

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA¹

RYOJIN SOGA

I

It was in the sixth century that Buddhism came into Japan. Since then it has undergone gradual modifications, adapting itself to the particular historical and social situations in which it found itself. It went through a process of developing into many schools and sects finally to become types of faith characteristically Japanese. Of all schools and sects, some are now to be counted among the past cultural assets of Japan, having discharged their respective missions as living religions. On the other hand, however, there are those schools that still now continue to be relevant to modern people as sources of religious inspiration. These schools include the Rinzai School of Zen Buddhism first introduced by Eisai (1141-1215 A. D.), the Soto School of Zen Buddhism initiated by Dogen (1200-1253 A. D.), the Jodo School of Pure Land Buddhism founded by Honen (1133-1212 A. D.), the Jodo Shin School of Pure Land Buddhism started by Shinran (1173-1262 A. D.), and the Nichiren School initiated by Nichiren (1222-1282 A. D.) together with its sub-schools which have now considerable influence over the present-day society. The above-mentioned schools were all founded in the Kamakura Period (1192-1333 A. D.). It may be said that, above all, Japanese Zen Buddhism is now well known all over the world, mainly due to the voluminous writings of Dr. D. T. Suzuki. It is to be regretted, however, that the nature of Pure Land Buddhism as clarified by both Honen and Shinran is not yet known so widely or so rightly as Zen Buddhism.

¹ This article is reconstructed and adapted by Emyo Ito and Shojun Bando from Prof. Soga's writings in Japanese.

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA

Zen Buddhism teaches that we should develop our potential Buddha-nature to arrive at the realization in a flash of sudden Enlightenment that all sentient beings are by nature Buddhas. In Shingon Buddhism, it is taught that we can become Buddhas with our earthly bodies through the practice of the three-fold mystical union of body, speech and mind (“sammitsu kaji”). In Tendai Buddhism, the practices of concentration and contemplation are taught, and in Nichiren Buddhism the chanting of the formula of “Namu Myō Hō Renge Kyō” is taught. Although the ways in which Enlightenment is sought are varied, they are all practices of self-effort aimed at attaining *prajñā* (Transcendental or undefiled Wisdom), the goal of Buddhism.

In contrast to the practices of the above-mentioned nature, Pure Land Buddhism teaches us to discard our dependence upon the practices of self-effort and instead to have faith solely in the Name-calling of “Namu Amida Butsu” in order to be liberated by Amida or the Buddha of Infinite Light (Wisdom) and Eternal Life (Compassion). There are some people who criticize Pure Land Buddhism as being out of the mainstream of Buddhism. Exponents of Pure Land Buddhism such as Honen and Shinran, however, were deeply convinced that it was the way of Pure Land Buddhism which was truly conducive to the realization of the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism, which aims at enabling all sentient beings to become Buddhas. According to their conviction, it is impossible for all sentient beings to become Buddhas without realizing the depth of the Vow of Dharmākara Bodhisattva, the name of Amida in his disciplinary stage. All sentient beings are equally endowed with *prajñā* (Buddha-nature or faith) in a latent form as a cause for becoming Buddhas. It is the vow of Dharmākara Bodhisattva that wills to have all sentient beings awakened to this *prajñā* innate in them; and it is this *prajñā* which manifests itself as faith and in its working appears as the practice of the invocation of the Nembutsu as singled out by Dharmākara Bodhisattva in his Original Vow. This tenet was phrased by Shinran thus: “The teaching of Jodo Shin Buddhism is that whosoever practices the Nembutsu believing in the Original

Vow attains Buddhahood.”¹

Therefore, to be saved by Amida means to be awakened to the depth of the Vow of Dharmākara Bodhisattva. Here I should like to point out that Dharmākara Bodhisattva appearing in the Pure Land teaching is by no means different from *ālayavijñāna* appearing in the traditional Mahayana doctrine, especially that of the Vijñānavādins. That is to say, the statement that Dharmākara Bodhisattva refers to *ālayavijñāna* should be a rejoinder by Pure Land Buddhism to its critics and this is meant for proving that Pure Land Buddhism is authentically Mahayana. In the statement that *ālayavijñāna* refers to Dharmākara Bodhisattva, it is implied that the fundamental principle of Mahayana Buddhism is actualized in this world as the realization of the Infinite in somebody “personal.”

