

INTRODUCTION.

THE Saddharma-puṇḍarīka is one of the nine Dharmas which are known by the titles of—1. Ashṭasahasrikā Praḡñāpāramitā ; 2. Gaṇḍa-vyūha ; 3. Dasabhūmīvara ; 4. Samādhi-rāga ; 5. Laṅkāvatāra ; 6. Saddharma-puṇḍarīka ; 7. Tathāgata-guhyaka ; 8. Lalita-vistara ; 9. Suvarṇa-prabhāsa.

These nine works, to which divine worship is offered, embrace (to use the words of the first investigator of Nepalese Buddhism¹) 'in the first, an abstract of the philosophy of Buddhism²; in the seventh, a treatise on the esoteric doctrines; and in the seven remaining ones, a full illustration of every point of the ordinary doctrine and discipline, taught in the easy and effective way of example and anecdote, interspersed with occasional instances of dogmatic instruction. With the exception of the first, these works are therefore of a narrative kind; but interwoven with much occasional speculative matter.'

As to the form, it would seem that all the Dharmas may rank as narrative works, which, however, does not exclude in some of them a total difference in style of composition and character. The Lalita-vistara e.g. has the movement of a real epic, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka has not. The latter bears the character of a dramatic performance, an undeveloped mystery play, in which the chief interlocutor, not the only

¹ B. H. Hodgson, Essays on the Language, Literature, and Religion of Nepāl and Tibet, p. 13; cf. p. 49.

² As the Perfect Praḡñā is she who has produced all Tathāgatas, the mother of all Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Disciples (see Cowell and Eggeling, Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, New Series, VIII, p. 3), we must infer that the work is chiefly intended to set forth the principia rerum. It begins with chaos (pradhāna or praḡñā); and hence its place at the commencement of the list. We may, perhaps, best designate it as an abstract of mystic-natural or materialistic philosophy.

one, is Sâkyamuni, the Lord. It consists of a series of dialogues, brightened by the magic effects of a would-be supernatural scenery. The phantasmagorical parts of the whole are as clearly intended to impress us with the idea of the might and glory of the Buddha, as his speeches are to set forth his all-surpassing wisdom. Some affinity of its technical arrangement with that of the regular Indian drama is visible in the prologue or *Nidâna*, where *Mañigusrî* at the end prepares the spectators and auditors—both are the same—for the beginning of the grand drama, by telling them that the Lord is about to awake from his mystic slumber and to display his infinite wisdom and power.

In the book itself we find it termed a *Sûtra* or *Sûtrânta* of the class called *Mahâvaipulya*. In a highly instructive discussion on the peculiar characteristics and comparative age of the different kinds of *Sûtras*, Burnouf arrives at the conclusion that the *Mahâvaipulya Sûtras* are posterior to the simple *Sûtras* in general¹. As there are two categories of simple *Sûtras*, 1. those in which the events narrated are placed contemporary with the Buddha, 2. those which refer to persons living a considerable time after his reputed period, e. g. *Asoka*², it follows that the composition of the *Mahâvaipulya Sûtras* must be held to fall in a later time than the production of even the second category of simple *Sûtras*. Now in one of the latter, the *Asoka-Avadâna*, we read of *Asoka* using the word *dînâra*³, which leads us to the conclusion that the said *Avadâna* was composed, not only after the introduction of *dînâra* from the West, in the first century of our era or later, but at a still more modern time, when people had forgotten the foreign origin of the coin in question.

The results arrived at by Burnouf may be right so far as any *Mahâvaipulya Sûtra*, as a whole, is concerned; they cannot be applied to all the component parts of such a work. Not to go further than the *Saddharma-pundarika*

¹ Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien, pp. 103-128.

² Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 218 seq.

³ Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 423; cf. p. 431, where *Pushyamitra* is made to speak of *Dînâras*; Max Müller, *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 245.

and the Lalita-vistara, it can hardly be questioned that these works contain parts of very different dates, and derived from various sources. The material discrepancies between the version in prose and that in verse are occasionally too great to allow us to suppose them to have been made simultaneously or even by different authors conjointly at work¹. Further it can be shown that the Mahāvaiṣṭya Sūtras are partially made up of such materials as must be referred to the oldest period of Buddhism. Let me adduce some examples to render more clear what I mean.

If we compare Lalita-vistara (Calc. ed.), p. 513, 13–p. 514, 2, with Mahāvagga (ed. Dr. Oldenberg) I, 5, 2, we perceive that the passages are to a great extent literally identical, and that the variations amount to little more than a *varietas lectionis*.

The passage adduced is in prose; now let us take some stanzas. In Mahāvagga I, 5, 3, the Lord utters the following *slokas*:

*kikkhena me adhigatam halam dāni pakāsītum,
rāgadosaparetehi nāyam dhammo susambudho.
paṇisotagāmi nipunam gambhīram duddasam anum
rāgarattā na dakkhanti tamokhandhena āvutā.*

This does not materially differ from Lalita-vistara, p. 515, 16 seq.:

*pratisrotagāmiko mārgo gambhīro durdriso mama,
na tam drakshya(n)ti² rāgāndhā alam tasmāt prakāsītum.
anusrotam pravāhyante kāmeshu patitāḥ pragāḥ;
krikkhrena me'yam samprāptam(!) alam tasmāt prakāsītum.*

Though there is some difference in the wording and arrangement of the verses, it is of such a kind as to exclude all idea of the compiler of the Lalita-vistara having composed the distichs himself. Even the words *ayam dhammo susambudho* and *nipunam* of the Pāli text were known to him, as appears from the passage in prose immediately preceding the *slokas* quoted: *gambhīraḥ*

¹ See e.g. the foot-note, p. 413.

² An erroneous Sanskritisation of the present tense *dakkhanti*.

khalv aya*m*, Mahâbrahman, mayâ dharmo 'bhisambuddha*h* sūkshmo nipuna*h*. What follows, *api ka me*, Brahman, *ime gâthe abhîkshnam pratibhâsatah*¹, is but a slight, not very felicitous modification of what we read in the Mahâvagga l. c. : *api 'ssu bhagavantam imâ anakkhariyâ gâthâyo patibhamsu pubbe assuta-pubbâ*.

Evidently from the same source are the verses in Trishubh uttered by the god Brahma, Mahâvagga I, 5, 7, and those found in Lalita-vistara, p. 517, 3 seq. The former text has :

pâturahosi Magadhesu pubbe
dhammo asuddho samalehi kîntito,
apâpur' etam amatassa dvâram
sunantu dhammam vimalenânubuddham².

The other runs thus :

vâdo babhûva samalair vikîntito
dharmo hy³ asuddho Magadhesu pûrvam ;
amrîtam mune tad vivrinîshva dvâram
srînvanti⁴ dharmâ vipulam⁵ vimalena buddham.

On comparing the two texts we may infer that the Pâli version is purer, that *vâdo babhûva* is a corruption of *pâdû babhûva* or something like it, answering to a Sanskrit *prâdur babhûva*, but we cannot deny that the stanzas have the same origin.

In Mahâvagga I, 5, 12, the Lord addresses the god Brahma with the following Trishubh :

apârutâ tesam amatassa dvârâ
ye sotavanto, pamuñkantu⁶ saddham.

¹ Obviously an unhappy attempt to Sanskritise a Pâli or Prâkrit *patibhamsu*; it ought to have been *pratyabhâsishâm*.

² The text is corrupt; we have either to read *vimalânubuddham*, a Tatpuruṣa compound expressing the same as what the text exhibits, or *vimalena buddham*.

³ *Hi* is meaningless, and only a clumsy device to satisfy the exigency of Sanskrit phonetical rules, which are not applicable to Prâkrit.

⁴ Read *srînvantu*.

⁵ Read *dharmam vimalena*. *Vipula* probably owes its origin to a dittography.

