

# APOLOGETICS AND HARMONY IN THE LOTUS SŪTRA AND BHAVYA

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## I. Śrāvakayānist position: the Sūtras are not the work of the Buddha.

### Texts which express this idea

The “Śrāvakas” (*ñan thos*) of “the eighteen sects” (*sde pa bco brgyad*), as Bhavya names the first Buddhist movement in history (denomination for what was also called “Hīnayāna” by the Mahāyāna) *negated that the Sūtras (i.e. the fundamental texts in which the teaching of the Mahāyāna is exposed) were written or spoken by the Buddha.* The negation of the authenticity of the Mahāyāna Sūtras is frequently expressed in many Śrāvakayānist texts.

In an article, that we published in *Cahiers d’Extrême Asie*, Kyoto, 1996-1997, under the title “The Conflict of Change in Buddhism: The Hīnayānist Reaction”, we have analyzed several texts that contain this Theravāda thesis.

We enumerate now these texts with their number of reference or of page in that article. In that article the texts are included in their original language and in English translation. These texts are the following ones:

- 1. *Hphags pa dgoñs pa ñes par hgral pa theg pa chen poñi mdo* (Tibetan translation of *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*) (*Tōhoku* 106), VII, 11-23, É. Lamotte's edition;
- 2. *Ta chih tu lun* (Chinese translation of *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* or *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*), attributed to Nāgārjuna (*Taishō* 1506), p. 506 a lines 13-15, *Taishō* edition;
- 3. *Fa sheng chih le hui* (Chinese translation of *Adhyāśayasamcodana* (?), 25th Sūtra of the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra* = *Ta pao chi ching*) (*Taishō* 310), p. 528 b lines 10-14, *Taishō* ed.;
- 4. *Mo ho pan jo po lo mi ching* (Chinese translation of *Pañcaviṃśatī-sāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*) (*Taishō* 223), p. 340 b lines 6-14, *Taishō* ed.;
- 7. *Ta t’ang ta tz’u en ssu san ts’ang fa shih chuan* (Chinese translation of the *Biography* of Hsüan tsang) (*Taishō* 2053), by Hui li and Yen ts’ung, p. 244 c lines 14-p. 245 c line 3, *Taishō* ed.;

- 12. *P'o su p'an tu fa shih chuan* (Chinese translation of the *Biography* of Vasubandhu) (*Taishō* 2049) by Paramārtha, p. 190 c lines 12-13, *Taishō* ed.;
- 15. *Rgya gar chos hbyun* (History of Buddhism in India), by Tāranātha, p. 51 lines 6-8, Schiefner ed.;
- 18. *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* by Asaṅga, stanza 7, and the commentary *ad locum*. Cf. Hsüan tsang, *Tch'eng wei che louen* (*Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* [from now on: *Siddhi*], *Taishō* 1585, p. 14 c line 19-p. 15 b line 18);
  - Text from p. 251 of *Cahiers' article*, 1996-1997. *Nikāya-saṅgraha*, p. 11, quoted by Walpola Rahula;
  - Text from p. 251 of *Cahiers' article*, 1996-1997. *Samantapāsādikā* (Vinaya Commentary) by Buddhaghosa, section *Pācittiya* IV, pp. 742-743, Pali Text Society ed.;
  - Text from p. 251 of the *Cahiers' article*, 1996-1997. *Sāratthappakāsinī* (Commentary of *Samyuttanikāya*) by Buddhaghosa, XVI, 13, Vol. II, p. 201-202, Pali Text Society edition.

In another article, published in *Hokke Bunka Kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1998, pp. 1-30, under the title “The Conflict of Change in the Lotus Sūtra: The Hīnayānist Reaction”, we commented two passages of the *Lotus Sūtra* which express the idea that the Sūtras were not composed by Buddha. These two passages are:

- *Lotus Sūtra, Chapter XII, stanzas 8-9* (p. 272, Kern-Nanjio ed.): we find a reference to the Disciples (*Śrāvakas*) who thought that there were the Mahāyānists themselves who have composed the Sūtras in order to procure for themselves material benefits.
- *Lotus Sūtra, Chapter III*: it is also found an interesting reference to this matter in the passage (pp. 60-64, KN ed.) that describes what we have called the “crisis” of the Great Disciple of Buddha, Śāriputra. Śāriputra tells how when he heard for the first time the teaching of the Mahāyāna (from the mouth of Buddha himself!) he became full of fear (stanza 15), because he was afraid that it was Māra, the Evil, himself who, assuming the form of the Buddha, imparted that teaching. This was a reaction very common among the “Śrāvakayānists”, according to the texts quoted in previous paragraphs. Śāriputra makes clear afterwards (stanza 20) that he later recognized that it was not Māra but the same Buddha who was preaching.

To the cited texts may be added others not mentioned in our already quoted two articles:

- *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, p. 163, lines 26-30, Vaidya ed. (= p. 674, Wogihara ed.);
- Fragment of the *Commentary* (today lost) by *Paramārtha* (Vth century A.D.) to the *Treatise on the sects* by Vasumitra – fragment quoted by the monk Chūkan (XIIIth century A.D.) in his commentary to the work of Ki-tsang (549-623 A.D.) entitled *San lun hsüan i (Profound Sense of the Three Treatises)*, Taishō ed., p. 459, lines 10-22, and
- *Madhyamakahrdayavṛttitarkajvālā* by Bhavya,<sup>1</sup> Chapter IV, especially folios 155 b line 7-156 a line 6, Sde-dge edition. This work by Bhavya has as aim precisely to demonstrate that the Mahāyāna is a work of the Buddha, contrarily to what is said by the “Śrāvakas” (*ñan thos*) of the eighteen sects (*sde pa bco brgyad*) (folio 144 b line 7) (*theg po chen po sañs rgyas kyi gsuñ ñid du sgrub pañi phyir rab tu byed pa bzī pa rtsom par byed de*).

## II. Śrāvakayānist argument in support of their thesis: the Mahāyānist doctrines are not Buddhist doctrines. Texts that point out which are these doctrines

In support of their thesis that denied the authenticity of the Mahāyāna Sūtras, *the Śrāvakayānists maintained that these Sūtras contained doctrines which either were openly different from the fundamental Buddhist doctrines preached by the Buddha and reunited in the Canons of the Theravāda sects or schools, or which even contradicted them*. What is more probable is that, while the new Mahāyānist doctrines were arising, they were being criticized by the Śrāvakayānists as they went away from the traditional Buddhist teachings or they were opposed to them, and thereby they were considered as a proof that the Mahāyāna had not been preached by the Buddha.<sup>2</sup>

We point out some of these *Mahāyānist doctrines* (mentioned in some of the texts

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<sup>1</sup> On Bhavya, named also Bhāvaviveka and Bhāviveka (*circa* 500-570 ? A.D.) see David Seyfort Rugg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, pp. 61-66; Donald S. Lopez, *A Study of Svātantrika*, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987; A.L. Heitmann, “Bibliographie zur Bhavya-Literatur”, in K.N. Mishra (ed.), *Glimpses of the Sanskrit Buddhist Literature*, Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1997, pp. 106-154. Concerning Bhavya’s works *Madhyamakahrdaya (kārikās)* and its commentary *Madhyamakahrdayavṛttitarkajvālā* let us say that the first one has been preserved in Sanskrit (Chr. Lindtner’s edition in The Adyar Library and Research Centre, India, 2001), and that the second one is preserved only in its Tibetan version that of course contains the text of the *kārikās*.

<sup>2</sup> It is not possible to settle with certainty the epoch in which each one of these new doctrines appeared.

enumerated in section I. of this article, or in our articles in *Cahiers* and in *Hokke Bunka*, also already cited in that section) *not accepted by the Śrāvakayānists*:

-Text 1 (*Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*). The Mahāyānist theory expressed in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and in Nāgārjuna's works and those of his Mādhyamika School: "things do not possess an own being (= substantiality), things do not arise, do not cease ... they are calm from the beginning and completely nirvāṇized by nature".