As mentioned above, there are some people who insist that Pure Land Buddhism is not in the authentic line of Buddhism, and that it is quite similar to Christianity, since it advocates salvation by Amida. As is apparent from the above, however, Amida is not a Transcendent Other standing over against sentient beings. Amida is not simply transcendent in the sense that he is externally transcendent to sentient beings. Amida is inherent in all sentient beings in His causal or Bodhisattva form called Dharmākara. Dharmākara Bodhisattva who is thus at once innate and transcendent to sentient beings becomes Amida, whereby their salvation is realized. Salvation by Amida is therefore not an heteronomous salvation by some Transcendent Other, but is a salvation attained the moment man is awakened to the depth of the Dharmākara’s Original Vow. To be awakened to the depth of the Original Vow means to acquire the enlightening Wisdom to know what one essentially is. The moment man is awakened to the depth of the Original Vow, the Enlightenment of Amida in the Pure Land (Transcendent Realm) is shared by him while remaining in this relative world—that is, his eventual attaining of Buddhahood is ensured.

The discussion of “Dharmākara Bodhisattva” in this article will

¹ 歎異鈔. The *Tannishō*, or *A Tract Deploring Heresies* by 唯圓 Yuien.

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA

therefore, I hope, help the reader in clarifying the following three points: 1) that Pure Land Buddhism is rooted in the self-same soil as are the other Mahayana Buddhist schools, 2) that it is truly the way by which to actualize the principle of Mahayana Buddhism in this life through the “personal” recognition of the Infinite Wisdom and Eternal Compassion of the Buddha, and 3) that Pure Land Buddhism and Christianity are essentially different from each other.

Detailed descriptions of the character of Dharmākara Bodhisattva are found in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*, upon which the doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism is based. Before going into this, however, let us consider the nature of *ālayavijñāna*.

II

As is well known, there have been two major schools in Mahayana Buddhism: one is the Mādhyamika School of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) expounded by Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250 A. D.) and the other the Yogācāra School of *vijñaptimātratā* (mind only) expounded by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu (both c. the beginning of 5th century A. D.). As to the idea of *ālayavijñāna*, which later became the basic concept of the Vijñānavādins, a number of commentaries have appeared, and among them subtle differences of interpretations can be perceived. Accordingly, in this article, I shall develop my discussions from my own views on the Vijñānamātratā teaching, guided by the expositions as expressed in the *Trimsikā* by Vasubandhu and the compilation of commentaries on it by Dharmapāla and others called the *Vijñaptimātriddhi—śāstra*.¹

“Vijñaptimātratā” means that what we regard as externally existing is nothing other than a differentiated form of the consciousness ever transforming itself. In other words, the sole reality is consciousness and consciousness only. In the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* it is stated that the triple world is illusory and only the product of the One Mind. In order to expound such a teaching, the Vijñānavādins postulate *manas*, the seventh form of consciousness, and *ālaya-*

¹ 成唯識論. C. Ch'êng-wei-shih-lun, J. Jō Yuishiki Ron. Compiled by Dharmapāla.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

viññāna or the eighth form of consciousness, besides the usual six forms of consciousness.

Six forms of consciousness—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—are mentioned by Theravada Buddhism, but they alone are clearly not enough to explain the whole structure of our consciousness, for we continue to live despite the frequent cessation of the above-mentioned forms of consciousness. The Viññānavādins hold that this shows that there are within ourselves some forms of consciousness which function without stopping even while we are fast asleep. Therefore at the bottom of our six forms of consciousness there is another consciousness which sustains our particular identity or “ego.” It is called *manas*. It is a kind of supra-consciousness which ever generates the instinctive impulse of setting up the “ego” and of grasping external objects as “mine.” This impulse of grasping things as “I” and “mine” is the source of our ignorance.

Below *manas*, or in the bottomless depth of consciousness, so to speak, lies *ālayaviññāna*, which is again the basis for *manas*. According to the Viññānavādins, even *manas* cannot have illusions such as “I” or “mine” without some other basis. It does so grasping *ālayaviññāna*, and thus it is attached to the illusions of “I” and “mine.” But *ālayaviññāna* never ceases to receive all things as they come, however defiled the whole consciousness may become by the working of *manas*. It should be noted, at the same time, that according to the Viññānavādins *ālayaviññāna* is no other than “I” in the most genuine sense. It is the most basic subjectivity capable of creating human life *per se*, that is, it is the seed of the realization of salvation in this life. It is the self-realization in its act of self-realizing itself. Therefore, *ālayaviññāna* is the principle at once of ignorance and Enlightenment. The actual world of ignorance is brought about by *ālayaviññāna*, but once awakened to the process by which *ālayaviññāna* comes to be defiled, one is already on the way toward Enlightenment. Enlightenment involves a dynamic process in which ignorance itself is infinitely subjected to the penetrating insight.

