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BODHISATTVA PRACTICE: THE FOUNDATION OF ENGAGED BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT

The term *Bodhisattva* (Pali: *Bodhisatta*) has been one of the most important Buddhist concept throughout the history of Buddhism. In the Pli Nikyas, the Buddha himself used this term to denote about his previous lives and before attaining enlightenment. Gradually, the concept of *bodhisattva* is enlarged and later on, it is become a major philosophy as well as the living way of Buddhists in Mahyana Tradition. *Bodhisattvas* are beings who are dedicated to the universal awakening of everyone.

KEYWORDS: *Bodhisattva a Practice , Engaged Buddhism , major philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

They exist as guides and providers of help to suffering beings, and offer everyone an approach to meaningful spiritual life. *Bodhisattvas* are enlightening,



radiant beings who are manifested by innumerable forms, valiantly functioning in helpful ways right in the middle of busy-ness of the world. As soon as we are struck with our own urge or intention to take on such a *bodhisattva* practice, we also are included in the ranks of the *bodhisattvas*. *Bodhisattva* can be awesome in their power, radiance, and wisdom; or they can be as ordinary as your next-door neighbour. *Bodhisattvas* are not restricted to the Buddhist religious institution. A *Bodhisattva* appears in whatever milieu is most helpful according to this way of seeing. We may feel their presence in the

four boundless abodes of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. We will witness their effective actions by the practice of Six Parmitas. The *Bodhisattva* who embodied all the best qualities of a human, he is not remote or passive, but rather involved with the world, with you and me, with all beings. This paper will discuss in the below points:

The meaning of Bodhisattva

The term *Bodhisattva* (Pli: *Bodhisatta*), a being who aspires for *Bodhi* or *Enlightenment*. Etymologically term can be separated into two parts, *bodhi* and *sattva*: *bodhi* comes from the

root *budh*, to be awake, means 'awakening' or 'enlightenment' and *sattva*, derived from *sant*, the present participle of the root *as*, 'to be', means 'a being' or literally 'one who is', a sentient being. Hence, the term is taken to mean 'one who essence is Enlightenment' or 'enlightened knowledge'. There is also a suggestion that the Pali term may be derived from *bodhi* and *satta*, 'one who is attached to or desires to gain Enlightenment. A *Bodhisattva* practices the *pramitas* to save all living beings as well as to fulfil his vows (*Pranidhna*). The *Bodhisattva* always works for the benefit of the creatures but never desires to enjoy any happiness for them. Even the merits which are accumulated by good-wills, he will dedicate all to his fellow-beings. We should bear in mind that the definition of *bodhisattva* contains no

hint of the compassionate or divine nature of the bodhisattva, which could be expected from the definition of later Buddhism. A bodhisattva always works for the welfare of all living being, he never desire to enjoy any earthly or heavenly happiness for himself. The merits which he acquired by his wholesome deeds, he does not wish to enjoy them, but he will dedicate all these merits to the happiness of all living beings. A Bodhisattva helps all beings not only to attain the spiritual goal of Nirvana, but also to attain the more material advantages of happiness and welfare in the world (sukha). The austere unworldliness of the old ideal is abandoned in favour of a more human aim.

The Mahayanists are believed to have enriched and developed the Theravada concept of Bodhisattva. They hold that everyone can be a bodhisattva, if they develop their bodhicitta and take the vows to follow the Bodhisattva's practice. The development of bodhicitta requires that the practitioner must dedicate himself for a long period to service others, and should not desire his own emancipation, unless all living beings have attained enlightenments. The Bodhisattvas are innumerable in our world, due to every human being is a bodhisattva as he has the potentiality to become a Bodhisattva as mention in chapter fourteenth of The Lotus Sutra, namely "Innumerable Bodhisattvas". The Encyclopaedia of Buddhism points out that "The essential difference between the two developments was that while in the early Buddhism the Bodhisattva vow was meant only for those rare beings who are specially gifted, the later theory was that everyone could and should aim at supreme enlightenment."

