therefore favored the term *awakening* because, in his opinion, the imagery of light is not appropriate to describe the ultimate experience of Buddhism. This view has been criticized on the ground that indeed the Mahāyāna literature considerably uses the metaphor of light in situations connected to spiritual achievement (Dan Lusthaus).

⁸SED, p. 707.

translations: "Thought of Enlightenment,"⁹ "Mind of enlightenment,"¹⁰ "Desire for enlightenment,"¹¹ "Will of enlightenment,"¹² "Mind turned to Enlightenment,"¹³ "Awakening mind"¹⁴ or "Desire for awakening."¹⁵

At this stage, it may be pointless to decide which translation is the most appropriate because, no matter how accurate the linguistic analysis is, I believe that one has to consider the context in which it is used to understand its exact significance. In Chinese Buddhism, for example, *bodhicitta* has been rendered by *fa-hsin* or *ch'i-hsin* that means "arousing the mind." *Bodhicitta* has then been interpreted as "initiating the aspiration and determination to become awakened."¹⁶ This interpretation seems to suggest a signification that is not explicitly given by just a literal translation of the term *bodhicitta*. Something has been added to it and to find out what it is and why, one would have to look at the ways Buddhist Chinese used the concept of *bodhicitta* and above all, for what purpose. One may, for example, investigate whether *bodhicitta* is for them a means to enlightenment, a factor of motivation or a description of a mental state.

I assume that Buddhism is primarily a system of ideas and practices whose goal is to bring about a liberation from conditions recognized as unsatisfactory. Its doctrines are not speculative but rather soteriological.¹⁷ What those conditions are, what the means to become free from them are, and to what sort of state this freedom leads, the answers to these questions are essentially what constitute the context which has to be taken into consideration. This context is what I called the "soteriological context." As Charles Adams, a scholar of the Islamic tradition, describes it:

1) What is the human problem or the human situation that calls the religious response into existence and to which the religious man is seeking an answer? This question is equivalent to asking what is the nature of man, what is the character of human existence in the world, and what is the destiny that men may ultimately expect? 2) By what means is the human problem

⁹Dayal (1932), p. 59.

¹⁰Hopkins (1984), p. 171.

¹¹Suzuki (1950), p. 171.

¹²Sangharakshita. See Subhuti (1994) p. 89.

¹³Joshi (1971), p. 70.

¹⁴Crosby, Skilton (1996).

¹⁵Richard Hayes (discussion on Email, Buddha-L, July 1994).

¹⁶Dan Lusthaus (discussion on Email, Buddha-L, July 1994).

¹⁷I use this word by way of extension from its usual meaning in Christian theology. It is the idea of being free from one's limited and unsatisfactory conditions that is emphasized and not the idea of salvation effected by a savior.

solved? In the situation of difficulty, unfulfillment or danger, etc., in which men naturally find themselves as a result of their very humanness, what appears as the solution which obviates the difficulty or evades the danger? 3) To what kind of state does the solution of the problem lead? As the result of the application of the solution to the problem, where does man find himself?¹⁸

In other words, the soteriological context refers to the character, the structure and the assumptions of any system whose main purpose is to effect a radical change of conditions of living or being. These questions are precisely those which are framed in connection with the understanding and assessment of any soteriological system. This method of investigation has been used by Charles Adams in an attempt to identify the fundamental differences between Islam and Christianity. The reason for such an investigation was that, since Christianity and Islam share many symbols such as the idea of sin or the role of prophecy, one may be misled by these similarities when trying to understand what their exact significance in their respective context of use is. Besides, without an awareness of the difference of their spiritual and possibly cultural environment, there is always the temptation to interpret the symbols of one tradition in terms of another soteriological context. The most important implication of this is the idea that, words or symbols being similar, they do not necessarily refer to the same thing. Just to give a simple example, to determine the meaning of the word *rendez-vous*, one has to know whether it is used in English or in French.

In Buddhism, we face the same situation. Some of its concepts have persisted over many stages of its historical and doctrinal development. The concept of *upāya* (skillful means) is such a concept. This concept, as presented in the simile of the Burning House of the Lotus Sūtra,¹⁹ advocates the idea that all Buddhist doctrines and practices are just provisional means skillfully designed by the Buddha or the Bodhisattvas to help all unenlightened beings to attain enlightenment in ways that fit their own mental dispositions. From a certain point of view, one may argue that

¹⁸Adams (1984), p. 291-2.

¹⁹The story goes as follows: A rich man had many children. They were playing in his house while it caught fire. The father tried to warn them of the danger, but the children did not respond; they were too busy playing. Then the father thought: "If I and my children do not get out at once, we shall certainly be burnt. Let me now, by some skillful means, cause my children to escape this disaster." Knowing that to which each of his children was predisposed, the father told them: "Here are rare and precious things for your amusement —if you do not come and get them, you will be sorry for it afterwards. So many carts are now outside the gate to play with." Thereupon, the children, hearing their father, rushed out of the burning house. Then the father, seeing that his children had safely escaped, sat down in the open with a mind at ease with ecstatic joy. Then each of his children asks him to give them the carts that were promised. Then the father gave to his children, instead of ordinary carts, equally each a great cart adorned with all the precious things, a cart they never had before and never expected to have.

“‘Buddhism,’ as a specific religion identifiable in human history, is a skillful means.”²⁰ This affirmation is true as long as one makes no distinctions between the various means possible to achieve enlightenment. By overlooking these distinctions, one also plays down the importance of the identity or the characteristics of the various Buddhist traditions or schools that have indeed insisted on these distinctions by developing their own approaches to enlightenment. When one considers these various approaches, one may notice that the significance of the concept of *upāya* is likely to vary according to the context of its use. Thus, the term *upāya* has a different meaning whether one views enlightenment as a gradual process or as a sudden one. In the first context, all means to enlightenment are skillful means; here the emphasis is on the word *means* and the term *skillful* is to be understood as efficacious with respect to the goal to achieve (*upeya*). In the second case, *upāya* refers to preliminary teachings which are in effect less important compared to the means which bring about sudden enlightenment. In this case, the emphasis is on the word *skillful* which is interpreted as clever, ingenious and even deceptive.²¹ In the story of the Burning House of the Lotus Sūtra, for example, the deceitfulness of the means employed is an important issue.

According to Tao-sheng, a Chinese Buddhist monk (circa 360-434 CE), the reasons for this difference of meaning are:

Enlightenment is an instantaneous realization apart from the written words, whereas skill-in-means involves a cumulative process of learning. There is also a difference in effect in these two approaches. The effect of sudden enlightenment is the “extinction of one’s ties with the world” (*mieh-lei*). [...] On the other hand, the effect of skill-in-means can only aid the believer to “subdue his ties with the world” (*fu-lei*), which means that although his ties with the world may gradually be diminished, it is impossible to extinguish these ties completely. As long as the believer relies on skill-in-means, “others and self are still differently felt, and non-being and being are still perceived.”²²

As a matter of fact, the discussion concerning gradual versus sudden enlightenment involves many more issues than just the means to enlightenment. It affects all aspects of the soteriological context: does the experience of enlightenment, for example, admit of degrees or is it indivisible? Is the human problem fundamentally an error in perception or is it woven throughout the whole fabric of the personality? All the possible answers to these questions will again depend on the

²⁰Pye (1978), p. 5.

²¹In French, the expression *upāya* has been translated by *artifice salvifique* (L. de la Vallée Poussin), thus assuming a more obvious deceptive connotation.

²²Yu (1974), p. 421.

structure and characteristics of the soteriological context in which these ideas are articulated.

I am aware that this approach might be violating some principles of the historico-philological method, because it is likely to leave out many details and exceptions in order to reveal a broad picture that could easily be called into question. Nevertheless, I feel justified to adopt it because I believe that a comprehension of the general picture is what gives, ultimately, the true significance of an idea or a concept. Let us take, for example, the idea of altruism in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

It is often argued that the ideal of the aspirant of the Mahāyāna tradition is superior to that of the non-Mahāyāna, because his motivation is based on a desire to save all beings, whereas the latter does it for his own sake. An example of such affirmation has been given by Jeffrey Hopkins:

The fact that a Hearer or Solitary Realizer [a non-Mahāyāna aspirant] is motivated by a wish to attain his own liberation does not mean he is not compassionate. But he does not have the extraordinary thought to take upon himself the burden of freeing all sentient beings. His compassion would be appreciably greater than our own; yet if we had awakened the Great Vehicle compassion even a little bit, our compassion could be more significant than his. [...] For a Low Vehicle practitioner, compassion is a secondary feature of the path, not a primary motivation.²³

But what does it exactly mean to have this extraordinary thought to take upon oneself the burden of freeing all beings? Why is it important to have such a great compassion? In other words, how central is this idea of developing compassion for the Mahāyāna spirituality? What we are looking for is whether this practice of developing compassion plays a similar role within the non-Mahāyāna tradition, or whether it carries the same significance for both traditions. By analyzing their respective soteriological contexts in which this idea of compassion is articulated, one might be able to answer the questions just mentioned. The point I want to make is that all comparisons and value judgments between two traditions or approaches to enlightenment on the basis of an idea are gratuitous as long as one does not know the soteriological context in which this very idea is used. And when we do know the exact context in which it is used, one usually realizes that such comparisons are without sense. Bluntly said, it would be as senseless as discrediting Buddhism on the ground that it does not have the ritual of the Eucharist. Again, because of the similarity of certain symbols and above all, because certain ideas and concepts play a very significant role in one specific context, in which case they are often viewed

²³Hopkins (1984), p. 129.

as absolute and universal, there is sometimes a strong tendency to interpret these symbols in terms of one's own soteriological context. In fact, when one looks at the various debates within the Buddhist tradition and, to a larger extent, within the context of the development of Indian philosophical thinking, this tendency is the norm. This tendency could be forgivable for people involved in their respective religious tradition, but it is not for scholars of religions.

The idea of soteriological context could be a very powerful hermeneutical tool. Just assuming that there is such a context already leads one to a different interpretation. It has been argued, for example, that the fundamental preoccupation of Dīnāga and his followers was metaphysical in nature. Others have said in this regard that his principal concern was with language. According to Richard Hayes, these views are completely missing the point about Dīnāga's philosophy because they overlook the fact that "The Buddhist's actions are oriented towards the goal of emancipation."²⁴ In other words, these views fail to bring to light the full significance of Dīnāga's ideas because they do not consider that they are to be articulated within a soteriological context.

Having discussed the approach I intend to use to analyze the significance of the concept of *bodhicitta*, I would like now to give a few details about the text I have chosen for my study of this concept as well as information concerning the background of its author and main Indian commentator.

2. *Sāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra*

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a text of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition known to have been composed by Sāntideva, a Buddhist monk and philosopher who lived around the 8th century CE.²⁵ It exists also in the Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese versions. According to Nakamura, there are at least nine commentaries and summaries altogether.²⁶ This text had little influence in later Chinese and Japanese Buddhism but became very popular in Tibet. Even today, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is considered as an important source of spiritual information for the Tibetan Buddhists.

In the West, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* also aroused a particular interest among scholars of Buddhism. It was first brought to their attention in 1889 by Minayeff, a Russian scholar. Since then, it has been translated, not always in its entirety, in

²⁴ Hayes (1988), p.33.

²⁵ According to Williams (1989), p. 58, c. 695-743, according to Nakamura (1989), p. 287, c. 650-750.

²⁶ Nakamura (1989), p. 288.

modern European and Asian languages. To name the most important, we have the French translations produced by Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1892, 1896, 1905, 1906, 1907) and by Louis Finot (1920). In English, there are the translations of Lionel D. Barnett (1909), of Marion L. Matics (1970), of Parmananda Sharma (1990) and the most recent is probably the translation of Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (1996). To these, one has to add the translations in German, Italian, Japanese and those produced in a few modern languages of India such as Hindi and Marāṭhī. It has been argued by Louis Finot that this text has had a certain appeal to Western scholars because of its similarity with the *Imitatio Christi* of Thomas a Kempis, a well-known text of the Christian spiritual tradition. This comparison is true as far as one considers the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, as will be mentioned later, from the point of view of only one of its many aspects.

i. The text

According to Paul Williams, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* “is, like the *Madhyamā-kāvatāra*, a statement of the Bodhisattva’s path to Buddhahood, but distinguished by a poetic sensitivity and fervour which makes it one of the gems of Buddhist and world spiritual literature.”²⁷ He also says that it is “one of the great spiritual poems of mankind.”²⁸ According to David Seyfort Ruegg, this text has been predominantly perceived as a religious and devotional poem rather than a philosophical treatise. Ruegg believes that it is, however, hard to agree with such a view since,

such a description curiously neglects the ninth chapter—the longest in the whole work—dealing with the *prajñāpāramitā*, which clearly places the treatise in the main stream of Madhyamaka thought; and if due consideration is given to this chapter it becomes abundantly clear that the work is hardly more religious in any sense exclusive of philosophy than certain earlier works of the school attributed to Nāgārjuna—e.g., the *Ratnāvalī*—as well as important portions of Āryadeva’s, Bhāvaviveka’s and Candrakīrti’s treatises.²⁹

Irrespective of this difference of perception concerning the nature of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* there is, however, one thing that is certain about this text: it definitively deals with the spiritual practices of the Buddhist aspirant to enlightenment, the bodhisattva, within the context of the Mahāyāna tradition. Whether it is a philosophical treatise or a devotional guide might not be an issue

²⁷Williams (1989), p. 58.

²⁸Williams (1989), p. 198.

²⁹Ruegg (1981), p. 83.

when looking at the soteriological context in which its philosophical ideas or devotional practices are articulated.

This context seems to be already alluded to in the title of Sāntideva's work. When comparing the various translations of the Sanskrit compound *bodhicarya-avatāra*, one may see various tendencies. There is one type of translation which appears to have taken into consideration the title of the Tibetan version of Sāntideva's work which is *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (*Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*), interpreting thus *bodhi* as *bodhisattva*. As examples of this type of translation, there are: *Exposition de la pratique des bodhisattva* or *Introduction à la pratique des futurs Buddha*. Both translations have been provided by Louis de La Vallée Poussin. There is also: *Vivre en héros pour l'éveil* (literally: *Entrée dans la pratique des héros pour l'éveil*) by Georges Driessens. A second type of translation, on the other hand, appears to lay emphasis on the notion of path. Examples of this type are: *La marche à la lumière* (L. Finot), *The path of Light* (L. de Barnett), *In cammino verso la luce* (G. Tucci) and *Satori e no michi* (E. Kanakura). What is noticeable in these translations is the fact that the word *avatāra*, in the expression *bodhicaryāvatāra*, has obviously been disregarded. This point is, however, not true for all translations referring to the idea of path. Indeed, as examples of these there are: *Der Eintritt in den Wandel in Erleuchtung* (R. Schmidt), *Eintritt in das Leben zur Erleuchtung* (Steinkellner), *La descente dans la carrière de l'éveil* (Pezzali) and *Entering the path of enlightenment* (Matics). The point I want to raise by presenting all these translations of the title of Sāntideva's work is that it seems that the word *avatāra* as such gave some difficulty to modern translators.

While some translators decided to omit it altogether, others were split over the choice between two meanings. On the one hand, there is L. de La Vallée Poussin who interpreted it in the sense of *introduction* or *presentation of a subject matter*. This interpretation is confirmed by Apte's translations of it.³⁰ Analogously, *avatāra* can also mean *to explain* as in *sāṃprataṃ bodhicitta-grahaṇāya tatrābhiḷāṣam utpādayitum anuśaṃsām avatārayan āha* (Now, in order to raise the desire that causes the grasping or holding of *bodhicitta*, [its] praising is to be explained, introduced or presented).³¹ On the other hand, there are translators who interpreted it in a more literal sense, i.e., as entering, descent or going down into, thus alluding to some kind of happening. Similarly, the word *'jug*, which is the Tibetan rendering for the word

³⁰SED, p. 245.

³¹BCA, p.8.

avatāra, means: to go, walk in, enter. This rendering is also supported by the commentary on the dedicatory verse of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* where it is said: *teṣāṃ saṃvara-avatāraṃ [...] tasya avataraṇam. avatīryate tasmin vā anena iti avatāro mārgaḥ, yena bodhisattva-padaprāptau sugatatvam avāpyate*.³² Here, the word *avatāra* is glossed by *mārgaḥ* which means *path* and it is further explained as that by which, having attained the stage of bodhisattva, Buddhahood is reached. Given this understanding, the idea of entry into may be, for example, compared to the first stage of the Theravādin's spiritual life which is incidentally called "entering the stream" (*sotāpanna*). This interpretation seems to take into consideration some aspects of the spiritual practice of the bodhisattva. Indeed, it is said that a bodhisattva's career begins with the production or arising of *bodhicitta*. As will be seen later, the Sanskrit term that is here translated by the word *production* is *utpāda*. This term is often used with the attainment of a new mental state. In this circumstance, the title of Śāntideva's work could very well be interpreted as "the attainment of a mental state making possible the practice to enlightenment" where the attainment of such mental state is what it means to be a bodhisattva. The validity of this interpretation can only be determined, as mentioned earlier, by examining the nature of the spiritual approach suggested by Śāntideva in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. For the moment, I just want to point out the possible clues with regard to Śāntideva's conception of the spiritual path of the bodhisattva. Next, I would like to consider the structure of the text itself and see if it may not reveal other clues.

The original text of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* in Sanskrit comprises ten chapters. These are:

1. *Bodhicittānuśaṃsā* (The praising of *bodhicitta*),
2. *Pāpadeśanā* (Confession of sins),
3. *Bodhicittaparigrahaḥ* (Acceptance of *bodhicitta*),
4. *Bodhicittāpramādaḥ* (Perseverance in *bodhicitta*),
5. *Samprajanyarakṣaṇam* (Guarding alertness),
6. *Kṣāntipāramitā* (The perfection of patience),
7. *Vīryapāramitā* (The perfection of vigor),
8. *Dhyānapāramitā* (The perfection of absorption),
9. *Prajñāpāramitā* (The perfection of wisdom) and
10. *Pariṇamanā* (Dedication).

As can be seen from the names of the chapters, the term *bodhicitta* is mentioned in the title of three of them.

³²BCA, p. 4-5.

It has been argued³³ that the tenth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* was not part of the original text. This affirmation is based on the fact that one of its major commentators, Prajñākaramati, did not comment on it and that Tāranātha, a Tibetan historian of Buddhism (1575-1608),³⁴ doubted its authenticity. In this regard, P. L. Vaidya, a modern editor of this text, has drawn to our attention that this chapter exists in various manuscripts used to prepare basic editions in the Sanskrit as well as the Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese versions.³⁵ It would most certainly require an extensive research—which is beyond the scope of this thesis—to determine which affirmation is exact. The interesting point about this chapter is, however, that it is considered as an example of the perfection of practice of giving (*dānapāramitā*). Usually, this perfection is the first of a series of six Perfections—the other five are: *śīla* (discipline), *kṣānti* (patience), *vīrya* (vigor), *dhyāna* (absorption) and *prajñā* (wisdom)—where each is believed to be a prerequisite to the next. By putting the perfection of giving at the end of the text, it may be seen as a result or consequence of having accomplished the goal of the spiritual path suggested in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* rather than just a prerequisite to it.

There is another interesting point to note concerning the chapters of this text. A recension of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is reported to have lacked chapters two and nine. In the *IDan-dkar-ma* Catalogue (no. 659), the extent of the *Bodhicarya-avatāra* is given as six hundred *śloka*s rather than the thousand verses as indicated by Bu-ston, another Tibetan historian of Buddhism (1290-1364).³⁶ Bu-ston discussed the discrepancy and attributed it to the fact that the second chapter has been omitted in the above-mentioned recension and that the ninth chapter has been ascribed, according to some, to a certain Blo-gros-mi-zad-pa (Akṣayamatī). Chapter two deals principally with the idea of performing worship to the holy figures of the Mahāyāna tradition. It is because of this chapter that the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* has somehow been compared to the *Imitatio Christi* and, consequently, perceived as a devotional breakthrough within the Buddhist tradition. Indeed, according to Dayal, “the ideas of sin as an offense against higher deities, and of confession, repentance and extraneous protection were alien to the spirit of Buddhism during several centuries.”³⁷ Also worth noting concerning this second chapter is that Tibetan

³³La Vallée Poussin (1907), p. 143.

³⁴This date has been questioned by de Jong (1975), p. 161.

³⁵Pezzali (1968), p. 48.

³⁶Ruegg (1981), p. 82, note 267.

³⁷Dayal (1932), p. 56.

Buddhists, who extensively use this text as a source of spiritual inspiration, understand these devotional practices as preliminary steps in the cultivation of *bodhicitta*. According to them,

in chapter two of his *Guide* Shantideva explains how to prepare the mind for the cultivation of the supremely altruistic attitude by uprooting and weeding out all that is potentially harmful to its growth. This purification of evil is accomplished by exposing one's accumulated non-virtue and then eradicating it by means of the four opponent powers explained in this chapter. [Power of regret, reliance, opponent force and promise]³⁸

The ninth chapter deals with wisdom, i.e., the realization of emptiness or the perfection of transcending discriminative understanding. This chapter is considered as the accomplishment of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* since it is argued that without wisdom, all other Perfections are worthless. What is significant about this chapter is that the concept of *bodhicitta* is hardly mentioned and that the chapter itself could be considered as autonomous or as a separate entity from the rest of Sāntideva's work.³⁹ It is in this chapter, as mentioned above, that one finds the bulk of the philosophical ideas discussed in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Perhaps for this reason, Tibetan Buddhists consider this ninth chapter as the way to cultivate what they call "the ultimate *bodhicitta*."

Indeed, according to them, *bodhicitta* has two parts or aspects: the conventional *bodhicitta* and the ultimate *bodhicitta*. The cultivation of the conventional *bodhicitta* is the means to develop compassion for all sentient beings. It consists in a variety of meditation where, for example, one imagines one's own mother and tries to extend the benevolent feelings one usually has for her to all sentient beings starting from one's own friends, then to people one is normally indifferent to and finally to one's enemies. Cultivation of the ultimate *bodhicitta*, on the other hand, is the way to train the mind to perceive the phenomenal world as impermanent and empty. By constantly entertaining the idea that everything is like a dream, even while eating, drinking and doing all kinds of activities, one is likely to come to realize emptiness. This emptiness is "beyond this world, cannot be formulated by concept or speech, is extremely radiant, the image of the Ultimate, immaculate, unshakable, and very bright like the steady glow of a lamp on a calm night."⁴⁰ It is to be noted that, although this twofold conception of *bodhicitta* dated

³⁸Gyatso (1989), p. 5.

³⁹In *Bouddhisme: études et matériaux*, Louis de La Vallée Poussin has edited only the ninth chapter upon which he has provided a consistent and perhaps sufficient description of the bodhisattva's path.

⁴⁰Williams (1989) p. 203.

back to as early as the composition of the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, a text of the Cittamātra tradition composed after Nāgārjuna (circa second century CE) and before Maitreya (circa 270-350 CE), it is not discussed in the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

The relevance of this discussion concerning the structure of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is that it may be possible to see chapter two, nine and those dealing specifically with *bodhicitta*, i.e., chapters one, three to eight and ten as autonomous from the point of view of a given soteriological context in which their ideas and concepts are articulated. In other words, from the point of view of its spiritual approach, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* seems to offer three alternatives: the first focuses on the concept of *bodhicitta*, the second alternative focuses on the idea of wisdom (*prajñā*), and the third one is based on what one might identify as “devotional practices.” This means that such devotional practices, for example, are not some kind of preliminary exercises and that the realization of emptiness is not that which the entire *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is exclusively aiming at. From the point of view of the soteriological context, which I intend to present in the next chapters of my thesis when discussing the spiritual function of *bodhicitta*, it could therefore be argued that each of these alternatives might be considered as autonomous or self-dependent.

One last word concerning the text. For my study of the concept of *bodhicitta* in the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, I used an Indian edition produced by Swami Dwarika Das Shastri, published by Bauddha Bharati in Varanasi (1988). For difficult passages, I referred to the Tibetan versions found in the Sde Dge Tibetan Tripiṭaka *Bstan 'gyur* as well as to a few translations made in contemporary languages.

ii. *Sāntideva*

In addition to being the author of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Sāntideva composed the *Sikṣāsamuccaya*, an anthology with comments compiled on the basis of many citations from various *sūtras* and a third text entitled *Sūtrasamuccaya*. This last text is not extant in any language and one knows of its existence from the fact that it is quoted in one verse (chap. V-106) of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. On the basis of this fact, Bu-ston and Tāranātha have ascribed this work to Sāntideva. In this verse, however, Nāgārjuna, the author of another text also called *Sūtrasamuccaya*, happened also to be mentioned. According to Ruegg, “the passage in question is not

altogether clear; [...] it has therefore been concluded that the above-mentioned ascription is erroneous.”⁴¹

What we know of Sāntideva comes from biographies produced by three Tibetan historians: Bu-ston, Tāranātha and Sum-pa mkham-po (1704-1788). There is also a fourth source constituted from a Nepalese manuscript of the fourteenth century. According to de Jong,⁴² this Sanskrit version and the Tibetan ones seem to go back to the same original source. Apart from these sources, we may rely, only as the dates of Sāntideva's life are concerned, on a few historical facts. It has been ascertained, for example, that I-Tsing, one of the Chinese pilgrims to whom we owe a lot of our knowledge on the history of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, left India in 685 CE. In his accounts, there is no mention of Sāntideva nor of his works. One might assume from this that, at the very most, Sāntideva was not known before this time. Another significant event concerning Sāntideva is the first trip to Tibet of Sāntarakṣita (c. 725-788 CE) in 763 CE. This is probably the latest date of composition of one of his works, the *Tattvasiddhi*, in which one verse of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is quoted. Given these details, it is believed that the productive life of Sāntideva is situated approximately in the period between 685 CE and 763 CE. For the other details concerning the life of Sāntideva, one has to rely on the above-mentioned biographies which are in fact more legendary than historical. Some details of his legend might be, however, of interest.

According to tradition, Sāntideva, whose childhood name was Sāntivarman, was born in the southwestern part of India as the son of a royal chieftain named Mañjuśrivarman. In his past lives, he served the various Buddhas and thereby accumulated the necessary merits that would later lead him to final liberation. His mother, who is said to be a reincarnation of the goddess Tārā, encouraged him to abandon the mundane life to become an ascetic. Another account says that Sāntideva had a vision of Mañjuśrī enjoining him to forsake the throne for the ascetic life. What should be noted here is that the tradition does not relate Sāntideva to the Brahmanic tradition but rather presents him as a true member of the Mahāyāna lineage (*samyak mahāyāna-gotra*).⁴³

Having set forth to lead the ascetic life, Sāntideva met a teacher with whom he studied for twelve years. With his guru, he learned the science of Mañjuśrī. We

⁴¹Ruegg (1981), p. 84.

⁴²de Jong (1975), p.177.

⁴³de Jong (1975), p. 168.

are told that Sāntideva was able to produce a vision of Mañjuśrī by invoking him. After this period of training in the forest,⁴⁴ which incidentally looks like a kind of novitiate, Sāntideva became a knight at the court of the king Pañchamasimha. There, he was forced to display his wooden sword which caused, because of the dazzling light it produced, the king's left eye to fall out of its socket. We are told that Sāntideva's wooden sword was special because it bore the seal of Mañjuśrī. Thereupon, Sāntideva restored the king's eye and, acknowledging the suffering he had caused, decided to leave the mundane life once and for all.

It is probably at this moment that Sāntideva became a monk. He joined the monastic university of Nālandā where he was ordained by Jayadeva. He received the name Sāntideva because of his quietness. There, the other monks despised him and to them it appeared that he did nothing but eat, sleep and defecate. They gave him the nickname Bhusuku. In reality, Sāntideva was meditating on the teachings during the night and sleeping during the day. As was the custom, each monk had to periodically give a discourse to the entire monastic community. When it came to Sāntideva's turn, the monks thought that they had a good opportunity to humiliate him. Instead, when asked to recite something new, he began to disclose the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* thus showing that he was a real *paṇḍit*. Thereupon, he left for the South of India never to return to Nālandā. According to his biographers, Sāntideva left three manuscripts in his cell which correspond to the three texts recognized to have been composed by him. This could be understood as an attempt by the tradition to settle the dispute over the authorship of the *Sūtrasamuccaya*.

Because Sāntideva is known to have performed miracles--for example, one is told that he accomplished a multiplication of rice to feed hungry people-- and also due to the fact that a certain Bhusuku has been recognized as the composer of songs belonging to the Vajrayāna school of Tantric Buddhism, it has been argued that Sāntideva has been an adept of Tantra or was influenced by it.⁴⁵ It also appears, in the *Bstan 'gyur*, that a certain Sāntideva was the author of tantric texts.⁴⁶ Despite these facts or coincidences, most scholars of Buddhism do not accept the idea that Sāntideva was connected in some way or another to the Tantric schools of Buddhism. He is considered as a representative of the Madhyamaka school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, most probably its Prāsaṅgika branch.

⁴⁴Chapter eight of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* praises dwelling in the forest and living the ascetic life.

⁴⁵This argument was put forward by H. Śāstri in an article entitled 'Sāntideva' published in *Indian Antiquary*. XLII, Bombay, 1913, p. 50-51.

⁴⁶Pezzali (1968), p. 45, note 80.

Indeed, according to Ruegg,⁴⁷ “as a result of the contributions made to the school by Candrakīrti and Śāntideva, the doctrine of the Prāsaṅgika branch of the Madhyamaka was firmly and systematically established from the points of view of logic, gnoseology and soteriology.”

iii. *Prajñākaramati*

On the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, as mentioned above, there exists a number of commentaries. Prajñākaramati's *Pañjikā* is probably the best known in Sanskrit. Not much is known about the life of this commentator. It is generally believed that he was an erudite Buddhist monk who lived at the monastic university of Vikramaśīla around the last quarter of the eighth century and the first quarter of the ninth. This assumption is based on the fact that in his commentary, he quotes abundantly from earlier works such as the *Tattvasaṃgraha* of Śāntarakṣita.⁴⁸ Indeed, Prajñākaramati refers to more than 73 *sūtras* in his *Pañjikā*. It also appears that he had at his disposal more than one manuscript of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* for his commentary.⁴⁹

Having presented the text I intend to use as the data for my research on the concept of *bodhicitta*, as well as its author and its most important Sanskrit commentator, I would like now to discuss the various interpretations of this concept provided by modern scholars of Buddhism. This discussion is in fact an analysis of their assumptions concerning the soteriological context in which *bodhicitta* is believed to be articulated.

3. Review of literature

In this section, I intend to look at two scholars of Buddhism. The first one is D.T. Suzuki, issued from the Zen tradition of Japan. His approach to the study of Buddhism is strongly influenced by the presuppositions of this tradition and his long friendship with Williams James. The second scholar, Sangharakṣita, is in fact an Englishman who presents Buddhism as a practical system with a definite purpose: the attainment of emancipation. Strictly speaking, his approach is not scientific but nevertheless, it is not devoid of interest because he is probably the only Buddhist author who has attempted to discuss the structure of the soteriological context in

⁴⁷Ruegg (1981), p. 85.

⁴⁸Sharma (1990), p. xii.

⁴⁹In many instances, Prajñākaramati indicates to his reader alternative readings of a verse he is commenting on.

which the concepts and ideas of Buddhism are articulated. For this review of literature, I also relied on a third scholar, L.M. Joshi, who is not, as far as I know, identified with any schools of Buddhism and whose study of the concept of *bodhicitta* is probably the most comprehensive in terms of the textual sources analyzed.

i. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki

D.T. Suzuki was probably one of the first non-Western Buddhist scholars to try to give a scientific description and explanation of the main concepts and practices of Buddhism. His contribution, especially in the area of Zen Buddhism, is without doubt impressive. He also translated and analyzed texts such as the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*. Both texts deal explicitly with the practices of the bodhisattva and the concept of *bodhicitta*.

One of his basic assumptions concerning the development of the Buddhist tradition as a whole is that it began at some point in its history to evolve into two distinct directions. As he explicitly says:

The idea of the Bodhisattva, a being (sattva) who seeks enlightenment (bodhi) thus came to take root in Buddhism, and a sort of secular Buddhism came to replace the old school of ascetic and exclusive monasticism. The householder was made more of than the homeless mendicant, the teaching of the Buddha was to be practiced outside a community of the *élite*, and this democratic social tendency brought about many great changes in Buddhist thought. One of them was to analyse in a practical way the process of enlightenment.⁵⁰

This assumption is not without consequences in Suzuki's interpretation of the concept of *bodhicitta*. According to him, the appearance of this concept was closely linked to the development of the Mahāyāna approach to spiritual fulfillment. Indeed, he argues:

When the actual process of enlightenment was examined, the Mahāyāna found that it consisted of two definite steps. In the beginning it was necessary to create for the sake of others an urgent longing for enlightenment, and then the attainment of the final goal would be possible. The longing was just as important and full of meaning as the attainment itself, for the latter was impossible without the former; indeed the latter determined the former in every way; that is, the time, strength, efficacy, etc., of enlightenment entirely depended upon the quality of the initiative will-power raised for the attainment of the final object. The motive determined the course, character, and power of the conduct. The desire for enlightenment intensely stirred meant, indeed, that the greater and more difficult part of the work was already achieved.⁵¹

⁵⁰Suzuki (1950), p. 168.

⁵¹Suzuki (1950), p. 169.

In this context, the concept of *bodhicitta* refers to the driving force leading the *bodhisattva* to his final goal. As such, it could be argued that this concept is not entirely new because, even though the term is not found in pre-Mahāyāna literature,⁵² it is well-known that Gotama, the historical Buddha-to-be, after renouncing the household life, also resolved to strive to put an end to all sufferings of existence. According to the Pāli tradition, we also know that the Buddha, after his experience of enlightenment, decided to preach to others the truth he had discovered out of great compassion for all sentient beings. Assuming that the spiritual career of the Buddha, including that of his previous lives, was taken by the early Buddhists as a model to emulate, there seems not to be much difference between them and the Mahāyānists from the point of view of the quality of their commitment. In other words, when *bodhicitta* is understood as an earnest decision to become enlightened, there is nothing really special about this concept; there is nothing that could later, i.e., in Mahāyāna Buddhism, justify its promotion to the status of technical term: there are in fact plenty of terms in Sanskrit that could express the same meaning. Why then did the desire for enlightenment become central to the path of the *bodhisattva* whereas in Early Buddhism there is no special emphasis on this idea? As mentioned in the preceding quote, this difference is to be attributed to a new understanding of the process of enlightenment. What then, according to D.T. Suzuki, is this process of enlightenment exactly?

It is probably in the description of the *Satori* experience of the Zen tradition that Suzuki makes explicit this process. This experience is said to be brought about by an intense reflection on a *kōan*. A *kōan* may be considered as a type of riddle given to a student to solve. A famous *kōan* is: "Two hands clap and there is a sound. What is the sound of the one hand?" What is interesting concerning the circumstances of its resolution, which is considered the experience of *Satori*, is that it "comes on in connection with the most trivial incidents such as the raising of a finger, uttering a cry, reciting a phrase, swinging a stick, slapping a face, and so on."⁵³ Suzuki interprets this experience in the following manner: "As the outcome is apparently incongruous with the occasion, we naturally presume some deep-seated psychological antecedents which are thereby abruptly brought to maturity."⁵⁴ To

⁵²According to Nakamura (1989), the term *aññācitta* seems to be the predecessor of *bodhicitta*. *Aññācitta* is a Pali term translated as "the thought of gnosis" or "the intention of gaining Arahantship". (T.W. Rhys Davids. *Pali-English Dict.* p. 14).

⁵³Suzuki (1970), p. 40.

⁵⁴Suzuki (1970), p. 40.

explain the nature of these deep-seated psychological antecedents, Suzuki analyzed the career of three early Zen masters.

The first example given is that of Hui-k' ê. Hui-k' ê was a learned scholar dissatisfied with mere scholarship. He was earnestly searching for an inmost truth which would give peace and rest to his soul. It is believed that a long period of intense lucubration took place prior to his experience of *Satori*.

The second example is that of Hui-nêng. Contrary to Hui-k' ê, Hui-nêng was not a scholar. The facts show, however, that he had some knowledge of several Mahāyāna *sūtras*. In his case also, it is assumed by Suzuki that a great spiritual upheaval was going on in his mind, since, in spite of being assigned to menial work in the monastery, the purpose of his being there was to study Zen.

The third example is that of Lin-chi. Lin-chi spent three years of silence under his master in order to grasp the final truth of Zen. In fact, he spent three years in silence because he did not know what to ask the master, thus pointing to an intense mental application and spiritual turmoil.

According to Suzuki, the common denominator of these three examples is that each aspirant to enlightenment cultivated an intense desire for it. This cultivation is central to the experience of *Satori*. As he himself explains: "The searching mind is vexed to the extreme as its fruitless strivings go on, but when it is brought up to an apex it breaks or it explodes and the whole structure of consciousness assumes an entirely different aspect."⁵⁵ According to him, this phenomenon is not exclusive to Buddhism; it is to be experienced whether one is pondering about a difficult problem or contriving a solution to an apparently hopeless situation. This phenomenon could be explained, as far as psychology goes, by the following law: "accumulation, saturation, and explosion."⁵⁶

It is from the point of view of this understanding of the spiritual process or, as I called it, the soteriological context, that Suzuki interprets the concept of *bodhicitta*. *Bodhicitta* is therefore not a simple desire to become enlightened, as can be seen in the context of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism and in which case it has a relative significance, but rather, it is a strong commitment that is the primary cause of the experience of enlightenment. As Suzuki himself puts it, *bodhicitta*, "is the becoming conscious of a new religious aspiration which brings about a cataclysm in

⁵⁵Suzuki (1970), p. 61.

⁵⁶Suzuki (1970), p. 72.

one's mental organization."⁵⁷ This is essentially the reason why, according to Suzuki, the concept of *bodhicitta* is specific to the Mahāyāna tradition: only this tradition has recognized the value of desire as spiritual catalyst, and this catalyst is best brought into function by *bodhicitta*.

To sum up Suzuki's understanding of the concept of *bodhicitta*, one may use an example taken from the physical world. This example is the process of lamination. This process or technique is used, among other things, to make gold sheets. Through successive striking on a gold ingot, one obtains very thin sheets of gold, so thin that no other method, such as cutting with precision instruments, can achieve this result. This technique is very simple and unrefined compared to the very fine result obtained. Furthermore, the result is sudden and unexpected; for a lapse of time nothing seems to happen but then, almost instantaneously, all the sheets appear. In this circumstance, the last blow that brought about the transformation of the ingot into sheets is no more important than all the previous blows. The last blow is like the trivial incident that brings about the experience of *Satori*. All other blows, like the intense desire stirred up by *bodhicitta*, have the function of producing an accumulation of pressure. In the case of the *Satori* experience, it is the structure of the mind, composed of false assumptions about reality, that is under pressure. In this context, *bodhicitta* is the instigator of a brute force, i.e., the intense desire for enlightenment and as such, it is totally devoid of knowledge. In other words, the concept of *bodhicitta* has a definite conative connotation and therefore, the appropriate translation for it is "Desire of enlightenment."

D.T. Suzuki recognizes that the concept of *bodhicitta* has acquired other connotations in the course of the development of the Buddhist tradition. In an earlier work, he defined it as "intelligence-heart." Thus *bodhicitta* is understood as a form of the *Tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha-nature) or *ālayavijñāna* (substratum-consciousness). As such, *bodhicitta* is something hidden in each being and constitutes its essential nature. It is something that, similar to the Buddha-nature or Buddha-essence, one ought to be awake to. Many Mahāyāna *sūtras* and Buddhist philosophers in general confirmed this connection between *bodhicitta* and the description of metaphysical realities. For example, in the Treatise on the Formless Enlightenment-Mind,⁵⁸ we have the following account of *bodhicitta*:

⁵⁷Suzuki (1950), p. 173.

⁵⁸This text is usually attributed to Nāgārjuna. This is however contested because "considering the fact that it refers to the concept of *ālayavijñāna* (store-consciousness), we may conclude that this must have been composed by somebody after Nāgārjuna." (Nakamura (1989), p. 243).

The bodhicitta is free from all determinations, that is, is not included in the categories of the five skandhas, the twelve āyatanas, and the 18 dhātus. It is not a particular existence which is palpable. It is non-atmanic, universal. It is uncreated and its self-existence is void. One who understands the nature of bodhicitta sees everything with a loving heart, for love is the essence of the Bodhicitta. The bodhicitta is the highest essence.⁵⁹

Sthiramati, an author of the Cittamātra (Mind-only) school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in his Discourse on the *Mahāyānadharmadhātu*, also said that *bodhicitta* is the Cosmic Body of the Buddha (*Dharmakāya*) or Reality as such (*Bhūtatathātā*).⁶⁰ It is probably within the Tibetan tradition that the concept of *bodhicitta* has acquired the strongest connections with metaphysical realities.

In the Vajrayāna school of Esoteric Buddhism, for example, a school which has been founded in India around the 3rd CE and which became important in Tibet, *bodhicitta* is understood as the final unification of *śūnyatā* (emptiness; also called *prajñā* [wisdom]) and *karuṇā* (compassion; also called *upāya* [skillful means]). This term also refers very often to the "Great Delight" (*mahāsukha*) itself.⁶¹ This *mahāsukha* is related to a practice of Esoteric Buddhism involving rituals connected with the enjoyment of meat, intoxicating liquors and sexual intercourse.

In the *Guhyasamājatantra*, a text produced by the Esoteric Buddhist tradition at its last stage, we are told that the great Bodhisattvas, headed by Maitreya, pay homage to *bodhicitta* in the same manner in which Nāgārjuna has paid homage to the *prajñāpāramitā* (the Perfection of wisdom). *Bodhicitta* is, consequently, described as born of the emptiness of things, complementary to the Buddha's awakening, beyond imagination and without support.⁶² In this text, an interesting definition of *bodhicitta* is also given: "The *bodhicitta* is the unity of voidness and compassion; it is beginningless and endless, quiescent and bereft of the notion of being and non-being."⁶³ And, in another text of the same tradition, the *Prajñopāya-viniścayasiddhi* (composed about 650-800 CE), *bodhicitta* is considered as the eternal, luminous, pure, the abode of the Conquerors, made of all *dharma*s (phenomena), divine and the cause of the whole universe (*nityaṃ prabhāsvaraṃ śuddhaṃ bodhicittaṃ jinālayaṃ, sarvadharmayaṃ divyaṃ nikhilāspada-kāraṇaṃ*).⁶⁴ And later in the text, the same

⁵⁹Suzuki (1970), p. 297.

⁶⁰Suzuki (1970), p. 298.

⁶¹Joshi (1971), p. 75.

⁶²Joshi (1971), p. 75.

⁶³*Guhyasamāja-tantra*, chapter XVIII, verse 37. Quoted in Nakamura (1989), p.333.

⁶⁴*Pra.vi.sī*, 2-29.

homage as that mentioned above is paid to *bodhicitta*. (*saṃbuddhā bodhisattvāḥ ca tvattaḥ pāramitāguṇāḥ, saṃbhavanti sadā nātha bodhicitta namo 'stu te.*)⁶⁵

According to Suzuki, all these metaphysical connotations “must be regarded as a degeneration of pure Mahāyāna Buddhism.”⁶⁶ The reason for this shift of meaning is that *bodhicitta* should be considered as the abbreviation of the expression *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādam* which means, according to him, “to cherish a spiritual aspiration for the attainment of supreme enlightenment.”⁶⁷ He further argues that “this historical connection between the compound *bodhicitta* and the phrase *anuttarāyāṃ samyak-sambodhau cittam utpādam* was altogether forgotten so that the Bodhicitta came to be treated as having an independent technical value.”⁶⁸

The view that one is dealing with two different meanings for the concept of *bodhicitta*, has also been advocated by L.M. Joshi. Joshi wrote a short paper attempting to present an historical survey of the concept of *bodhicitta* with a view to pointing out the difference in its meaning in the classical Sanskrit literature of the Mahāyāna tradition and in Tantric Buddhism.⁶⁹ According to him, the concept of *bodhicitta*

is conceived, in the Mahayana-*sūtras* and *śāstras*, as a strong resolution to work for the spiritual benefit of all creatures; wisdom is its philosophical foundation, and compassion its active side; it is nevertheless, a mere thought or will (a strong will, no doubt) turned towards *samyak-sambodhi*; production of *bodhicitta*, its careful preservation and growth lead to *nirvana*. It is thus a way of moral and spiritual perfection. In the Vajrayana, on the other hand, we have the express declaration of the esoteric texts that *bodhicitta* is not a way of Bodhi or *nirvana*, but it is *nirvana* itself. It is the supreme Reality called *advaya*, *prajñapaya*, *Vajrasattva* and the *mahasukha*.⁷⁰

Concerning the question of how this change of meaning was effected, Joshi only says that it occurred gradually but, contrary to Suzuki, he does not attribute it to some kind of degeneration. In this regard, it might be interesting to look at the ideas of the second scholar I wish to discuss.

⁶⁵Pra.vi.sī, 3-11.

⁶⁶Suzuki (1950), p. 175.

⁶⁷Suzuki (1950), p. 173.

⁶⁸Suzuki (1950), p. 174.

⁶⁹A survey of the conception of *bodhicitta* in *The journal of Religious Studies*. Dept. of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, vol. III No. 1. p. 70-79.

⁷⁰Joshi (1971), p. 77 (Diacritical marks missing in quote).

ii. Sangharakshita

Sangharakshita is probably one of the first Westerners who has devoted his life to the practice and understanding of Buddhism. His major contribution is without doubt his attempt to translate the ideas and practices of this Eastern spiritual tradition into a language understandable to people educated in the Western world. For that purpose, Sangharakshita has not shied away from borrowing concepts from the field of science. As such, he could be compared, in his enterprise, to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a catholic philosopher and paleontologist who tried to explain religious phenomena in terms of scientific language.

Sangharakshita has been a very prolific writer. He has been a practitioner of Buddhism, i.e., he made a serious commitment for the realization of its goal, in all major schools of this tradition. One of his books, *A Survey of Buddhism* is still a valid source of information, even for non-Buddhists. All along his career as a translator and a practitioner of Buddhism, one could say that one of his major preoccupations was to show the unity of this tradition in its metaphysical ideas as well as in its underlying assumptions in the various approaches to enlightenment it produced. It is therefore in the context of his vision of what is the unifying principle of Buddhism that he discussed the concept of *bodhicitta*.

According to Sangharakshita, the practice of Going for Refuge to the Buddha, the *dharma* and the *sangha* is "the central and definitive Act of the Buddhist life" and "the unifying principle of Buddhism itself."⁷¹ Moreover, he considers that the language of Going for Refuge provides the most helpful model of spiritual life.⁷² Before looking at Sangharakshita's understanding of the concept of *bodhicitta*, it is therefore necessary to explain this model of spiritual life based on the practice of Going for Refuge.

Going for Refuge is above all the expression of one's commitment to the ideals of Buddhism. Sangharakshita explains that this practice has in effect lost, in the course of time, this signification. Going for Refuge has more or less become a formality. "In some 'Buddhist countries' virtually the entire population will recite the formula when they go to temples, but few will do so with much consciousness of what the words really mean."⁷³ Because of this loss of significance, Sangharakshita argues that other means of expressing the essential act of commitment had to be

⁷¹Subhuti (1994), p. 84.

⁷²Subhuti (1994), p. 98.

⁷³Subhuti (1994), p. 88.

developed. One of these expressions came to be known as “the arising of *bodhicitta*.”⁷⁴ In this way, *bodhicitta* could be understood as an alternative to the practice of Going for Refuge, which is essentially a commitment to the ideals of Buddhism. Eventually, in the course of the development of the Buddhist tradition, other forms such as the tantric initiation of Vajrayāna appeared because even the arising of *bodhicitta* degenerated into a mere ritual. To be more precise, Sangharakshita did not say that these new forms of expressing this essential act of commitment were exactly like the original Going for Refuge, but rather, he argues that the development of these new forms resulted in making more explicit certain dimensions of Going for Refuge. For example, the arising of *bodhicitta*, which is interpreted as a deep urge to go forward on the path for the benefit of all beings,⁷⁵ came to reveal its altruistic dimension. It is, however, essential to realize that, for Sangharakshita, the arising of *bodhicitta* brings nothing new to the basic act of commitment encompassed in the Going for Refuge; “The spiritual path [based on Going for Refuge] is of its very nature altruistic, a growth in harmony, friendship, and compassion.”⁷⁶

The act of Going for Refuge can be done, according to Sangharakshita, at five different levels. These are: the Cultural, Provisional, Effective, Real and Absolute. Although this classification is his own, it is not without basis in the canonical literature of Buddhism. These levels represent the various degrees of commitment to the ideals of Buddhism. The first level, the “Cultural” Going for Refuge has the least spiritual significance and probably it plays the biggest social role. Here the formula of Going for Refuge is an affirmation of cultural and national identity; it is a characteristic of the tradition one vows allegiance to. The second level is called “Provisional” because it refers to an act which, although marked by strong feelings of devotion and reverence towards the ideals, falls short of being a true commitment. At this level, one is still torn by competing interests and ambitions. At the third level, the “Effective” Going for Refuge, these interests and ambitions are still there but one “is sufficiently drawn to the Three Jewels to be able to commit oneself to making systematic steps towards them. It is really at this point of “Effective” Going for Refuge that the spiritual life begins in earnest. Here, the decisive reorientation from the mundane towards the transcendental is made.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴Subhuti (1994), p. 88.

⁷⁵Subhuti (1994), p. 95.

⁷⁶Subhuti (1994), p. 95.

⁷⁷Subhuti (1994), p. 93.

As mentioned earlier, these levels represent degrees of commitment. Sangharakshita has also provided a model to explain the succession of levels; he calls it the “principle of Higher Evolution.” The idea of evolution is one of these concepts used by Sangharakshita to make certain ideas of Buddhism easier to understand by a Western audience. It is to be considered as a kind of metaphor. The principle of Higher Evolution is to be contrasted to the Lower Evolution: where the latter corresponds to the scientific principle of evolution used to explain the developments of the biological world, the former is used to describe the developments of the spiritual life. The Lower Evolution is cyclic and does not require consciousness to happen whereas the Higher Evolution evolves like a spiral and has to be consciously undertaken by the individual and requires personal commitment and sustained effort. The image of the spiral is used by Sangharakshita because along this path towards greater commitment one experiences a deepening of self-awareness or an increase in transcendental consciousness. As long as efforts are sustained, one moves upward along the spiral towards enlightenment. This progression, however, does not seem to be linear.

At the fourth level, the “Real” Going for Refuge, one gains a transforming insight that brings one on to the transcendental path. “It is the point on the path of the Higher Evolution where transcendental consciousness arises and one becomes a true individual.”⁷⁸ This transition is a “point of no-return” and it is considered as the first goal of spiritual life. In the Buddhist tradition, there are a lot of images used to describe this moment: Stream Entry or the Opening of the Dhamma-Eye in the Pāli tradition, the attainment of the eighth *bhūmi* called *Acalā* in Mahāyāna or entering the Path of Vision in Tibetan Buddhism. At this point, one is assured of gaining enlightenment because one cannot help making the efforts that will bring one to it. In other words, at this level the act of commitment has become a second nature for the aspirant to enlightenment. Finally, there is the “Absolute” or “Ultimate” Going for Refuge. This is the point of full Enlightenment. Here,

the cyclic trend of conditionality is completely exhausted and there is only a spontaneous unfolding of the spiral trend in unending creativity. Here even Going for Refuge is transcended, since one has oneself become the refuge. In fact, in so far as all dualistic thought has been left behind, there is no refuge to go to and no one to go to it.⁷⁹

This last level is not to be viewed as a fixed place in which the enlightened being settles down. Sangharakshita remarks that even after the Buddha attained

⁷⁸Subhuti (1994), p. 93.

⁷⁹Subhuti (1994), p. 94.

enlightenment, he still had the need of some higher principle. Understanding that there was no being to worship, he realized that there was the *dharma* which had helped him become what he was. So he resolved to live worshipping and revering it.

