

Rājādhirājasimha. The rock edict is transcribed with variations and additions occurring at times up to the first line of the seventh side. The remaining *sannasas* are then added up to complete the seventh side.

It should be mentioned that the plates are in letters of the 18th century. It may be that these were copies of the original *sannasas* granted to the *vihāra*. In view of this circumstance, the contents of the document should be examined with a certain amount of caution. There are quite a number of architectural details which do not occur in the rock inscription. The base (*adhīṣṭhāna*), levelled to an area 60x70 cubits in length and breadth, was of granite and to the height of a man. Many hundreds and thousands of bricks were used in the construction of the rest of the shrine. Facing the eastern direction was a porch (*bappuva*). On the four sides there were moonlight terraces (*candrikā-sthala*). The height of the building from ground level to the finial of the *sikhara* (Sinh. *kot-kāralla*) was thirty two cubits. On the top, at the four corners, there were four (miniature) *stūpas*, surmounted by golden pinnacles. The *dāgoba* (*vimana*) on the summit was in the centre and was likewise crowned by a golden pinnacle. It was a chamber constituting a library, wherein was transcribed and deposited the *Tripiṭaka*. It had doorframes and lintels.

With the aid of these details occurring in the copper plate, it may be possible for an architect to have a conjectural restoration of the shrine as it existed in the 14th century, taking into consideration also, the material available in the rock inscription.

The Lankātilaka rock inscription of Vikramabāhu III (1536/7-1373) is dated the third day of the waxing moon of *Unduvap*. The purport of the document was to register the grant of the village Paṭṭiyegama in Goḍaraṭa, including the house sites of the village, forests, serfs and animals to the Lankātilaka-vihāra for its maintenance. An *ādīpāda* of the reign makes also a donation of the village of Rabbegamuva to the *vihāra* for its maintenance and mentions the various curses to which disputants of the donation would be subject.

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LANKĀVATĀRĀ SŪTRA, 'Discourse about 'Entering Lanka' is one of the most important *sūtras* of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is included among the traditional 'great discourses' (*vaipulya sūtra*) by Mahāyānists. The *sūtra* has also been adopted as one of the basic texts of Soto Zen Buddhist tradition in Japan.

The date of the compilation of the *sūtra* has not been fixed with certainty for want of evidence. The internal evidence suggests that the *sūtra* represents the idealist development in the Indian Buddhist tradition. However, it is generally believed that the *sūtra* was compiled during 350-400 A.C. (See Hajime Nakamura *Indian Buddhism*, Osaka, KUFU Publication, 1980. p. 231). Many who have studied the *sūtra* are of opinion that the introductory chapter and the last two chapters were added to the book at a later period. Suzuki who may be regarded as the most authoritative writer on the *sūtra* in the English language (*Studies in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra* (hereafter Suzuki I) Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London. (1930) 1952 and *The Lankāvatāra Sūtra* (hereafter Suzuki II), George Routledge and Sons, London. 1931) points out that there are records of four Chinese translations of the *sūtra*, the earliest being about A.C. 420 and the last being about A.C. 704. He further points out that the earliest translation by Gunabhadra does not contain the first and the last two chapters. He surmises that this shorter version is the original *Lankāvatāra* which is believed to have been brought to China from India by Bodhidharma, the legendary founder of Mahāyāna in China. The tradition believes that Bodhidharma transmitted the text to the second patriarch Hui-K' e. According to Suzuki, the *sūtra* contains all the major tenets of Zen Buddhism. (See Suzuki I. pp 89-236).

Structure of the sūtra: The *sūtra* has 10 chapters. They are:

1. *Rāvaṇādhyeṣaṇaparivarta* (Chapter on Ravana's Request)
2. *Ṣaṭtriṃṣatsahasrasarvadharmasamuccaya-parivarta* (Chapter on the Collection of all the *Dharmas* (taken from) *Lankāvatāra* of 36,000 Verses)
3. *Anityatāparivarta* (Chapter on Impermanence)
4. *Abhisamayaparivarta* (Chapter on Intuitive Understanding)
5. *Tathāgatānityānityaprasaṅgaparivarta* (Chapter on the Deduction of the Permanency and Impermanency)