⁶ I do not understand this *pamuñkantu*, i. e. let them cast off, loose or emit. Perhaps we have to read *payuñgantū*, let them practise.

vihimsasaññi pagunam na bhâsi
dhammam panitam manugesu, Brahma; iti.

Then in prose: Atha kho Brahmâ Sahampati katâvakâso
kho 'mhi bhagavatâ dhammadesanâyâ 'ti bhagavantam
abhivâdetvâ padakkhinam katvâ tatth' ev' antaradhâyi.

The parallel passage in Lalita-vistara, p. 520, 19 seq.,
has:

apâvritâs teshâm¹ amritasya dvârâ
Brahmann iti² satatam ye srotavantaḥ,
pravivanti sraddhâ na vihetḥasañgñâ
sriinvanti dharmam Magadheshu sattvâḥ.

Atha khalu Sikhî Mahâbrahmâ Tathâgatasyâdhivâsanâm
viditvâ tushṭa udagra âttamanâ pramuditâḥ pritisau-
nasyagâtas Tathâgatasya pâdau sirasâbhivanditvâ tatrai-
vântaradhât.

At the meeting of the Âgîvaka monk Upaka and the
Buddha, the latter is represented as having pronounced the
following slokas (Mahâvagga I, 6, 8 and 9):

na me âkariyo atthi, sadiso me na viggati,
sadevakasmim lokasmim n' atthi me paṭipuggalo.
aham hi arahâ loke, aham sathâ anuttaro,
eko 'mhi sammâsambuddho, sîtibhûto 'smi nibbuto.
mâdisâ ve Ginâ honti ye pattâ âsavakkhayam,
gitâ me pâpakâ dhammâ tasmâham Upaka³ gino.

Materially the same slokas, albeit in somewhat different
arrangement, occur Lalita-vistara, p. 526, 22 seq., as being
spoken at the same meeting:

âkâryo nahi me kasîti, sadriso me na vidyate,
eko 'ham asmi sambuddhaḥ, sîtibhûto nirâsravaḥ.
aham evâham⁴ loke sâstâ hy aham anuttaraḥ,
sadevâsuragandharve nâsti me pratipudgalaḥ⁵.

¹ Read tesham, if not tesam, because a contraction of am and a following
vowel into one syllable is as common as one of âm is unheard of.

² These words do not suit the metre, and have undoubtedly been transposed
from their original place, which they have kept in the Pâli text.

³ Rather Upakâ, a common Prâkrit form of the vocative case. See Sukhâ-
vatî-vyûha, p. xi, in Anecdota Oxoniensia, Aryan Series, vol. i, part ii.

⁴ Read aham evâraham (Sanskrit arhan).

⁵ The Calc. ed. has wrongly °dharvo and °puṅgalaḥ.

Ginā hi mādrisā gñeyā ye prāptā āsravakshayam,
gitā me pāpakā dharmās tenopa(ka) Gino [hy] aham.

The following verses, taken from Mahāvagga and Lalita-vistara l. c., have likewise the same origin, notwithstanding some variations :

dhamaḥakkam pavattetum gakkhāmi Kāsinam puram,
andhabhūtasmi lokasmim āhañhi amatadudrabhim.

Compare :

Vārānasīm gamishyāmi gatvā vai Kāsikām purīm,
andhabhūtasya lokasya kartāsmi asadrīsīm¹ prabhām.
Vārānasīm gamishyāmi gatvā vai Kāsikām purīm,
sadbahīnasya lokasya tādāyishye² 'mritadundubhim.
Vārānasīm gamishyāmi gatvā vai Kāsikām purīm,
dharmaḥakram pravartishye lokeshv aprativartitam.

An important passage on the divine sight of the Buddha in Lalita-vistara, p. 439 seq., almost literally occurs in the Sāmaññaphala-Sutta, as has been pointed out by Burnouf³.

These few examples I have chosen will suffice to prove that the material of a Mahāvaipulya Sūtra is partly as old as that of any other sacred book of the Buddhists. The language of the prose part of those Sūtras does not differ from that used in the simple Sūtras of the Northern canon. Should the Sanskrit text prove to be younger than the Pāli text, then we may say that we do not possess the Northern tradition in its original shape. That result, however, affords no criterion for the distinction between the simple Sūtras and the Mahāvaipulya Sūtras, for both are written in the very same Sanskrit, if we except the Gāthās.

It would lead me too far, were I to enter into the heart of the question which of the three idioms, Sanskrit, Pāli, and the so-called Gāthā dialect, was the oldest scriptural language of the Buddhists, and I will therefore confine myself to a few remarks. In the first place it will be granted

¹ The reading aham sadrīsīm of the Calc. ed. is clearly a corrupt reading.

² This word, which spoils the metre, has manifestly replaced an older expression, not unlikely āhañhi, or a similar form of the future tense of āhan (Sansk. āhanishye).

³ Lotus de la bonne Loi, p. 864.

that the same person cannot have uttered any speech or stanza in two languages at the same time, and, further, that he is not likely to have spoken Sanskrit, when expressing himself in prose, and to have had recourse to a mere dialect, when speaking in poetry. One need not suppose that the common and every-day language of the god Brahma and the Buddha was Pâli or Prâkrit, in order to call it an absurdity that those persons would have spoken prose in Sanskrit and poetry in the Gâthâ dialect, such as we find in some passages already quoted and in many others. Nor is it absurd, even if we do not believe that Pâli is the original language of scripture, to contend that the Sanskrit text of the canonical works is at any rate a translation from some dialect. If the Sanskrit text of the Northern Sûtras, in general, were the original one, it would be impossible to account for occasional mistranslations and for the fact that the most palpable dialect forms have been left untouched, whenever the passage by being Sanskritised would have been spoilt. A striking instance is afforded in *Lalita-vistara*, p. 145. There we read that the pronouncing of the letter *t̥ha* of the Indian alphabet is to be brought in connection with the word *t̥hapanîyaprasna*, i.e. a question that should be avoided, set aside, Pâli *t̥hapanîyapañho*. Here the context absolutely opposed itself to the Pâli or Prâkrit *t̥hapanîya* being rendered by the Sanskrit *sthâpanîya*, because the initial syllable of this form could not be made to agree with the letter *t̥ha*. On the same page of the *Lalita-vistara* we also meet with a word *airapatha*¹, the initial syllable of which must needs harmonise with the diphthong *ai*, so that *airapatha* did not admit of being Sanskritised into *âryapatha*. From the occurrence of this *airapatha* I infer that the original text was composed in some kind of Prâkrit, and not in regular Pâli, because the latter has lost both the primary and secondary diphthong *ai*, though it may be asked whether forms such as *kayira* (Sansk. *kârya*), *payirupâsati*

¹ Written *âirapatha*, for the *Vridhi* vowel denotes the sound of *âi* in Sanskrit, at least originally; from the same diphthong being used in the *Asoka* edicts in *thaira* (Sansk. *sthavira*), we must infer that the diphthong was, in the then Prâkrit, sounded *ai*, not *âi*.

(Sansk. paryupāsati), and the like are anything else but instances of inaccurate spelling¹. This much is certain that thaira occurs in the inscriptions of Asoka, and in these the diphthong cannot but have the value of a short a followed by i.