To sum up, the progression from one level of Going for Refuge to the next corresponds to a more radical turning towards the Three Jewels. "It is Going for Refuge that drives one to leave behind what one has presently achieved and to seek yet greater heights. Going for Refuge therefore takes place within the context of the Higher Evolution, of which it is the vital fuel and spark."⁸⁰ The relevance of this idea for the concept of *bodhicitta* is that Sangharakshita considers that Going for Refuge is the expression, within the context of Buddhism, of a general principle, which is, for the Mahāyāna, the concept of *bodhicitta*. This principle, also called the "principle of perpetual self-transcendence" and "considered as the universal principle that underlies the entire evolutionary process, Sangharakshita calls this the 'Cosmic Going for Refuge'."⁸¹ This interpretation of the concept of *bodhicitta* has been corroborated by Marion Matics, a modern translator and commentator of Sāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. According to him, [*bodhicitta*] "is the force of the thought which thus turns one's life completely upside down (as any thought is a force insofar as it results in action). Consequently, Bodhicitta (like Citta) partakes of a quasi-universal aspect, because in the latter sense, it is a force let loose in the universe to work for the good of all."⁸² What this means is that the commitment for enlightenment does not only depend on one's individual will, but rather, it could be stirred up by a cosmic force. The best way to get attuned to this force is the practice of Going for Refuge. As Sangharakshita explained:

The individual's spiritual efforts are not merely the efforts of an individual entirely isolated from everything else: they take place within a vast context. The individual's efforts and the upward movement of life and consciousness that in their context are both manifestations of the single principle of the Cosmic Going for Refuge. The individual can reveal ever more of the significance of his or her efforts because those efforts are interconnected with the entire context.⁸³

It is probably at the fourth level, the "Real" Going for Refuge, that one has the experience of being carried off by this cosmic force.

Sangharakshita's understanding of the concept of *bodhicitta* is not devoid of interest. Earlier in my introduction, I drew a parallel between him and Teilhard de

⁸⁰Subhuti (1994), p. 100.

⁸¹Subhuti (1994), p. 102.

⁸²Matics (1970), p. 34.

⁸³Subhuti (1994), p. 103.

Chardin. The comparison was not gratuitous. This Jesuit scholar also saw in the phenomenon of evolution a principle of spiritual growth, a force leading it to a spiritual finality. According to him, the evolution is “une cosmogénèse en mouvement dans laquelle, de lentes maturations en brusques explosions, quelque chose se fait, de la matière à la vie, de la vie au phénomène humain et jusqu’à, préparé et attendu, un ultra-humain.”⁸⁴ This “phénomène humain” is a crucial moment of the evolution because it is the point where consciousness starts to grow in complexity. In Sangharakshita’s language, this is the beginning of the Higher Evolution.

When one compares D.T. Suzuki with Sangharakshita, one can see that they stand at the opposite ends of a spectrum with regard to the significance of the concept of *bodhicitta*. Suzuki understands this concept as purely motivational and does not recognize the validity of its metaphysical connotations. The abstract and technical meanings that developed in the Tantric tradition, for example, must be regarded, as mentioned earlier, as deviation from the original meaning of *bodhicitta*. On the other hand, Sangharakshita’s understanding of this concept, based on his vision of the soteriological context in which it is found, renders it, at the motivational level, somewhat redundant and obsolete. As he himself says:

I think it is all the more necessary to fall back on the Going for Refuge as the basic Buddhist act, not on the arising of *bodhicitta* and becoming a Bodhisattva —which is the archetype of Going for Refuge, on a cosmic scale.⁸⁵

In a way, Sangharakshita has, if one allows me the comparison, given to the concept of *bodhicitta* a seat in the House of Lords knowing that in fact things really happen in the Commons. In this context, although the term *bodhicitta* is translated as “Will to Enlightenment,” this “will” should not be understood as the usual mental event of volition but rather as the description of a metaphysical reality.

Despite these two opposing views, I am of the opinion that it is possible to find a middle way, i.e., to elaborate a soteriological context that would be able to accommodate both connotations: the metaphysical and the motivational. As a matter of fact, the concept of *bodhicitta* is also connected to what I would call ethical realities. In many instances, it is mentioned that the person in whom the *bodhicitta* arises is to be considered as a son or a daughter of the Buddha. In the *Bodhicarya-avatāra*, we are told:

⁸⁴Borne (1985), p. 1673.

⁸⁵Subhuti (1994), p. 96 .

*bhavadācārakabandhano varākaḥ sugatānāṃ suta ucyate kṣaṇena,
sa narāmaralokavandanīyo bhavati sma uditā eva bodhicitta.*

The moment *bodhicitta* arises in a wretched man who is attached to existence, he becomes a son of the Buddhas and is praised by both men and gods.⁸⁶

In the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* also, it is said that “a bodhisattva radiates great friendliness and compassion over all those beings, he gives his attention to them, thinking: I shall become a savior to all those beings.”⁸⁷ This event is viewed as a life-transforming experience and is characterized by the acquisition of an attitude or a spontaneous feeling of compassion towards all beings. Such a person is also said to be instantaneously freed from negative mental tendencies. In other words, these ethical realities describe the behavior or state of being of the person in whom *bodhicitta* has arisen. In this circumstance, I believe that any suggested soteriological context should take these facts into consideration.

As the next step of my research, I would like to investigate the possible functions the concept of *bodhicitta* might assume in the context of a spiritual path. One function, as we have already seen, is *bodhicitta* as desire for enlightenment, where the desire is to be understood literally, i.e., as a mental event of volition. A second function is *bodhicitta* as object of concentration. Here, the emphasis is on the experience of calmness of the mind. The third function, the one which will lead me to the elaboration of what I believe to be an appropriate soteriological context for the understanding of the exact significance of *bodhicitta*, is *bodhicitta* as a basis for the cultivation of awareness.

⁸⁶BCA, I-9.

⁸⁷Joshi (1971), p. 71.

Chapter two

BODHICITTA AS DESIRE FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

From the analysis of Suzuki's conception of the spiritual path of the bodhisattva, it is quite clear that desire plays a crucial role in it. To state the obvious: in order to attain enlightenment one has to desire it. But when we looked at Sangharakshita's understanding of the path, the idea of desire became a little bit more complex. In addition to assimilating it to a conventional mental event, Sangharakshita, with his idea of "Cosmic Going for Refuge," added a new dimension to it. As mentioned earlier, for him, the individual's spiritual efforts are not merely the efforts of an individual entirely isolated from everything else: they are somehow interconnected with a wider context which he called the "Higher Evolution." It is most probably at the fourth level of Going for Refuge that this interconnection begins to be felt. At this point, the desire for enlightenment appears to require less efforts; at this level, the act of commitment has become so to speak a second nature for the aspirant to enlightenment.

The difference between Suzuki's and Sangharakshita's view of the notion of desire is basically that, for the former, desire is exclusively a voluntary act requiring intense efforts and motivation. It is the brute force of the will allowing one to cross the sea of *samsāra*. Using an adapted version of the well-known simile of the raft, desire would be so to speak the fuel of its engine. In this circumstance, the idea of desire and that of motivation are almost synonymous: the desire for enlightenment of the bodhisattva is his major factor of motivation, it is that which is chiefly responsible for his spiritual progression. For Sangharakshita, on the other hand, desire seems, in the course of the spiritual progression, to detach itself from the necessity of motivation. Using the same modified simile of the raft, an engine is still needed to move it across the sea of *samsāra*, but, at some point, it enters into a stream or is pushed by a strong wind so that its speed is maintained or even increased and above all, it now requires less fuel to progress along its path. This means that progression on the path is not always directly proportional to the intensity of efforts put in by the aspirant to enlightenment. Sangharakshita's view of

the desire for enlightenment is in a way a little bit more sophisticated than that of Suzuki. As will be seen later, I am of the opinion that it is also more faithful to the nature of the spiritual path as conceived by the Mahāyānists of India.

In the present chapter, I will therefore look at the possible connotations of the idea of desire and evaluate their appropriateness for a definition of the concept of *bodhicitta*. It is especially the notion of motivation and voluntary efforts that will be investigated. As for the description suggested by Sangharakshita, I will show that the term *bodhicitta*, when taking into consideration the various contexts in which it is used, also carries a certain ambiguity as to its significance and its role within the spiritual path of the bodhisattva. Implicitly, I will be criticizing Sangharakshita's interpretation of the historical development of the concept of *bodhicitta*. For instance, I do not think that the arising of *bodhicitta*, even as the expression of a ritual of initiation, is to be assimilated to the "Cultural" Going for Refuge, i.e., to a simple social event. This means that even at the moment of initiation, *bodhicitta* could be seen as the basis of a spiritual approach in its own right and, consequently, it is not to be understood in terms of the terminology and concepts of another approach such as the practice of going for refuge. The principle underlying the spiritual development, i.e., how, in psychological terms, the experience of spiritual transformation is brought about, may be similar in both, but each approach nevertheless retains its own identity. My arguments in this regard will be expounded after I have discussed what I consider to be an appropriate soteriological context to understand the meaning of the concept of *bodhicitta*.

1. The importance and implications of the idea of motivation

When considering the idea of desire from the perspective of its motivational function, one inevitably has to discuss the notion of goal. The goal is the incentive, that for which efforts are made. It is also that which allows one to make decisions and sacrifices: some choices lead away from the goal while other bring one closer to it. This idea is quite straightforward because one can easily relate to it in usual circumstances of life.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the goal of the spiritual practice of its aspirants is *bodhi*. As mentioned earlier, this term has been translated either as *enlightenment* or *awakening*. In the literature of this tradition, one also finds expressions such as *saṃbodhi* (enlightenment), *samyaksaṃbodhi*, (perfect enlightenment) or *anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi* (unsurpassed perfect enlightenment). All these expressions refer to

the final experience of the path of the bodhisattva. In the Pāli canon, however, there seems to be a distinction between these expressions. Indeed, *bodhi* is used to express the lofty knowledge of an ascetic and the stage of enlightenment of the *paccekabuddhas*, those who attained enlightenment by their own means, whereas the final experience of the Buddha is identified as *sammāsambodhi*.⁸⁸ The relevance of this observation is that, from the early beginning of the Buddhist tradition, one began to make distinctions as to the nature and content of this final goal. The Mahāyāna Buddhists were not exempted from this trend and indeed argued that their goal was superior to that of the non-Mahāyānists. Its superiority was mainly justified on the basis of the idea of motivation.

According to the *Abhisamayalaṅkāra*, “the thought of Enlightenment is the desire for supreme Enlightenment in pursuit of the welfare of others.”⁸⁹ In the *Vajradhara sūtra*, the bodhisattva, overflowing with compassion, says:

it is my resolution to save all sentient beings, I must set all beings free, I must save all the universe, from the wilderness of birth, of old age, of disease, of being born again, of all sins, of all misfortunes, of all transmigrations, of all depths of heretical doctrine, of the destruction of the skillful Law, of the occurrence of ignorance, therefore by me all sentient beings must be set free from all the wildernesses.

*sarvasattvottāraṇapraṇidhānaṃ mama. mayā sarvasattvāḥ parimocayitavyāḥ. mayā sarvajagatsamuttārayitavyam. jātikāntārājarākāntārād vyādhikāntārāccyutyupapāttakāntārāt sarvāpattikāntārāt sarvāpāyākāntārāt sarvasaṃsārakāntārāt sarvadṛṣṭigahanakāntārāt kuśaladharmapraṇāśakāntārād ajñānasamutthitakāntārāt tad ete mayā sarvasattvāḥ sarvakāntārebhyaḥ parimocayitavyāḥ.*⁹⁰

This means that in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the desire for enlightenment is no longer sufficient; it has to be coupled with the resolution to save all beings. In this context, the desire to help all beings is the reason for which one seeks enlightenment. On the basis of this idea, a distinction was made between the aspirants engaged on the Mahāyāna path to enlightenment and those who were not. Indeed, according to Atiśa (982-1054) in his *Bodhipathapradīpa*, beings can be divided in terms of their scope or aspirations into three types: the lesser, the middling, and the superior. Those of lesser scope are those who have no religious aspirations, they strive only for their material well-being. The middlings turn their backs on the pleasures of existence and renounce immoral deeds. They act in order to bring about their own pacification, in another words in order to attain enlightenment as an *arhat*. Those of the highest, superior scope seek to bring a complete end to all sufferings of others,

⁸⁸PED, p. 491.

⁸⁹Joshi (1971), p. 72.

⁹⁰Ss, B280.

since the suffering of others is indeed their own suffering. These are the bodhisattvas.⁹¹

This distinction on the basis of aspiration seems to have been carried over in the analysis of modern Buddhist scholars. In this regard, Joshi says that, after having discussed the readiness of the bodhisattva to sacrifice himself for other people's sake,

Needless to say that such an utterly altruistic and self abnegating ideal inculcated in the theory of *bodhicitta* by the Mahayanists stands out in sharp contrast to the dictum of the Theravada tradition wherein we read: 'One should not sacrifice one's own interest, one ought to devote to one's true interest.'⁹²

The significance of this discussion concerning what I would call the political function of motivation is that, I suspect, it contributes to a tightening of the connection between desire and motivation. Among the Mahāyānists, it is believed that the desire for enlightenment, because it is motivated by the desire to help all sentient beings, renders one who entertains it a superior aspirant. As long as one wishes to justify a distinction between the paths to enlightenment, one has no choice than to maintain that desire is exclusively a voluntary act requiring intense efforts and motivation. If one were to argue, on the other hand, that the experience of enlightenment results in being beneficial to beings, then the reasons for which one seeks enlightenment become secondary and, consequently, any distinction between aspirants to enlightenment on the basis of these reasons would be senseless. In other words, if, for example, the experience of enlightenment means the realization of one's own compassionate nature and, as a result of which, one, as the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* puts it, "radiates great friendliness and compassion over all beings,"⁹³ then there is no reason to exclude the non-Mahāyāna Buddhists since they too must be endowed with this nature. As will be discussed later, I believe that this interpretation of the desire to work for the welfare of all beings is quite plausible. For the moment, I would just like to point out the fact that historical and cultural circumstances may have led one to adopt an interpretation which reinforces the link between the desire to help all other sentient beings and the motivation of the aspirant to enlightenment.

There is another reason why one may believe that the desire for enlightenment is closely related to the idea of motivation. There are many passages

⁹¹Williams (1989), p. 197.

⁹²Joshi (1971), p. 72.

⁹³Joshi (1971), p. 71.

in the Mahāyāna scriptures that stress the importance of making efforts. In the *Sikṣāsamuccaya* of Sāntideva, for example, it is said:

The bodhisattva makes a courageous effort with all the forces of his body, speech and mind in order to appease all bodily and mental sufferings of all beings, both present and future and to produce bodily and mental happiness present and to come.

bodhisattvaḥ sarvasattvānāṃ vartamānānāgata-sarvaduḥkha-daurmanasyopasāṃyā vartamāna-anāgatasukhasaumanasyotpādāya ca niḥsāthyataḥ kāya-vāri-maṇaḥ-parākramaiḥ prayatnaṃ karoti. ⁹⁴

The 24th verse of this same text cannot be more explicit:

Having first been firm with efforts in your resolution, having attended to [put in front] compassion, you should strive so that merits increase.

*kṛtvādaṃ eva yatnena vyavasāyāśayau drdhaṃ,
karuṇāṃ ca puraskṛtya yateta śubha-vṛddhaye.* ⁹⁵

Efforts are also necessary for being faithful to the resolve taken. In many passages, the bodhisattva is enjoined never to desert it. In the *Lalitavistara*, for example, it is said that bodhisattva Siddhārtha was reminded of his resolution to obtain *bodhi* and to liberate the creatures of the world from sorrow.⁹⁶ In the *Rāṣṭrapāla*, it is said that the bodhisattva must remember the following verse for the purpose of counteracting despondency:

In many millions of ages a Buddha sometimes arises, someone [who works] for the welfare of the world, a great sage. For the one who desires emancipation, now a great opportunity has come, today he must reject indolence.

*bahukalpakoṭibhiḥ kadācit buddhaḥ utpadyate lokaḥiṭaḥ maharṣiḥ, labdhaḥ 'dhunā saḥ pravaraḥ
kṣaṇaḥ 'dya tyajati pramādaṃ yadi moktukāmaḥ.* ⁹⁷

After reflecting on the meaning of this verse, he further motivates himself by saying: “thus persevere in and always strive for [or cause to happen] the Perfections, the spiritual Stages, the Powers; never relax your vigor until you are awakened to the most excellent enlightenment.” (*udyajya yathā ghaṭata nityaṃ pāramitāsu bhūmiṣu baleṣu, mā jātu sraṃsaya vīryaṃ yāvat na budhyathā pravara-bodhim.*) ⁹⁸

It is probably on the basis of such passages that Suzuki discussed the significance of the concept of *bodhicitta*. Given his background, the idea that motivation is one of the chief factors of enlightenment makes a lot of sense. For him, efforts and commitment are important for creating an open and receptive mind

⁹⁴Ss, B15.

⁹⁵Ss, B276.

⁹⁶Joshi (1971), p. 74.

⁹⁷Ss, B203.

⁹⁸Ss, B203.

in the aspirant to enlightenment. Already at the time of Confucius, one understood their importance for making the disciple receptive to the teaching. In the *Analects* (XV, 15), there is the following passage:

The Master said, If a man does not continually ask himself 'What am I to do about this? what am I to do about this?' there is no possibility of my doing anything about him.⁹⁹

This attitude has prevailed up to present day Japan and is without doubt an important component of the overall mentality of the Japanese. In this regard, it might be interesting to quote Victor Hori, a scholar of Buddhism and a Zen Buddhist monk of the Rinzai school:

An American friend of mine in Japan took lessons to learn how to dance and chant *nō*. She found that when she did not practice and walked mechanically through the steps and movements, the teacher merely said, "Fine, fine," with no further comment. But when she put effort into her chanting and danced with intensity, then the teacher suddenly came forward full of criticisms, "This is wrong, that is no good, do that again but slower," and so on.¹⁰⁰

In short, one can say that the desire to learn is what predisposes one to mystical experience or mental transformations.

This link between motivation and receptivity or openness of the mind is in fact not exclusive to the Far East. In Indian spiritual systems one finds the idea of *adhikāra* (qualifications). Earlier, I mentioned the doctrine of *upāya* which advocates the idea that teachings are adapted to the mental dispositions of the people; the idea of *adhikāra* is exactly the opposite: in order to be imparted with certain teachings, a aspirant must have reached a certain spiritual stage or level. Here the onus for establishing contact is on the aspirant and not on the teacher as it is the case in the context of the doctrine of *upāya*. In the context of Indian Buddhism also, there is the conception of *gotra* (family, predisposition). It is said, for example, in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, a text of the fourth century CE which describes the various stages of the spiritual progression of the bodhisattva, that one has to belong to the *gotra* of Gautama Buddha, i.e., to be his spiritual son and heir, before *bodhicitta* may arise. The notion of *gotra* is, however, not common to all descriptions of the bodhisattva's path. Śāntideva, for example, does not attach great importance to it.

The idea of prerequisites for spiritual experience could be the topic of an important research that would exceed the scope of this thesis. In many instances in

⁹⁹Arthur Waley, trans., *Analects of Confucius*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1938. Quoted from Hori (1994), p. 16.

¹⁰⁰Hori (1994), p. 16.

the development of the Buddhist tradition, such prerequisites have been so to speak institutionalized by means of rituals or by being included in systematized descriptions of the spiritual path leading to those experiences. In other cases, these prerequisites were only describing mental attitudes that the aspirant must entertain at certain moments of his spiritual career. Despite the wide variety of prerequisites, motivation remains nevertheless their common denominator: it is on account of motivation that one can acquire them and go through the different stages of any given spiritual path.

To sum up the present discussion on the role of motivation, it appears that there are two main reasons why the concept of *bodhicitta*, which is the desire for enlightenment for the sake of all beings, may be considered exclusively as a motivational factor. The first refers to the fact that the Mahāyāna tradition tried to distinguish its ultimate experience from that of other Buddhist traditions; this is what I called the political function or significance of the idea of motivation. The second reason has more to do with its spiritual function. The concept of *bodhicitta* seemed to have been the privileged means to express this idea of motivation. On the one hand, there is a certain understanding of the spiritual path in which motivation plays a key role and, on the other hand, one has a concept very prominent in Mahāyāna Buddhism which is defined as desire for enlightenment. It becomes therefore obvious that *bodhicitta*, being essential to the practice of the bodhisattva, is to be viewed as a motivational factor.

The issue I would like to address now is whether the concept of *bodhicitta* has to be understood in terms of the idea of motivation. I do not want to deny the importance of this idea but rather evaluate its exact nature in the context of what I believe to be an appropriate view of the spiritual path of the bodhisattva. Like the laws of Newton which have been integrated into Einstein's theories of relativity, I believe that the idea of motivation could be seen from the perspective of a wider context thereby reassessing its character and its significance.

It has been shown earlier that, on account of the idea of motivation, the term *citta* in the compound *bodhicitta* has been interpreted as desire, i.e., as having exclusively a conative connotation. In the Mahāyāna sources, however, when it comes to expressing the desire or the resolution of the *bodhisattva*, apart from the context of the expression *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksaṃbodhau cittam utpādam*, (the arising of the thought (desire) of unsurpassed perfect enlightenment), the term *citta* is, as far as I know, never employed. Instead, one encounters the terms *praṇidhāna* as in *sarvasattva-uttāraṇa-praṇidhānam mama* (it is my resolution to save all

creatures),¹⁰¹ *kāma* as in *yadi moktu-kāmaḥ* (if one wishes release),¹⁰² *artha* as in *tasmāt mayā bodhi-arthikena bhavitavyam* (Therefore I must be desirous of enlightenment),¹⁰³ *āśaya* and *adhyāśaya* as in *āśayu yeṣa prasādivisuddhaḥ teṣa adhyāśayu uttama śreṣṭhaḥ* (For the one who has intention there is complete composure; for the one who has determination there is the very best desire)¹⁰⁴ or *abhilāṣa* as in *ayaṃ ca saṃvaraḥ strīṇāṃ api mṛdukleśānāṃ bodhyabhilāṣacittānāṃ labhyate* (And this discipline is attained even in the case of women, when their mental tendencies are soft and their minds are characterized by a longing for enlightenment).¹⁰⁵ The last example is not without interest because of the simultaneous occurrence of the words *citta* and *abhilāṣa* in the compound *bodhi-abhilāṣa-citta*. This compound is in fact made up of two other compounds: the first is *bodhi-abhilāṣa* which is a *tatpuruṣa* (desire for enlightenment) and the second, *abhilāṣa-citta*, could be viewed as a *upamāna-pūrvapada-karmadhāraya* (a *karma-dhāraya* compound in which a word expressive of the standard of comparison is compounded with another denoting the common quality or ground of comparison).¹⁰⁶ In this case, the term *abhilāṣa* denotes a quality or characteristic of *citta*. The meaning of this compound could then be: a mind whose characteristic is to desire.

The relevance of this last discussion is to draw to one's attention the fact that *citta* may refer to a state of mind having such and such quality. This renders the psychological process of desiring a little bit more complex because the desire appears not to be a willful act but rather a consequence of a certain state of mind. In other words, one does not have desires, but rather, one is in a state of mind which desires. This distinction may appear to be superfluous at first sight, but I am of the opinion that it makes all the difference in the way one understands the concept of *bodhicitta*. In this circumstance, the desire for enlightenment for the sake of all beings is not a willful act, in which case it would be viewed as a motivational factor, but it is instead a state of mind or way of being in which the will has no role to play. In the next section of this chapter, I will therefore look at the various semantic applications of the word *citta* and try to justify why it is possible that *citta* may be considered as a state of mind.

¹⁰¹Ss, B280.

¹⁰²Ss, B203.

¹⁰³Ss, B323.

¹⁰⁴Ss, B4.

¹⁰⁵Ss, B11.

¹⁰⁶HSG, p. 133.

2. Criticism of *bodhicitta* as factor of motivation

i. *Citta*

Previously, I maintained that to have a comprehensive picture of the meaning of a concept such as that of *bodhicitta*, one has to take into consideration the soteriological context in which it is articulated. Such a context, however, is never created out of a vacuum; it has itself its own history. Part of this history may be revealed by the various semantic applications its key concepts or terms have assumed or are still assuming. In the case of *citta*, for example, because it is related to a mental process which could have a direct bearing on one's state of being, a knowledge of its semantic applications may inform us on the type of means required or appropriate to influence or modify this mental process.

The present discussion on the various semantic applications assumed by the term *citta* is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather, it is to be considered as an attempt to trace back the origin of the various meanings it has assumed in the course of its history of application and evaluate the consequences this may have for understanding of the expression *bodhicitta*.

In the first chapter, while discussing the possible interpretations of the term *bodhicitta*, I mentioned that *citta* could have either a cognitive or a conative connotation. These two interpretations are well supported in most of the philosophical traditions of India including Buddhism. From the point of view of its etymology, these two meanings are also confirmed. Indeed, the word *citta* comes from the verbal root $\sqrt{cit}$ which gives the verbs *cetati* (1P) and *cetayate* (10 $\bar{A}$). Both have a wide range of meanings. Apte gives the following translations among others:

1) to perceive, notice, observe; 2) to know, understand, be aware or conscious of; 3) to regain consciousness; 4) to aim at, intend, design; 5) to desire, long for; 6) to be anxious about, care for, be intent upon, be engaged in; 7) to resolve upon; 8) to appear, to shine; 9) to be regarded as; 10) to make attentive, remind of; 11) to teach, instruct; 12) to form an idea, be conscious of, understand, comprehend, think, reflect upon; and 13) to be awake.¹⁰⁷

The form *cittam*, which is the neuter past participle of the verb *cetati*, therefore, means: 1) perceiving; 2) understanding; 3) regaining consciousness; 4) aiming at, intending; 6) being intent upon, and so forth.

Sometimes, the term *cittam* is glossed by *cetanā* as in the following example taken from the *Bhāvanākrama* of Kamalaśīla: *prārthanākārā cetanā tat prañidhicittam* (the aspiration-mind is the intention which has the form of a

¹⁰⁷SED, p. 707.

desire).¹⁰⁸ According to Apte, the feminine noun *cetanā* means: 1) sense, consciousness; 2) understanding, intelligence; 3) life, vitality, animation; and 4) wisdom, reflection.¹⁰⁹ As shown in the last example, this term is also used in the sense of intention and volition.

One can therefore see that the derivatives of the verbal root *√cit* occur in relation to various mental faculties. Already in the literature of the *Rg Veda*, these derivatives assumed a wide range of meanings and connotations. According to Ross Reat, who did a study on the various psychological concepts of early Indian thought,

Used with the term *manas*, *√cit* indicates mental perception or intellectual thought. With *hrd* (heart) it refers to emotional or intuitive thought. With *√dhī* it refers to imaginative, visionary thought. With *kratu* it refers to volitional thought.¹¹⁰

The important point to notice in this analysis is that derivatives of the verbal root *√cit* denote simply mental activity in general. The purpose of this mental activity was, in the context of the Vedic culture, to maximize the efficiency of sacrifices. These sacrifices were performed to obtain boons or a place in heaven. As Reat Ross says in an attempt to summarize this world-view:

Roughly speaking, the entire human psychological complex, as represented in the *Rg Veda*, may be conceived in terms of electronic communications. In such model, *hrd* would be the transmitting room, *manas* the transmitter itself, and derivatives of *√cit* would be the various forms of current and electrical activity in the transmitter. *Kratu* would be the antenna, which focuses and directs the signal, and *dhī* would be the message sent, hopefully to be received by the Gods.¹¹¹

The Vedic tradition, however, is not the only source of meaning for the various concepts used in the context of the philosophical and psychological thinking of India. One has also to take into consideration the non-Vedic, or more specifically, the yogic world-view. Yoga is one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. It has been systematized by Patañjali (c. second century BCE) in a text called *Yoga Sūtra*. According to him, Yoga is a methodical effort to attain perfection, through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical.¹¹² The very idea of controlling human nature already sets this approach apart from the Vedic system of thought. Probably before the arrival of the Vedic culture in India there were ascetics strolling the country in search of immortality and

¹⁰⁸Tucci (1980), p. 193.

¹⁰⁹SED, p. 708.

¹¹⁰Ross Reat (1990), p. 107.

¹¹¹Ross Reat (1990), p. 142.

¹¹²Radhakrishnan (1973), p. 453.

permanent happiness, something that the Gods themselves would never be able to grant. Indeed, the favors granted by the gods were usually proportional to the extent of the sacrifices. To obtain immortality, i.e., an unlimited stay in heaven, would therefore require an unlimited sacrifice or a sacrifice whose extent is beyond imagination.¹¹³ The Yoga system, on account of its goal and aspiration, could therefore be considered as an offshoot of this tradition of seekers.

At the very outset, Yoga is declared to be the restraining of the modifications of *citta* (*yogaś cittavṛtti-nirodhah.*).¹¹⁴ In this context, *citta* is the mind-stuff that undergoes modifications or fluctuations when it is affected by objects through the senses. These modifications are called *vṛtti* and may be likened to the impressions left on material like wax when some force acts upon it. These impressions are left on the *citta* and as such are called *vāsanās*. Another metaphor used to describe *citta* is that of the lake whose surface is agitated by the strong winds which are the *vṛtti*. When the disturbing winds are absent, one can see through the calm surface of the lake which is, in the case of Yoga, the pure Self or *puruṣa*.

One can see from these two metaphors that the basic image behind the notion of *citta*, in the context of the Yoga system, is that of a repository of habits, memories and dispositions acquired through one's experience with the phenomenal world. This idea of repository is not without precedents in the Buddhist tradition.

In this tradition, there is the concept of *viññāṇa* (Pāli) or *vijñāṇa* (Sanskrit) that seems to play this role. Not the *viññāṇa* that arises from contact of the senses and sense-objects, but rather, the one which appears as a member of the doctrine of dependent origination¹¹⁵ (*pratītyasamutpāda*). According to this doctrine, the karma-formations (*saṃskāra*), which have been accumulated in the preceding lives due to ignorance, condition the arising of a new consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in the womb, on the basis of which a new psycho-physical complex (*nāma-rūpa*), equipped with the six-senses-bases, comes into being. Contact between any of these and sense-objects produces feeling, which in turn leads to craving. This *viññāṇa* was considered as a transmigratory entity and could be compared to a stream or a series of *viññāṇa*-moments (*kṣaṇa*) that is modified according to the nature of its relationship with the environment, i.e., the objects of consciousness.

¹¹³Lambert Schmithausen, unpublished notes.

¹¹⁴Y.S, I. 2 [Quoted in Kulkarni (1989), p. 64].

¹¹⁵This doctrine is also called *co-dependent origination*. Western translators of Buddhist scriptures have used both translations without much consideration for their semantic implications in Western philosophy.

This attempt to account for the continuity between one's actions and the ripening of their consequences has been thus formulated by the Theravādins. There are also other attempts within the Buddhist tradition. Some avoided altogether the concept of *viññāna*—this is the case of the Vātsīputrīyas with their idea of the indefinable person (*pudgala*)—while others, like the Yogācārins and their concept of substratum consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), made *vijñāna*, not only the repository of one's past actions but also of the whole phenomenal world. Despite these variations, however, the basic understanding behind this idea of repository remains nevertheless the same: the necessity to explain why one acts or reacts in such and such a way given the situation in which one finds oneself. This question, referring to Charles Adams' definition of the soteriological system, addresses the human problem or the human situation that calls for a response. Thus, given the above-mentioned assumptions, the answer to this question is: it is because one has accumulated and reinforced certain dispositions and tendencies, that one has such and such responses. And these tendencies have to be stored somewhere to produce their effects later; hence the importance of the idea of repository.

In Buddhism, the term *citta* also seems to play this function of repository. According to W. S. Karunaratna, "as a psychic factor *citta* carries the traces of the experiences of the individual. *Citta*, therefore, may be viewed as the storehouse of each man's psychic heritage transmitted through the cycle of birth and rebirth."¹¹⁶ As such, this term is more or less synonymous with *mano* (mind), but often used much like *heart* in English.¹¹⁷ The word *heart* usually refers to the whole personality including intellectual as well as emotional functions or traits. It is also considered as one's innermost character, feelings, or inclinations.¹¹⁸

The term *citta* by itself appears to have no moral connotation; it is rather the words it is associated with, as mentioned above, that give its quality. For example, we are told in the *Bodhisattvaprātimokṣa* that the bodhisattvas do not have a despondent mind (*līnacittaṃ bodhisattvānāṃ na saṃvidyate*),¹¹⁹ or, in the *Ratnamegha Sūtra*, that he does not cause an angry thought to arise (*na pratigha-cittam utpādayati*).¹²⁰ These tendencies of the mind are not necessarily negative; they could be beneficial as well. A bodhisattva, for example, should have a mind

¹¹⁶Nanayakkhara (1961), p. 172.

¹¹⁷Walshe (1987), p.540 (n. 55).

¹¹⁸Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1977), p.528.

¹¹⁹Ss, B20.

¹²⁰Ss, B135.

desiring the practice of the bodhisattvas (*bodhisattvacaryābhilaṣitacitta*),¹²¹ a mind ready and eager [to respond] to all requests (*sarvayācanakābhilaṣitacitta*)¹²² or a mind which has no consideration for his own body (*svaśarīra-anapekṣa-citta*).¹²³ Again, the term *citta* seems to refer to a state of mind which has such and such qualities, one of which could be the tendency to desire or even to abandon as in “on account of the force or impulse of a mind [inclined] towards renunciation, there is abandonment of all possessions” (*tyāgacittavegāt utsrṣṭa-sarvaparigrahaḥ*).¹²⁴

Coming back to the analysis of the term *citta* in the context of the discussion on the concept of *bodhicitta*, it appears that these two semantic applications, namely mental activity and repository, have not really been taken into consideration. When trying to decide whether *citta* is either cognitive or conative, one has assumed that it refers exclusively to a mental activity. One has failed to notice that this term, like a few other terms of Buddhism, has so to speak an active connotation as well as a passive one. To have a clearer idea of what is meant by these two connotations comprised in one term, let us take, for example, the word *saṃskāra*.

According to Ross Reat, this term, as used in Buddhist psychology, represents a concept unfamiliar to the Western mind.¹²⁵ In this regard, it is said in the Pāli-English dictionary, that it is

one of the most difficult terms in Buddhist metaphysics, in which the blending of the subjective-objective view of the world and of happening, peculiar to the East, is so complete, that it is almost impossible for Occidental terminology to get at the root of its meaning in a translation.¹²⁶

It has been difficult to translate in European languages because its semantic applications cover ideas that are normally considered distinct in Western thinking. On the one hand, *saṃskāra* is characterized by the tendency to accumulate or to build up. This is what may constitute memory. Like memory, it has the function to store elements of past experiences. On the other hand, *saṃskāra* accounts for the basic mechanism of *karma*, i.e., the actions of the mind, speech and body. As such, it could be translated as *cetanā* (volition). The idea of volition, in most Western

¹²¹Ss, B24.

¹²²Ss, B24.

¹²³Ss, B24.

¹²⁴Ss, B34.

¹²⁵Ross Reat (1990), p. 320.

¹²⁶PED, p. 664.

systems of thought, is usually understood as being quite different from the process of memorizing or that of accumulation of habits.

It is for this reason that I believe that *citta* refers to a state of mind which has such and such quality, i.e., that it may respond in such and such a way depending on the situations it is confronted to. From this point of view, one may say that one has no control over *citta* as in *na cittasya vaṣī parityāgāya* (I have no control over my mind to make it give up);¹²⁷ it dictates one's behavior and makes one a passive subject. But when one takes into consideration the possibility that one of its qualities could be the desire for enlightenment, then the connotation of passiveness is no longer valid; it is somehow blended with a notion of activeness. This idea should not be, despite its unfamiliarity, so difficult to understand. One is well familiar with the phenomena of procrastination which is the constant putting off of what should be done. From the point of view of motivation, one is waiting for the moment when the interest or the will to do what should be done arises. This attitude is quite different from that where one forcibly goes against one's emotions and mood to do what is to be done.

While presenting D.T. Suzuki's understanding of the concept of *bodhicitta*, I mentioned that, according to this author, this concept should really be considered as the abbreviation of the expression *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādam* which means, according to him, "to cherish a spiritual aspiration for the attainment of supreme enlightenment."¹²⁸ He also argued that the connection between *bodhicitta* and *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādam* was later forgotten so that the former came to assume metaphysical connotations. His argument rests on the assumption that the word *citta*, in the compound *bodhicitta*, should in fact be understood as *citta-utpāda* which usually means *desire* or *resolution*. There has been some debate in the Buddhist tradition over this interpretation of *citta* and therefore, I would like next to consider its validity.

¹²⁷Ss, B20.

¹²⁸Suzuki (1950), p. 173.

ii. *Citta-utpāda*

Suzuki's main contention concerning the concept of *bodhicitta* is that it should not be interpreted as a thought. To translate the phrase *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādam* by "to awaken the idea of enlightenment" would be, according to him, incorrect and misleading. It appears that Suzuki is mainly criticizing the interpretations of the Chinese translators who also coined the phrase "to raise supreme-enlightenment-mind" to render *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādam*. For Suzuki,

'To awaken or raise the thought of enlightenment' means, if it means anything definite, to have the conception of enlightenment, or to find out what enlightenment means. But *citta* as we have it suggests no such intellectual content, for it is used in its conative sense.¹²⁹

On the basis of this comments, Suzuki affirms that the sense of this expression is really "cherishing the desire for enlightenment."¹³⁰

To support his interpretation, Suzuki argues that *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādam* is equivalent to *anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim ākāṅkṣamāṇa* (longing for supreme enlightenment), or to *anuttarāyāṃ samyak-sambodhau praṇidhānaṃ parigṛhya* (cherishing an intense desire for supreme enlightenment). Both these passages are taken from the Lotus Sutra.¹³¹ He also quotes passages from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* where one finds expressions which convey the same idea: *vipula-kṛpa-karaṇa-mānasa paryeṣase 'nuttamāṃ bodhim* (raising a far-reaching compassion, you seek for supreme enlightenment), or *ye bodhiprāthayante* (those who desire enlightenment).¹³² His most important argument is probably the idea that the phrase *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādam*, the abbreviated form of which is *bodhicittotpāda*, is also equivalent to *anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau praṇidadhanti*.¹³³

The term *praṇidadhāti* should be given special consideration according to Suzuki. It means "to give one's entire attention to something," that is, "to resolve firmly to accomplish the work." He further explains that:

The Bodhisattva's *Praṇidhāna* is his intense determination to carry out his plan of universal salvation. Of course, it is necessary here to have an adequate knowledge of a full intellectual grasp of the work he intends to accomplish, but a *Praṇidhāna* is far more than this. Mere

¹²⁹Suzuki (1950), p. 173.

¹³⁰Suzuki (1950), p. 172.

¹³¹*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, edited by Kern and Nanjo, p. 414 (Suzuki (1950), p. 171.

¹³²Suzuki (1950), p. 171.

¹³³Suzuki (1950), p. 171. See note 7 for the origin of this expression.

intellectuality has no backing of the will-power; mere idealism can never be an efficient executive agency. The *Cittotpāda* is a form of *Praṇidhāna*.¹³⁴

That is why *citta*, i.e., *citta-utpāda* is not “arising of a thought” but rather “cherishing of a desire.” Consequently, “*Cittotpāda* is a volitional movement definitely made towards the realization of enlightenment.”¹³⁵

This interpretation of the expression *citta-utpāda* seems to be well supported in Sanskrit literature. According to the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit dictionary, it is rendered as production of intention, resolution as in *antaśa ekacittotpādenāpy anumoditam idaṃ sūtram* (by even so much as a single deliberate mental act this sūtra has been approved),¹³⁶ or *śobhanas te citta-utpādaḥ* (that is an excellent resolution of yours, a fine idea).¹³⁷ In Pāli, this expression is also translated as intention or desire as in *theyya cittaṃ uppādesi* (he had the intention to steal).¹³⁸ In the context of the Mahāyāna literature, it has been pointed out “that most of the philosophers who accept the definition of *bodhicitta* as one leaning towards aspiration, wish and devotion, prefer to use the term *cittotpāda* instead of *bodhicitta*.”¹³⁹ In particular, this is the case of the Buddhist philosophers Vasubandhu and Asaṅga.

According to Tsong-kha-pa, a Tibetan scholar of the 14th century (c. 1357-1419), Asaṅga claimed in his *Bodhisattvabhūmi* that *cittotpāda* has to be understood as an aspiration (*praṇidhi/smon lam*). In support of his affirmation he quotes the following passage: “The bodhisattva’s best aspiration is the *citta-utpāda*.”¹⁴⁰ With regard to Vasubandhu, he says:

Vasubandhu explains the essence [of *cittotpāda*] to lie in the will, because in his commentary on the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra he states: “The will that is combined with the perception of two or three good qualities is called *cittotpāda*.”¹⁴¹

Tsong-kha-pa therefore concludes that Vasubandhu considered the very essence of *bodhicitta* as lying in the will (*cetanā/sems-pa*).¹⁴²

¹³⁴Suzuki (1950), p. 172.

¹³⁵Suzuki (1950), p. 173.

¹³⁶BHD, p. 229.

¹³⁷BHD, p. 229.

¹³⁸PED, p. 268.

¹³⁹Dargyay (1981), p. 103.

¹⁴⁰See Dargyay (1981), p. 104 for complete reference concerning this passage and Tsong-kha-pa’s argumentation.

¹⁴¹Dargyay (1981), p. 104.

¹⁴²Dargyay (1981), p. 104.

As discussed by Dargyay, Tsong-kha-pa's purpose in presenting these views on the concept of *bodhicitta* and *citta-utpāda* was to analyze their characteristic features in order to harmonize their differences. Indeed, according to Dargyay,

Within the framework of Buddhist philosophy, as reflected in the Sūtras and Sāstras, there arose a fervent discussion as to whether *bodhicitta* was originally a *citta*, a mind in its indestructable, uncreated being, or mainly a wish, an aspiration for enlightenment, that will become a mental attitude during the various stages of the Five Paths. In terms of Buddhist philosophy, the question was whether *bodhicitta* was *citta* or *caitta*.¹⁴³

The other position presented was that of Haribhadra, a Buddhist scholar of the late eighth century, of Ārya Vimuktisena and of Bhadanta Vimuktisena, both preceding Haribhadra. These three philosophers were also considered by Tsong-kha-pa. In his own words, he said:

[Referring to] what is called *cittotpāda*, Ārya [Vimuktisena] said: *citta* (mind) is consciousness (*vijñāna/rnam-par shes-pa*) and cognition (*vijñapti/rnam-par rig-pa*). And [if one asks] of what kind this consciousness will be, [one may answer] it is mind-consciousness that is supported by all wholesome phenomena. As far as the concept of *utpāda* (arising) is concerned, it points to the [hitherto] unproduced as now produced. [Such is stated] because it shows the essence of the first limitation on this phenomenon known by the mind.¹⁴⁴

Contrary to Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Suzuki, who saw in the expression *citta-utpāda* a kind of fixed expression to be understood metaphorically as a desire or a resolution, Ārya Vimuktisena considers it as being composed of two different words which ought to be interpreted literally. For him, *utpāda* means production and it refers to the bringing into existence of a consciousness (*citta*) composed of or supported, in the case of *bodhicitta*, by wholesome phenomena. In other words, the term *utpāda* identifies a result, something which has been brought into being and as such, it could be used independently to express the production or the bringing into function of any kind of mental activity. For example, it is used to express feelings as in *asmin putre 'tiriktataraṃ prema-utpādayāmi* (I feel excessive affection for this son),¹⁴⁵ or as in *spṛhām utpādayanti* (they cause arrogance to arise).¹⁴⁶ It could also refer to the process of thinking as in *punaraparaṃ bodhisattvaḥ sarvadharmeṣu parakīya-saṃjñām utpādayati* (Again, the bodhisattva, in relation to all things, thinks that this belongs to others).¹⁴⁷ The point of this discussion is to say that the use of the term *utpāda* is not to be viewed as a figure of speech but rather as a

¹⁴³Dargyay (1981), p. 103.

¹⁴⁴E: Dargyay (1981), p. 105.

¹⁴⁵Ss, B19.

¹⁴⁶Ss, B90.

¹⁴⁷Ss, B18.

description of a mental process. Haribhadra, in his *Spuṭa-arthā*, gives us some details about the significance of this understanding in relation to *citta-utpāda*:

If the very wish for full enlightenment is a mental factor (*caitta/sems-las byung-ba*) striving for wholesome phenomena, then isn't it right to say that *cittotpāda* arises as a mind endowed with a very noble object? And what is the way the *cittotpāda* arises? That's true, but if one strives for the sign of wholesome phenomena, then the *bodhicitta* arises, bringing about the fruit from the cause. This is because one must acknowledge that all propitious phenomena of the Bodhisattva will be enlarged by this striving.¹⁴⁸

This means that, as Dargyay puts it, "*citta* becomes modified by the altruistic and ethical impact of the Bodhisattva, and that afterwards this *citta* is called *cittotpāda* or 'Rising Mind,' i.e., rising for the attainment of enlightenment. This moment of ethical willing and altruistic aspiring is the basis for calling *citta-utpāda* or *bodhicitta* a wish, will or aspiration, though its real nature does not consist of any wishful attitude."¹⁴⁹

This is what I argued when discussing the semantic applications of the concept of *citta*. In this circumstance, motivation, if one wants to assign it some role, could be used to bring about a state of mind whose qualities are conducive to the attainment of the final goal. This role could be shared by other factors, for example, a contact with a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitra*) or even some kind of grace from the Buddhas. Beyond this, however, it is the state of mind one is in that does the work. What is assumed here is the notion of intermediary stage where the parameters of the path to enlightenment are radically transformed. This stage is like a place to be. Indeed, in the *Gaṇḍavyūya*, it is compared to a city (*cittanagara*).¹⁵⁰ As such, it has to be protected (*cittanagarapālana*), beautified (*cittanagarālaṃ-kāra*), cleansed (*cittanagarapariśodhana*), developed (*cittanagaravivardhana*), etc.¹⁵¹ This idea of stage is, in my opinion, of utmost importance for the understanding to the concept of *bodhicitta* and consequently, it will be further discussed in this thesis.

While discussing the meaning of the term *citta-utpāda*, Suzuki explicitly said that it is to be considered as a form of *praṇidhāna*. By the same token, *bodhicitta*, being its synonym, has to be interpreted as a vow or a strong resolution. The problem with this view is that *praṇidhāna* is in fact only one aspect of *bodhicitta*. Indeed, the Mahāyāna tradition advocates the idea of a two-fold division of *bodhicitta*. According to the *Bhāvanākrama* of Kamalaśīla, the *Sikṣasamuccaya* and

¹⁴⁸E: Dargyay (1981), p.106.

¹⁴⁹Dargyay (1981), p. 106.

¹⁵⁰Ss, B122.

¹⁵¹Ss, B123.

the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva, there are two types of *bodhicitta*. The first type is called *bodhipraṇidhicitta* and has been translated as “the resolution to attain Bodhi”¹⁵² and the second, *bodhiprasthānacitta*, as the “actual march towards the attainment of Bodhi.”¹⁵³ From the point of view of an understanding of *bodhicitta* as desire, this two-fold division has been interpreted in the following manner: the bodhisattva must first resolve to become awakened then implement his resolve. In the light of what has been suggested in the analysis of the expressions *citta* and *citta-utpāda*, I am of the opinion that it could be interpreted otherwise. This is what I would like to consider next.

iii. The two types of *bodhicitta*

The first reference to this two-fold division or the two types of *bodhicitta* seems to have been in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, a Mahāyāna text which precedes the works of Kamalaśīla and Śāntideva. In this text, we are told that it is very difficult to find in the world beings who have made the resolve for supreme enlightenment; and those who are proceeding towards it are even more rare to come by (*durlabhāḥ kulaputra te sattvāḥ sattvaloke ye anuttarasyāṃ samyaksamodhau praṇidadhati, atas te durlabhatarāḥ sattvāḥ ye 'nuttarāṃ samyasambodhim abhisamprasthitāḥ*).¹⁵⁴ For the purpose of the present discussion, let us look at what Śāntideva is telling us about the two types of *bodhicitta*. In chapter one of his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, he says:

Then, in short, one should know that *bodhicitta* is two-fold: the mind having made a resolve for *bodhi* and the actual proceeding towards *bodhi*.
tad bodhicittam dvividham vijñātavyam samāsataḥ,
*bodhipraṇidhicittam ca bodhiprasthānam eva ca.*¹⁵⁵

This two-fold division of *bodhicitta* is made more explicit with a simple analogy:

Just as a difference is perceived between the one who desires to go and the one who is going, so a difference between both [types of *bodhicitta*] is acknowledged by the wise men.
gantukāmasya gantuḥ ca yathā bhedaḥ praṇīyate,
*tathā bhedaḥ 'nayoḥ jñeyoḥ yāthāsamkhyena paṇḍitaiḥ.*¹⁵⁶

As mentioned above, one way of interpreting the two-fold division of *bodhicitta*, is to say that first there is a wish for enlightenment, then the making of

¹⁵²Joshi (1971), p. 73.

¹⁵³Joshi (1971), p. 73.

¹⁵⁴G.Vy, S492 Prajñākaramati quotes this verse in his commentary of verse I-15 in the BCA with some differences: *durlabhāḥ kulaputra te sattvāḥ sattvaloke ye anuttarasyāṃ samyaksamodhau cittam praṇidadhati, tato 'pi durlabhatamāste sattvāḥ ye anuttarāṃ samyasambodhim anuprasthitāḥ iti.*

¹⁵⁵BCA, I-15.

¹⁵⁶BCA, I-16.

efforts for its implementation. From the point of view of ordinary experience, this is common sense, but from the perspective of spiritual endeavor, this situation is a little bit odd. Why would someone, for example, put a lot of energy in strengthening his desire and commitment then fall short of implementing it? Such a person is comparable to a racing car spinning its tires in order to increase adherence to the road and which, with all the fuel consumption it requires and the noise and smoke it causes, never crosses the starting line. Either this person is not serious in his decision or he is dishonest. This is how one would judge a person which says “I am going to that place” but never leaves for it.

There are therefore a few problems with the above-mentioned interpretation of the two-fold division of *bodhicitta*. First of all, it diminishes the value of the first type of *bodhicitta*. As Sharma says, commenting on this last verse, “the secret of the attainment of bodhi is the practice aspect and not merely a pious wish.”¹⁵⁷ What Sharma implies is that a pious wish achieves practically nothing; this is, however, contrary to what the scriptures are telling us. In the *Maitreyavimokṣa*, for example, we are told the following:

Verily, my son, even when broken the diamond-gem is distinguished above all others and is superior to a golden ornament, and as such, does not lose the name of diamond-gem; it averts all poverty. So also the diamond of the production of the thought of perfect enlightenment, even though divorced from good intention and conduct, is superior to the gold ornament of the virtues of mere *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, and does not lose the name of thought of enlightenment. *tadyāpi nāma kulaputra bhittam api vajratnam sarvaprativiśiṣṭam suvarṇālaṃkāraṃ abhibhavati, vajratnāma ca na vijahāti, sarvadāridryaṃ vinivartayati, evam eva kulaputra, āśaya-pratipattibhinnaṃ api sarvajñatācittotpādavaḥ vajratnam sarvaśravakapratyekabuddha-guṇasuvārṇālaṃkāraṃ abhibhavati, bodhicittanāma ca na vijahāti, sarvasaṃsāradāridryaṃ vinivartayati iti.* ¹⁵⁸

Concerning this view, Sāntideva adds: “even without practice the thought of enlightenment is to be recognized as a helpful thing” (*vināpi caryayā bodhicittam upakāraṃ iti jñātavyam*). ¹⁵⁹

The interpretation suggested above also assumes the idea that a thought, if not carried out, has no spiritual value. Sharma, for example, still commenting on the passage just quoted from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, says that “he who thinks, stays; he who ventures, reaches.”¹⁶⁰ Suzuki seems to argue along the same lines when he says: “‘to conceive an idea’ or ‘to awaken a thought’ is one thing, and to carry it out in

¹⁵⁷Sharma (1990), p. 15.