-Text 4 (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*). The exhortation to the delighted cultivation of the Six Pāramitās (or moral Perfections) aiming at the obtainment of the Supreme Perfect Enlightenment (*anuttara-saṃyaksambodhi*).

The Pāramitās (whose number differs) constitute the moral values that the Mahāyānist must realize in order to arrive at the moral and intellectual perfection which will allow him to attain the supreme goal of Buddhism: the condition or nature of a Buddha with the sublime attributes that mark it out.

-Text 5 of the article in *Cahiers* (not included in the enumeration of the first section) (*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, *Ta chih tu lun*, *Taishō* 1509, p. 145 a lines 12-25). The exaltation of the extreme generosity that leads to heroic sacrifices, as the donation of one of his eyes to a beggar by Śāriputra. The Mahāyāna extolled this kind of sacrifices.

Moreover this passage of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* contains the Theravāda opinion that not everybody can be saved, contrarily to what the Mahāyāna maintains in the sense that all men and women will attain Buddhahood.

-Text 6 of the article in *Cahiers* (not included in the enumeration of the first section) (*Biography of Hsüan tsang*, *Taishō* 2087, p. 226 c lines 22-25). The "erroneous opinions" (without indication of which they are) of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the treatise of the great Mahāyānist thinker Asaṅga.

This treatise in 17 volumes contains a large exposition of important doctrines of the Mahāyāna. Asaṅga's *Yogācārabhūmi* belongs to the IVth century A.D., i.e. it is located after the *Lotus Sūtra*.

-Text 7 (*Biography of Hsüan tsang*). The doctrine exposed in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and by Nāgārjuna and his Mādhyamika School is contemptuously referred to with the expression "the heretics of the sky-flower".

These *Sūtras*, Nāgārjuna, and his school maintained that the empirical reality has the ontological status of a flower that grows up in the space. See *supra* in this same section the text 1.

This same text affirms (*in fine*) in a general way without any specification that "the fundamental principles (of Buddhism) are damaged or spoiled by the Mahāyāna".

-Text 10 of the article in *Cahiers* (not included in the enumeration of the first section) (*Ta t'ang hsi yü chi, Records of the Western Countries, Taishō 2087*, p. 891 c lines 1-12). The non ascetic existence of the Bodhisattva Maitreya in the Tushitā Heaven according to the Mahāyāna – existence that strictly speaking corresponds to any Bodhisattva who is reborn in this heaven. This existence does not agree with the austere life proper to the Śrāvakayānist monks.

-Text of p. 251 of the article in *Cahiers* (included in the enumeration of the first section) (*Nikāya-saṅgraha*, p. 11). The Mahāyānist doctrines in general, whose comparison with the Śrāvakayānist writings gives as a result that they are false.

-*Lotus Sūtra, Chapter XIX* (p. 378 line 11, Kern-Nanjio ed.) (not included in the enumeration of the first section; included in our article in *Hokke Bunka Kenkyū*). The *Discipline of the Bodhisattvas (bodhisattvacaryā)* and the *Supreme Perfect Enlightenment (anuttarasamyaksambodhi)* as conceived by the Mahāyāna and to which the Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta has referred to previously. The Śrāvakayānist monks to which Sadāparibhūta has addressed consider that both are *inexistent* and thereby *not desired by them (asattam anākāṅkṣitam)*.

- Other Mahāyānist doctrines not accepted by the Śrāvakayānists are mentioned in Bhavya's *Tarkajvālā* to which we shall refer below in detail.

### **III. Other arguments against the authenticity of the Mahāyāna mentioned in the *Madhyamakahr̥daya* and in the *Tarkajvālā* of Bhavya**

In connection with the subject we are dealing with a special place deserves the treatises of Bhavya called *Madhyamakahr̥daya* (in verse) and its commentary *Madhyamakahr̥dayavṛttitarkajvālā*. In Chapter IV of these works Bhavya points out a long series of arguments adduced by the Śrāvakayānists against the authenticity of the Mahāyāna, and refutes them. *The majority of these arguments are constituted by (Mahāyānist) doctrines that not only are not found among the Śrāvakayānist doctrines, but even are also in an evident contradiction with them.* The *Madhyamakahr̥daya* as well as its commentary the *Tarkajvālā* are important sources for the study of the conflict of change in Buddhism; now we shall only mention the principal arguments pointed out by Bhavya that the Śrāvakayānists adduced in order to demonstrate that the Mahāyāna had not been preached by the Buddha, following the text (Tibetan version) of the *Tarkajvālā*:

- *Kārikā IV, 7 a, c and d: The Mahāyāna is not the Word of the Buddha – as the Vedānta (is not either), because it is not included in the Sūtrāntas (= Sūtras),*

*etc.: mdo sde sogs su ma bsdus dañ / ... / theg chen sañs rgyas gsuñ ma yin / rig byed mthaḥ yi lta ba bžin //*. The commentary specifies that the text is referring to the *Tripiṭaka*, i.e. the *Canon of the Nikāyas* (= Śrāvakayānist sects), *constituted by the three* (tri) “*baskets*” (piṭaka) or *sections: section of the doctrinaire texts* (mdo sde, sūtra), *section of the texts concerning the monastic discipline* (ḥdul ba, vinaya), *and section of doctrinal systematization* (mñon pa, abhidharma).

- *Kārikā IV, 7 b, c and d: The Mahāyāna is not the Word of the Buddha – as the Vedānta (is not either) - because it teaches another salvific path: ... / lam gžan ñe bar ston phyir dañ / theg chen sañs rgyas gsuñ ma yin / rig byed mthaḥ yi lta ba bžin //*. The commentary points out some practices that the Mahāyāna would prescribe, as bathing in sacred rivers, to drink water from those rivers, to recite *mantras* and to fast, all this in order to purify oneself from the committed faults and to attain Liberation, which are proper to Brahmanism and contrary to the spirit of Buddhism in its first steps.<sup>3</sup>
- *Kārikā IV, 8, a-b. (The Mahāyāna is not the Word of the Buddha), because it negates the cause and the effect, as nāstikas (atheists) do: chad par lta ba de bžin du / rgyu dañ ḥbras bu skur ḥdebs pas / ...*
- *Kārikā IV, 8, c-d. (The Mahāyāna is not the Word of the Buddha), because it is undoubtedly not included in any of the Eighteen Sects*<sup>4</sup>: sde

pa bco brgyad khoñs su yañ / gtogs pa med pas ma yin ñes //.<sup>5</sup>

- *Kārikā IV, 9, a-d. Since mind has as its object (or support) form-color, etc. and is self knowable, the ajātivāda (= doctrine of the inexistence of arising and thus the non-existence of things and beings maintained by those Mahāyānists as the Mādhyamikas, which implies the non-existence of objects of knowledge) is opposed to (the traditional theory of) perception, pratyakṣa (which requires the existence of mind and the object of knowledge for the production of cognition): gzugs la sogs la dmigs paḥi blo / rañ rig ñid du yod*

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<sup>3</sup> *Kārikā IV, 7* reads in Sanskrit: na buddhoktir mahāyānaṃ sutrāntādāvasaṃgrahāt / mārgāntaropadeśād vā yathā vedāntadarśanam //.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Tarkajvālā*, folio 155 b, line 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Kārikā IV, 8 a-d* reads in Sanskrit: phalahetvapavādād vā yathā nāstikadarśanam / aṣṭādaśanikāyāntarbhāvābhāvān na niścitam //.

pas kyañ / mñon sum gnod pa gañ yin des / skye med smras ba de la gnod //.<sup>6</sup>  
 The commentary introducing this *kārikā* makes clear that this *darśana* of the Mahāyāna is a teaching contradictory not only to (the traditional conception of) *pratyakṣa* but also to the other means of valid knowledge: theg pa chen poñi lta ba ḥdi mñon sum la sogs pa dañ śin tu ḥgal bar ston pa /.