If we eliminate the Sanskrit, there remain two dialects, Pāli and the Gāthā idiom. Which of the two can lay claim to being the original language of the Buddhist scriptures or is the nearest approach to it? Pāli is intelligible in its phonetics, the Gāthās are not. Under ordinary circumstances the comparatively greater regularity of Pāli would tend to favour its claims; the case before us is, however, so peculiar that it is not safe to draw inferences from the state in which the Gāthās have come to us. It seems to me that the verses in the Northern books in general, as well as the prose of the Mahāvastu², have been Sanskritised to a large extent, so that they ought to be restored, as much as possible, to a more primitive form, before a comparison with Pāli can lead to satisfactory results. When we come across such words as hesh *thâd* (Sansk. *adhastâd*), *gunebhih*, &c., we easily perceive that these forms are more primitive than Pāli *hettâ*, *gunehi*; but what warrant have we of such forms being really in use at the time when the Gāthās were composed, if we observe that in a verse, *Lalita-vistara* 53, the syllable *bhih* is reckoned as a short one in the words *gunebhih pratipûna*? In short, in their present state the Gāthās afford no conclusive evidence that the language in which they were composed is older than Pāli.

Whatever may have been the phonetic aspect of the oldest standard dialect of the Buddhists, its vocabulary is unmistakably closely related to that of the *Satapatha-brâhmana*. The coincidences are so striking that the

¹ That is, *kayira* was probably pronounced *kāira*, which cannot be exactly expressed by कैर, because those who were acquainted with the rules of Sanskrit grammar would pronounce this and similar words with the sound of *ai*.

² The able editor of this work, M. Senart, makes the following remarks on its language (p. xii): 'Nous sommes ici en présence d'une langue irrégulière et instable, mélange singulier de formes diverses d'âge et d'origine.'

interval separating the younger parts of the Satapatha and the beginnings of Buddhist literature can hardly be supposed to have been very great. Among those coincidences I cite sarvâvat, a word which as yet has not been discovered in the whole range of Sanskrit literature except Satap. XIV, 7, 1, 10, and in Northern Buddhist writings, as well as in Pâli (sabbâvâ). The ἀπαξ λεγόμενον ekoti Satap. XII, 2, 2, 4 recurs in ekoti-bhâva, Lalita-vistara, p. 147, 8¹; p. 439, 6; Pâli ekodi-bhâva². The expression samîrita in the sense of 'equipped, furnished with' occurs in Satapatha thrice³, in Atharva-veda once, in Saddharma-pundarîka several times, e.g. in *pa ttaghantâsa-mîrita*, chap. xxii. We may add the Prâkritism *iñg* in *samiñgayati*, Brâhad-âraṇyaka VI, 4, 23, the usual form in Buddhist works in Sanskrit, Gâthâ dialect, and Pâli; further *mañku*, Satap. V, 5, 4, 11; *manda* in the compound *naumanda*, Satap. II. 3, 3, 15; cf. *bodhi-manda*. An archaic trait in the stanzas is the expletive use of the particle *u*, e.g. in *teno*, *yeno*, *tasyo*, *adyo*, for *tena*, *yena*, *tasya*, *adya*. Both in prose and poetry⁴ we meet with *no*, sometimes in the sense of Sansk. *no*, which etymologically of course is identical with it, at other times in that of Sansk. *na*. An analogous case is Sansk. *atho*, almost imperceptibly differing from *atha*. Perhaps the most curious of similar forms in the Gâthâs is *ko*, in meaning exactly coinciding with *ka*; this *ko* I take to be the older form of the Mâgadhî *ku* in the Asoka edicts.

From the occurrence of peculiar old words and forms we may draw inferences as to the age of certain compositions in ordinary cases; but it is not safe to apply the same test, if there is sufficient reason to suppose that the work, the date

¹ Ekâbhîbhâva of the Calc. text is a clerical blunder.

² See Childers' Pâli Dict. p. 134, where the Thero Subhûti's etymology *eko u deti* proves that he does not know the origin of the word; nor is it likely that the writer of the Pâli passage cited by Childers knew more, for had he recognised the word, he would have written *ekoti*, because a Prâkrit *d* between two vowels, if answering to a Sanskrit *t*, usually requires a *t* in Pâli.

³ III, 5, 1, 31; VIII, 2, 6; XIV, 1, 3, 31.

⁴ Also in the inscriptions of Asoka.

of which we wish to determine, has been carefully moulded upon time-honoured models. In such a case new words prove a good deal¹, old ones next to nothing. Therefore it would be an abuse of the argument *ex silentio* to infer from the total absence of such new words in our Saddharma-pundarika that the bulk of the Sûtra must date from the earlier period of Buddhism.

I had already occasion to notice that the two versions, the prose and the metrical one, in our Sûtra show here and there material discrepancies. The question arises to which of the two we must award the palm of priority. Repeatedly, both in prose and poetry, the Sûtra is spoken of as consisting of stanzas; e. g. chap. vii, st. 82; chapters x and xxii in the prose portion, several times. As the term of stanza (*gâthâ*), for aught I know, is never used to denote a certain number of syllables, there is a strong presumption that the ancient text consisted of verses, with an admixture of short prose passages serving as introduction or to connect the more solemn poetical pieces. The idea to expand such passages into a regular prose version would especially recommend itself at a period when the poetical dialect began to become obsolete and obscure. Without being a formal commentary, the prose version would yet tend to elucidate the older holy text.

It will not be objected that, because not all chapters in the Saddharma-pundarika have a poetical version added, the original cannot have been a poem. For the chapters containing but one version, viz. xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxv, and xxvi, show decided traces of being later additions; and as to the final chapter, it may be held to be a moderate amplification of a short prose epilogue.

In contending that the original text of our Sûtra was probably, in the main, a work in metrical form, I do not mean to say that the poetical version in all the chapters must be

¹ As e. g. the word *dînâra* in the Asoka Avadâna; the passage on the Greeks Yonâs, in *Assalâyana Sutta* (ed. Pischel), p. 10; cf. the editor's remark, p. 6; the word *karama* for *kalama*, calamus to write with, in *Kâranda-vyûha* (Calc. ed.), p. 69.

considered to be prior to the prose¹. The Gâthâs of the *Saddharma-pundarîka* are nowhere very brilliant, but in some chapters they are so excessively clumsy and mechanically put together that involuntarily we are led to the assumption of their having been made by persons to whom the old dialect was no longer familiar. The stanzas, e. g. in chapters xi and xiv, are abominable in form, and unusually silly; those in chap. xxiv are a pattern of mechanical verse-making, and give the impression as if they were intended rather to stultify than to edify the credulous reader. Now it is a curious fact that in a Chinese preface to the translation of our Sûtra by *Gñânagupta* and *Dharmagupta*, A.D. 601², we meet with the following notice: 'The omission of the Gâthâs in No. 134, chaps. 12 and 25³, have since been filled in by some wise men, whose example I wish to follow⁴.'

Here we have a direct proof that the Gâthâs of some chapters have been added in later times. Had we similar notices concerning all the chapters in which the Gâthâs are of a comparatively modern date, and could we prove that the prose of such chapters belongs to a later period, then the supposition of the ancient text of the *Saddharma-pundarîka* having been in the main a metrical one would seem to lose in strength. For, reasoning by analogy, one might say that just as some later chapters have notoriously been enriched with a metrical version in later times, so the ancient parts also will have gradually received their Gâthâs. Still the fact remains that those chapters in which the metrical portion is wanting clearly belong to a later period, so that it is questionable whether their case is entirely analogous to that of the more ancient part of the whole work.

¹ Isolated stanzas, as in chapters xxii, xxv, and elsewhere, are wholly left out of question.

² Catalogue of the *Tripiṭaka* (Oxford), by Mr. Bunyiu Nanjio; Sûtra *Ṭiṭaka*, col. 45.

³ In the English translation chapters xi and xxiv.

⁴ Another notice in the above-mentioned Catalogue, col. 44, runs thus: 'The portion of prose' (of chap. xxiv) 'was translated by *Kumârâgṛva*, of the latter Tshin dynasty, A.D. 384-417; and that of Gâthâs by *Gñânagupta*, of the Northern Keu dynasty, A.D. 557-589.' So it seems that the Gâthâs have been added, and, not unlikely, been composed, between 417 and 557 A. D.