¹⁵⁸Ss, B9.

¹⁵⁹Ss, B9.

¹⁶⁰Sharma (1990), p. 15.

action is quite another, especially when it is carried out with intensity and fervency.”¹⁶¹ In a way, the present problem concerning this interpretation of the two-fold division of *bodhicitta* is directly related to its underlying philosophical presuppositions: an intention must be supported by motivation in order to be effective. Again, there are passages in the Mahāyāna literature that seem to suggest another view on the significance of thoughts in the process of spiritual development.

In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, it is said: “The wise man must always be thinking: ‘May I and all other beings become a Buddha!’ This is for me the means to attain all happiness” (*cinteya sadā vicakṣaṇaḥ bhaveya buddhaḥ ahaṃ ime ca sattvāḥ. etat ca me sarvasukhopadhānam.*).¹⁶² The most explicit examples confirming the spiritual importance of just having a thought are probably related to the recollection of the Buddhas and their qualities. In the *Dharmasaṅgīti Sūtra*, it is mentioned that:

Thus he calls them [the Blessed Buddhas] to mind; and thus having called them to mind he remains established in his “vision” of them in order to develop their virtues. This is what is meant by calling the Buddhas to mind.

*evaṃ tān anusmarati. evaṃ ca tān anusmṛtya tadguṇāpariṇiṣpattiyartham smṛtim upasthāpayati. tad ucyate buddhānusmṛti iti.*¹⁶³

In fact, this practice of recollecting the Buddhas and their qualities (*buddha-anusmṛti*) is one important spiritual approach developed by the Buddhists. I would like to deal with it in more details later in this thesis. For the moment, I just want to challenge the idea that a thought alone has no spiritual value, as assumed or implied by the above-mentioned interpretation of the two-fold division of *bodhicitta*.

There is probably a second problem concerning this interpretation which is worth noting. This interpretation presupposes two decisions: the first is to attain enlightenment and the second is to actually move towards it. Such a distinction is possible if one views the first decision, granted that it is done in good faith, as a kind of ritual which has lost, in the course of time, its spiritual significance and the second, as the expression of a true wishful attitude. According to the Mahāyāna tradition, a bodhisattva is called upon taking a series of vow and making a few commitments in front of a suitable master and the community he is about to join.

¹⁶¹Suzuki (1950), p. 172.

¹⁶²Ss, B354.

¹⁶³Ss, B322.

There is an elaborate ceremony surrounding this event whose climax is, according to Atiśa, for the aspirant to repeat three times the following vow:

May all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas abiding in the ten directions deign to take notice of me!
May the master deign to take notice of me! I, named so-and-so, [...] generate a thought towards
supreme, right and full great awakening.¹⁶⁴

It is usually taken for granted that such a vow is a sufficient condition to engage into the practice of the bodhisattva unless, as observed by Sangharakshita, this ritual of the arising of *bodhicitta* assumed only a social meaning. In such a case, one has to renew one's commitment, usually at a personal level. As mentioned before, it is possible that a bodhisattva relaxes his commitment at some point in his career—that is why he may sometimes have to be reminded about his vow—but I do not believe that the reason for advocating a two-fold division of *bodhicitta* was meant to draw one's attention to this type of situation. As far as I know, these two ideas are never presented or discussed together in the Mahāyāna literature. It is also probably anachronistic to see in the treatment of the two-fold division of *bodhicitta* a discussion related to the degeneration of the ritual surrounding the arising of *bodhicitta*.

This interpretation of the two-fold division of *bodhicitta* rests on the understanding of the words *praṇidhi* and *prasthāna*. The word *praṇidhi* has been rightly rendered by desire or resolution. In this regard, one may recall the following passage from the *Sikṣāsamuccaya*: *sarvasattvottāraṇa-praṇidhānaṃ mama* (it is my resolution to save all creatures).¹⁶⁵ What I would like to discuss here is not the meaning of this word proper, but rather the significance of the fact that it is combined with the term *citta*. Earlier in this chapter, while discussing the simultaneous occurrence of the words *citta* and *abhilāṣa* in the compound *bodhi-abhilāṣa-citta*, I maintained that the compound *abhilāṣa-citta* could be viewed as a *upamāna-pūrvapada-karmadhāraya* where the term *abhilāṣa* denotes a quality or characteristic of *citta*. I am of the opinion that this reasoning also applies to the expression *bodhipraṇidhicittaṃ*. Indeed, Prajñākaramati, in his commentary of the verse introducing the two-fold division of *bodhicitta*, says: *yaccittaṃ praṇidhānād utpannaṃ bhavati tat praṇidhicittaṃ* (The mind which arises on account of entreaty that is the resolution-mind).¹⁶⁶ Again, the use of the word *utpanna* seems to point

¹⁶⁴Williams (1989), p. 202.

¹⁶⁵Ss, B280.

¹⁶⁶BCA, p. 24.

out to the fact that the mind described is a state of mind. Another passage, this time from the *Sikṣāsamuccaya*, seems to confirm the same idea:

They [the bodhisattvas] emit the Ray Incombustible. By this, vicious persons incited become established in purity of conduct, and they conceive the thought 'May I become a Buddha.' In the skillful and purified path of action, they undertake good conduct by solemn vow, which awakens the minds of many persons: thus the Ray Incombustible is accomplished.
*niṣparidāha ya orasi raśmi tāya duṣīlaya codita sattvā,
śīlaviśuddhipratīṣṭhita bhūtvā cinta janenti bhaveya svayaṃbhūh.
karmapathe kuśale pariśuddhe śīla samādayi yadbahusattvān,
bodhayi cittasamādapanena raśmi nivṛtta sa niṣparidāhah. 167*

Regardless of the circumstances of its arising, the resolution-mind is a state of mind which is characterized by the ability to express the vow or the intention to become a Buddha. Consequently, it appears that not all states of mind are conducive to expressing this wish.¹⁶⁸ Although this state of mind does not yet proceed towards enlightenment—in this regard, Prajñākaramati says that it is *dānādi-pravṛtti-vikalaṃ* (devoid of the practice of the Perfections beginning with giving)—it has nevertheless beneficial spiritual consequences. The arising of this state of mind could be compared to an experience of conversion or “a call of God.” As will be discussed later, this experience could be provoked by one's own efforts as well as by someone else thus being also gratuitous. In this regard, one might quote the *Bodhicarya-avatāra*:

Just as lightning produces a momentary illumination during a dark night, so also sometimes people may have a brief thought for what is beneficial through the power of the Buddhas.
*rātrau yathā meghaghanāmdhakāre vidyutkṣaṇaṃ darśayati prakāśaṃ,
buddhanubhāvena tathā kadācit lokasya puṇyeṣu matiḥ kṣaṇaṃ syāt. 169*

Despite its spiritual significance, however, this event is not yet enlightenment: another spiritual event has to occur and I believe that it is what is implied or referred to by the expression *bodhiprasthānam*.

In the previous discussion, the term *prasthāna* has been rendered by march towards or proceeding. These translations are supported by the lexicographers such as Apte who gives: 1. going or setting forth, departure, moving, walking; 2. coming to; 3. sending away, despatching; and 4. procession, march.¹⁷⁰ This word comes from the root *pra+√sthā* which gives the verbs *prasthīyate* (1Ā) and *prasthāpayate* (10Ā).

¹⁶⁷SS, B336.

¹⁶⁸One could for example argue that because one is preoccupied by material considerations, he or she could never express such a desire. Probably an experience of dissatisfaction or disillusionment is first necessary to come to entertain the desire to become like a Buddha.

¹⁶⁹BCA, I-5.

¹⁷⁰SED, p. 1120.

These verbs means respectively: 1. to set out, depart; 2. to advance, march towards; 3. to walk, move; and 4. to send away, dismiss, despatch.¹⁷¹ In this circumstance, the idea of movement is not to be denied. But what is exactly the nature of this movement?

In addition to the idea of moving forward, the verb *prasthīyate* also assumes a connotation of being stationary. Indeed, it is translated as to stand firmly and to be established.¹⁷² It might therefore be plausible to interpret the term *prasthāna* as basis or perhaps point of departure. Moreover, it might be possible to relate this term to the word *upasthānam* which is used in the expression *smṛti-upasthāna*, a meditative practice common to both Mahāyāna and early Buddhism. In this context, *upasthānam* has been interpreted as foundation¹⁷³ or establishment.¹⁷⁴ According to Apte, this word usually means: 1. presence, proximity, nearness; 2. approaching, coming, appearance, coming into the presence of; 3. worshipping; 4. attending to, guarding; 5. an abode; and 6. a sanctuary or a sacred place.¹⁷⁵ In some way, *upasthānam* could be seen as a kind of refuge in which the main happening is watching or guarding. According to Gethin, who made an important study of the *bodhi-pakkhīyā dhammā* (the factors of enlightenment), “the *satipaṭṭhānas* (Pāli translation of *smṛti-upasthāna*) always constitute the *bhikkhu*’s refuge—they guard and protect him.”¹⁷⁶ It is exactly this idea of refuge that could be of some significance for one’s understanding of the second aspect of *bodhicitta*. Indeed, this image of refuge is not foreign to the concept of *bodhicitta* in general. For example, Vasubandhu, in his *Bodhicittotpādaśāstra*:

compares the production of *bodhicitta* to an ocean from which come forth all kinds of pearls and desire-yielding stones (*cintamani*). It is like the store from which spring forth gods, men, *śravakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, all moral actions, meditation and wisdom. Just as the earth provides shelter to all creatures irrespective of their good or bad nature, so also *bodhicitta* provides refuge to all beings.¹⁷⁷

I am aware of the fact that it may be difficult to establish the link between *prasthāna* and *upasthāna* from the historico-philological point of view. In this regard, Dayal said that “Buddhist Sanskrit *smṛty-upasthāna* is a wrong back-

¹⁷¹SED, p. 1120.

¹⁷²SED, p. 1120.

¹⁷³Walshe (1987), p. 335.

¹⁷⁴Gethin (1992), p. 29.

¹⁷⁵SED, p. 467.

¹⁷⁶Gethin (1992), p. 71-2.

¹⁷⁷Joshi (1971), p. 71.

formation¹⁷⁸ and for this reason “the Mahāyānists have interpreted it, not as *prasthāna*, but as *upasthāna*, and they have recklessly changed the sense in order to get an intelligible Sanskrit word,”¹⁷⁹ but his position has been refuted by Gethin thus confirming the validity of *upasthāna*.¹⁸⁰ Apart from these remarks, I have not come across any discussion on this matter. Therefore, as hinted above, it is rather from the perspective of the spiritual context that I assume a connection between these two terms. For this reason, I believe that a closer look at the semantic implications of the word *upasthāna* might give us some clues about what is going on when someone is “proceeding” towards enlightenment.

According to Buddhaghosa, one basic use of the term *satipaṭṭhāna* is that it is the field or pasture of mindfulness (*sati-gocara*). In the *Satipaṭṭhāna-samyutta*, he states:

For with regard to ‘I shall teach you, *bhikkhus*, the arising and the disappearance of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Listen, pay careful attention ... And what, *bhikkhus*, is the arising of body? Due to the arising of food there is the arising of the body...’ and so on, it is the pasture of mindfulness that is spoken of as *satipaṭṭhāna*. Likewise with regard to ‘Body is a support, it is not mindfulness; mindfulness is both a support and it is mindfulness...’ and so on. The meaning of this is that it is a resting place (*paṭṭhāna*) because [something] rests (*patiṭṭhāti*) there. What rests? Mindfulness. A *satipaṭṭhāna* is a resting-place of mindfulness. Alternatively *paṭṭhāna* is like ‘a special place’; a *satipaṭṭhāna* is a special-place for mindfulness like a place for elephants or a place for horses, etc.

*catunnaṃ bhikkhave satipaṭṭhānaṃ sanudayaṃ ca atthagamaṃ ca desissāmi. taṃ suṇātha sādhu kaṃ manasikarotha ... pe ... ko ca bhikkhave kāyassa samudayo. āhāra-samudayā kāyassa samudayo ti ādisu hi sati-gocaro satipaṭṭhānaṃ ti vuccati. tathā kāyo upaṭṭhānaṃ no sati, sati upaṭṭhānaṃ ceva sati cā ti ādisu. tass’attho patiṭṭhāti asmiṃ ti paṭṭhānaṃ. kā patiṭṭhāti. sati. satiyā paṭṭhānaṃ satipaṭṭhānaṃ padhanaṃ tñānaṃ ti vā paṭṭhānaṃ. satiyā paṭṭhānaṃ satipaṭṭhānaṃ hatthi-ṭṭhāna-assa-ṭṭhānādini viya.*¹⁸¹

There is a second use of the expression *satipaṭṭhāna*, which is, according to Gethin, the basis of nearly the whole of the *Nikāya* treatment of it. Again, Buddhaghosa says:

But with regard to ‘The four *satipaṭṭhānas* when developed and made great bring to fulfilment the seven factors of awakening’ and so on, it is just mindfulness that is spoken of as *satipaṭṭhāna*. The meaning is that it is ‘a standing forth’ (*paṭṭhāna*) because [something] stands forth (*patiṭṭhāti*); it stands near (*upaṭṭhāti*); ‘coming forth and leaping forward it proceeds’ is the meaning. A *satipaṭṭhāna* is just mindfulness in the sense of standing forth (*paṭṭhāna*). Alternatively *sati* is in the sense of remembering and *paṭṭhāna* is in the sense of standing near

¹⁷⁸Gethin (1992), p. 31.

¹⁷⁹Dayal (1932), p. 85.

¹⁸⁰See Gethin (1992), p. 31 for the details of the argumentation. Basically, according to both Childers and Geiger, the Middle Indo-Aryan *satipaṭṭhāna* does indeed represent a sandhi of *sati* and *upaṭṭhāna*.

¹⁸¹Vibh-a, 214 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 33].

(*upaṭṭhāna*). So *satipaṭṭhāna* means simply 'mindfulness and the standing forth which that [i.e., mindfulness] is'.

cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvitā bahulikā satta bojjhaṅge paripūrenti ti ādisu pana sati yeva satipaṭṭhānaṃ ti vuccati. tass'attho paṭiṭṭhāti ti paṭṭhānaṃ; upaṭṭhāti; okkantitvā pakkhanditvā pavattati ti attho. sati yeva paṭṭhānaṭṭhena sato paṭṭhānaṃ. atha vā saraṇaṭṭhena sati upaṭṭhānaṭṭhena paṭṭhānaṃ. iti sati ca sā paṭṭhānañ ca ti pi satipaṭṭhānaṃ. 182

What is interesting to notice in these two ways of understanding *satipaṭṭhāna* is first of all the use of the verb *paṭiṭṭhāti* (in Sanskrit *pratitiṣṭhati*) which means both to rest and to stand forth and secondly, the tendency to relate this verb to *paṭṭhāna*. According to Gethin, there seems to be some amount of play with the expression *satipaṭṭhāna* and it "should be regarded as arising directly out of an ambiguity inherent in Middle Indo-Aryan *satipaṭṭhāna*." 183 If one were to argue in favor of a connection between *prasthāna* and *upasthāna* from the historico-philological point of view, I believe that this is the closest one can get in terms of proof. But, as mentioned earlier, it is from the perspective of the spiritual context, that such a connection could be more convincingly established.

The explanation given by Buddhaghosa for the expression *satipaṭṭhāna* seems to suggest, as mentioned earlier, the idea of refuge but also of growth. This second idea is also related to the concept of *bodhicitta*. For example, in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, it is said:

bodhicitta, noble son, is the seed of all qualities of the Buddhas; it is the field for growing all the white qualities of all the world; it is the earth which is the refuge of all the world
bodhicittam hi kulaputra bījabhūtaṃ sarvabuddhadharmānāṃ. kṣetrabhūtaṃ sarvajagat-śukladharmavirohaṇatayā, dharanibhūtaṃ sarvalokapratiśaraṇatayā. 184

It also appears that this growth occurs by the simple fact of being there and not by doing specific actions. This is, I believe, the most relevant aspect of the *bodhiprasthānacitta*; a place where one should be so that transformation might occur. At this stage, motivation, as mentioned earlier, does not have any role to play; as a matter of fact, it might be counter-productive because it reinforces the distinction between subject and object. In a way, the idea that *citta* is a state of mind, where something is happening, avoids the pitfall of dualism. What is happening at this stage is the subject matter of the next section.

182Vibh-a, 214-5 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 34].

183Gethin (1992), p. 33.

184G.Vy, S494.

iv. *The ethical aspect of bodhicitta*

At the end of the first chapter, I mentioned that *bodhicitta*, in addition to its metaphysical connotations, was also related to what I identified as ethical realities. This means that, for example, the efforts given to help all sentient beings is not the product of a desire but rather the result of having reached a certain spiritual stage. What this means for someone to have reached such a stage seems to be described by the following wishes expressed in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

May I become the protector of those without protection, the guide for those on the path, the boat, the bridge and the causeway for those wishing to go to the other shore.

*anāthānām ahaṃ nāthaḥ sārthavāhaḥ ca yāyinām,
pārepsunām ca naubhūtaḥ setuḥ saṃkrama eva ca.*

May I become a lamp for those desiring a lamp, a bed for those desiring a bed, a slave for all beings desiring a slave.

*dīparthinām ahaṃ dīpaḥ śayyā śayyārthinām ahaṃ,
dāsārthinām dāso bhaveyaṃ sarvadehinām.*

May I become the wish-fulfilling gem, the miracle urn, a successful mantra, a universal remedy, the wish-fulfilling tree and the wish-fulfilling cow for all beings.

*cintāmaṇiḥ bhadraghataḥ siddhavidyā mahauśadhiḥ,
bhaveyaṃ kalpavṛkṣaḥ ca kāmadhenuḥ ca dehinām.* ¹⁸⁵

These verses, and many others, describe what it means to be an accomplished bodhisattva: a person who is, in every aspects of the spiritual as well as material life, of benefits for all sentient beings. There is another important idea related to the ethical aspect of *bodhicitta*. Because of its radical implications it may be viewed as a metaphor, but, giving the above understanding of the spiritual path, i.e., the progression from one state of mind to another, I believe that it could be taken literally. This idea is that of the bodhisattva's self-sacrifice.

In addition to the well-known birth-stories (*jātaka*) of the Buddha in which the latter sacrifices his body to feed some beings in need such as the female tiger and her offspring, there are many passages in the Mahāyāna literature related to the spiritual practice of the bodhisattvas that mention this idea. In the *Akṣayamati sūtra*, for example, we are told by a bodhisattva the following:

I must wear out even this body of mine for the benefits of all sentient beings. And as these four great elements, i.e., earth, air, fire and water, go to the varied enjoyment of beings through many directions and turnings, supports, appliances and uses: so I purpose to make this body of mine, itself an aggregation of the four great elements, fit for the enjoyment of all beings through the many directions and other means.

*ayameva mayā kāyaḥ sarvasattvānām kimkaraṇīyeṣu kṣapayitavyaḥ tadyathāpi nāma imāni
bāhyāni catvāri mahābhūtāni pṛthivīdhātuḥ abdhātuḥ tejodhātuḥ vāyudhātuḥ ca nānāsukhaiḥ*

¹⁸⁵BCA, III-17-19.

*nānāparyaiḥ nānārambaṇaiḥ nānopakaraṇaiḥ nānāparibhogaiḥ sattvānāṃ nānopabhogam
gacchanti, evameva ahaṃ imaṃ kāyaṃ caturmahābhūtasamucchrayaṃ nānāśukhaiḥ/
nānāparyaiḥ nānārambaṇaiḥ nānopakaraṇaiḥ nānāparibhogaiḥ vistareṇa sarvasattvānāṃ
upabhogyaṃ kariṣyāmi iti.* ¹⁸⁶

And in the *Vajradhvaṃ sūtra*, it is said:

So indeed the bodhisattva, giving himself amongst all sentient beings, by aiding all roots of happiness, regarding all creatures in their roots of happiness, offering himself as a lamp amongst all creatures...
*iti hi bodhisattva ātmānaṃ sarvasattveṣu niryātayaṃ sarvaśālamūlopakāritvena sarva-sattvānāṃ
śālamūlaiḥ śalmanvālharan prāḍīpasamamātmānaṃ sarvasattveṣu upanayaṃ ...* ¹⁸⁷

What transpires from such passages is not the idea of strong will or intense motivation on the part of the bodhisattva, but rather, an attitude of readiness. This readiness does not seem to be the result of an active effort of renunciation similar to that given by a smoker trying to stop smoking, but, on the contrary, it appears to be a natural disposition of the mind. It is something that is or ought to be done quite effortlessly. In the *Nārāyaṇa-paripṛcchā*, for example, it is said:

One must not hold to anything of which one will have no thought of renouncing, no understanding of renouncing; no such acquisition is to be acquired as to which he [the bodhisattva] would have not the heart to let go. He must not take articles of which there arises in him, when asked by beggars, the thought of possession. Nor must he hold to kingdom, enjoyments, treasure ... or anything whatever which would make the bodhisattva unready to give it up.
*na tadvastūpādātavyaṃ yasmin vastuni nāśya tyāgacittam upadyate. na tyāgabuddhiḥ krameta. na
sa parigrahītavyo yasmin parigrahe na utsarjanacittam utpādayeta, na sa parivāra
upādātavyo yasmin yācakaiḥ yācyamānasya parigrahabuddhiḥ utpadyate. na tadrāḍyaṃ
upādātavyaṃ, na te bhogāḥ, na tadratnaṃ upādātavyaṃ, yāvat na tatkiṃcid
vastūpādātavyaṃ, yasmin vastuni bodhisattvasya aparityāgabuddhiḥ utpadyate.* ¹⁸⁸

The idea of readiness is further emphasized by the fact that it is not the bodhisattva that initiates the action of giving but rather those who are in need. In the text mentioned above, one is told, for instance:

I [the bodhisattva] will give hand, foot, eye, flesh, blood, marrow, limbs great and small—my head itself to those who ask for them.
*haṣṭaṃ haṣṭārthikebhyo dāsyāmi, pādāṃ pādārthikebhyo netraṃ netrārthikebhyo dāsyāmi,
māṃsaṃ māṃsārthikebhyo, śonitaṃ śonitārthikebhyo majjānaṃ majjārthikebhyo
'nigapratyāṅga-anyaṅgapratyāṅgārthikebhyo, śiraḥ śirorthikebhyo parityakṣyāmi.* ¹⁸⁹

or “Whoever wants them [various possessions], I will give them to him for his benefit” (*api tu khalu punar yasya yasya yena yena yadyadkāryaṃ bhaviṣyati, tasmai*

¹⁸⁶Ss, B21-22.

¹⁸⁷Ss, B22.

¹⁸⁸Ss, B21.

¹⁸⁹Ss, B21.

tasmai sattvāya tattat deyam.),¹⁹⁰ and finally, “Let all sentient beings take them [parts of my body] as they require them, a hand, for such who needs it, or a foot, for such who needs it” (*yeṣāṃ yeṣāṃ sattvānāṃ yena yena arthaḥ, tattadeva me harantu, hastam hastārthināḥ, pādāṃ pādārthināḥ iti*).¹⁹¹

Given these examples, I am of the opinion that it would be wrong again to interpret the generous attitude of the bodhisattva on account of his will power or even his commitment to the final goal. Instead, his readiness to give up parts of his body for the sake of others could be explained by the fact that he or she has attained a state of mind characterized by an absence of a lack of motivation. At first sight, this might be viewed as a twisted way of describing the behavior of the bodhisattva, but it makes sense when considering that, at this stage, there is also an absence of fear.

The presence of fear is probably the most important inhibiting factor for those who are reluctant to give up any of their possessions. Indeed, in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, one is reminded that the prospect of losing one’s possessions is the cause of fear and consequently, of suffering:

“I am rich, honored and desired by many,” a person boasting thus is overcome by fear when confronted with death.

*ābhī ca satkṛtaḥ ca aham icchanti bahavaḥ ca mām,
iti martyasya samprāptāt maraṇāt jāyate bhayaṃ.*

Whenever the mind deluded by pleasure gets attached, it faces a thousand-fold suffering which it has caused.

*yatra yatra ratim yāti manaḥ sukhavimohitam,
tattat sahasraguṇitaṃ dukhaṃ bhūtvā upatiṣṭhati.*

That is why the sage ought not to desire because from desire fear is produced; this desire goes away by itself when faced with a steady mind.

*tasmāt prājño na tām icchet icchāto jāyate bhayaṃ,
svayaṃ eva ca yāti etad dhairyaṃ kṛtvā pratikṣatām.*¹⁹²

In this circumstance, fear and attachment are closely interdependent and the absence of one inevitably leads to the non-occurrence of the other. In other words, fear is a sign of attachment. For this reason, the bodhisattva, by producing a mind free from distress directed towards fearlessness, will be in a position to sacrifice parts of his body and even himself to those who ask for them or for him

¹⁹⁰Ss, B21.

¹⁹¹Ss, B21.

¹⁹²BCA, VIII-17-19.

(*aparitrasyanābhimukhena akhedacittotpādena bodhisattvaḥ svahrdayaṃ parityajan yācakebhyaḥ*).¹⁹³

If fear is a sign of attachment, then the state of fearlessness is an important characteristic of spiritual achievement. For this reason, it is something eagerly sought for:

Having transgressed your word and because now I see fear, I seek your [the bodhisattva Vajrapāni] refuge, do take away this fear immediately from me who is afraid.

*aṭṭiya yuṣmadvacanaṃ sāmpratam bhayadarśanāt,
śaraṇaṃ yāmi vo bhīto bhayaṃ nāśayata drutam.*¹⁹⁴

Who would grant me fearlessness and how will I escape from it, certainly I will cease to be, how can my mind be well-established?

*abhayaṃ kena me dattaṃ nihsariṣyāmi vā katham, avasyaṃ na
bhaviṣyāmi kasmāt me susthitaṃ manaḥ.*¹⁹⁵

The last verse is not devoid of interest because the expression *susthita* has also been translated as “peace of mind,”¹⁹⁶ “composed mind”¹⁹⁷ or even “esprit joyeux.”¹⁹⁸ The significance of this point is that the state of fearlessness, which makes it possible for the bodhisattva to have the self-sacrificing attitude, is also characterized by feelings of contentment and joy. Indeed, Śāntideva is quite clear on this point:

the bodhisattva, sacrificing his own body, offering his blood to those begging for it, he whose *bodhicitta* is delighting (*praharṣita-bodhicittaḥ*), desiring to follow the path of the bodhisattva, not casting away a thought that was made clear to him, ready and eager for all who are begging, not hated by any one who receives, practicing the path of renunciation of all the bodhisattvas, not regarding his own body because of unconquerable joy and contentment, offering the blood from his own body, devoted to the Mahāyāna path as the abode of knowledge, with mind unspoilt in the Mahāyāna path, agreeable, pleased, delighted, joyful, friendly, happy, contented, and becoming joyful, pleased, and content, sacrificing the very marrow from his body for those begging for it.

*bodhisattvaḥ svaśarīram āksipyā rudhiram anupayacchan yācakebhyaḥ praharṣita-bodhicitto
bodhisattvacaryā-abhilaṣitacitto 'paryāttaveditacittaḥ sarvayācanaka-abhilaṣitacittaḥ sarva-
pratigrāhakāvidviṣṭacittaḥ sarvabodhisattva-tyāgapratipatpratipanno 'nivartyayā
prītiprasrabdhya svaśarīra-anapekṣacittaḥ svaśarīrādrudhiram anuprayacchan jñānāyatana-
mahāyānaprasṛtacetā mahāyāna-avinīṣṭamanā iṣṭamanāstuṣṭamanāḥ prīṭamanā muditamanā
maitryamanāḥ sukhamanāḥ prasannamanāḥ pramuditapṛīṭisaumanasyajāto majjāmāṃsam sva-
śarīrāt parityajan yācanakebhyaḥ*¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³Ss, B25.

¹⁹⁴BCA, II-54.

¹⁹⁵BCA, II-60.

¹⁹⁶Sharma (1990), p. 64.

¹⁹⁷Matics (1970), p. 152.

¹⁹⁸Driessens (1993), p. 34.

¹⁹⁹Ss, B24.

The fact that feelings of joy and contentment are related to the self-sacrificing attitude of the bodhisattva is, in my opinion, another argument in favor of the idea that his behavior is possible because of having attained a state of mind where absence of a lack of motivation is one of its main characteristics and not, as assumed from the perspective of the importance of spiritual commitment, a product of strong motivation. This latter mental activity is never done without stress, as well described by Suzuki in his interpretation of the antecedents to the *Satori* experience, and for that reason, I believe that it is incompatible with feelings of contentment and joy.

To sum up the present section, I argued that the concept of *bodhicitta*, in addition to its metaphysical connotations, is also related to realities or phenomena pertaining to the behavior of the bodhisattva, i.e., to his ethic or rules of conduct. And for that reason, I am of the opinion that one has to reject any soteriological context defining the concept of *bodhicitta* as motivational, as advocated by Suzuki. In this regard, I would like to present one last passage taken from the *Maitreyavimokṣa*:

Just as, sir, the great Nāga kings with the magic jewels in their royal tiaras did not fear the enemy's approach, so also the Bodhisattvas, with those magic jewels which is the thought of enlightenment [*bodhicitta*] and great compassion, fastened in their royal tiaras, do not fear the hostile approach of misery and unhappiness.

tadyathā kulaputra cintāmaṇi-rājamukutānām mahānāgarājñām nāsti paropakrama-bhayam. evam eva bodhicitta-mahākaruṇā-cintātramaṇi-rājamukutāvabaddhānām bodhisattvānām na asti durgatyapāyapara-upakrama-bhayam iti. ²⁰⁰

It goes without saying that an interpretation of this concept as exclusively metaphysical is also to be rejected. Despite the fact I criticized Suzuki's understanding of *bodhicitta*, I am not going as far as Sangharakshita who argues that it is of no consequences in the spiritual practice of the aspirant to enlightenment. I believe that the concept of *bodhicitta* plays an important function in the practice, but what is to be determined is the exact nature of this function.

²⁰⁰Ss, B178.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of the present chapter was to discuss the idea of *bodhicitta* as factor of motivation. It also discussed the validity of assimilating *citta* to the notion of desire. The basic problem with this view is that it reinforces the distinction between subject and object. The way to avoid this problem is, I believe, to argue that *citta* is a state of mind where the desire for awakening is one of its qualities or characteristics. This means that for one to be able to express the vow to become a Buddha, it also requires a certain degree of mental transformation or a type of conversion involving a spiritual experience. This is supported by the fact that one refers most of the times to the experience of *bodhicitta* as the “arising of *bodhicitta* .” The expression *arising* is not to be taken as a simple metaphor for expressing the idea of desire or intention, but rather, it is to be understood quite literally, i.e., to mean that something arises or is produced. This model for explaining mental activity is not devoid of precedents; it confirms the basic Buddhist understanding of causation which is found in the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasam-utpāda*). Applied to *citta*, it means that when certain elements are present, a certain state of mind arises. When they are absent, it does not. In a way, *citta* is like a living being: it has to be fed to be maintained alive or it could be starved to be killed.

Suzuki, when discussing the importance of motivation, used the example of the spiritual practice based of the Zen *kōan* . The experience of *Satori* was compared to the experience of having a logical insight. In this context, the solution of the problem always remains an object of the mind, something that a subject can objectively apprehend. I do not want to deny the validity of the experience of *Satori* but rather the explanation given by Suzuki. In this regard, I would like to suggest another description which appears to me more appropriate. This description is given by Victor Hori.

At the extremity of his great doubt, there will come an interesting moment. This moment is hard to describe but on reflection afterward we might say that there comes a point when the monk realizes that he himself and the way he is reacting to his inability to penetrate the *kōan* are themselves the activity of the *kōan* working within him. The *kōan* no longer appears as an inert object in the spotlight of consciousness but has become part of the searching movement of the illuminating spotlight itself. His seeking to penetrate the *kōan*, he realizes, is itself the action of the *kōan* which has invaded his consciousness. It has become part of the very consciousness that seeks to penetrate itself. He himself is the *kōan* . Realization of this is the response to the *kōan* .²⁰¹

²⁰¹Hori (1994), p. 30.

The experience described by Hori refers to a state of mind where the distinction between subject and object has been destroyed. It is not to be interpreted, however, as a state of non-action; indeed, as mentioned in the case of *bodhiprasthānacitta*, it is a state where a lot of things are happening. It is here, for example, where the compassion of the bodhisattva has the maximum efficiency, i.e., is the most beneficial to sentient beings.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that *upasthānam* could be seen as a kind of refuge in which the main happening is watching or guarding. Taking into consideration the suggested understanding of *bodhiprasthānacitta*, it means that this state of mind, where skillful things are happening, has to be maintained and guarded against what might disrupt it. What is exactly the nature of this activity? Is it an exercise of concentration with the purpose of inhibiting all mental activity? The Buddhist literature offers many reasons that could lead one to such an interpretation as a way to understand the concept of *bodhicitta*. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter three

BODHICITTA AS OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION

In the preceding chapter, I looked at the notion of motivation and challenged the attempt to assimilate the concept of *bodhicitta* to it. The purpose was not to negate the importance of the idea of desire for the attainment of enlightenment, but rather to situate such desire in its proper perspective. For this I had to introduce the idea of subjective-objective view of the world and happening. The subjective aspect of this view was more or less related to the phenomena of memory and accumulation of habits. The objective aspect, on the other hand, accounted for mental activity in all its forms, i.e., perception, reflection, imagination and volition. Consequently, the desire for enlightenment should not be viewed as a pure act of volition in which there is a subject reaching out for an object, but rather, as the product of having reached a particular state of mind where the occurrence of this desire is possible.²⁰² Moreover, I argued that not only the desire for enlightenment but also the actual progression towards it depends on having undergone a change of state of mind. In a way, I believe that the praising of a human rebirth as opposed to a rebirth as an animal or a hungry ghost, is metaphorically describing the importance of having attained certain states of mind to be able to progress spiritually.

In this second chapter, I also said, while discussing the significance of *bodhiprasthānacitta*, that the progression towards enlightenment was characterized by an activity that could be described as watching or guarding. It remains unclear, however, what the exact nature of this activity is. Is it, for example, an effort in paying attention to things as they actually are, or is it rather the fixing of attention onto an object of the mind? In the first case, a cognitive experience is sought for

²⁰²I believe that failure to appreciate this blending of subjective-objective view may lead one to a wrong interpretation of Eastern religious concepts. The idea of *karma*, for example, may be viewed, from a perspective clearly distinguishing the subject and the object, as a confirmation of predestination and thereby negating free-will. Free-will, or to be more concrete, the notion of responsibility, has always been acknowledged in Eastern thought, but the best way to describe it, given the Eastern context, would be to say that one has to be subjected to it.

whereas in the second, one is striving at an ethical experience, i.e., a complete cessation of mental activity or a perfect peace of mind.

These two alternatives seem to reveal a major difference of perspective at the level of the soteriological context. As Paul Griffiths pointed out:

There appears to be some tension between a view which regards dispassionate knowledge of the way things are as a *sine qua non* and constituent factor of enlightenment, and a view which sees complete unconsciousness, the cessation of all mental functions, as essential to, or even identical with, enlightenment.²⁰³

Griffiths has called these two approaches to enlightenment respectively the analytic and the enstatic approach.²⁰⁴ According to him, the first approach corresponds to the practice of cultivation of insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) and the second, to the cultivation of tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvanā*). As he further explains:

the former is concerned with repeated meditations upon standard items of Buddhist doctrine—the four truths, the 12-fold chain of dependent origination and so forth—until these are completely internalized by practitioners and their cognitive and perceptual systems operate only in terms of them. Such analytical meditations are designed, then to remove standard cognitive and perceptual habit-patterns and to replace them with new ones. Furthermore, these techniques are designed to teach the practitioner something new about the way things are, to inculcate in his consciousness a whole series of knowledges that such-and-such is the case. In contrast, the enstatic meditations are designed to reduce the contents of consciousness, to focus awareness upon a single point and ultimately to bring all mental activity to a halt.²⁰⁵

According to the Hindu yoga system of thought, a system, as mentioned earlier, also aiming at the cessation of mental activity (*cittavṛtti-nirodha*), this single point upon which one's attention is focused need not necessarily be a physical object like the tip of the nose or the rhythm of the breath; on the contrary, it could also be something quite abstract like the ideas of friendliness, compassion and complacency.²⁰⁶ In fact, it appears that, from the perspective of this spiritual approach, any ideas, concepts, pieces of knowledge or beliefs could be used for the purpose of calming the mind. Even doctrines that are central to a particular tradition could be used for that purpose. In the case of the Buddhist Madhyamaka tradition, for example, it might be legitimate to interpret its key doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpādam*) in such a way. Referring to the introductory verses of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, it is said:

I salute him, the Enlightened One, the best of speakers, who preached the non-ceasing, non-arising, non-annihilating, non-permanent, non-identical, non-different, non-appearing, non-

²⁰³Griffiths (1986), p. xv.

²⁰⁴Griffiths (1986), p. 13.

²⁰⁵Griffiths (1986), p. 13.

²⁰⁶Y.S, I-33: Radhakrishnan S. (1973), p. 459.

disappearing co-dependent origination (*prafityasamutpādam*) which is the cessation of discursive thought (*prapañca-upaśamam*) and which is auspicious.
*anirōdham anutpādam anucchedam aśāvatam, anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam,
yaḥ prafityasamutpādam prapañca-upaśamam śivam, deśayāmāsa sambuddhaḥ tam vande
vandatām varam.* ²⁰⁷

In fact, given the parameters of this soteriological context, the whole endeavor of a thinker may be interpreted as a way of bringing mental activity to a complete standstill. As Richard Hayes argued, “logic for Dinnāga is not intended to serve as a means of adding to our knowledge but rather as a means of subtracting from our opinion.”²⁰⁸ This goal is, still according to Hayes, what it means to reach *nirvāṇa*.

The question I would like to address at this point is whether the concept of *bodhicitta*, in the context of the Buddhist literature dealing with the path of the bodhisattva, including the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, is used as a means of reducing all mental activity in order to subdue the mind and eventually attain a state of perfect peace of mind. In other words, similar to the idea of the stick used to stir up a fire which, by the same process, consumes itself, it could therefore be argued that *bodhicitta*, defined as the desire for enlightenment for the sake of all beings, is used as a means to bring the mind to a complete desireless state. In this circumstance, this desire to act for the benefit of all beings is not to be considered as a genuine altruistic attitude, but rather, as a skillful means (*upāya*) designed to lead one to the final goal or to the various stages of the spiritual path. There are a few clues in the above-mentioned literature that may lead one to such an interpretation. This is what I intend to consider in the next section.

1. Arguments in favor of bodhicitta as object of concentration

The first clue or argument has to do with the terminology used in relation with the concept of *bodhicitta*. As will be shown later, this terminology is not without ambiguities. The soteriological context presented above could, however, provide a way to harmonize these ambiguities.

²⁰⁷MKV, ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin, p. 11 [Kalupahana (1986), p. 101].

²⁰⁸Hayes (1988), p. 35.

i. Derivatives of the verbal root $\sqrt{\text{grah}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{dhr}}$.

In the *Sāgaramati*, one is told that the repelling of a mind perverted towards worldly objects, concentration, restraint, entire quietude and discipline is called receiving the good law (*prahrutaṃ batedaṃ kulaputra cittam viṣayeṣu. tasya yā nivāraṇā parirakṣā ekāgrībhāvo damaḥ śama upāsamo vinayaḥ, ayam ucyate saddharmaparigrahaḥ*).²⁰⁹ What is of interest here is the importance if not the predominance of the activity described by the term *parigrahaḥ*. In the *Srīmālā simḥanāda sūtra*, one reads:

All the aspirations of the Bodhisattvas, countless as the sand of the Ganges, are included and comprehended in one great aspiration —namely, the accepting (*parigrahaḥ*) of *dharma*. This, then, is the great object.

*yānyapīmāni bhagavan gaṅgānādivālikasamāni bodhisattva-praṇidhānāni, tāni ekasmin mahāpraṇidhāne upanikṣiptāni antargatāni anupratīṣṭhāni yaduta saddharmaparigrahe. evaṃ mahāviśayo bhagavan saddharmaparigraha iti.*²¹⁰

A second point to notice is its value for spiritual growth and achievement. In the *sūtra* just mentioned, it is said:

Just as, Lady, a small blow inflicted on a mighty man, if it is in a vital part, is painful and harmful, so the acceptance (*parigrahaḥ*) of *dharma*, even though it is feeble, causes pain, sorrow, and lamentation to Māra, the Evil One. I cannot regard any other good act so effective against Māra as accepting (*parigrahaḥ*) of *dharma*, be it so little.

*syādyathāpi nāma devi mahābalavato 'pi puruṣasyālpo 'pi marmaṇi prahāro vedhanīyo bhavati bādḥakaraḥ ca, evaṃ eva devi mārasya pāpīyasaḥ parīṭṭo 'pi saddharmaparigraho vedhanīyo bhavati, śokāvahaḥ paridevakaraḥ ca bhavati. na ahaṃ devi anyam ekam api dharmam kuśalam samanupaśyāmi mārasya pāpīyasa evaṃ vedhanīyam śokāvaham paridevakaram ca yathā ayam alpo 'pi (saddharmaparigraha iti).*²¹¹

One can read further:

Just as Sumeru, the King of Mountains, shines forth supreme in loftiness and extent, surpassing all mountains, so when a follower of the Mahāyāna, having no regards for life and limbs, with a non-grasping mind accepts the *dharma*, this action outweighs all the good principles of the Mahāyānists who are careful for their life and limbs, and have newly set forth on the new [Mahāyāna] path.

*syādyathāpi nāma devi sumeruḥ parvatarājaḥ sarvān kulaparvatān abhibhavannabhirocate ca samabhirocate coccatvene vipulatvena ca, evaṃ eva devi mahāyānikasya kāyajīvitānirapekṣasya ne cāgrhītacittasya saddharmaparigraho navayānasamprasthitānām api kāyajīvitasāpekṣānām mahāyānikānām sarvān kuśalān dharmānabhibhavati iti ādi.*²¹²

Judging from the last passage, the idea of *saddharma-parigrahaḥ* clearly involves some kind of event of spiritual significance because of, among other things, as shown in the previous chapter, the absence of fear for self-sacrifice.

²⁰⁹Ss, B42.

²¹⁰Ss, B42.

²¹¹Ss, B42.

²¹²Ss, B43.

When the term *parigrahaḥ* is compounded with *bodhicitta*, the activity it describes also seems to refer to something of spiritual importance and value that occurs on account of having reached a certain state of mind. Indeed, an important part of the third chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which described the characteristics of what it means to be an accomplished bodhisattva, is entitled *bodhicitta-parigrahaḥ*. Moreover, in many places in the above text, the beginning aspirant to enlightenment is enjoined to act in order to bring about these events of spiritual significance so that he may progress further on the path, and the expressions used to describe this act are often formulated in terms of another derivative of the verbal root *√grah*. For example, still in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, one comes across these following verses:

Having taken this impure form, it [*bodhicitta*] transforms it into the priceless form of a *Jina* [an accomplished bodhisattva]; it is like a gold-making elixir. So, hold fast (*sudṛḍham grhṇata*) to what is called *bodhicitta*.

*aśucipratimām imām grhītvā jinaratnapratimām karoti anarghām,
rasajātam atīva vedhanīyaṃ sudṛḍham grhṇata bodhicitta-saṃjñam.*

It has been considered as having an immense value by those of immeasurable intellects and guides of this world. Oh you, you used to dwell in the foreign counties and cities which are the six destinies, hold fast (*sudṛḍham grhṇata*) to the jewel which is *bodhicitta*.

*suparīkṣitam aprameyadhībhiḥ bahumūlyam jagad ekasārvabhauṇikam,
gatipattanavipravāsaśīlāḥ sudṛḍham grhṇata bodhicitta-ratnam.* ²¹³

Given these examples, I believe that one can say with confidence that the derivatives of the verbal root *√grah* may be employed as technical terms describing some aspects of the spiritual experience of the bodhisattva similar to the expressions issued from the prefix *ut* and the verbal root *√pad*. Because of that, however, the exact meaning of these technical terms might be difficult to establish just on the basis of what the lexicographers are telling us.

Indeed, according to Apte, for example, the verb *grhṇāti* could mean:

1. to seize, take, take or catch hold of, catch, grasp; 2. to receive, take, accept;
3. to apprehend, stop, catch; 8. to affect; seize or possess (as a demon, spirit); 9. to assume, take;
10. to learn, know, recognize, understand; 11. to regard, consider, believe, take for;
12. to catch or perceive (as by an organ of sense); 13. to master, grasp, comprehend;
18. to wear, put on (clothes, etc.); 19. to conceive; and 22. to undertake, undergo, begin.²¹⁴

More specifically, the term *parigrahaḥ* means, among other things:

1. seizing, holding, taking, grasping, 'taking or entertaining a doubt'; 2. surrounding, enclosing;
3. putting on, wrapping round (as a dress); 4. assuming, taking; 5. receiving, taking, accepting;

²¹³BCA, I-10-11.

²¹⁴SED, p. 678.

22. grace, favour; 23. comprehension, understanding; 24. undertaking, performing; and 25. subjugation.²¹⁵

It may be remarked that when the derivatives of the root *√grah* have a physical object as in the phrase *aśucipratimām imām grhītvā*, in which case *grhītvā* is glossed as *ādāya* (having taken this impure form, i.e., the body), there is no ambiguity as to their meaning. On the other hand, however, when their objects are abstract concepts such as *bodhicitta*, as in the phrase *sudṛḍham grhṇata bodhicittasamjñam* (hold fast to what is called *bodhicitta*), or *saddharma*, as in *evam mahāviṣayo saddharmaparigraha iti* (the accepting of *dharma* is thus our great object), one is not clear as to the exact significance or nature of the activity described by these derivatives. Let us look at other terms and expressions used in the same context to see if this situation can be clarified.

The third chapter of Sāntideva's *Sikṣāsamuccaya* begins with the following verse: "In this regard, what is the protection of oneself? It is the avoidance of evil" (*tatrātmabhāve kā rakṣā yad anartha-vivarjanam*).²¹⁶ This avoidance of evil is according to Sāntideva: "discussed in the *Gaganagaṇjasūtra* by the bodhisattvas who are diligent in preserving (*dhāraṇa*) the True *dharma* (*saddharma*)" (*idaṃ ca anarthavivarjanam āryagaganagaṇjasūtra saddharma-dhāraṇoyataiḥ bodhisattvaiḥ bhāṣitam*).²¹⁷ In the text just mentioned, one is told that: "At that evil time we will hold fast (*dhārayiṣyāma*) to the True *dharma*, sacrificing our body and life for the sake of sentient beings" (*tasmin kāle vyaṃ kaṣṭe tyaktvā kāyaṃ saṁjīvitam, saddharmaṃ dhārayiṣyāma sattvānāṃ hitakāraṇāt*).²¹⁸

The noun *dhāraṇa* and the verb *dhārayiṣyāma* are both issued from the verbal root *√dhr̥*. According to Apte, it can mean:

1. To hold, bear, carry; 2. to hold or bear up, maintain, support, sustain; 3. to hold in one's possession, possess, have, keep; 4. to assume, take (as a form, disguise); 5. to wear, put on (clothes, ornaments); 6. to hold, in check, curb, restrain, stop, detain; 7. to fix upon, direct towards; 8. to suffer, undergo; 11. to hold, contain; 12. to observe, practice; 15. to preserve, maintain; 16. to seize, lay hold of; 17. to hold out or on, endure; 18. to fix, place, deposit; and 19. to intend in mind.²¹⁹

When it is used in association with terms referring to the mind such as, for example: *manas*, *matih*, *cittam* and *buddhiḥ*, it means: to bend the mind to a thing, fix

²¹⁵SED, p. 973.

²¹⁶Ss, B44.

²¹⁷Ss, B44.

²¹⁸Ss, B47.

²¹⁹SED, p. 866.

the mind upon, think of, resolve upon.²²⁰ Similarly, the neutral substantive *dhāraṇam* is translated as: 1. The act of holding, bearing, carrying, preserving, sustaining, protecting, having, assuming; 3. observing, holding fast; 4. retaining in the memory; 6. steady abstraction of the mind; 7. keeping, maintaining; and 8. restraining.²²¹ And, as a feminine noun:

1. The act of holding, bearing, supporting, preserving, etc.; 2. the faculty of retaining in the mind, a good or retentive memory; 3. memory in general; 4. keeping the mind collected, holding the breath suspended, steady abstraction of the mind; 5. fortitude, firmness, steadiness; 6. a fixed precept or injunction, a settled rule, conclusion; 7. understanding, intellect; 9. conviction or abstraction.²²²

Again, it is to be noticed that these translations, as was the case with the derivatives of verbal root *√grah*, manifest a blending of the subjective and objective view of happening and activity. Consequently, the spiritual activity referred to by these terms and expressions may describe either an active event where a subject is holding firm to an object of the mind or a passive happening in which a subject is established in some kind of knowledge. The point of this discussion is to say that, on the basis of the terminology used to describe the activity of watching and guarding alone, both interpretations can be supported. Even when looking at how Prajñā-karamati glossed the expression *sudṛḍham grhṇata: yathā grhītaṁ punar na calati. grhṇīta iti prāpte grhṇata iti yathāgamapāthāt* (when it is obtained, it does not go or move again. *grhṇīta* [to be understood in the sense of] obtained. This rendering is according to the tradition),²²³ it is still difficult to decide since the idea of stability of the mind is common to both situations. Given this circumstance, it is, I believe, legitimate to argue that *bodhicitta* is an object of concentration. It is therefore possible to reconcile these two alternatives by saying that whatever knowledge is involved, it is for the sake of making the activity of concentration as intense as possible. This means that, in this practice, it is the activity of fixing which is dominant and consequently, the object being fixed upon is secondary. Later in the present chapter, I intend to analyze the implications of this view. For the moment, however, let us consider other arguments in favor of interpreting the concept of *bodhicitta* in terms of an object of concentration.

²²⁰SED, p. 866.

²²¹SED, p. 860.

²²²SED, p. 860.

²²³BCA, p. 12.

ii. *The practice of meditation*

In the first chapter, while discussing the significance of the various chapters of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, I mentioned that according to the Tibetan Buddhists, there are two types of *bodhicitta*: the conventional *bodhicitta* and the ultimate *bodhicitta*. The conventional *bodhicitta* consisted essentially in various meditations used to develop compassion whereas the ultimate *bodhicitta* was the realization of emptiness. This practice of developing compassion was above all a way to pacify the mind. As one Tibetan Buddhist teacher said:

At present our mind is unsettled and biased; instead of looking at all beings equally with an eye of compassion, we feel very partial towards some and very distant from, or even hostile towards, others. In such an unbalanced state it is very difficult to recognize all beings as our mothers so if our meditation is to be successful we must first try to remove our prejudices by cultivating an attitude of equanimity.²²⁴

It is assumed that this attitude of equanimity is synonymous to peace of mind since, by being impartial to all beings, one is not drawn into making distinctions between these beings. This peace of mind, still according to the Tibetans, should lead one to the final realization of *bodhicitta*, which is emptiness. In a way, the Tibetan Buddhists, by these two types of *bodhicitta*, have reconciled the two spiritual approaches discussed earlier by Paul Griffiths. It would, however, exceed the scope of my research to evaluate the merits of this treatment of the concept of *bodhicitta*. The reason why I am referring to this practice of cultivating compassion, though, is to draw to one's attention the fact that the content of the meditations need not be true, i.e., something established on account of strict logic and hard facts. Indeed, this practice of cultivating compassion is based on the idea that each and every being, of the past, present and future, have been at least once one's own mother. This idea itself is based on the doctrine of rebirth, which is more a question of faith than the result of scientific evidence. But from the point of view of the result to achieve, this is of no consequence. In fact, everything is possible as attested by a Tibetan monk who said, upon being asked why it was possible for him to believe that the sun is going around the earth: "Despite the fact that the knowledge that the earth goes round the sun might be a scientific truth useful for the development of modern techniques, it was not useful for the inward belief, for the realization of the Ultimate Truth."²²⁵

²²⁴Gyatso (1989), p. 23.