Moreover in *Tarkajvālā*, folio 155 b line 7-156 b, line 1, Bhavya expounds a series of arguments constituted by *Mahāyānist doctrines not accepted by the Śrāvakas of the Eighteen Sects*, which they adduced against the authenticity of the Sūtras of the Mahāyāna:

- *Because of having taught that the Tathāgata is eternal, (the Mahāyāna) is in contradiction with (the Buddha's teaching that says that) 'all the conditioned things are impermanent':* de bzin gsegs pa rtag pa ñid du ston par byed pas 'ḥdus byas thams cad mi rtag pa' zes bya ba dañ ḥgal bañi yañ phyir ro /.
- *Because of having taught that everything is pervaded by the tathāgatagarbha (= literally "the embryo of the Tathāgata", the essence of the Tathāgata) and the ādānavijñāna (= ālayavijñāna i.e. receptacle-consciousness), (the Mahāyāna) has not abandoned the belief in the ātman (substantiality, soul):* de bzin gsegs pañi sñiñ pos khyab pa ñid dañ / len pañi rnam par ses pa ston par byed pas bdag tu ḥdsin pa ma spañs pañi yañ phyir ro /.
- *Because of having taught that Lord Buddha has not entered the Parinirvāṇa, (and) with the teaching (derived) from there that (for Him) there is no extinction, (the Mahāyāna) is in contradiction with the three lakṣaṇas (or mudrās, as essential characteristics or 'seals') of things (dharma) (i.e. unsubstantiality, impermanence, suffering: nairātmyam, anityam, duḥkham):* sañs rgyas mya ñan yoñs mi ḥdaḥ zes ston par byed pas de la ži ba ñid med par bstan pas chos kyi phyag rgya gsum dañ ḥgal bañi phyir dañ /.
- *(The Mahāyāna) predicts to the Great Disciples (their future Enlightenment), and criticizes in excess the Arhants, and teaches that the householders are to be venerated, and extols the Bodhisattvas more than the Tathāgata: ñan thos chen po rnam luñ bstan pa dañ / dgra bcom pa rnam la śin tu smod pa dañ / khyim pa la phyag bya ba ston pa dañ / de bzin gsegs pa las khyad par du byañ chub sems dpañ la bsnags par byed pañi phyir dañ /.*

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<sup>6</sup> *Kārikā* IV, 9 a-d reads in Sanskrit: rūpādyālabanā buddhiḥ svasaṃvedyāpi vidyate / yathāḥ pratyakṣabādhāpi jāyate 'jātivādinaḥ //

- *The vows of the Bodhisattvas as Gaganagañja, etc. are only words:* nam mkhaḥ mdsod la sogs paḥi byañ chub sems dpaḥi smon lam rnam kyañ tshig tsam yin paḥi phyir dañ /.
- *Because of saying that Śākyamuni is a supernatural creation, also all his teachings are false:* śā kya thub pa sprul pa yin par smra bas bstan pa thams cad kyañ log pa yin paḥi phyir dañ /.
- *It is not logical (what the Mahāyāna affirms) that He (= the Buddha) remains always absorbed in meditation:* rtag tu mñam par g'zag pa yin 'zes bya bar yañ mi rigs paḥi phyir dañ /.
- *(The Mahāyāna) in numerous Sūtras extols the inexistence of the effect:* mdo sde mañ po las ḥbras bu med paḥi bsnags pa ston paḥi phyir te /.
- *On affirming that even a very great fault can be completely eradicated, (the Mahāyāna) teaches that the action is without effect:* śin tu snig pa chen po yañ rtsa ba nas ḥbyin par smra bas las la ḥbras bu med par ston paḥi phyir /.
- *Because the (future) division (of Buddhism into Eighteen Sects) of the dream of (the fabulous King of India) Kṛīkī did not even mention (the Mahāyāna), the Mahāyāna is not the Word of the Buddha:* krī kīḥi rmi lam gyi dbye ba yañ ma bstan pas deḥi phyir theg pa chen po ḥdi sañs rgyas kyis gsuñs pa ma yin te /.
- *The teaching concerning pratyakṣa and the other means of correct knowledge maintained by the Mahāyāna are in contradiction with the traditional conception of perception, as already referred to on quoting kārīkā IV, 9.*

#### IV. Bhavya's apologetic method

As it had to be, the Śrāvakayānist negative theses about Mahāyānist Sūtras were refuted by Mahāyānist authors. We present in this article two instances of this refutation, one offered by Bhavya, another by the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Bhavya refutes one by one the doctrinaire arguments adduced by the Śrāvakayānists against the Mahāyāna. Two forms of Bhavya's apologetic method interest us in the context of this article:

The *first form* consists in demonstrating by arguments that the Mahāyānist doctrines rejected by the Śrāvakayānists, when correctly understood, agree with the fundamental principles taught by the Buddha, to which the Śrāvakayānists adhere.

The *second form* consists in showing that these Mahāyānist doctrines have a support in the Theravāda scriptures, they were expressed in them.

## V. The *first form* of Bhavya's refutation method

As an example of his first way of procedure we offer the Tibetan text and the English translation of a passage of *Tarkajvālā* (folio 169 a lines 1-4), where Bhavya refutes the accusation of the Śrāvakayānist that the Mahāyāna with the *Tathāgatagarbha* and the *ādānavijñāna* theories is adhering to the heretic theory of a substantial, eternal *ātman* (*ātmavāda*) (*de bz'in gśegs paḥi sñiñ pos khyab pa ñid dan / len paḥi nam par śes pa ston par byed pas bdag tu ḥdsin pa ma spañis paḥi yañ phyir ro*, folio 156 a line 2).

In fact Bhavya intends to demonstrate that there is not difference between the Śrāvakayānist and the Mahāyānist doctrinaire positions. It could be said that this first form of Bhavya's method is an application of the *upāyakaśālya* ("ability in the use of means") method of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

### Text of the *Tarkajvālā*, folio 169 a, lines 1-4, and translation

[I] “ ‘The Tathāgata pervades everything’ – so it has been said (in the Mahāyāna). It is so because (His) knowledge pervades all knowable objects, but He does not dwell in everything in the same way Viṣṇu does.

[II] ‘(All living beings always) possess the Tathāgatagarbha’ – so it has also been said (in the Mahāyāna). It is so because It exists in the series of all living beings that are void, without characteristics, and aimless, but It is not like an individual acting inside (man), eternal, all-pervading. Why? Because of the (following) assertions and others: ‘All the dharmas have the nature of voidness, characteristiclessness, aimlessness’, (and) ‘That which is voidness, characteristiclessness, and aimlessness, that is the Tathāgata.’

[III] (Concerning your objection against the doctrine of the *ādānavijñāna* that the Mahāyāna affirms, let us say that) The *ādānavijñāna* is the cause of entering (*pravṛtti*) in the *saṃsāra* and getting rid (*nivṛtti*) of it. Since it flows as the great current of a river, it has moved onwards (*praVṚT-*), and it moves onwards with the nature of a continuous series of instants (*kṣanikasamṭānavarttin*), but it is not like the *ātman*, and consequently it is not in contradiction with the seal of the Dharma, the *anātman* conception.”