At present we are far from the ultimate end which critical research has to reach; we are not able to assign to each part of our Sūtra its proper place in the development of Buddhist literature. We may feel that compositions from different times have been collected into a not very harmonious whole; we may even be able to prove that some passages are as decidedly ancient as others are modern, but any attempt to analyse the compound and lay bare its component parts would seem to be premature. Under these circumstances the inquiry after the date of the work resolves itself into the question at what time the book received its present shape.

There exist, as it is well known, various Chinese translations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, or parts of it, the dates of which are well ascertained. The above-mentioned Catalogue by Mr. Bunyiu Nanjio affords some valuable information about the subject, from which I borrow the following particulars¹:

The oldest Chinese translation, known by the title of *Kan-fâ-hwâ-kiñ*, is from *Ku Fâ-hu* (Dharmaraksha), of the Western Tsin dynasty, A.D. 265-316; in 28 chapters².

Equally old is an incomplete translation entitled *Sâ-thân-fan-tho-li-kiñ*, of an unknown author.

Next in time comes the *Miào-fâ-lien-hwâ-kiñ*, by Kumâragīva, of the latter Tshin dynasty, A.D. 384-417³. It agrees with the Tibetan version, and contains 28 chapters. Of one chapter (xxiv in the Nepalese MSS. and the English translation) Kumâragīva translated the prose only; the Gâthâs were rendered by *Gñânagupta*, of the Northern Keu dynasty, A.D. 557-589.

The last translation in order of time, entitled *Thien-phim-miào-fâ-lien-hwâ-kiñ*, is from *Gñânagupta* and *Dharmagupta*, A.D. 601, of the Sui dynasty; in 27 chapters.

We see that the older translations—and, consequently, their originals—counted one chapter more than our MSS.

¹ Sūtra Piṭaka, col. 44 seqq.

² In S. Beal, *The Buddhist Tripitaka*, p. 14, the name of the author *Ku Fâ-hu* (Chu-fâ-hu) is identified with *Dharmagupta*.

³ Cf. Beal, *Buddhist Tripitaka*, p. 15.

The difference, however, does not affect the contents of the whole, because the matter divided over chapters 11 and 12 of the older translations is contained in chap. xi of our texts and the latest Chinese version. The order of the chapters is the same in all the texts, both original and translated, up to chap. xx (=21 older division); the discrepancies first begin at chap. xxi, on *Dhâranîs*. The subjoined comparative table, to begin with the chapter on *Dhâranîs*, exhibits the order of the last seven chapters in the various texts. The first column refers to the Nepalese MSS. and the Chinese translation by *Gñânagupta* and *Dharmagupta*; the second to the oldest Chinese translation; the third to that of *Kumârâgîva*.

1	4	5
2	1	2
3	2	3
4	3	4
5	5	6
6	6	7
7	7	1

A glance at this table will suffice to convince us that chapters xxi-xxvi (1-6) are of later growth, if we bear in mind that the order of the chapters down to the *Dhâranîs* is the same in all sources. This result is quite in harmony with what we would have guessed upon internal grounds. The last chapter, entitled *Dharmaparyâya*, must, from its very nature, have been the close, the epilogue of the whole. In the Chinese translation of *Kumârâgîva* it occurs, as the table shows, immediately after chap. xx, by itself a clear indication that xxi-xxvi are later additions. It is somewhat strange that in the older translation of *Ku Fâ-hu* the *Dharmaparyâya* has already taken its place after the additional matter, but this may be explained on the supposition that *Kumârâgîva*, though living in a later time, made use of ancient manuscripts¹. However that

¹ The preface to the Chinese translation of *Gñânagupta* and *Dharmagupta* says: 'The translations of *Ku Fâ-hu* and *Kumârâgîva* are most probably made from two different texts.'

may be, I think that the following facts may be held to be established, both from internal and external evidence : 1. The more ancient text of the Saddharma-pundarīka contained 21 chapters and an epilogue, i.e. the matter of chaps. i-xx and of chap. xxvii; 2. The later additions, excepting probably some verses, had been connected with the work, in the way of Parisiṣṭas or Addenda, about 250 A.D. or earlier. As the book, along with the Parisiṣṭas, already existed some time before 250 A.D., we may safely conclude that the more ancient text in 21 chapters, the epilogue included, dates some centuries earlier. Greater precision is for the present impossible.

We know that a commentary on the Saddharma-pundarīka was composed by Vasubandhu¹. The date of that work, not yet recovered, it seems, must fall between 550 and 600 A.D., or at least not much earlier, for Vasubandhu's pupil Guṇaprabha became the Guru of the famous Śrī-Harsha, alias Śilāditya, king of Kanauj, the friend of Hiouen Tshang². The latter often mentions Vasubandhu and some of that great doctor's writings, as well as Guṇaprabha³. As both worthies at the time of Hiouen Tshang's visiting India had already departed this life, and Vasubandhu must have been at least one generation older than Guṇaprabha, we cannot be far amiss in assigning to Vasubandhu's commentary the date above specified.

It appears from the above-mentioned preface to the Chinese translation of A.D. 601, that the text-differences in the MSS. current in those days were more important than such as we observe in the Nepalese MSS. from 1000 A.D. downward, with which the Tibetan closely agree. The Chinese preface is so interesting that it is worth while to

¹ Wassiljew, Buddhismus, p. 222. This was written before the publication of my Cambridge Lectures, 'India, what can it teach us?' and affords valuable, because independent, confirmation of the chronological system contained in Note G, 'Renaissance of Sanskrit Literature,' pp. 281-366.—The Editor, F. M. M.

² Wassiljew, Buddhismus, p. 78; cf. pp. 64 and 219; Tāranātha, Geschichte des Buddhismus (transl. Schiefner), p. 126.

³ See especially Histoire de la vie de Hiouen Tshang, pp. 83, 93, 97, 114; 106.

copy a passage from it as quoted in the Catalogue of the Tripitaka¹:

'The translations of *Ku Fâ-hu*, No. 138, and *Kumâragîva*, No. 134, are most probably made from two different texts. In the repository of the Canon, I (the author of the preface) have seen two texts (or copies of the text, of the *Saddharma-pundarîka*); one is written on the palm leaves, and the other in the letters of *Kwei-tsz'*, or *Kharakar*, *Kumâragîva*'s maternal country. The former text exactly agrees with No. 138, and the latter with No. 134. No. 138 omits only the *Gâthâs* of the *Samantamukha-parivarta*, chap. 24. But No. 134 omits half of the *Ôshadhi-parivarta*, chap. 5, the beginning of the *Pañkabhikshusata-vyâkarana-parivarta*, chap. 8, and that of the *Saddharmabhâṣaka-parivarta*, chap. 10, and the *Gâthâs* of the *Devadatta-parivarta*, chap. 12², and those of the *Samantamukha-parivarta*, chap. 25. Moreover, No. 134 puts the *Dharmaparyâya-parivarta* (the last chapter of the *Sûtra*) before the *Bhaishagya-râga-parivarta*, chap. 23. Nos. 138 and 134 both place the *Dhâranî-parivarta* next to the *Samantamukha-parivarta*, chaps. 24 and 25 respectively. Beside these, there are minor differences between the text and translation. The omission of the *Gâthâs* in No. 134, chaps. 12 and 25, have since been filled in by some wise men, whose example I wish to follow. In the first year of the *Zan-sheu* period, A.D. 601, I, together with *Gñâna-gupta* and *Dharmagupta*, have examined the palm-leaf text, at the request of a *Sramana*, *Shân-hhiñ*, and found that the beginning of two chapters, 8th and 10th, are also wanting in the text (though No. 138 contains them). Nevertheless we have increased a half of the 5th chapter, and put the 12th chapter into the 11th, and restored the *Dhâranî-parivarta* and *Dharmaparyâya-parivarta* to their proper order, as chaps. 21 and 27. There are also some words and passages which have been altered (while the greater

¹ *Sûtra Pitaka*, col. 45.

