

国際仏教学大学院大学研究紀要
第 16 号 (平成 24 年)

Journal of the International College
for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies
Vol. XVI, 2012

Far From the Madding Strife for Hollow Pleasures: Meditation and Liberation in the *Śrāvakabhūmi*

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I Prefatory Remarks

The *Śrāvakabhūmi* (Tibetan, *Nyan thos kyi sa*; Chinese, 聲聞地 *Shengwen di*), *The Foundation of the Disciples* [*'Path of Spiritual Cultivation*],² constitutes Book XIII of the **Mauḷyo bhūmayāḥ* (*Sa dngos gzhi*; 本地分 *Ben di fen*) division in the *Yogācārabhūmi* (*rNal 'byor spyod pa'i sa*; 瑜伽師地論

¹ Obviously, part of the title is inspired by Thomas Gray's poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751): 'Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife/ Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;/ Along the cool sequester'd vale of life/ They kept the noiseless tenor of their way'. Needless to say, the poem also inspired the title of Thomas Hardy's famous novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874). The 'hollow pleasures', on the other hand, come directly from the *Śrāvakabhūmi*. Our text contains a long diatribe against sensual pleasures (*kāma*) (see ŚrBh-Sh 439.17–443.4; for edited Sanskrit text, see Deleanu 2006, 319 § 3.28.2.1.2.2–323 §3.28.2.1.2.7; for English translation, *ibid.* 447–449), which are described as 'hallow' (*rikta*) (ŚrBh-Sh 441.14 = Deleanu 2006, 321.1) – to quote just one out of an endless list of unflattering epithets.

² Another possible rendering of the title is *The Disciples' Level*. The primary sense of °*bhūmi* in titles of the *Śrāvakabhūmi* and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, especially in the early phases of their textual history, appears to have been that of 'foundation' or 'source' rather than 'stage'. The latter is, to be sure, one of the meanings of the word, and this semantic sphere becomes more prominent in works such as the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* or *Scripture on the Ten Stages [of the Bodhisattva's Path]*. We must note, however, that as also argued by Itō (1968; 1970), even in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, one of the basic senses of *bhūmi* appears to have been that of

ākara 'a rich source of anything, place of origin' (Itō 1968, 134).

The meaning of 'foundation' in the title of the *Yogācārabhūmi* is also attested in later commentarial works like the **Yogācārabhūmivyākhyā* or *Exposition upon the Foundation* [or: Stages] *of Spiritual Practice* (T 30.884c25–26) (see Deleanu 2006, 48, n. 3). Similarly, in his *Sūtrālaṅkāravṛttibhāṣya* or *Gloss upon the Ornament of [Mahāyāna] Scriptures*, the Yogācāra exegete Sthiramati (ca 510–570) glosses upon the term *pañcavidhā yogabhūmiḥ* (ad MSĀ 65.16ff.), usually construed as 'five types of stages of spiritual practice', as follows: 'The [se] five types of factors are called "foundations of spiritual practice" (*yogabhūmi*) due to [their] being the basis (**āśraya*) and the ground (**nidāna*; or: **adhiṣṭhāna*) of the cultivation (**bhāvanā*) of spiritual practice (*yoga*)' (*chos rnam pa lnga rnal 'byor bsgom pa'i rten dang gzhir gyur pas na rnal 'byor gyi sa zhes bya'o* || D Mi 189a4–5). The polysemy of the word *bhūmi* is undeniable, and it is not excluded that even in the same context, more than one denotation or connotation may have been present. It seems to me, however, more natural to construe the original meaning of the titles of the *Śrāvakabhūmi* and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* as 'The Foundation of the Disciples['] Path of Spiritual Cultivation]' and 'The Foundation of the Bodhisattvas['] Path of Spiritual Cultivation]' respectively.

However, it is quite possible that *°bhūmi* in the sense 'stage', which originally might have been a secondary, even dormant, semantic line in the title of the two texts, may have gradually gained prominence over the meaning of 'foundation' once the *Śrāvakabhūmi* and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* became part of the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the latter continued its expansion into a mega-encyclopaedia of spiritual and doctrinal lore. But even in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the term *°bhūmi* has not a straightforward, unequivocal meaning of 'step' on a ladder of spiritual progression. There is no implication, for instance, that a yogi must first practice according to the Śrāvakayāna, then follow the Pratyekabuddha's path, and then engage in the bodhisattvic course of salvific activity and spiritual cultivation. If there is a sense of *bhūmi* as 'level' in context of the titles of the textual units making up the *Yogācārabhūmi*, then it must be one of hierarchical evaluation of religious ideals from the perspective of the Great Vehicle: Śrāvakayāna, the lowest Vehicle, is placed first; this is followed by the path of the Solitary Buddhas; and finally the Mahāyāna course of praxis is set forth in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.

I should add in this context that that my choice to translate the *Śrāvakabhūmi* simply as *The Disciples' Level* in Deleanu 2006, 13 and passim, should have been discussed in more nuanced terms.

Yuqie shi di lun), the vast encyclopaedic *Summa Ascetica* of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school.³ Although Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda is one of the two major Mahāyāna traditions in Indian Buddhism – the other being the Madhyamaka school, the *Śrāvakahūmi* is a text dedicated to the exposition of the spiritual cultivation practised by the followers of the conservative path of Śrāvakayāna (also known by the less flattering

³ The *Yogācārahūmi* was translated into Tibetan by Jinamitra, Ye-shes-sde, etc. at the beginning of the 9th century (for more details, see Deleanu 2006, 73ff.). The Chinese rendering of the text was made between 646–648 by the famous scholar-monk and pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) and his translation team (see Deleanu 2006, 106). Only about a half of the entire Sanskrit text of the *Yogācārahūmi* survives in manuscripts. We owe the discovery of most of these manuscripts to the great Indian scholar Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana (1903–1963). A large part of the Sanskrit manuscripts have been edited by various scholars over the years, but there are still some important fragments which have not been made available to the scholarly community at large. I discuss in detail the discovery of the *Śrāvakahūmi* MS, its palaeographical features and date in Deleanu 2006, 51–59. Here it will suffice to say that the probable date of the manuscript seems to be 11th century (at any rate, not later than 12th century). It must be stressed, however, that the manuscript has no colophon and the dating is made on the basis of palaeographical criteria, which remains a highly conjectural method. The manuscript is written in a variety of a Northern, to be more precise North-eastern, script which seems to have been fairly widespread in the region for a couple of centuries. Palaeographic research on Indian Buddhist manuscripts is an area about which we still have to learn a great deal, but I would not be surprised to find out that the bulk of the manuscripts belonging to this lineage, *Śrāvakahūmi* MS included, originated or were connected in one way or another to the Vikramaśilā Monastery, a famous Buddhist centre of learning in late mediaeval India. This, however, remains a mere hypothesis. Current research on these and other related manuscripts, such as the projects undertaken by the University of Hamburg, will certainly shed more light on the issue. Extremely relevant will also be the findings yielded by the research conducted by the International Institute of Buddhist Studies (Tokyo), especially by my colleague Mr Hori Shin'ichirō who works on the study of colophons in Northern Indian manuscripts and their palaeographical chronology and historical background.

appellation of *Hīnayāna* or 'Lesser Vehicle').⁴ The nature of its discourse is multiple: presentation of the complex edifice of the spiritual progression from its first steps to the attainment of Awakening, detailed meditation manual, philosophical treatise on a variety of related topics, Abhidharmic taxonomy of doctrines and human psychology relevant to the spiritual praxis, etc. In spite of its incorporation into a basic scripture of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school, the *Śrāvakabhūmi* is written from, or at least reflects, a Śrāvakayāna doctrinal standpoint and is not conceived of as a stage or part of the bodhisattva's path.