[I] de b'zin g'segs pa ni khyab pa'ho 'zes bya ba ni ye 'ses kyi 'ses bya ma lus pa la khyab pas yin gyi / khyab h'jug dañ h'dra bar thams cad du gnas pa ñid ni ma yin no /

[II] de b'zin g'segs pa'hi sñin po can 'zes bya ba yañ stoñ pa ñid dañ / mtshan ma med pa dañ / smon pa med pa la sogs pa mams sems can thams cad kyi rgyud la yod pa'hi phyir yin gyi / nañ gi byed pa'hi skyes bu rtag pa thams cad du khyab pa lta bu ni ma yin te / ji skad du / chos thams cad ni stoñ pa ñid dañ / mtshan ma med pa dañ / smon pa med pa'hi ño bo / gañ stoñ pa ñid dañ / mtshan ma dañ / smon pa med pa de ni de b'zin g'segs pa'ho 'zes bya ba la sogs pa h'byuñ bas so /

[III] len pa'hi nam par 'ses pa yañ h'khor bar h'jug pa dañ ldog pa'hi rgyur gyur pa / chu bo chen po'hi rgyun b'zin du h'bab pas h'jug tu zin kyañ / skad cig ma ñid kyi rgyun gyis h'jug pa yin gyi / bdag dañ h'dra bar ni ma yin pa'hi phyir bdag med pa'hi chos kyi phyag rgya dañ mi h'gal lo.

We do some remarks on the preceding text.

## VI. The first [I] and the second [II] assertions are found in numerous Mahāyānist texts

The doctrines that “the *Tathāgatagarbha* pervades everything” (*first assertion [I]*) and that “all beings are possessed of the *Tathāgatagarbha*” (*second assertion [II]*) are expressed in numerous Mahāyānist texts. Let us mention some of them:

1. *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, *Taishō* 666, p. 457 b line 28-c line 1: “*With my Buddha's eye I see that all living beings although inside the impurities of desire, hatred and error possess the Tathāgata's knowledge, the Tathāgata's eye, the Tathāgata's body*”.

2. *Ibidem*, p. 457 c lines 7-8: “*Either if Buddhas arise in the world or if they do not arise in the world, all living beings are endowed with the Tathāgatagarbhā*”. Cf. *Uttaratantra*, commentary *ad kārīkā* I, 152, where the Sanskrit text of this *kārīkā* is quoted: utpādād vā tathāgatānām anutpādād vā sadaivaite sattvās tathāgatagarbhā iti.

3. *Avataṃsakasūtra*, *Taishō* 278, p. 623 c lines 23-25: “*Moreover, O sons of the Buddha, there is no place where the Tathāgatajñāna does not reach. Why? There is no living being in the totality of living beings who is not fully possessed of the Tathāgatajñāna*”. Cf. *Uttaratantra*, commentary *ad kārīkā* I, 25, where there is the Sanskrit text of this quotation: na sa kaścid sattvaḥ sattvanikāye saṃvidyate yatra tathāgatajñānaṃ na sakalam anupraviṣṭam.

4. *Uttaratantra*, commentary *ad kārīkā* I, 16: “... *Since with their supramundane knowledge, which reaches the extreme limit of all the knowable things, they [= the Bodhisattvas] see the existence of the Tathāgatagarbha in all living beings, even in those reborn as animals...*”:... *sarvajñeyavastuparyantagatayā lokottarayā prajñāyā sarvasattveṣv antaśas tiryagyonigateṣu api tathāgatagarbhāstit-vadarśanād...*[The expression *tathāgatagarbhāstitva*<sup>7</sup>, “existence of the *Tathāgata-garbha*”, in the commentary glosses the expression *sarvajñādharmatā*<sup>7</sup> of the *kārīkā*].

5. *Ibidem*, *kārīkā*s 27-28: “... *All beings possess the Buddhagarbha*” (27), “...*because of the pervasion by the Body of the Perfectly Enlightened, all beings are always possessed of the Buddhagarbha*” (28): ...*sarve dehino buddhagarbhāḥ* (27), ...*saṃbuddhakāyaspharaṇāt ... sadā sarve buddhagarbhāḥ śārīriṇaḥ* (28).

6. *Ibidem*, commentary *ad kārīkā* I, 152: “*In every living being there exists the Tathāgatadhātu as an embryo, but the living beings do not know it*”: *tatra ca sattve sattve tathāgatadhātu utpanno garbhagataḥ saṃvidyate na ca te sattvā budhyante*.

The quoted texts use as synonyms the expressions *tathāgatagarbha*, *buddhagarbha*, *tathāgatajñāna*, *tathāgatakāya*, *sambuddhakāya*, *tathāgatadhātu*, *sarvajñādharmatā*.<sup>7</sup>

## VII. How does Bhavya understand the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine

Now let us see how Bhavya in his answer to the Śrāvakayānist accusation understands the *Tathāgatagarbha*'s doctrine. He, as a Mādhyamika, did not adhere to that doctrine, but, as a Mahāyānist thinker, he intended to clarify the real meaning of this doctrine in order also to defend the Mahāyāna from that erroneous Śrāvakayānist accusation.

*In relation to the first assertion [I]* (the pervasion of all by the *Tathāgata*) Bhavya answers identifying *Tathāgatagarbha* with *Tathāgatajñāna*. The “embryo” of *Tathāgata* is nothing else than the knowledge that the Buddha possesses, His Omniscience. This identification is expressed in many texts, as for instance in the texts quoted *supra* under

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<sup>7</sup> On the *Tathāgatagarbha* theory see Jikido Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra), Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Roma: IsMEO, 1966; D.S. Ruegg, *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du goṭra*, Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1969, and *Le traité du Tathāgatagarbha de Bu ston rin chen grub*, Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1973; B.E. Brown, *The Buddha Nature. A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha and Ālayavijñāna*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991.

the numbers 1., 3. and 4. And Bhavya argues that the assertion that *Tathāgatagarbha* [= *Tathāgatajñāna*] pervades everything means that the knowledge of the *Tathāgata* encompasses everything and everybody, that it encounters no obstacle. In fact Bhavya is affirming Buddha's Omniscience, which was also accepted by the Śrāvakayānists.

*As regards the second assertion [II]* (the possession of the *Tathāgatagarbha* by all living beings) Bhavya admits that in (some schools of) the Mahāyāna the existence of the *Tathāgatagarbha* in all living beings is affirmed, but *he denies that it can be considered as an ātman*, soul, because it exists in the series of consciousnesses that constitute sentient beings who are “void, without characteristics, and aimless” by nature, and also because the *Tathāgata* is “void, without characteristics, and aimless”, as all the *dharmas* are, but it does not exist with the essential characteristics of an *ātman*.

The expression “void, without characteristics, and aimless”, *sūnyatā*, *ānimitta*, *aprañihita* is found in *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* IV, p. 101, line 1, Kern-Nanjio ed., where it is emphatically declared “all is void, without characteristics, aimless”: *sūnyatānimittāprañihitaṃ sarvam*. In Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā ad XXII*, 11, we also find the same idea: *sūnyāḥ sarvadharmā(ḥ) ... nirmittāḥ sarvadharmā(ḥ)... aprañihitā(ḥ) sarvadharmā(ḥ)*. Cf. *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, p. 78, Nanjio edition = p. 33 line 17, Vaidya edition (*sūnyatā ... ānimittāprañihita*<sup>o</sup>).

The quoted texts express the Mādhyamika thesis accepted by the Mahāyāna “that *all* is void”, in other words: “all is unsubstantial, submitted to causes and conditions”. These texts authorize to apply the Voidness principle, i.e. unsubstantiality, to the *Tathāgatagarbha* also, as Bhavya does, since the word *sarvam* admits no exception and shows the absoluteness of the principle. And if the *Tathāgatagarbha* is void, unsubstantial, it is not an *ātman*. The universal unsubstantiality was a fundamental tenet of the Śrāvakayānists.