Most probably *ālayaviññāna*, the basic principle of the Viññānavādins, may not be different from the reality which various Maha-

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA

yana sutras and commentaries have tried to explicate. For example, in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* there appears the phrase; "Buddha-nature is eternal"; in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* Bodhisattvas who spring up from beneath the earth are depicted; and in the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, which is said to have been written by Aśvaghōṣa (420–500 A. D.), appear the expositions on *ālayavijñāna* in reference to the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. All these are regarded as not different from the *ālayavijñāna* as taught in the *Vijñānamātratā* doctrine.

In view of the history of Buddhism, however, the teaching of the *Vijñānavādins*, which attains the transcendental wisdom of Enlightenment by transforming illusory consciousness, has only been understood by the elected few with superior intelligence. Even if its doctrine had been duly understood, it might have been extremely difficult for ordinary people actually to practice it as they were taught, for, as stated above, the teaching of *ālayavijñāna* involves a system of practice relying upon self-effort.

It is at this stage that we must turn with deep concern to the exposition of the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* in which *ālayavijñāna* is understood to have been described in terms of the relationship between Dharmākara Bodhisattva, the causal name of Amida, and sentient beings. In this sutra, *ālayavijñāna* as a philosophical concept is presented as a personal character called Dharmākara Bodhisattva, whereby it is made clear that the Way through which he became a Buddha is already open to each and every sentient being whose spiritual life is rooted deep in *ālayavijñāna*, that is, the Buddha-nature.

III

Dharmākara Bodhisattva is narrated in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* in terms of the following myth: Innumerable aeons ago, a Buddha called Dīpaṅkara appeared in the world. After he had enlightened numberless people without exception, he left the world.—In this way the narrative starts.—Dīpaṅkara was followed by fifty-three Buddhas such as Ko-on (Far-Light), Gakko (Moon-

Light), Sendanko (Shining Sandalwood), and so forth, successively to appear in the world and then to disappear.—The narrative then turns to the time when the fifty-fourth Buddha, Lokeśvararāja made his appearance.—There was a king who, upon hearing the preaching of Lokeśvararāja, appreciated it profoundly, so much so that there sprang up in his mind an eagerness to seek the supreme Enlightenment. So he renounced the world, forsaking his country as well as his royalty, and became a śrāmaṇa (way-seeker) and called himself “Dharmākara” (the Storehouse of Dharma). His wisdom was superior, his aspiration steadfast, and he was peerless among common mortals in every respect.

The Bhikṣu Dharmākara went before the Buddha Lokeśvararāja, saluted him in reverence, holding palms together respectfully, and praised the sublime virtues of the Buddha in verse, in which he expressed his own aspirations as follows: “I wish to become a Buddha so as to deliver suffering beings. In order to fulfil my purpose, I wish to establish a land, pure and peaceful.”

Thereafter he meditated for five *kalpas* until he realized that there was no other way but the teaching of “Namu Amida Butsu” [I take refuge in the Buddha of Infinite Light (Wisdom) and of Eternal Life (Compassion)] for all sentient beings equally to be delivered. Thereupon he specified his Vow of realizing the teaching of “Namu Amida Butsu” in forty-eight articles (which are the Forty-eight Vows), and epitomized them in *gāthā* (verse) which is called “Jūsei Ge.” The latter is to the following effect: “I have now made a vow transcending the world. First of all, I shall become a Buddha myself, and then I shall deliver each and every sentient being. This vow of mine shall reverberate throughout all the worlds, being embodied in the Name-calling of “Namu Amida Butsu,” to be heard by all people in every conceivable world. It shall be heard and believed.”

As soon as Bhikṣu Dharmākara finished uttering this verse, the earth shook in six ways, divine flower-petals fluttered in the air, heavenly music was heard all around, and a voice was heard to say: “O Bhikṣu Dharmākara, you are sure to attain the supreme En-

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA

lightenment.” Bhikṣu Dharmākara who thus made his vows after having gone through the hard practice required of him for fulfilling his Original Vow, lasting for innumerable *kalpas*, finally fulfilled his prodigious vow to become Amida Buddha, or the Buddha of Infinite Wisdom and Compassion.