² In the Nepalese MSS. and the European translations the latter part of chap. xi.

part of No. 134 is retained). The reader is requested not to have any suspicion about these differences.'

According to the opinion of an eminent Chinese scholar, the late Stanislas Julien, the translation of Kumâragîva widely differs from Burnouf's. He gives utterance to that opinion in a letter dated June 12, 1866, and addressed to Professor Max Müller, to whose obliging kindness it is due that I am able to publish a specimen of Kumâragîva's version rendered into French by Stanislas Julien. The fragment answers to the stanzas 1-22 of chap. iii. As it is too long to be inserted here, I give it hereafter on page xl.

On comparing the fragment with the corresponding passages in Burnouf's French translation and the English version in this volume, the reader cannot fail to perceive that the discrepancies between the two European versions are fewer and of less consequence than between each of them and Kumâragîva's work. It is hardly to be supposed that the text used by Kumâragîva can have differed so much from ours, and it seems far more probable that he has taken the liberty, for clearness sake, to modify the construction of the verses, a literal rendering whereof, it must be owned, is impossible in any language. It is a pity that Stanislas Julien has chosen for his specimen a fragment exclusively consisting of Gâthâs. A page in prose would have been far more useful as a test of the accuracy of the Chinese version.

Proceeding to treat of the contents of our Sûtra, I begin by quoting the passage where Burnouf, in his usual masterly way, describes the general character of the book and the prominent features of the central figure in it. The illustrious French scholar writes¹:

'Là, comme dans les Sûtras simples, c'est Çâkyâ qui est le plus important, le premier des êtres ; et quoique l'imagination du compilateur l'ait doué de toutes les perfections de science et de vertu admises chez les Buddhistes ; quoique Çâkyâ revête déjà un caractère mythologique, quand il

¹ Introduction, p. 119.

déclare qu'il y a longtemps qu'il remplit les devoirs d'un Buddha, et qu'il doit les remplir longtemps encore, malgré sa mort prochaine, laquelle ne détruit pas son éternité; quoiqu'enfin on le représente créant de son corps des Buddhas qui sont comme les images et les reproductions idéales de sa personne mortelle, nulle part Çâkyamuni n'est nommé Dieu; nulle part il ne reçoit le titre d'Âdibuddha.¹

To this I have nothing to object, only something to add. It is perfectly true that Sâkyas does not receive the simple title of Deva; why? Because that title is far too poor for so exalted a personage who is the Devâtideva, the paramount god of gods. So he is called in the Lotus, chap. vii, st. 31¹, and innumerable times in the whole range of Buddhist literature, both in Pâli and Sanskrit². It is further undeniable that the title of Âdibuddha does not occur in the Lotus, but it is intimated that Sâkyas is identical with Âdibuddha in the words: 'From the very beginning (âdita eva) have I roused, brought to maturity, fully developed them (the innumerable Bodhisattvas) to be fit for their Bodhisattva position³.' It is only by accommodation that he is called Âdibuddha, he properly being anâdi, i.e. existing from eternity, having no beginning. The Buddha most solemnly declares (chap. xv) that he reached Bodhi an immense time ago, not as people fancy, first at Gayâ. From the whole manner in which Sâkyas speaks of his existence in former times, it is perfectly clear that the author wished to convey the meaning that the Lord had existed from eternity, or, what comes to the same, from the very beginning, from time immemorial, &c.

Sâkyas has not only lived an infinite number of Æons in the past, he is to live for ever. Common people fancy that he enters Nirvâna, but in reality he only makes a show of Nirvâna out of regard for the weakness of men. He, the

¹ Burnouf's rendering is 'Déva supérieur aux Dévas.'

² Less frequent than devâtideva is the synonymous devâdhideva, e.g. Lalita-vistara, p. 131; essentially the same is the term sarvadevottama, the highest of all gods, ib. p. 144.

³ See chap. xiv, p. 295.

Father of the world¹, the Self-born One, the Chief and Saviour² of creatures, produces a semblance of Nirvāna, whenever he sees them given to error and folly³. In reality his being is not subject to complete Nirvāna; it is only by a skilful device that he makes a show of it; and repeatedly he appears in the world of the living, though his real abode is on the summit of the *Gṛidhrakūta*⁴. All this is, in other words, the teaching of Nārāyana in Bhagavad-gītā IV, 6 seqq.:

*Ago 'pi sann avyayātmā bhūtānām īsvaro 'pi san,
prakṛitim svām adhiśthāya sambhavāmy ātmamāyayā.
yadā-yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati, Bhārata,
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛigāmy aham.
paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināsāya ka dushkrītām,
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge-yuge.*

The Buddha is anthropomorphic, of course; what god is not? The Lotus, far from giving prominence to the unavoidable human traits, endeavours as much as possible to represent the Lord and his audience as superhuman beings. In chap. xiv there is a great pause, as in a drama, of no less than fifty intermediate kalpas, during which Sākya-muni and all his hearers keep silence⁵. A second pause of 1000, or according to a various reading, 100,000 years is held in chap. xx. Now it is difficult to conceive that any author, wilfully and ostentatiously, would mention such traits if he wished to impress the reader with the notion that the narrative refers to human beings.

It will not be necessary to multiply examples. There is, to my comprehension, not the slightest doubt that the

¹ Cf. *Kṛishna* declaring of himself in Bhagavad-gītā IX, 17: *Pitāham gagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ*. Cf. XI, 43. The significant title of Pitāmaha is given to Buddha in an inscription found at Dooriya (Bithā); Cunningham, *Archæol. Survey*, vol. iii, pl. xviii; cf. p. 48.

² Like Nārāyana in Bhagavad-gītā XII, 7: *Teshām aham samuddhartā-mṛityusamsārasāgarāt*.

³ Chap. xv. st. 21.

⁴ Chap. xv, st. 6, 10.

⁵ One intermediate kalpa is, in the system, equal to 8 yugas. As 4 yugas number 4,320,000 years, it follows that the pause lasted 432 millions of years. Esoterically, kalpa has certainly denoted a short interval of time, but even if we take the 'intermediate kalpa' to mean, in reality, a lapse of time equal to a few hours, the pause would not refer to an historical event.

Saddharma-puṇḍarīka intends to represent Sākya as the supreme being, as the god of gods, almighty and all-wise. But what have we to understand by the words 'god' and 'god of gods?' that is the question. To find the answer let us recall to memory the theosophic notions prevailing in ancient India at certain periods.

In general it may be said that the Upanishads recognise two supreme beings, which in a mystical way are somehow identified; one is the great illuminator of the macrocosm, and is sometimes called the Sun, at other times Ether; the other, the enlightener of the microcosm, is Mind or Reason¹. As soon as the Sun ceased to be considered an animate being or to be represented as such, he might continue, for worship's sake, honoris causâ, to be called the highest god; the really remaining deity was Reason, poetically termed the inward light. This idea is expressed by Nīlakaṇṭha in his commentary on Bhagavad-gītâ V, 14, in the following terms: Prabhūḥ kīdātmā sūrya ivāsmadā-dīnām prakāśakaḥ, the Lord (is) the intelligent Self that like a sun is the illuminator of ourselves and others². Now the same author, in his notes on Bhagavad-gītâ VI, 30, distinctly states that our inward consciousness, or as he puts it, the pratyagâtman, the individual Self, otherwise called gīva, is Nârâyana, i.e. the supreme being. At IX, 28 he paraphrases Nârâyana by sarveshâm pratyagâtman, the individual consciousness of all (sentient beings); at XII, 14 he identifies Nârâyana with nirguṇam brahma. Just as here and there Nârâyana is represented as clad in all the glory and majesty of a sovereign, as the illuminator, the vivifier of the world, in one word as the sun, so we find Sākya-muni invested with all the grandeur and all the resources of a ruler of nature. Philosophically, both Nârâyana and his counterpart Sākya-muni are puruṣottama, paramâtman, the highest brahman, Mind. Sākya-muni

¹ See e. g. *Khândogya-upanishad* III, 18 and 19; cf. *Bhagavad-gītâ* XV, 12.