²²⁵Desjardins (1969), p. 24.

There are many passages in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, especially in the eighth chapter, which is devoted to the practice of meditation, that shows this interaction between ideas and stabilization of the mind. One such meditation, which has perhaps a long history within the Buddhist tradition, has as main theme the impurities of the body and its impermanence.

It is no wonder that you do not realize the body of others to be excrement; but that you do not understand your own body to be excrement is amazing.

*nāmedhyamayasya kāyaṃ vatsīyanadbhutam,
svāmedhyamayam eva tvam taṃ nāvaiṣīti vismayah* ²²⁶

This body of mine will become so putrid that even jackals will not be able to approach it because of its stench.

*ayam eva hi kāyo me evaṃ pūtirbhaviṣyati,
śrgālā api yadgandhānnopasarpeyurantikaṃ* ²²⁷

The principle underlying of this kind of meditation is to create the mental conditions that would neutralize one's tendency to be attached to one's own body and that of the others and consequently, get rid of the fear issued from the worries concerning their fate. In a way, this kind of meditation is an exercise in mental creations. Many passages of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* are the basis of mental pictures, almost comparable to *maṇḍalas* which are visualized and internalized in the mind of the meditator. These images are like fruits containing a taste of the absolute peace. They are pressed by means of visualization and reflection to extract their juice. Once the juice is extracted and consumed, the skin of the fruit is thrown away. So much is the value of what has been used to create the mental picture.

This principle of neutralization could most probably be best exemplified by the meditative practice of exchanging the self for others. This meditation is mentioned towards the end of the eighth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and it could be seen as a culmination point of all previous meditations. In short, it consists in viewing oneself as being the other and the other as being oneself. In this regard, Śāntideva says:

Whoever wishes to quickly rescue himself and others, should practice the most secret path: the exchange of his own self and others'.

*ātmanam ca parāṃśca eva yaḥ śighram trātum icchati,
sa caret paramaṃ guhyaṃ parātma-parivartanam.* ²²⁸

²²⁶BCA, VIII-56.

²²⁷BCA, VIII-32.

²²⁸BCA, VIII-120.

There is certainly no accomplishment, no Buddhahood, or even happiness in the realms of rebirth, for the one who does not exchange his own happiness for the sorrow of others.
na nāma sādhyam buddhatvaṃ saṃsāre api kutaḥ sukham,
svasukhasya anyaduḥkheṇa parivartam akurvataḥ ²²⁹

That is why that for the sake of tranquilizing my own sorrow, and for the tranquilizing of others' sorrow, I give myself to others and I accept others like myself.
tasmāt svaduḥkhaśāntyartham paraduḥkhaśamāya ca,
dadāmi anyebhyaḥ ātmānam parān gṛhṇāmi ca ātmavat. ²³⁰

Due to its drastic nature, Marion Matics, a modern translator of the *Bodhicarya-avatāra*, has considered this meditation as a “curious doctrine” and as “exercises belonging primarily to the realm of trance.”²³¹ He justifies his affirmation on account of the fact that this transference of selves is practically impossible. As he himself says:

A saint like Francis of Assisi could pronounce the Bodhisattva vow and appropriately undertake *parātma-parivartana* (exchange of selves) as a symbolic expression of his moral intention; but as a mere humanitarian, however holy, he cannot execute his intention in literal practice. He cannot get into another's skin and there experience the pains of the other; he cannot interpose himself, literally, between the sin of the other and the judgment which the sinner merits; he cannot renounce the good qualities which are the attributes of his Franciscan soul and give them away, like alms to the poor, no matter how he tries. He cannot really even begin to try, for these are things which can be accomplished only on the level of trance.²³²

This level of trance has been previously described by Matics as a form of *ṛddhi* or meditative power. Examples of such powers are: the ability to prolong one's life, or the ability to create a kingdom without slaughter. Therefore, according to Matics, without *ṛddhi*, “there can be no literal transference of selves.”²³³

I believe that there is a simpler way to explain this practice of exchanging the selves. It is not necessary to have recourse to the notion of supernatural powers to make it plausible. This meditation is not the only curious and out of the ordinary thing that is mentioned in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Indeed, in the second chapter one learns that the bodhisattva, in an outburst of devotion, offers to the Buddhas and the great Bodhisattvas all kind of extraordinary things:

I shall offer to the Compassionate Ones palaces bedecked with hanging garlands of costly gems, shining in all directions and resounding all over with chants of prayerful hymns.
pralambamuktāmaṇihāraśobhānāścarān diṇmukhamanḍanāmstān,

²²⁹BCA, VIII-131.

²³⁰BCA, VIII-136.

²³¹Matics (1970), p. 99.

²³²Matics (1970), p. 99-100.

²³³Matics (1970), p. 99.

vimānameghān stutigītaramyān maitrīmayebhyo 'pi nivedayāmi. ²³⁴

I shall offer to the great sages umbrellas with jewels and golden handles and exquisitely embellished rims, stretching up-right and with shapes beautiful to look at.

suvarṇadaṇḍaiḥ kamaṇīyarūpaiḥ saṃsaraktamuktāni samucchritāni,

pradhārayāmi eṣa mahāmuniṇāṃ ratnātapatrāni atisobhanāni. ²³⁵

It is unlikely that the bodhisattva materializes these fabulous objects through some kind of powers in order to offer them in his *pūjas*. What is more plausible is that this exercise of devotion is performed mentally. In fact, this assumption is confirmed by the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* itself:

These I offer mentally to the eminent sages (*muni*) and their sons [the Bodhisattvas]. May the great Compassionate Ones, worthy of such gifts, mercifully accept this from me.

ādāya buddhayā munipumgavebhyo niryātayāmi eṣa saputrakebhyaḥ,

grhṇantu tanme varadaḥṣiṇīyā mahākrpā mām anukampamānāḥ. ²³⁶

What Matics is not realizing is that, in the case of the practice of exchanging the selves, its literalness is an issue whereas it is not in the case of the devotional practices. From the point of view of the spiritual approach aiming at bringing the mind to a complete standstill, however, both practices are explained by a common principle which could be called the principle of neutralization.

Earlier I mentioned that the bodhisattva might meditate on the fact that the body is composed of impure and impermanent elements. One of the goals of this meditation could be to neutralize his physical attraction to other people's body. In this case, however, the goal to achieve is very limited; being free from such attachment, the bodhisattva is not yet off the hook: there are other tendencies he should care to destroy. Instead of finding a new theme of meditation for each of his tendencies, which in itself might be a task more demanding than the actual practice of meditation, he might rather settle for a theme which would work as a kind of universal antidote. The practice of exchanging the selves could be such an antidote because its limits are those of the selfish ego which is in effect the main obstacle to perfect peace of mind. In other words, the meditation based on the exchange of the selves could be perceived as a mental exercise whose goal is to neutralize all tendencies resulting from attachment to the egoistic self. To use a metaphor, this meditation is like producing the mental anti-bodies which neutralize the viruses created by the ego.

²³⁴BCA, II-18.

²³⁵BCA, II-19.

²³⁶BCA, II-6.

The point of the above discussion is to argue that there is a relationship between the nature of the object of concentration and the quality of the spiritual experience. If the object is limited, like the decaying body, the fruit is also limited: the neutralization of the tendency which consists in being attracted to beautiful bodies. On the other hand, if the object expand to the limits of the reach of what causes mental instability, meditation on such object should result in achieving mental stability. In a way, this is the basic logic of the practice of sacrifice which has marked Eastern thoughts from the early beginning: the fruits to be awarded is proportional to the extent of what is sacrificed. This is also the basic principle underlying the doctrine of karma.

It is therefore possible to define the concept of *bodhicitta* according to the same principle. Indeed, *bodhicitta*, as the desire to help all sentient beings is, so to speak, an object which is limitless because there is no end to this enterprise. In fact, this idea ought not be taken literally for the obvious reason that all those who had become bodhisattvas would never be enlightened. On the contrary, like the practice of exchanging of selves, it is done at the mental level. Consequently, meditation on such object should produce an unlimited reward, as the following verse from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* seems to imply:

All other wholesome results lose their effects, like the plantain tree which begins to decay after its fruition. But, the tree of *bodhicitta* produces fruits and does not decay. It even bears fruit perpetually.

*kadalīva phalaṃ vihāya yāti kṣayaṃ anyat kuśalaṃ hi sarvaṃ eva,
satatam phalati kṣayaṃ na yāti prasavati eva tu bodhicittavṛkṣaḥ.*²³⁷

In this circumstance, it is legitimate to believe that the experience of enlightenment, which is the calming down of mental activity, is not a limited process. It could be viewed as a perpetual deepening of the experience of peacefulness similar to, following the principle of Higher Evolution discussed by Sangharakshita, the deepening of commitment to the ideals of Buddhism. To sum up the present discussion, I would like to look at some of the implications of having *bodhicitta* assimilated to an object of concentration.

²³⁷BCA, I-12.

iii. Implications related to the idea of *bodhicitta* as object of concentration

One of the major implications related to defining the concept of *bodhicitta* as an object of concentration is, as already alluded to in the introduction of the present chapter, to say that any ideas, concepts or beliefs, having a doctrinal status or not, are true in so far as they fulfill the purpose of bringing the mind to a standstill. Consequently, these ideas or concepts are important for this ability only and not for being an expression of some kind of ontological truth. In other words, if one understands the concept of *bodhicitta* according to the soteriological context just discussed, one has to assume a pragmatic theory of truth. This assumption has moreover a direct incidence on the very nature of religious language and other forms of religious expressions.

In fact, this view of religious language is exactly what has been implied by the doctrine of skillful means (*upāyakaūśalya*) propounded by the Lotus Sutra and the simile of the Burning House.²³⁸ On the basis of this doctrine, it has been argued by Michael Pye, a modern scholar of Buddhism, "that religious language is essentially indirect, allusive, based in cultural circumstance, and subject to qualification and to criticism."²³⁹ This means that religious concepts such as that of *bodhicitta* are not supposed to have any particular meaning beyond the attainment of the solution of the problem they are meant to solve. In other words, religious concepts are disposable. Consequently, if one were to view *bodhicitta* as an object of concentration, one would have to say that whatever cognitive element is related to it, it is of no consequence from the perspective of ontology for the simple reason that it is not meant to describe any ultimate reality, whatever it may be.

While discussing the relevance of the concept of *bodhicitta* as a factor of motivation, I mentioned that this concept was related to metaphysical realities. I did not, however, analyze the full significance of this statement. Despite the implications of the doctrine of skillful means, I believe that one can observe, within the different spiritual traditions of Buddhism, a certain consistency between the means to achieve their respective spiritual experience and the ways to describe it. For the followers of the Madhyamaka school, for example, the concept of emptiness is certainly an antidote to a person's mental and emotional attachment to phenomenal and ideal entities, but it is also their privileged way to describe reality as they view it ultimately. Consequently, I assume that religious language may be more than just a

²³⁸See chap. I, note 19.

²³⁹Pye (1990), p. 40.

means to achieve a religious experience, but also a standard or a measure of the authenticity of that experience. In the next section, I intend to look, as a criticism of the idea of *bodhicitta* as object of concentration, at the importance of the fact that the concept of *bodhicitta* be viewed as a metaphysical reality.

2. Criticism of *bodhicitta* as object of concentration

There is a short passage taken from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* which, I believe, may serve as the basis for a criticism of *bodhicitta* as object of concentration. I would like next to provide a fresh translation of it and comment on it with the help of Prajñākaramati's Sanskrit commentary.

The teachings [of the Buddha] are the foundations of the practice of the monk [aspirant to enlightenment]. This practice is, however, poor and *nirvāṇa* is impossible for those whose mind is holding on to props.

*śāsanam bhikṣutā-mūlam bhikṣutā eva ca duḥsthitā,
sāvalambana-cittānam nirvāṇam api duḥsthitam.*

If liberation is caused by the destruction of the tendencies [desire, hatred, pride, etc.], then it should occur immediately afterwards [i.e., when the tendencies are destroyed]. It has been, however, observed that they [certain monks mentioned in the tradition] retained a propensity for actions although their tendencies were absent.

*kleśa-prahāṇāt muktiḥ cet tad anantaram astu sā,
drṣṭam ca teṣu sāmāthyam niṣkleśasya api karmaṇaḥ.*

If it has been ascertained that there is no attachment as far as there is no craving, why then is there not a non-afflicted craving for them? [The answer is: Such craving is] like confusion [i.e., without clear understanding].

*trṣṇā tāvat upādānam na asti cet sampradhāryate,
kim akliṣṭā api trṣṇā eṣām na asti samṁmohavat safi.*

Feelings are caused by craving and they have feelings. A mind which holds on to props remains attached whatever [the object of concentration].

*vedanā-pratyayā trṣṇā vedanā eṣām ca vidyate,
sāvalambanena cittena sthātavyam yatra tatra vā.*

Without emptiness the mind may remain subdued but it is bound to become active again. Similar to those who meditate to the point of reaching a state of absence of consciousness, [their mind is reactivated as soon as they come out of this state] Therefore, emptiness [should be cultivated].

*vinā śūnyatayā cittam baddham utpadyate punaḥ,
yathā asaṃjñīsamāpattau bhāvayet tena śūnyatām.* ²⁴⁰

The point which is being made in this passage is that it would be a wrong application of the teachings of the Buddha, i.e., that which is to be practiced for the

²⁴⁰BCA, IX-45-49.

attainment of Buddhahood (*śāsanam buddhatva-upāya-abhyāsaḥ*),²⁴¹ to use them as props for the mind or as objects of concentration. By teachings of the Buddha are meant the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakṣa-dharmas*) as well as the Four Noble truths. Thus, if the practice of the monk is bogged down in mere contemplation of the Four Noble Truths, for example, without an understanding of emptiness, then this practice or approach is bound to yield poor results (*duḥsthitā śūnyatā-darśanam antareṇa asamañjasā kevala-satyadarśanato na yujyate*).²⁴² For this reason, it does not lead to liberation (*tasmāt satyadarśanato mukti iti na vaktavyam*).²⁴³

The reasons given to support this affirmation are essentially the idea that, despite the fact that the practice of contemplation may quiet down the tendencies, the tendency to act, either in a good or a bad way (*śubha-aśubha-lakṣaṇa*), is still present. At this point, some clarifications are perhaps called for. The word that has been translated by *tendency* is *kleśa*. According to the *Abhidharmakośa*,²⁴⁴ there are six *kleśas*: desire (*rāga*), hatred (*pratigha*), pride (*māna*), ignorance (*avidyā*), wrong view (*kudṛṣṭi*) and doubt (*vicikīṣā*). Taking into consideration the blending of the subjective-objective view of the world and happening, the ambiguity could be resolved thus: the *kleśas* refer to the action of desiring, etc. as well as the latent potentiality to desire. Consequently, the practice of contemplating the Four Noble Truths, for example, is efficient in curbing the action of desiring but it is insufficient to eradicate the latent tendency to desire. For that purpose, an understanding of emptiness is necessary. In other words, despite the fact that the mind has been brought to a complete standstill, ignorance, which is the cause of the latent tendencies, is still present (*tasmāt sarvadharma-śūnyatā eva avidyāprati-pakṣatvāt saṃsāra-santativicchitti-hetuḥ avasīyate na kevalam satyadarśanam*).²⁴⁵

Two examples are given by Prajñākaramati in support of his argumentation. The first example is the case of two disciples of the Buddha, the Venerables Maudgalyāyana and Aṅgulimāla, who, having attained a state where the working of the tendencies were subdued (*kleśa-sahakāri-rahita*), still retained the propensity (*sāmarthyam*) to perform actions (*karman*). According to Sharma, a translator of the *Bodhicaryāvatara*, these two disciples had, as a result of their spiritual

²⁴¹BCA, p. 53.

²⁴²BCA, p. 316.

²⁴³BCA, p. 316.

²⁴⁴LaVallée Poussin, *AbhidhK*, v.I note 4 [Quoted in BHS, p. 198].

²⁴⁵BCA, p. 317.

achievement, the power to grant wishes. But this power “was also a kind of craving and, therefore, enough to cause a redescend into *samsāra*.”²⁴⁶

The second example deals with those who have attained a state where there is absence of consciousness (*asamjñīsamāpatti*). This example is not devoid of interests because it refers us back to the quote from Griffiths at the beginning of this chapter. The state of complete cessation of mental functions is known within the Buddhist tradition as Absorption into the Cessation of Notions and Sensations (*samjñā-vedayita-nirodha-samāpatti*). This state is characterized, in contrast to death, by the fact that “life-force (*āyus*) is not yet exhausted, bodily heat (*uṣman*) is not yet extinguished, the sense-faculties are unimpaired, and *vijñāna* [consciousness] has not withdrawn from the body.”²⁴⁷

This spiritual experience is not without causing doctrinal problems for the Buddhists themselves. For one, what is the nature of the consciousness that remains, given the Buddhist understanding of six traditional consciousness that says that, in order to arise, there must be an object and a contact between this object and a sense-organ? Consequently, in a meditative state in which there is absence of perception, how can there be consciousness? The second problem, which has been dealt with by Griffiths, has to do with the relationship between the mind and the body, as conceived by Buddhist thinkers. If one reaches a state where there is absence of perceptions, what is the mechanism that allows a meditator to come out of this state? In this regard, the Vaibhāṣikas provided the beginning of an answer by asserting that:

- i. there are no mental events in the attainment of cessation, ii. the emergence of consciousness from attainment of cessation must have an immediately antecedent and similar condition, iii. the immediately antecedent and similar condition of any event may be temporally separated from that event and finally, iv. the immediately antecedent and similar condition for the emergence of consciousness from the attainment of cessation is the last moment of consciousness to occur before entering that attainment.²⁴⁸

It is precisely the implications of this view that have been criticized in the passage quoted above. If there is no difference between what is going on in the mind before entering the state of cessation and the moment of coming out of it, then this type of meditation has no real effect with regard to obtaining permanent spiritual fruits.

To sum up the point of this passage, one can use a simile. Let us imagine a ship that is about to shipwreck. The captain of this ship must supervise the rescue

²⁴⁶Sharma (1990), p. 406.

²⁴⁷Schmithausen (1987), p. 19.

²⁴⁸Griffiths (1986), p. 63.

of the passengers. He does so by coordinating the activities of his crew. Once the passengers are rescued, he personally orders his crew to leave the ship. Then finally, when everyone is safe, he also must go. But, because he makes things happen only by giving orders to others and cannot give himself the order to leave the ship, he remains on it and never succeeds in saving all the people, i.e., every person including himself. Similarly, the practice of meditation based on the contemplation of an object can succeed in eliminating all tendencies but never the idea that there is a meditator, the last tendency caused by ignorance. Referring back to the meditation of exchanging the selves, there would always remain a self thinking of being the other self.

Similar to the criticism of the concept of *bodhicitta* as a factor of motivation, to reduce this concept to an object of concentration, with the implications it entails, would reinforce the distinction between subject and object. The only difference here is that one may be fooled by the peace of mind that could result out of this type of meditation. In this regard, Buddhists have said that such achievement is nevertheless a failure to understand what they called "the emptiness of emptiness," if emptiness is used as a prop. A nice story from the Zen tradition illustrates this point:

There was an old woman in China who had supported a monk for over twenty years. She had built a little hut for him and fed him while he was meditating. Finally she wondered just what progress he had made in all this time. To find out, she obtained the help of a girl rich in desire. 'Go and embrace him,' she told her, 'and then ask him suddenly: "What now?"' The girl called upon the monk and without much ado caressed him, asking him what he was going to do about it. 'An old tree grows on a cold rock in winter,' replied the monk somewhat poetically. 'Nowhere is there any warmth.' The girl returned and related what he had said. 'To think I fed that fellow for twenty years!' exclaimed the old woman in anger. 'He showed no consideration for your need, no disposition to explain your condition. He need not have responded to passion, but at least he should have evidenced some compassion.' She at once went to the hut of the monk and burned it down.²⁴⁹

Poor monk! He missed it both ways.

The expression used in the passage to describe those who used the teachings of the Buddha as props for the mind is *sāvalambana-citta* which literally means: "those whose mind is with a prop or support (*avalamba*)." Those who are not trapped by this kind of practice are called *nirālambanacitta* (those whose mind is without a prop) and for them, the practice is not fruitless (*ataḥ teṣāṃ upalambha-drṣṭinām duḥsthitā na nirālambana-cittānām*).²⁵⁰ What does it mean then to have

²⁴⁹Reps (1957), p. 21.

²⁵⁰BCA, p. 317.

such a mind? In other words, how can one think about concepts without their being objects of one's attention? In the *Āryavajracchedikā*, the Buddha said to Subhuti:

That is why, Subhuti, the magnanimous Bodhisattva should cause to arise a mind which is not permanently fixed (or abiding in trance), never should he cause a mind which is permanently fixed to arise, a mind which is permanently fixed onto a form, a sound, a smell or a tactile sensation. That is why emptiness has been established as the path to enlightenment.
*bhagavān āha. tasmāt tarhi, subhute, bodhisattvena mahāsattvena evaṃ apratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam, na kvacit pratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam, na rūpapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam, na śabda-gandha-rasa-spraṣṭavya-pratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam iti. tasmāt sūnyatā eva bodhimārgaḥ iti sthitam.*²⁵¹

This passage only deals with the objects of the senses, but it is clear, given the fact that it has been quoted by Prajñākaramati in his commentary of the previous passage, that it also includes mental objects. Then, what is the nature of the activity described earlier as watching and guarding? How is the relationship between the “one who watches” and “that which is being watched,” i.e., emptiness, *saddharma* or *bodhicitta*? The answer to these questions is what I believe would define the spiritual function of the concept of *bodhicitta*. At the very end of the first chapter, I defined this function as being a basis for the cultivation of awareness. The analysis and the argumentation in favor of this idea will be the topic of the next chapter. For the moment, however, I would like to show how it might be possible to have a situation in which concepts are “apprehended” by someone whose mind is without support (*nirālambanacitta*) and discuss the implications such possibility might have for one's understanding of the nature of religious language and consequently, the doctrine of *upāya* which defines all concepts and doctrines as provisional and disposable.

Michael Polanyi, a scientist and philosopher, has advocated the idea that all activity was characterized by two kinds of awareness. For example, describing the action of driving a nail, he says:

When we use a hammer to drive a nail, we attend to both nail and hammer, *but in a different way*. We *watch* the effect of our strokes on the nail and try to wield the hammer so as to hit the nail most effectively. When we bring down the hammer we do not feel that its handle has struck our palm but that its head has struck the nail. Yet in a sense we are certainly alert to the feeling in our palm and the fingers that hold the hammer. They guide us in handling it effectively, and the degree of attention that we give to the nail is given to the same extent but in a different way to these feelings. The difference may be stated by saying that the latter are not, like the nail, objects of our attention, but instruments of it. They are not watched in themselves; we watch something else while keeping intensely aware of them. I have a *subsidiary awareness* of the

²⁵¹BCA, p. 321.

feeling in the palm of my hand which merged into my *focal awareness* of my driving in the nail.²⁵²

This idea of two kinds of awareness led him to distinguish between what he called “tacit” and “explicit” knowledge. Explicit knowledge refers to one’s perception of objects and ideas. This knowledge would be *sāvalambana*. Tacit knowledge is something that is never directly apprehended. In this regard, Polanyi gives another example:

Consider the act of viewing a pair of stereoscopic pictures in the usual way, with one eye on each of the pictures. Their joint image might be regarded as a whole, composed of the two pictures as its parts. But we can get closer to understanding what is going on here if we note that, when looking through a stereo viewer, we see a stereo image at the focus of our attention and are also aware of the two stereo pictures in some peculiar nonfocal way. We seem to look through these two pictures, or past them, while we look straight at their joint image. We are indeed aware of them only as guides to the image on which we focus our attention. We can describe this relationship of the two pictures to the stereo image by saying that the two pictures function as *subsidiaries* to our seeing their *joint* image, which is their joint meaning.²⁵³

This is, according to Polanyi, the typical structure of tacit knowing. This way of knowing might be what has been meant before as *nirālambana*.

There is perhaps another way to explain this tacit knowledge. One way of apprehending objects, mental or physical, could be by being asked questions beginning with “when,” “where” or “what” as interrogative pronouns. These questions usually prompt us to pinpoint something in time or in space, i.e., to focus one’s attention to something determinate. To some extent, these objects are perceived as having an existence independent of any context, framework or background. In contrast to this, we have concepts such as “long” or “short” and these concepts never pinpoint objects as such. What is long or short is always perceived in relationship with a context. In other words, when one looks at a long object, one apprehends the object as well as the context in which it is found. A rope, for example, is long in relation to another short object. These concepts are not identified with questions beginning with “when” or “where,” but rather with “how” or “what” as interrogative adjective. These questions always refer to the quality of the objects and as such, require an awareness of a context to be answered. This awareness of the context is consequently not possible, according to Polanyi, without some kind of personal participation or personal indwelling.

Let us take, for example, a man and his wife. This man presents his wife by introducing her to his friends. At first, she might be perceived by them as just

²⁵²Polanyi (1962), p. 55.

²⁵³Polanyi (1975), p. 34.

another woman, but as soon as that man says that it is his wife, their perception is likely to change. In other words, that woman is perceived both as a woman and as the wife of a friend, and this double awareness, one being objective--the object perceived, i.e., the woman²⁵⁴-- and the other qualitative or subjective--a wife is always defined in terms of the characteristics (pleasant or unpleasant) of the personal relationship between a man and a woman-- is what determines what this woman is.

It is in this sense that one may understand the significance of religious concepts such as that of emptiness. It is not to be apprehended as objects of the mind, but rather as a qualitative background. Objects are focused on but their background is also perceived. This background could be defined in terms of *svabhāva*, i.e., the idea that objects have independent existence, or in terms of emptiness, i.e., the idea that objects have no independent existence. Like the famous example of the vase and the two faces of the cognitive theories of Gestalt, both backgrounds can never be perceived at the same time. To hold on the idea of emptiness would therefore mean to cultivate an awareness of the fact that the background of all objects is that objects have independent existence. To cultivate such awareness is comparable to keeping in mind the fact that, to use the above example, this woman is the wife of my friend, something which is apprehended subsidiarily and not focally. In the next chapter, I will discuss how this can be done.

One can now see why an idea such as that of emptiness can be viewed as a metaphysical reality. It is that which gives the meaning of all things. Such ideas and concepts are therefore a true description of reality because the moment they are understood, everything, including the attempt and the event of understanding them, is perceived as a manifestation of the reality these concepts are meant to describe. Thus, they are not provisional and never disposed of. In fact, to consider religious concepts as simply provisional, as suggested by the doctrine of *upāya*, only leads us to a dead end. Indeed, if these concepts are provisional, when are they gotten rid of and by whom? As just discussed above, the notion of *upāya* is dependent on the idea of *upeya* (goal) and as such, it maintains the duality between what is the goal and what is not and above all, it leaves unchallenged the *upāyin* (he who appropriates and applies the means). In support of the above interpretation of the doctrine of *upāya*, the simile of the raft, which is mentioned in the Pāli canon, has

²⁵⁴Of course, the object *woman* is not purely objective. In fact, this example does not assume that there is a purely objective object to be eventually perceived.

often been used. In the light of the present argumentation, it would not be an example of the provisional nature of the teachings of the Buddha, but rather of the necessity to view them as description of a background defining all phenomena and not as objects of the mind. This simile is a warning against maintaining a fruitless relationship between the "one who watches" and "that which is being watched."

To sum up, one might say that, referring back to the description by Victor Hori of the experience of *Satori*, emptiness is no longer an inert object in the spotlight of consciousness, but has become the illuminating spotlight itself. In this circumstance, the paradox between the idea of right view and that of no view could be resolved thus: right view becomes no view when the right view is perceived as the background of all views. With regard to the concept of *bodhicitta*, this affirmation means that *bodhicitta*, as the desire for enlightenment for the sake of all beings, is itself a true description of things as they are. Taking into consideration what has been said in chapter two, *bodhicitta* is also a description of what it means to be an accomplished bodhisattva as well as being the means to attain this state of ethical and cognitive perfection. Cultivation of *bodhicitta* would therefore mean cultivation of the idea that one's true nature is to search for enlightenment for the sake of all beings. *Bodhicitta* is therefore the means to an end as well as the end itself.

Chapter four

BODHICITTA AND CULTIVATION OF AWARENESS

In the second chapter, I showed that the spiritual activity leading to enlightenment or awakening consisted in “watching” or “guarding.” Chapter three was an analysis of the possibility to view this activity as an exercise in concentration or fixing of attention on real or mental objects. In this circumstance, *bodhicitta*, as the desire for enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, could be viewed as a way to expand the boundaries of the egoistic self, thereby neutralizing all of its tendencies such as passion and hatred. This approach, however, was criticized on the ground that the state of non-conscious meditative equipoise that was achieved by it could only quiet down the tendencies in their active manifestations but not in their latent state. For example, when someone comes out of this non-conscious meditative equipoise, he is bound to resume the activity happening just before entering it. This spiritual experience thus becomes only an interruption of the tendencies without transforming them. From the point of view of the continuity of *karma*, this experience is comparable to the passage of death to rebirth where all the latent tendencies are carried over from one life to the other.

This criticism was based on the interpretation of a short passage of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. According to this passage, the distinction between fruitful and fruitless practice could be made on the basis of the type of mind adopted by the meditator, i.e., the one who is watching. For those whose mind is holding on to props (*sāvalambanacitta*) the practice is deficient and for them, *nirvāṇa* is impossible. On the other hand, those whose mind is not holding on to props (*nirālambanacitta*), they are on the right path to enlightenment. It is therefore primordial to understand the significance of this type of mind if one wishes to comprehend what is going on during the activity characterized by watching. Since *bodhicitta*, as mentioned earlier, is directly related to this activity, it is also that which is likely to define the spiritual function of this concept.

The last part of the third chapter was therefore an attempt to understand the meaning and the implications of this type of mind called *nirālambanacitta*. For that, I introduced the idea of double awareness. Basically, this idea points out to the fact that, while perceiving an object, one is also aware of something else, i.e., a background or a context in which this object is found. The perception of the object is called the focal awareness and it is always identifiable. The awareness of the background, on the other hand, is called the subsidiary awareness. This second type of awareness is not always identified. When interpreting a text, for example, the assumptions underlying the interpretation are the content of the subsidiary awareness while the interpretation itself is the object of the focal awareness. The subsidiary awareness is also known as tacit knowledge because its content may be known or it may not. The content of this subsidiary awareness is also that which gives the meaning of the object of the focal awareness, i.e., the interpretation. To some extent, this idea of double awareness is the theoretical foundation of the methodology of the present thesis. As argued in the first chapter, the meaning of the concept of *bodhicitta* can be established only by having a clear idea of the soteriological context in which it is articulated. This meaning can also be criticized on the basis of false presuppositions concerning that context.

If concepts such as that of emptiness are to be perceived with a mind not relying on props (*nirālambanacitta*), then it means, given the idea of double awareness, that emptiness is a description of the background from which everything finds its meaning. This understanding is that of the enlightened being; for the unenlightened, this background could be defined, for example, by the idea that all things have an inherent existence (*svabhāva*). Consequently, the path to enlightenment could be viewed as the attempt to change one's understanding of the background defining all things. At first sight, one could say that enlightenment is essentially a cognitive transformation, i.e., the acquisition of a liberating insight. But when one considers that the way one views the background of all things has a direct influence on one's behavior--to understand it in terms of emptiness releases one from all forms of attachment--then efforts to change one's behavior are equally as important as the efforts to acquire the liberating insight. In fact, both approaches could be seen as the two sides of the same coin. Both these approaches are part of what I called the cultivation of awareness. This is what I intend to discuss in the present chapter.

The idea of double awareness has also some incidence on the ways one understands the nature of religious language. In the preceding chapter, I argued

that the interpretation of the doctrine of *upāya* which advocates the view that religious concepts are provisional and disposable was not an appropriate way to describe the function of religious language. The main argument was to say that this interpretation maintains unchallenged the notion of a user of the skillful means (*upāyin*). As such, it could also be said that some form of craving is maintained; in the case of *bodhicitta* as object of concentration, it is craving for peace of mind. What is needed is therefore something that would allow the dissolution of the idea of doer and consequently, the foundation of all craving. The idea of cultivating an awareness of a background that includes or defines the person cultivating this awareness as well as the cultivation of awareness itself seems to be that which would allow this dissolution. In other words, when the means is what constitutes the goal, then, because the former is no longer distinct from the later, there is no path to follow and consequently, no one to follow it. At this point, this statement may appear a little bit obscure, but, I believe that it could make sense given a certain understanding of the nature of religious language. For this reason, I believe that it would be appropriate to present and justify what is this certain understanding before looking at the cultivation of awareness.

1. The nature of religious language

Previously, I argued that the idea of the blending of subjective-objective view of the world and happening was a key element in one's understanding of the concepts of the Indian religious and philosophical traditions. I would like now to introduce the idea of a second blending with regard to religious language in general. Indeed, I am of the opinion that religious concepts or truths could be viewed from three different perspectives or consist of three specific aspects. These are: the functional, the ethical and the metaphysical aspects. The Buddhist concept of *dharma*, for example, seems to be viewed from these three different perspectives. Indeed, according to Kong-sprul Rinpoche's vast encyclopedia of Buddhism, the *Shes-bya kun-khyab*:

dharma means phenomena, the Path, nirvāṇa, mental objects, the meritorious, life, the teachings, the process of becoming, the religious life and customs.
chos ni shes bya lam dang ni, mya ngan 'das dang yid kyi yul, bsod nams tshe dang gsung rab dang, 'byung 'kyur nges dang chos lugs la'o. ²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵Hodge (1990), p. 156.

Thus, *dharma* as phenomena, the path, *nirvāṇa*, mental objects and the process of becoming, could refer to metaphysical realities; the meritorious, life, the religious life and customs, to ethical realities and finally, the teachings to the functional aspect of this concept. It should be noted that this distinction into three aspects does not mean that each aspect has an existence apart from the others; the reason why religious concepts could be viewed from these three perspectives is that they describe or imply something that is considered true with regard to the three components of any soteriological context, i.e., the reality it presupposes (metaphysical aspect), the means of salvation it suggests (functional aspect) and the state of salvation it aims at (ethical aspect).

i. The functional aspect of religious language

The functional aspect is what is considered to be the means to attain or bring about a certain spiritual experience. These means are true because of their recognized efficiency to lead one to the final goal. They are usually enshrined in some kind of oral or written tradition and are consequently available to every generation of spiritual aspirants. As such, they are also part of the very fabric of the identity of any given spiritual tradition. In this regard, it might be interesting to quote Michael Pye:

There is, incidently, a tendency among Japanese Buddhists to regard the teachings and practices of other sects within Japanese Buddhism as skillful means, while regarding their own as real truth. In other words, there is a marked reluctance to regard the central symbols of one's own Buddhist sect as skillful means. This tendency, however, is not in accord with the main usage in the early Mahāyāna sutras. According to these, all expressions of Buddhism are in principle somehow located in human culture and consciousness, and all are therefore understood in the terms of the dialectic between skillful means and insight. The concept of skillful means has to do with the status of religious language or symbols of all kinds.²⁵⁶

All this may well be true with regard to the origin or the source of religious concepts, but it has nothing to do with how these concepts are appropriated and used by a living tradition at a given moment in its history. At this level, other factors enter into play, the most important being personal commitment and group identity. If Pye had looked at the developments of the various Buddhist schools and sects, I think that he would not have wondered at the behavior of the Japanese Buddhists. Indeed, there are other examples of this type of behavior or attitude within the Buddhist tradition.

²⁵⁶Pye (1990), p. 38-39.

The first example deals with the distinction between the two kinds of discourse held by the historical Buddha. This distinction led to the classification of the *suttas* of the Pāli tradition into two categories: the *nītattha-suttas* or those of the direct meaning and the *neyyattha-suttas* or those of the indirect meaning. The *nītattha-suttas* are to be taken literally whereas the *neyyattha-suttas* need to have their intended meaning drawn out. From the point of view of hermeneutics, the former type of *suttas* describes reality as it is whereas the latter refers to mere conventions. One good example of this distinction is perhaps the doctrine of no-self (*anattā*): discourses of the Buddha advocating the non-existence of the self are to be interpreted as *nītattha-suttas* while expressions such as “I,” “self” and so on used by the Buddha in the course of his conversations are to be taken as *neyyattha-suttas*. This means that such expressions are not to be taken as true description of the things as they actually are.

From the perspective of their ability to bring about a spiritual experience, one might compare this distinction between the *nītattha-suttas* and the *neyyattha-suttas* with the knowledge required to conduct a successful experiment and the knowledge used to prepare or train someone so that he may be able to understand the instructions necessary for conducting the experiment successfully. In other words, the *neyyattha* knowledge is a kind of prerequisite which has its validity only as such. For example, one could argue that the acceptance of the Buddhist doctrine of *karma*, as expounded in the *Sāmaññaphala sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* is such a prerequisite because it provides a foundation for the practice of the path towards enlightenment. Without this prerequisite, all the teachings of Buddhism have no efficiency. It is for this reason, I believe, that the Buddha disapproved of Pūraṇa Kassapa’s view of karmic retribution in the *sutta* just mentioned, a view which states that no evil is done by, among other things, killing sentient beings and that there is no merit in giving, self-control and so on. It is obvious that, with such a view, one would have no incentive to follow the teachings of the Buddha.

Because of this crucial distinction, it seems that it was considered of the utmost importance for the Early Buddhists to identify which *sutta* corresponds to which type. Failure to do that would lead one to misunderstand, i.e., not apply properly, the teachings of the Buddha. In the *Anguttara Nikāya*, for example, it is said that:

There are these two who misrepresent the Tathāgata. Which two? He who represents a Sutta of indirect meaning as a Sutta of direct meaning and he who represents a Sutta of direct meaning as a Sutta of indirect meaning.

Dve'me Tathāgataṃ abbhācikkhanti. Katame dve? Yo ca neyyatthaṃ suttantaṃ nītattha suttantaṃ ti dīpeti; yo ca nītatthaṃ suttantaṃ neyyattha suttantaṃ ti dīpeti. ²⁵⁷

Despite this warning, it appears that the means or guidelines making possible such discrimination were left to the discretion of the commentators of the Buddha's discourses. According to Jayatilleke, "no examples are given in the Canon of the two kinds of Suttas referred to, and we have to seek this information in the commentaries."²⁵⁸ It would exceed the scope of the present thesis to look into what the commentators suggested as guidelines. Instead, what interests me at this point, is to show that this distinction between the two types of *sutta* led to the organization of the various teachings of the Buddha into some kind of a hierarchy, something which is in contradiction with the spirit of the doctrine of *upāya* as interpreted by Michael Pye but which very well describes the behavior of the Japanese Buddhists mentioned above. Indeed, still according to Jayatilleke, "the very fact that one is called a *nītattha Sutta*, whose meaning is plain and direct and the other a *neyyattha*- in the sense that its meaning should be inferred in the light of the former, gives the former a definite precedence over the latter."²⁵⁹

The same preoccupation could be seen among the Chinese Buddhists who elaborated the system of *p'an-chiao* (judging the teachings). At first, this system was employed simply to determine the historical place of the particular *sūtras* and doctrines taught by the Buddha. It was a way to verify the authenticity of his teachings on the basis of historical evidence. Indeed, the Chinese Buddhists felt that there were many contradictions and apparent discrepancies between the Mahāyāna teachings and those identified as Hināyāna. For this reason, they wanted those contradictions and discrepancies reconciled in order to put an end to confusion and dispute. Later, however, *p'an-chiao* degenerated into mere value judgments of the doctrines and philosophical concepts expounded in the *sūtras* and treatises; it became a way of establishing supremacy over the other.²⁶⁰

The reasons for establishing a hierarchy was, as was the case with the distinction between the *nītattha-suttas* and the *neyyattha-suttas*, mainly attributed to an evaluation of the efficiency of the teachings. According to the Chinese Buddhists, this efficiency was evaluated in the light of the debate between sudden and gradual enlightenment. For them, the teachings of the Buddha could be

²⁵⁷ A, I-60 [E: Jayatilleke (1963), p. 361].

²⁵⁸ Jayatilleke (1963), p. 362.

²⁵⁹ Jayatilleke (1963), p. 361-2.

²⁶⁰ Kōgen (1982), chap. 8.

classified into two broad categories: a) teachings of the half word (imperfect teaching) and teachings of the full word (perfect teachings). It was held that to people of superior intellect the Buddha preached teachings producing instantaneous enlightenment while to people of lesser intellect he preached teachings producing gradual enlightenment in order to raise them from their low plane to a higher one. The sudden teachings were direct, unmediated whereas the gradual teachings were gradual because they resorted to expedients (*upāya*) as means to accommodate the Buddha's enlightened insight to the understanding of unenlightened beings. As mentioned in the first chapter, the term *upāya* consequently came to qualify a type of teachings which had a lesser significance. Again, judging from Michael Pye's observation above, this distinction seems to have prevailed among the Buddhists of Japan.

To sum up the present discussion on the functional aspect of religious language, the point I want to make is that these concepts could be considered as true within a particular tradition because the latter acknowledges them as the best expression of what is the most efficient means to attain the goal set out by its spiritual path. One could agree that Buddhists, as a general rule, did not indulge in fruitless speculations about things unrelated to what is beneficial for the aspirant to enlightenment--this is one important argument used in support of Pye's view of religious language--nevertheless, this did not prevent them from engaging in important debates over various points in the teachings of the Buddha. They did so precisely because of their differences in appreciating what is beneficial and what is not from the point of view of their respective spiritual path. In other words, the reasons underlying these differences are their implicit or explicit understanding of what is worth committing oneself to. This commitment is incidentally what establishes the specific characteristics of their own identity as a group of aspirants to enlightenment. In a way, one may say that even if it is argued that Buddhists used a pragmatic theory of truth, as Pye maintained in the light of his interpretation of the doctrine of *upāya*, it does not mean that there should not be any debate among them, something that Pye seems to wish for. On the contrary, given the idea of the functional aspect of religious concepts suggested above, one can see that there will always be some debates, i.e., always a distinction will have to be made between right and wrong views. I believe that a survey of the historical developments of the Buddhist schools and sects confirms that point rather than the view that Buddhists are impartial to doctrinal diversity because "there exists a concept, namely this very concept of skillful means, for recognizing that partial

expression of truth elsewhere is valid.”²⁶¹ In fact, it seems that Michael Pye, with his interpretation of the doctrine of *upāya*, is confusing two different issues: on the one hand, there is the issue concerning the interpretation of religious documents, i.e., hermeneutics, on the other hand, one attempts to understand the behavior of a living Buddhist tradition which is influenced by various factors such as the historical, sociological and even political environment, i.e., phenomenology. Its relationship towards the documents of its own tradition is one such factor. It will be a mistake to assume that it is the only one.

ii. The metaphysical aspect of religious language

The metaphysical aspect refers to what is said about the cognitive content of a given spiritual experience. As mentioned previously, it is, for a given group of spiritual seekers, their privileged way to describe what has been and what is to be experienced. From this perspective, a religious concept is true because it is a confirmation of the authenticity of the spiritual experience. In other words, religious concepts, in addition to being a means to a goal, are also a description of that goal. In this regard, one might consider again the implications of Pye’s understanding of the nature of religious language:

The Buddhist concept of skillful means suggests that it is of the nature of a developed religious teaching to be extended through a series of forms building upon each other and even criticizing each other, while sharing an inner consistency that cannot be directly stated. It suggests that absoluteness should be ascribed to the teaching of no one sect, even though Buddhists sometimes forget this themselves.²⁶²

The difficulty with this view is that it cannot be contradicted objectively: to verify it, one has to undergo the experience for which a given set of religious ideas and concepts are meant to bring about. Nonetheless, I believe that it can be challenged.

Firstly, it is interesting to notice that Pye once more wonders at the “deviant” behavior of the Buddhists. I believe that what he describes as an exception is in fact the rule. Indeed, it has been so far difficult to find an agreement on this idea of inner consistency from people who claimed to have had attained the final goal of their respective spiritual path.

Secondly, the view propounded by Pye does reiterate the idea that the ultimate reality is beyond conceptualization. There are indeed many passages in the

²⁶¹Pye (1990), p. 39.

²⁶²Pye (1990), p. 39.

literature of Mahāyāna Buddhism that could easily support this view. For example, in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, one learns that:

It is said that there are two truths: the conventional and the ultimate truths.
The ultimate reality is beyond the range of conceptualization; conceptualization [belongs] to the conventional world.
saṃvṛttiḥ paramārthaḥ ca satyadvayam idaṃ matam.
buddheḥ agocaraḥ tattvaṃ buddhiḥ saṃvṛtiḥ ucyate. ²⁶³

In this circumstance, it could be argued that all metaphysical claims are necessarily false with respect to the ultimate reality. As Pye himself says: "skillful means cannot be a direct expression of truth, and in some sense therefore is always false."²⁶⁴ This means that for him, skillful means belongs entirely to the conventional world whereas the ultimate reality is what he described as the inner consistency that cannot be directly stated. While this view may solve some problems with respect to explaining why there is an extreme diversity of teachings within the Buddhist tradition, it raises, however, new questions at another level.

If the ultimate is beyond conceptualization, what are the criteria for distinguishing salutary teachings from perversion? If the conventional truth serves as a pointer towards the ultimate, as argued by Nāgārjuna in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*vyavahāram anāśritya paramārthaḥ na deśyate*), ²⁶⁵ then, is there anything common between these two truths? Because it seems that Pye's interpretation of the doctrine of *upāya* leaves these problems without a solution, I believe that his view concerning the nature of religious language is not adequate. Given this affirmation, the onus is now on me to interpret the above passage. As alluded above, I am of the opinion that the conventional truth is also an expression of the ultimate, that, to some extent, it participates in the reality expressed in the ultimate truth. What is the nature of this participation, this is what I wish to explain now.

In chapter two, I gave some hints concerning the significance of thoughts in the process of spiritual development. There is another passage, taken from the *Mahānidāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, which could also be used in support of the idea that thoughts are not devoid of spiritual value. It goes as follows:

There are beings who have completely transcended all perception of matter, by the vanishing of the perception of sense-reactions and by non-attention to the perception of variety; thinking: "Space is infinite," they have attained to the sphere of Infinite Space. That is the fifth station.
There are beings who, by transcending the Sphere of Infinite Space, thinking: "Consciousness is

²⁶³BCA, IX-2.

²⁶⁴Pye (1990), p. 38.

²⁶⁵MMK, XXIV-10.

infinite," have attained to the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness. That is the sixth station. There are beings who, having transcended the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness, thinking: "There is no thing," have attained to the Sphere of No-Thingness. That is the seventh station of consciousness.

Sant' Ānanda satta sabbaso rūpasāññānaṃ samatikkamā patigha-sāññānaṃ atthagamā nānatta-sāññānaṃ amanasikārā "Ananto ākāso" ti ākāśānañcāyatanūpagā. Ayaṃ pañcamī viññāṇaṭṭhiti. Sant' Ānanda satta sabbaso ākāśānañcāyatanāṃ samatikkamma "Anantaṃ viññāṇan" ti viññāṇañcāyatanūpagā. Ayaṃ chaṭṭhā viññāṇaṭṭhiti. Sant' Ānanda satta sabbaso viññāṇañcāyatanāṃ samatikkamma "N'atthi kiñcīti" ti ākiñcaññāyatanūpagā. Ayaṃ sattamī viññāṇaṭṭhiti. ²⁶⁶

This passage is also another example of what I meant when I said, in the previous chapter, that there is a certain consistency between the means to achieve a spiritual experience and the way to describe that very experience. Because language can still be used to describe an experience which by definition should be beyond language (the Sphere of No-Thingness), I believe that the world of conventions, to which language belongs, still maintains a certain presence or a degree of participation at the transcending level. To understand the nature of the participation of language at the level of the ultimate truth is therefore the same as to inquiry what does it mean to "transcend" the world of conventions?

I would like to use two similes to explain the apparent paradox which the above affirmation leads us to. First, let us imagine that a person is given a picture of a place, a city or a landscape. That person is then required or decides to go to that place. The only information he has about reaching it is the picture given to him. Now, on the basis of that sole picture, he evaluates the most probable choices, makes hypotheses and, assuming that he has also unlimited resources to travel, he moves around to verify them. Eventually, he succeeds in reaching the place sought for. Then, at that moment, what is the relationship between the picture he has in hand and the actual experience of being at the place sought for?

This picture, although it is a very limited representation of what could be seen while being at the place sought for, remains nevertheless a true representation of it. Upon seeing that picture, for example, he who has been or is at the place it depicts, is likely to recognize it as a representation of that very place and not of another. It is therefore in that sense that religious concepts could be viewed as a confirmation of the authenticity of the spiritual experience and consequently, that religious language, in addition of being a means to a goal, is also a description of that goal, hence its metaphysical aspect. In other words, religious concepts are like snapshots of the ultimate reality and as such, although capturing only one moment of it, they are nevertheless valuable, if not the only clues for leading one to it. At

²⁶⁶D, II-69 [E: Walshe (1987), p. 228-9].

this point, it is worth noting that, referring to the above simile, no picture can fully describe the experience of being at the place sought for. A picture is always something limited with respect to the actual experience of being at the place it depicts. This limitation is, I believe, what is implied when one says that the ultimate reality is beyond conceptualization.

In this way, religious concepts, which are part of the conventional world, always maintain a certain presence at the level of the ultimate reality and for that reason, I believe that it is not appropriate to say that they are disposable like a map is, once one has arrived at a destination. Instead of being disposed of, which would mean that all connections with the ultimate reality are severed and consequently, that there are no criteria for distinguishing salutary teachings from perversion, it is their function that changes or rather their relationship with the apprehending subject that is redefined. Indeed, from being the only available picture of the reality it represents, it is now integrated into the reality it is meant to describe. At this moment, it becomes one event, among an infinity of other events, that could be used as guide to as well as a description of the place sought for. In other words, it becomes part of the background alluded to in the preceding chapter. This change of status is what it means to transcend the world of conventions. To make this more explicit, I would like to suggest a second simile.

Let us imagine that one has to assemble a puzzle. At first, all the pieces which lie apart, are almost meaningless. With one piece only, it is sometimes possible to guess what the whole puzzle looks like once assembled. On the basis of these guesses, one searches for other clues, manages to join more pieces together up to the moment when one can really see the picture the puzzle is meant to represent. At this moment, it becomes very easy to find the position of the remaining pieces. The question I would like to address at this point is which piece of the puzzle is responsible for bringing about the vision of the complete picture?

One may assume that there was one piece that triggered the experience of seeing the global picture, but one has to say that, given other circumstances, i.e., a different course of event in assembling the pieces, another piece could have been responsible for it. Moreover, once the puzzle is completed, all the pieces, by the very fact that they are now integrated into the whole picture, equally contribute to or participate in the formation of this whole picture. One may get rid of a few pieces without disturbing the picture, but this should not mean that they are disposable. On the contrary, what it means is that they are just not indispensable. In this way, even if I argue that religious concepts describe or say something about

the ultimate reality, there is still some flexibility and diversity with regard to which concepts may be used as a means. Only this time, contrary to what Pye's interpretation of religious language suggests, there are certain limitations as to what may be chosen. These limitations are imposed by the ability of these concepts to describe or represent, in a limited way, the ultimate experience they are meant to bring about. In a way, it is because religious concepts are limited with respect to the ultimate reality that they may be used as means to reach that ultimate reality; similar to the situation in which they have no connections whatsoever with the ultimate reality, if they were encompassing the entire reality, then one would also have no sense of direction. Like being everywhere at the same time, one can go nowhere. To interpret the statement which says that the ultimate reality is beyond conceptualization the way I suggested above means therefore that religious language is at a middle way between nihilism and eternalism.

iii. The ethical aspect of religious language

The ethical aspect refers to what is said about the emotional and behavioral content of a given spiritual experience. In the second chapter, I gave a few examples of what the fruits of undergoing such experience could be. First of all, there is an absence of fear which results in a self-sacrificing attitude and the acquisition of an earnest and spontaneous desire to help all sentient beings. This state of fearlessness is further characterized by a stable mind as well as by feelings of contentment and joy. The most important of these fruits, however, is probably the acquisition of a perfect peace of mind.