This is an epitome of the mythology of Bodhisattva Dharmākara. This may be interpreted to be the mythological description of the background of the appearance of Śākyamuni Buddha in this world. The mythological description that Dharmākara Bodhisattva appeared in this world and made a vow transcending this world points to the profound background of Śākyamuni Buddha’s own appearance in the world.

At present it is generally accepted that Buddhism is a religion which had its inception in Śākyamuni Buddha, who appeared in India. Indeed, all scriptures which convey the message of Buddhism made their appearance after Śākyamuni Buddha. But it can be said that all Mahāyāna scriptures reflect the Buddha-Dharma prior to the historical Śākyamuni Buddha, that is, the principle that makes possible the appearance of Śākyamuni as an historical person. There is thus a background to the appearance of Śākyamuni Buddha. It is no other than the mythological narrative of the fifty-four Buddhas preceding him, as enumerated in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*, that testifies to his supra-historical aspect.

The Buddhas prior to Śākyamuni have neither color nor form. Therefore it is not possible for us to see them. Nor can we hear their preaching. Yet, it does not follow that there did not exist any Buddha-Dharma prior to Śākyamuni. It is by means of the historical Śākyamuni preaching in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* that we are enabled to know of the Buddha-Dharma prior to Śākyamuni.

Calmly contemplating the profound background of his own experience of Enlightenment, Śākyamuni successively encountered innumerable centers of light in eternity. The Buddha Dipaṅkara was the first Buddha he encountered in his contemplation. Śākyamuni, retrospectively more and more innerward to the depth of his being,

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

finally came across Dharmākara Bodhisattva. This Dharmākara Bodhisattva whom he encountered was no other than Śākyamuni Buddha's own primordial being, for which he had long been seeking.

IV

Thus, the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* assumes the form of the record of preaching in which Śākyamuni described the Buddha-Dharma prior to Śākyamuni himself in terms of the mythology of Dharmākara Bodhisattva. As stated above it is the teaching of *ālayavijñāna* in the Vijñaptimātratā doctrine that attempts theoretically to clarify the Buddha-Dharma prior to Śākyamuni in philosophical terms. When we read the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* and the *Vijñaptimātrasiddhi-śāstra*, we are made to realize that in the depth of our mind we always hold the sincerest aspiration, that springs up from *ālayavijñāna*, to become the inhabitants of that pure and truthful world. Or rather, the fact that here we are as such derives from our having been born out of this profound aspiration.

This profound aspiration is apt to be disturbed in our waking consciousness by the beclouding influence of momentary impulses. The basic stream of our thought or aspiration can never, however, be disturbed by the momentary influences of our impulses. As is stated in the *Trīṃśikā*, *ālayavijñāna* is ever being transformed like a rushing torrent. Rather it will manifest itself amidst illusory thoughts, break through all forms of ignorance of sentient beings, and must some day fulfil all of its innermost aspirations.

The working of our momentary impulses is caused by *manas*. It is the all-ignorant self-consciousness which grasps the basic *ālayavijñāna* as its own self. And yet, *ālayavijñāna* receives all kinds of differentiation or limitation as they come, and yet does not lose its own identity. *Ālayavijñāna* or the basic subjectivity, is the eternal mind itself which communes in its depth with all sentient beings even while they are submerged in the darkness of ignorance or *avidyā*. This inner mind is none other than the aspiration expressed by Dharmākara Bodhisattva in the presence of the Buddha Lokeśvararāja. It is none other than his Original Vow that declared: "O

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA

sentient beings in the ten directions! I shall never attain the Supreme Enlightenment until you are all delivered.”

In the text of the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*, it is stated that prior to his making vows, Dharmākara Bodhisattva meditated for five *kalpas*, and the perspective then revealed to him points to nothing else but the background of our spiritual world. The pitch darkness of the beginningless past in which Dharmākara Bodhisattva sits in deep silence is broken through by the Buddha's effulgent light of wisdom. The spectacle of the darkness of the night lit up all over indicates the world of aspiration which shines forth amidst the darkness of ignorance.

Following this, Dharmākara Bodhisattva rose up from the seat of his age-long meditation and set out on his *kalpa*-long journey. In other words, in accordance with the instruction of his master, the Buddha Lokeśvararāja, Dharmākara Bodhisattva stepped out into the life of practice for the benefit of all sentient beings. Here the Bodhisattva, who had long been submerged deep down in the bottom of the earth, emerges to the surface of the earth to become a real Bodhisattva or One who walks on the Way. This shows that he before anybody else has now become a man who practices the Nembutsu or the invocation of “Namu Amida Butsu.” That is to say, the passage in the sutra stating that Dharmākara Bodhisattva meditated for five *kalpas* and underwent hard practices for innumerable *kalpas*, refers to the fact that he became the primordial practicant of the Nembutsu. And it is *ālayavijñāna* that reveals the mystery of the realization of Dharmākara Bodhisattva, the primordial practicant of the Nembutsu.