² Cf. *Bhagavad-gītâ* XIII, 33: yathâ prakāśayaty ekaḥ kṛtsnam lokam imam raviḥ, kshetram kshetrî tathâ kṛtsnam prakāśayati, Bhârata. The kshetra here is the body, the kshetrin is Mind, Reason, âtman. Cf. *Ṣaṅkara on Khândogya-upanishad*, l. c.

is, esoterically, the very same muni, the beholder of good and evil, the *pun̄yapāpekshitā* muni that is spoken of in Manu VIII, 91. It is acknowledged in Bhagavad-gītā IX, 14 seqq. that the supreme being may be conceived and respected in different ways according to the degree of intelligence of creatures. Some pay their worship by leading a virtuous life, others by pious devotion, others by contemplation, others by confessing a strictly monistic philosophy¹, others by acknowledging a personal god². The Lord in the Saddharma-pun̄darīka admits of being viewed in all these various aspects. Whether the Buddha-theory, such as we find it developed in the Sūtra, not in plain words, indeed, but by circumlocutions and ambiguities, should be called atheistic or not, is a matter of comparatively slight importance, about which opinions may differ. This much, however, may be asserted, that the Lotus and the Bhagavad-gītā are, in this respect, exactly on a par.

The conclusion arrived at is that the Sākyamuni of the Lotus is an ideal, a personification, and not a person. Traits borrowed, or rather surviving, from an older cosmological mythology, and traces of ancient nature-worship abound both in the Lotus and the Bhagavad-gītā, but in the highest sense of the word, *paramārthataḥ*, the Puruṣhotama in both is the centre of mental life. It is just possible that the ancient doctors of the Mahāyāna have believed that such an ideal once walked in the flesh here on earth, but the impression left by the spirit and the letter of the whole work does not favour that supposition. In later times fervent adherents of the Mahāyāna really held that belief, as we know from the example of the pious Hiouen Thsang, who was evidently as earnest in his belief that the Lord once trod the soil of India as he was convinced of Mañgusrī, Maitreya, and Avalokitesvara existing as animated beings. Whether the system of the Lotus can be said to agree with what is supposed to be 'genuine' Bud-

¹ The followers of the Upanishads, Aupanishadas, who say, 'Myself am God,' or as Nīlakantha puts it, 'Myself am the Lord Vāsudeva.'

² According to Nīlakantha the common people, who think, 'He, the Lord, is my Master.'

dhism, it is not here the place to discuss. So far as the Northern Church is concerned, the book must be acknowledged as the very cream of orthodoxy; it is the last, the supreme, the most sublime of the Sûtras exposed by the Lord; it is, so to say, the *siromani*, the crown jewel, of all Sûtras¹.

The contents of the separate chapters into which the Sûtra is divided may be described, summarily, as follows:

1. Prologue.

2. Awakening of the Lord from his mystic trance; display of his transcendent skilfulness, proved by the apparent trinity of vehicles, whereas in reality there is but one vehicle.

3. Prophecy of the Lord regarding the future destiny of Sâriputra, his eldest son. Second turn of the wheel of the law on that occasion, with incidental commemoration of the first turn near Benares. Parable of the burning house, to exemplify the skill of the good father in saving his children from the burning pains of mundane existence.

4. Another parable, exemplifying the skill of the wise father in leading a child that has gone astray and lost all self-respect back to a feeling of his innate nobility and to happiness.

5. Parable of the plants and the rain, to exemplify the impartiality and equal care of the Lord for all creatures². Parable of the blind man, to intimate that the phenomena have but an apparent reality, and that the ultimate goal of all endeavours must be to reach all-knowingness, which in fact is identical with complete nescience.

6. Sundry predictions as proofs of the power of the Sugata to look into the future.

7. He has an equal knowledge of the remotest past; his remembrance of the turning of the wheel by the Tathâgata Mahâbhigñâgñânâbhîhû. Edifying history of the sixteen sons of the said Tathâgata.

¹ Chap. xiii, st. 53 seq.

² Cf. Bhagavad-gîtâ IX, 29, where Nârâyana declares: 'I am equal towards all creatures, none is hateful to me, none beloved;' samo 'ham sarvabhûteshu, na me dveshyo 'sti na priyah.

8. Prophecy regarding five hundred Arhats.

9. Prophecy concerning Ānanda, Rāhula, and the two thousand monks.

10. The Lord teaches how pious preachers of the law, who will come in after-times, ought to be duly honoured, and promises that he will always protect the ministers of religion.

11. Display of the miraculous power of Sākyamuni shown in the appearance of a Stûpa, which, being opened by him, discloses to sight the frame of the expired Tathâgata Pra-bhûtaratna, who is desirous of hearing the exposition of the Lotus of the True Law. How Sākyamuni in a former birth strove to acquire the Lotus. His great obligations to Deva-datta. Episode of the wise daughter of the Ocean and her change of sex.

12. Prediction to Gautamî, Yasodharâ, and the nuns in their train. Promise of the host of disciples and Bodhisattvas to take up the difficult task of preaching the holy word in days to come, after the Lord's Nirvâna.

13. Vocation of the ministers of religion, and practical rules for their conduct in and out of society. Parable of the king who rewards his valiant warriors; in the same manner the Buddha will reward those who struggle for his sake, by bestowing upon them all kinds of favours, at last the most valuable of his boons—eternal rest.

14. Splendid phantasmagory of innumerable Bodhisattvas evoked by the creative power of the Lord. Long pause, during which the Tathâgata and the four classes of hearers are silent. Perplexity of Maitreya on hearing that the innumerable Bodhisattvas have all been the pupils of the Lord.

15. The Buddha explains the fact by revealing the immense duration of his lifetime, in the past and the future.

16. Meritoriousness of the belief in the immense duration of the Tathâgatas and all those who have once become Buddhas.

17. The Lord details the great merit attending a ready acceptance of the preaching of the law.

18. Exposition of the advantages, worldly and spiritual, enjoyed by the ministers of religion.

19. Story of Sadáparibhûta, exemplifying the superiority of simple-mindedness and pure-heartedness to worldly wisdom and scepticism.

20. Grand show exhibited by the two Tathâgatas Sâkyamuni and Prabhûtaratna conjointly¹. Pause after the performance. After the pause a great stir amongst gods, celestial and infernal beings, men, &c.² The Tathâgata extols the Sûtra of the Lotus in which 'all Buddha-laws are succinctly taught,' as well as the keepers of this most eminent of Sûtras.

Immediately after this chapter may have followed, in the oldest version, the epilogue entitled 'Period of the Law;' the reasons for this opinion have been already stated above. The supposed additional chapters contain the following topics, briefly indicated :

21. Efficacy of talismanic spells (Dhâraⁿis).

22. Self-sacrifice of the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadaršana, otherwise called Bhaishagyarâga. Glorification of the Lotus as the most eminent of Sûtras.

23. Visit of the Bodhisattva Gadgadasvara to the Saha-world. Extraordinary qualities and achievements of this worthy, incidentally narrated by the Tathâgata. Return of the Bodhisattva to whence he came.

24. Grandeur and ubiquitousness of Avalokitesvara.

25. Wonderful and edifying story of the conversion of the king Subhavyûha through the instrumentality of his two sons Vimalagarbha and Vimalanetra, al. Bhaishagyarâga and Bhaishagyasamudgata.