As a consequence of Bhavya's reasoning in relation to the first and second assertions there is no place for the Śrāvakayānist accusation that the *Tathāgatagarbha* is an *ātman*; there is no place for asserting that, with the *Tathāgatagarbha* theory, the Mahāyāna “*has not abandoned the belief in the ātman*”.

Agreeing with Bhavya's position and confirming it, the so-called *Tathāgatagarbhasūtras*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* – to which we shall refer in the next section – affirm that the *Tathāgatagarbha*, whose existence they proclaim, is not an *ātman*. This doctrine has been preached by the Buddha.

## VIII. The attribution of positive qualities to the *Tathāgatagarbha* is only an *upāya*

Moreover the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtras*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* add a most important idea. If sometimes the *Tathāgatagarbha* has been presented by the Buddha with attributes that bring it near the *ātmavāda*, this has been only an *upāya*, an skillful means, on the part of the Buddha: He did not want to scare the brahmin/heretics with the thesis of the inexistence of an *ātman* in sentient beings; He wanted that, with the removal of the fear produced in them by the *anātmavāda* or *nairātmya*, they were able to approach the Buddhist Community, to receive the Buddhist Message, and consequently to be saved.

In what follows we quote some texts where the preceding ideas are developed.

1. The *Śrīmālāsīghanādasūtra*,<sup>8</sup> has a section consecrated to the *Tathāgatagarbha* [ *Taishō* 353, p. 221 b line 8-p. 222 c line 7; Tibetan text, p. 885 line 3-p. 899 line 5]. This Sūtra in its Chinese version clearly identifies the *Tathāgatagarbha* with the *Dharmakāya* [ *Taishō*, p. 222 b lines 22-23].<sup>9</sup> In that section the *Śrīmālāsīghanādasūtra* attributes *passim* to the *Tathāgatadharma-kāya/Tathāgatagarbha* extolling characteristics ( *Taishō*, p. 221 c lines 8-10; Tibetan text, p. 888 line 7-p. 889 line 3). In *Taishō*, p. 222 a lines 23-24; Tibetan text, p. 894 lines 3-4, the Sūtra attributes to the *Tathāgatadharma-kāya* the four so-called *guṇapāramitās*: eternity (*nitya*), bliss (*sukha*), self (*ātman*) and purity (*śuddha*), what seems to lean, at least in the expression, towards an *ātmavāda* inspiration. But the same Sūtra ( *Taishō*, p. 222 b lines 19-20; Tibetan text, p. 897 lines 5-6: *bdag ma lags, sems can ma lags, srog ma lags, gañ zag ma lags...*) categorically declares that the *Tathāgatagarbha* is neither an *ātman* nor a sentient being nor a soul (*jīva*) nor a person (*pudgala*), pointing out in an evident way that the *Tathāgatagarbha* must not be conceived as the *ātman* of the Brahmanical schools (heretics).

2. Another important text in relation with the *Tathāgatagarbha* theory is the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* ( *Taishō* 374). It contains, in page 525 a line 14-b line 1, the well-known dialogue between the Buddha and the group of five hundred brahmins. The

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<sup>8</sup> Preserved in Chinese [ *Taishō* 353 and 310 (48)] and in Tibetan [Lhasa edition (Dharamsala), *Dkon brtsegs*, Cha, p. 835 line 6-p. 907 line 4 = *Tōhoku* 92 = *Catalogue* 760 (48)].

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Taishō* p. 221 c lines 10-11, and, with a different understanding of this last passage, the Tibetan text p. 889 lines 3-4, and the Sanskrit quotation in the *Uttaratantra* commentary *ad kārikā* I, 12: *ayam eva ca bhagavaṃs tathāgatakāyo ’vinirmuktakleśakośas tathāgatagarbhaḥ sūcyate*, which supports the two Chinese versions and their interpretation.

brahmins were thinking that if Gautama had not taught the *ucchedavāda* (“doctrine of annihilation”), they would have entered His monastic order. Buddha, thanks to His power of knowing the thought of others, discovers what they were thinking and asks them why they attribute to Him the *ucchedavāda*. They answer that He in many Sūtras has taught that the *ātman* does not exist, and consequently he is teaching the *ucchedavāda*. Buddha says that He has never taught that the *ātman* does not exist, and adds that He has always taught that in all sentient beings exists the Buddha Nature. He asks the Brahmins whether the Buddha Nature is not an *ātman*. And He affirms that therefore He has not taught the *ucchedavāda*. Immediately the thought of the Supreme Perfect Enlightenment arises in all of them. Afterwards Buddha explains that *in fact* the Buddha Nature is not an *ātman* but that “for the benefit (*wei ... ku*) of sentient beings” He declares it to be an *ātman*.<sup>10</sup>

3. Although the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* cannot be considered a *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine has a very important place in this Sūtra. We find in it, pp. 77-79, Nanjio edition = p. 33, Vaidya edition, a very outstanding passage about the *Tathāgatagarbha* theory, its relation with the *ātmavāda*, and the real intention of its preaching by the Buddha. In this passage the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Mahāmāti asks the Buddha how is it that the *Tathāgatagarbhavāda*, which describes the *Tathāgatagarbha* as permanent (*nitya*), firm (*dhruva*), auspicious (*śiva*), eternal (*śāsvata*), etc., is not similar to the heretic *ātmavāda*, which posits an *ātman* conceived as permanent (*nitya*), creator (*kartṛ*) or permanent creator (*nityakartṛ*), without determinations (*nirguṇa*), all-pervading (*vibhu*), not liable to change (*avyaya*). Buddha expresses that the *Tathāgatas* teach the doctrine of the *Tathāgatagarbha* only with the purpose of getting rid of the fear that ignorant people feel in relation to the doctrine of unsubstantiality (*bālānāṃ nairātmyasaṃtrāsapadavivarjanārtham*), having recourse to their knowledge and to their skill in the use of methods (*prajñōpāyakaśālyayogair*), and emphatically affirms that the *Tathāgatagarbha* is not the *ātman* of the heretics.

## IX. The third [III] assertion

*In relation to the third assertion (III)* (the doctrine of the *ādānavijñāna*) let us first indicate that as in the case of the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine Bhavya, being a

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. the Tibetan translation of this passage in volume Kh, pp. 273 line 7-p. 275 line 6, Lhasa edition (*sems can gyi phyir*: “for the benefit of sentient beings”), and also Kh, pp. 441 line 3-442 line 4.

Mādhyamika, does not adhere to this Mahāyānist doctrine, but nevertheless is going to refute the objection against it from the point of view of those Mahāyānist who maintain that doctrine.

Bhavya begins explaining in his answer, which is the function of the *ādānavijñāna*. Its important function is to give rise to the *saṃsāra* and to put an end to it (*len paḥi rnam par śes pa yañ ḥkhor bar ḥjug pa dañ ldog paḥi rgyur gyur pa*). This thesis agrees with the teaching of other texts, as for instance, Sthiramati *ad* Vasubandhu, *Triṃśikā* 19, p. 39 lines 1-2, Sylvain Lévi's edition: *evam ālayavijñāne*<sup>11</sup> *sati saṃsārapravṛttir nivṛttiś ca*, and Hsüan-tsang, *Siddhi, Taishō* 1585, p. 45 b lines 28-29: "In the beginning, in the middle, and at the end the wheel of saṃsāra turns without depending on external conditions, since (it turns) due to the internal consciousness".