Ālayavijñāna means the supra-consciousness in which are stored all *dharma*s, hence the epithet “Store-consciousness.” I long ago called it “Dharmākara-consciousness.” In the *Vijñaptimātra-siddhi-śāstra* we find three interpretations of “ākara” (a mine; a storage): 1) A storage in the sense that *ālayavijñāna* is grasped by man as if it were a real self in a manner that a treasurehouse is tightly guarded by its owner with deep attachment. 2) A storage in the sense that *ālayavijñāna* contains the seeds of all things within

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

itself. 3) A storage in the sense that *ālayavijñāna* is affected by *karmas* of various nature.

In this connection, I should like to call the reader's attention to the fact that our fleshly body as such is the embodiment of *ālayavijñāna*. *Ālayavijñāna*, then, means, on one hand the consciousness that stores an infinite potentiality, and on the other our actual fleshly body. The consciousness and human body are inseparably identified in *ālayavijñāna*. In fact the self-realization as a person can only be established in the unity of the consciousness and body. The actual event of our salvation takes place only at this personal realization.

V

As is apparent from the teaching of Dharmākara Bodhisattva and the theory of *ālayavijñāna*, it must be said that the salvation of us sentient beings does not take place apart from the personal realization as a unity of spirit and body. Therefore, it follows that we are required thoroughly to grasp the true significance of the very reality that we are thus living.

Some forty years ago, I wrote an article on the significance of this reality. As my conviction expressed there has undergone little change, I shall make here somewhat extensive citation from that earlier writing.¹

It is not that we sentient beings suddenly fell from heaven upon this earth, but that we are rooted deep in the earth. We have all sprung up out of the earth with a beginningless history behind us. Looking up toward heaven we feel lonely, but once turning our eyes over our feet, there we see a picturesque sight of solid mountains and winding rivers, standing as they are high and low. There we see numberless sentient beings moving around. Each movement that they make springs up, so to speak, from below the earth and then goes back to the depth of the earth. The function of the earth always unfolds itself through sentient beings, and its guiding spirit is always identified with their mind. When we 'dig up the earth, we shall find the spirit of sentient beings' identical with those found upon the earth. Therefore, the earth with her mountains and rivers is

¹ 救済と自證. *Kyūzai to Jishō* (Salvation and Self-realization) pp. 163-174.

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA

no other than the actual body of my universal self. Undoubtedly, it was to no other than this fact that the fabulous description in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* alluded, namely, that as soon as Dharmākara Bodhisattva expressed his aspirations the earth shook in six ways and flower-petals fell from heaven.

We should penetrate, in deep contemplation, into our own body to see the primordial man. We must see there the natural man, and explicitly realize that this fleshly body is no other than the actual manifestation of our fundamental self.

Indeed, various kinds of sinful deeds are committed because of this physical body. All defilements, such as ignorance, craving, anger, and so forth are rooted in this physical body, and therefore, if it were not for this fleshly body, all defilements would lose their foundation and no problem would arise in this life, nay this life itself would have never existed. Where there is no physical body, there is no actual self. But in spite of the fact that it affords a foundation for all defilements, there is no reason, I believe, that we should curse this physical body. For the reason why all defilements arise is that this body, disturbed by the external world of senses, is unaware of the true subjectivity upon which are dependent the external senses. This physical body ever haunted by defilements is only the outward crust of the pure subjectivity. The actual body testified to by the heartfelt declaration of the fundamental subjectivity, "Here I am!"¹ is by nature pure and spotlessly undefiled.

In this undefiled body within each sentient being is stored up the ancestral heritage of the "teaching" from time immemorial. Each action and each movement we make are all done by the command of this teaching, of which we are not conscious. The succession of sentient beings from time immemorial is for us a teaching of naturalness. The inner experiences of our ancestors all constitute a teaching, of which we are usually not conscious. We are expected to go our respective ways, being ever urged and encouraged by this implicit teaching. Is there anybody on earth who has learned from others how to beget a child? The preservation of life which is transmitted from parents to children is one of the teachings implicit in the world of the unconscious since the immemorable past prior to our birth. We are born with this mysterious "sutra" in our hand! Nay, our birth itself was brought about by this "sutra."