The importance of the *Śrāvakabhūmi* in the history of Buddhist spirituality and philosophy is undeniable. The text reflects a great and unique synthesis of centuries of contemplative practice and theory as

⁴ In India, the *Yogācārabhūmi* was no doubt considered a basic scripture of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school (see Suguro 1989, 8–15).

The Tibetan doxographic treatises *Grub mtha' chen mo* by 'Jam-dbyang bzhad-pa'i-rdo-rje Ngag-dbang-brtson-'grus (1648–1722) and *Grub mtha'i rnam par bzhag pa gsal bar bshad pa thub bstan lhun po'i mdzes rgyan* by lCang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717–1786) mention the *Yogācārabhūmi*, referred to by the title *Sa sde* (for which, see Deleanu 2006, 46–47), as the representative text of the followers of the scriptures (**āgamānusārin; lung gi rjes 'brangs*), a branch of the Cittamātra (Tibetan, *Sems tsam*) school (see fragments edited in Hakamaya 1976, 21–22)(for a brief presentation of these two Tibetan works, see Hopkins 1996, 172–173). Tibetan doxographers often distinguish between this branch, whose proponents advocate the teachings of Aśaṅga and Vasubandhu, and the followers of reasoning (**nyāyānusārin; rigs pa'i rjes 'brangs*), who rely mainly on the logico-epistemological systems of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti (see *ibid.*, 174–176).

The Far Eastern Buddhist tradition speaks of 'six sutras and eleven treatises' 六經十一論 which constitute the fundamental scriptural authority for the Faxiang (Japanese, Hossō) school 法相宗. The *Yogācārabhūmi* is listed as the first of these treatises (see Fukaura 1954, vol. 2, pp. 8–79 [especially, pp. 39–47]; Yokoyama 1976, 74; Hakamaya 1982, 48; etc.), and the impressive number of commentaries dedicated to it in China, Korea, and Japan bears testimony to the influence of this work (see Deleanu 2006, 248–252).

transmitted in a Northern Buddhist tradition which appears to have been mainly associated with the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda school⁵ and was probably also influenced by (or at least displayed similarities with) the Sautrāntikas/Dārṣṭāntikas.⁶ In many ways, the *Śrāvakabhūmi* can be said to represent the Northern counterpart of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, the most celebrated and comprehensive treatise of spiritual cultivation in the Theravāda tradition. The influence of the *Śrāvakabhūmi* on later Buddhism can be seen in the works of many illustrious figures from Kamalaśīla (ca 740–797) in India to Tsong-kha-pa (1357–1419), the founder of the dGe lugs pa tradition in Tibet, and Zhiyan 智儼 (602–668), the second patriarch of the Huayan school 華嚴宗 in China.⁷

Traditionally, Chinese sources attribute the authorship of the *Yogācārabhūmi* to Bodhisattva Maitreya 彌勒菩薩. Tibetan historiography, on the other hand, assign it to Asaṅga (Tibetan, Thogs pa med).⁸ The text, however, does not seem to be work of a single author. It rather appears to be the outcome of a gradual compilation process which took place between roughly the beginning of the 3rd century and the latter half of the 4th century CE.⁹ The earliest reliable information concerning the date of the

⁵ For a brief discussion of the term Mūlasarvāstivāda, containing references to some of the key contributions to the topic, see Deleanu 2006, 215, n. 70.

⁶ On the scholastic affiliation of the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, see Deleanu 2006, 156–162, as well as Deleanu 2007.

⁷ On the place of the *Śrāvakabhūmi* in the history of Indian Buddhism and its influence on Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism, see Deleanu 2006, 248–280.

⁸ The problem of the differences between the Chinese and Tibetan traditions concerning the authorship of the *Yogācārabhūmi* is meticulously examined by Suguro (1989, 94–125).

⁹ The problem of the authorship or formation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* still remains a controversial problem. While scholars like Frauwallner (1969, 265), Schmithausen (1969; 1987, especially pp. 13–14, 183–185; 2000), etc. strongly (and, in my opinion, convincingly) argue in favour of a gradual formation of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, there

Yogācārabhūmi, which can more or less be taken as the *terminus ante quem* of its compilation, is provided by the Chinese translation of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, which represents Book XV in our current text of the **Mauilyo bhūmayāḥ*. The first rendering of this text was done in 418 by the Indian monk Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (385–433)¹⁰ under the title of *Pusa di chi jing* 菩薩地持經 (**Bodhisattvabhūmyādhāra*).¹¹ It attests not only to the

are quite a few modern researchers who maintain that the work can be ascribed to a single author, whether Asaṅga or Maitreya or whatever his name was. More on this as well as the formation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* is found in Deleanu 2006, 147–247.

¹⁰ For the eventful life of Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (*var. lec.* 曇摩讖, 曇謨讖), see the *Gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳 or *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (T50.335c-337b). For an excellent French translation, see Shih tr. 1968, 98ff.

¹¹ Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), the compiler of the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏集記 or *Collection of Notes Concerning the Translation of the Tripiṭaka*, the oldest extant Chinese catalogue of Buddhist scriptures (generally considered to be a reliable historical source), gives the translation date as ‘year 7 of the Xuanshi 玄始 Era’ (i.e. 418 C.E.). (It must be noted, however, that this date appears only in the versions of the Zifu, Puning and Jingshan Canons; see T55.11b19 and p. 11, n. 14)(for more on Chinese editions of the Buddhist Canon, see Deleanu 2006, 110ff.). The *Chu san zang ji ji* also registers the following variants of the Chinese title of the text: *Pusa jie jing* 菩薩戒經 and *Pusa di jing* 菩薩地經. Sengyou has also left a note on the relation between this text and Guṇavarman’s 求那跋摩 closely related translation, the *Pusa shan jie jing* 菩薩善戒經 (T55.62c-63a). On the relation between these two renderings, see also Tokiwa [1938] 1973, 948–951, and Demiéville [1957] 1973, 301. Though some matters of detail are not certain, there is, however, no doubt that both these two translations were done at the beginning of the 5th century.

In terms of textual history, the *Pusa shan jie jing* seems to be the oldest version of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. Its revised and amplified version is the *Pusa di chi jing*, and the latest stage is represented by the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* rendered by Xuanzang, the Tibetan translation and the extant Sanskrit original which constitutes Book XV of the present *Yogācārabhūmi* (see Sueki 1980; cf. also Sueki 1979). It is quite possible that the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* also circulated as an independent work in India, and some variants may have preserved older versions of the text. The *Pusa shan jie jing* and the *Pusa di chi jing* may actually reflect such versions, and in the first centuries after

existence of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* in a version more or less similar to the extant Sanskrit text but also to that of other parts of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, including the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, which are cited or referred to.¹²

the formation of the text, they may have been transmitted in parallel with the developed *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, i.e. which was more or less similar to the extant Sanskrit original. One must add here that a careful analysis of the textual variants should also take into consideration the role of the Chinese translator(s). Differences in translation style, abbreviations of the original, explanatory additions, editorial interventions, imperfections in communicating the exact sense of the text to the Chinese assistants responsible for the final wording of the rendering, failure to understand nuances or difficult readings in the original, etc. — all these may result in enough divergences which do not necessarily need the postulation of a different Indian version.

¹² More on Dharmakṣema's translation is found Deleanu 2006, 183ff.