Six Transcendent Practice (pramits) and the Foundation of Engaged Buddhism

The meaning of Primit and Engaged Buddhism

The pramits are regarded as the chief factors in the Bodhisattva doctrine and the qualities resulting in Buddhahood. All Bodhisattvas, at every stage, study the pramits to develop their capacity to carry out these practices completely in all their activities. Primit practice is based on human decency, and how to be in the world and help others who are suffering. The Sanskrit term primit (Pali: pram) means "mastery", "supremacy", "perfection", it is usually rendered as "perfection". The other meaning of this term is "to cross over to the opposite bank, to reach the further shore". Kumrajva interpreted the word as meaning "crossing over to the other shore" and translated prajñāprimit as "crossing by wisdom (to the shore of enlightenment)". Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh also explains primit with the meaning "gone to the opposite shore", he writes that "Because we don't want to stay on the shore of anger, I have offered you ways to crossed to the shore of well-being, non-anger, and joy. We want to leave the shore of jealousy for the shore of equanimity and love. We can practice crossing over to the other shore in our daily lives through Six Pramits."

Socially engaged Buddhism apply the Buddhist teachings to the resolution of social problems has emerged in the context of a global conversation on human rights, distributive justice and social progress.

1.Dna-primit

The word dna which is explained in the Pali – English Dictionary that means giving, dealing out, gift, almsgiving, liberality, munificence. According to Har Dayal, "giving" seems to be the best rendering in the context of Bodhisattva's practice. The perfection of giving is an act to offer to others whatever is possessed by the giver, given according to the need of recipients without the hope for reward. The donor offers a gift with her love, respect, equanimity and keeps in mind the gratitude to the recipients who have given the practitioner an opportunity to perform her vow.

Dna is the basic step in the practicing of a bodhisattva, it will be combined with others pramits to result in culminated levels. Actually, each primit is closely interrelated and supported to others in its function. The motive of giving should be raised from the compassion (karna) and loving kindness (metta) to reach the foremost kind of merit, the perfection (primit). The Bodhisattva performs Dna – primit without hope of reward and sees no difference between giver and receiver as the statement that "Almsgiving is the place of practice, because it hopes for no reward".

Three level of dna

There are three kinds of gift: material gift, the gift of fearlessness, and the gift of dhamma. The first one, material gifts consist of food, clothes, accommodation, and medicine and so on. Material generosity which belongs to a welfare situation. This is the way in which we express our generosity to somebody physically, there

is a quality of richness. The first level is material dāna which includes the external and internal gifts. The external gifts consist of giving food, drink, accommodation, clothes, medicine, and others daily needs. Nowadays, with the high development of medicine, we can donate our blood and several internal organs with less effect to quality of our life. They belong to the internal gifts. Buddhists also establish the projects of social welfare, community service, taking care of the lonely, sick and aged, the orphanage, school, hospital and so on. They can be listed in the category of internal gifts. By the engagement in social service, Buddhists apply the Buddha's teaching in daily life to help others in order to relieve the unfortunate in society. The second is the gift of Dhamma which consists of instruction, teaching of Dhamma, translation, propagation, writing, copying, printing, compilation etc. Dhamma gift is said to be foremost among others gifts as mentioned in Itivuttaka: Monks, there are these two gifts, the carnal and spiritual. Of these two gifts the spiritual is prominent. There are these two sharings together, the sharing of carnal and the sharing of the spiritual. There are two acts of kindness, the carnal and spiritual. Of these two acts of kindness the spiritual is prominent. Of these two sharings together the spiritual is prominent. The third category is the Giving of Fearlessness (Abhayadāna). There are various kinds of fear which taken place in everyone. But there are the four foremost fears which are the fear of birth, old-age, sickness, and death; they become the obsession of human being.