6. *Kṣāṇikaparivarta* (Chapter on Momentariness)
7. *Nairmaṇīkaparivarta* (Chapter on Transformation)
8. *Māms'abhakṣaṇaparivarta* (Chapter on Meat-eating)
9. *Dhāraṇīparivarta* (Chapter on *Dhāraṇis*)
10. *Sagāthakaṃ* (Chapter with Verses)

Contents of each chapter:

Chapter 1: The Enlightened one was staying in a castle situated on the peak of Mount Malaya in Lanka. He was surrounded by *bhikṣus* and *bodhisatvas* 'who understood the significance of the objective world as a manifestation of their own mind; they knew how to maintain (various) forms, teachings and disciplinary measures, according to the various mentalities and behaviours of beings; they were thoroughly versed in the five *dharma*s, the (three) *svabhāvas*, the (eight) *viññānas* and the twofold Non-Ātman'. The Buddha, following a tradition of the ancient Buddhas, expresses the intention of explaining the *dhamma* to the king of Rākṣasas, Rāvaṇā. Having known the intention of the Buddha Rāvaṇā arrives before the Buddha. The Buddha through his divine power makes Rāvaṇā see that everything in the universe is a creation of one's own mind. Subsequently, aided by Mahāsātva Bodhisatva, upon the approval of the Buddha, Rāvaṇā asks a question from the Buddha on duality. The Buddha says that duality arises from discrimination (e.g. *dharma* and *adharma* etc.) which is 'cherished by the philosophers, S'rāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas and ignorant people'. The Buddha further says that the highest *samādhi* which is attained by entering into the womb of Tathāgatahood (*tathāgatgarbha*) is realized through oneness which is the absence of duality and discrimination.

Chapter 2: The chapter begins with the Bodhisatva Mahāsātva's statement that he will ask one hundred and eight questions from the Buddha. (In actuality, according to Suzuki's translation, there are 151 questions or even more than that in this list.) These questions cover various issues most of which are directly related and some not directly related to the teaching of the Buddha. For example a few questions at the beginning are as follows:

How can one be cleansed of false intellection? Whence does it arise? How can one perceive errors? Whence do they arise? Whence come lands, transformation, appearance, and philosophers? Wherefore is the state of imagelessness, the gradations, and whence are the sons of the Victorious? Where is the way of emancipation? Who is in bondage? By what is he

redeemed? What is the mental state of those who practise the *dhyānas*? Whence is the triple vehicle? (24) (Unless otherwise stated, these numbers refer to the section numbers in Suzuki I. These numbers also correspond to the section numbers in the Sanskrit text edited by P.L. Vaidya). However, there are some other questions the relevance of which to the teaching of the Buddha is not quite clear. For instance: of how many sorts are *gāthās*? What is prose? What is metre? of how many sorts is reasoning and exegesis? How many varieties of food and drink are there? Whence does sexual desire originate? Whence are there kings, sovereigns, and provincial rulers? (26)

The above questions have no direct bearing on the teaching although such questions are not unheard of in the Buddhist literature. The manner in which the Buddha deals with these questions suggests that they have been put not in order to obtain answers but for some other purpose, namely, to show that the questions are meaningless since the language itself used to convey the meaning is empty. The Buddha rejects all questions saying that the sentences do not actually make the statements meant to be made by those sentences ('...*utpādapadam anutpādapadam, nityapadam anityapadam*...').

In spite of this treatment of his questions by the Buddha, Mahāmāti continues to ask. It is significant to note that the questions asked are in no way different from the rejected questions. In fact, almost all the questions subsequently asked by Mahāmāti are from the previous list. This time, the Buddha does not reject the questions, but 'answers' them.

In this longest chapter of the *sūtra* questions are asked on the following subjects: (numbers in the following summary refer to the numeral order of the question.) (1) in how many ways does the rise, abiding, and the ceasing of the *viññānas* take place? (2) the most subtle doctrine which explains the *citta*, *manas*, *manoviññāna*, the five *dharma*s, the *Svabhāvas*, and the *Lakṣaṇas*; (3) examining into the reality of noble wisdom; (4) purification of the outflow which comes from recognising an objective world which is of mind itself; (5) the eternal unthinkable; (6) making an assertion and refuting it; (7) how all things are empty, unborn, non-dual, and have no self-nature; (8) is the *tathāgata-garbha* same as ego-substance of the other religionists?; (9) perfection of the discipline leading to be a *yogin*; (10) will-body (11) causation of all things; (12) essence of discrimination as regards words;

(13) conditions whereby the word-discrimination manifests itself; (14) attainment of self-realization by noble wisdom; (15) *nirvāna*; (16) nature of the Buddha's theory of causality; (16) whether all things exist on the reality of words; (17) eternity of sound; (18) nature of error; (19) the stream-entered and their special attainments; (20) one vehicle that characterises the inner realisation of noble wisdom. The Buddha answers these questions by laying emphasis on the fundamental *Vijñānavāda* doctrines.