Another clue concerning the date of the *Yogācārabhūmi* is provided by the fact that we find three references to this text in Vasubandhu's *Pratītyasamutpādayākyā* (P Chi fol. 5b1, 13a1, 25b4) (see Matsuda 1984, 82–85; Skilling 2000, 303). The exact date of the *Pratītyasamutpādayākyā* is not known, but it most probably represents a work written by Vasubandhu in the early phases of his Mahāyāna period. Furthermore, there are numerous similarities between the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the *Yogācārabhūmi*. The American scholar Robert Kritzer (1999, 199–204; 2003, 375–381; 2005; etc.) reasonably argues that that many doctrines and passages in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* actually seem to rely upon or presuppose the *Yogācārabhūmi*. Though no direct reference to the *Yogācārabhūmi* is made in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* itself, it is quite possible that Vasubandhu knew and drew inspiration from the former or, at least, was familiar with the doctrinal tradition which had produced it. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* most probably belongs to Vasubandhu's early phase of activity, traditionally being counted as his first major opus. I suppose, however, that even a genius of Vasubandhu's stature needed some time to become familiar and synthesise more than one scholastic tradition in such a masterful and creative way. Therefore, I would speculate that the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* must have been written by Vasubandhu when he was in his thirties (or even early forties?). This would then imply that the *Yogācārabhūmi* had probably assumed its more or less final shape already before this date. But does this offer us a precise point in time? This is a welcome clue, but it is far from bringing a final

The *Śrāvakabhūmi* appears to belong to the oldest stratum of the *Yogācārabhūmi*.¹³ There are, I believe, good reasons to assume that the *Śrāvakabhūmi* itself was compiled as an independent text in a gradual process spanning over a few decades. Roughly speaking, placing its formation in the 3rd century CE cannot be too off mark. A more daring, though arguably plausible, dating would be roughly between 200 and 270. The authors and redactors behind this compilation most probably belonged to one or several kindred groups of contemplatives (*yogācāra*) affiliated to the Sarvāstivāda tradition.¹⁴ We know that monastics mainly specialised in meditative practices, usually referred to as *yogācāra* or *yogin*, are attested

solution. Actually, Vasubandhu's date is one of the thorniest issues in Buddhist studies. In Deleanu 2006, 186ff. I argue for 350–430 as being the most likely dates, but this remains nothing but a hypothesis.

¹³ See Schmithausen 1987, 14; etc. For more details on the formation of the *Śrāvakabhūmi* and bibliographical details, see Deleanu 2006, 156 ff.

¹⁴ On quite a few occasions, the *Śrāvakabhūmi* expresses views which are similar to or prefigure Sautrāntika doctrines. (What exactly Sautrāntika means as a school [if it ever was one] remains a controversial issue in Buddhist studies; for a collection of some of the recent contributions on the subject, see the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 26, Nr. 2: *The Sautrāntikas*; see also Deleanu 2006, 159–160 [as well as notes], etc. for a brief discussion and further bibliographical data.) Moreover, we can also find instances in which the *Śrāvakabhūmi* agrees with neither the Sarvāstivādins nor the Sautrāntikas. (I discuss such examples in several contexts in Deleanu 2006 and Deleanu 2007, the latter being a paper dedicated to this topic.) This fact does not, I believe, upset the general picture, i.e. the affiliation of the *Śrāvakabhūmi*-related *yogācāras* to the Sarvāstivāda community, in terms of basic doctrinal framework and probably monastic lineage. The Sarvāstivādins were a very large and fairly diverse community, allowing for some doctrinal freedom. The **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 or *Great Treatise upon the Extensive Exposition of the Doctrinal System* is actually an attempt to settle the doctrinal diversity within the Sarvāstivāda fold and decide once and for ever an orthodox system of this school. Last but not least, it must be stressed that the Sautrāntikas were not different from the Sarvāstivādins in every single detail of their philosophy, and there is a common base shared by both schools.

in numerous sources linked to a variety of Buddhist schools.¹⁵ As suggested above, the doctrinal core of the *Śrāvakahūmi* has much in common with the Sarvāstivādin system. Since the active role of the *yogācāras* 瑜伽師 is abundantly attested in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, a fundamental treatise of the Sarvāstivādin school compiled around the middle of the 2nd century CE, it seems natural, or at least plausible, to assume that the tradition behind the *Śrāvakahūmi* is historically linked to this milieu.¹⁶

No matter what the exact scholastic affiliation and formation process of the *Śrāvakahūmi* might have been, there is no doubt that the text represents a typically Śrāvakayānika standpoint. Even if we regarded it as a chapter in an encyclopaedic opus composed by a single author or group of authors working according to a well-structured plan, we would have to conclude that this was the main entry devoted to the exposition of the Śrāvakayāna meditative praxis and theory.

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The presentation below focuses upon the framework and main steps on the path of spiritual cultivation in the *Śrāvakahūmi*.¹⁷ Many of the

¹⁵ We owe Jonathan Silk (2000) an excellent study on the meaning and historical background of the term *yogācāra* in Buddhist sources.

¹⁶ The role and many of the doctrines of the *yogācāras* in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* are examined in a meticulous study undertaken by the Japanese scholar Nishi Giyū (1975).

¹⁷ Unfortunately, we do not have a complete translation of the *Śrāvakahūmi* into a modern language. The closest thing to it is Wayman's (1961) contribution which offers a synoptical presentation of the entire text with key Sanskrit passages translated into English. In spite of its shortcomings and controversial points, Wayman's work succeeds in giving a bird's-eye view of the *Śrāvakahūmi*. Of far higher scholarly value and much more reliable is the translation of the text into modern Japanese (alongside a new and meticulously edited Sanskrit text) provided

doctrinal and psychological technicalities as well as numerous practical details, which our text often discusses in great detail, have been omitted. This will, I hope, allow for a clearer picture of the path trodden by the contemplative from his/her first steps to the attainment of Awakening.¹⁸

by the *Śrāvakahūmi* Study Group of Taishō University (see Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 1998, III-IX; Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 1998). This is a translation of the entire text, but the project is still progress with the latest instalment (at least as known to me as of 28th of March 2012), i.e. Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 2011b, approaching now the end of Yogasthāna [Book] III. (The end of the text edited and translated in Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 2011, i.e. ŚrBh-Gr (25) 150.15 corresponds to ŚrBh-Sh 422.9.)

The most important studies directly relevant to the path of spiritual cultivation in the *Śrāvakahūmi* are (chronologically arranged): Wayman 1961; Schmithausen 1982; Mōri 1989; Huimin 1994; Schmithausen 2007, 215–232; Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 1998, III-IX; Abe 2004; Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 2007, III-XVII; 371–380. Deleanu 2006 also contains edited passages, translations, discussions, and bibliographical data relevant to the meditative praxis in the *Śrāvakahūmi*, especially the mundane path. (For more details on modern editions, translations and studies in general of the *Śrāvakahūmi*, see Deleanu 2006, 59–62).

Schmithausen's studies (1982 and 2007) are particularly outstanding, and my presentation here owes a great deal to them. (Deleanu 2006 is actually based upon my doctoral thesis supervised by Professor Schmithausen, to whose bodhisattvic generosity and guidance I should once again like to express my deepest gratitude.)

¹⁸ The *Śrāvakahūmi* refers to contemplatives as *yogācāra* or *yogin*. Our text does not seem to make a doctrinally relevant distinction between these two words. On the three classes or rather levels of *yogācāra* in the *Śrāvakahūmi*, i.e. beginners (*ādikarmika*), adepts (*kṛtāparicaya*), and practitioners who have transcended the practice of contemplation (*atīkrāntamanaskāra*), see ŚrBh-Sh 284.4ff. (= ŚrBh-Gr II 168.1ff.). Let us note that the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* uses similar terms with reference to the levels attained in the cultivation of the impure (*aśubhābhāvanā*) (see AKBh Ch. VI ver. 9–13).