After dealing with the theme of the causal connection between the *ādānavijñāna* and the *saṃsāra* (function of the *ādānavijñāna*), Bhavya *rejects the Śrāvakayānist objection that equates ādānavijñāna and ātman*. Bhavya expresses that the *ādānavijñāna* moves onwards with the nature of a continuous series of instants (*skad cig ṅid kyi rgyun gyis ḥjug pa yin gyi : kṣanikasamṭānavarttin*)<sup>12</sup>, in other words the *ādānavijñāna* is a series formed by punctual instantaneous consciousnesses, each of which disappears as soon as it arises, and which are connected among them by the law of causality.<sup>13</sup> The notion of *ādānavijñāna* is completely different from the notion of *ātman*, which is a compact mass of consciousness (*vijñānaghana, Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* IV, 5, 13), existent always *in se et per se*, existent as a whole, and being beyond time and causality.

This conception of the *ādānavijñāna* as a series, and consequently that it is not an *ātman*, is a fundamental thesis of the Yogācāra School. The *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra* in a frequently quoted verse compares the *ādānavijñāna* to a current of water (*ogha*) (in the quotation of Sthiramati's commentary *ad Triṃśikā* 15, p. 34 lines 3-4, S. Lévi's edition, and in the Chinese translation: *Taishō* 676, p. 692 c lines 22-23); the comparison is to a river (*chu boḥi klun*) in the Tibetan translation (V, 7, p. 58 at the bottom, É. Lamotte's edition).<sup>14</sup> The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* II, 100, refers to the flood of the *ālayavijñāna* (*ālayaughā*). The expression of the same idea is found in Hsüan-tsang, *Siddhi, Taishō*

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<sup>11</sup> *Ālayavijñāna = ādānavijñāna*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Yogācārabhūmi, Sde-dge* edition (*Tōhoku* 4038) Zi 4b line 5 where the same expression is used.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. L. Schmithausen, *Ālayavijñāna. On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy*, Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1986, Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 41-47.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Asaṅga, *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* I, p. 4, É. Lamotte's edition, where this verse is also quoted with minor variants.

1585, p. 12 b line 28-c line 15 (L. de la Vallée Poussin's translation, pp. 156-157), and in p. 14 b lines 17-18 (L. de la Vallée Poussin's translation, p. 172).

## X. Śrāvakayānist antecedents of the *ādānavijñāna*

Some Mahāyānist authors maintained that the *ādānavijñāna* had its antecedents in the Śrāvakayānist Scriptures. Asaṅga, *Mahāyānasamgraha* I, 11, É. Lamotte's edition, develops the thesis that the *ādānavijñāna* "was also taught in the Śrāvakayāna" (*ñān thoṣ kyī theg par yañ bstan te*) although by other names (or under synonyms) (*rnam grañs kyis*), and he refers to some sects of the Śrāvakayāna that accepted it: Theravādins, Mahāsaṃghikas, Mahīśāsakas. Cf. the commentaries of Vasubandhu (*Bhāṣya*), and of Asvabhāva (*Upanibandhana*) *ad locum*. Hsüan-tsang, *Siddhi*, *Taishō* 1585, p. 15 a line 18-b line 18 (L. de la Vallée Poussin's translation, pp. 178-182 with important notes), maintains the same thesis, adding other sects to the previously indicated: Vibhajyavādins, Sarvāstivādins. Vasubandhu, *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*, É. Lamotte's edition, p. 199 (Tibetan text), p. 250 (French translation), *Taishō* 1509, p. 785 a lines 14-15, besides the Mahāsaṃghikas and the Mahīśāsakas mentions also the Tāmraparṇīyas among the Śrāvakayānist sects that admitted the existence of the *ādānavijñāna*. Cf. L. Schmithausen, *op. cit.*, Chapter 3.

In fact there are important points of contact between the Śrāvakayānist conception of *viññāṇa* / *vijñāna* and the Mahāyānist conception of *ādānavijñāna*. It is possible to consider the Mahāyāna conception as a *development* of the Śrāvakayāna conception.

1. The Mahāyānist *ādānavijñāna* is nothing else than "a part", an aspect, a level of the *vijñāna* and not an element outside and different from the *vijñāna*. The Śrāvakayānists had analyzed the *viññāṇa* / *vijñāna* into six parts, the six acts of perception; the Mahāyānists deepening this study of consciousness analyzed it into eight parts, including thus the *ādānavijñāna*. What they both analyze was the same entity. Cf. L. Schmithausen, *op. cit.*, Part I, Chapter 5.

2. The conception of the *viññāṇa* / *vijñāna* as a series had already been maintained by several schools of the Śrāvakas. Cf. A.B. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1963, pp. 169-176.

3. For the Mahāyānists the *saṃsāra* depends on the presence of the *ādānavijñāna* as expressed by Bhavya. For the Śrāvakayānists the *saṃsāra* depends on the existence of an individual (*nāma-rūpa*) and the individual has the *viññāṇa* / *vijñāna* as its necessary condition. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya* II, pp. 63-64 (XV *Mahānidānasuttanta*), PTS

edition; *Samyutta Nikāya* II, p. 13 (*Moḷiyaphagga-sutta*), and II, p. 91 (*Viññāṇasutta*); and P.Oltramare, *La Formule bouddhique des douze causes*, Genève: Librairie Georg & C<sup>ie</sup>, 1909, pp. 14-15; L. de la Vallée Poussin, *Théorie des douze causes*, Gand: Librairie Scientifique E. van Goethem, 1913, pp. 12-18.

4. According to the Śrāvakayānist the *viññāṇa* /*viññāna* “carries” in itself or is composed by the *saṅkhāras* /*saṃskāras* or *bijas*, the karmic residues left by any corporal action, any vocal act, any mental (cognitive or emotive) operation (*kā ceyam santatiḥ? hetuphalabhūtās traiyadhvikāḥ saṃskārāḥ*, Vasubandhu, *Abhi-dharmakośa ad II*, 36, Vol. I, p. 217, Swami Dwarikadas Shastri edition). The *ādānavijñāna* of the Mahāyāna fulfills the same function of being a “carrier”. Cf. in the already quoted verse of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, in Sthiramati *ad Triṃśikā* 15, Tibetan translation, p. 58, É. Lamotte’s edition, the expressions: *sarvabījo* and *sa bon thams cad*.

## XI. The *second form* of Bhavya’s apologetic method

In the case of the accusation regarding the *Tathāgatagarbha* and the *ādānavijñāna* Bhavya has had no recourse to Śrāvakayānist texts in order to prove that the Śrāvakas also maintained the doctrine it criticizes as not being a doctrine taught by the Buddha; he does not mention the fact of the *ādānavijñāna* having antecedents in the Śrāvakayānist scriptures as we have said other Mahāyānist authors do. But in other cases he adduces Śrāvakayānist texts that prove that the Mahāyānist doctrine rejected by the Śrāvakas was also contained in their own texts.

One of the cases in which Bhavya adopts this procedure is in relation to the Theravāda accusation (contained in folio 156 a lines 3-4) that the Mahāyāna preaches that *gṛhapatīs* must be honored (*khyim pa la phyag bya ba ston pa*). Under the name “*khyim pa*” (*gṛhapati*) we must understand “a layman who practises the *bodhisattvacāryā*” without having yet attained the condition of a Buddha - not any householder without qualifications. The prototype of a lay-Bodhisattva is Vimalakīrti to whom we shall refer afterwards.

## XII. Mahāyanist texts that express that homage must be rendered to *gṛhapatīs* and Bodhisattvas must be venerated

1. In fact we find in the *Lotus Sūtra* some instances of the Buddha enjoining

people to honor the *kulaputras* or *kuladuhitas* (lay Buddhist devotees) who knew the *Lotus Sūtra*, taught it and venerated it (X, p. 226 line 1-p. 227 line 3, Kern-Nanjio edition), and the *dharmabhāṅakas* whether they be lay devotees or wandering monks (*ibidem*, p. 227 line 6: *grhasthānaṃ vā pravrajitānāṃ vā*). Cf. *ibidem* verses 1-14.