Tathāgata, or the eternal Buddha, created a living sutra with the paper made of his skin, with a brush made of his bones, and with the ink made

¹ Self-declaration of the fundamental subjectivity as it is awakened to its self.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

of his blood. The sutra is no other than this physical body of mine. The *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* in which the eternal Buddha expressed his experiences through Śākyamuni, the Incarnate, in terms of his life is the sutra of this body. It is only through this teaching of Śākyamuni that we are made to acknowledge in faith the Original Vow of Bodhisattva Dharmākara, the causal figure of Amida. Accepting Śākyamuni as the revealer of the teaching, we are enabled to hear the inner voice of the sutra which is our physical body itself.

VI

The teaching of the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* is, I would venture to say, that we should hear in the pure and undefiled physical body of ours the voice of Dharmākara Bodhisattva or the Self-declaration of the Original Vow. Therefore, Vasubandhu, who composed the verses expressing his aspiration for birth in the Pure Land (the *Gwanshō-ge*) in accordance with the teaching of the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*, confesses at the outset of those verses: "O the World-honored One, single-mindedly I take refuge in the Buddha of unobstructed Light shining throughout the ten directions (Amida), and I wish to be born in the Land of Peace (Amida's Pure Land)." In addressing Śākyamuni as "O the World-honored One," he expressed his aspiration to be enlightened through the Way of "Namu Amida Butsu," that is, by taking refuge in the Buddha of unobstructed Light shining throughout the ten directions.

As is evident from the above passage, we must not be confused about the difference of "teacher" and "savior." Shinran taught us clearly to distinguish "teacher" from "savior," correcting at the same time the grave mistake of taking single person appearing in history as a savior. Śākyamuni-centered Buddhism or Jesus-centered Christianity is of a servile nature. We must always remember the great primordial subjectivity or the fundamental subjectivity underlying the reality which gave rise to Śākyamuni or Jesus Christ.

The enlightened predecessors whom we look up to as ideal are all historical characters. They are all the projection of our respective ideals. They are our idealized teachers, but by no means our saviors.

DHARMĀKARA BODHISATTVA

The real savior for us is not our idealized historical characters but the universal self—the fundamental self upon which is based our actual self. The real savior is Dharmākara Bodhisattva who does not exist apart from this physical body of mine as the fundamental subjectivity of myself. Manifesting himself in phenomenal bodies, Dharmākara Bodhisattva has become the living witness to his own actuality and thus deprives all futile arguments, illusions, dogmatisms, superstitions, doubts, procrastinations, controversies, and so forth, of their foundations. Therefore he can be said to be a real savior leading our life to truth.

Śākyamuni is our teacher, master, father, and ideal. Dharmākara Bodhisattva is the real person whom we can directly experience; he is our eternal actuality. It is no other than the preaching of our teacher, Śākyamuni, that urges us to hear the voice of Dharmākara Bodhisattva, that clarifies for us the Way through which we are to return to the undefiled, pure self.

Consequently, my way of understanding the teaching of the Jodo Shin School by Shinran is that it teaches us to realize the way of becoming a Buddha initially by pointing to the difference between “teacher” and “savior.”

VII

As stated above, the Dharmākara Bodhisattva which appears in the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* is the personal expression of *ālayavijñāna* as taught in the *Vijñaptimātratā* doctrine. Thus interpreted, it may become clear, in the first place, that Pure Land Buddhism stands on a common ground equally shared by all the other Mahayana schools. In the second place, Dharmākara Bodhisattva shows, in as much as he is a personal realization which is one with the fleshly body, that the salvation advocated by Pure Land Buddhism is the universal way accessible to all, the way by which truly to realize the Mahayana ideal that each and every sentient being shall become a Buddha. In the third place, in spite of the superficial resemblance between Pure Land Buddhism and Christianity, Dharmākara Bodhisattva clearly points to the qualitative dis-

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

inction between them. The fact is that Dharmākara Bodhisattva, who is at once innate to and transcendent over all sentient beings, fulfils his Original Vow and liberates all sentient beings through his becoming Amida. In other words, sentient beings are saved through accepting in faith the aspiration of Dharmākara Bodhisattva.

In conclusion, Dharmākara Bodhisattva constitutes a basic theme by which the characteristic of Pure Land Buddhism can be explicitly revealed both to those outside and inside of Mahayana Buddhism. In this article I have confined myself merely to calling the reader's attention to the points of doctrinal concern regarding the nature of Dharmākara Bodhisattva.