As many, if not most, of the traditional Indian sources, Buddhist ones included, our text usually employs only masculine forms ('he', 'his', etc.) when speaking of these contemplatives. Seen from the paradigm of our age, such a usage appears sexist. One should, however, be fair and add that there are also sources which clearly

II The Path of Spiritual Cultivation

The path of spiritual cultivation depicted in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* consists of a preparatory phase and two lines of progression called ‘mundane path’ (*laukikamārga*) and ‘supramundane path’ (*lokottaramārga*) respectively. These paths can be practised either separately or combined, and as we shall see below, the decision on how to deal with them has much to do with the contemplative’s mental constitution, background, and objectives. The yogi practising the mundane path attains a series of ever deeper levels of serenity and increasingly rarefied states of consciousness expansion, reduction, and eventually cessation. These altered states of consciousness, traditionally subsumed under the category of tranquillity meditation (*śamatha*), are, however, temporary and cannot lead to the final Liberation from the cycle of rebirths and suffering.¹⁹ It is only the supramundane path, which basically consists in reflective meditation (*vipaśyanā*) directed at the Four Noble Truths, that is conducive to Nirvana. This actually represents a spiritual paradigm typical of the Northern Śrāvakayāna strand of Buddhism, mainly of the Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika schools.²⁰ Like in the famous *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, for instance, the reflective meditation

refer to female contemplatives, too (see, for instance, the examples analysed in Silk 2000), and that the Order of nuns likewise attests to the fact that women were not barred from spiritual praxis. The fact that I often employ masculine forms only, especially in translations, to refer to meditators should be understood as an attempt to stay close to the conventions of the traditional wording. It reflects no sexist assumption that the meditative techniques as well as the philosophy behind them are not accessible to women, an assumption which was anyway alien to many of the traditional sources in spite of their failure to express it in clear grammatical forms.

¹⁹ For the taxonomy of Buddhist meditation, see Deleanu 2010.

²⁰ For an excellent study on the formation of the Sarvāstivādin path of spiritual cultivation, see Frauwallner 1995, 149ff. .

characteristic of the supramundane path is given the central role while the mundane path is relegated to an ancillary or soteriologically inferior alternative course.²¹

1. Preparatory Phase

Strictly speaking, the preparatory phase also includes a basic training in the restraint in morality (*śīlasaṃvara*), restraint of senses (*indriyasaṃvara*), moderation in eating (*bhojane mātrañātā*), mindful conduct (*saṃprajānad-vihāritā*), etc. These topics are discussed in detail in the Chapter on Requisites (*saṃbhāra*) in Book (*yogasthāna*) One of the *Śrāvakahūmi*.²² Each of them is quite interesting for understanding what traditional contemplatives expected of their disciples as well as of the spiritual

²¹ The path of spiritual cultivation in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* is discussed mainly in Chapter VI (AKBh 327ff.).

²² ŚrBh-Gr I 62.2ff.; ŚrBh-Sh 36.11ff. The full list of requisites include the following thirteen factors:

1. Propitious conditions regarding oneself (*ātmasaṃpad*)⁽¹⁾ (begins at ŚrBh-Gr I 62.8; ŚrBh-Sh 37.4).
2. Propitious conditions regarding others (*parasamṃpad*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 62.8; Sh 37.4)
3. Wholesome aspiration for the Teaching (*kuśalo dharmacchandah*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 62.8; Sh 37.4)
4. Restraint in morality (*śīlasaṃvara*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 62.11; ŚrBh-Sh 37.7)
5. Restraint of senses (*indriyasaṃvara*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 100.1; ŚrBh-Sh 63.14)
6. Moderation in eating (*bhojane mātrañātā*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 116.1; ŚrBh-Sh 73.19)
7. Staying awake and meditating in the first and last watches of the night (*pūrvatrāpararātram jāgarikāyogasyānuuyuktatā*) (ŚrBh-Gr I 150.1; ŚrBh-Sh 97.16)
8. Mindful conduct (*saṃprajānadvihāritā*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 172.1; ŚrBh-Sh 111.11)
9. Qualities of the spiritual guide (*kalyāṇamitrata*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 212.1)⁽²⁾
10. Listening to and cogitating upon the True Teaching (*saddharmaśravaṇacintanā*) (ŚrBh-Gr I 226.4; ŚrBh-Sh 134.6)
11. Lack of obstructions (*anantarāya*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 244.2; ŚrBh-Sh 144.1)

environment. A detailed presentation of these requisites is unfortunately not possible here, and we shall go straight to the *yogācāra*'s ABC in meditative training.

The novice begins his/her praxis by choosing from one of the following meditative objects: (1) impurity (*aśubhā*), (2) friendliness (*maitrī*), (3) dependent origination (*idaṃpratyayatāpratītyasamutpāda*), (4) analysis of the elements (*dhātuprabheda*) and (5) mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasmṛti*).²³ The choice is actually made by the master guiding the spiritual progression of the trainee and is determined by the fundamental proclivity which underlies the latter's psyche.²⁴

(1) Persons dominated by passion (*rāgacarita*) should contemplate the impure (*aśubhā*) in the form of either (a) repellent anatomical parts and physiological processes of the human body or (b) various stages in the decay of a corpse.

(2) If dominated by hatred (*dveṣacarita*),²⁵ the ascetic should meditate

12. Generosity (*tyāga*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 256.4; ŚrBh-Sh 149.8)

13. [Spiritual] adornments of the recluse (*śramaṇālaṃkāra*)(ŚrBh-Gr I 268.2; ŚrBh-Sh 155.1)

(1) 'Propitious condition' for *samṣad* is admittedly a free rendering. Closer translations would be 'excellence', 'perfection', or 'fulfilment'. It is also possible that, as suggested by Wezler (2000, 440, 441), *samṣad* could mean *in fine compositi* 'complete group' of factors. See also Deleanu 2006, 38, n. 23.

(2) The last part of the mindful conduct and the beginning of the qualities of the spiritual guide lack in the Sanskrit manuscript as well as in Shukla's edition. The ŚrBh-Gr edition gives here the corresponding Tibetan translation.

²³ In the ŚrBh, these techniques are discussed in detail at ŚrBh-Sh 202.3 ff. (= ŚrBh-Gr II 58.7ff.) and ŚrBh-Sh 411.5ff (= ŚrBh-Gr (25)).

²⁴ The beginning of Book III (ŚrBh-Sh 352.1ff. = ŚrBh-Gr (22) 10.1ff.) gives a vivid description of the way the master welcomes the disciple, gives advice, and initiates him into spiritual praxis (*yoga*).

²⁵ At ŚrBh-Sh 209.14 (= ŚrBh-Gr II 70.15), this type of person is called *vyāpādacaritaḥ pudgalo*.

on friendliness or loving kindness (*maitrī*), a feeling which should be gradually extended to encompass all sentient beings.²⁶

(3) The yogi dominated by bewilderment (*mohacarita*) should reflect upon the fact that all phenomena arise on the basis of a complex chain of causation which ultimately has neither permanent doer nor experiencer (*niṣkāarakavedakatva*).²⁷

(4) The practitioner dominated by arrogance (*mānacarita*) should analyse the human being and comprehend that it consists of nothing more than six basic elements, to wit, earth (*pṛthvīdhātu*), water (*abdhātu*), fire (*tejodhātu*), wind (*vāyudhātu*), space (*ākāśadhātu*), and sentience (*viññāna*).²⁸

(5) The mindfulness of breathing is the practice recommended for those who are dominated by restless thoughts (*vitarkacarita*).²⁹

The ascetic must grasp and refine the characteristic (*nimitta*) of his meditative object until he purifies the mind (*cittaṃ viśodhayati*) from the respective proclivity.³⁰ The notion of *nimitta* ‘(essential) characteristic’ or ‘mental image’ of the meditative object is actually fundamental for the

²⁶ An excellent edition (Sanskrit and Tibetan texts) as well as German translation of the main passages connected to the practice of the meditation on friendliness in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* is found in Maithrimurthi 1999, 277–304.

²⁷ ŚrBh-Sh 210.7 (= ŚrBh-Gr II 70.21).

²⁸ For the definition of *viññāna* here, see ŚrBh-Sh 218.6–8 (= ŚrBh-Gr II 78.13). For an excellent analysis of the meaning of the concept of *viññāna* in Early Buddhism, see Vetter 2000, 63–73, etc.