26. The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra charges himself with the task of being a protector to the preachers of religion in after-times after the Lord's Nirvâna³.

¹ Both stretch their flaming tongues as far as the Brahma-world. In the Bhagavad-gîtâ XI, 30 it is said of Nârâyana, when at the request of Arjuna he shows himself in his full grandeur: *lelihyase grasamâna^k samantâl lokân samagrân vadanair gvaladbhi^k, tegobhir âpûrya gagat samagram bhâsas tavo-grâ^k prapatanti, Vishno !*

² Cf. Bhagavad-gîtâ XI, 15.

³ There is some incongruity between this chapter and chapter x, because

This summary, however meagre, will be sufficient to show that there is no lack of variety in our Sûtra. We may, indeed, be satisfied that the compilers of it intended giving an exposition of the principal truths of their religion in general, and of the peculiar tenets of their own system¹ in particular, the whole with anxious care arranged in such a form that the Sûtra admitted of an exoterical and esoterical interpretation. It contains a revelation of the state of things in the present, as well as in the past and the future, a revelation derived from a virtually eternal source, so that the doctrine taught in it must be deemed valid not only for a certain spiritual brotherhood or church, but for the human race at large. The highest authority to whom the doctrine is referred, is not a certain individual having lived a short span of time somewhere in India, but the sublime being who has his constant abode on the *Grîdhrakûta*, i.e. he who is the terminology of other Indian creeds is called *Kûtastha*.

As a general rule it may be said that in such works of ancient Indian literature as are anonymous, we must distinguish between the authority and the author. In the Lotus we meet after the invocation in some MSS. the following distich :

Vaipulyasûtrarâgam paramârthanayâvatâranirdesam |

Saddharmapundarikam sattvâya mahâpatham vakshye ||

I.e. 'I shall proclaim the king of the Vaipulya-sûtras, that teacheth how one arrives at the (right) method of attaining the highest truth ; the Saddharma-pundarîka, the great road (leading) to substantiality (being in abstracto).' The person here speaking is not the Buddha, who is neither the author nor the writer of the work. Have we then to ascribe the distich to one of the ancient copyists? Burnouf² decidedly thinks so, and his opinion is corroborated by the fact that the verses do not occur in all MSS. I must con-

in the latter it is the Lord himself who promises to be in future the protector of the preachers.

¹ I.e. of the Mahâyâna, which according to Târanâtha, *Geschichte des Buddhismus*, p. 274, stands above the division of the Baudddhas into various schools.

² Lotus, p. 285.

fess that I am not so sure of it. As the Sûtra, like other compositions of the kind, begins with the solemn 'Thus have I heard, &c.,' it is at least possible that the distich belongs to the compiler. I am not aware that the scribes were in the habit of using such expressions as *vaḥ* or synonymous terms instead of *likh*, to write; and as we find in the Mahāvastu similar futures as *vakshye*, viz. *udārayishyāmi* and *upavarṇayishyāmi*¹, where they can hardly be imputed to the scribe, it is safer to leave the question, whether the opening distich of the Lotus is the work of a compiler or of a copyist, undecided, the more so because the parallel phrase *athâto—vyâkhyâsyâmaḥ*, frequently found immediately after the invocation, in non-Buddhistic writings, must be held to refer to the author or authors, compilers.

The Lotus being one of the standard works of the Mahâyâna, the study of it cannot but be useful for the right appreciation of that remarkable system. A perusal of the book will convince the reader that a statement of Professor Wassiljew's² can only be accepted with some restrictions, when this scholar, so profoundly versed in the history and development of Northern Buddhism, says that the Buddha of the Mahâyâna is 'neither the creator nor the ruler of the world; he remains the same cold, indifferent egoist, absorbed in Nothingness.' The Tathâgata of the Lotus is passionless, indeed, but that does not involve his being an egoist. In general it may be said that the spirit of the Mahâyâna is more universal, its ideal less monastical than the Hīnayâna's. According to Professor Rhys Davids we must not seek the superior vital power which enabled the Great Vehicle to outlive the earlier teaching in certain metaphysical subtleties, but in the idea of a desire to save all living creatures; 'the idea,' to quote his own words³, 'as summarised in the theory of Bodisatship, is the key-note of the later school, just as Arahatsip is the key-note of

¹ Mahāvastu (ed. Senart), p. 1, with the remarks of the editor, and p. 9.

² In his Buddhismus, p. 126.

³ In Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 254.

early Buddhism.' The Mahâyâna doctors said in effect : 'We grant you all you say about the bliss of attaining Nirvâna in this life¹. But it produces advantage only to yourselves; and according to your own theory there will be a necessity for Buddhas in the future as much as there has been for Buddhas in the past. Greater, better, nobler then, than the attainment of Arahatsip must be the attainment of Bodhisattship from a desire to save all living creatures in the ages that will come.' The teaching of the Lotus, however, is different, and comes to this, that every one should try to become a Buddha. It admits that from a practical point of view one may distinguish three means, so-called Vehicles, yânas, to attain the summum bonum, Nirvâna, although in a higher sense there is only one Vehicle. These means are, in plain language, piety, philosophy or rather Yogism, and striving for the enlightenment and weal of our fellow-creatures; these means are designated by the terms of Vehicle of (obedient) hearers or disciples, of Pratyekabuddhas, and of Bodhisattvas. Higher than piety is true and self-acquired knowledge of the eternal laws; higher than knowledge is devoting oneself to the spiritual weal of others². The higher unity embracing the three separate Vehicles is the Buddha-vehicle.

The title of Bodhisattva is not always used in the same acceptation. Apart from a broad distinction we can draw

¹ It may be observed that there is nothing peculiarly Buddhistic in the searching for Nirvâna in this life, except in the sound of the word. It is exactly the same as what other Indian enthusiasts or mystics called Gīvanmukti, the aim of Yogins in the fourth degree (answering to the Arhats of the Buddhists) and of the Brâhmins or Dvīgas in the fourth Āsrama.

² See chap. iii, p. 80. Something similar in Bhagavad-gītā XII, 12 : sreyo hi gñānam abhyāsāg gñānād dhyānam visishyate, dhyānāt karmaphalatyāgas tyāgāt khāntir antaram; and IV, 5 : labhante brahmanirvānam rishayah kshī-makalmashāh, khīnnavaidhā yatātmānā sarvabhūtahite ratāh. Neither in these passages of the Bhagavad-gītā nor in the three Vehicles is there anything new; abhyāsa, study, denotes the period of one's studying under a master, the Brahma-kāriship, which the Lotus calls the Vehicle of Disciples; the period of dhyāna, alias the Vehicle of Pratyekabuddhas, coincides with the third Āsrama, that of Vānaprastha; the tyāga, alias Bodhisattvaship, is virtually the same with the life of a Sannyāsin, Yati, or Mukta. Gñāna characterises the second Āsrama; in the Lotus it is merged in or combined with dhyāna.

between human and superhuman Bodhisattvas¹—the latter are here left out of account—we find sometimes the word applied to those persons who in the passage of our Sûtra alluded to are styled Srāvakas, hearers, learners. This appears to be the case at least in Nepâl, as we know from the following passage²: ‘The Buddha is the adept in the wisdom of Buddhism (Bodhijnána), whose first duty, so long as he remains on earth, is to communicate his wisdom to those who are willing to receive it. These willing learners are the “Bodhisattvas,” so called from their hearts being inclined to the wisdom of Buddhism, and “Sanghas,” from their companionship with one another, and with their Buddha or teacher, in the viháras or cœnobitical establishments. The Bodhisattva or Sangha continues to be such until he has surmounted the very last grade of that vast and laborious ascent by which he is instructed that he can “scale the heavens,” and pluck immortal wisdom from its resplendent source: which achievement performed, he becomes a Buddha, that is, an Omniscient Being.’