In the third chapter, I made a few references to the importance of this peace of mind. In fact, it is so important that, as Griffiths explained, it has become identical with enlightenment itself. In that chapter, I also questioned the validity of any spiritual approach that considers this experience of peace of mind as an end in itself. I argued that, in the context of such spiritual approach, any ideas or concepts ought to be viewed as disposable means. This view was rejected, from the perspective of the quality of the resulting spiritual experience, i.e., on the ground of its inability to transcend the duality of the subject and the object and, from the historical point of view, on the ground of its inappropriateness to account for the behavior of living Buddhists with regard to their evaluation of the various means to enlightenment.

Contrary to this view, it could be argued that the experience of perfect peace of mind is only a result of acquiring some kind of knowledge or wisdom. As

Paul Griffiths pointed out earlier, as an alternative to the spiritual approach suggested above, enlightenment consists in seeing things the way they actually are. If one is attached to things and consequently experiences suffering on account of being separated from them, it is fundamentally because one does not see the real nature of these things. The tendencies such as desire and hatred which arise in relation to the objects of the phenomenal world are in fact only secondary: one has to overcome first the ignorance that is causing these tendencies. Given this view, the acquisition of the liberating knowledge is the first priority or the final objective and consequently, the practice of moral discipline and mental restraint are to be considered as prerequisites for this acquisition of the liberating knowledge.

This view is, as Gethin says, "basically a manifestation of the principles of the consecutive stages of the path or of the hierarchy of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*."²⁶⁷ In this regard, Sangharakshita argues that:

According to the Threefold Way, spiritual life begins with *sīla* or morality, then proceeds to *samādhi* or meditation, and concludes with *paññā* or Wisdom. Ethics is only *sīla* in the Buddhist sense if it is a step on the path. Since the path leads towards the goal of Buddhahood, moral action is not merely the expression of skilful states of mind but has Buddhahood as its ultimate object.²⁶⁸

This means that ethics or rather the criteria of what it means to behave ethically are not to be seen as some kind of ultimate truth, i.e., a code which is structured on the revelations of a God as a law-giver, but rather as guidelines for developing the mental states conducive to the higher practices of the spiritual path. As Sangharakshita himself says: "The primary terms of ethical evaluation are not 'good' and 'bad' but 'skilful' and 'unskilful'".²⁶⁹

This Threefold Way is, according to the Buddhist tradition, a way to subsume the Eightfold path (*ariya-aṭṭhangika-magga*) which is the fourth Noble Truth taught by the Buddha in his first discourse at Bārāṇasī, i.e., the truth concerning the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*). This idea has been confirmed by Etienne Lamotte, an eminent scholar of Buddhism:

La quatrième vérité sainte [...] a pour objet le chemin conduisant à la destruction de la douleur (*duḥkhanirodhagāminī pratipad*). Le noble chemin à huit branches défini dans le sermon de Bénarès comporte trois éléments: la moralité, la concentration et la sagesse.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷Gethin (1992), p. 215.

²⁶⁸Subhuti (1994), p. 133.

²⁶⁹Subhuti (1994), p. 132.

²⁷⁰Lamotte (1958), p. 45.

This Eightfold path consists of: 1. Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), 2. Right Thought (*sammā-sarikappa*), 3. Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), 4. Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), 5. Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājiva*), 6. Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), 7. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and 8. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Consequently, according to the Threefold Way, *sīla* would consist in the factors 3 to 5, *samādhi*, factors 6 to 8 and *paññā*, factors 1 and 2.

At this point, it is to be noticed that the standard sequence of the Eightfold path does not give the normative progression of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, but instead, *paññā*, *sīla* and *samādhi*. According to Walshe, “this is because, while some preliminary wisdom is needed to start on the path, the final flowering of the higher wisdom follows after the development of morality and concentration”.²⁷¹ To some extent this is true, however, it seems that this change of order reveals something more.

Etienne Lamotte's statement just quoted above is following the *Cūḷavedalla sutta*'s method of classifying the eight factors in terms of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. According to Gethin, “scholars have tended to ignore the discussion in the *sutta* that immediately precedes this”:

‘Is it, sister, that the three aggregates of [*sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*] are comprised by the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*, or is it that the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* is comprised by the three aggregates?’

‘The three aggregates are not, Visākha comprised by the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*, but the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* is, Visākha, comprised by the three aggregates.’
*ariyena nu kho ayye aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṃgaḥīṭā, udāhu tīhi khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṃgaḥīṭo ti. na kho āvuso Visākha ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṃgaḥīṭā, tīhi ca kho āvuso Visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṃgaḥīṭo.*²⁷²

What is to be intended here is made explicit in the commentary of this passage, as reported by Gethin:

Herein, because the *magga* is specific while the three aggregates are all inclusive, therefore, because of its specificity, it is comprised by the three all inclusive aggregates like a city by a kingdom.
*ettha yasmā maggo sappadeso tayo khandhā nippadesā, tasmā ayam sappadesattā nagaram viya rajjena nippadesehi tīhi khandhehi saṃgaḥīṭo.*²⁷³

At this point, Gethin is asking: “So why is the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* comprised by the three *khandhas* but not vice versa?”²⁷⁴ The answer suggested by Gethin is as follows:

²⁷¹Walshe (1987), p. 25.

²⁷²M, I 301 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 211].

²⁷³Vism, XVI 95 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 211].

²⁷⁴Gethin (1992), p. 211.

The triad of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* implies a comprehensive graded description of the stages of the spiritual path. In terms of content it comprises the successive stages in full, and while reflecting the overall general nature of the actual stages of the path, it does in part represent something of an ideal scheme.²⁷⁵

The reasons why it is considered as an ideal scheme is the fact that it is generally understood, within the Buddhist tradition, that if one tries to develop *paññā*, it becomes apparent that some measure of *samādhi* is required and if one tries to develop *samādhi*, some degree of *sīla* is needed. What this means in practice, as Gethin says, “is that it is understood that someone can have developed *sīla* but need not necessarily have developed *samādhi* and *paññā*; someone can have developed *sīla* and *samādhi*, but not necessarily have developed *paññā* to any great degree. However, the converse cannot be so.”²⁷⁶

In theory, this hierarchy of spiritual achievements may make sense, but in practice, the relationship between *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* seems to be a little bit more subtle than that. Indeed, in the *Soṇadaṇḍa sutta*, one is told by the Brahmin Soṇadaṇḍa:

Just as, Gotama, one might wash hand with hand or foot with foot, even so *paññā* is fully washed by *sīla*, *sīla* is fully washed by *paññā*; where there is *sīla* there is *paññā*, where there is *paññā* there is *sīla*; one who has *sīla* has *paññā*, one who has *paññā* has *sīla*; *sīla* and *paññā* together are declared the summit of the world.
*seyyathāpi bho Gotama hatthena vā hatthaṃ dhopeyya, padena vā padam dhopeyya. evaṃ eva kho bho Gotama sīla-paridhotā paññā; paññā-paridhotam sīlam, yattha sīlam tattha paññā, yattha paññā tattha sīlam, sīlavato paññā paññāvato sīlam, sīla-paññānaṃ ca pana lokasmim aggam akkhāyati ti.*²⁷⁷

Although this passage considers the stages of the path by way of just *sīla* and *paññā* --the context was a discussion on what is required for one to be a true Brahmin-- it could be assumed that *samādhi* is to be included in this scheme as well. Indeed, in the *Mahāparinibbāna*, it is said: “*samādhi* when imbued with *sīla* leads to great fruit and profit. *Paññā* when imbued with concentration leads to great fruit and profit.” (*sīlaparibhāvito samādhi mahapphalo hoti mahānisamsa, samādhi-paribhāvitā paññā mahapphalā hoti mahānisamsā*).²⁷⁸ Therefore, what this passage presumably means “is that the intent to develop *sīla* is seen as bound up with *paññā* and that the development of *sīla* naturally tends to the development of *paññā* and *samādhi*. The

²⁷⁵Gethin (1992), p. 212.

²⁷⁶Gethin (1992), p. 209.

²⁷⁷D, I-124 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 209].

²⁷⁸D, II-81.

latter two in turn tend to the development of *sīla*.²⁷⁹ Consequently, the hierarchy referred to above should not “mean that when the novice at the initial stages of the path establishes *sīla*, he does not also in some way and to some degree begin to develop *samādhi* and *paññā*, or that when the adept at the advanced stage of the path develops *paññā* he does not need *sīla* or *samādhi*.²⁸⁰ As one of my colleagues said:

There appears to be a very close causal relationship between *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. They are dependent on each other to arise. They are regarded as three classes of eight paths and therefore each of them can be a primary path and support the others. The fulfillment of knowledge, ethical conduct or meditative practices cannot be obtained independently; each of them is inaccessible if treated separately. They can be considered as three aspects of an element or three qualities of Nibbāna. *Sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are so related with each other that when this arises the other naturally arises; there is no need to make effort to have the other arise.²⁸¹

In support of his last affirmation, he quotes the following passage taken from the *Anguttara Nikāya*:

Monks, for one whose body is calmed there is no need for the thought: I feel happiness. This, monks, is in accordance with nature—that one whose body is calmed feels happiness. Monks, for one who is happy there is no need for the thought: my mind is concentrated. It follows that the happy man’s mind is concentrated. Monks, for one who is concentrated there is no need for the thought: I know and see things as they really are. It follows naturally that one concentrated does so. Monks, for one who knows and see things as they really are there is no need for the thought: I feel revulsion; interest fades in me. It follows naturally that such a one feels revulsion and fading interest.

*passaddhakāyassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ sukhaṃ vediyāmi ti. dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vediyati. sukhino, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ cittaṃ me samādhīyatū ti. dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati. samāhitassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ yathābhūtaṃ jānāmi passāmi ti. dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati. yathābhūtaṃ, bhikkhave, jānato passato na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ nibbandāmi virajjāmi ti. dhammatā esā bhikkhave, yaṃ yathābhūtaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ nibbandati virajjati.*²⁸²

With regard to the Eightfold path then, it implies that it is not to be understood primarily as a description of the successive stages of the path. Indeed, according to Saddhatissa, a Buddhist monk and translator often writing for non-specialists:

The path leading to the release from suffering is said to be eight-fold. These are not consecutive steps. The eight factors are interdependent and must be perfected simultaneously, the fulfilment of one factor being unlikely without at least the partial development of the others.²⁸³

²⁷⁹Gethin (1992), p. 209.

²⁸⁰Gethin (1992), p. 209.

²⁸¹Mai (1994), p. 83-84.

²⁸²A, X-I, ii [E: G.S. vol. 5, p. 3-4].

²⁸³Saddhatissa (1971), p. 46.

I shall come back to this idea of interdependence when discussing the role of the *pāramitās* or Perfections in the context of the cultivation of *bodhicitta*. Indeed, as with the Eightfold path and its threefold division into *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, there is also a tendency to view the various *pāramitās* as successive stages of spiritual achievements, one leading to the other. For the moment, I would like to finish the present discussion on the significance of the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*.

While the scheme consisting in the triad of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* may be seen as a general picture of the various aspects of the path, the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* as a whole represents, according to Gethin, “an actual manifestation of all three aspects so that the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* can be seen as the essential distillation of the aggregates of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.”²⁸⁴ In other words, the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* is the consummation of the development of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. As Gethin further explains:

It is the path or way of life that issues from that development. Its end is a reflection and crystallization of the way one has come. In other words, the development of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* in all its various aspects culminates in right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right striving, right mindfulness, right concentration—*paññā*, *sīla* and *samādhi*, the three essential aspects in perfect balance.²⁸⁵

In support of his affirmation, Gethin essentially argues that the Eightfold path is where one wishes to arrive as well as the way one must go to get there. In other words, “the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* is the transformation of view, thought, speech, action, livelihood, striving, mindfulness and concentration into right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right striving, right mindfulness, right concentration.”²⁸⁶ How then the Eightfold path could be seen not only as a means but also as the goal of spiritual endeavor? Gethin gives the following arguments.

First of all, the Buddhist tradition seems to view the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* as a kind of yardstick against which all spiritual practice could be compared. Indeed, in the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, when Subhadda asked the Buddha whether teachers such as Pūraṇa Kassapa have all realized the truth, the Buddha responded:

Enough, Subhadda, leave aside this question of whether all who claim direct knowledge for themselves really have not had direct knowledge, or whether some have and some have not. I shall teach you *dhamma*, Subhadda. Hear it, pay careful attention, I shall speak... Now in the *dhamma-vinaya* where the noble eight-factored path is not found, there too the *samaṇa* [leaders in

²⁸⁴Gethin (1992), p. 212.

²⁸⁵Gethin (1992), p. 212.

²⁸⁶Gethin (1992), p. 207.

religious life²⁸⁷] is not found, there too the second ... the third ... the fourth *samaṇa* is not found. But in the *dhamma-vinaya* where the noble eight-factored path is found, there too the *samaṇa* is found, there too the second ... the third ... the fourth *samaṇa* is found.

*alam Subhadda. tiṭṭhat'etaṃ sabbe te sakāya paṭiññāya abbhaññāṃsu, sabbe vā na abbhaññāṃsu udāyu ekacce abbhaññāṃsu ekacce na abbhaññāṃsū ti. dhammaṃ te Subhadda desessāmi. taṃ suṇāhi sādhukaṃ manasikarohi bhāssissāmi ti ... yasmim kho Subhadda dhamma-vinaye ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo na upalabbhati, samaṇo pi tattha na upalabbhati dutiyo ... tatiyo ... catuttho pi tattha samaṇo na upalabbhati. yasmim ca kho Subhadda dhamma-vinaye ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo upalabbhati, samaṇo pi tattha upalabbhati dutiyo ... tatiyo ... catuttho pi tattha samaṇo upalabbhati.*²⁸⁸

As such, the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* seems to be viewed not as a specific path, but rather, as something encompassing some kind of principle which is the essence of all spiritual paths. The understanding of this principle, rather than going through the different stages it refers to, appears to be the solution to the basic problem of suffering. In other words, the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*, as the fourth Noble Truth, is something one is awakened to. In fact, not only the fourth Noble Truth, but the entire scheme of the four Noble Truths. This might explain why realization of these Noble Truths is seen, in the *Sāmaññaphala sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, as an accomplishment of the practice of the four *jhānas* or meditations. If the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* were to be considered simply as path, then one would face a paradox: how could it be possible to follow a path whose accomplishment results in understanding the path to follow? This idea that the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* is to be seen as the content of spiritual experience might become clearer when considering Gethin's second argument.

The second argument addresses the significance of the term *ariya* in the expression *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*. This term has been analyzed in the context of the *Abhidhamma* but, according to Gethin, its usage has been somewhat overlooked when considering early Pāli literature such as the *Nikāyas*. In this regard, Gethin believes that "the *Nikāyas*' technical usage of the term *ariya* must be considered in broad agreement with, although not always as clear cut as, the usage in the *Abhidhamma/Abhidharma* literature."²⁸⁹ This usage can be summarized thus:

In terms of Buddhist spiritual hierarchy it is applied to anything that is directly associated with the world-transcending (*lokuttara*) knowledge of the stream-attainer, the once-returner, the non-returner and the *arahant/arhat*—the 'noble persons' (*ariya-puggala/ārya-pudgala*). By way of contrast we have the 'world' (*loka*): the sphere of the five senses (*kāmvācara*), the *jhānas* of the

²⁸⁷PED, p. 682.

²⁸⁸D, II-151 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 204].

²⁸⁹Gethin (1992), p. 205.

form sphere (*rūpāvacara*) and the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*); in short, the 'world' accessible to the ordinary man (*puthujjana*).²⁹⁰

What this means is that "there are strong grounds for thinking that the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* should be particularly associated with the notion of *sotāpatti* (the stage of stream-attainer).²⁹¹ Indeed, a passage taken from the *Samyutta Nikāya* confirms this:

'The "stream" is spoken of Sāriputta. What stream is this, Sāriputta?'

'The stream, lord, is just the noble eight-factored path, namely right view ... right concentration.'
'Good, good, Sāriputta ... The "stream-attainer" is spoken of, Sāriputta. What stream-attainer is this?'

'Now, lord, one who is endowed with this noble eight-factored path he is said to be a stream-attainer—just a venerable one of some name, of some family'

*soto soto ti ha Sāriputta vuccati. katamo nu kho Sāriputta soto ti. ayam eva hi bhante ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo soto, seyyathīdam sammā-diṭṭhi. pe. sammā-samādhī ti. sādhu sādhu Sāriputta ... sotāpanno sotāpanno ti hi daṃ Sāriputta vuccati. katamo no kho Sāriputta sotāpanno ti. yo hi bhante iminā ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena samannāgato. ayam vuccati sotāpanno yoyam āyasmā evaṃ nāmo evaṃ gotto ti.*²⁹²

The significance of the term *ariya* is therefore to identify, whatever knowledge or behavior is associated to it, something that is possible only after a certain spiritual breakthrough has occurred. This means that *sīla*, which is right speech, right action and right livelihood, is not a prerequisite for the acquisition of *samādhī* and *paññā* but rather it is a characteristic of what it means to undergo that spiritual breakthrough. In this regard, I would like to present a simile, taken again from the *Samyutta Nikāya*, which I believe illustrates well the conception of the spiritual progress related to the *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*:

As if, *bhikkhus*, a person wandering in the forest, in the jungle were to see an ancient path, an ancient road along which men of old had gone. And he would follow it, and as he followed it he would see an ancient city, an ancient seat of kings which men of old had inhabited, possessing parks, gardens, lotus-ponds, with high walls, a delightful place. And then that person would tell the king of his minister: 'You should surely know, sir, that while wandering in the forest, in the jungle I saw an ancient path ... and ancient city ... a delightful place. Claim that city, sir!' And then the king of the king's minister would claim that city. And after a time that city would become prosperous and wealthy, with many people, filled with people, achieving growth and prosperity. Just so, I saw an ancient path, the ancient road along which the fully awakened ones of old had gone ... namely the noble eight-factored path ... I followed it and following it I knew directly old age and death, the arising of old age and death, the cessation of old age and death, the way leading to the cessation of old age and death."

seyyathāpi bhikkave puriso araññe pavane caramāno passeyya purāṇaṃ maggaṃ purāṇañjasam pubbakehi manussehi anuyātaṃ so taṃ anugaccheyya taṃ anugacchanto passeyya purāṇaṃ nagaraṃ purāṇaṃ rāja-dhānim pubbakehi manussehi ajjhāvutthaṃ ārama-sampannaṃ vana-

²⁹⁰Gethin (1992), p. 205.

²⁹¹Gethin (1992), p. 205-6.

²⁹²S, V-347 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 206].

sampannam pokkaraṇī-sampannam uddāpavantam ramaṇīyam atha kho so bhikkhave puriso raṇṇo vā rāja-mahāmattassa vā āroceyya. yagghe bhante jāneyyāsi. ahaṃ addasaṃ araṇṇe pavane caramāno purāṇam maggaṃ ... purāṇam nagaraṃ ... ramaṇīyam. taṃ bhante nagaraṃ māpehi ti. atha kho bhikkhave rājā vā rāja-mahāmatto vā taṃ nagaraṃ māpeyya. tad assa nagaraṃ aparena samayena iddhaṃ ceva phītaṃ ca bahujaṇaṃ ākiṇṇa-manussaṃ vuddhi-vepulla-ppattaṃ. evaṃ eva khvāhaṃ bhikkhave addasaṃ purāṇam maggaṃ purāṇaṇjaṣaṃ pubbahehi sammā-sambuddhehi anuyātaṃ ... ayaṃ eva ariyo atthaṇṇiko maggo ... taṃ anugacchim. taṃ anugacchanto jarā-maraṇam abbaññāsim, jarā-maraṇa-samudayaṃ abbaññāsim, jarāmarāṇa-nirodhaṃ abbaññāsim, jarā-maraṇa-nirodha-gāminim paṭipadam abbaññāsim ²⁹³

Gethin suggests to consider this simile from the point of view of the king. He is without doubt likened to the aspirant to enlightenment who has been instructed from the Buddha about the existence of a path leading to cessation of suffering. The king must find the path in the jungle himself. For that, he has to first accept on trust the existence of such path. This path, which is somewhere in the jungle, is not something easily accessible. Therefore, the search for it may involve some wandering, doubts may also arise as to its existence, etc. But as soon as he comes across the path he was eagerly searching, one may assume that he experiences great relief because, having seen the way to the delightful place, the possibility to reach it is now a certainty. Similarly, the aspirant to enlightenment may work with ordinary view and practices, at this point he may doubt the existence of a path leading to the cessation of suffering but then, he comes across the Eightfold path and follows it. What it means to follow this path is what I discussed in the context of *bodhiprasthānacitta*, i.e., to go along a stream in which motivation and self-centered desires, even that for enlightenment, are absent and in which mental factors that allow spiritual progression are present.

At this point I believe that it is obvious why I consider that religious language could be true from an ethical perspective. A religious concept is true from the ethical point of view because there is no difference between the way to describe a behavior which is induced by such concept or its implications, at the worldly level, and that which results from assimilating or integrating it, as a kind of spiritual breakthrough. Before the experience, the change of behavior may be a conscious act requiring efforts; after the experience, the desired behavior has become spontaneous, like a second nature. This idea of truth from the ethical point of view also means that behavior is a sign of spiritual accomplishment, as was the case with the Buddha. In the *Sāmaññaphala sutta*, for example, one is told that it

²⁹³S, II-105-6 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 224-5].

happens that a Tathāgata arises in the world, an Arahant, fully-enlightened Buddha, endowed with wisdom and conduct (*vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*).²⁹⁴

In chapter two, while discussing the ethical aspect of the concept of *bodhicitta*, I gave a few examples of the spontaneous character of the behavior of the bodhisattva. I have also shown that motivation, at this level, had no role to play. As a matter of fact, such motivation, because it reinforces the distinction between subject and object, could even be counter-productive. If motivation had some importance, it could be for bringing one to this state of spontaneous behavior. In the case of *bodhicitta*, for example, the arising of *bodhicitta* always means a change of behavior, one of which is the acquisition of an earnest and spontaneous desire to help all sentient beings. One way to acquire this desire could therefore be to actually try to be of help to all sentient beings. One should not, however, interpret this statement as a desire leading to the achievement of a mental state characterized by the desire to help; as already discussed, this approach might not be sufficient to rise one above the duality of subject and object or more precisely, the duality between the situation in which one helps and the one in which one does not.

Given this circumstance, I believe that the appropriate approach would be instead to search for the feeling that is likely to result from understanding that the desire to help all sentient beings is a characteristic of having produced *bodhicitta*. In other words, to try to feel already what one is supposed to feel when acknowledging *bodhicitta* as a description of one's only reality. In this way, one combines the functional, the metaphysical as well as the ethical aspects of religious language. How this can be done will be revealed by explaining the cultivation of awareness.

²⁹⁴D, I-62.

2. The cultivation of awareness

There is, I believe, a key passage in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* which makes the cultivation of awareness quite explicit. This passage is closely connected to the one previously used to criticize the concept of *bodhicitta* as object of concentration. I would therefore like to provide a fresh translation of it and comment it on with the help of Prajñākaramati's Sanskrit commentary.

Even if the world is known to be constituted of illusion, how could a tendency be destroyed, as [for example] the creator of an illusory woman, who manages to fall in love with his [creation]?
jñāte māyopamātve 'pi katham kleśo nivartate,
yadā māyāstriyāṃ rāgastatkartuḥ api jāyate.

[The reason is that] the impression disturbing [a clear perception of] reality of the creator has not been worn out. Consequently, in that moment of seeing her, his impression of emptiness is weak.

aprahīṇā hi tatkartuḥ jñeyasaṃkleśavāsanā,
tad dṛṣṭikāle tasyāto durbalā śūnyavāsanā.

By reinforcing the impression of emptiness, the impression [which causes the belief in] existence will be abandoned. And with the practice of [thinking] that nothing [existence as well as the idea of absence of existence] is, the impression of emptiness will afterwards also be worn out.

śūnyatā-vāsanā-ādhanāt hīyate bhāvavāsanā,
kiñcit nāsti iti ca abhyāsāt sā api paścāt prahīyate.

When existence is not conceived of on account of imagining that it is not, then how can the idea of absence of existence, which is [now] without support, stand in front of the mind?

yadā na labhyate bhāvo yo na asti iti prakalpyate,
tadā nirāśrayo 'bhāvaḥ katham tiṣṭhet mateḥ purāḥ.

If neither existence nor non-existence can stand in front of the mind, then [the mind], having no other alternative, will be without support and become pacified.

yadā na bhāvo na abhāvaḥ mateḥ santiṣṭhate purāḥ.
tadā anyagatyabhāvena nirālambā praśāmyati. ²⁹⁵

This experience in which the impression of emptiness itself is dissolved and the mind pacified is called the "emptiness of emptiness" because all objects of imagination have been destroyed (*sarvasaṅkalpahānāya śūnyatāmṛtadeśanā*). ²⁹⁶

At first, this passage identifies a problem related to the cause of one's attachment: if the world is an illusion, i.e., without real existence, how can it defile the mind of the people? There is a problem because it is assumed that a thing, in order to leave a trace on a mind, must be truly existent. This idea has been used as an objection to the concept of emptiness itself. Indeed, in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* of

²⁹⁵BCA, IX-31-35.

²⁹⁶BCA, p. 304. This is taken from the *catuḥstava*, a text allegedly attributed to Nāgārjuna (Nakamura (1980), p. 242).

Nāgārjuna, the objector believes that it would not be appropriate (*na ca etat iṣṭam*)²⁹⁷ to admit that things which are empty are capable of performing actions (*śūnyā api sarvabhāvāḥ kāryakriyāsamarthā bhaveyuh*).²⁹⁸ This objection is based on a misunderstanding of what it means for a thing to be empty. As Nāgārjuna says: things are empty because of being dependently originated (*pratītyasamutpannatvāt*)²⁹⁹ and not because they are absent, so that objects like a cart, a pot, a cloth, etc. may perform specific functions such as carrying things and protecting from cold. (*yathā ca pratītyasamutpannatvāt svabhāvaśūnyā api rathapaṭaghata-ādayaḥ sveṣu sveṣu kāryeṣu kāṣṭhatṛṇamṛttikāharaṇe madhūdakapayasām dhāraṇe śīta-vātātapaparitrāṇāprabhṛtiṣu vartante*).³⁰⁰ Similarly, the example of the creator of an illusory woman who becomes infatuated in his creation is given as an argument in favor of the fact that things, although they are lacking intrinsic existence, can nevertheless cause the impregnation of mental habits such as desire. This example appears to be appropriate because one is told by the commentator Prajñākaramati, it is possible for certain magician to create illusory objects by means of sacred formulae or drugs (*mantra-auśadhi-sārthya-nirmita*).³⁰¹ These objects were definitively unreal and yet, one, including their creator, could develop feelings of attachment towards them.

The reason why one is likely to develop such feelings of attachment is given in the second verse of the above passage: it is because one's mind is permeated, so to speak, with the idea that things have an inherent existence (*vastu-svabhāvatā-samāropāt*)³⁰² and that prevents one from seeing things as they really are. The term *samāropaḥ* usually means attribution or mental assumption. In the light of my explanation of the dual awareness, I believe that it refers to the background which defines all objects of perception. This means that the idea that things are endowed with an inherent existence is not an object of perception, but rather, it is what defines all objects that are perceived. The word that is used to identify this phenomenon of impregnation is *vāsanā* (impression). The choice of this term is interesting by itself because it comes from the verbal root *√vās* which gives the verb *vāsayati*. According to Apte, it means: 1. to scent, perfume, incense, fumigate,

²⁹⁷Bhattacharya (1978), p. 97.

²⁹⁸Bhattacharya (1978), p. 97.

²⁹⁹Bhattacharya (1978), p. 108.

³⁰⁰Vv, verse 22.

³⁰¹BCA, p. 302.

³⁰²BCA, p. 302.

make fragrant; 2. to steep, infuse; and 3. spice, season.³⁰³ More interesting is the process used to perfume, for example, cloths: one would put in a box one piece of cloth which has been soaked in perfume under a pile of unsoaked cloths; by the process of suffusion all the unsoaked cloths will be impregnated by the scent of the perfume. Similarly, the idea of inherent existence impregnates all objects of perception. Because of that, the impression that things lack inherent existence is weak if not totally absent.

This impression, according to Prajñākaramati, is caused by the successive repetition of acknowledging the wrong idea (*paramparābhyasta-mithya-vikalpa*)³⁰⁴ that things are inherently existing and it is comparable to an impregnation or a *karma*-formation which is planted like a seed in the mental continuum (*bīja-bhūta-citta-santati-saṃskāra-ādhānam*).³⁰⁵ Given this process of impregnation, the antidote (*pratipakṣaḥ*) prescribed is to develop or cultivate the impression that things lack inherent existence also by the constant practice of thinking that nothing is actually existent (*kiñcit na asti iti abhyāsāt*). This practice is not characterized by fixing one's mind on the idea that nothing exists, but rather, it is a kind of investigation involving every aspect of the cognitive faculty.

The term that seems to be usually used to designate that investigation is *vicāra*. Indeed, a little bit further in the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, it is said:

If, in the presence of an annihilating cause, there is no production of suffering, then it would mean that what is called "feeling" is the result of an attachment to a false idea.
viruddha-pratyaya-utpattau duḥkhasya anudayo yadi,
kalpanābhiniveśo hi vedanā iti āgatam nanu.

Therefore, this investigation is conceived as the antidote [of this unjustified feeling]. That is why, it is, for the yogis, the food —which consists of the content of any conceptual mind activity— of their meditative absorption.

ataḥ eva vicāraḥ ayam pratipakṣaḥ asya bhāvyaḥ.
*vikalpa-kṣetra-sambhūta-dhyāna-āhārāḥ hi yoginaḥ.*³⁰⁶

What is meant by this conceptual mind activity (*vikalpa*) is a passionless (*viviktaṃ kamaiḥ*) analysis (*vitarka*) of the idea that what is called "feeling" is the result of an attachment to a false idea (*kalpanābhiniveśo vedanā iti*).³⁰⁷ What should be noticed also in this passage, is the link between meditation (*dhyāna*) and *vicāra*; *vicāra*

³⁰³SED, p. 1419.

³⁰⁴BCA, p. 302.

³⁰⁵BCA, p. 302.

³⁰⁶BCA, p. 363-4.

³⁰⁷BCA, p. 364.

appears to bring about a deeper *dhyāna* and consequently, a greater peace of mind. Indeed, Prajñākaramati said that when one is investigating (*vicāryamāṇa*) the fact that in reality the “I” does not exist (*aḥam eva na kiñcit vastuvat*), one should not experience fear. Therefore, from investigation fear ceases (*ito 'pi vicārāt trāso nivartate*).³⁰⁸ A last point concerning this term is worth mentioning. In his commentary of the 109th verse of chapter nine of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Prajñākaramati gives the term *vimarśaḥ* as a gloss for *vicāraḥ*. This term means, according to Apte: 1. deliberation, consideration, examination, discussion; 2. reasoning; 3. a conflicting judgment; 4. hesitation; 5. the impression left on the mind by past good or bad actions; see *vāsanā*; and 6. knowledge.³⁰⁹ This definition seems to encompass all major components of what is meant by *vicāra*. Firstly, it is a critical examination and reasoning on the basis of accepted truths, secondly, it is an hesitation in the sense that it challenges the assumptions of what is investigated and finally, it is also the result of its activity, i.e., it leaves a new impression on the mind of the investigator.

This investigation is what I called the cultivation of awareness. The content of an awareness is the background which defines all objects of perception. In some Advaita Vedānta schools of thought, for example, it is said that the phenomenal world is a projection on a screen; this is true to the extent that the screen is not only a reality to be discovered but also something that has to be created or caused to be revealed. The cultivation of awareness is therefore characterized by building up an awareness of a background. In this regard, it might be interesting to draw a parallel with Christian iconography. According to the Slavic iconographers, the background of the icon is called “light” (*svet*). Its function is specifically to reveal the presence of the divine in the scene represented. In fact, every element of this scene is depicted in such a way that it is always the background that imposes itself. This is the effect that the iconographer has to reproduce in each of his icons whatever scene he represents. Similarly, the cultivation of an awareness is to depict the phenomenal world in such a way that the content of this awareness becomes more and more obvious. As such, the background is made to cover all aspects of existence or every and each moment of existence is caused to be viewed as a manifestation of it. I believe that when one looks at spiritual practice from this perspective, the differences between the various traditions of Buddhism such as

³⁰⁸BCA, p. 325.

³⁰⁹SED, p. 1459.

Theravāda and Mahāyāna are only in terms of the content of awareness and not in terms of the spiritual approach. Let us look at two examples.

i. Examples of the cultivation of awareness

In the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, a text of the Theravāda tradition, one finds the canonical explanation of the Noble Truth of Suffering:

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness and distress are suffering. Being attached to the unloved is suffering, being separated from the loved is suffering, not getting what one wants is suffering. In short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering.

*katamañ ca bhikkhave dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ? Jāti pi dukkhā, jarā pi dukkhā [vyādhi pi dukkhā] maraṇaṃ pi dukkhā, soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsā pi dukkhā, yam p' icchaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhā, saṃkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā.*³¹⁰

It appears that, in this short explanation of the idea of suffering, one already finds two levels of investigation.

The first level is related to more conventional matters such as the loss of a loved one. It is a reflection on what our daily life has in store for us. It is meant to intensify our sense of dissatisfaction with the world. Historically speaking, it could be argued that this idea of suffering is above all a result of the conditions the early Buddhists found themselves. Indeed:

Several reasons have been suggested to account for this great wave of pessimism, occurring as it did in an expanding society, and in a culture that was rapidly developing both intellectually and materially. It has been suggested that the change in outlook was due to the break-up of old tribes and their replacement by kingdoms wherein ethnic ties and the sense of security that they gave were lost or weakened, thus leading to a deep-seated psychological unease affecting all sections of the people.³¹¹

Given this circumstance, many people commenting on the Buddhist tradition as a whole have been tempted to interpret the First Noble Truth of the Buddha as a reiteration of this mood of pessimism. To that, other scholars have reacted by saying that this interpretation overlooks the fact that there is a Fourth Noble Truth, i.e., a way leading to its cessation.³¹² This would mean that the reflection on the idea of suffering is a means to awaken and reinforce the desire to escape a dissatisfying world. This is probably one way of conceiving the significance of the First Noble Truth but I believe that it is not appropriate: it fails to explain the

³¹⁰D, II-305 [E: Walshe (1987), p. 344].

³¹¹Embree (1988), p. 45.

³¹²Sangharakshita (1966), p. 123.

philosophical developments that the Buddhists produced most probably from investigating the various implications related to this idea of suffering.

I think that the First Noble Truth was not meant to serve as a kind of justification for spiritual involvement. On the contrary, the decision to find a way to change one's dissatisfying condition is always assumed in the teachings of the Buddha. Indeed, he gives advice or refutes his challengers always on questions concerning the way; there is no instance of proselytism on the part of the Buddha or his disciples.³¹³ Instead, I am of the opinion that the investigation related to the idea of suffering is meant to deepen one's meditative absorption. One can easily imagine that the understanding of the painful nature of one's daily existence leads one to develop a sense of detachment from the things likely to cause pain. This is already a spiritual approach producing some fruits. It is, however, possible that such understanding might not be sufficient: one may have doubt about the universality of the idea of suffering by arguing that despite the impression that life is suffering, it also has its good moments; one has simply to accept this alternation of ups and downs. In order to offset such a doubt, one's investigation has to reach a level beyond the psychological dimension.

It appears that there is a more subtle form of suffering that can only be perceived by the practice of what Vetter called "the discriminative insight."³¹⁴ According to those who went beyond the ordinary sphere of perception, all existence is characterized by impermanence (*anicca*), the absence of essence or hard core (*anatta*) and their potential to lead to suffering or the fact that they are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). Each of these characteristics became the theme of many meditative practices as well as the source of the development of metaphysical theories concerning the nature of things. For instance, the meditation on the decaying body could be used to neutralize certain mental habits, as mentioned in the third chapter, but I would argue that its main purpose is to bring about an ever greater awareness of the idea of impermanence. As a matter of fact, those who pursued the investigation on the idea of impermanence, not satisfied to deal only with observable events, went as far as saying that existence consisted in a succession of very short moments (*kṣaṇa*) so that it lasts, according to certain

³¹³One possible exception to this is the case of the disciple who made a display of supernatural powers in order to attract people to the practice of the Buddhist path. We are told that he was reprimanded by the Buddha thus settling the question on the use of such "spiritual pyrotechnic" as a means to convert people.

³¹⁴Vetter (1988).

schools of early Buddhism (the Sautrāntika in particular), a moment so brief that one is capable of perceiving only the trace of its occurrence.

The idea of absence of hard core, on the other hand, led to the formulation of the theory of the five constituents of being (*pañca-khandha*) and to the idea of no-self. According to this theory, a human being is made up of five aggregates or *khandhas*, i.e.: form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental disposition (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Apart from these five aggregates there is nothing more, hence no-self (*anatta*). This idea that a human being is made up of parts has been extrapolated to include all aspects of the perceivable world. Indeed, it was believed that the world consisted of imperceptible elements called *dharma*s. It might exceed the scope of the present research to investigate all the implications of this idea, but suffice to say that, at this point in the practice of discriminative insight, one has covered a lot of ground in creating or revealing a background upon which all experience of the phenomenal world finds a new meaning.

The second example I would like to use is taken from Nāgārjuna's *Mūla-madhyamamakārikā*. The philosophical goals of Nāgārjuna have been the subject of a lot of speculations among modern Buddhologists. Indeed:

Over the past half-century the doctrine of the Madhyamaka school, and in particular that of Nāgārjuna, has been variously described as nihilism, monism, irrationalism, misology, agnosticism, scepticism, criticism, dialectic, mysticism, acosmism, absolutism, relativism, nominalism, and linguistic analysis with therapeutic value.³¹⁵

All these descriptions of what Nāgārjuna is or what he attempts to do in his *Mūla-madhyamamakārikā* assumes that the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*), which is the central theme of his work, is a means to an end. It would be much simpler to argue that the means is itself the end so that the idea of dependent origination is what appropriately describes one's only reality. In this circumstance, Nāgārjuna, if one wants to define him, is a "dependent-originationist" (*pratītyasamutpādavādin*). It think that it should be obvious that the whole enterprise of Nāgārjuna in the *Mūlamadhyamamakārikā* is to convince us, using even fallacious argumentation,³¹⁶ of the fact that everything, including our most established concepts such as cause and effect or movement, does not exist on its own. The purpose of all his reflection and investigation is to push to the background the idea of dependent origination, i.e., to define all aspects of the phenomenal world in terms of it. In other words, what he is attempting to do, is to "perfume" the phenomenal

³¹⁵Ruegg (1981), p. 2.

³¹⁶In this regard, see Hayes (1994).

world with the idea of dependent origination. As with the cultivation of awareness of the idea that everything is suffering, the impressions left on the mind by the investigation of the implications related to the idea of dependent origination should bring about an attitude of detachment and thereby calming the anxious activity of the mind. So far, in my description of the cultivation of an awareness, I have always assumed that the feeling of detachment was an immediate consequence of developing an ever greater awareness. In the next paragraphs, I would like to show how such an awareness can cause a feeling of detachment.

ii. The feeling of detachment

First, I would like to quote a passage which I believe confirms the fact that awareness of an idea that includes all aspects of the phenomenal world is interrelated with a feeling of detachment. This passage is taken from the *Mahāsaccaka sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and appears to refer to a spiritual experience the Buddha had before he left his family to search for immortality.

This, Aggivessana, occurred to me: 'I know that while my father, the Sakyan, was ploughing, and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, entering on the first meditation, which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful, and while abiding therein, I thought: 'Now could this be a way to awakening?' Then following on my mindfulness, Aggivessana, there was the consciousness: This is itself the Way to awakening.' *Tassa mayham Aggivessana etad ahoṣi: Abhiñāmi kho pañāham pitu Sakkassa kammante sītāya jambucchāyāya nisinno vivicc' eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekaṃ pītisukhaṃ pathamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharitā, siyā nu kho eso maggo bodhāyāti. Tassa mayham Aggivessana satānusāri viññānaṃ ahoṣi: eso va maggo bodhāyāti.* ³¹⁷

This entering of the first meditation (*jhāna*) is also called the experience of entering the Stream (*sotāpanna*) and is characterized, among other things, by the giving up for ever of the belief in personality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This experience is also identified as "the opening of the Dhamma-eye" (*dhamma-cakkhu*) and, according to Buddhaghosa,³¹⁸ at this moment, one is said to have glimpsed *nibbāna*. On account of this experience, which is not devoid of cognitive content and even mental activity, the Buddha tells us that he entered a state of aloofness or detachment. At this point it may be worth noting some of the implications related to this state in which one feels aloof.

³¹⁷M, vol I, p. 246-7 [E: M.L.S. p. 301].

³¹⁸cf. *Visuddhimagga*, 22.126.

In the above passage, it is said the one becomes “aloof from the pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind.” The term used to describe this state is derived from the Pāli verb *viviccati*. This verb means: to separate oneself, to depart from, to be alone and to separate.³¹⁹ It seems therefore that this state of detachment is characterized by the creation of a distance or a stepping back away from the stage of the phenomenal experiences such as passion and hatred. Consequently, this experience is not an annihilation of one’s mental states, which is, as discussed in chapter three, the main purpose of the practice of concentration on a single object, but rather, it is the establishment of a new relationship between these mental states and the one who experiences them. This means that spiritual practice, at some point, has nothing to do with chasing away bad habits or acquiring good ones. I believe that one passage of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* confirms this:

And how, monks, does a monk abide contemplating mind as mind? Here, a monk knows a lustful mind as lustful, a mind free from lust as free from lust; a hating mind as hating, a mind free from hate as free from hate; a deluded mind as deluded, an undeluded mind as undeluded; a contracted mind as contracted, a distracted mind as distracted; a developed mind as developed, an undeveloped mind as undeveloped; a surpassed mind as surpassed, an unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed; a concentrated mind as concentrated, an unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated; a liberated mind as liberated, an unliberated mind as unliberated.

kathaṃ ca bhikkhave citta cittānupassī viharati? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sarāgaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, vītārāgaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vītārāgaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, sadosaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sadosaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, vītadosaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vītadosaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, samohaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘samohaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, vītamohaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vītamohaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, saṃkhittaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘saṃkhittaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, vikkhittaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vikkhittaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, mahaggataṃ vā cittaṃ ‘mahaggataṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, amahaggataṃ vā cittaṃ ‘amahaggataṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, sa-uttaraṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sa-uttaraṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, anuttaraṃ vā cittaṃ ‘anuttaraṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, samāhitaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘samāhitaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, asaṃhitaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘asaṃhitaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, vimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vimuttaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti, avimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘avimuttaṃ cittaṃ ti’ pajānāti. ³²⁰

Thus, the mind may take whatever form possible and this has no repercussion on the attitude of the one who is abiding in such a state. This is possible, not on account of a sheer force of mind-control, but rather on a redefinition of the meaning and the significance of these mental states, i.e., the establishment of a new relationship between these mental states and the one who experiences them. This redefinition is the result of a transformation of what is viewed as their background. In order to make this point clearer, I would like to suggest an example taken from the field of dramaturgy.

³¹⁹PED, p. 638.

³²⁰D, II-299 [E: Walshe (1987), p. 340].

The difference between a tragedy and a comedy is precisely based on this notion of distance. In a tragedy, for example, the tragic effect is created by eliminating the sense of distance that might exist between the spectator and the character. Everything is done so that the former fully identifies himself with the plight and the fate of the latter. In this context, the art of the dramaturge and that of the producer is to draw the spectator away from his usual reality and absorb him into the plot of the play. At this point, the reality of the character becomes the reality of the spectator. In a comedy, it is exactly the reverse process that is going on.

Let us take, for example, the plays of Molière, a French author from the XVIIth century. The comical effect is achieved by creating a distance between the spectator and the reality of the characters. Most of his comedies are based on cases of mistaken identity. The spectator is aware of the mistaken identity while most of the characters are not. Thus, the spectator is aware of two levels of reality: the reality based on the mistaken identity and that based on the overall plot of the play. I said that most of the characters are unaware of the mistaken situation because in a lot of cases, there is one character who is not fooled. His function is very important in this process of creation of a distance between the spectator and the reality of the characters. He is the one who often addresses himself to the spectator as spectator, i.e., as an observer. He makes sure by his repartees that the spectator understands what is going on at the level of the plot. This plot, and this is the most interesting part of the play, very often carries a distinct message. In the case of Molière's work, the message is that distinctions between social classes are, from the point of view of human nature, unjustified and unfounded. When looking more closely at the structure of such plays, one may notice that in fact three realities are involved: the first is related to the prejudices of the spectator before the play, the second is that of the characters acting under the assumptions of the mistaken situation. This second reality is the means for the realization of the third reality which has to be assimilated by the spectator. This structure incidently corresponds to the three aspects of religious concepts: the plot evolving in accordance with the assumptions of the mistaken situation is the means as well as a manifestation of the new understanding which has to be assimilated, an understanding that is supposed to have a direct implication on the behavior of the spectator. In this way, one can see how theater could be used as a means to change social awareness. In this regard, it might be appropriate to look at Bertold Brecht's ideas concerning dramaturgy.

Bertold Brecht is a German dramaturge who lived in the first part of this century. He was very much concerned by the social role of theater. He believed that much of the Classics were reinforcing the social structure of his time which was based on inequality of social classes and injustice. This reinforcement was made possible because spectators, as mentioned above in the case of a tragedy, were assimilating the reality of the plots with their own. Because of that, they were not capable of seeing and understanding the reasons causing human tragedy. He thought that, if theater ought to bring about a new awareness, a knowledge of the root cause of human misery, spectators should be prevented from being absorbed into hopeless realities, i.e., they should become more detached from the situations they were confronted to. For that purpose, Brecht coined a new word: *Entfremdungseffekt* (the process of alienation).

One example of an application of this process was to let some actors, during the course of the play, walk through or in front of the stage with signs carrying slogans. The purpose was to distract the spectators from the plot as well as giving indications on how to understand the context in which this plot was articulated. At this point, it has to be said that Brecht was a Marxist and believed that the reality described by Marxist theory was scientific and objective. But nevertheless, because people were engrossed into their social prejudices, they had to be instructed. Such was the role of one of his famous plays, *Mother Courage*. In this play, the spectator is invited to understand that greed has its price--Mother Courage makes a living on account of war but in the same time, loses her sons because of it-- and that price is to be paid, not because of a certain fatality, but because of a lack of awareness of the causes of that tragic situation. It was believed by Brecht that, as soon as people would understand these causes, they would take action to eradicate them, i.e., to overthrow the existing social and political system. This later play showed in fact a greater maturity in applying the *Entfremdungseffekt* because, instead of using external devices such as signs, the plot itself, by highlighting its inherent contradictions, created the effect of distance. In short, what Brecht did was to recycle tragedy, which was usually used for reinforcing existing prejudices, to a means of transforming social awareness, a role that appears to be reserved to comedy only. In a way, Brecht, most probably without being aware of it, used the technique adopted by Nāgārjuna: to bring to the fore the inherent contradictions of the wrong way of looking at things, contradictions that ought to be dissolved by looking at them in the new suggested way. This brings me to explain what exactly this *vicāra* or investigation consists of.

iii. The breaking up of distinctions

Contradictions between things are based on the assumption that these things stand in opposite relationship and as such, can not be reconciled. Reconciliation will be, however, possible when the background defining them as opposites will be replaced by the awareness of another background harmonizing their differences. This latter statement comprises a pleonasm because once one is aware of the new background, there are no differences to harmonize; like the fate of the barren woman's son, it is no longer a question to be addressed. It seems, therefore, that one way to force the realization of the all encompassing background is to use one's analytical mind and imagination to break the allegedly existing differences up. This breaking up of differences is done at all levels and in every circumstance. In the sixth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, for example, one can read:

There is no doubt about the fact that this entire world has been assumed by the Compassionate Ones. Therefore they should be seen as taking the forms of all beings. [In this circumstance] why should they [the beings] be treated with disrespect?

*ātmīkṛtaṃ sarvaṃ idaṃ jagat taiḥ kṛpātmabhiḥ na eva hi saṃśayaḥ asti,
dṛśyanta ete nanu sattvarūpāḥ ta eva nāthāḥ kim anādarāḥ atra.*

This [understanding] pleases the Tathāgatas, fulfills one's ultimate purpose [Buddhahood] and dispels the suffering of the world. Therefore, this [the realization of this understanding] should be my vow.

*tathāgatārādhanaṃ etad eva svārthasya saṃsādhanaṃ etad eva,
lokasya duḥkhāpahaṃ etad eva tasmāt mama astu vrataṃ etad eva.* ³²¹

After telling us that one should not make any distinctions among beings, Sāntideva provides a simile which might help us assimilate this fact:

For example, if a king's henchman is mishandling a citizen, then a far-sighted citizen will not be able to stand in the way [for fear of reprisal].

*yathā ekaḥ rājapuruṣaḥ pramathnāti mahājanam,
vikartuṃ na eva śaknoti dīrghadarśī mahājanaḥ.*

Because the henchman is not alone, that his power is that of the king, similarly one should not show disregard for the weak whatsoever.

*yasmāt eva sa ekākī tasya rājabalaṃ balaṃ,
tathā na durbalaṃ kiñcit aparāddhaṃ vimānayet.*

Because his power is that of the Guardians of Hells and the Compassionate Ones, all beings should be highly respected in the same way that a servant would attend a demanding king.

*yasmāt narakapālāḥ ca kṛpāvantaḥ ca tadbalaṃ,
tasmāt ārādhayet sattvān bhrītyaḥ caṇḍanṛpaṃ yathā.* ³²²

This practice of breaking up all distinctions is indeed applied to fit any case:

³²¹BCA, VI-126-7.

³²²BCA, VI-128-30.

Saliva and faeces come from the same source, [i.e., food and drink]. Why then faeces are repulsive whereas the drinking of saliva is something one likes?

ekasmāt aśanāt eṣāṃ lālāmedhyam ca jāyate,

tatrāmedhyam anīṣṭam te lālāpānam katham priyam ³²³

There are plenty of other examples in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, all variations of the idea that all distinctions are unjustified. This reflection is always done with the purpose of assimilating a view conducive to a behavior which is no longer dictated by making distinctions. In chapter three, I mentioned the practice of exchanging the selves; it is therefore in the context of the practice of breaking up distinctions that this spiritual technique ought to be understood. Instead of neutralizing mental activity, its main function is, as mentioned earlier, to bring about an awareness of the idea that all distinctions are not real. There is one last point I would like to discuss with regard to the cultivation of awareness: in the initial passage used above for the present discussion, it is said that, with sustained practice of thinking that nothing exists, the impression of emptiness will eventually also be worn out. This experience was called, as said earlier, the “emptiness of emptiness.” When does it happen is, I believe, something that remains mysterious even for those who have achieved the ultimate goal.

iv. The unforeseeable nature of the experience of transformation

There is an interesting verse in the third chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* which seems to present the spiritual breakthrough such as the arising of *bodhicitta* as an unforeseeable or unpredictable event:

This *bodhicitta* has arisen in me somehow like a blind man who would find a jewel in a heap of dust.

andhaḥ samkārakūṭebhyo yathā ratnam avāpnuyāt,

tathā kathamcit api etat bodhicittam mama uditam. ³²⁴

It is the expression *kathamcit api*, which has been translated by *somehow*, that is of interest here. This expression conveys the idea of chance or unexpectedness. Parmananda Sharma and Georges Driessens, in their translation, have expressly used the expression *by chance* to render it.³²⁵ According to Apte, *kathamcit api* also means: in every way, on any account, with great difficult and with great efforts,³²⁶ but I think that, given the above context, these other translations should be ruled

³²³BCA, VIII-49.