²⁹ The matching of these techniques with various personality types is found in several places in the ŚrBh. Here I rely mainly on the treatment found at ŚrBh-Sh 198.12–199.9 (= ŚrBh-Gr II 50.14–52.10) as well as ŚrBh-Sh 202.3ff. (= ŚrBh-Gr II 58.7ff.).

³⁰ See, for instance, ŚrBh-Sh 210.10–11 (= ŚrBh-Gr II 72.2–3): *mohacaritāc cittaṃ viśodhayati* ‘[the yogi] purifies the mind from [being] dominated by bewilderment’. (Here ŚrBh-MS omits *moha* but the word can be reconstructed from Tib. *gti mug* and Ch. 諸癡; see ŚrBh-Gr II 72, note 3).

understanding of the yogic praxis in many, if not all, Buddhist traditions.³¹ Let us see how this works in the case of the meditation on the impure.³² First, the yogi must go to a charnel-ground (*śmaśāna*) and carefully behold a decaying corpse. When this is not feasible, the contemplative grasps its basic characteristics from a painting or a representation made of wood (*citrakṛtād vā kāṣṭhaśmaśānakṛtād vā nimittam udgrhāṇa*; ŚrBh-Sh 416.7-8).³³ Having imprinted the image (*nimitta*) in his mind, the ascetic has no more need to observe the physical object as such.

He must then look for a quiet place under a tree (*vr̥kṣamūla*) or in a solitary abode (*śūnyāgara*) and bring his mind in a state of non-distraction and mindfulness (*cittāvīkṣeṣe smṛtyuṣanibaddhaṃ kuru*; ŚrBh-Sh 416.13). After dwelling a while in this state of concentration, undisturbed by inner and outer stimuli, the contemplative will start visualising the image which he has grasped (ŚrBh-Sh 416.19-22). Obtaining a clear image of it is, however, far from easy, and the ascetic has two ancillary methods to boost

³¹ The term *nimitta* is polysemic. It also means 'sign', 'phenomenon', 'cause', etc. On different types of *nimitta* in our text, see ŚrBh-Sh 280-281; 411.5ff. For more details, see Deleanu 2006, 473, n. 17. The importance of *nimitta* in Buddhist meditation is witnessed in other sources as well. See, for instance, *Visuddhimagga* IV, § 31ff.; etc.

³² This meditation is described in detail in Schmithausen 1982, 63ff and Schmithausen 2005, 225-229. A detailed examination of the object of the meditation on impurity in the *Śrāvakahūmi* is found in Huimin (1994, 134ff.). The concentration on the impurity of the body (variously referred to in the Pali tradition as *asubhabhāvanā*, *asubhajhāna*, *asubhasaññā*, *asubhato manaskaroti*, etc.), either in the form of the foulness of the anatomical parts and physiological processes of the living body or by observing the stages of a decaying corpse, is a very old meditative practice. In the Pali Canon, the practice is expounded at DN II 239ff.; MN I 57ff.; etc. A detailed explanation of the stages of decay is founded at Vism 145ff. Cf. also Dhs §§ 263-264.

³³ It should be noted that the passage presented here is written in the form of instructions directly given by the master to the novice ascetic. This is also apparent from the imperative form of the verb in the examples cited here and below.

his performance. One is to alternate the exercise proper with the visualisation of light (*ālokanimitta*)(ŚrBh-Sh 421.18-422.9). This will eventually make the image of the decaying corpse appear brighter.³⁴ The second is to repeatedly wipe off imperfect images and replace them with ever better ones until a flawless mental representation is produced (ŚrBh-Sh 421.3-8).³⁵ The process is compared to the training of a painter's disciple (*citrakārāntevāsīn*) who is given a model to copy. The disciple first produces an imperfect replica, then wipes it off and tries again and again until his copy becomes faultless (ŚrBh-Sh 437. 8-19).

The meditative exercise does not stop here, and once a perfect image is obtained, the contemplative imagines the whole world becoming pervaded with corpses (ŚrBh-Sh 420.1-9). This makes him cogitate that in the course of the beginningless cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), he has left behind an even larger number of bodies and this process will continue for ever unless Liberation is attained (ŚrBh-Sh 420.9-421.1). In this way, our ascetic achieves his basic aim of purifying his mind from passion for sensual pleasures, at least while engaged in this meditative praxis. When the purified conviction with regard to the meditative object arises in him (*pariśuddhaś cālambanādhimokṣaḥ pravartate*)(ŚrBh-Sh 437.12-13), the yogi can decide whether he will proceed by the mundane path or by the supramundane path.

2. Mundane Path (*laukikamārga*)

(ŚrBh-Sh 439.3-470.6)³⁶

The mundane path consists in achieving the four meditative absorptions

³⁴ See also ŚrBh-Sh 416.2-4.

³⁵ See also ŚrBh-Sh 395.2-7; 397.2-19.

³⁶ For critical editions of the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions as well as an annotated English translation of the Chapter on the Mundane Path, see Deleanu

(*dhyāna*), the four immaterial attainments (*ārūpyasamāpatti*), the two attainments without mental activity (*acittike samāpatti*), and the five supernatural faculties (*abhijñā*)(ŚrBh-Sh 439.3–470.6).³⁷ The eight meditative attainments, i.e. the four *dhyānas* and the four *ārūpyasamāpattis*, are obtained by means of the seven contemplations or seven contemplative levels (*saṭṭa manaskārāḥ*), which is a unique set of meditative techniques peculiar to the *Śrāvakabhūmi*. In this section, we shall focus upon the presentation of this practice in relation to the first absorption (*prathamadyāna*)(ŚrBh-Sh 439.3–445.12).³⁸

(1) The contemplation apprehending the [essential] characteristics (*lakṣaṇapratisamvedī manaskārāḥ*). This represents a careful examination of the object of meditation under six aspects, i.e. meaning (*artha*), thing (*vastu*), characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*), category (*pakṣa*), time (*kāla*), and reasoning (*yukti*). The meditative objects most amply treated in this context are the coarseness (*audārikatā; audārikalakṣaṇa*) of the sensual pleasures (*kāma*) and the serenity (*śāntatā; śāntalakṣaṇa*) of the first absorption. The nature of this examination is discursive, consisting mainly in listening (*śruta*) to and cogitation (*cintā*) upon relevant Buddhist teachings.

(2) The contemplation leading to [/characterised by] conviction (*ādhimokṣiko manaskārāḥ*). The ascetic gradually becomes convinced that the sensual pleasures are fraught with defects which bring various and ceaseless suffering. By contrast, the meditative absorption offers a serene and peaceful abode. The process of gaining conviction is achieved by meditative cultivation alone (*bhāvanākāreṇaiva*).³⁹

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³⁷ The mundane path in the ŚrBh is also discussed in Schmithausen 1982, 74–76, and Schmithausen 2005, 215–219.

³⁸ For the revised Sanskrit edition, see Deleanu 2006, 318–326.

³⁹ Buddhist sources distinguish the following levels in spiritual cultivation:

(3) The contemplation engendering separation (*prāvivekyo manaskāraḥ*). As a result of his assiduous practice, the yogi generates for the first time the path leading to the elimination of defilements (*kleśaprahāṇāya mārga utpadyate*). In our particular case, this means that the meditator's attachment for sensual pleasures (*kāma*) begins to wane.

(4) The contemplation comprising delight (*ratisaṃgrāhako manaskāraḥ*). The contemplative starts to feel the benefit of abandoning sensual pleasures. This leads to the experience of genuine joy and pleasure – still limited in degree at this stage – resulting from their removal.

(5) The investigating contemplation (*mīmāṃsāmanaskāraḥ*). The ascetic ascertains whether the elimination of the latent proclivities is only due to his meditative efforts or is achieved by the very nature (*dharmatā*) of his mentation, i.e. in a spontaneous, effortless manner. Only when the former proves to be the case, this contemplative level is achieved. Otherwise, the practitioner has to engage in his training again and again until the elimination is ascertained to be spontaneous.