Here the Bodhisattvas are plainly distinguished from the cœnobitical monks; they are so likewise in the Lotus³, in which we find them also in the function of learned or wise men (*Pandītas*), of preachers or ministers of religion. Wassiljew l.c. remarks about the Bodhisattva—the terrestrial one of course—that ‘from one side, he seems to be the substitute of the ancient Bhikshu;’ from which we ought not to infer that the mendicant monks, as such, ceased to exist, for that is notoriously not the case, but that the Bodhisattvas were charged with the office of preaching. They are persons who deserve to be honoured both by mendicant monks and lay devotees⁴, and formed, it would seem, a kind of learned clergy, not to be confounded, however, with the modern Vagra-Ātāryas or married clergymen in Nepâl. There is reason to suppose that one of the

¹ Cf. Wassiljew, *Buddhismus*, p. 124.

² B. H. Hodgson, *Essays*, p. 62. Cf. Stanislas Julien, *Voyages des Pèlerins bouddhistes*, II, p. 436 note.

³ See especially the whole of chapter x.

⁴ Lotus, chap. x, st. 27 seq.

honorific titles given to the preachers or interpreters of the law was 'wise' or 'learned man,' *Pandīta*, for the word is so often applied to them that it looks more like a title than a common epithet¹. Tāranātha knows *Pandīta* to be a title², and considers it to be the equivalent of the older Mahābhādanta; he distinguishes 'Bodhisattvas' from 'common *Pandītas*' and 'Arhats.' How does this agree with the data in the Lotus? As it has been intimated in a foregoing note, the three Vehicles are imitations of three Āsramas or stages in the model life of an Ārya, in the first place of a Brāhman. The stages are that of a student, of a hermit living in the forest, and of a Sannyāsin, Yati, or Mukta, who has wholly given up the world. The second stage, that of a householder, does not exist, of course, for those who vow themselves to a monastic life. Our Sūtra does not prescribe that the three stages must be gone through by the same persons, no more than the Bhagavad-gītā l.c. requires that one should pass the stages of study, knowledge, and meditation before resolving upon complete renunciation (tyāga); what follows from the context is only this, that the Vehicle of Bodhisattvas, alias those who strive for the weal of all creatures, is superior to the two preceding Vehicles. The Vehicle of the Bodhisattvas being the loftiest of the three, they themselves must be considered as occupying the highest rank. Now Tāranātha places the Arhats above them, and with the Nepalese also the first class of the monastic order is that of Arhat³. The question is, how are we to judge of the relation between Arhats and Bodhisattvas in the Lotus? As far as I am able to see, the compiler⁴ of the Sūtra describes facts, or supposed facts, which he knew from oral or literary tradition, as having occurred in the past, whereas the actual state of things in his own time and shortly before is represented as that of the future. His Arhats are sages of the past, canonized saints; his human Bodhisattvas are sages,

¹ E. g. Lotus, chap. x, st. 4, cf. 6; 23, 33; xiii, 13, 16, 24, 26, 30, 32, 39, 44.

² Geschichte des Buddhismus, p. 60.

³ Hodgson, Essays, p. 52; cf. p. 30.

⁴ The reader should not lay stress upon this singular.

wise men of the present, most reverend worthies who should live a saintly life and generally do so, but who, however sanctimonious, are not acknowledged saints. Of an antagonism between Arhats and Bodhisattvas there is no trace in the book; the Arhats being dead, they cannot be active; the Bodhisattvas as living persons, can¹. In a certain respect, then, the remark of Professor Rhys Davids holds good; the Bodhisattvas represent the ideal of spiritual activity, the Arhats of inactivity. It must be admitted that the Lotus, as a whole, breathes a less monastic and ascetic² spirit; it does not go the length to speak of ascetism and mortification in such scornful terms as the Bhagavad-gîtâ³ does, but at the same time it never extols it. There are in the book many indications that the art of preaching was made much of and highly developed, and it may be supposed that a greater proficiency in hermeneutics combined with superior mental activity has enabled the Mahâyâna to supplant its rival, the Hînayâna, and to extend its spiritual conquests once from the snows of Siberia to the luxuriant islands of the Indian Archipelago.

After having touched upon such points in the text of the Saddharma-pundarîka as seemed to require more special notice, it behoves me to say a few words about the translation and its resources. In the first place, I must declare that I cannot speak in too warm terms of the benefit I have derived from the French translation by the illustrious Burnouf. I have taken that work throughout for my model, without having been able to reach its excellency. The material discrepancies between his translation are partly due to my having followed other MSS., partly to another interpretation, especially of frequently corrupt and difficult Gâthâs. If some reader not acquainted

¹ Something of contempt for the Arhats is shown in the story communicated by Hiouen Thsang in *Voyages des Pèlerins bouddhistes*, II, p. 176, where the editor inadvertently writes Vasubandhu instead of Vasumitra; his index affords the means of correcting the mistake; cf. Wassiljew in *Târanâtha*, p. 298.

² See chap. xiii, 28, where the eighth commandment of the Dasasîla, forbidding the use of ointment, is slighted.

³ See there xvii, 5 seqq., and cf. 14 seqq., where we are taught what the true tapas should be.

with the peculiar difficulties of those Gâthâs should wonder at the occurrence of numerous discrepancies, I would repeat the words of the preface to the Chinese version from A.D. 601, and request him 'not to have any suspicion about these differences.' Let him compare the fragment from Kumâragîva's rendering on page xl with the corresponding passages in the French and English translations, and he will observe that the difference between the work of the learned Buddhist of the fourth century and the two European versions is far more considerable than between the latter.

The base of my translation has been an old manuscript on palm leaves, belonging to Dr. D. Wright's collection, in the University Library of Cambridge. 'The manuscript is dated Newar, era 159 (= A.D. 1039), and was written in the reign of the king Kâmadeva (?), in the bright half of the month Vaisâkha, on a Thursday¹. It is one of the most ancient Sanskrit MSS. existing in Europe, and therefore I thought that it was advisable to follow its readings as much as possible, except in such passages as were evidently corrupt. A second MS., unfortunately incomplete, from the same collection, is of unknown date, since the latter part of the codex is lost; from the form of the characters it may be inferred that it is not much more modern than the other codex². The difference between both is not very great; yet there can be no doubt that the second MS. belongs to another family. The *varietas lectionis* is strikingly similar in kind to what we find in the different texts of the *Vagrakkhedikâ*, edited by Professor Max Müller.

The former manuscript has much in common with the London codices, from which Burnouf in the notes on his translation has derived numerous various readings; it stands farther off from the Paris MS. that has formed the base of Burnouf's version, but not so far as the second

¹ Samvat 159 Vaisâkhasukle (illegible the Tithi) Gurudine, Kâmadevasya vigayarâgye likhitam iti. There seem to be wanting two syllables before kâma.

² The two Cambridge MSS. are marked Add. 1682 and 1683.

Cambridge MS., which shows the greatest number of peculiar readings. The text of chapter iv in Professor Foucaux's edition of the *Parabole de l'enfant égaré* is comparatively modern and bad. In general it may be said that all the known copies of the *Saddharma-pundarika* are written with a want of care little in harmony with the holy character of the book.

Before closing this preface I beg to offer my sincere thanks to Professors William Wright and E. B. Cowell, at Cambridge, for the generous way in which they have enabled me to use the MSS. I wanted for my translation. My thanks are due also to the Council of Cambridge University and Mr. H. Bradshaw, for their readily complying with my wishes. To Professor Max Müller I owe a debt of gratitude for his kindly assisting me in my task in more than one respect, a debt which I am glad here openly to acknowledge.

H. KERN.

LEIDEN.