2. In Candrakīrti's *Trīśaraṇasaptatī*, Per K. Sorensen edition, Wien: Universität Wien, 1986, verses 50-51, is prescribed that Arhants should honor Bodhisattvas – i.e. persons who have not yet become Buddhas.

3. It is interesting to mention Hsüan-tsang's *Ta t'ang hsi yü chi* (Records of the Western Lands), *Taishō* 2087, p. 891 c lines 1-12, where he narrates how Guṇaprabha, a "Hīnayānist" monk was taken by the Arhant Devasena to the Tuṣita Heaven and how he respectfully saluted the Bodhisattva Maitreya but did not consider appropriate to worship him as Devasena would have liked, giving reasons for his behaviour. Cf. F. Tola and C. Dragonetti, "The Conflict of Change in Buddhism: The Hīnayānist Reaction", in *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie* 9, 1996-1997, pp. 242-243.

4. P. Skilling in his valuable article "Citations from the Scriptures of the "Eighteen Schools" in the *Tarkajvālā*", in *Bauddhavidyāsudhākaraḥ Studies in Honor of Heinz Bechert*, Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica, 1997, pp. 605-614, gives another instance of the "practical ramification of the controversy" - to use his own expression - taken from G. Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959, p. 19.5, where a Śrāvaka criticizes Dharmasvāmin for having worshipped images of Avalokiteśvara: "You seem to be a good monk, by it is improper [for you as a monk] to worship a householder" (khyod dge sloṅ legs pa žig 'dug pa la, khyim pa la phyag byed pa ma legs so zer).

In the two last cases there was the idea – in the first case on the part of Devasena and in the second case on the part of Dharmasvāmin – that Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara had to be worshipped.

5. We could add another instance related to the present theme. Vimalakīrti to whom is dedicated the famous *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*,<sup>15</sup> is portrayed as a perfect *grhapati*, a wealthy man and a prominent citizen, and at the same time as a perfect lay believer, as a perfect lay Bodhisattva. Although it is not said in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* that he must be worshipped, he inspires, due to his intellectual and spiritual superiority, a sentiment of fear and respect in the old Buddha's disciples as Shāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, Kāśyapa, etc.

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<sup>15</sup> The Sanskrit text of this important Sūtra has been recently (1999) discovered by Japanese researchers in the city of Lhasa, at the Potala Palace, and published by Taisho University Press, Tokyo, March 2006. We thank the Japanese scholar Dr. Seishi Karashima, who had the kindness of sending to us a copy of this precious text, which we were translating from Chinese into Spanish.

### **XIII. Śrāvakayānist texts that express that homage must be rendered to *Bodhisattvas***

In folios 175 a line 7-181 a line 6 Bhavya rejects the accusation that the Mahāyāna, when it enjoins to worship Bodhisattvas, is acting against a Buddhist norm, since Bodhisattvas have not yet become Buddhas, the only ones – according to Śrāvakas – entitled to that honor. And Bhavya refutes this accusation of the Śrāvakas by quoting seventeen texts of the “Eighteen schools”, where either it is enjoined that Bodhisattvas should be honored by monks, or antecedents are presented of Bodhisattvas being honored by monks. Peter Skilling, in his quoted article, has completed the quotations giving the folios of the Peking, Cone, and Derge editions where they are found.

We give two examples of texts from the “Eighteen schools” used by Bhavya in his defense of the Mahāyāna.

The first one is the passage concerning the *Vidyādharaṭṭaka* of the Siddhārthikas, a sub-sect of the Mahāsaṃghika sect, included in folios 175 b line 1-175 b line 3 of Bhavya’s treatise:

“... ‘O monks, he who, (thinking:) ‘The Supreme Perfect Enlightenment (will be) mine through faith in Maitreya’, pays homage to Maitreya, he is paying homage to me and is venerating me, the Supremely Perfectly Enlightened. By those of whom I am the teacher, for whom I am the Supreme Venerable, homage must be paid to the Bodhisattva Maitreya, and also (by them) he must be venerated. By all the Four Assemblies, monks, nuns, male and female lay devotees, homage must also be paid to Prince successor Maitreya, (the future Buddha)’...”. On hearing these words from the Buddha, 1250 Arhants resolved to pay homage to all the Bodhisattvas.

...dge sloṅ dag ṅaḥi bla na med pa yaṅ dag par rdzogs paḥi byaṅ chub ni byams pa ḥdi la dad pas gaṅ byams pa la mñon par phyag byed pa de ni bla na med pa yaṅ dag par rdzogs paḥi saṅs rgyas ṅa la phyag byas pa daṅ mchod pa byas par gyur ro / ṅa gaṅ dag gi ston pa yin pa daṅ / gaṅ dag gi mchod gnas bla na med pa yin pa de dag gis ni byaṅ chub sems dpaḥ byams pa ḥdi la yaṅ phyag bya ba daṅ mchod pa bya ba yaṅ yin no / dge sloṅ daṅ / dge sloṅ ma daṅ / dge bsñen daṅ / dge bsñen ma daṅ / ḥkhor bzi po thams cad kyis kyaṅ rgyal tshab byams pa ḥdi la yaṅ phyag byaḥo...

The second example is offered by the four verses of the *Jātakapiṭaka* of the Haimavatas, a sub-sect of the Mahāsaṃghika sect, included in folio 177 a lines 3-4 of

Bhavya's treatise where in a dialogue with the Buddha, Bhikṣu Ānanda, His well-known Disciple, praises the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and venerates him:

*“O Bhagavan, I bow down to Avalokiteśvara,  
the Great Muni,  
the Hero without fear  
and endowed with compassionate nature.”*

bcom ldan ḥdas ḥdi dpaḥ bo ni /  
mi ḥjigs sñiṅ rjeḥi bdag ṅid can /  
spyān ras gzigs gyi dbaṅ phyug ni /  
thub pa che la rab tu ḥdud //

#### **XIV. Position of the *Lotus Sūtra* concerning the negation of the authenticity of the Sūtras**

Let us see now how the *Lotus Sūtra* faces the affirmation that the Buddha is not the author of the Mahāyānist Sūtras.

In the *Lotus Sūtra*, p. 22 lines 14-16, Kern-Nanjio edition, the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī expresses that Buddha Shākyamuni will preach soon the Exposition of the Doctrine called “The Lotus of the True Doctrine”; and in fact in Chapters II-XXVI Buddha appears doing diverse expositions on the Mahāyānist Doctrine and predicting to many of his followers their future Supreme Perfect Enlightenment.

The announcement of Mañjuśrī and the presentation of the Buddha as preaching imply, on one hand, the rejection – in relation to the *Lotus Sūtra* - of the Śrāvaka's thesis that deny the authenticity of the Mahāyānist Sūtras, and, on the other hand, the affirmation that the Buddha has preached it, that He is its true author. It happens the same with the other Sūtras of the Mahāyāna: the Buddha is *directly* presented as preaching them, as being their author.

This is a *de facto* rejection of the Śrāvakayānist ideas regarding the authenticity of the Mahāyāna Scriptures.

## XV. The method of the *Lotus Sūtra* in face of the Śrāvaka's criticisms:

### The *Lotus Sūtra* as an apologetic work.

#### Its argument

The *Lotus Sūtra* does not construct *individual* arguments in order to refute one by one the accusations of the Śrāvakas; the *Lotus Sūtra* presents *only one* argument destined to discard not only the Śrāvakayānist arguments pointed out by Bhavya, but any argument that could be elaborated against the authenticity of the Mahāyāna Sūtras, based on the idea that they teach doctrines different to those taught by the canonical Śrāvakayānist texts.

The argument of the *Lotus Sūtra* is centered around the notion of *upāyakaūśalya* or “ability in (the use of) methods”, and obviously it represents a Mahāyānist perspective.