(6) The contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice (*prayogaṇiṣṭho manaskāraḥ*). The yogi cultivates the antidotes for defilements, repeatedly investigates whether the defilements have been abandoned or not, and in the end, his mind becomes temporarily free from all the defilements pertaining to the realm of sensual pleasures (*kāmadhātu*).

listening (*śruta*), cogitation (*cintā*), and meditative cultivation (*bhāvanā*), each being associated with a specific type of wisdom (*prajñā*). The stage of *bhāvanā* represents meditation par excellence, i.e. a contemplative process going beyond the discursive levels of listening and cogitation. It is by means of *bhāvanā* that the practitioner comes to directly apprehend the essence of the meditation object and eventually of the Truth (often equated in the Śrāvākayāna tradition with the Four Noble Truths). On this tripartite classification, see, for instance, AKBh ch. VI ver. 25 and following auto-commentary (AKBh 349).

(7) The contemplation representing the fruit of the culmination of the practice (*prayogaṅiṣṭhāphalo manaskāraḥ*). This constitutes the final goal of this series of contemplative steps, which in this case means the attainment of the first meditative absorption proper (*mauladhyaṇa*).⁴⁰

And the rest of the meditative attainments are obtained by similarly applying the same series of seven contemplations.

3. Supramundane Path (*lokottaramārga*)

(ŚrBh-Sh 470.7-510.13)

The supramundane path represents a series of meditative processes which lead to the realisation (*abhisamaya*) of the Four [Noble] Truths (*catvāri satyāni*) and the attainment of Liberation.⁴¹ The same set of seven contemplations (*sapta manaskāraḥ*) is employed but in a rather different

⁴⁰ The absorption proper (literally, 'root [/main] absorption') refers to the meditative state as such which is distinguished from the preparatory concentration preceding its full attainment. This is a distinction which probably originated with the Northern Abhidharma, mainly Sarvāstivāda tradition. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, for instance, discusses in various contexts the absorption proper and the liminal attainments (*sāmantaka*, or *dhyānāntara*, or in the case of the first *dhyāna* only, *anāgāmya*) through which one reaches the former state (see AKBh ch. VIII ver. 5a-b; AKBh ch. VIII ver. 22a; AKBh 436.12-13; AKBh 447.17-18; AKBh 448.4; etc.). The Theravāda tradition, on the other hand, does not use this terminology but has structurally similar strategies for attaining *jhāna* proper (see Kv 565-569; Kv-a 174-175; Vism 102, §§ 32-33; etc.). (I discuss in more detail this problem in Deleanu 2006, 509-510, n. 118.) What the *Śrāvakabhūmi* does is actually a further refinement which analyses the preparatory phase and absorption state proper into *seven* steps. The feeling one gets from the *Śrāvakabhūmi* treatment here as well as in the context of the mundane path is that of a praxis-orientated approach. This does not seem to be analysis for analysis' sake but reflects a very careful mapping of the psychological processes occurring during the meditative training.

⁴¹ The supramundane path in the ŚrBh is also discussed in Schmithausen 1982, 76-85, and Schmithausen 2005, 219-224.

manner and with slight changes of order.

(1) The contemplation apprehending the [essential] characteristics (*lakṣaṇapratisamvedī manaskāraḥ*) (begins at ŚrBh-Sh 470.10). It consists in reflecting upon the Noble Truths (*āryasatyāni*) under sixteen aspects.⁴² This contemplation receives a very detailed treatment. A brief summary of its practice, in the words of the *Śrāvakahūmi* itself, will suffice:

The contemplative who has grasped the Four Noble Truths by listening to their succinct and detailed expositions, who has well cultivated his concentration or has obtained the basic absorptions and immaterial [attainments], apprehends the [essential] characteristics of the Truth of Suffering under four aspects, i.e. impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no(n)-Self;⁴³ [and likewise, he apprehends] the [essential] characteristics of the Truth of Origination under four aspects, i.e. cause, origination, production, and condition. He [further] apprehends the [essential] characteristics of the Truth of Cessation under four aspects, i.e. cessation, serenity, exquisiteness, and escape [from the cycle of rebirths]. [Finally,] he apprehends the [essential] characteristics of the Truth of the Path under four aspects, i.e. path, method, course [of practice], and leading forth [from suffering].

(Sanskrit original: *Tatra caturnām āryasatyānām soddeśavibhaṅgānām śravaṇenodgrhītā yogācāraḥ*⁴⁴ *subhāvitamanaskāro vā,*

⁴² Let us also note here that *Śrāvakahūmi* authors prefer to construe the compound *āryasatyāni* as ‘Truths [realised by] the Noble Ones’ (ŚrBh-Sh 254.5-10 = ŚrBh-Gr II 120.1-5). I stick, however, to the translation ‘Four Noble Truths’ because of its almost universal use in modern introductions, essays, and studies dedicated to Buddhism.

⁴³ Here and below, I adopt a rather free rendering. The original literally goes as ‘through the aspect of impermanence, through the aspect of suffering’, etc.

⁴⁴ Both ŚrBh-MS and ŚrBh-Sh read: *śramaṇenodgrhītayogācāraḥ*.

No doubt, *śramaṇena*^o should be emended to *śravaṇena*^o. This is not only more

*mauladhyānārūpyalābhī vā, caturbhir ākārair duḥkhasatyasya lakṣa-
ṇaṃ pratisaṃvedayate, tadyathā 'nityākāreṇa, duḥkhākāreṇa,
śūnyākāreṇa,⁴⁵ anātmākāreṇa ca; caturbhir ākārair samudayasaty-
asya,⁴⁶ tadyathā hetutaḥ, samudayataḥ, prabhavataḥ, pratyayataś ca.
Caturbhir ākārair nirodhasatyasya lakṣaṇaṃ pratisaṃvedayate,
tadyathā nirodhataḥ, sāntataḥ, praṇītataḥ, niḥsaraṇataś ca. Caturbhir
ākārair mārgasatyasya lakṣaṇaṃ pratisaṃvedayate, tadyathā mārga-
taḥ, nyāyataḥ, pratipattitaḥ, nairyāṇikataś ca.)*

(ŚrBh-MS 120a5 (right side)-120a8 (left side); ŚrBh-Sh 470.10–21).⁴⁷

meaningful from a doctrinal viewpoint but also supported by the Tibetan *thos* and Chinese 聽聞 (see note 47 below for the citation of the entire passage). Wayman 1961, 130, also emends *śramaṇena*^o to *śravaṇena*^o.

More difficulties are raised by *udgrhita*, but emending it to *udgrhitā* (ie *udgrhitṛ* = one who grasps; cf. *grhitṛ* in Monier-Williams [1899] 1986, s.v.) appears to be the best solution. For an occurrence of *udgrhitṛ* in our text, see ŚrBh-Sh 48.12 (= ŚrBh-Gr I 78.8): *nāmagotrodgrhitā*.

⁴⁵ ŚrBh-Sh omits. Wayman 1961, 130, reads: *śūnyatākāreṇa*.

⁴⁶ Here, too, the Chinese and Tibetan contain the equivalent of *lakṣaṇaṃ pratisaṃvedayate* (see note 47 below for the citation of the entire passage). Wayman 1961, 130, too, adds: *lakṣaṇaṃ pratisaṃvedayate*. The ŚrBh-MS (as well as ŚrBh-Sh) do not contain, however, this phrase, and the whole sentence is meaningful even without it. As often seen in the ŚrBh, the style is not exactly symmetric and polished. This is, I surmise, a trace of an earlier stage in the formation and circulation of the text as an oral exposition. The addition in the Tibetan and Chinese versions can be explained as a deliberate editorial effort made by the respective translators to bring more symmetry to their texts.