³²⁴BCA, III-27.

³²⁵Sharma (1990), p. 82; Driessens (1993). p. 40.

³²⁶SED, p. 526.

out. Furthermore, the fact that this spiritual breakthrough cannot be foreseen, even by the Buddha himself, seems to be confirmed by his concluding statement of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta*:

Whoever, monks, should practise these four foundations of mindfulness for just seven years may expect one of two results: either Arahanship in this life or, if there should be some substrate left, the state of a Non-Returner. Let alone seven years — whoever should practise them for just six years..., five years..., four years..., three years..., two years..., one year may expect one of two results...; let alone one year — whoever should practice them for just seven months..., six months..., five months..., four months..., three months..., two months..., one month..., half a month may expect one of two results...; let alone half a month — whoever should practice these four foundations of mindfulness for just one week may expect one of two results: either Arahanship in this life or, if there should be some substrate left, the state of a Non-Returner.

Yo hi koci bhikkhave ime cattāro satipaṭṭhāne evaṃ bhāveyya satta-vassāni, tassa dvinnam phalānaṃ aññataram phalaṃ patikankham, diṭṭhe va dhamme aññā sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā. Tiṭṭhantu bhikkhave satta-vassāni, yo hi koci bhikkhave ime cattāro satipaṭṭhāne evaṃ bhāveyya cha vassāni... pe... pañca-vassāni... cattāri vassāni... tīni vassāni... dve vassāni... ekam vassam, tassa dvinnam phalānaṃ aññataram phalaṃ patikankham, diṭṭhe va dhamme aññā sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā. Tiṭṭhantu bhikkhave ekam vassam, yo hi koci bhikkhave ime cattāro satipaṭṭhāne evaṃ bhāveyya satta-māsāni, tassa dvinnam phalānaṃ aññataram phalaṃ patikankham, diṭṭhe va dhamme aññā sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā. Tiṭṭhantu bhikkhave satta-māsāni, yo hi koci bhikkhave ime cattāro satipaṭṭhāne evaṃ bhāveyya chamāsāni... pe... pañca-māsāni... catāri māsāni... tīni māsāni... dve māsāni... ekam māsam. aḍḍha-māsam, tassa dvinnam phalānaṃ aññataram phalaṃ patikankham, diṭṭhe va dhamme aññā sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā. Tiṭṭhantu bhikkhave aḍḍha-māso, yo hi koci bhikkhave ime cattāro satipaṭṭhāne evaṃ bhāveyya sattānaṃ, tassa dvinnam phalānaṃ aññataram phalaṃ patikankham, diṭṭhe va dhamme aññā sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā. ³²⁷

What is significant in the fact that the aspirant to enlightenment cannot predict the moment of his spiritual breakthrough is that he should always persevere in his practice. In this regard, I cannot fail to draw a parallel between the coming of the Kingdom of God about which only the Father, not even Jesus, knows when it is to happen, hence the importance of keeping a watch as in the parable of the Ten virgins with their oil-lamp. One important implication of this fact is therefore that one may relapse into a state of mind no longer conducive to spiritual accomplishment.

At the beginning of chapter three, I said that there could be a link between the idea of rebirth and that of spiritual breakthrough. What led me to this conclusion is precisely the use of the expression *kathamcit api* in both cases. Indeed, in the fourth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, one can read:

Somehow I have attained this beneficial state so difficult to attain and now, I am being led knowingly again to those very hells.

kathamcit api saṃprāpto hitabhūmiṃ sudurlabhām,

³²⁷D, II-314-5 [E: Walshe (1987), p. 350].

The context of this verse is the fact that one, on account of bad actions, may be reborn in one of the various tormenting hells. I believe that it should not be very difficult to establish that these hells or states of existence (*gati*) are to be understood metaphorically as states of mind. Given this parallel, one can say that being reborn as a human being, since it is regarded as a great opportunity which should be seized, is comparable to an experience conducive to spiritual accomplishment such as Entering the Stream or, as discussed in chapter two, *bodhiprasthānacitta*. Despite the attainment of such beneficial state of mind, it is nevertheless, as in the case of the passage from one state of existence to another, still possible to relapse from them. That is why, I believe that the activity occurring in these states of mind not only consists in watching but also in guarding. It is here, as will be argued later, that the role of the *pāramitās* is the most significant. Before looking in detail at the various components of the practice of cultivation of awareness, I would like to end the present chapter by showing that, as alluded to while discussing the significance of the chapters of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the practice of devotion could be considered as an autonomous spiritual practice instead of being some kind of prerequisite for another practice.

3. The practice of devotion

At the very end of the *Sutta Nipāta* there is a remarkable description of the spiritual experience of a disciple of the Buddha called Piṅgiya. After having praised the qualities of the Buddha, Piṅgiya is asked by his interlocutor, the Brahmin Bāvari, why then he does not spend all his time, every moment with Gotama the Buddha? To this Piṅgiya answers:

'Brahmin, Sir', said Piṅgiya, 'there is no moment for me, however small, that is spent away from Gotama, from this universe of wisdom, this world of understanding, this teacher whose teaching is the Way Things Are, instant, immediate and visible all around, eroding desire without harmful side effects, with nothing else quite like it anywhere in the world.'

'You see, Sir', said Piṅgiya, 'with constant and careful vigilance it is possible for me to see him with my mind as clearly as with my eyes, in night as well as day. And since I spend my nights revering him, there is not, to my mind, a single moment spent away from him.'

*nāhaṃ tamhā vipavasāmi muhuttam api brāhmaṇa, gotamā bhūripaṇṇāṇā gotamā
bhūrimedhasā.*

yo me dhammamedesosi sandiṭṭhikamakālikam, taṇhakkhayamanītikam yasya natthi

upamācchaci.

*passāmi naṃ manasā cakkhunā 'va, rattimdivaṃ brāhmaṇa appamatto, namassamāno vivasemi
rattim, teneva maññāmi avippavāsaṃ.* ³²⁹

Then Piṅgiya said that he had a vision of the Saṃbuddha upon which the Buddha himself commented:

'Piṅgiya', he said, 'other people have freed themselves by the power of confidence. Vakkali, Bhadrāvudha and Āḷavi-Gotama have all done this. You too should let that strength release you; you too will go to the further shore, beyond the draw of death.'

*yathā ahū vakkali muttasaddho, bhadravudho āḷavigotamo ca. evameva tvaṃ 'pi
pamuñcassu saddhaṃ, gamissasi tvaṃ piṅgiya maccudheyyapāraṃ* ³³⁰

According to Paul Williams, "Piṅgiya's praise of the Buddha and his reference to seeing him with the mind appear to connect with the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, a practice known from other contexts in the Pāli canon and practised by, as far as we can tell, all schools of Buddhism".³³¹

In this practice, the meditator recollects the features of the Buddha systematically and in detail. According to Buddhaghosa, the meditator

attains the fullness of faith, mindfulness, understanding and merit ... He conquers fear and dread ... He comes to feel as if he were living in the Master's presence. And his body ... becomes as worthy of veneration as a shrine room. His mind tends towards the plane of the Buddhas.³³²

Williams, in commenting on Piṅgiya's description of his spiritual experience, said that "the interpretation of this discussion is perhaps difficult."³³³ I believe that my understanding of the practice of cultivation of awareness may give us some clues about what is going on. The recollection of the features of the Buddha are not to be considered as objects of concentration or visualization but rather as means to make obvious the constant presence of the Buddha. In this way, the Buddha, or what it represents, becomes the background from which all things find their meaning. And Buddhaghosa says rightly that such a projection translates itself into a feeling of the Master's presence which is, it is assumed, a very pacifying emotion.

In the second chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, one can witness one of the first full-fledged confessions of sins of Buddhist history. It has been argued that this confession was a way to purify one's mind, i.e., a preparatory practice. I believe that it need not be so. A confession of sins always involves a confessor, in the case of Sāntideva's confession, it is the Buddhas and the great Bodhisattvas, and as such,

³²⁹Sn, verses 1140-2 [E: Saddhatissa (1985), p. 132].

³³⁰Sn, v. 1146 [E: Saddhatissa (1985), p. 132].

³³¹Williams (1989), p. 218.

³³²Williams (1989), p. 218.

³³³Williams (1989), p. 218.

it could be viewed as a way to cultivate an ever increasing awareness of their presence; the more one has sins to confess, the more one becomes aware of the presence of one's confessors and what they represent. In a moment of total awareness, sins are always present but, precisely because of this awareness, they have lost their grips. In fact, at this moment, sins have never become so obvious and present: they are what fuels one's awareness of what is seen as the only reality. Similarly, one may say that Jesus has never been so close to his Father the moment he uttered before dying on the cross: *Elôî, Elôî, lema sabachthani*.³³⁴ For this reason I believe that what is described in the second chapter of the *Bodhicarya-avatāra* is more than just a preliminary practice. On the contrary, it could be considered as a spiritual means which is as powerful as the meditation on the concept of emptiness. Given this understanding, one may also reevaluate briefly the significance of the term *saddhā/śraddhā* (faith, confidence).

i. saddhā/śraddhā

As can be seen from the Buddha's response to Piṅgiya's account of his spiritual experience and Buddhaghosa's explanation of the practice of *buddha-anusmṛti*, faith appears to play an essential role in the devotional approach to enlightenment. But what exactly this role is, scholars of Buddhism have different opinions. One of the most common opinions is probably that expounded by Jayatilleke:

Thus *belief* (*saddhā*) is regarded only as a first step towards knowledge, with which it is replaced. It is not valuable in itself and bears no comparison with the final knowledge, which results from the personal verification of the truth.³³⁵

What this means is that faith is a prerequisite to an experience of knowledge. Similar to the performance of an experiment, what it is meant to prove is accepted first on the basis of faith, then, after the experiment, it is on the basis of personal experience. This view also assumes that faith is somewhat inferior to the experience of knowledge. For Sangharakshita, however, faith has a more affective connotation and as such, seems to play a more significant role despite the fact that it is still perceived as a preliminary step. Indeed, faith is

the capacity for being emotionally moved and stirred by something that transcends the senses and even the rational mind —at least for the time being. [Faith is also] the act (expressed by 'taking refuge') or state (condition of being established in the refuge) of acknowledging unquestioningly

³³⁴Mc 15. 34 (Lord, lord, why have you forsaken me).

³³⁵Jayatilleke (1963), p. 397-8.

that the man Gautama, or what appears as the man Gautama, is in possession of Full Enlightenment.³³⁶

In short, given the soteriological context propounded by Sangharakshita, faith is the very act of commitment to a spiritual practice culminating in the experience of wisdom. It seems to me that there might be another way to interpret the relationship between faith and the experience of knowledge.

According to Gethin, “*saddhā* is the instigator of a process which culminates in *paññā* which in turn reinforces *saddhā*’.”³³⁷ In support of his affirmation he quotes J. R. Carter:

Saddhā and *paññā* when taken together do not fit into “faith and reason.” Rather, they express a dynamic process where *saddhā* is active in one wanting to know, coming to know in part and *paññā* becomes more pervasive in one coming to know and knowing fully, in truth.³³⁸

This understanding of the concept of *saddhā* is, I believe, very close to what I described as the cultivation of awareness. Indeed, faith is comparable to the exercise of investigation (*vicāra*) and knowledge appears to correspond to the background revealed or created by this exercise. As such, faith is hardly to be distinguished from knowledge. In this regard, it might be interesting to quote a passage from the *Ratnaka-dhāraṇī*:

Faith is the guide, the mother, the producer, the protector and increaser of all virtues. Desire-expelling, bringing across the stream, faith shows the city of bliss. Faith is the calm of the undefiled thought —firmly rooted in honour, void of pride. Faith is the best foot to go and find the wealth of the treasury, it is a hand to grasp happiness. [...] Faith is not attached to the joys that attach, delivered from all unfavourable states, it is the best and unique happy state. Faith goes beyond the path of Māra, reveals the path of supreme deliverance. As a cause, faith has the undecaying seed of virtues, faith causes the tree of wisdom to grow, increases the felicities of perfect knowledge.

*śraddha purogata mātṛjanetrī pālīka vardhika sarvagunānām, kāṅkṣavinodati oghapratārāṇi śraddhanidarśani kṣamapurasya. śraddha anāvikalacittaprasādo mānavivarjitagauravamūlā, śraddha nidhānadhanam caraṇāgram pāṇi yathā subhasaṁgrahamūlam. śraddha asaṁgata saṅgasukheṣu akṣaṇa-varjita ekakṣaṇāgram, śraddha atikramu mārapathasya darśika uttama mokṣapathasya. bījamapūtiku hetu guṇānām śraddha virohaṇi bodhidrumasya, vardhani jñāna- viśeṣasukhānām śraddha nidarśika sarvajinānām.*³³⁹

This passage bears a lot of resemblance with what has been said about the significance of *bodhicitta* and *saddharma* earlier in this thesis. For this reason, I believe that it is inappropriate to assimilate faith to a kind of preliminary spiritual exercise, however valuable it may appear.

³³⁶Subhuti (1994), p. 212.

³³⁷Gethin (1992), p. 111.

³³⁸J. R. Carter, *Dhamma: Western Academic and Sinhalese Buddhist Interpretations: A study of a Religious Concept*. Tokyo. 1978 p. 104 [Quoted in Gethin (1992), p. 111].

³³⁹Ss, B2-3 [E: Bendall (1971), p. 3].

There is another word, often used with *śraddhā* in connection with the practice of cultivating awareness, which might confirm what has been just said concerning the significance of faith. This word is *chanda* as in *hīne śrāvaka-pratyekabuddha-yāne adhimuktiḥ śraddhā chandaḥ vā* (trust, faith or *chanda* in the inferior paths of the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas*)³⁴⁰ or as in *saṃbodhau chandam śraddhām prāthanām praṇidhim* (the desire, the longing, the faith and the *chanda* in enlightenment).³⁴¹ According to Apte, this term means: 1. wish, desire, fancy, liking, will; 2. free or wilful conduct; 3. subjection, control; and 4. meaning, intention, purport.³⁴² These translations, however, appear too general and do not seem to render the full implication of the use of *chanda* in the phrases just mentioned. In this regard, Louis de la Vallée Poussin noted that “le vœu de Bodhi (*chanda-samādhī*) est comparé à la poule qui couve son oeuf.”³⁴³ The idea behind this image is that one day, the bodhisattva, like a chick, will see the light or break through his shell.³⁴⁴ What this means is that the term *chanda* is somehow related to a process of incubation, something similar to the activity of watching and guarding. Indeed, according to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*:

The meaning of *chanda* is to be directly known as root; it is to be directly known as basis; it is to be directly known as endeavour; it is to be directly known as succeeding; it is to be directly known as commitment; it is to be directly known as taking hold; it is to be directly known as standing near; it is to be directly known as non-distraction; it is to be directly known as seeing. *chandaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa mūlaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa pādaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa padhānaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa ijjhanaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa adhikokkhaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa paggaḥaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa upaṭṭhānaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa avikkhepaṭṭho abhiññeyyo, chandassa dassanaṭṭho abhiññeyyo.*³⁴⁵

As in the case of *śraddhā*, *chanda* seems to describe one aspect of the cultivation of awareness. If *śraddhā* is to be more related to the idea of confidence, as cultivated in the context of devotion, *chanda* may very well imply the notion of ever increasing commitment to enlightenment. In this regard, the *Vibhaṅga*, according to Gethin, describes the *chanda-samādhī* “as a concentration or one-pointedness of mind gained by making the desire to act the ‘overlord’ or ‘dominant.’”³⁴⁶ Again, this

³⁴⁰BCA, p. 19.

³⁴¹BCA, p. 18.

³⁴²SED, p. 718.

³⁴³La Vallée Poussin (1898), p. 102.

³⁴⁴La Vallée Poussin (1898), p. 103.

³⁴⁵Paṭis, I-19; II-123 [E: Gethin (1992), p. 102].

³⁴⁶Gethin (1992), p. 85.

commitment ought not to be viewed as a kind of motivation but rather as a description of what it means to be enlightened.

One last word concerning the role of faith. Faith in Buddhism has often been compared to Christian faith. The latter, for the sake of the comparison, is often assimilated with the idea of blind faith with the assumption that it is an inferior or more immature kind of faith. In this regard, Sangharakshita thinks that:

The spiritually immature, however, are likely to confuse an intuitive response with all sorts of other desires. Faith must therefore be grounded on reasoned investigation of the object to which one is responding—and an investigation of one's response itself. In a way one avoids the extremes of blind faith enjoined in much of Christianity and in various modern brands of guru worship.³⁴⁷

For this reason both notions of faith should not be confounded. Given my understanding of the cultivation of awareness, I do not see why it has to be so.

One of the most fundamental beliefs of the Christians is that Jesus has saved humanity or redeemed one's sins by his sacrifice on the cross. According to the Catechism of the Protestant church, it is said:

Was ist dein einiger Trost im Leben und im Sterben?
Daß ich mit Leib und Seele, beides, im Leben und im Sterben, nicht mein, sondern meines getreuen Heilandes Jesu Christi eigen bin, der mit seinem teuren Blut für alle meine Sünden vollkommenlich bezahlet und mich aus aller Gewalt des Teufels erlöst hat und also bewahret, daß ohne den Willen meines Vaters im Himmel kein Haar von meinem Haupt kann fallen, ja auch mir alles zu meiner Seligkeit dienen muß.³⁴⁸

If one accepts this belief and tries to understand all its implications, i.e., in any moment of one's existence one remembers that one has been saved, there is no reason, I believe, to view Christian faith, from the point of view of their spiritual function and fruits, differently from that of Buddhism.

³⁴⁷Subhuti (1994), p. 212.

³⁴⁸Der Heidelberger Katechismus (1563).

4. Conclusion

Given the above discussion concerning the practice of cultivation of awareness, how is then the concept of *bodhicitta* to be interpreted? *Bodhicitta*, as the desire for enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, is a description of what it means to be an enlightened being, i.e., a person in whom *bodhicitta* has arisen. This description is valid for all aspects of existence, i.e., even as unenlightened being, there is no moment when one does not act for the benefit of all beings. The spiritual path that one has to follow is therefore to develop an awareness of this truth so that it should be recognized that one is acting for the benefit of all beings. The cultivation of such awareness, because it is an attempt to redefine the true nature of all one's actions, the bad ones as well as the good ones, brings about a feeling a detachment, a kind of distance from one's acting in general. From this feeling of detachment, a sense of peace of mind begins to establish itself on account of being, among other things, relieved from the responsibility of being involved in the course of one's actions. Then, if this awareness is maintained long enough, it will result in the full and irreversible realization of the idea that one's actions are always performed for the sake of all sentient beings. What remains to be said at this point is how this practice of the cultivation of awareness is to be understood in its details.

In many instances in the Mahāyāna literature, including the *Bodhicarya-avatāra*, one finds the following passage:

O great king, constantly remember, draw to your attention and contemplate the earnest aspiration, the faith, the longing and the desire for illumination, even when you are walking, standing still, sitting, sleeping, awake, eating and drinking.
*mahārāja, evam eva sambodhau chandam śraddhām prāthanām praṇidhim gacchan api. tiṣṭhan api niṣannaḥ api śayanah api jāgrad api bhuñjānaḥ api piban api satatasamitam anusmara manasikuru bhāvaya.*³⁴⁹

This passage is, I believe, what constitutes the essence of the cultivation of awareness. Indeed, three expressions or, to be more exact, injunctions should be noticed. These are: remember (*anusmara*), draw to attention (*manasikuru*) and contemplate (*bhāvaya*). These injunctions are what I identified as the three aspects of the cultivation of awareness, i.e., renunciation, conversion and contemplation.

Earlier, I said that it was important to maintain an awareness of whatever the background reality might be in order to bring about its full realization. In the

³⁴⁹BCA, p. 18 This passage is also quoted in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* and, according to which, it comes from the *āryarājāvādaśāstra*.

scriptures, it seems that this holding on is like a state of contemplation. In Sanskrit the words used are *dhyāna* or *samādhi*. This state is characterized by a deep calmness of the mind but it is not yet the final experience. In other words, it seems that it is not permanent and, as discussed above, one can slip away from it. This happens mainly because one pays again attention to the world most probably on account of desire, anger or hatred.

At this moment, one has to remember what should be the true “object” of one’s awareness. This is the aspect of renunciation. The basic idea underlying the aspect of renunciation is an acknowledgment of the fact that one is engaged in a wrong path or going in a wrong direction by paying attention, for example, to the objects of one’s desires. To express that idea, the injunction *remember* seems appropriate because it always presupposes a giving up, a relinquishment or a renunciation of what is preoccupying the mind at a given moment.

After renouncing what is preoccupying the mind, one has to redirect attention towards the true “object” of awareness. This is the aspect of conversion. The term *conversion* should not be understood in the sense of a “change of religion” or a “transformation of the mind (*metanoia*)” but simply as “redirecting attention.” In order to redirect attention, it appears that one of the favored strategies of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is to provoke a sense of crisis or urgency. The fear to be reborn in hells, for example, is often used. This is in brief, the cultivation of awareness which I would like to present and discuss in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Chapter five

THE ASPECT OF RENUNCIATION

The three aspects of the cultivation of awareness have been named *renunciation*, *conversion* and *contemplation* but other terms or expressions could have been chosen to describe these three aspects. In this regard, one may refer to a passage taken from the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*:

When things causing demerits and unskillful things have not arisen, he [the bodhisattva] forms a resolution that they shall not arise, he strives, he puts forth strength, he controls and fixes his mind; by this comes protection. When they have arisen, he forms a resolution that they shall be destroyed; by this comes purification. And when skillful things have not arisen he forms a resolution that they shall arise, ... and when they have arisen he forms a resolution that they shall abide and increase, and so forth. By this comes growth.

anutpannānāṃ pāpakānāṃ akuṣālānāṃ dharmānāṃ anupādāya eva chandaṃ janayati, vyāyacchati, vīryamārabhate, cittaṃ pragṛhṇāti, samyakpraṇidadhāti iti anena takṣā utpannānāṃ ca prahāṇāya chandaṃ janayati iti anena śuddhiḥ. anutpannānāṃ kuṣālānāṃ dharmānāṃ utpādāya chandaṃ janayati. yāvad utpannānāṃ ca sthitaye bhūyobhāvāya chandaṃ janayati iti anena vṛddhiḥ. 350

Similar to the ideas conveyed by the terms *renunciation*, *conversion* and *contemplation*, the expressions *protection* (*rakṣā*), *purification* (*śuddhi*) and *growth* (*vṛddhi*) seem to identify three different types of activity. First, there is the idea of stepping back away from unskillful things. To use a simile, it is like pressing the clutch to release the drive shaft from the engine. The words *renunciation* and *purification* should therefore be understood in the sense of disengaging one's mind from whatever keeps it busy. Secondly, to use the same simile, one has to put into gear in order to move forward. Similarly, after disengaging the mind from unskillful things one has to engage it towards the skillful things. This act of engaging in the skillful things is to some extent also a protection from the unskillful ones. Consequently, the words *conversion* and *protection* seem to be quite appropriate to express this idea of engaging the mind. Finally, after having engaged the clutch, one could give gas to increase speed and as such, *contemplation* and *growth* describe everything that could be done to become more and more established in what is

350Śs, B356.

skillful. This simile is not devoid of interest because it also tells us that the more one increases speed, the harder it is to shift to a lower gear. Similarly, the more one is established in one's contemplation, the harder it is for the unskillful things to affect one's mind.

In addition to these three types of activity, this threefold division could be justified by the fact that there also seems to be in Buddhist literature three types of discourse related to the instructions of the aspirant to enlightenment. First, there are the discourses on the causes of one's distraction from the skillful things, i.e., basically that which has to be renounced in order to progress spiritually. In these discourses one is often reminded of the evil consequences of following one's unskillful or unwholesome tendencies. As a matter of fact, one finds in this context beautiful examples of literary creativity and imagination whose purpose seems to literally try to scare one off from being "possessed" by them. In the second type of discourse, one is showed the way to follow, one is reminded of the direction to aim at. This is most probably the role of taking vows. In this context, one is told of the benefits of converging one's mind towards the skillful things, of making the right choices. Finally, once one has made the right choice, one is given instruction on how to hold to it and, consequently, bring to fruition the promised benefits. Discourses fostering faith (*śraddhā*), in the sense discussed earlier, or intensifying investigation (*vicāra*), are given to keep the aspirant to enlightenment on the right track. What I intend to do in the next three chapters therefore, is precisely to analyze these three types of discourses and their spiritual and philosophical implications. Before that, however, there is one point I would like to clarify concerning this threefold division of the cultivation of awareness. This point has to do with the nature of the relationship between these three aspects.

Because I argued that there are three aspects to the cultivation of awareness, it does not mean that they have an independent existence. When one aspect is considered, the other two are also present, like the ideas of a child and a father are when one refers to a person as a mother. Take, for example, the aspect of renunciation which is expressed by the injunction *remember* (*anusmara*). This verb, being transitive, always refers to an object so that one can say that this injunction comprises both the activity of disengaging the mind and that of engaging it. More convincingly perhaps, the activity of contemplation (*bhāṇaya*) could be viewed as a more intense activity of paying attention (*manasikuru*) as well as being a form of renunciation by warding off or keeping at bay what may disturb it. From one's dualistic point of view, it could be said that these three aspects refer to only

one activity: the decision to engage one's mind. Let us take, for example, the decision of acknowledging that one is enlightened: this decision would be the only thing that is to be done in order to become enlightened. This may appear odd, but taking into consideration the cultivation of awareness, it cannot be otherwise. Indeed, if one doubts that one is enlightened, then attention has already been distracted from the fact that one is enlightened and consequently one cannot become absorbed by it or be carried towards it. At this point, one has to relinquish the causes of one's doubts and redirect attention to the fact that one is enlightened, i.e., to decide again that one is enlightened. In other words, the reason why one is not enlightened is because one doubts that one is. Therefore, clearing away the doubts (renunciation) allows one to take the right decision (conversion) and lives by it (contemplation and ultimately realization). In a way, to take the right decision, to converge one's mind in the right direction is to become enlightened. This makes plausible, I believe, the fact that, many people at the time of the Buddha, upon hearing his teachings, realized them on the spot. It also confirms the idea, discussed in the fourth chapter, that the exact moment a spiritual breakthrough occurs cannot be foreseen: once the decision is taken nothing is to be done except maintaining it. One cannot even wait for it to happen because this waiting would assume that it has not happened. In fact, not only the three aspects of the cultivation of awareness exist in dependence of each other, but also the cultivation of awareness itself is dependent on conditions for its existence or appearance. I would like now to present a simple simile to show how it can be so.

Let us take, for example, the temperature of a room regulated by a thermostat. When the room temperature is the same as the one set by the thermostat, then nothing happens. But when the temperature varies, then the thermostat reacts by sending a signal to a machine that warms or cools the room depending on the circumstances. This means that the mechanism for regulating the room temperature enters into function only when there is a discrepancy between it and the temperature set by the thermostat. Similarly, the cultivation of awareness enters into function and, consequently, becomes apparent the moment it ceases to happen, i.e., when one is no longer aware of what one should be aware of. This may appear paradoxical but it can be easily understood. Take, for example, the sense of equilibrium: one feels it the moment one has lost equilibrium. The function of this sense of equilibrium is to reestablish equilibrium; once it is done, it is no longer felt. In a way, this sense of equilibrium as well as the set temperature of the thermostat have the same role as that of a religious truth. Both are a means to bring about a

change of state as well as a description of it. Similarly, a religious truth becomes a means, something that can be distinguished and appropriated, the moment when what it describes is no longer seen as the only reality. In sum, the cultivation of awareness is real only for those who are dissatisfied with their own condition. This is incidentally true for the idea of soteriological context: it is a creation of the seekers of "salvation"; take away the seeker, i.e., the desire to be saved, there is no notion of salvation. Conversely, he who is saved or enlightened, has no need for a path to realization; in the context of a soteriological context which advocates the idea that the path is the goal, then even the idea of path disappears once the goal has been reached. This is the reason why I believe that it may be appropriate to begin the description of the cultivation of awareness with the aspect of renunciation: the things to be giving up are both the causes of its appearance and of its disappearance: when they are not given up, the cultivation of awareness enters into function, when they are, it is no longer there.

There is probably a second reason why I feel that it is appropriate to start with the aspect of renunciation. This second reason has more to do with practical considerations than theoretical ones. It seems that for many aspirants to enlightenment the path begins with an experience of enlightenment itself. This experience which happens without previous preparation or anticipation does not usually last. In this regard, it might be interesting to relate the experience of Sri Ramana Maharshi, an Indian saint who lived in the beginning of this century. In the language of Indian philosophy, he is said to have "realized the Self;" that is to say, that he has recognized that the "Self" is the only true reality, as I would say, the background from which everything finds its meaning. It is usually said that such realization is the fruit of a long and arduous spiritual practice but in the case of Sri Ramana, it happened spontaneously, without prior effort or desire. Indeed, according to the reports,

Venkataraman [Sri Ramana], the sixteen-year-old schoolboy, was alone in an upstairs room of his uncle's house in Madurai when he was suddenly gripped by an intense fear of death. In the following few minutes he went through a simulated death experience during which he became consciously aware for the first time that his real nature was imperishable and that it was unrelated to the body, the mind or the personality.³⁵¹

In the case of Sri Ramana, this experience was permanent, but for many others, who had a similar experience, it was a temporary one. For them, this experience set a new standard in terms of quality of being, to use the above simile, it set the

³⁵¹Godman (1985), p.1.

temperature of the thermostat to a new level, and, consequently, triggered an urge or desire to get rid of everything incompatible with it. This is, I believe, the real beginning of the path for the aspirant to enlightenment, i.e., the search for the lost paradise accompanied by an acute sense of what is irrelevant to one's own true happiness. In the Christian tradition, this experience is called the "Call of God" and it often happened to those who were the least likely candidates for it.

In the context of *bodhicitta*, this experience is called, as mentioned in the previous chapters, the "arising of *bodhicitta*" (*bodhicitta-utpāda*) and it is considered as the beginning of the spiritual career of the bodhisattva. Within the Mahāyāna tradition, it has been institutionalized into a rite of initiation, thus recognizing its importance for the aspirant to enlightenment. It has been said previously that this rite of initiation, however, became, according to Sangharakshita, more or less a social event without much spiritual significance. As such, still following Sangharakshita's thoughts, it has to be rediscovered or replaced with something that will bring about the original attitude of the aspirant to enlightenment which is defined as the basic act of commitment to the ideals of Buddhism. This may seem plausible but again I believe that this view fails to see the full significance of the event of the arising of *bodhicitta* by assimilating it to an act of commitment, however genuine it may be. First of all, the experience of the arising of *bodhicitta* cannot be ritualized because one has no control over its causes. It can happen at any time and in any conditions. Indeed, in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, one is told that:

The wretched one who is bound by the chains of existence, the moment *bodhicitta* arises in him, is called a son of the Buddhas and he is praised both by men and Gods.
bhavadācārakabandhanaḥ varākaḥ sugatānām sutaḥ ucyate kṣaṇena,
saḥ narāmaralokavandanīyaḥ bhavati sma udite eva bodhicitte. ³⁵²

This idea is further confirmed in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*:

When one caused the wrong view of individuality to arise as high as Mount Sumeru, even then the thought of enlightenment can arise.
sumerusamāṃ satkāyadrṣṭim utpādyā bodhicittam utpadyate. ³⁵³

This means that what is actually ritualized are the implications of the arising of *bodhicitta* as a spiritual event. These implications are, in the present case, the fact that one is always acting for the benefits of all beings. As such, the ritual becomes an actualization of one's reality as an enlightened being. Consequently, a ritual never degenerates, as Sangharakshita seems to imply in his discussion of *bodhicitta*:

³⁵²BCA, I-9.

³⁵³Ss, B6.

what happens instead is that the aspirant fails to recognize it as a description of its ultimate nature. In this circumstance, the image of degeneration is hardly appropriate: either one acknowledges it or one does not. Like making a decision, it is a yes/no situation without middle ground. Moreover, taking into consideration what has been said so far, this ritual, as an enactment of what it means to be a bodhisattva, i.e., a person who has experienced the arising of *bodhicitta* and behaves accordingly, if it is recognized as the only and true way of being, becomes itself a means leading to the final realization. Thus, the ritual of the arising of *bodhicitta* is, from the point of view of the cultivation of awareness—which I believe is what characterized the path for the aspirant to enlightenment-- as significant as the actual experience itself.

In fact, I would go as far as saying that this ritual is one of the most efficient ways of bringing about the conditions favorable to the realization of what it is meant to describe. All other means such as the various meditations mentioned earlier (focusing one's attention on real or mental objects, for example), if they do not include a cultivation of the awareness that one's true nature is that of a bodhisattva, would produce only limited spiritual benefits like temporally calming the mind. At best there are so to speak spiritual warm-ups unconnected with the actual competition. In this regard, it may be added:

The all-knowing Lord said that repetition of sacred words and the ascetic exercises, even though they have been practiced for a long time are worthless, if the mind is distracted and slack, [i.e., not cultivating awareness].

*japāḥ tapāṃsi sarvāṇi dīrghakāla-kṛtāni api,
anyacittena mandena vṛthā eva iti āha sarvavit.* ³⁵⁴

This does not mean that these meditations have no value: similar to warming up before doing an intense physical exercise, they may allow an optimum performance but, this is important to repeat, they are not the performance itself.

The fact that one aspect of the cultivation of awareness has been called *renunciation* may lead one to interpret the path to enlightenment in terms of the mirror metaphor. According to this metaphor, the mind is like a mirror covered by dust, i.e., the mental tendencies (*kleśas*). This view of the spiritual path, which seems to have been fully articulated in the context of the Chinese philosophical traditions including Buddhism, presupposes the existence of a pure nature in each sentient being which has to be uncovered. In this context, the notion of purification is quite appropriate and can almost be taken literally. Spiritual practices consist therefore

³⁵⁴BCA, V-16.

in getting rid of these mental tendencies by whatever means possible. In the context of the cultivation of awareness and more particularly, of the aspect of renunciation, the mental tendencies (*kleśas*) are not what is causing a problem to spiritual progression. In fact, mental tendencies are never a problem to the practice because the very fact that one is aware of their existence is already a sign that one is engaged into the cultivation of awareness. In other words, the *kleśas* are a means for the cultivation of awareness. In fact, there are not only a means, but also a product of the cultivation of awareness itself and as such, they have no independent existence apart from it. This is what I would like to clarify next.

i. The kleśas and the cultivation of awareness

In the preceding chapter, while discussing the unforeseeable nature of the experience of transformation, I quoted a verse from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* that said that, after having undergone such an experience, it was still possible to relapse into afflicting states of being. The cause of this spiritual regression is the following:

These powerful *kleśa*-enemies push me instantly into [the hell-fires] into which even the mount Meru does not leave ashes.

*meroh api yadāsamgāt na bhasmāpi upalabhyate,
kṣaṇāt kṣipanti mām tatra balinaḥ kleśa-śatavaḥ.*

Not even all my enemies have such a very long [almost] endless life-span as that of my *kleśa*-enemies.

*na hi sarvāni aśatrūṇāṃ dīrgham āyuh api īdṛśam,
anādyantaṃ mahādīrgham yat mama kleśa-śatavaḥ.*

All [the other enemies] can accomplish some good if properly served. These *kleśas* are, however, causing enormous suffering if served.

*sarve hitāya kalpante ānukūlyena sevitaḥ,
sevyamānāḥ tu amī kleśāḥ sutarāṃ duḥkārakāḥ.* ³⁵⁵

These *kleśa*-enemies are mainly craving and hatred (*trṣṇādvēśādi-śatavaḥ*) ³⁵⁶ and are compared to the hooks of fishermen:

This hook thrown by the fishermen is like the *kleśas*; it is terrible when one is caught by it. For the guardians of hells, after bringing you to the Kumbhi-hells, will cook there.

*etad hi baḍiśaṃ ghoram kleśabāḍiśikārpitam,
yataḥ narakapālāḥ tvām kṛtvā pakṣyanti kumbhiṣu.* ³⁵⁷

Having identified the cause of our state of misery, Sāntideva invites us to undertake a military-like expedition against them:

³⁵⁵BCA, IV-31-33.

³⁵⁶BCA, IV-28.

³⁵⁷BCA, IV-89.

I shall become an hostile fighter, a leader [in the war against all the *kleśas*]; except [against] those kinds of *kleśas* which are fighting the *kleśas*.
atra grahī bhaviṣyāmi baddha-vairah ca vighrahī,
*anyatra tadvidhāt kleśāt kleśa-vairiṇām.*³⁵⁸

What Sāntideva is telling us in this last verse is that hatred against hatred is acceptable and legitimate. This may appear paradoxical but it is not if one takes into consideration the type of weapon that is required to fight the *kleśas*:

Where will these [*kleśas*] go, they who dwell in my mind, after having been banished from it? Where will they stand [being ousted of the place] in which they destroy me? These wretched *kleśas* are to be conquered by the sight of wisdom. I, whose mind is slack, do not do any efforts.
kvāsau yāyānmanmanahstho nirastah sthitvā yasmin madvadhārtham yateta,
*na udyogo me kevalam mandabuddheḥ kleśāḥ prajñadrṣṭisādhya varākāḥ.*³⁵⁹

The efforts that are required are precisely to acquire a wisdom which consists in understanding that:

Kleśas do not dwell [are not to be perceived] in objects, not in the sense-organs and not even between these two. They do not exist anywhere else. Where then are these [*kleśas*], they who churn the entire world?
They are illusion [*māyā*]. Therefore give up the fear in your heart and be enthusiastic for acquiring wisdom! Why torture yourself in hells for no reason?
na kleśa viṣayeṣu na indriyagaṇe na api antarāle sthitāḥ, na ataḥ anyatra kuha sthitāḥ punar amī mathnanti kṛtsnam jagat.
*māyā eva iyam ataḥ vimuñca hṛdaye trāsaṁ bhajasva udyamam, prajñārtham kim akāṇḍa eva narakeṣu ātmānam ābādhase.*³⁶⁰

In other words, as Prajñākaramati commented, these wretched *kleśas* have to be investigated from the point of view or with the help of the ultimate truth (*amī varākāḥ paramārthataḥ vicāryamāṇāḥ*).³⁶¹

I have already discussed in chapter four how this investigation (*vicāra*) is to be understood. I described it as the way to cultivate the awareness that what is seen (the phenomenal world) is to be perceived in terms of an idea such as that of the emptiness of all things. In other words, it is the effort to transform an idea that can be “grasped” by the mind into a “vision” or a background defining everything that can be grasped by the mind. I also argued that this cultivation of awareness does not eliminate the *kleśas*, but rather it renders them groundless and consequently inoffensive. Now, if one begins to see the *kleśas* as groundless or as illusion, this presupposes that one is already aware of another background defining them as such. This means that the *kleśas* may be considered as the worst enemies to

³⁵⁸BCA, IV-43.

³⁵⁹BCA, IV-46.

³⁶⁰BCA, IV-47.

³⁶¹BCA, p. 71.

spiritual achievement, but the discourse on the *kleśas* is a good ally in one's endeavor of cultivating an auspicious awareness. In fact, as said earlier, the more one is aware of the *kleśas* and sees the spiritual damage they can incur, the more one becomes established in the understanding of the fact that they are groundless and consequently, the less dangerous they become. In fact, the very idea of *kleśa* is made up by the mind engaged in the cultivation of awareness and to some extent one can say that the more *kleśa* one is aware of, the better it is. It is in this sense that the aspect of renunciation is to be considered as a part of the cultivation of awareness: although the discourses related to this aspect is distinct or deals with specific themes such as the danger of the *kleśas*, its purpose is to cultivate a specific awareness which are likely to lead one to auspicious states of mind. According to the Mahāyāna tradition, it seems that it is the Perfection of patience (*kṣānti-pāramitā*) that best incorporates that aspect of renunciation as a means to cultivate awareness.

ii. *kṣāntipāramitā*

The word *pāramitā* is usually translated by perfection, supremacy and mastery.³⁶² In this regard, Dayal has discussed the possible etymology of this expression. One such etymology, which has been propounded by Burnouf in particular, is to say that it is derived from *pāram* + *ita* (gone to the other shore). This view is denied, based on a passage of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, on the ground that it comes from the adjective *parama* (the highest) and the suffix *tā*, a suffix used to transform nouns and adjectives into abstract substantives.³⁶³ Taking into consideration the significance of the image of reaching the other shore in Buddhist writings and the uncertainty of Indian etymology, I believe that these two interpretations can easily be justified. At this point, I am not as much interested in determining the exact etymology of this term as to evaluate its significance for the aspirant to enlightenment. As will be seen shortly, I am of the opinion that a *pāramitā* is to be understood in the same way as a religious truth, i.e., as a means and a description of a goal to attain. In the case of the *kṣānti-pāramitā*, it is a state of mind where there is absence of wrath (*cittasya-akopanātā*)³⁶⁴ and anger (*krodhādi-nivṛtta-cittam*).³⁶⁵ In the case of *kṣānti* the metaphysical aspect may be less

³⁶²BHS, p. 343.

³⁶³Dayal (1932), p. 165-6.

³⁶⁴BCA, p.77.

³⁶⁵BCA, p.77.

obvious than the ethical one, but, as discussed above, it would not be a Perfection if a clear understanding of the things as they are was absent. In this regard, the *Āryaśatasāhasrā prajñāpāramitā sūtra* says:

Kauśika, just as for hundred or thousand of persons born blind which are without a guide to enter in the right road, how can they reach the city [it leads to]? Similarly, Kauśika, the five Perfections would be eyeless like persons born blind without being led by the Perfection of wisdom; without it, not being able to enter into the right path to realization [*bodhi*], how could they reach the city called omniscience?

*kauśika, jāti-andhānāṃ śataṃ vā sahasraṃ vā aparīṇāyakānāṃ abhavyaṃ mārga-avataraṇāya, kutah punar nagara-anupraveśāya; evaṃ eva, kauśika, acakṣuṣkāḥ pañca pāramitā jāti-andha-bhūtā bhavanti vinā prajñāpāramitayā aparīṇāyakāḥ, vinā prajñāpāramitayā abhavyā bodhimarga-avataraṇāya, kutah eva sarvākāra-jñātā-nagara-anupraveśāya!*³⁶⁶

As the text further argues, it is only when the *pāramitās* include the Perfection of wisdom that they are fit to be called “Perfections” (*prajñā-pāramitā-parigrhītāḥ etāḥ pañca pāramitāḥ pāramitā-nāmadheyam labhante*).³⁶⁷ Let us see how this can be understood in the context of the Perfection of patience.

According to Apte, *kṣānti* means: 1. patience, forbearance, forgiveness; and 2. the state of saintly abstraction.³⁶⁸ In Prajñākaramati’s commentary, this term is often confounded with *kṣamaḥ* or *kṣamā* (patience, forbearance and forgiveness)³⁶⁹ as in *evaṃ kṣamo bhajet* (having thus entertained forbearance)³⁷⁰ and sometimes glossed as *titikṣā* (endurance, patience, resignation and forbearance)³⁷¹ as in *yataḥ kṣāntyā titikṣayā* (therefore with patience [glossed as] *titikṣayā*).³⁷² Therefore, the primary and fundamental connotation of *kṣānti* is to endure and consequently, not to be carried away by the *kleśas*, which, in the present case, are mostly anger and hatred. In other words, *kṣānti* is a kind of remedy (*evaṃ dveṣadoṣān vibhāvyaṃ sarva-upāyena tad-vipakṣa-bhūtāṃ kṣāntim utpādayet*)³⁷³ against the disease of anger and hatred as well as repugnance (*pratigha*) and malice (*vyāpāda*).³⁷⁴ According to Prajñākaramati, *kṣānti* is to be divided into three categories: 1. *kṣānti* which is endurance in the face of suffering (*duḥkha-adhivāsanā-kṣānti*); 2. *kṣānti* which is the ability to avoid responding to other people’s provocation (*parāpakāra-marṣaṇakṣānti*); and 3. *kṣānti* which is endurance in one’s resolve to abide to the

³⁶⁶BCA, p. 264-5.

³⁶⁷BCA, p. 265.

³⁶⁸SED, p. 623.

³⁶⁹SED, p. 622.

³⁷⁰BCA, VI-1.

³⁷¹SED, p. 772.

³⁷²BCA, p. 161.

³⁷³BCA, p. 123.

³⁷⁴Dayal (1932), p. 209.

dharma (dharma-nidhyāna-kṣānti).³⁷⁵ These three categories do not refer to three different attitudes but rather to three different contexts in which one's patience can be tested.

Given this description of the three kinds of *kṣānti*, one may be led to view it as a cultivation of a kind of force, like that of the ascetics who are able to endure painful conditions. Indeed, this may appear a legitimate way to interpret Sāntideva's following verses:

There is nothing which is difficult to practice. Therefore, by practicing of little sufferings one is able to endure great sufferings.

*na kiñcit asti tadvastu yadabhyāsasya duṣkaram,
tasmāt mṛduvyathā abhyāsāt soḍhavyā api mahāvyathā.*

One should not be delicate in the face of cold, heat, rain, wind, travel, disease, capture and beating, otherwise suffering will increase.

*śīta-uṣṇa-vṛṣṭi-vātā-adhva-vyādhi-bandhana-tāḍanaiḥ,
saukumāryam na kartavyam anyathā vardhate vyathā.*³⁷⁶

This interpretation would be true if it were not for Prajñākaramati's explanation. Indeed, according to the *pitāputrasamāgama sūtra*, such endurance is possible not because the bodhisattva does not feel the agony of suffering but rather because he experiences the joy of suffering (*bodhisattvaḥ sarvārambaṇavastuṣu sukhām eva vedanāṃ vedayate na duḥkhām, na aduḥkhasukhām*).³⁷⁷ This *sukha* is, as mentioned in the second chapter, a characteristic of the state of mind of the bodhisattva who is ready to give up even his own body for the sake of all beings. This means that, because the emotion of joy is, even for unenlightened beings, never forced, one may understand the force to endure suffering, not as something resulting from will-power, but rather, as a spontaneous reaction resulting from having achieved a certain state of mind. In this circumstance, the above-mentioned verses from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* are to be seen, not as a trick to endure pain, but rather, as a way to level out distinctions between phenomena. In other words, the equanimity which is to be developed by the cultivation of the Perfection of patience is not physical but mental. This explanation is, however, not without a problem: if *kṣānti* is above all a state of mind where, as mentioned above, there is absence of anger, how then is it possible to bring about this state of mind? Does it require motivation? This is what I would like to discuss next by looking at how the mind functions according to the various clues given by the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

³⁷⁵BCA, p. 123.

³⁷⁶BCA, VI-14 and 16.

³⁷⁷BCA, p. 126.

iii. The workings of the mind

In the second chapter, I discussed the idea that one's behavior is the result of one's state of mind. The passage from one state of mind to another, let us say from a mind whose main characteristic is hatred (*dveṣa-citta*) to one which is friendly (*maitra-citta*), appears to be described by the prefix *ut* and the verbal root $\sqrt{pad}$. As another example of this one finds: *tathā sarva-sattveṣu na maitracittam mayā nikṣeptavyam. antaśaḥ na dagdhassthūṇāyām api pratigha-cittam utpādayitavyam* (Thus, I should not abandon or reject a friendly mind towards all beings; not even a mind of repugnance or hatred should be produced towards the burning stick [which is used to torment me]).³⁷⁸ In this regard, one may also notice the use of the derivatives of the verbal root $\sqrt{cyu}$ which means: 1. to fall or drop down; 2. to come out of, flow or issue from, drop, trickle or stream forth from.³⁷⁹ The verb *cavati*, for example, in Sanskrit as well as in Pāli, is especially employed to denote the passage from one state of existence to another and as such it is contrasted or equated to the verb *utpadati*, as in *te ca sattā sandhāvanti, saṃsaranti, cavanti upapajjanti* (and these beings run around, transmigrate, pass away and arise).³⁸⁰ Given this understanding, how is it then possible to move or be moved from one state of mind to another?

Also in the second chapter, while analyzing the various semantic applications of the word *citta*, I argued that this word ought to be understood in terms of the blending of the subjective-objective view of the world and happening. With this model the desire for enlightenment, for example, was explained as a state of mind whose main characteristic is to desire enlightenment. Given the implications of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), I also compared this state of mind to a living being which has to be fed to be kept alive or destroyed by starving it. I believe that this image is very appropriate to describe how the passage from one state of mind to another is brought about.

Within the context of the cultivation of awareness, this blending of the subjective-objective view appears to dissolve itself so that its objective aspect becomes clearly distinct from its subjective aspect. This can best be seen in what I called "the dialogue between the *I* and the *me*." The *I* is the subject, the captain of the ship to use a previous simile, whereas the *me*, as an object perceived by the *I*, is the state of mind which has to be changed. Already in a passage quoted above,

³⁷⁸BCA, p. 141.

³⁷⁹SED, p. 716.

³⁸⁰D, I-14.

one has seen an example of this dialogue: *na udyogo me kevalam mandabuddheḥ* (I, whose mind is slack, do not do any efforts).³⁸¹ There are other examples of it that are quite explicit:

If other people are happy after praising someone who has acquired merits, why, Oh mind, don't you also rejoice after praising him?

*yadi prītisukham prāptam anyaiḥ stutvā guṇārjitam,
manah tvam api tam stutvā kasmāt evam na hr̥syati?*³⁸²

Prajñākaramati further explains this verse by paraphrasing it thus: *he manah tvam api kimiti harṣasukham na anubhavasi* (Oh mind, why don't you experience the pleasure of joy)?³⁸³

Like the three aspects of the cultivation of awareness and the cultivation of awareness itself, the *I* and the *me* are not to be viewed as independently existing entities: the *me* only exists from the point of view of the *I* whereas the latter is a product of the *me*. In other words, the *I* is only a projection of the *me* and consequently, it could be argued that the consciousness of the world, including that of the *me*, is an illusion created by the mind. Let us just imagine a man standing in the sun and who can only see his shadow. The perception of his own shadow produces his consciousness of himself. Let us further assume that his standing in the sun is the cause of suffering; then, seeing himself, i.e., the shadow, will always be a sign of being in a state of suffering. Talking to his shadow, the way the *I* addressed the mind above, is like talking to that which creates it. If the talking results in making that which creates the shadow move under a tree (something which is incidentally making another shadow, only this time, it covers the whole ground), then the shadow disappears and by the same token, the perception and the consciousness of it. For the one who suffers from the sun, his release is then brought about the moment his shadow becomes that which defines his whole world, i.e., the shadow of the tree. In a way, it is his own shadow that guided him to the tree by not disappearing when making wrong moves, and confirmed his release by disappearing when having placed himself under the shadow of the tree. Similarly, at this point, the *I* and the *me* become without distinctions again. These distinctions, therefore, only appear when there is a feeling of dissatisfaction, i.e., a reason to move.

The fact that the world is defined as illusion on account of the suggested understanding of the role and the nature of the *I* and the *me*, may appear somewhat

³⁸¹BCA, IV-46.

³⁸²BCA, IV-76.

³⁸³BCA, p. 151.

distressing. This feeling is, however, only the result of a certain perspective. Similar to the ski-jumper hanging twenty meters above the ground, from the point of view of a spectator, his situation may appear scary. But from the perspective of the ski-jumper, his floating in mid-air is perceived within the context of the whole dynamic of his jump and for this reason he, being fully absorbed by it, may perhaps feel more stable than anyone on the ground. This dynamic is possible only when he is in mid-air and not on the ground, where his spectators may feel more secure. Similarly, the dynamic of the cultivation of awareness is possible only when the *kleśas* are seen as illusion and not when they are no more seen. It is in this sense that I understand Nāgārjuna's statement alluded to previously concerning the two truths:

The ultimate truth cannot be taught without the [illusory] world of convention, and without the ultimate truth, *nirvāṇa* cannot be attained.
vyavahāram anāśritya paramārthaḥ na deśyate;
paramārthaṁ anāgamyā nirvāṇaṁ na adhiḡamya. 384

In other words, if the world is illusion, it remains so as long as it is not realized as such. This later statement may appear enigmatic, but it is just common sense given the way the *I* and the *me* interact to bring about their disappearance.

