



Relocation of the verses on “The equality of oneself and others” in the Bodhi(sattva)caryavatara

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There are two versions of the Bodhi(sattva)caryavatara, viz. the current version entitled Bodhicaryavatara (BCA) and the early version entitled Bodhisattvacaryavatara (BSA). The former is available in Sanskrit and also preserved in the Tibetan Tripitaka, while the latter was only found in the Dunhuang manuscripts, in Tibetan. Both include a series of verses about the equality of oneself and other people, the concept of which supports the Bodhisattva’s starting point of helping others, but they are situated in different chapters: at the end of the chapter on the “Perfection of strength (virya)” in the BSA and at the end of the chapter on the “Perfection of contemplation (dhyana)” in the BCA. Because the contents of the books are arranged step by step along the six perfections (paramitas), the difference may reflect the characteristics of the books themselves; more practical or more contemplative.

Commentators have already remarked upon the problem, to which chapter the verses are supposed to belong, but nothing has been written about the differences of the verses in question themselves. In fact, the total number differs and so do the details of the corresponding verses. The BCA has 84 verses while the BSA has 52. Many of the verses in the BSA have corresponding verses in the BCA, but they are not always the same in detail and that could be evidence of an enlargement of the text. I assume the change of details could have led to the relocation of the series of verses. I would like to examine this matter in this paper.

Actually the topic “the equality of oneself and others” consists of two parts, first, the equality itself and second, a practical meditation in which one substitutes one’s identity for that of another person, Each part includes differences between the two versions, but in order to investigate the reason for the relocation, I will here focus on the former part.

The BCA mentions the non-existence of self-identity as a person who feels pain, while the BSA does not refer to it. The theory is stated from an ontological viewpoint and it

explains the equality of all beings. On the basis of this theory the BCA claims one should help others because their natures are like one's own. The theory is found only in the BCA, and it is summarised in verse 113 of the "Contemplation chapter."

Here I would like to refer to the two works compiled by Dharmapala: Bodhisartvacaryavatara-sattrimsat-pindartha and Bodhisattvacaryavatara-pindartha. Both are extracts of important verses from the BCA. It has already been pointed out that these extracts convey both versions partially; i.e. they mix both versions and therefore they could have been compiled just at the time when the two versions were concurrent and read at the same time.

It is interesting that both abstracts quote only verse 113 and the opening verse of the topic (v. 90) of the "Contemplation chapter" as representative verses of the topic. Both are only found in the BCA. In addition, it would be worthy to note that both use the word "sgom pa" (meditate/ meditation), which is not used in any verse of "the verse series" in question in the BSA. This fact suggests that at that time the theory mentioned above had already been regarded as the most important part among all the verses about the equality of oneself and other people. As the BSA contains none of these, the BCA's point of view obviously changed from the BSA. The theory which explains the equality of one's self and others ontologically and the existence of the word "sgom pa" made it easy to relocate the series of verses from the chapter of strength to that of contemplation.

We can find some evidence in the "Strength chapter" which suggests that the BSA was the earlier form and that it was changed in a "well-devised" manner in the BCA. There are two key verses in the "Strength chapter," and they exist both in the BSA and in the BCA, although they are not completely the same. The two verses state the contents of the chapter one by one and form a kind of synopsis. And the last of the items is the topic of "the equality of oneself and others." Because the verse series of "the equality of oneself and others" is situated at the end of the chapter, the construction of the BSA "Strength chapter" corresponds to the two synoptic verses. In the BCA, on the other hand, the topic is not stated in this chapter. The key verses and the last verse of the chapter in the BCA (the verse corresponding to the one immediately before "the equality" verse series in the BSA "Strength chapter") were slightly but intentionally changed, so as to fit with the relocation of the verse series from the "Strength chapter" into the "Contemplation chapter."