⁴⁷ The Tibetan translation reads: *de la 'phags pa'i bden pa bzhi po mdor bstan pa dang | rgyas par bshad pa dang bcas pa thos shing bzung la legs par bsgoms shing yid la byed pa'am | bsam gtan dang gzugs med pa'i dngos gzhi thob pa'i rnal 'byor spyod pas⁽¹⁾ nyi rnam pa bzhi po 'di lta ste | mi rtag pa'i rnam pa dang | sdug bsngal ba'i rnam pa dang | stong pa'i rnam pa dang | bdag med pa'i rnam pas bden pa sdug bsngal gyi mtshan nyid so sor rig par byed do || rnam pa bzhi po 'di lta ste | rgyu'i rnam pa dang | kun 'byung ba'i rnam pa dang | rab tu skye ba'i rnam pa dang | rkyen gyi⁽²⁾ rnam pas (P 214b1) bden pa kun 'byung ba'i mtshan nyid so sor rig par byed do ||*

A large part of the section on the *lakṣaṇapratiṣamvedī manaskāraḥ* is dedicated to the way in which the yogi grasps the realities comprised in the Truth of Suffering (*duḥkhasatya*). For this purpose, the Śrāvakabhūmi devises a further series of ten aspects which are distributed under the four aspects mentioned above (ŚrBh-Sh 471.1ff.). These ten aspects offer a more concrete picture of the reality and help the contemplative gain a concrete feeling of this Truth. He is thus taught that all conditioned phenomena (*sarvasaṃskāra*) are impermanent (*anitya*) because they are subject to

rnam pa bzhi po 'di lta ste | 'gog pa'i rnam pa dang | zhi ba'i rnam pa dang | gya⁽³⁾ nom pa'i rnam pa dang | nges par 'byung ba'i (D 178a1) rnam pas bden pa 'gog pa'i mtshan nyid so sor rig par byed do || rnam pa bzhi po 'di lta ste | lam gyi rnam pa dang | rigs pa'i rnam pa dang | sgrub pa'i rnam pa dang | nges par 'byin pa'i rnam pas bden pa lam gyi mtshan nyid so sor rig par byed pa ste | (P Wi 214a6; D Dzi 177b5; ZT vol. 23, p. 441, l. 5)

(1) All editions read: *rnal 'byor spyod pa la*. The most natural way of construing the text here would be to emend *pa la* to *pas* (as required by the transitive verb *so sor rig par byed*) and delete *la*. An early scribal error confusing *pas* with *pa la* (graphically quite similar letters) can easily account for the present reading. It is not excluded, however, that *la nyi* could be a double emphatic particle (see Beyer 1992, 279, with a citation from Mother Sum-pa). If this was the original reading intended by the translators, the sentence should be construed as 'concerning the ascetic, [...] [he] apprehends [...]' (which would assume a **des* in the deep structure as the subject of *so sor rig par byed*). However, although *pa la* as a double topicaliser is not impossible, such constructions do not seem to occur (at least not often) in translations of Yogācāra texts.

(2) P, N read: *gyis*.

(3) P reads: *kya*.

The Chinese translation reads: 修瑜伽師 於四聖諦 略標廣辯 增上教法, 聽聞受持, 或於作意 已善修習, 或得根本靜慮、無色。由四種行 了苦諦相, 謂: 無常行、苦行、空行、無我行。由四種行 了集諦相, 謂: 因行、集行、起行、緣行。由四種行 了滅諦相, 謂: 滅行、靜行、妙行、離行。由四種行 了道諦相, 謂: 道行、如行、行行、出行。(T 30.470c16; ZC 26.673a8)

The Sanskrit text is also edited and translated in Wayman 1961, 130. There are, however, details, some of which have been pointed out above, where my edition and rendering differ from Wayman 1961.

change-and-decay (*vipariṇāma*), annihilation (*vināśa*), and separation (*viyoga*); these three aspects are imminent (*sannihita*), and this is the very nature (*dharmatā*) of things. The conditioned phenomena are characterised by suffering (*duḥkha*) because they are unpleasant (*aniṣṭa*), represent fetters and bondage (*saṃyojanabandhana*), and are not [conducive to ultimate] security (*ayogakṣema*). They are empty (*śūnya*) because no substantial Self can be observed (*anupalambha*) as being the subject of the cognitive processes or the agent of rebirths. Finally, they are no(n)-Self (*anātman*) because they are not autonomous (*asvātantrya*), i.e. they depend upon conditions to arise.

(2) Contemplation leading to [/characterised by] conviction (*ādhi-mokṣiko manaskāraḥ*)(ŚrBh-Sh 495.15). This contemplative level is also amply treated. Its main function is to facilitate the meditator's access (*avatīrṇo bhavati*) to the Four Noble Truths and eventually lead to the attainment of the supreme mundane factors (*laukikā agradharmāḥ*)(*Tasya yāval laukikebhyo 'gradharmebhya ādhimokṣiko manaskāraḥ*)(ŚrBh-Sh 502.12-13). In Abhidharmic terms, of which the *Śrāvakabhūmi* makes full use, this corresponds to the highest level of the wholesome roots (*kuśalamūla*) conducive to the penetration (*nirvedhabhāgīya*) [of the Truth]. The yogi does this mainly by observing the sixteen aspects mentioned above in his own mental continuum (*cittasantati*). Meditating chiefly upon the conditioned phenomena of the external world, as done in the preceding step of the *lakṣaṇapratisaṃvedī manaskāraḥ*, is not sufficient. The yogi must now direct his mind towards Nirvana. He succeeds in focusing on the *summum bonum* of the Buddhist path only when any notion of a permanent Self is eliminated. Our ascetic is liberated from this notion precisely by contemplating the mind itself and realising that it consists of nothing but a series of ever changing moments. He will thus gain direct insight into the fact that the mind, too, is impermanent, conducive to suffering, empty, and no(n)-Self (ŚrBh-Sh 497.3-499.12).

The yogi now reaches a state of deep tranquillity (*śamatha*) in which the mind apparently has no more object and thus ceases functioning altogether. This, however, should not to be confused with the actual realisation (*abhisamaya*) of the Four Noble Truths (ŚrBh-Sh 499.17–500.5). The first true insight into them occurs *after* his emergence from this deep tranquillity. This is a non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) form of knowledge based upon direct perception (*pratyakṣajñāna*) which effects a certain cognition (*niścayajñāna*) of the Four Noble Truths (ŚrBh-Sh 500.6–17). These series of moments will prepare the decisive step of the path of vision (*darśanamārga*), which is matched with the next contemplative level.

(3) Contemplation engendering separation (*prāvivekyo manaskāraḥ*) (ŚrBh-Sh 502.15). The ascetic attains the supramundane direct insight into the Four Noble Truths and thus eliminates the defilements to be abandoned by the path of vision (*darśanāprahātavyāḥ kleśāḥ*), i.e. the proclivities related to wrong views and doubt.⁴⁸

(4) Investigating contemplation (*mīmāṃsāmanaskāraḥ*) (ŚrBh-Sh 503.2). The yogi begins his effort to eliminate the defilements to be abandoned by the path of cultivation (*bhāvanāprahātavyāḥ kleśāḥ*), i.e. emotional proclivities. Persevering in his spiritual cultivation, he investigates time and again the defilements which have been abandoned as well as those which have not been abandoned yet. (*Tasyaivam bhāvanāprayuktasya kālena ca kālaṃ kleśānāṃ prahīṇāprahīṇatāṃ mīmāṃsataḥ.*) (ŚrBh-Sh 506.6–7)⁴⁹

(5) Contemplation comprising delight (*ratīsamgrāhako manaskāraḥ*) (ŚrBh-Sh 506.8). The practitioner repeatedly makes his mind loathe (/become frightened) on the basis of the factors conducive to loathing

⁴⁸ This and the following subsections are particularly hard to define and delimit accurately. For more details, see Deleanu 2006, 41–42 (especially notes 42–43).

⁴⁹ Let us note that this and the next contemplation appear in reversed order in the description of the mundane path (see above).