Among the powers (*bala*) acquired by the Buddha in his spiritual perfection there was the faculty of knowing the different capacities, tendencies, proclivities, levels of understanding, and specially receptivity (*adhimukti*) of beings.

The Buddha, by knowing the psychological, intellectual and spiritual characteristics of beings, and their particular religious needs and expectations, adequates His preaching to the audience He has in front of Him; transmits to the disciple that part of His doctrine that the disciple is prepared to receive and assimilate in that moment; graduates His teaching for the hearer, passing from the stage which is within his reach to other stage that will demand him effort and work; He gradually leads him to the acceptance of an instruction, which shocks the received convictions; transmits him the knowledge that the disciple needs most as a help and support for overcoming the conflicts, the anxieties, the discouragement, the fears that in that moment are in possession of him. The Buddha is the Great Physician that provides each sick person the appropriate medicine, the Great Master that adjusts His teaching to the personal situation of the pupil, the Great Guide that leads His companions to the goal through the paths more in accordance with their training. With this form of acting the Buddha succeeds in not scaring, not scandalizing the beings that have recourse to Him, and in this way He does not separate them away from Him, and He makes possible that, remaining at His side, they gradually come to possess in its whole integrity and authentic sense the Doctrine that will be for their good, for their happiness, for their Salvation.

To His Śrāvakas, to whom the Buddha preached in the first years of His life as a Master, He gave of His Doctrine only what, according to their psychological and spiritual circumstances at that moment, they were capable of receiving, what they could grasp and assimilate at that moment, what they most required at that moment, as

Liberation from suffering and Nirvāṇa. The teaching so transmitted to Śrāvakas was, necessarily, *provisional*, i.e. it was to be completed; and to many of its formulations a richer meaning, more profound, more complex, with greater novelty, was to be attributed afterwards – a meaning different from that meaning they seemed to express *prima facie*, and that was the only meaning the Śrāvakas were in that moment able to grasp.

With the Mahāyānist disciples, to whom the Buddha preached after He had preached to the Śrāvakayānist ones, it was different. They were intellectually, psychologically and spiritually prepared for receiving the *definitive* teaching of the Buddha, as Omniscience and Supreme Perfect Enlightenment, and this was transmitted to them provided with all its elements, freely, without secrets, clearly and directly expressing its proper and authentic meaning.

The teaching transmitted to the first disciples (Śrāvakas) and the teaching transmitted to those who followed them (Mahāyānists) constitute a sole and unique teaching, a unique salvific “Vehicle” (*Ekayāna*). What was transmitted to Śrāvakas is *Doctrine of the Buddha*, even not being the totality of it, and the Śrāvakas, adhering to the Mahāyāna, can easily complete it integrating it with the elements that were missing. And, at its turn, the *prima facie* meaning with which the Śrāvakas had taken the teachings of the Master, becomes larger, richer, more precise, when the Disciples have become able to place themselves in the perspective of the Mahāyāna, and from this perspective interpret, grasp, and understand such teachings.

The doctrine of *upāyakauśalya* or “ability in the use of the methods”, provides with the argument for the refutation of any accusation presented by the Śrāvakayāna against the Mahāyāna consisting in it that the Mahāyāna is not the Word of the Buddha because it contradicts the teachings of the Śrāvakas: the Śrāvakayāna cannot be taken as the criterion of what is “the Word of the Buddha”, because the teaching the Śrāvakayānists presents as teaching of the Buddha is only a part of this teaching, and because the meaning with which the Śrāvakayānists took the formulations of the Buddha, is not the definitive and last meaning with which they have to be taken. The Mahāyāna is the correct criterion of authenticity because the Mahāyāna is the totality of the teaching of the Buddha and because the Mahāyāna took the formulations of the Buddha in the meaning in which the Buddha wanted them to be finally taken.

The argument based on the *upāyakauśalya* exempts from the necessity of having recourse to other arguments in order to refute the accusations that the Śrāvakas could adduce against the authenticity of the Mahāyāna Sūtras, founded in the existence of contradictions among the Śrāvakayānist and the Mahāyānist doctrines.

## **XVI. Will of harmony in Bhavya and in the *Lotus Sūtra***

The attitude revealed by Bhavya and the *Lotus Sūtra* in their defense of the Mahāyāna does not imply the intention to present the Mahāyāna doctrines as the *only true* Doctrine of the Buddha, and consequently the exclusion of the Śrāvakayānist doctrines out of the Teaching of the Buddha.

The only thing that Bhavya basically tries to do is to demonstrate through arguments that the Mahāyāna doctrines either agree with the Śrāvakayānist doctrines or have in these ones their antecedents. Bhavya's apologetic attitude safeguards the coherence and unity of Buddhism in his historical evolution. In Bhavya there is a clear *will of harmonization*.

We find this same *will of harmonization* in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Although the *Lotus Sūtra* has sometimes very harsh expressions regarding the first Disciples of the Buddha, anyhow for the *Lotus Sūtra* the Śrāvakayāna and the Mahāyāna are *the same* Doctrine presented by the Buddha *in two different forms* according to the special circumstances of the audience, and in His desire to save all living beings. This difference does not hinder that those who adhere to one or the other form of Buddhism can attain the same salvific goal, Buddhahood. Nobody is excluded from this achievement. The *Lotus Sūtra* in the numerous *vyākaraṇas* it contains has many examples that point out to the universality of its message. If Bhavya puts emphasis on the agreement of the doctrinaire point of view of Śrāvakayānists and Mahāyānists, the *Lotus Sūtra* put it in the identity of the religious aim of Salvation.

## **XVII. The Mahāyāna Sūtras are the Word of the Buddha**

Bhavya, an important Mahāyānist Buddhist author, maintains in his *Tarkajvālā* that the Mahāyāna doctrine, correctly understood, is the same as the Śrāvakayāna doctrine. The *Lotus Sūtra*, a most important Mahāyānist Buddhist text, considers that the Śrāvakayāna doctrine and the Mahāyāna doctrine are one and the same although they are presented for didactic reasons in different forms and gradually, for the sake of the beings that hear it.

Neither Bhavya nor the *Lotus Sūtra* take into account an idea to which we are remarkably accustomed: the idea of evolution. Many doctrinaire elements are common to both, the Śrāvakayāna and the Mahāyāna; in relation to others there are more or less

profound divergences, but neither Bhavya nor the author(s) of the *Lotus Sūtra* thought that they were non-Buddhists, that they constituted a new, non-Buddhist religious movement. They considered themselves true and faithful disciples of the Buddha. This was their feeling. Thus they did not accept the idea that the Mahāyāna Sūtras were not the Word of the Buddha. Similarly in our days a Mahāyānist Buddhist scholar and devotee could not deny the fact that the Mahāyāna Sūtras originated several centuries after Buddha's life, but nevertheless he deposits his faith in these Sūtras as expressing Buddha's Teaching.

We think that Bhavya, the author(s) of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the modern Buddhist scholar are all of them right. In its long and dynamic existence Buddhism has evolved. In some aspects Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna are the same; in some aspects Mahāyāna Buddhism is nothing else than the normal natural legitimate evolution of the Śrāvakayāna Buddhism. It could be said that all that the Mahāyāna teaches and may seem different from the Śrāvakayāna teachings was already in the Buddha's Preaching of the Śrāvakayāna epoch as a *garbha*, as a *bīja*, as a *śakti*, as an effect that is really existing in the cause. In due moment, thanks to the action of time, it blossoms as a Mahāyāna doctrine.

This is not a process exclusive of Buddhism; all religion has experienced it. The Buddha preached a rich lofty message, and as such in the course of its unavoidable evolution this message had to present itself under novel forms developing its inexhaustible potentialities.