Chapter 3: The chapter begins with the Buddha giving a further account of will-body to Mahāmāti. Subsequently, the following questions which are similar in nature to those in the previous chapter are asked and answered: (21) the five immediacies; (22) the Buddha nature of the Buddhas; (23) the deeper sense of the statement "I am all the Buddhas of the past" and "I have gone through many a birth..." (24) on 'not speaking is the speaking of the Buddha'; (25) being and non-being of all things; (26) characteristic of the realization; (27) what characterises wrong discrimination; (28) Why should not Bodhisatva-Mahāsātva grasp meaning from words? What are words? What is meaning? (29) deepseated attachment to the existence of all things and the way of emancipation; (30) if all things are of the nature of false imagination is there neither defilement nor purification?; (31) how is transcendental knowledge unobtainable (32) why Lokāyata should not be honoured?; (33) what does the term *nirvāna* designate? (34) self-nature of Buddhahood; (35) is the Tathāgata a non-entity?; (36) on external causation (of the Buddha and the other religionists); (37) on the claim that all composite things are impermanent.

Chapter 4: This short chapter is on a single question asked by Mahāmāti on (38) the state of perfect tranquilisation.

Chapter 5: This short chapter too discusses one point, namely, (39) whether the Tathāgata is permanent or not.

Chapter 6: The chapter discusses the following questions by Mahāmāti: (40) rising and disappearing of *skandha*, *dhātu* and *āyatana*; (41) distinguishing aspects of the five *dharmas*, the (three) *svabhāvas*, the (eight) *vijñānas* and the twofold egolessness; (42) should the statement "the Tathāgatas of the past, present

and future are like the sands of the river Ganga" be taken literally? (43) momentary destruction of all things and their distinctive signs; (44) what are the six *pāramitās*? how are they fulfilled?.

Chapter 7: The following questions are asked (together) and answered (together): (45) how was it that the arahants were given assurance by the Buddha on their attainment of supreme enlightenment?; (46) how can all beings attain Tathāgatahood without realising the truths of *parinirvāna*?; (47) What does it mean that from the night when the Tathāgata was awakened to supreme enlightenment until the night when he entered into *parinirvāna*, between these two events the Tathāgata has not uttered, has not pronounced a word?; (48) What is the meaning of this that, being always in *samādhi*, the Tathāgatas neither deliberate nor contemplate? (49) how do the Buddhas of transformation being in the state of transformation, executed the works of the Tathāgata? (50) how is the succession of momentary decomposition explained, which takes place in the *vijñānas*?; (51) what do these statements mean: that Vajrapāṇi is constantly with (the Tathāgata) as his personal guard, and that the primary limit is unknown and yet cessation is knowable, and that there are evil ones, their activities and left-over *karmas*?; (52) how can the Blessed one with the unexhausted *karma*-hindrances attain omniscience?

Chapter 8: This chapter is the Buddha's response to Mahāmāti's question (53) on meat-eating.

Chapter 9: This short chapter comprises the *Lankāvatāra Mahāyāna sūtra Dhāraṇī* or magical formula based on the *sūtra* (a device characteristic of Mahāyāna tradition by which usually a lengthy *sūtra* is given in an extremely abbreviated form for the purposes of chanting in order to secure good results).

Chapter 10: This is usually not numbered as a separate chapter, but meant to be a compilation in verse form of all the ideas expressed in the *sūtra* so that memorization is made easy. There are 884 verses in this section which covers not only what was already given in the *sūtra* but many new issues.