2. Sla-pramit – the methods to purify from thought to actions

The second pramit is Sla which derives from the root sl, meaning “to exercise, to practice”. Pali English Dictionary offers the meaning of samdhi and upadhrāa with the explanation as: nature, character, habit, behaviour, moral practice, good character, Buddhist ethics, and code of morality. Sla consists of all precepts which were laid down by Buddha to regulate the bodily action, verbal action and thought of his disciples. In the early years of Sangha, Buddhists observe their disciplines by the concise teachings as not doing the unwholesome deeds; accomplish the wholesome actions; purify one's mind; those are the Buddha's teachings. According to Har Dayal, sla pramit has been defined in three ways. It is identified with virtue in general and many admirable qualities; relation to the ideals of purification and restraint; referring to the five moral precepts and the ten meritorious ways of action which constitute the Buddhist layman's definite code of practical ethics. The first one which relates to virtue in general and admirable qualities denote the standard of behaviours conform to the standards of society. The second one sla deals with the ideals of purification and restraint which indicate the high moral standard such as monastic Monks and Nuns who observe various kinds of sla including major precepts and minor precepts to help them always living with an awakened mind. The meaning of sla refers to the five precepts and ten meritorious ways of action.

3. Ksanti-pramit

The Sanskrit term knti (P. khanti) means patience, forbearance, forgiveness. Knti is always described as the opposite of krodha (anger), dveṣa (hatred), pratigha (repugnance) and vyaḍā (malice). It is defined as freedom from anger and excitement and as the habit of enduring and pardoning injuries and insults. It is patient endurance of pain and hardship and acquiescence in or acceptance of the ideals and doctrines of the religion with faith. Patience is one of the qualities of mind, it means being willing to wait a long time for something. One should have to accept and work with any condition, both advantage and disadvantage which are received with a balance and equilibrium. The pramit of patience is really a helpful attitude in our daily life due to there are thousands, millions things which happen to us and we need be patient to survive. This world is called the world of endurance (sah) by the Buddha, because it is full of sufferings, cruelties, injustices. Living in this world we must be patient with our life, with various conditions, inside our bodies and outside environment. In regard with one's body, one ought to learn how to live with heat, cold, pain, itch, illness and so on. One also has to be patient with one's emotions like, happy, angry, love, hatred, grief, fear, desire, or eight winds: gain – loss; defamation – fame; praise – ridicule; sorrow – joy which all need to be balance to survive.

4. Vrya-pramit

The term Vrya (Pali: viriya) derived from vra and vr, literally means “the state of a strong man, energy, vigour, effort, exertion”. Har Dayal offers some more meanings as strenuousness, zeal, courage, diligence, fortitude, firmness, and prowess. In Dhamma-sāgāi, vryapramit is defined that “The striving and onward effort, the exertion and endeavour, the zeal and ardour, the vigour and fortitude, the state of unfaltering effort, the state

of sustained desire, the state of not putting down the yoke and the burden, the solid grip of the yoke and the burden, energy, right endeavour, this is vrya". Majjhima Nikaya mentions about four right kinds of striving as: "Here a bhikkhu awakens zeal for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome state, and makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states... He awakens zeal for arising of unarisen wholesome states... He awakens zeal for continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfilment by development of arisen wholesome states".

5. Dhya-pramit - the method to cultivate and purify our mind

The Sanskrit term dhya is regarded as equivalent of Pali term jhna, it is derived from dhy, has been rendered as "meditation", "trance", "ecstasy", "contemplation", "rapture", etc. Rhys Davids explains dhya as "the practice of rapt musing or abstraction". The Bodhisattva-bhmi defines as "concentration and stability or fixity of the mind". It is primarily and principally the means of experiencing and attaining serenity and calm.