The only meaningful action the *I* can do in the context of a spiritual path is ultimately to cultivate the awareness that he is that which he has acknowledged as the only reality. Before arriving at this realization, he sees that the *me* does not see it that way. The way the *me* reacts is for the *I* the sign that he is behaving according to another set of assumptions. The task of the *I* is therefore to challenge the validity of these assumptions. These assumptions are consequently, the food which feeds the states of mind, that which keeps them alive. If one destroys these assumptions, then one annihilates by the same token the states of mind that are feeding on it. This idea of food is in fact given by the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* itself and I am sure that it is not exclusive to it:

The food of mental affliction is entertaining what is not desired and destroying what it is; having obtained [this kind of food] hatred is seen and destroys me.
aniṣṭa-karaṇāt jātam iṣṭasya ca vighātanāt,
daurmanasya āśanam prāpya dveṣaḥ dr̥ṣṭaḥ nihanti mām.

That is why I shall destroy this food of my enemy because it has no other function than to kill me.
tasmāt vighātayiṣyāmi tasya āśanam ahaṁ ripoh,
yasmāt na madvadhādanyatkṛtyam asya asti vairiṇaḥ. 385

384MMK, XXIV-10.

385BCA, VI-7 and 8.

In this regard, it may be appropriate to quote a passage from the *Samyutta Nikāya*:

Just as, *bhikkhus*, this body needs food for its subsistence, subsists conditioned by food, and without food does not subsist, just so, *bhikkhus*, the five *nīvaraṇas* [hindrances] need food for their subsistence, subsist conditioned by food, and without food do not subsist.
seyyathāpi bhikkhave ayaṃ kāyo āhāra-tīthitiko āhāraṃ paticca tiṭṭhati anāhāro no tiṭṭhati, evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave pañca nīvaraṇā āhāra-tīthitikā āhāraṃ paticca tiṭṭhanti anāhārā no tiṭṭhanti. ³⁸⁶

And again, how is this food to be destroyed? According to Prajñākaramati, it is by simply understanding that what causes it to be is not real (*na tu parama-arthataḥ kiñcit iṣṭam aniṣṭam vā saṃbhavati*), ³⁸⁷ that is to say, by investigating (*vicāra*) their true nature; such investigation is in effect to redefine them as being not real. The real cause of one's mental afflictions is therefore the absence of such investigation: *avicārayataḥ daurmanasya utpadyate* and *vicārya daurmanasya nivartanam eva varam.* ³⁸⁸

So far, I have discussed the role of *vicāra* without really analyzing the implications it may have for what is the content of this investigation. In one of the above passages, one noticed the use of the expression *paramārthataḥ* in connection with *vicāra* (*amī varākāḥ paramārthataḥ vicāryamāṇāḥ*). This expression usually means: "according to the ultimate truth." Are we to understand that there is really an ultimate truth? I may very well begin to answer this question by giving Gethin's opinion on this matter:

In the present context the discussion of the particular foods for the *nīvaraṇas* and *bojjhaṅgas* tends to dissolve any distinction between speculative philosophy and meditation practice. For to abandon the *nīvaraṇas* and develop the *bojjhaṅgas* is to see and understand how certain things feed the *bojjhaṅgas* and the *nīvaraṇas*. This is to know how one thing arises conditioned by another, which is, of course, to know *paticca-samuppāda*. ³⁸⁹

What this exactly means is that whatever the content of one's investigation is, it is true, in the context of the cultivation of awareness, in so far as it produces a deepening of one's awareness of whatever one tries to be aware of. Consequently, there is no difference, in the context of such investigation, between what one may consider as true knowledge (*paramārtha*) and beliefs (not *sraddhā*) such as the doctrine of *karma* or the existence of the various types of hells. More specifically, in the context of the cultivation of awareness from the point of view of the aspect of renunciation, knowledge and beliefs are used primarily, as mentioned earlier, to

³⁸⁶S, V-64-5 [E: Gethin (1994), p. 175].

³⁸⁷BCA, p. 123.

³⁸⁸BCA, p. 124.

³⁸⁹Gethin (1994), p. 177.

destroy the assumption that the objects of one's perception are truly existent and consequently, that their distinctions are real. Here is one example of a *paramā-rthataḥ* statement:

Who does hate whom? Truly, the hatred which is intended, of whom is it, on account of which fault it is?

kaḥ kasmai druhyati paramārthataḥ yena aparādhini kvacit kasyacit aparādhē tasya dveṣaḥ yuktaḥ ³⁹⁰

In this context, *paramārthataḥ* refers to the idea that everything is dependent on something else (*paravaśam sarvam*). ³⁹¹ Consequently, on the basis of this “fact,” hatred is no longer justified.

As for the use of beliefs, the purpose is identical. In fact, it is very difficult, if not impossible to make a distinction between a belief and a “fact.” A distinction can perhaps be made on the basis of the style of the discourse: when one is dealing with beliefs, his reflection is like a fantasy which involves a lot of creativity. For example, we have seen in the third chapter the idea that the body of one's beloved is not different from the decaying bodies in the cemetery. Another interesting example is probably the transformation of the meaning of *kalyāṇamitra*.

A *kalyāṇamitra*, within the Buddhist tradition, is a spiritual friend whose task is to help the aspirant in his progression towards enlightenment. Usually it is a master or a *guru* who is the most important *kalyāṇamitra* for the aspirant to enlightenment. The *kalyāṇamitra* is generally considered as a superior being on account of his spiritual achievement and its ability to help. In this regard, Śāntideva says:

One should never abandon a spiritual friend even at the cost of one's life. He is one who is preserving the vows of the bodhisattva and who is proficient in the knowledge of the Mahāyāna.

sadā kalyāṇamitraṃ ca jīvita-arthe api na tyajet.
bodhisattvavratadharaṃ mahāyāna-artha-kovidam. ³⁹²

These are the two qualities which qualify anyone to be a *kalyāṇamitra*. One's spiritual friend could be to a lesser extent one's colleague in the search for enlightenment; in this case, they might not be as good as the master but at least they are well-intentioned. Or, in a less obvious way, it can also be one of the Great Bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī or Avalokiteśvara. These Great Bodhisattvas can be venerated in order to progress spiritually (*kalyāṇamitraṃ vande aham satprasādāt*

³⁹⁰BCA, p. 133.

³⁹¹BCA, VI-31.

³⁹²BCA, V-102.

ca vardhate).³⁹³ Therefore, if one had to classify all sentient beings in terms of their ability to help the spiritual seekers, then the *kalyāṇamitra* would be at the very top. In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, however, this classification does not hold: even those beings, who harbor an intention to harm others, are *kalyāṇamitra*. Indeed:

Therefore, those who are conspiring against me by destroying my reputation, etc., are in fact protecting me from falling into lower states of being.
tasmat stuti-ādi-ghātāya mama ye pratyupasthitāḥ,
*apāyapāta-rakṣārthaṃ pravṛttāḥ nanu te mama.*³⁹⁴

These people are, as Prajñākaramati says, one's *kalyāṇamitra* and not one's injurer (*ataḥ kalyāṇamitrāṇi te na apakāriṇaḥ*).³⁹⁵ For this reason, there is no reason to hate them (*dveṣaḥ teṣu kathaṃ mama*).³⁹⁶ Similar to the *paramārthataḥ* statements, fantasy is therefore used as a way to destroy the idea that, in the case of the *kṣāntipāramitā*, someone is our enemy and even the idea that his actions are harming us. The ideas, which in fact are the manifestation of a specific way of viewing the world, are the food of the hating-mind (*dveṣa-citta*). They have to be destroyed, more specifically, the view that produces them, in order to annihilate the hating-mind. It would be nonsensical to achieve this result by eliminating all enemies. In this regard, Śāntideva gives a nice simile:

Where shall I find enough leather to cover the entire earth? Just by wearing leather-shoes, the earth will be covered.
bhūmiṃ chādayitum sarvāṃ kutaḥ carma bhaviṣyati,
*apānaḥ-carma-mātreṇa channā bhavati medinī.*³⁹⁷

These leather-shoes are, in the context of the cultivation of awareness of the idea that the world is devoid of independent existence, the realization that the world is indeed devoid of independent existence. Having identified the role of the *paramārthataḥ* statements, what is then the significance of the expression *paramārthataḥ*?

While discussing the metaphysical aspect of religious language in chapter four, I argued that the ultimate truth (*paramārtha*) is beyond conceptualization not in the sense that words cannot say anything about the ultimate reality, but rather that, whatever it says about it is true of it but always in a partial manner. The limitations of language are therefore seen not in terms of its inability to express the

³⁹³BCA, X-58.

³⁹⁴BCA, VI-99.

³⁹⁵BCA, p. 160.

³⁹⁶BCA, VI-100.

³⁹⁷BCA, V-13.

ultimate reality but rather in its inability to express everything about it. Like describing a running horse, it is impossible to report everything it does at every moment, but it is possible to describe it in such a way that one distinguishes it from a running dog or a standing horse. Therefore, what is characterized as *parama-arthataḥ*, is something which can be viewed as a partial description of the truth which has been acknowledged or as an implication of it. Consequently, because there can be a multitude of descriptions of the truth which serves as the basis of the cultivation of awareness, there can be as well an unlimited number of *parama-arthataḥ* statements. In this sense, referring back to the doctrine of skillful means (*upāya*), there can be a great diversity of truth-statements, but nevertheless these statements remain within the framework or context of what they are referring to. In other words, religious truths are not an obstacle to creativity; on the contrary, they are its greatest source of inspiration. While typing this very sentence on my word-processor, I am amazed to see what the simple idea of 1 and 0 has led us to achieve in terms of computer technology. Similarly, the great constructions of speculative philosophy are only an articulation of a simple idea; like a building which can assume an unlimited number of shapes, it can do so, however, only within the physical characteristics of the material it is made of.

I would like to end the discussion of the aspect of renunciation of the cultivation of awareness here. Our understanding of how the mind works, i.e., how the *I* and the *me* interact is, however, not complete yet. So far, we have seen how the mind can be disengaged from the claws of the world or, to use my previous simile, to press the clutch in order to release the drive shaft from the engine. I also argued that the Perfection of patience (*kṣāntipāramitā*), as a means and a description of what it means to be in a state of disengagement, was the best embodiment of this aspect of renunciation. It remains now to be seen how the mind can be reengaged into gears. This is the function of the aspect of conversion, and this is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter six

THE ASPECT OF CONVERSION

In the preceding chapter, I began a discussion on the idea of food as that which maintains “alive” a state of mind. I showed that a hating-mind (*dveṣa-citta*) could be annihilated by starving it. To starve a state of mind did not mean, however, to abstain from the food that nourishes it, but rather, to come to understand, through the exercise of investigation (*vicāra*), i.e., the cultivation of awareness, that this food has so to speak no nutritive quality. Given this understanding of what it means to starve the mind, I consequently argued that the more food one views as lacking nutritive quality, the more one’s awareness of what it means for food to have nutritive quality becomes stronger. In the context of the aspect of renunciation, one can say that this awareness is mediated through the awareness of the fact that some foods lack nutritive quality. In the context of the aspect of conversion, however, one is directly aware of the nutritive food. In a way, within the cultivation of awareness, the aspect of conversion calls for a more intense cultivation of awareness.

If the aspect of renunciation is a cultivation of awareness through the understanding of what is not good for oneself, then the aspect of conversion is looking for what is good for oneself. The difference between these two aspects has been presented by Gethin in the following manner:

The basic principles can be summed up as follows: improper or inappropriate bringing to mind (*ayoniso manasikāra*) of particular items is food for the *nīvaraṇas*; proper or appropriate bringing to mind (*yoniso manasikāra*) of particular items is food for the *bojjhaṅgas*.³⁹⁸

The inappropriate bringing to mind is the aspect of renunciation on account of understanding what it means to be inappropriate and the appropriate bringing to mind is the aspect of conversion on account of understanding what is appropriate, i.e., that which directly reinforces the beneficial awareness. In the context of *bodhicitta*, it is that which confirms the idea that one always desires enlightenment

³⁹⁸Gethin (1994), p. 175.

for the sake of all beings. In this context, one no longer uses the *kleśas* as means to cultivate a beneficial awareness, but rather, one is looking at what is one's refuge. In other words, the question "Where is my refuge?" is what occupies the mind of the aspirant to enlightenment in the context of the aspect of conversion.

In the Buddhist literature, Mahāyāna as well as pre-Mahāyāna, there are many examples of discourses giving answers to the above question. Despite the fact that these answers are articulated in many ways, they can nevertheless be classified into three categories expressed by the well-known formula of the taking of refuge in the three Jewels:

And I, Lord, go for refuge to the Blessed Lord [the Buddha], the *dhamma* and the community of the spiritual seekers (*bhikkhu*).

So ahaṃ bhante Bhagavantam saraṇam gacchāmi dhammaṃ ca bhikkhusaṃghaṃ ca. ³⁹⁹

According to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, this seeking for refuge should be maintained as long as one has to arrive at the final goal:

So long as I have not attained perfect enlightenment, I shall seek refuge in the Buddha, the *dharma* and the community of the spiritual seekers (bodhisattva).

buddhaṃ gacchāmi saraṇam yāvadā bodhimāṇdataḥ,

dharmaṃ gacchāmi saraṇam bodhisattvagaṇam tathā. ⁴⁰⁰

In the context of the cultivation of awareness, to take refuge in the Buddha would be, as argued in chapter four, to develop the awareness of his constant presence, to take refuge in the *dharma* is to acknowledge the truth of emptiness and its manifold articulations (*pratītyasamutpāda*, *sarvaṃ duḥkham*, *anatta*, etc.) and, to take refuge in the community of spiritual seekers is to cultivate the awareness of the fact that one is such a seeker. To some extent, the cultivation of awareness based on the concept of *bodhicitta* corresponds to the taking of refuge in the *saṅgha*. In this regard, Sangharakshita said:

It seems that the *bodhicitta* is something more likely to arise within a community, within an order of people who are working to allow it to manifest. [...] The *bodhicitta* is more likely to arise in the case of a number of people working hard together, and stimulating and sparking one another off, rather than in the solitary individual, in whose case it may tend to be like an individual experience in the narrower sense.⁴⁰¹

I do not deny the importance of one's colleagues in the search for enlightenment-- as mentioned in the preceding chapter, these colleges are to some extent one's *kalyāṇamitra*-- but I believe that this interpretation diminishes the significance of

³⁹⁹D, I-86.

⁴⁰⁰BCA, II-26.

⁴⁰¹Subhuti (1994), p. 128.

the *saṅgha* as one of the three refuges. Indeed, it seems that the *saṅgha*, as the community of spiritual seekers, is, like the other Buddhist truths, a way to describe the only reality, i.e., a reality which gives meaning to everything. In other words, taking refuge in the *saṅgha* is to acknowledge that everyone is seeking enlightenment, that everyone is helping each other:

The Sakya-muni said that the field of beings is like the field of the Enlightened Ones, because many people have attained full happiness by worshipping them.

*sattvaḥsetram jinaḥsetram iti ataḥ muninā uditam,
etān ārādhya bahavaḥ sampatpāram yataḥ gatāḥ.* ⁴⁰²

Both are similar because they are the cause of Buddhahood (*buddhatva-kāraṇa-hetutvāt*) ⁴⁰³ or because they create the conditions for the cultivation of awareness (*saṃbhāra-prasūti-pravṛtti-hetutvāt*). ⁴⁰⁴ It is in this sense, as discussed in chapter five, that entry into the community of spiritual seekers can be considered to some extent as the actualization or enactment of what one already is.

In the context of the Mahāyāna tradition, although the idea of taking refuge is still present, it appears to have been replaced by the taking of vows. I have already discussed in chapter five the idea that the ritual of initiation of the bodhisattva may be viewed as an enactment, similar to the taking of the Refuge in the Three Jewels, of what it means to be a bodhisattva. As alluded to in chapter two, while discussing the significance of *praṇidhicitta*, this ritual of initiation comprises the taking of a series of vows. These vows are called the ten *praṇidhānas* and may be summarized as follows:

1. To provide for the worship of all the Buddhas without exception, 2. to maintain the religious Discipline that has been taught by all the Buddhas and to preserve the teaching of the Buddhas, 3. to see all the incidents in the early career of a Buddha, 4. to realise the Thought of Enlightenment, to practice all the duties of a *bodhisattva*, to acquire all the *pāramitās* and purify all the stages of his career, 5. to mature all beings and establish them in the knowledge of the Buddha, viz. all the four classes of beings who are in the six states of existence, 6. to perceive the whole Universe, 7. to purify and cleanse all the Buddha-fields, 8. to enter on the Great Way and to produce a common thought and purpose in all *bodhisattvas*, 9. to make all actions of the body, speech and mind fruitful and successful and 10. to attain the supreme and perfect Enlightenment and to preach the Doctrine. ⁴⁰⁵

These ten vows are in effect a description of what an aspirant to enlightenment becomes when he has attained the stage of bodhisattva, i.e., someone in whom *bodhicitta* has arisen. What is interesting to note at this point is that, according to

⁴⁰²BCA, VI-112.

⁴⁰³BCA, p. 135.

⁴⁰⁴BCA, p. 135.

⁴⁰⁵Dayal (1931), p. 66.

Dayal, “a *bodhisattva*’s career is said to commence with the “production of the Thought of *bodhi* (*bodhi-citta-utpāda*)”. He thinks of becoming a Buddha for the welfare and liberation of all creatures, makes certain great vows, and his future greatness is predicted by a living Buddha.”⁴⁰⁶ In this regard, Williams confirms that: “[the] Bodhisattva on the first stage, the ‘Joyous’ stage, we are told that he (or she) is accordingly filled with joy, and makes ten great vows.”⁴⁰⁷ How is it then that the arising of *bodhicitta* is characterized by taking a vow (the fourth) to realize *bodhicitta*? To add a little more confusion, Śāntideva, at almost the very end of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, says:

May I always retain the memory of previous lives [of the Buddha] and of my ordination vows till I attain the Joyous stage on account of holding to [the vision] of Mañjuśrī.
jātisamaratvaṃ pravrajyām ahaṃ ca prāpnuyām sadā,
yāvat pramuditābhūmiṃ mamjughoṣaparigrahāt. ⁴⁰⁸

Given this last passage, it would be paradoxical to say that one attains a spiritual stage in which the means to attain it has to be followed. This is incidentally the same paradox concerning the revelation of the fourth Noble Truths which has been mentioned earlier. Similarly, this paradox can be resolved by saying that the taking of vows which occur at the *pramuditabhūmi* is in effect a description of what it means to undergo this spiritual experience as well as being a means to it. In this circumstance, it is appropriate to say that the taking of vows, as well as the taking of Refuge, creates the conditions for the cultivation of awareness and as such, there is nothing more to do than become fully aware of the reality described by the vows taken. In other words, the taking of vows by the bodhisattva may be the beginning of his spiritual career, but also the end. Between the beginning and the end, there is a “timeless span of time” because any notion of time, on the part of the bodhisattva, would mean that he has not begun yet.

To a lesser extent, conversion, as mentioned by Gethin above, is effected by paying attention to whatever is beneficial for the cultivation of awareness. What is beneficial, as in the case of the aspect of renunciation, is the *paramārthataḥ* statements as well as beliefs or fantasy. The expressions used to bring about a conversion are derivatives of the noun *manas* and the verbal root *√kr* as in *idam duḥkham mahārtha-sādhakatvāt soḍhum ucitam iti manasi kartavyam* (One ought to

⁴⁰⁶Dayal (1931), p. 50.

⁴⁰⁷Williams (1989), p. 206.

⁴⁰⁸BCA, X-51.

remember that this suffering is to be borne because it is the means to achieve the great goal).⁴⁰⁹ In another passage in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, one finds the following:

Manasikāraḥ is that mind which is “fixed” on perfect enlightenment or Buddhahood [which is defined] as the intent to reach it by means of the desire to rescue all sentient beings.

*samyak-saṃbodhau buddhatve yac-cittam sarva-sattva-samuddharanābhiprāyeṇa
tatprāptiyartham adhyāsayena manasikāraḥ.*⁴¹⁰

That mind, which is, in this context, called the *saṃbodhicittam*, has to be produced (*saṃbodhicittam eva upādeyam*)⁴¹¹ because there is no better means against evil (*na ca saṃbodhicittāt pratipakṣaḥ mahīyān aparāḥ saṃbhavati*).⁴¹²

According to Apte, the noun *manasikāra* means: 1. perfect perception, full consciousness, mental concentration and resolution.⁴¹³ According to the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit dictionary, one has: fixing in mind, mental concentration, intense attention, thought, notice.⁴¹⁴ Both translations are somewhat ambiguous as to the intensity of one’s attention. This means that the activity of conversion can be seen as an ongoing process present at various degrees within the context of the aspect of renunciation as well as the aspect of contemplation. Indeed, to a lesser degree, one thinks about the fact that everything lacks intrinsic existence to justify that one ought not to be involved in them, and to a greater degree, one is fully aware of all the implications of the fact that everything lacks intrinsic existence.

The term *manasikāra* therefore corresponds very much to what I have described in the preceding chapter as making the right decision. It makes sense to say that this is the only action or activity that ought to be done to reach enlightenment, when one takes into consideration the idea of intensity. If one views enlightenment as a flash of light, as a kind of spiritual knock-out, then it is difficult to accept the idea that deciding that one is enlightened is already the experience of enlightenment. In fact, if enlightenment is a change of state of mind, this change need not be a “cataclysm in one’s mental organization,” to use Suzuki’s expression. Let us imagine a person having a lot of money problems. On account of this, he is full of anxiety. Then he learns that he is about to inherit a huge sum of money allowing him to pay off all his debts and even more. Even if he does not have the money yet, he feels quite released and he can even incur more debts. The very idea

⁴⁰⁹BCA, p. 125.

⁴¹⁰BCA, p. 9.

⁴¹¹BCA, p. 9.

⁴¹²BCA, p. 9.

⁴¹³SED, p. 1233.

⁴¹⁴BHS, p. 418.

that he is going to inherit a lot of money is sufficient to change his outlook of life and above all, his quality of life. In the same way, the decision to acknowledge certain ideas, to put in one's mind (*manasikṛ*) certain thoughts, already brings its results. In a way, taking such a decision is already a change of state of mind. Indeed, in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, *manasikāra* is a state of mind which ought to be produced: *paribhujatā ca evaṃ manasikāra utpādayitavyaḥ* (he who consumes [food] should understand the following).⁴¹⁵ In the present context, what one should understand is that one ought to eat with moderation because there are eighty thousand types of worms in the body which rely on this energy for their happiness (*santi asmin kāye aṣṭi-kṛmikulasaḥasrāṇi, tāni anena eva ojasā sukhaṃ viharantu*).⁴¹⁶ This is a good example of the use of fantasy fueling one's cultivation of awareness: even a worm is worthy of consideration.

This last argument, although a little bit far-fetched, is, however, not devoid of interest. Usually, it is assumed that the expressions derived from *manasikṛ* refer to a distinct object of the mind such as an idea or a thought. I gave an example above about how just holding a thought might bring a change of behavior. Conversely, however, it can be said that changing one's behavior reinforces one's awareness of the reasons why one should change one's behavior. As with the example of the worms, the moderation in one's eating habits it is meant to bring about does refer to the idea that no distinctions are to be made at the level of the phenomenal world. This interaction between behavior and cultivation of awareness is discussed in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* mainly in its fifth chapter entitled *samprajñā-rakṣaṇam* (Guarding alertness). To some extent, the discourse of this chapter corresponds to the Perfection of discipline (*śīla-pāramitā*). In this regard, Prajñā-karamati says:

Whatever practices are performed for the sake of *samādhi*, they are in harmony with or included in *śīla*. For that reason, those who wish to obtain *samādhi* ought to practice *śīla* which consists of *smṛti-samprajñā*.
*ye kecit samādhihetavaḥ prayogaḥ, te śīle 'nugatāḥ iti. tasmāt samādhi-ārthinā smṛti-samprajñā-śīlena bhavitavyam*⁴¹⁷

With regard to the cultivation of awareness, *śīla* is a good example of the idea that the aspect of renunciation does overlap with the aspects of conversion and eventually, contemplation. Indeed, as renunciation, we have the following verses:

⁴¹⁵BCA, p. 104.

⁴¹⁶BCA, p. 104.

⁴¹⁷BCA, p. 88.

If one sees one's mind led [by anger] or in a state of jealousy, one should not act nor speak, one should stay put like a piece of wood.

*anunītaṃ pratihatam yadā paśyet svakam manah,
na kartavyam na vaktavyam sthātavyam kāṣṭhavat tadā.*

Whenever there is a desire to praise oneself or denigrate others, to disregard other's words and start argument, one should stay put like a piece of wood.

*yadātmotkarṣaṇābhāsam parapamśanam eva vā,
sādhikṣepam sasamrambham sthātavyam kāṣṭhavat tadā.*

Whenever I am intolerant, lethargic, fearful, obstinate, loquacious and too partial, then I remain like a piece of wood.

*asaḥṣṇu-alasaṃ bhītaṃ pragalbham mukharam tathā,
svapakṣābhiniṣṭam ca tasmāt tiṣṭhāmi kāṣṭhavat.⁴¹⁸*

as conversion:

Remembering again and again the fact that I have obtained after a long time this wonderful moment, I hold this mind which is unshakable like Mount Sumeru.

*cirāt prāptam kṣaṇavaram smṛtvā smṛtvā muhurmuḥuḥ,
dhārayāmi īdṛṣam cittam aprakampyam sumeruvāt.⁴¹⁹*

and as contemplation:

[A mind which is] very resolute, very happy, steadfast, respectful with humility, bashful, fearful, peaceful, with the intention of providing joy.

*suniścitaṃ suprasannam dhīram sādaraḡauravam,
sajajam sabhayam sāntam parārāḡhanatatparam.*

Undisturbed by childish desires which are mutually contradicting each other and which are born out of *kleśas*, full of pity for those [who entertained them]

*parasparavirudhābhiḥ bālecchābhiḥ akheditam,
kleśa-utpādāt idam hi etad eṣām iti dayānvitam.⁴²⁰*

Again, this renunciation, conversion and contemplation is possible because of understanding that the phenomenal world is illusion, a creation of the mind and consequently, by controlling the mind, one controls the whole world:

Tigers, lions, elephants, bears, serpents and all enemies such as the guardians of hells and evil-spirits and demons, they are all controlled on account of controlling the mind alone. With only the mind subdued, all are subdued.

*vyāghrāḥ simhāḥ gaḡāḥ rkṣāḥ sarpāḥ sarve śatравāḥ,
sarve narakapālāḥ ca ḡākinyāḥ rākṣasāḥ tathā
sarve baddhāḥ bhavanti ete cittasya ekasya bandhanāt,
cittasya ekasya damanāt sarve dāntāḥ bhavanti ca.⁴²¹*

How is this mind to be subdued, this is the role of *saṃprajanya* or more particularly, of *smṛti-saṃprajanya* (mindfulness-alertness). At this point, I do not believe that the

⁴¹⁸BCA, V-48, 50, 53.

⁴¹⁹BCA, 58.

⁴²⁰BCA, V-55, 56.

⁴²¹BCA, V-4, 5.

Bodhicaryāvatāra is really suggesting another means to subdue the mind, but rather a different description of the causes of one's suffering and consequently, it is a way to foster *vicāra* or the cultivation of awareness:

The thief which is the absence of alertness, following the lack of mindfulness, will take away the accumulated merits and those who have been deprived of them will finish in one of the evil states of being.

*asamprajanya-caureṇa smṛti-moṣānusārinā,
upacitya api punyāni muṣitāḥ yānti durgatim.*

The group of thieves which are the *kleśas* are waiting to enter [in one's awareness, i.e., to disrupt the cultivation of awareness]. Once they have entered, they steal it and kill the means or conditions for the attainment of a happy state of existence.

*kleśa-taskara-saṃgho 'yam avatāra-gaveśakaḥ,
prāpya avatāraṃ muṣṇāti hanti sadgatijīvitam.* 422

It appears therefore that *smṛti* and *samprajanya* are a description of the dynamic of *manasikuru*. Indeed, *smṛti* seems to correspond to its object:

That is why *smṛti* should never be allowed to leave the mind which is like a door. If it is gone, it has to be reestablished by means of thinking of the sufferings of the lower realms.

*tasmāt smṛtiḥ manodvārāt na apaneyā kadācana,
gatāpi pratyupasthāpyā saṃsmṛtyāpāyikīm vyathām.* 423

This means that a mind which is cultivating an awareness of a beneficial thought is like the door to the full realization of what it describes. If the thought leaves the mind, then the mind itself is no longer such a door and one may be doomed because of this change of mind. It is, however, necessary to reestablish or reinstate the beneficial thought in the mind. *Smṛti* is therefore the content of *manasikuru*.

The reason why *smṛti* is allowed to slip away is because the container is not tight enough:

A person who lacks alertness cannot retain what has been heard, thought about or contemplated just as a pitcher with a hole that leaks water.

*asamprajanya-cittasya śrutacintatābhāvitam,
sacchidrakumbhajaḥlavat na smṛtāvavatiṣṭhate.* 424

Consequently, to stop any possible leak, a person must be alert and kept a constant watch on his mind:

This is in brief the characteristic of a person who is alert. [That person] is constantly keeping a watch on his body and mind.

*etad eva samāśena samprajanyasya lakṣaṇam,
yatkāyacittāvekṣāḥ pratyavekṣā muhuḥ muhuḥ.* 425

422BCA, V-27, 28.

423BCA, V-29.

424BCA, V-25.

425BCA, V-108.

This is, I believe, the essence of the practice of *śīla*.

It seems to me that the function of the discussion concerning the importance of *smṛti* and *saṃprajanya*, within the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, is to give some kind of perspective to the notion of *manasikuru*, i.e., to show its various degrees of intensity. As such, *manasikuru* may refer to the simple action of having a thought in mind or to a deep absorption (*bhāvanā*). With the idea of *saṃprajanya*, which corresponds to the activity of holding a thought in mind (*smṛti*), one adds a new dimension to *manasikuru*; as just said, one adds the impression of perspective to what, at first sight, allows no difference between thinking about an idea and being fully absorbed by it. It appears, however, that *saṃprajanya* is just the beginning of this increase in intensity. There is in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* another discourse that contributes to an intensification of the cultivation of awareness. This discourse is mainly found in the context of the discussion of the Perfection of valor or strength (*vīryapāramitā*). Indeed, similar to the parallel between the aspect of renunciation and the Perfection of patience (*kṣānti-pāramitā*), the aspect of conversion seems to be best exemplified by the Perfection of valor. I therefore intend to show next how this Perfection contributes to the cultivation of awareness.

i. vīryapāramitā

According to Apte, *vīryam* means among other things: 1. heroism, prowess, valor; 2. vigor, strength; 3. virility; 4. energy, firmness, courage; and 5. power, potency.⁴²⁶ In this regard, Edgerton seems to combine both the idea of heroism and that of energy by translating it as heroic energy.⁴²⁷ I believe that, as will be shown in the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, both connotations are justified. Indeed, courage, heroism, energy and strength are usually the qualities needed in the face of danger or in the face of a difficult task to perform. As such, *vīrya* could be understood as effort and perseverance. Given the multitude of rebirths a bodhi-sattva has to go through before reaching enlightenment, effort and perseverance are of the utmost necessity. Referring back to Suzuki's description of the *Satori* experience, *vīrya* appears to be the only true spiritual quality to bring this experience about so that *bodhicitta*, according to him, is to be assimilated almost exclusively to effort and perseverance. In the context of the cultivation of awareness, however, I do not believe that this kind of effort, based on the dualistic

⁴²⁶SED, p. 1488.

⁴²⁷BHS, p. 506.

notion of a place to leave and a place to reach, is appropriate. In this context, *vīrya* and more particularly, *vīryapāramitā*, is not to be seen as a valorization of effort or perseverance, but rather, as simply a means to bring one face to face with whatever idea that serves as the basis of the cultivation of awareness. In other words, it is the act of facing that counts and not the annihilation of what may impede it. Similar to the *kleśas* in the context of the aspect of renunciation, awareness of what causes lack of vigor and heroism is already to have vigor and heroism. Given this understanding of *vīrya*, effort and motivation, the way they are normally understood, are consequently just skillful means to bring about a conversion of the mind towards or literally facing what is beneficial for the cultivation of awareness. Indeed, doing efforts assumes an awareness of a goal or an objective; this awareness is what really brings about the transformation and not the actual efforts. This is what I intend to clarify next.

To some extent the connotations associated with the injunction *remember* are very similar to that related to the idea of waking up. Indeed, in the *Bodhicarya-avatāra*, *vīrya* is seen as the remedy against lethargy or laziness (*ālasyam*):

What is *vīrya* ? It is inclination towards what is beneficial. And what are its opposing factors? It is lethargy, attachment to what is contemptible, despondency and self-contempt.
kim vīryam kuśala-utsāhaḥ tadvipakṣaḥ kaḥ ucyate?
ālasyam kutsitāsaktiḥ viśādātmāvamānyanā. ⁴²⁸

The causes of this lethargy are:

Lethargy is born on account of enjoying illusory pleasure, a craving for sleep and absence of reaction when confronted to the suffering of *samsāra*.
avyāpārasukhāsvāda-nidrāpāśrayatṛṣṇayā,
samsāraduḥkha-anudvegāt ālasyam upajāyate. ⁴²⁹

The last cause does refer to the notion of *adhikāra* alluded to in one of the previous chapters and, as discussed in the preceding chapter, to the feeling of dissatisfaction as the real beginning of a spiritual path and consequently, as the cause of the appearance of the cultivation of awareness.

After having identified the various causes of lethargy, Sāntideva tries to awaken one's consciousness of the situation one finds oneself in:

Being caught by the hunter which is the *kleśas*, you have entered into the net of rebirth. Why don't you know today that you have come to the mouth of death?
kleśavāgurikāghrātaḥ praviṣṭaḥ janmavāgurām,
kim adya api na jñāsi mṛtyoḥ vadanam āgataḥ.

⁴²⁸BCA, VII-2.

⁴²⁹BCA, VII-3.

Don't you see that people of your kind are systematically being killed? You are as asleep as a buffalo in the presence of a butcher.

*svayūthyānmāryamānān tvam krameṇa eva na paśyati,
tathāpi nidrām yāsi eva caṇḍālamahiṣaḥ yathā.*

You are constantly under the surveillance of the Lord of death, without any escape. How is it that you relish enjoyments, sleep and pleasure?

*yamenodvikṣyamāṇasya baddhamārgasya sarvataḥ,
katham te rocate bhoktum katham nidrā katham ratih.* ⁴³⁰

What Sāntideva is trying to achieve with this type of discourse is, I believe, to create a sense of crisis or urgency. Indeed:

As you collect the prerequisites [for wholesome practice] death is to come soon. Having abandoned lethargy at that inopportune time what will you do?

*yāvatsaṃbhṛtaṃbhāraṃ maraṇaṃ sīghraṃ iṣyati,
saṃtyajyāpi tadālasyaṃ akāle kiṃ kariṣyasi?*

Thinking: 'I have not achieved this', 'What I have started remains half-done', you exclaim: 'Oh, I am dead' when death suddenly has come.

*idaṃ na prāptam ārabdham idaṃ ardhakṛtaṃ sthitam,
akasmāt mrtyuḥ āyātaḥ hā hataḥ asmi iti cintayan.* ⁴³¹

This sense of crisis is not better expressed by the attempt to arouse fear from what is not beneficial to spiritual progression:

Your fear that you are like a live fish [about to be eaten] is appropriate. And why? Because of the intense suffering in hell for one who has done evil.

*jīvamatsya iva asmi iti yuktaṃ bhayaṃ iha eva te,
kiṃ punaḥ kṛtapāpasya tivrāt narakaduhkhataḥ* ⁴³²

The reason for the creation of this sense of crisis or urgency is, on the one hand, to destroy any illusions concerning the eventual benefits offered by being attached to the phenomenal world, i.e., viewing it as independently existent--this is the aspect of renunciation-- and on the other hand, to leave one avenue of escape for the mind. This avenue is what is really beneficial for the spiritual progression; this is the aspect of conversion. In a way, it is like building a wall around oneself and letting one door to go out. The more one feels cooped up by the walls, the more one is likely to have the desire to escape. It is in this sense that I previously said that awareness of what is causing a lack or *vīrya* is to some extent already a manifestation of it. Indeed, what does cause the desire to escape as well as the knowledge of the way to escape? It is the wall; without it, there is not even a door. This is incidentally a variation of my argument concerning the role of confession which is

⁴³⁰BCA, VII-4-6.

⁴³¹BCA, VII-7, 8.

⁴³²BCA, VII-11.

not to be seen as a kind of preliminary practice but rather as a direct means of cultivating the awareness of the presence of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, an awareness which is as liberating as the realization of emptiness. In this regard, I would like to quote Polanyi:

Precatory prayers are perhaps, of all parts of religious worship, the most empty of ordinary-action significance. It might be considered remotely meaningful to feel gratitude that God is good—even though we think he could not be otherwise. But how can one presume either to advise or to plead with him to do something good for someone? Such entreaties should logically mean that we do not trust that he will know or will do what is best without our intercession. However, such prayer, in its most sincere form, is obviously a supreme act of trust.⁴³³

In other words, the act of mistrust which is the precatory prayer is actually one of trust. Similarly, the discourse describing one's state of lethargy and despondency, like the discourse related to the fact that one is entangled in the *kléśas*, renders one immune from this kind of state as well as pointing at the way to escape from them. As a matter of fact, in the present context, to be immune and escaping are two descriptions—viewed from two different points of view, i.e., the aspect of renunciation and that of conversion—of the same thing: the cultivation of awareness. Indeed:

[*Virya*] is self-control by means of lack of despondency, strength and cleverness. It is also the practice of exchanging or transforming of one's self with other's.
aviśāda-balavyūha-tātparya-ātmavidheyatā,
parātmāsamatā ca eva parātmāparivartanam. ⁴³⁴

As mentioned before, this practice of exchanging one's self with other's is a way of cultivating an awareness of the fact that there is no difference between oneself and the others, i.e., realization of emptiness which is the highest goal of the aspirant to enlightenment.

The sense of crisis gives therefore the right direction one should turn one's mind to. Taking into consideration the idea of intensity discussed above, it seems, however, that it is just the beginning of what one might call *vīrya*. Indeed, the first reaction from turning one's mind towards what is beneficial seems to be fear:

I am afraid at the prospect of giving up my hands and feet. The distinction between heavy and light made by me is due to my lack of investigation [i.e., cultivation of awareness].
athāpi hastapādādi dātavyam iti me bhayam.
guru-lāghavamūḍhatvaṃ tanme syāt avicārataḥ. ⁴³⁵

⁴³³Polanyi (1975), p. 155.

⁴³⁴BCA, VII-16.

⁴³⁵BCA, VII-20.

Again, giving one's limbs up or more specifically, the readiness of giving them up is what it means to be a bodhisattva and this state of being, as confirmed by the second part of the last verse, is intimately related to an understanding of how the things really are, i.e., as defined by the idea of emptiness. Consequently, the idea of emptiness itself can be the cause of fear. Indeed, in the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, there is a passage reporting a discussion involving a Vastuvādin and a Mahāyānist concerning the consequences of meditating on emptiness. The Vastuvādin argues:

The consequence of [reflecting or meditating] on the meaning of emptiness is, for the ones afflicted by confusion, to stay in *samsāra* because of not being released on account of fear and attachment.

*saktitrāsāt tu anirmuktyā samsāre sidhyati sthitiḥ,
mohena duḥkhinām arthe śūnyatāyā idam phalam.* ⁴³⁶

In other words, meditating on the idea of emptiness would cause fear and as such, it inevitably binds one to the world of *samsāra*. Therefore, emptiness is no remedy to suffering. To this the Mahāyānist says:

Since fear is a thing that produces suffering, let one cultivate emptiness, which calms suffering. How can fear arise from it?

*yad duḥkhaśamanam vastu trāsaḥ tasmāt prajāyatām,
śūnyatā duḥkhaśamanī tataḥ kim jāyate bhayaṃ.* ⁴³⁷

Although fear must be eventually overcome, it is not devoid of interest in the context of the cultivation of awareness. Fear has the quality, if one may say so, to make real what is not. A person who suffers from a phobia, for example, sees as real what is the product of his imagination. In other words, fear could be used as some kind of factor of intensification. The only problem with the feeling of fear is that it has a limited effect: if it is not subdued, one may run away from what causes it and then everything has to start from the beginning, i.e., bring back one's attention towards the skillful things. It is here, therefore, that *vīrya* becomes significant. Its task is to maintain a sufficient level of "strength," by means of investigation (*vicāra*) and not by means of will-power, one's attention towards what is skillful. If I can use a simile, this activity is like trying to join two magnets at their respective positive poles not by simple pressure but rather by causing a change of polarization in one of the two magnets. Within the context of the cultivation of awareness, this appears to be the function of *chanda*.

According to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

⁴³⁶BCA, IX-53.

⁴³⁷BCA, IX-56.

For the welfare of sentient beings [it is necessary to have] the four strengths: the desire for what is beneficial, strength, attachment to good actions and spirit of sacrifice. One should develop the desire of what is beneficial while meditating on what is praiseworthy.

chanda-sthāma-rati-mukti-balaṃ sattva-artha-siddhaye.

chandaṃ duḥkhabhayāt kuryāt anuśaṃsān ca bhāvayan. ⁴³⁸

In chapter four, while discussing the significance of *śraddhā*, I said that the activity described as *chanda* could be compared to the incubation, something similar to the activity of watching and guarding. Another passage taken from the *Bodhicarya-avatāra* seems to confirm this idea:

The Buddha said that *chanda* is the root of all beneficial things. The root of that itself is a constant meditation or awareness on the result of good and bad actions.

kuśalānāṃ ca sarveṣāṃ chandaṃ mūlaṃ munih jagau,

tasya api mūlaṃ satatam vipākaphalabhāvanā. ⁴³⁹

To a lesser extent, the idea of *māna* is used to help the bodhisattva to face adversities:

Māna should be applied in three things: *karma*, minor or secondary tendencies and strength. 'This can be done only by me alone' —this is called being proud of actions.

triṣu māno vidhātavyaḥ karma-upakleśa-śaktiṣu,

mayaiiva ekena kartavyam iti eṣā karmamānitā. ⁴⁴⁰

In this context, *māna* somewhat means perseverance on account of self-confidence. *Māna* can also be considered as a near synonym of *sthāma* which means: perseverance in what has been undertaken (*sthāma ārabdha-dṛḍhatā*). ⁴⁴¹ As quoted above, *sthāma* is one aspect of *chanda*.

The term *māna* is, however, not without ambiguity.⁴⁴² According to Apte, it has the following meanings: 1. respect, honour, regard, respectful consideration; 2. pride (in a good sense), self-reliance, self-respect; 3. haughtiness, pride, conceit, self-confidence, vanity; 4. a wounded sense of honour; 5. jealous anger; and 6. opinion, conception.⁴⁴³ In the spiritual context, it is often equated to one's ego and as such, it is a major hurdle to spiritual progression:

How is it that someone is doing a work that is incumbent upon me to do. If because of my ego or egoistic attitude I do not do that work, it is better that my ego be destroyed.

nīcam karma karoti anyah katham mayyapi tiṣṭhati.

⁴³⁸BCA, VII-31.

⁴³⁹BCA, VII-39.

⁴⁴⁰BCA, VII-49.

⁴⁴¹BCA, p. 187.

⁴⁴²See Crosby and Skilton's translation of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* for an interesting discussion regarding the negative and the positive connotations of the term *māna*.

⁴⁴³SED, p. 1261.

mānāt cet na karomi etat māno naśyatu me varam.

Led into the lower states of existence by the ego, their joy being destroyed even in human existence. They are like slaves eating from others' hands, they are emaciated fools ugly to see.
*mānena durgatiṃ nītā mānuṣye 'pi hatosavāḥ,
paripinḍāsino dāsā mūrkhā durdaśanāḥ kṛśāḥ.* ⁴⁴⁴

In this regard, Matics gives the following comments:

The word pride (*māna*) has a double meaning with which translators find it difficult to cope. It is pride in the sense of lively spirit, respect, regard, honor, consideration of oneself and others; it is what Poussin has called "*la fierté*," "*héroïsme robuste*," and it is closely associated with *sthāman*—"station, seat, place; strength, power," a word widely used in Buddhist Sanskrit texts in its second meaning as strength or power. [...] At the same time, *māna* has the simple meaning of arrogance, of pride in the wrong and bad sense of the word, which makes others unhappy and which holds one back from progress along the Bodhisattva path. As such, it is listed in the *Dharmasaṃgraha* as one of the six evil feelings (*ṣaṭkleśāḥ*), viz., "passion, hostility, arrogance, confusion, error, and doubt." *Māna* is also included in a comparable list called "the hosts of *Māra*" or "the ten fetters."⁴⁴⁵

As can be seen above, Sāntideva is indeed aware of the two connotations of *māna* and even makes a sort of philosophical pun with it:

Those beings who are overcome by their ego are contemptible, not those who are self-confident. The one who is self-confident [*manī*] is not controlled by the enemies whereas others are by the enemies such as the ego *māna*.

*ye sattvāḥ mānavijitāḥ varākāḥ te na mānināḥ,
mānī śatravaśaṃ na eti mānaśatruvaśāḥ ca.* ⁴⁴⁶

According to Matics, "no comparable use of pride exists in the religions of the world"⁴⁴⁷ and as such, i.e., in the sense of self-confidence, it "is a pervasive attribute, and when one becomes aware of it, it may be noticed as an underlying theme in many utterance of the Bodhisattva as he undertakes the great task of the emancipation of all beings."⁴⁴⁸ In other words, *māna* is contributory to the tranquillity of the mind and as such, "it is another form of Mindfulness, of being ever-alert that the passions may not pervade the Citta, and its special stress is only that one must be quick to take remedial action whenever danger threatens."⁴⁴⁹

I agree with Matics that *māna* is another theme for developing mindfulness, but, as argued so far, I believe that no distinctions, from the point of view of the cultivation of awareness, are to be made between *māna* as one's ego and *māna* as self-confidence. Awareness of both connotations is a means of cultivating awareness

⁴⁴⁴BCA, VII-51, 57.

⁴⁴⁵Matics (1970), p. 63-4.

⁴⁴⁶BCA, VII-56.

⁴⁴⁷Matics (1970), p. 30.

⁴⁴⁸Matics (1970), p. 64.

⁴⁴⁹Matics (1970), p. 65.

of the reality they are referring to and consequently, it is not appropriate to say that “one must be quick to take remedial action whenever danger threatens” because the only beneficial action possible is to become aware. In fact, if one insists that there is a difference between the two kinds of *māna*, I would say that the negative *māna* is the theme of a cultivation of awareness in the context of the aspect of renunciation whereas the good *māna* is considered, as a means to strengthen self-confidence, i.e., to face adversities, in the context of the aspect of conversion.

Given this understanding of *chanda*, one can say that it is not much different from *vicāra* and to some extent, *śraddhā*. In fact, I believe that the difference in meaning between these terms lies, not in the nature of the activity they call for, but rather in the description of their fruits or even, it is the same fruit seen from different perspectives. Indeed, one can say that, *chanda* being the power to maintain an awareness of what is skillful—like fear, desire renders real its object—*śraddhā*, the confidence issued from maintaining such awareness and *vicāra*, the discrimination resulting from it, all three are the fruits as well as the causes of an ever greater awareness of what is skillful. In other words, the cultivation of an awareness of the idea of emptiness produces an understanding of the fact that everything is empty and this understanding could be expressed in terms of *vīrya*, *śraddhā* and *vicāra*, i.e., on account of this understanding one has more vigor, confidence and wisdom. As a matter of fact, not only those three, but also all the *pāramitās* such as *kṣānti*, *dhyāna*, *dāna* and *śīla* could be interpreted thus. This is another way of saying that the *pāramitās* are both the means and the goal to reach and as such, they are only different ways of expressing what it means to reach it. At this point, I believe that it may be appropriate to finish a discussion, begun while analyzing the significance of the Eightfold path, concerning the tendency to view the various *pāramitās* as successive stages of spiritual achievements, as one leading to the other.

In chapter four I argued, with the help of Mai and Saddhatissa, that the members of the Eightfold path are not to be seen as progressive steps but rather as primary as well as interdependent. Each of these members must be perfected simultaneously and as such, they are supporting each other. In this regard, Gethin seems to go a little further by suggesting “that by developing just one of the thirty-seven *dharmas* (any aspect of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*) to its full one comes to the

conclusion of the path to awakening.”⁴⁵⁰ In support of his affirmation, Gethin looked at the concept of *ekāyana* discussed in the *Mahāsatipatṭhāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In the *sutta*, one can find the following formula:

Ekāyana, bhikkhus, is this path for the purification of beings, for passing beyond sorrow and grief, for the disappearance of pain and discontent, for the attainment of the right way, for the realization of *nibbāna*—that is the four *satipatṭhānas*.
ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā soka-pariddavānaṃ samatīkamāya dukkha-
domanassānaṃ atthāgamāya nāyassa adhiḡamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya yadidaṃ cattāro
satipatṭhānā. ⁴⁵¹

The interpretation of this *ekāyana* formula has been the subject of various speculations among Buddhist scholars. For one, it has been translated as “the narrow path” or the “sole, exclusive path.” Gethin rejects these interpretations as inappropriate and argues that what is meant by this formula is that the path is “unified, clear, well defined and single.”⁴⁵² In other words, a path which is devoid of doubt. Therefore, still according to Gethin:

the four *satipatṭhānas* embrace a conception of the essentials of Buddhist practice that is clear and direct. In this sense, more than any other remaining sets, the four *satipatṭhānas* provide a description of the path right from basics direct to the final goal and are, it seems, deserving of the epithet *ekāyano maggo*. ⁴⁵³

This is exactly what I meant when saying, in the preceding paragraph, that *chanda* is not much different from *vicāra* and *śraddhā*. With regard to the *pāramitās*, this idea of one for all is also confirmed in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. In his commentary of the first verse of the ninth chapter, Prajñākaramati tells us that all the *pāramitās* are considered as means if wisdom is predominant in them (*prajñāpradhānāḥ dāna-ādayaḥ guṇāḥ ucyante*). ⁴⁵⁴ For the Perfection of giving (*dānapāramitā*), for example, this means to give with the knowledge that there is no distinction between a giver, a thing given and a receiver (*dātrdeyapratigrāhakādi-tritaya-anupalambha-yogena*). ⁴⁵⁵ In other words, the activity of giving is a way of cultivating an awareness of the idea that there is no intrinsic difference between a giver, a thing given and a receiver. As such, the *dānapāramitā* is like any other *pāramitās*, even the *prajñāpāramitā*, if one understands them as means as well as description of the goal.

⁴⁵⁰Gethin (1994), p. 352.

⁴⁵¹D, II-290 [E: Gethin (1994), p. 59].

⁴⁵²Gethin (1994), p. 64.

⁴⁵³Gethin (1994), p. 66.

⁴⁵⁴BCA, p. 263.

⁴⁵⁵BCA, p. 263.