The *Lankāvatārasūtra* is one of the most important of all Mahāyāna works. It represents the most advanced stage of the philosophical development of the

1. See in this regard Dasgupta, S.N., "Philosophy of Lankāvatāra in *Buddhist Studies*, ed. by B.C. Law, Gndological Book house, Delhi, 1983, pp. 859-876

Mahāyāna tradition, namely, the Vijñānavāda or the idealist trend in Buddhist thought.¹

The *Sūtra* has a dual purpose, positive and negative. The positive purpose of the *sūtra* is to present the idealist persuasion in Buddhist thought. The negative purpose is to criticise the views that are not in conformity with its own. The *sūtra* is simultaneously engaged in both these activities, and that it is so engaged can be seen very clearly throughout the work, from the beginning to its very end.

We already mentioned the fact that many scholars including Suzuki are of opinion that the first and the last chapters are later additions. There are several theories about the presence of the first chapter. One theory believes that the first chapter with the king of Laṅkā, Rāvaṇā, as the main interlocutor has been added later in order to give historicity for the *sūtra* (Suzuki (I) p. 16. and Ananda Guruge 'History of the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra' in *Buddhist Essays: A miscellany*. London. 1992). Another theory says that the *sūtra* has been compiled hurriedly having Laṅkā as the venue in order to introduce Mahāyāna Buddhism to Sri Lanka. This theory is heavily dependent on the eighth chapter on meat-eating which is a Hinayāna practice² Whether this chapter is a subsequent addition or not cannot be determined conclusively on available historical or even on internal evidence. There is a possibility that both these theories may be true. However one thing is clear: the internal evidence clearly suggest that the first chapter is quite integral in its content and outlook with the rest of the *sūtra* and it serves as the introduction to the whole *sūtra*. The introductory chapter introduces all the main ideas and trends the reader is bound to come across repeatedly throughout the *sūtra*. Therefore the first chapter, even if it is a later addition, has been constructed so as to integrate with the rest of the *sūtra* quite well.

The only 'non-philosophical' chapter of the *Sūtra* (with the exception of the ninth chapter containing a *dhāraṇī* which is not supposed to have a standard meaning) is the one on meat-eating. However, it is hard to say that these chapters are not integral to the whole *sūtra*, for the *sūtra* not only gives a philosophy but also gives a religion. The discussion on meat eating and the *dhāraṇī* are quite significant in this respect.²

The major philosophical and religious views of the *Sūtra* are those of the Vijñānavāda tradition, namely, the five *dharmas*, three *svabhāvas*, the eight *vijñānas* and the twofold non-atman (1); the non-differentiating nature of the *ālayavijñāna* (17); denial of duality (16); abandonment of discrimination (18), unreality of the external world (20), and the 'womb of tathāgatahood' (*tathāgatagarbha*) (21). These ideas are introduced and emphasized in the first chapter itself. The above ideas are not presented in a vacuum, but in the context of the views opposed to them.³ In this respect, the first and foremost target is what the *sūtra* calls *s'rāvakas* or the Hinayāna schools of Buddhism. Almost always, the *s'rāvakas* are grouped together with *pratyekabuddhas*, the other religionists or *īrthakas* (which Suzuki, not very appropriately, translates as 'philosophers') and 'those who are ignorant'. In the first chapter, the Buddha warns Ravana that he should "not fall into the attainments, conceptions, experiences, views and *samādhis* of the *s'rāvakas*...." (10). Subsequently the Buddha praises Rāvaṇā for asking a question on some aspect of meditation which is never tasted by those who practise the meditation of the *s'rāvakas*..." (14) and refers to the stage of *acala* in meditation which goes "beyond the *samādhi* and understanding attained by the *s'rāvakas*...." (15). In this same discussion, the discrimination of phenomena into *dharma* and *adharmas* is attributed to other religionists, *s'rāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas* and the ignorant (18). In this manner, the *sūtra* always presents its views along with the criticism of its opponents of whom the Hinayāna tradition is the foremost.

'Other religionists' are often referred to along with the rest. However the main contention with them is their theories of causation (section:40). It is said that Rāvaṇā acquired that kind of knowledge which is capable of disposing of the arguments of other religionists on causation (10-11). Although Lokāyatikas are referred to in several places, it is not clear in what sense the term is used. They have been described as "skilled in varieties of incantations and in the art of eloquence" and "making clever use of words" (173); but subsequently they have been attributed with views usually considered 'metaphysical' and 'unanswered' in the Buddhist tradition (176-177). They have also been attributed with dualism (being and non-

2. Kalupahana. D.J., *A history of Buddhist Philosophy*, Hawaii 1992, ch. XVIII and the Appendix

3. We are in agreement with Arnold Kunst who says that the *Lankāvatāra* is a highly polemical text: "Some Polemics in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra" in *Festschrift for walpola Rahula*

being etc.) which is usually attributed to 'other religionists' in the *sūtra*. It must be noted that the major philosophical and religious views advocated and the references to the opponents whose views are criticized in the first chapter continue to appear till the end of the *Sūtra*.