The dhya system consists of four stages of mental purification, beginning with secluding from sensual pleasure and unwholesome states, this first jhna leads to states of meditative bliss and joy. With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the second jhna, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. The third jhna is defined that with the fading away as well of rapture, a bhikkhu abides in equanimity, and mindful and full aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhna, on account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the fourth jhna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. In each state of meditative concentration, the five sense organs are inactive, while the mind of the practitioner is lucid and awake. After attained the Four Jhnas, the practitioner enters the Four Formless Concentration named the realm of limitless space, the realm of limitless consciousness, the realm of no materiality, and the realm of where the concepts "perceiving" and "not perceiving" no longer apply. The practice, development and cultivation of meditation will lead to various benefits, for example, the Vimuttimagga mentions that there are four benefits which concentration can produce: Pleasant dwelling in the happiness of truth in the present life; Enjoyment of all objects through investigation; Acquisition of worldly knowledge; the attainment of perfection.

6. Prajñ-pramit

The sixth pramit is prajñ (Pali: paññ) which has been translated as "gnosis", "wisdom", "insight", "intuition", "transcendental idealism", "knowledge", "spiritual enlightenment", etc. Prajñ means 'knowledge', there are three kinds, rutamay, cintamayi, bhvanmayi. In Vimuttimagga, wisdom is defined that this wisdom (paññ) is understanding. This is knowledge. This is investigation of the truth, distinguishing, synecdoche. That investigation is learned, skilful, clever, and in considering, it sees clearly and draws knowledge. Wisdom is good, faculty, power, sword, tower, light, splendour, lamp, and gem. Non-delusion, investigation of truth, right view – these are called wisdom.

There are incalculable benefits of wisdom. However, they may be mentioned in brief in Vimuttimagga as the followings: Through wisdom are all morals made to shine. Through wisdom one treads the Holy Path and sees the fruition great of sanctity. Two kinds of wisdom lead to jhna-heights. Supreme is wisdom; unrivalled is the growth in wisdom's state; through wisdom does one break all heresy; the vulgar drawn by craving practice ill, not so the wise. Who rightly live and teach what profits both this world and that. They being free and strong see states of woe and welfare multiform, and know condition, cause, mind, matter, norm. This wisdom is the doctrine of Truths, the pasture of the good. Through wisdom one attains to excellence and roots out the evil brood which are called craving, hatred, ignorance, and birth and death and all the rest which naught else ever can exterminate. All unskilful actions which are caused by ignorance, lacking of wisdom to distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome, due to this, one commits the evil deeds that are harmful to others as well as oneself. A wise person who does not indulge in sensual pleasures, he always awakes himself and abides his mind at one place, therefore, he can avoid the faults. Wisdom is compared with the sunlight with which everything is distinguished. It is the only mean to approach the truth.

CONCLUSION

In brief, Mahayana holds that everybody can become the Bodhisattva by raising the mind of enlightenment and taking the vows for the sake of living beings. The Bodhisattvas practice six pramits in a long period to fulfil their vows and attain the full enlightenment. The practice of dāna-pramit into three kinds which not only offer material needs but also spiritual requirements. By practicing this pramit, the Buddhists bring welfare into society, by this way, they establish the happy living for the masses. This is the contribution of the practice of the perfection of giving for social welfare. The Buddhists observe at least five precepts that create a peaceful community without killing, thief, sexual misconduct, false speech, intoxication. The Buddhists practice śīla-pramit which helps reduce the offenders relating to killing, thief, sexual misconduct, intoxication. Practicing the perfection of patience which is reduced the conflict between the individuals as well as the communities. Diligence should be cultivated and developed not only in the spiritual life, but also in worldly life. Without diligence, one cannot complete one aim and success in one's career. These four pramits which will support to the practice of meditation, therefore, the practitioners are advised to cultivate and develop the qualities of mind as generosity, virtue, patience, energy, compassion to establish the firm foundation for easier entering of samadhi. Practice meditation brings various benefits which are caused effected in both physical and mental aspects. By practicing meditation, the practitioner acquires the wisdom with which he gets rid of ignorance, illusion, and greed those are the root of all faults. Therefore, Buddhists always enhance the cultivation and development of the perfection of wisdom. Lack of wisdom, one's view is covered by a thick cloud of ignorance, and far from truth.

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