When one looks at other passages of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, however, one might get another impression concerning the relationship between the various *pāramitās*. Indeed, in the *Āryaśatasāruya-prajñāpāramitā*, one is told:

Thus, O Kauśika, the Perfection of wisdom predominates over the Perfection of giving of the Great Beings, the Bodhisattvas; it predominates over the Perfection of discipline, of patience, of vigor and contemplation.
iyam kauśika prajñāpāramitā bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām dānapāramitām abhibhavati, śīlapāramitām abhibhavati, kṣāntipāramitām abhibhavati, vīryapāramitām abhibhavati, dhyānapāramitām abhibhavati. ⁴⁵⁶

In other words, the Perfection of wisdom, whose nature is to investigate *dharma*, prevails over the other Perfections (*dānapāramitāsu dharma-pravicaya-svabhāvāyāḥ prajñāyāḥ pradhānatvāt*). ⁴⁵⁷ With regard to the relationship between the other *pāramitās*, the idea of hierarchy or steps appears to be justified:

Thus, the Perfection of giving is the first step or cause for attaining enlightenment because it accumulates merits as a prerequisite [is included in the prerequisite of merits]. Similarly, the Perfection of discipline serves as accompaniment during the progression towards higher states of existence. It is also the cause of the acquisition of higher knowledge and joy. The Perfection of patience, on account of being a remedy against hatred which is itself a obstacle to patience, also proceeds for the attainment of Buddhahood when it has accumulated the prerequisites which are the Perfections of giving and discipline. And this auspicious triad of giving, discipline and patience, which is recognized as the prerequisites of merits, cannot be without the Perfection of vigour, which arises for the sake of destroying all obstacles on account of being the cause of the two types of prerequisites [merits and knowledge]. The Perfection of contemplation is also possible when the knowledge of the reality as such arises in the mind of him who is endowed with the Perfections [just mentioned].

tathā hi dānam sambodhiprāptaye prathamam kāraṇam, puṇyasambhāra-antarbhūtatvāt. tat ca śīla-alamkārtam eva sugatiparamparām sukhabhoga-upakaraṇa-saṃpannābhāvahadanuttara-jñāna-pratīlambhahetuḥ. kṣāntiḥ api tadvipakṣabhūta-pratighata-pratikṣatayā dānaśīla-sukrtamayam sambhāram anupālayanī sugatatva-adhigataye saṃpravartate. etat ca śubham dānādi-tritaya-sambhūtam puṇyasambhārākhyam vīryam antareṇa na bhavati iti tad api ubhayasambhārakāraṇatayā sarvāvaraṇa-prahāṇāya samupajāyate. samāhitacittasya ca yathā-bhūta-parijñānam utpadyate iti dhyānapāramitāpi. ⁴⁵⁸

This idea of hierarchy or spiritual stages seems to be confirmed by the introductory verses of each chapters of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* dealing with the *pāramitās*:

Having thus practiced patience, one should [work on] vigor because enlightenment lies in vigor. There is no merit without vigor as there is no movement without wind.
evam kṣamo bhajet vīryam vīrye bodhiḥ yataḥ sthitā, na hi vīryam vinā puṇyam yathā vāyum vinā gatiḥ. ⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶BCA, p. 264.

⁴⁵⁷BCA, p. 263.

⁴⁵⁸BCA, p. 263.

⁴⁵⁹BCA, VII-1.

Having thus developed vigour, one should fix one's mind in contemplation because a man whose mind is unstable is like a person stuck within the fangs of *kleśas*.
vardhayitvaivam utsāhaṃ samādhau sthāpayet manaḥ,
vikṣiptacittaḥ tu naraḥ kleśadamṣtrāntare sthitaḥ. ⁴⁶⁰

How is it then possible to reconcile the fact that each *pāramitā* may serve as a means to the final goal and the idea that there appears some sort of progression between them where each is a prerequisite to the next up to the Perfection of wisdom?

I believe that one may reconcile both ideas by introducing, as done above in the context of the discussion on *manasikuru*, the notion of intensity. This would mean that the practice of giving, as an exercise in contemplation of awareness, is less intense, i.e., it allows for more distractions. This is how I interpret the following verse of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

With regard to [the experience of] fear [of burning from fire, etc.] and [at the time] of the ceremony [of the taking of refuge in the three jewels], if one is incapable [of maintaining a steady mind], one may relax just as [relaxation] is possible in the practice of discipline while practicing the Perfection of giving.
bhayotsavādi-saṃbandhe yadi aśaktaḥ yathāsukham,
dānakāle tu śīlasya yasmāt uktam upekṣaṇam. ⁴⁶¹

In this passage, the Perfection of giving is not really a prerequisite for the practice of the Perfection of discipline, because both are practiced at the same time, but rather it appears as something easier to practice. This relaxation, however, should not lead to lassitude (*na ca ataḥ śīthilena bhavitavyam*). ⁴⁶² As mentioned above, it is also on the basis of the notion of intensity that I distinguished between the three aspects of the cultivation of awareness. While the *kṣānti* corresponds to the aspect of renunciation and *vīrya*, the aspect of conversion, *dhyāna*, the Perfection of contemplation, is what best described the aspect of contemplation with the assumption that this aspect refers to a more intense activity of contemplation. Before that, however, there is one point I would like to clarify.

The notion of *puṇya* and *pāpa* usually refers to the idea of accumulation of merits and demerits. Within the context of the cultivation of awareness, however, this idea of accumulation is still appropriate but it has to be complemented with that of direction. We have seen above that the mind can either be turned towards what is skillful or away from it. When one's mind is turned towards it, it can be said that one is accumulating *puṇya*, away from it, *pāpa*. This means that *puṇya* and *pāpa* are

⁴⁶⁰BCA, VIII-1.

⁴⁶¹BCA, V-42.

⁴⁶²BCA, p. 89.

not really two different things, but rather, they are the same thing viewed from two different directions. Indeed, accumulation of *puṇya* is elimination of *pāpa*, and elimination of *puṇya* is accumulation of *pāpa*. To give an idea of the exact interaction between the ideas of accumulation and direction, I would like to give a simile. Let us imagine that one is traveling on a road joining two countries. When one arrives at the border, one can see a sign on which one may read: "Welcome to X" and "Thank you for visiting Y." Once the border is crossed, one can see on the back of the same sign the following: "Welcome to Y" and "Thank you for visiting X." Such is the line between *puṇya* and *pāpa*. This simile may be further exploited. Once one has crossed the border and gone deeper in country X, one is likely to undergo some transformations: learning new habits, a new language and possibly losing the old one. The deeper one goes in country X, i.e., losing more and more contact with country Y, the more one assimilates what is characteristic of country X, the more intense and thorough is one's experience of it. Similarly, an accumulation of merits can be understood as a kind of intensification of one's experience of cultivation of awareness. It is in this sense that I believe that the metaphor of *puṇya* and *pāpa* has to be viewed: in terms of both the idea of accumulation and direction.

With the aspect of conversion, we have seen what it means for the mind to reengage itself. It is basically by turning it towards what is beneficial for it. This action of turning is a simple one, the difficulty comes when one tries to maintain it in the right direction. The efforts required for maintaining it towards the skillful things is, however, not a product of motivational strength or will-power but rather the result of cultivating an awareness of an idea which gives it no reasons no turn away and all the reasons to stay put. This idea and its fruits are the beneficial food of the mind. In a way, the food of the mind and the mind itself are the same thing: similar to the distinction between the *I* and the *me*, the distinction is made on account of the feeling of hunger, i.e., the sense of dissatisfaction and consequently, it is an illusion from the point of view of a state of perfect satisfaction.

Chapter seven

THE ASPECT OF CONTEMPLATION

What has been said so far about the workings of the mind suggests a model very close to that of cybernetics. Basically, this model explains how a system maintains its structure by means of controlling its feedbacks. The thermostat used as a simile in chapter five is such a system that tries to maintain its structure, i.e., to maintain a room temperature around a constant. Similarly, the mind which is in contact with the phenomenal world reacts to it. What defines the nature of its reactions is the way it perceives this phenomenal world. If it is perceived as something truly existent, specific reactions will be triggered which in turn are likely to reinforce the idea that the world is truly existent. This is the positive feedback with regard to a mind centered on the idea based on a perception of the phenomenal world as truly existent. This same mind, however, may accept a new constant, like fixing a new temperature for the thermostat, defined in terms of the idea that the phenomenal world lacks intrinsic existence or that it is interdependent. At first, the acceptance of this new constant is likely to create a situation of tension with the already accepted assumption. Both constants are in fact mutually exclusive and what is positive for one is negative for the other and vice-versa. In other words, the reactions issued from the idea that the world is interdependent is a negative feedback for the assumption that it is truly existent. These reactions are therefore the food of the mind discussed previously. The cultivation of awareness is consequently to maintain an awareness of a new constant and the practice will intensify on account of the positive feedbacks reinforcing it.

Given this understanding of the workings of the mind, one can understand what causes the cultivation of awareness to occur. It is precisely the tension which results from an awareness of the two constants that brings it into function, and to some extent, creates it. At this point it has to be clear that one is not dealing with two different awarenesses. Indeed, when one is acting, for example, in conformity with the idea that the phenomenal world is truly existent, one is not really aware of this idea. And when one develops an awareness of this idea, the awareness of what

negates it is always present in one's mind. That is why an awareness of the two constants is already a sign that the cultivation of awareness has started. Conversely, when one is not engaged in it, then no awareness is present in the mind. That also explains why the *kleśas* --the very fact that one uses the term is a sign of awareness--are a means to the cultivation of awareness. As a matter of fact, it cannot be otherwise because the *kleśas* are themselves a creation of the mind engaged in the cultivation of awareness.

It might be interesting to open a parenthesis with regard to the implications of the parallel between the workings of the mind and the model of cybernetics. It has been fashionable to draw such parallels between the ideas of modern science and religious truths. Fritjof Capra, in the book *The Tao of Physics*, has, for example, compared the discoveries of quantum physics with some of the insights of Hinduism and Buddhism. The assumptions behind such parallels were to say that the spiritual traditions of Eastern mysticism, with their particular means of investigation, came to reveal the same truths or laws discovered by modern science. In other words, the parallels were made from the point of view of the presuppositions of science, i.e., that there are laws which are truly existent and that can be discovered. If one draws the same parallel, this time from the perspective of the presuppositions of religious thinking, then one has to say that our scientific knowledge is a creation of the mind. The reason why we know something is because we feel that something has to change. The desire for change creates or reveals a knowledge that would eventually result in bringing about the desired change and maintaining the newly created situation changeless. Therefore, contrary to Fritjof Capra who argues that religions are doing science, I would say that science is religion. In other words, the distinction between discovery and creation is not as sharp as one may usually assume.

It seems that the cultivation of awareness also functions like an exponential equation, i.e., its rate of intensification is not constant but it increases every time new positive feedbacks reinforce the awareness. Similar to the population growth, every time new people are born, the rate of growth increases. The idea that awareness increases exponentially is what characterized the aspect of contemplation. More specifically, it explains what happens at this point and the explanation itself is a feedback that intensifies the cultivation of awareness. This is what I will consider next. Before that, however, I would like to show a little bit more how one can view the cultivation of awareness from the perspective of the aspect of contemplation.

To come back to previous discussions, what is of concern here is what it means to watch and guard. We have seen that the aspect of renunciation is whatever it takes not to be disturbed from this activity and that the aspect of conversion corresponds to turning one's mind towards what is to be watched and guarded. This activity, even from the point of view of the aspect of conversion, is not to be conceived of as fixing one's mind onto an object. In this regard, it might be interesting to quote Herbert Guenther who wrote on the subject of the mind in the context of Buddhist psychology:

Nowadays, some people who take the Buddha's words out of context and make a display of meditation, meditate by concentrating on what appears before their visual perception, but Asanga has stated very clearly that concentration does not take place in sensory perception but in categorical perception, and the objective reference is not the visible object that is present in sensory perception, but its precept.⁴⁶³

Furthermore, he added:

The specific function of intense concentration is said to provide a basis for an awareness in which one has a state of mind settled in itself, (a mind) taking every individual aspect of the perceptual situation as it is and never occurring in a vacuum, even though attention may shift within this perception (from one aspect to another).⁴⁶⁴

These comments confirm, I believe, what I argued in the fourth chapter concerning the nature of the content of one's awareness in the context of the cultivation of awareness. What one is watching and guarding, to use Polanyi's words, is a subsidiary awareness from which every object of one's focus finds its meaning. In fact, this point should not be too hard to figure out. If one sees somebody as a father or a mother, for example, what is characterized by the word *as* is the subsidiary awareness and it does not change regardless of the situation or the transformations, like aging and even dying, of the person characterized as the father or the mother. To fix one's mind onto or to hold to the idea of emptiness therefore is to "see" the world as empty and in practice it means to constantly "pay attention" to or be aware of the implications, assumptions, etc., of what is characterized by the word *as*, i.e., emptiness. With reference to the practice of devotion or what is identified as such within the various spiritual traditions, one can understand this idea of subsidiary awareness by looking at the implications related to the use of the preposition *with* as in "He is with her." The truthfulness of this statement does not depend on some kind of objective observation like the position or the distance between the persons designated as *he* and *her*, but rather, on the

⁴⁶³Guenther (1975), p. 35.

⁴⁶⁴Guenther (1975), p. 36.

subjective understanding of the *he* -person of what it means to be with the *her*-person. Even when the *her* -person dies, the *he*-person can still argue that “She is with me.” As a matter of fact, the physical absence of the *her*-person may result in a more intense feeling of her presence for the *he*-person. Indeed, her physical presence is no longer an obstacle to imagining a subtle and more comprehensive presence. In this circumstance, one can easily see how certain objects or events, which are insignificant for the majority of people, reinforce this impression of the presence of the other without being the other. It goes without saying that this impression of the presence of the other has a direct consequence on how the person who entertains such impression feels and behaves. This is again the reason why I do not really see a substantial difference between what is called *devotion* and *meditation*. Again, it does not also make sense, at least from the point of view of the cultivation of awareness, to consider devotional practices as a prerequisite to the meditation of emptiness for instance.

The model of the workings of the mind would not be completed if we were not to add another important element. Taking again the simile of the thermostat maintaining a constant temperature, let us imagine that at this very temperature it is possible for certain things to occur. For example, a plant may find the optimal condition of its growth or a chemical reaction such as fermentation may happen. These reactions happen because the temperature is maintained at the right level. With regard to the cultivation of awareness, this means that its spiritual fruits such as absence of fear and compassion occur so to speak by themselves. The idea of seed, which is dear to the ancient Buddhist philosophers, is in this context very appropriate. In this regard, I would like to quote Gethin’s concluding remarks concerning his study of the *bodhi-pakkhiyā dhammā*, in the context of the *Nikāya* and *Abhidhamma*:

The outlook of the body of texts considered above is that the ordinary mind is not to be understood as uniform in character. In fact the ordinary mind is very complex and very subtle; it is of many different kinds; it has many different and contradictory tendencies. Some of these kinds of mind and some of these tendencies are more useful than others in trying to wake up the mind. Some kinds of ordinary mind actively perpetuate the sleep of the defilements, while some kinds of ordinary mind actually approximate rather closely to the waking mind itself. In other words, some states of mind, some tendencies are to be cultivated, other are to be curbed. The task, then, is to maximize these *kusala* or ‘skilful’ tendencies, to use the technical terminology of the texts. How does one go about this? The problem is that in ordinary everyday states of mind, while these skilful tendencies may often arise, they are always in danger of being crowded out. The texts immediate solution is that we must attempt to still the mind—we must practise calm (*samatha*) and concentration (*samādhi*). According to the texts, in calm, still states of mind

the natural 'skilful' tendencies of the mind tend to come into their own—they naturally grow and strengthen, and the mind becomes clearer.⁴⁶⁵

From the perspective of the cultivation of awareness, the last sentence means that the idea which serves as its basis becomes a more obvious description of what is perceived by the mind. It is for this reason that it is possible to argue that the world is a creation or a product of the mind only. Indeed, according to Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra sūtra*,

The world of beings and the world of objects are made by the mind alone. It is said that the whole universe is born out of acting (*karma*) and without the mind, *karma* is not.

sattvalokaṃ atha bhājanalokaṃ cittam eva racayati aticitram,

*karmajaṃ hi jagat uktam aśeṣaṃ karma cittam avadhūya ca na asti.*⁴⁶⁶

In other words, the mind creates itself the conditions of its survival and of its growth. A hating-mind not only imagines a world that justifies its hatred but reorganizes, on account of its actions or reactions, the world around it so that it may prosper. Once such a mind is engaged in this dynamic, there is no limit to what it can do. If this dynamic does not lead the hating-mind to the destruction of what it supports, i.e., the physical body, it may stop spreading death the moment it sees, by a kind of sudden insight that this dynamic is leading to self-destruction. At this moment, the description of hells one can find in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is small potatoes. This is for many the beginning of psychological and spiritual recovery.

I believe that, given Gethin's explanation of the *bodhi-pakkhiyā dhammā*, it might be appropriate at this point to finish my own discussion of the meaning of the title of Sāntideva's work, i.e., *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. In the first chapter, I discussed the meaning of *bodhi* as well as *avatāra*. With regard to *bodhi*, it refers to the goal of the Mahāyāna aspirant. It could be translated as *enlightenment* or *awakening*. At this point it is not important to determine which translation is the most appropriate, suffice to say, however, that *bodhi* as the goal of the bodhisattva, taking into consideration what has been argued so far concerning the nature of religious language, is also a description of what it means for a bodhisattva to realize it. In other words, the term *bodhisattva*, refers both to a being in search of *bodhi* as well as a being who has realized *bodhi*. Consequently, *bodhi* may refer to all the spiritual qualities or *pāramitās* of the accomplished bodhisattva. Indeed, bodhisattvas are described as those beings whose mind is centered on arranging the happiness of all

⁴⁶⁵Gethin (1994), p. 344-5.

⁴⁶⁶MA, 6-89 [BCA, p. 75].

beings (*sarva-sattva-hita-sukha-vidhāna-eka-manasaḥ*).⁴⁶⁷ This is, as often mentioned, the means and the goal of the spiritual approach of the bodhisattva.

Concerning the word *avātara*, I argued that it may refer to a kind of passage from one mental state to another. It is like stepping in a stream or setting foot on the path leading to *bodhi*. If this word can be translated as *introduction*, then it has to be understood in its more literal sense, i.e., the act of putting in or the state of being into something. Given Gethin's understanding of the *bodhi-pakkhiyā dhammā*, I believe that this interpretation of the expression *avatāra* is still appropriate. It remains therefore to analyze the term *caryā*.

I think that it should be quite obvious at this point that *caryā* is the path or the stream to *bodhi*. It is not a path where spiritual progression depends on one's efforts or motivation. It is rather a state of being or a mental state in which, as Gethin said above, "the natural 'skillful' tendencies of the mind tend to come into their own," in which "they naturally grow and strengthen." If efforts are required, it is to maintain that skillful state of mind. In other words, *caryā* does not refer to a spiritual path in the usual sense of the term, i.e., having rules to follow, spiritual exercises to practice, stages to aim at, etc., but rather to a place to reside on account of which enlightenment is assured. It would certainly exceed the scope of the present thesis, but I believe that it might be interesting to compare the notion of *caryā*, in the sense just mentioned, with that of *buddhakṣetra* (Buddha-fields) or that of Pure lands. Indeed, the *buddhakṣetra* is considered as a place where the path to enlightenment can be best practiced and where enlightenment itself is even assured.

There are a few passages in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* itself that confirm the understanding of the term *caryā* suggested above. In the chapter on *kṣānti*, it is said:

Thus if I retaliate towards [those who are tormenting me], this will not protect or help them.
Such conduct will undermine my own *caryā*; that is why they, the unfortunate ones, are
destroyed.

*atha pratyapakāri syāṃ tathāpi ete na rakṣitāḥ,
hīyate ca api me caryā tasmāt naṣṭhāḥ tapasvināḥ.*⁴⁶⁸

The meaning of this verse is that people who are tormenting the bodhisattva are in fact helping him in his practice of the Perfection of patience. Conversely, however, retaliation, i.e., to return evil for evil, will not help them at all. On the contrary, this

⁴⁶⁷BCA, p. 32.

⁴⁶⁸BCA, VI-51.

course of action will destroy them. The point I want to make here is that *caryā*, as the practice of the Perfection of patience, is another word for the cultivation of awareness. The word *caryā*, as the course of conduct of the Bodhisattvas,⁴⁶⁹ is sometimes translated as *ācāraḥ* (conduct, behavior, observance).⁴⁷⁰ Consequently, one may note the following verse:

The various *pāramitās* like *dāna*, etc., are graded as one being superior to the preceding ones. The lower *pāramitā* should not be abandoned for the sake of the superior one because [all *pāramitās*] are comparable to a bridge or a dam.

uttara-uttarataḥ śreṣṭhā dānapāramitādayaḥ
*na itarārthaṁ tyajet śreṣṭham anyatra ācāraśeṭutaḥ.*⁴⁷¹

What Sāntideva means by this simile is that *ācāra*, which is the practice or observance of the Perfections, is a dam which holds the skillful tendencies that are here characterized by water (*bodhisattvānāṁ yaḥ ācāraḥ śikṣāsaṃvara-lakṣaṇaḥ saḥ eva kuśala-jala-rakṣaṇāya setubandhaḥ vihitah*).⁴⁷² As can be seen from this last example, the word *śikṣā* also designates the behavior of the bodhisattva or his practice and, similar to *ācāra*, it has to be protected: “on account of attending to *bodhicitta* and protecting or guarding the rules of conduct or the practice [of the bodhisattva], I should increase the skillful tendencies” (*śikṣā-saṃvara-rakṣaṇena bodhicitta-sevanādinā ca kuśalapakṣasya ca vṛddhim kuryām.*).⁴⁷³ At this point, it could be argued that *śikṣā-saṃvara-rakṣaṇa* simply means to follow a set of rules of conduct the same way one would do to accomplish a task, i.e., an activity involving motivation and guidelines to follow. This would be true if it were not for the fact that the resolve to follow the bodhisattva’s rules of conduct is preceded by the grasping of *bodhicitta* (*bodhicitta-grahaṇa-pūrvakam bodhisattva-śikṣā-samādānam*),⁴⁷⁴ (*bodhicitta-utpādam pratipādyā śikṣāsaṃvara-grahaṇam pratipādayan*)⁴⁷⁵ and (*bodhisattvaśikṣā yad-upādita-bodhicittena bodhisattvena sadā karaṇīyam*).⁴⁷⁶ The fact that the arising of *bodhisattva* is a prerequisite to the practice of the bodhisattva’s rules of conduct leaves, I believe, no doubt as to the nature of this practice. In other words, because *śikṣā* is preceded by *bodhicitta-utpāda*-- the latter being the beginning of one’s engagement into the cultivation of awareness-- it

⁴⁶⁹BHS, p. 226.

⁴⁷⁰SED, p. 317.

⁴⁷¹BCA, V-83.

⁴⁷²BCA, p. 103.

⁴⁷³BCA, p. 144.

⁴⁷⁴BCA, p. 5.

⁴⁷⁵BCA, p. 61.

⁴⁷⁶BCA, p. 61.

is, as well as *caryā* and *ācāra*, to be considered as a fruit of this cultivation of awareness, as the sum of all the skillful tendencies. Consequently, *śikṣā-saṃvara-rakṣaṇa* is the cultivation of awareness. Thus:

Just as the Buddhas of ancient times have got hold of *bodhicitta* and just as they remained afterwards well-established in the practice of the bodhisattvas,
yathā grhītaṃ sugataiḥ bodhicittaṃ purātanaḥ,
te bodhisattva-śikṣāyāṃ ānupūrvyāḥ yathā sthitāḥ.

Likewise I will be the one who will cause *bodhicitta* to arise for the sake of the universe, likewise also, I will practice or follow the practice of the bodhisattva properly or in proper order.
tadvad utpādayāmi eṣaḥ bodhicittaṃ jagathite,
tadvadeva ca tāḥ śikṣāḥ śikṣāyāmi yathākramam. ⁴⁷⁷

In other words, to maintain an awareness of *bodhicitta* is the same as cultivating it because it allows the skillful tendencies to do their work. At this point I believe that it might be appropriate to say a word about what these skillful tendencies are.

These skillful tendencies are also called the *roots of happiness* as in:

Then it is said O king that you, who has a lot to do, will raise among the gods of account of ripening the root of happiness which consist of and are leading to perfect enlightenment.
atha khalu punaḥ tvam mahārāja, samyak-saṃbodhi-citta-kuśala-mūla-vipakena anekakṛtyaḥ
deveṣu upapannaḥ abhūḥ ⁴⁷⁸

This passage, which, according to Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*, comes from the *Āryarājāvavādakasūtra*, is the continuation of the one I quoted at the end of chapter four in support of the idea of the three aspects of the cultivation of awareness. This latter passage is preceded by the following:

Because you, O king, who are busy and have a lot to do and unable to practice the Perfections of giving up to that of wisdom, [constantly remember, draw to your attention and contemplate...]
yasmāt tvam, mahārāja, bahukṛtyaḥ bahukaraṇīyaḥ asahaḥ sarveṇa sarvaṃ sarvatha
dānapāramitāyāṃ śikṣitum yāvat prajñā-pāramitāyāṃ śikṣitum ⁴⁷⁹

How is it then that the king is advised to abandon the practice of the *pāramitās* for the sake of cultivating an awareness of the desire of enlightenment? I have just said that the practice of the *pāramitās*, which is the cultivation of awareness, are what allows the roots of happiness or the skillful tendencies to develop; there is therefore a contradiction. In other words, if the skillful tendencies are the spiritual qualities described by the *pāramitās*, i.e., readiness to give, discipline, patience, vigor, calmness of mind, wisdom, etc., why should the king forsake the practice of what leads to the development of these spiritual qualities to

⁴⁷⁷BCA, III-22, 23.

⁴⁷⁸BCA, p. 18.

⁴⁷⁹BCA, p. 18.

acquire these same spiritual qualities? The only explanation I can give is that the intention of this passage is not to incite someone to abstain from the practice of the *pāramitās*, but rather to challenge a wrong understanding of what it means to practice them. And what is the nature of this misunderstanding? It is to assume that the practice of the *pāramitās* precedes the arising of *bodhicitta*. Given this view, the practice of the Perfections is not the *caryā* discussed above in which one ought to enter or step into. It can only be a practice that reinforces a dualistic notion of the spiritual path, i.e., the idea that there is a doer and something to be done. Indeed, the above passage is used by Prajñākaramati to discuss the significance and the implications of the two types of *bodhicitta*:

There are great merits in *samsāra* for him who has an aspiring mind; they are not, however, as uninterrupted as the flow of merits produced by him who has an engaging mind.

bodhipraṇidhicitasya samsāre 'pi phalaṃ mahat,
na tu vicchinna-puṇyatvaṃ yathā prasthānacetasāḥ. ⁴⁸⁰

In other words, one has to convert one's mind (*praṇidhi*) towards *bodhicitta* so that the skillful tendencies produce their effect (*prasthāna*) and not the other way round. Moreover, the difference between *bodhipraṇidhicitta* and *prasthānacitta* is, as argued many times, a question of intensity. Indeed, *bodhipraṇidhicitta* may be related to the fact of taking the decision to acknowledge the reality described by *bodhicitta*, and *prasthānacitta* is maintaining the awareness of what has been acknowledged. They are therefore not meant to distinguish two different types of practice. Consequently, I believe that if a distinction is made, as done in the above passage, between the practice of the *pāramitās* and the cultivation of an awareness of the desire for enlightenment, it is for the sake of challenging the idea that the practice of the *pāramitās* may precede the arising of *bodhicitta* and, by the same token, the assumption that this practice depends on one's efforts and motivation.

While discussing what those skillful tendencies are we should not assume that they have an independent existence; on the contrary, similar to the idea of the *kleśas*, they are a creation of the mind engaged in the cultivation of awareness. This means that the awareness of these skillful tendencies are a description of such mind as well as a means to its existence. In other words, one cannot speak about skillful tendencies if one is not experiencing them, and speaking about them is a means to cultivate one's awareness of them and consequently of the underlying idea giving them their signification. In this circumstance, it might be "more objective" to describe what they do instead of what they are.

⁴⁸⁰BCA, I-17.

One of the key ideas to understand the cultivation of awareness is that of intensity. As explained above, it accounts for the hierarchy among the *pāramitās* as well as the nature of one's spiritual endeavor. In the context of the *Bodhicarya-avatāra*, this idea is not explicitly mentioned. Instead, one finds the notion of purification. Thus:

Having taken this impure form, it [*bodhicitta*] transforms it into the priceless form of a *Jina* [an accomplished bodhisattva]; it is like a gold-making elixir. So, hold fast to what is called *bodhicitta*.

*aśucipratimām imām grhītvā jinaratnapratimām karoti anarghām,
rasajātam atīva vedhanīyaṃ sudṛḍhaṃ grhṇata bodhicitta-saṃjñam.*

Like the fire at the time of the great dissolution, [*bodhicitta*] burns away the great sins in one moment. Its immeasurable praise was made by the wise Lord Maitreya to Sudhana.

*yugāntakāla-analavat mahānti pāpāni yat nirdahati kṣaṇena,
yasya-anuśaṃsān amitān uvāca maitreya-nāthaḥ sudhanāya dhīman.*⁴⁸¹

What is implied in these two verses is that *bodhicitta*, or the cultivation of an awareness of what *bodhicitta* means, has the power to purify sins or what is the cause of one's suffering. Moreover, this purification is not gradual but instantaneous (*kṣaṇena*). How can it be so? The cultivation of awareness, at its very first beginning, is comparable to turning on a light on a new reality where *kleśas* or sins become visible at once. That is why I argued before that it is not possible to see the *kleśas* without the spotlight of the cultivation of awareness. I also said that the fact that one sees them, one becomes immune from their influence. Being caught by the *kleśas* always presupposes losing sight of them. Even the idea of being caught is not appropriate because the moment one is aware of being caught by them, one is no longer caught; and when one is really caught, then one is not in a position to say: "I am caught." That is why it is possible to say that purification is instantaneous: the transition between awareness of *kleśas* and lack of it does not admit of degrees. This is another way of saying that the cause of enlightenment is the decision to acknowledge that one is enlightened. If purification is sudden, how can it be equated to the idea of intensification, as mentioned above?

What is intensified is not the purification but the ability to remain in the state of purification. Purification is perhaps instantaneous but the state of mind which allows it may be reversible. In other words, the cultivation of awareness, even at a very deep stage of contemplation, is never secured before one reaches the moment when one is no longer aware that one is aware, i.e., as long as one knows to be engaged in the cultivation of awareness. Before that moment, however,

⁴⁸¹BCA, I-10, 14.

it still remains a nice place to be, happy with one's sins, where one experiences peace of mind and joy in the midst of the big storm produced by the *kleśas*. In other words, this place to be is like a shelter, a refuge and island, etc. Indeed:

Having committed the most abominable sins one escapes instantaneously on account of taking refuge [in *bodhicitta*], as someone finds shelter by a strong man in the face of great dangers.

Why is it not, then, resorted to by ignorant beings?

kṛtvā api pāpāni sudāruṇāni yadā āśrayāt uttarati kṣaṇena,

śūrāśrayeṇa iva mahābhayāni na aśrīyate tat katham ajñāsattvaih. ⁴⁸²

The idea of purification therefore does not refer to a process, but rather to a state of mind or a state of being whose characteristic is peacefulness and joy on account of an awareness of one's sins and *kleśas*. This means that the expression *purification of the mind*, as referring to a gradual process eliminating the causes of suffering, is not to be taken literally but as a skillful means (*upāya*). Indeed, if one bows hundred thousand times in front of the Buddha, it is not the bowing that is likely to purify, but rather, it is the awareness of the Buddha one is bowing to. Similarly, the desire for enlightenment based on one's efforts and motivation, can be beneficial if it allows one to maintain an awareness of what it means to reach the desired goal but it is not, if one is aware of one's efforts or the necessity to do them. This distinction is perhaps very subtle but it makes all the difference. I believe that one can better understand Victor Hori's description of the *Satori* experience:

The *kōan* no longer appears as an inert object in the spotlight of consciousness but has become part of the searching movement of the illuminating spotlight itself. His seeking to penetrate the *kōan*, he realizes, is itself the action of the *kōan* which has invaded his consciousness. It has become part of the very consciousness that seeks to penetrate itself. He himself is the *kōan*.

Realization of this is the response to the *kōan*.⁴⁸³

in contrast to that of Suzuki: "The searching mind is vexed to the extreme as its fruitless strivings go on, but when it is brought up to an apex it breaks or it explodes and the whole structure of consciousness assumes an entirely different aspect."⁴⁸⁴ The latter considers the activity of searching as the primary cause of the experience, whereas Hori, if I interpreted him rightly, does presuppose that the content of the searching mind play a significant role in bringing about this experience of *Satori*.

⁴⁸²BCA, I-13.

⁴⁸³Hori (1994), p. 30.

⁴⁸⁴Suzuki (1970), p. 61.

At this point it might be difficult to say more about the aspect of contemplation of the cultivation of awareness. In this process, being comparable to that of incubation, there is not much to see for an external observer. We are like one sitting in front of an egg waiting to see it hatch. Because we assume that it will hatch we also presuppose that something is happening in the egg from the moment it was laid by the hen. This assumption is also the basis of my idea of intensity to explain the cultivation of awareness. Thus, I wonder if this explanation of this process and consequently, of the path to enlightenment, i.e., what I believe to be the appropriate soteriological context, could not be recycled into a means of cultivation of awareness. Once again, the line between creation and discovery, subjectivity and objectivity, is very thin. Also thin is the demarcation between the descriptive and the performative nature of language. The view concerning the nature of religious language I suggested in the fourth chapter was therefore an attempt to show how it is still possible to maintain a hope for efficacy despite the fact that the basis of what gives us a certain degree of confidence in our actions has been challenged. In other words, even if our understanding of reality is a creation of the mind, it nevertheless remains real as long as one feels that there is a problem to solve. Therefore, there is no problem without solution or, knowledge of a problem is not possible without some degree of awareness of its solution. When the brothers Wright asked why birds fly instead of how, modern aviation was born. The most sophisticated airplanes of today are still based on the solution given to this simple question. In other words, the moment the question was asked, some degree of awareness of the principles of aerodynamics evolved. That is why it appears that religion, as well as science, are more concerned about understanding problems and their implications than elaborating solutions. Consequently, subjectivity refers to the fact that there is no problem without a subject and objectivity emerges the moment more than one subject share a problem. At this point the efforts done by the subjects to understand the very problem they share is likely to result in the creation of what we identify as scientific or religious discourses.

Before ending this chapter, there is one last point I would like to discuss. Referring back again to the passage mentioned above taken from the *Āryarājāva-vādaka sūtra*, after the king has been introduced to the cultivation of awareness, his interlocutor adds:

[constantly remember, draw to your attention and contemplate...] Do rejoice, after having accumulated and maintained [or supported] the roots of happiness, of past, present and future times, belonging to you and to all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Aharants, solitary Buddhas and non-

buddhist people. After having rejoiced with the best of joy, offer acts of worship to all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, solitary Buddhas and Aharants and having offered acts of worship, practice equanimity towards all beings. Then, in order that all beings may obtain omniscience which is the fulfilment of the *dharma* of all Buddhas, mature in unsurpassed perfect awakening everyday at all three times of the day [i.e., always].

sarvabuddhabodhisattva-āryaśrāvaka-pratyekabuddhapṛthakjanānām ātmanah ca atīta-anāgata-pratyutpannāni kuśala-mūlāni piṇḍayitvā, tulayitvā, anumodayasva. agrayā anumodanayā anumodya ca sarvabuddha-bodhisattva-pratyeka-buddhāryaśrāvakāṇām pūṣkarmāni niryātaya. niryātya ca sarvasattvasādhāraṇāni kuru tataḥ sarvasattvānām yāvat sarvajñatā-pratilambhāya sarvabuddha-dharma-paripūraṇāya dine dine traikālyam anuttarāyām samyak-sambodhau pariṇāmayā. 485

The first part of this passage quite obviously refer to the experience of entering the first *bhūmi* called *pramuditā*. Indeed, after having told us that *bodhicitta* has somehow arisen in him, Śāntideva says:

Today the universe is invited by me to this joy [or happiness experienced] by the Buddhas in the presence of all the Protectors. May all gods and demons (*asūras*) rejoice.

jagat adya nimantritam mayā sugatatvena sukhena cāntarā, purataḥ khalu sarvatāyinām abhinandantu surāsurādayaḥ. 486

This experience is elsewhere described in a more colorful way:

The bodhisattvas become the sons of the Buddhas and appear before them with [or on account of] all their skillful tendencies. As such, they are standing in the spacious, fragrant and cool lotus [a place where wisdom, compassion, happiness, etc. are the characteristics of the mind], their splendor nourished by the sweet speech of the conquerors and with their true body issued from the lotus of enlightenment created by the Sages.

vipula-sugandhi-śītala-saroruha-garbhagatāḥ, madhura-jina-svarāṣana-kṛta-upacita-dyutayaḥ, munikara-bodhitāmbuja-vinirgata-sadvapusāḥ, sugatasutāḥ bhavanti sugatasya puraḥ kuśalāḥ. 487

The experience of joy is therefore a sign of spiritual accomplishment which is at least the attainment of the first *bhūmi* where joy and happiness are its main characteristics. Consequently, the injunction *anumodayasva* is to be considered more as a description of a spiritual experience than an invitation to do specific actions. Similarly, the second part of the above passage ought to be understood as being a description of what happens when a bodhisattva-aspirant becomes a bodhisattva-son of the Buddha and not as a prescription to perform acts of worship (*pūja*). These acts of worship are indeed expressions of gratitude, a kind of thanksgiving rather than ordinary acts of offering. I believe that if such acts of offering were intended in this passage, it would not make sense to mention them following the experience of joy just described. The same reasoning applies for the third part of the passage

485 BCA, p. 18.

486 BCA, III-33.

487 BCA, VI-44.

where one is enjoined to mature in unsurpassed perfect enlightenment. The term translated by *mature* is *pariṇāmaya*. According to Edgerton, this verb means: to ripen, mature, ripen, to develop; to change into,⁴⁸⁸ and in its substantive form: change, alteration; ripening, development.⁴⁸⁹ The word *pariṇāmanā* is one of the six forms of *pūja* performed by the Buddhists and as such, it has been interpreted as *transfer of merits*.⁴⁹⁰ According to Sangharakshita, that “would be the climax of the preliminary devotional practices.”⁴⁹¹ In the present context, however, this interpretation would not be appropriate for the reasons just mentioned above. It is also used as the title of the last chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, thus giving the impression of some kind of finale. This means that the transfer of merits is more than just a form of devotional practice; it is also a description of the behavior of the accomplished bodhisattva. Given this understanding, it appears that the injunction *pariṇāmaya* refers not to a process but rather to the result of it. In other words, the intention of the passage is to say: be like a mature fruit, i.e., available to all for their benefits. This is the consummation of the cultivation of awareness. At this point, even awareness of the cultivation of awareness vanishes. Indeed, does a bodhisattva know that he is one who provides some benefits to others? It seems that he is not; it is his nature to be so:

Monks, for one whose body is calmed there is no need for the thought: I feel happiness. This, monks, is in accordance with nature—that one whose body is calmed feels happiness.
*esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vediyati. sukhino, bhikkhave, ne cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ cittaṃ me samādhiyatū ti.*⁴⁹²

as it is probably for the nature of all things:

So also the element water does not think as follows: I provide sufficient moisture to the seed. The element fire also does not think as follows: I ripen the seed. The element air also does not think as follows: I scatter the seed away. The element space also does not think as follows: I do the work of protecting the growing seed from any hindrances. And the element season does not think as follows: I do the work of maturation of the seed.
*evam ab-dhātoḥ api na evaṃ bhavati— ahaṃ bījaṃ snehayāmi iti. tejodhātoḥ api na evaṃ bhavati— ahaṃ bījaṃ paripācayāmi iti. vāyudhātoḥ api na evaṃ bhavati— ahaṃ bījaṃ abhinirharāmi iti. ākāśadhātoḥ api na evaṃ bhavati— ahaṃ bījasya anāvāraṇakṛtyam karomi iti. ṛtoḥ api na evaṃ bhavati— ahaṃ bījasya pariṇāmanākṛtyam karomi iti.*⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁸BHS, p. 323.

⁴⁸⁹BHS, p. 323.

⁴⁹⁰Sangharakshita (1966), p. 454.

⁴⁹¹Sangharakshita (1966), p. 454.

⁴⁹²A, X-1, ii [E: G.S. vol. 5, p. 3-4].

⁴⁹³SāI (1950).

Conclusion

There is one story, taken from the *Lieh Tzu*, a Taoist text compiling the thoughts of Lieh Tzu, the alleged teacher of Chuang Tzu, which, I believe, gives a good idea of what the cultivation of awareness is: a man lost his ax. He suspected his neighbor's son and began to observe him. His appearance was that of an ax thief; his face expression was that of an ax thief; his way of talking was exactly that of an ax thief. All his movements, all his being was distinctively expressing the fact that he was an ax thief. Some time afterwards, this man, digging in his garden, found his ax. Another day, he saw his neighbor's son. All his movements, all his being had nothing of an ax thief.

When one looks at the phenomenal world, one's reality always comprises its objects and a background that defines them. In the case of our man above, the background is the conviction that his neighbor's son is an ax thief. His observations are only reinforcing his conviction. This conviction has, however, been destroyed instantaneously when he found the "stolen" ax in his garden. At this moment, has he really found the "stolen" ax, or is it the "lost" ax? Would our man ever search for a "stolen" ax? In our story, the man was lucky to find it by chance. But let us imagine that another neighbor would have convincingly established that his neighbor's son cannot possibly have stolen the ax, that even it is impossible that his ax had been stolen so that it must be lost. The moment our man accepts this eventuality as a true fact, he starts looking for the "lost" ax and eventually finds the "lost" ax. From the point of view of his conviction, nothing has changed from the moment he decides to look for it and the moment he finds it. In other words, the moment he accepts that his ax is lost and not stolen, one can say that he has already found it because his conviction will inevitably lead him to its finding. His conviction does not tell him how and when he will find it, but this does not matter because this information is of no use for the search itself. In this regard, the path to enlightenment is often compared to making a map. I believe that this analogy is not appropriate because the way one takes to reach the goal is unpredictable and even unlimited. The fact, however, that the way to reach the place one already is is unlimited, does not mean

that it can be anything. Whatever way one takes, it is always a true description of or it is always leading to—in the context of the cultivation of awareness these two ideas are identical—the conviction or the confirmation of the conviction—again, no difference here—one has decided to acknowledge at the very start of the path. In other words, whatever way one takes, it always reinforces one’s “conviction of reality.” If it does not, then there is not even a path and a goal to reach. It is to this kind of radicalism that the process cultivation of awareness introduces us: the beginning of the path is the end and one can never stand in between because the distinction between the beginning and the end presupposes another conviction incompatible with the one to reinforce. One can never dwell in two incompatible convictions at the same time. In fact, to talk of two convictions reveals that one is already established or aware of the liberating conviction whereas the one who acts on the assumptions of a conviction leading to suffering does not see any alternative at all. The cultivation of awareness is therefore very much comparable to a mirror maze: before entering, one does not see oneself, while being in it, one’s own reflection can be seen, and when coming out, it disappears. In the context of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, this phenomena corresponds to what I described as the dialogue or perhaps more appropriately, the monologue between the *I* and the *me*.

To understand the dynamic of the cultivation of awareness, I quote a short passage taken from the *Āryarājāvavādaka sūtra* and used by Prajñākaramati to explain the three aspects of cultivation of awareness. Again, this passage goes as follows:

O great king, constantly remember, draw to your attention and contemplate the earnest aspiration, the faith, the longing and the desire for illumination, even when you are walking, standing still, sitting, sleeping, awake, eating and drinking.

I said that the three injunctions *remember*, *draw to attention* and *contemplate* described in a nutshell the three aspects of the cultivation of awareness: renunciation, conversion and contemplation. These three aspects were distinguished, not on the ground of a difference of activity, but rather on account of the degree of intensity in one’s awareness to be cultivated. I believe that I have explained at length the nature and the implications of these three aspects. I have, however, not said much about the significance of the second part of the passage, i.e., “even when you are walking, standing still, sitting, sleeping, awake, eating and drinking.” This is in fact the key to the correct practice of the cultivation of awareness.

If the cultivation of awareness is to come to see the phenomenal world in terms of an idea such as emptiness, for example, it is impossible to develop such awareness if one is cut out from the phenomenal world. To see a person as a friend, what is referred to by the word *as* cannot be experienced without seeing or experiencing that which is *as*... In other words, the phenomenal world, even understood, or perhaps because understood as illusory, is the support of one's awareness to be cultivated. Let us come back to the simile of the mirror maze. While being in it, one sees one's reflections in the mirrors perfectly knowing that these are only reflections. By seeing them, however, one indirectly perceives a distance or a space between them and oneself. This distance can only be perceived by looking at the reflections of oneself. By looking closely at the various reflections, one perceives that some come from a closer mirror, some from other mirrors which are farther. Slowly one begins to develop a more acute sense of the distance or space between the reflections and oneself. It is this sense of space that reveals the way to follow in order to come out of the maze. At some point, one's sense of distance may be so developed that one would walk through the maze as though the mirrors were plain walls. And when one eventually comes out of the maze, the reflections disappear but the sense of distance or space remains. Only this time, the experience is overwhelming. When one looks at a person who went through the maze and a person who did not, what exactly has been added in the experience of the former? Certainly not space because, even for the latter, actions or movements is impossible without it. What has been added is just an awareness of what always is. The sojourn in the maze did not bring about the creation of something new, but rather, it forced the awareness of what already is.

It would certainly exceed the scope of this thesis, but I think that it may be interesting to look at the parallels between the notion of space (*ākāśa*) in Buddhism and that of *nirvāṇa*. Both have been considered as that which is not composed (*asamskṛta*) and in some texts, one has the impression that they are synonymous.⁴⁹⁴ Taking into consideration the simile of the mirror maze, one could see how they can be: if *nirvāṇa* means extinguishing, space, by being fully revealed by the extinction of the illusions, i.e., the coming out of the maze, is only a different description of what is referred to by the experience of *nirvāṇa*.

As a final point of this thesis I would like to come back to where it started. Given the soteriological context suggested in the present research, what would be

⁴⁹⁴See Bareau (1950) for a full study on the *asamskṛta*.

an appropriate translation for the word *bodhicitta*? I would say that *bodhicitta* means a mind fully pervaded—a mind can only be fully pervaded— of a thought whose content is the desire for enlightenment for the sake of all beings. In a shorter form: the thought of the desire for enlightenment. However accurate this translation may be, there is something missing. We have seen in the first chapter that *bodhicitta* referred to metaphysical realities or concepts such as the Cosmic Body of the Buddha (*Dharmakāya*) or Reality as such (*Bhūtatathātā*). Why is it that most Buddhist Mahāyāna traditions came to assimilate *bodhicitta* to such realities? In this research, I have shown that a lot of ideas, for example, the notion of emptiness of all things or the immanent presence of the Buddha, could be used as a basis for the cultivation of awareness. For this reason, I argued that the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* can be divided into three autonomous parts, each having its own theme for the cultivation of awareness. Why then did *bodhicitta* and not the other themes or ideas become so prominent? It appears to me that one can compare the development of the concept of *bodhicitta* to that of a trademark such as Coca-Cola®. This word is not only the name given to a brownish sticky liquid but also of a wide range of ideas and impressions often identified as “the American way of life.” As such, the word Coca-Cola® is untranslatable. Similarly, the concept of *bodhicitta* came to be assimilated to a specific spiritual approach and especially the fruits it produces and consequently, it referred to more than what a simple translation of it could express. To some extent, *bodhicitta* is like a word designating a whole class, similar to the expression *bahuvrīhi*. The best translation I can imagine for *bodhicitta* is therefore *bodhicitta*™.

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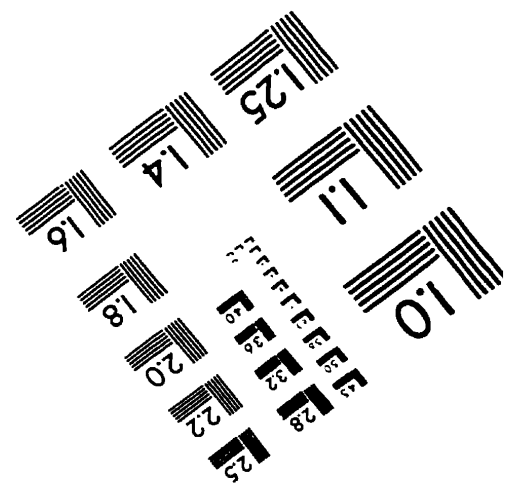
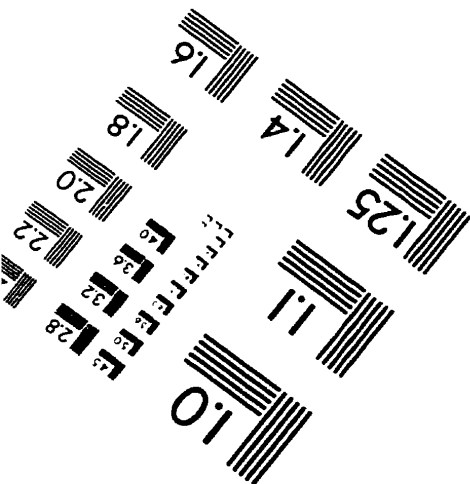
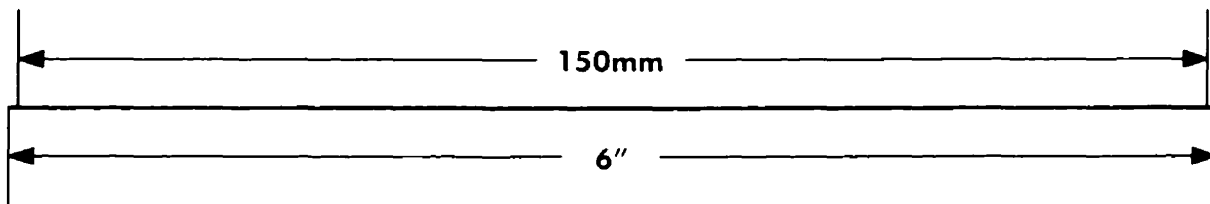
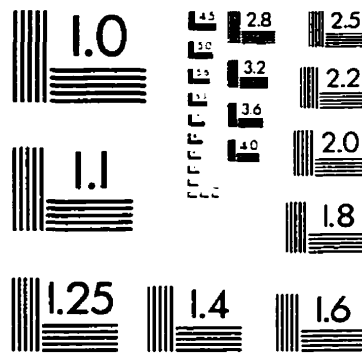
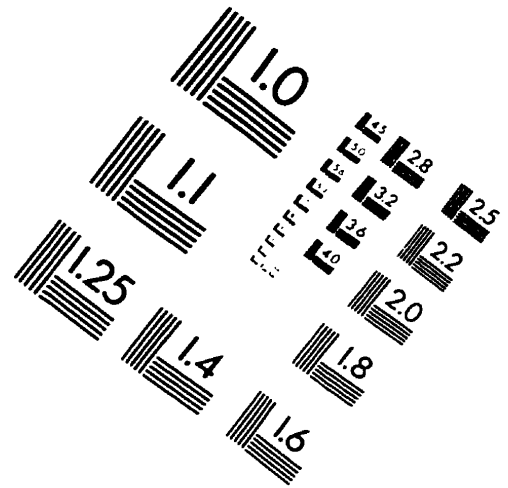
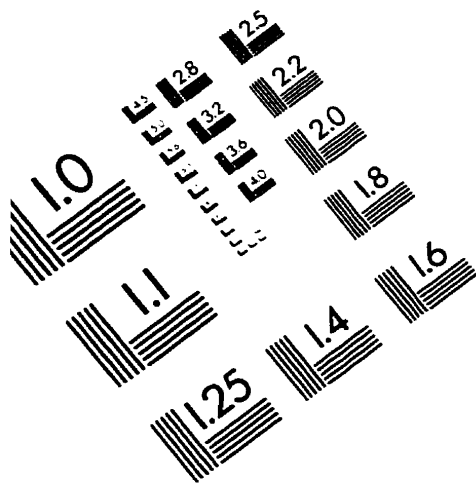
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1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

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