The main interlocutor in the *Sūtra* (in fact, the sole interlocutor after the first chapter) Mahāmāti, the Bodhisatva appears in the first chapter itself. He is the only one in the assembly who understands the significance of the mysterious smile of the Buddha. Mahāmāti's inquiry into the reason behind the Buddha's smile opens the door for the exposition of the philosophy of the *sūtra*, first as responses to Rāvaṇā's questions and subsequently to those of Mahāmāti.

The themes discussed from the 2nd to the 7th chapter are of uniform nature in the sense that the responses of the Buddha to those questions represent the Vijñānavāda philosophy. As the (above) summary of the questions show, the subject-matter of the questions is diverse and varied. Nevertheless, the philosophy presented to respond to these questions is the same.

The Vijñānavāda doctrine of 'mind only' (*cittamātra*) and the reality of *ālayavijñāna* is the central teaching of the *sūtra*. This doctrine is presented against the practice of various forms of discrimination, namely, *citta*, *mano* and *manovijñāna* and subject and object. The following statement articulates the two ideas clearly:

....That Mind in itself has nothing to do with discrimination and causation, discourses of imagination, and terms of qualification (*lakṣyalakṣaṇa*); that body, property, and abode are objectifications of the *ālayavijñāna*, which in itself above (the dualism of) subject and object; that the state of imagelessness which is in compliance with the awakening of mind itself, is not affected by such changes as arising, abiding, and destruction (section: 42).

The 'mind-only' doctrine is affirmed throughout the *sūtra*. For example, it occurs in the following sections: 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 70, 73, 91, 111 (chapter II); 152, 162, 170, 173, 183, 208 (chapter III); 212 (chapter IV); 219 (chapter V); 225, 235 (chapter VI); 243 (chapter VII); 272, 282, 300, 301, 311, 320, 327, 335, 342, 351, 369, 375 (chapter X). The related ideas of (the folly of) false discrimination (129-131, 150, 163, 204, 274 and 306); non-reality of the external world

(*māyā*) (320, 334 and 374); and that all phenomena are empty of self-nature (73-74) occur throughout the *sūtra* in support of the main doctrine.

The philosophical and religious context against which the idealist philosophy is presented is primarily the Hīnayāna philosophy and religion. The references to and criticism of the Hīnayāna doctrines and practices are many and varied. They are scattered in all chapters except in chapter IX which is a *dhāraṇī* (magical formula). In the first chapter itself there are several references to Hīnayāna. The first reference to *s'rāvakas* occurs in the admonition by the Buddha to *Rāvaṇā* not to "fall into the attainments, conceptions, experiences, views, and *samādhis* of the *S'rāvakas*, *Pratyekabuddhas* and philosophers" (10). Subsequently the discrimination of things as belonging to past, present and future is condemned and the state beyond such discrimination is described as a state "not tasted by those who practise the meditation of the *S'rāvakas*, *Pratyekabuddhas*, and philosophers..." (14). Subsequently sections 15, 18 and 20 contain criticisms of the Hīnayāna on the same grounds. Chapter II extends the criticism of Hīnayāna to many other philosophical issues. The workings of the *alayavijñāna* is described as a phenomenon "not easy to comprehend (especially) by those who practise the discipline belonging to the *S'rāvakas*, *Pratyekabuddhas* and philosophers" (45). The '*dharmata Buddha*', which is unconditioned is described as "not belonging to the world of the ignorant, *S'rāvakas*, *Pratyekabuddhas* and philosophers" (57). Subsequently the final realization of the *S'rāvakas* is criticised as "no discarding of habit-energy and no escape from imperceivable transformation of death" (58). This downgrading of the Hīnayānic goal reaches its culminating point in the following statement:

... those who, afraid of suffering arising from the discrimination of birth and death, seek for *nirvāna*, do not know that birth-and-death and *nirvāna* are not to be separated the one from the other; and seeing that all things subject to discrimination have no reality, imagine that *nirvāna* consists in the future annihilation of the senses and their fields. They are not aware, Mahāmāti, of the fact that *nirvāna* is the *ālayavijñāna* where a revulsion takes place by self-discrimination. Therefore Mahāmāti those who are stupid talk of the trinity of vehicles and not of the state of mind-only where there are no images (61-62).

Sections 63, 69, 71 and 83 contain criticisms of

the Hinayāna doctrines of *skandha*, *dhātu* and *āyatana*. Sections 72, 97, 103 and 107 and 134 contain similar criticisms of the low nature of the Hinayāna standards. Chapter III continuing a similar line of thought confirms that those who adhere to discrimination of *skandha*, *dhātu* and *āyatana* are 'doomed to ruin' (147). The section 170 shows the importance of keeping the *bodhisattvas* and *mahāsattvas* away from 'those who belong to the vehicles of the *s'ṛāvaka*...' The chapter IV is a reaffirmation of the 'mind-only' doctrine and downgrading of the Hinayāna *nirvāna* which is prohibited for the *bodhisattvas* who have a loftier ideal (212). Chapter V, although it does not directly refer to the *s'ṛāvakas*, does criticize their practice of discrimination of phenomena into *skandha*, *dhātu* and *āyatana* and permanency and impermanency. Chapter VI contains a harsher attack on Hinayāna. The section (222) claims that self-realization is not gained by the *s'ṛāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas* and philosophers. Section 226 asserts that the right knowledge constitutes not 'falling back into the stage of the philosophers, '*s'ṛāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*. Section 236 refers to those 'ignorant and simple-minded who are addicted to the doctrine of momentariness' and the next section compares those who delight in *nirvāna* and those who perform the *pāramitās* of charity etc. in order to achieve it with the 'ignorant' (237). Chapter VII describes the *S'ṛāvakas* as those who have got rid of 'passion-hindrance' (*kles'avarāṇa*) but not 'knowledge-hindrance' (*jñeyāvaraṇa*), a result of direct perception of the egolessness of phenomena which is not achieved by the *s'ṛāvakas*. Chapter VIII is the only chapter which discusses a practically oriented ethical issue, namely, the practice of meat-eating. The entire chapter can be considered a direct attack on the Hinayāna. At the very outset of the chapter the Hinayānists are isolated from the other groups with whom they were combined up to that point for attack, and this fact becomes clear from this statement of Mahāmati: "even those philosophers who hold erroneous doctrines and are addicted to the views of the Lokāyata such as the dualism of being and non-being, nihilism, and eternalism, will prohibit meat-eating..." (244). In this chapter we do not encounter the expositions of usual idealist doctrines, but again the focus is the *mahāsattvas* and *bodhisattvas* who must refrain from the kind of food enjoyed by the *s'ṛāvakas*. In the discussion it is made

clear that meat-eating is not approved for anyone, not even for the *s'ṛāvakas*. The so-called 'meat purified from three ends' (*trikoṭipāris'uddhamāṇsa*) of the Hinayānists has been clearly denied (253 and 257). The last chapter which is composed of verses is basically a summary of the ideas presented in the previous eight chapters (chapter IX being only a *dhāraṇī*) although it contains some other material which is not directly related to the main trend of the *sūtra*. The criticism of the Hinayāna continues unabated in this chapter too. The section 295 puts all the doctrines criticised together and affirms their dream-like nature:

Causation, the *dhātus*, *skandhas*, and the self-nature of all things, thought-construction, a personal soul, and mind they are all like a dream, like a hair-net.

The doctrines advanced by the *s'ṛāvakas* are described as resulting from jealousy. They 'who are deeply intoxicated with the liquor of *samādhi*' are compared to an elephant 'who is stuck in deep mud is unable to move about' (322). In the very last section the basic ideas emphasized throughout the *sūtra* are reiterated:

When the dualism of being and non-being is abandoned, there is neither bothness nor not-bothness; and going beyond *s'ṛāvakahood* and *pratyekabuddhahood*, one will even pass over the seventh stage (357).

This discussion shows that the *Sūtra* has a clearly articulate dual purpose, namely, to promote the idealist trend in Buddhist philosophical thinking and the religion associated with it and to show the invalidity of the philosophy and the religion of Hinayāna.

Many scholars have noticed the *Sūtra* has a large amount of repetitions.⁴ However, this aspect of the *Sūtra* may be defended on the ground that in a work which combines theoretical philosophy with practical religion, repetitions are not only desirable but also helpful, for they serve to keep laying emphasis on the main themes so that the reader gets accustomed to the viewpoint.

The philosophical method followed in the *sūtra* is similar to the method in the *Vajracchedikā* and in

4. Suzuki (1) Vaidya, *Suddharmālaṅkāra sūtram*, Mithila Institute 1963; Kalupahana, *op. cit*

Nāgārjuna, namely, the method of conceptual 'deconstruction'. The best example of this kind of treatment is the way the Buddha treats the so called 108 questions that occur at the beginning of the second chapter. As we showed earlier these questions cover a vast range of concepts.

All the questions are dismissed as not capable of conveying the meaning intended. The obvious reason is that both language and the things behind its concepts are empty of any reality. There are other occasions where specifically Buddhist and philosophical concepts are negated, a method which very much resembles that of Nāgārjuna:

And there are no Buddhas, no truths, no fruition, no causal agents, no perversion, no *nirvāna*, no passing away, no birth. And then there are no twelve elements (*aṅga*), and no duality either, of limit and no-limit; because of the cessation of all notions (that are cherished by the philosophers). I declare (there is) Mind-only.

The difference in application of this method, however, from Nāgārjuna, as indicated in the above quoted statement, is that here all concepts are negated not only to show that they are devoid of any self-nature but also to affirm the view that all such phenomena are mind-made and hence the sole reality is mind, a view which marks the idealistic development over the *Sūnyatāvāda*.

The negation of the validity of the concepts including those in the 108 questions in the second chapter thus seems to be integral to the philosophical method adopted by the *sūtra*. In holding this view we are not in agreement with Suzuki who holds the following:

The 108 clauses preached by the Buddhas of the past are a string of negations, negating any notion that happens to come into the mind at the moment, apparently with no system, with no special philosophy in them. These negations are another example of the irrationality of the *Laṅkāvatāra* (Suzuki I. p. 41).

The negation of the validity of language is an essential aspect of the philosophy of religion in the *sūtra*. What the *sūtra* presents as ultimately valid experience is that which transcends the boundaries of language. The following question by Mahāmāti and the answer given by the Buddha to the question confirm this:

Mahāmāti: Are words themselves the highest reality, or is what is expressed in words the highest reality?

Buddha: Words are not the highest reality, nor is what is expressed in words the highest reality. Why? Because the highest reality is an exalted state of bliss, and as it cannot be entered into by mere statements regarding it, words are not the highest reality, Mahāmāti, the highest reality is to be attained by the inner realization of noble wisdom, it is not a state of word-discrimination; therefore, discrimination does not express the highest reality (87).

The denial of the validity of all concepts does not necessarily mean that 'things in themselves' are beyond expression. Rather it leads us to the core of the *Vijñānavāda* philosophy, namely, nothing in phenomena has any reality, but all of them are creations of the mind. What ultimately remains is the mind alone (*cittamātra*). This understanding shatters the *māyā*, the cause of the realistic view of phenomena and leads us to the experience of "the highest *samādhi*, which is gained by entering into the womb of Tathāgatahood, which is the realm of noble wisdom realised in one's innermost self" (21). The Religion of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, for which the philosophy is only a means, culminates here.

Asanga Tillekeratne

LAOS.

Introduction: The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a thinly populated mountainous country land-locked between Thailand, Burma, China, Vietnam and Cambodia with an estimated population of 4.6 million (in 1995). Over half the population in Laos are Buddhist, while the rest comprising more than 60 ethnic groups living on the hills adhere to the traditional beliefs of spirit cults. Buddhism continues to exist alongside animism with no conflict with the *wat* (temple) compound having a spirit (*phi*) house for the guardian of the village.

Buddhism was known in the Lao region by the 8th century A. C. from the Mon people who brought Mon civilization and Buddhism, according to Coedes who based his conclusion on inscriptions found in western Lao ('Documents sur l'histoire politique et religieuse du Laos occidental', *BEFEO*, XXV, 1925, pp. 1-202). Paul Levy dated to the 12th century, two Buddha statues found at Luang Prabang with characteristics simi-