(/fright) and makes it rejoice on the basis of the factors conducive to rejoicing. Thus he will attain the contemplation comprising delight. (*Kālena kālaṃ samvejanīyeṣu dharmeṣu cittaṃ samvejayataḥ, kālena kālaṃ abhipramodanīyeṣv abhipramodayataḥ, so 'sya bhavati ratisaṃgrāhako manaskārah.*) (ŚrBh-Sh 506.8–10)⁵⁰

(6) Contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice (*prayoga-niṣṭho manaskārah*) (ŚrBh-Sh 506.10). Relentlessly cultivating the contemplation comprising delight, the ascetic generates the diamond-like contemplation (*vajropamasamādhi*) by which all defilements to be abandoned by the path of cultivation are eliminated. (*Sarvapaścimaḥ śaikṣo vajropamaḥ samādhir utpadyate. Tasyotpādāt sarve bhāvanāprahātavyāḥ kleśāḥ prahīyante.*) (ŚrBh-Sh 506.13–15; Schmithausen ed. [1982] 1984, 460)⁵¹

(7) Contemplation representing the fruit of the culmination of the practice (*prayoganiṣṭhāphalo manaskārah*) (ŚrBh-Sh 507.7). This state represents the result of the diamond-like contemplation, i.e. the supreme fruit of the path, the attainment of Arhatship (*Tatra yo vajropamaḥ samādhir, ayaṃ prayoganiṣṭho manaskārah, yaḥ punar agraphalārhattvasaṃgrhīto manaskāro, 'yaṃ prayoganiṣṭhāphalo manaskārah.*) (ŚrBh-Sh 510. 10–12; Schmithausen ed. [1982] 1984, 472).

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What is the precise relation between the mundane path and supramundane path? The *Śrāvakahūmi* suggests two possibilities. One is the combinatory

⁵⁰ According to Shukla (1973, 506, n. 2), *rati* in *ratisaṃgrāhako* is added by a separate hand. The ŚrBh-MS is blurred here, but to me, this does not look like an addition by a separate hand. Both the Tibetan and Chinese translations contain the equivalent of *rati*°.

⁵¹ Here and in the paragraph below, I follow Schmithausen's edition with a few minor modifications linked to the conventions adopted throughout this paper.

pattern usually adopted in Sarvāstivādin and Sautrāntika sources. According to this paradigm, it is the reflective strategy of meditation (*vipāśyanā*) associated with the supramundane path that is the key to Liberation. The tranquility-orientated meditation (*śamatha*) is not ignored but neither is it a sine qua non condition on the path of spiritual cultivation. True, it can speed up the attainment of Arhatship, and in this sense, *śamatha* is a helpful addition to the yogi's contemplative repertoire. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, for instance, tells us that in the case of a practitioner who has mastered the mundane path, the successful completion of the path of vision (*darśanamārga*) will bring the fruit of Once-Returner (*sakṛdāgāmin*) or Non-Returner (*anāgāmin*) rather than that of Stream-Enterer (*srotaāpanna*). The latter, which is the lowest of the four saintly fruits of the life of the recluse (*śrāmaṇya*), is actually accessible even for a contemplative who has not gained command of the mundane path.⁵² In fact, one can attain Awakening without experiencing the absorptions (*dhyāna*) and immaterial attainments (*ārūpyasamāpatti*).⁵³

The *Śrāvakabhūmi* is not as clear and detailed as the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* in its discussion of the relation between *laukikamārga* and

⁵² See AKBh ch. VI ver. 29c-d: *ahinabhāvanāheyau phalādyapratīpannakau*. See also AKBh 366.5–6.

⁵³ As Stanza 47cd of Chapter VI in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* declares, 'detachment from all [spheres][is obtained] by means of the pure threshold [of meditation]' (*anāsraveṇa vairāgyam anāgāmyena sarvataḥ*) (AKBh 367.12). The threshold (*anāgāmya*) of meditation is the state in between the realm of sensual pleasures and the first absorption (*prathamam dhyānam*). It provides the practitioner with a privileged locus from which he can use reflection, mainly directed at the precariousness of the sensual pleasures which is contrasted to the exquisiteness of the absorptions, in order generate the different mental processes necessary for the attainment of *dhyānas* and *ārūpyasamāpattis*, processes which we would call today 'altered states of consciousness'.

For a discussion of the path of spiritual cultivation in the *Abhidharmakośa*, see Deleanu 2012 forthcoming.

lokottaramārga, but it does tell us that the long process of the elimination of emotional defilements, corresponding to the path of cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*), can be shortened if the yogi practises the mundane path at an earlier stage (ŚBh-Sh 500.19–501.6).⁵⁴

The second possibility is that of limiting one's practice of meditation to the mundane path only – at least for one or as many lives as may be necessary to meet the right conditions. The *Śrāvakabhūmi* actually describes in great detail the mundane path conceived as this latter possibility. According to our text, there are four categories of persons choosing or having to practise the mundane path in the present life (*dr̥ṣṭe dharme*). These include (1) non-Buddhists, (2) Buddhist followers with weak spiritual faculties but with experience in tranquillity (*śamatha*), (3) likewise, Buddhists who have keen faculties but whose roots of wholesome factors (*kuśalamūla*) are unripe, and (4) bodhisattvas wishing to attain Awakening not in this life but in the future (ŚrBh-Sh 437.17–438.7).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Here I should like to correct an earlier statement made in Deleanu 2006, 20: 'there are some technical aspects which interconnect these two paths [i.e. the mundane and the supramundane paths], but in principle, they do not presuppose each other'. Put in this way, the description is misleading. True, the two paths can be practised separately, and the *Śrāvakabhūmi* basically presents the progression along each path more or less independently. Yet, as mentioned above, the passage at ŚBh-Sh 500.19–501.6 makes it clear that they can be interconnected. Like other sources linked to the Northern Śrāvakayāna traditions, the possibility of connecting them is not a sine qua non condition for attaining Nirvana, but it is a viable alternative which can speed up the way towards It. Why the *Śrāvakabhūmi* did not elaborate upon this connection remains unclear, but one can conjecture that the issue was more of a practical nature rather than a theoretical aspect. It might have been enough to briefly sketch the possibility of interconnection in the text itself, which doubtless was a basic source of authority in the community (or communities) associated with it, but it would have been up to the master to decide according to the personality of each disciple who was to tread along which path as well as if, when, and how the yogi had to link the two paradigms of meditative praxis.

⁵⁵ A revised Sanskrit edition is found at Deleanu 2006, 317–318 (for English

Of course, this path does not lead *eo ipso* to Nirvana. As a matter of fact, it is a postponement of or detour from the supreme goal of the Buddhist spirituality, but this does not make the *Śrāvakahūmi* authors neglect it. Actually, they give it a treatment almost as extensive as that of the supramundane path. This has to do, I believe, with the praxis-orientated nature of our text. Few other sources in the Yogācāra tradition are so full of practical details, and one can safely conclude that many passages in the *Śrāvakahūmi* came straight from the mouths and pens of *yogācāra* masters fully immersed in and knowledgeable of contemplative cultivation and its psychology. These masters were guiding people in flesh and blood rather than Abhidharmic abstractions, no matter how carefully arranged in long taxonomical lists. It is not difficult to imagine that not all their disciples were suited to practise the supramundane path alone or in combination with the mundane path. Though Awakening remains the ultimate goal for any serious Buddhist follower, the ground realities of teaching and practising meditation probably required a great deal of pragmatism. Instead of heedlessly herding novices along an idealised, theoretically tailored path, it must have been far more beneficial to set up a detailed course for those who had to content themselves with the mundane path only. This might have been the reason for paying so much attention to this otherwise non-Nirvana-conducive alternative.

translation, see *ibid.* 446–447). Let us also note here the presence of the term ‘bodhisattva’, which is one of the very few instances where the *Śrāvakahūmi* mentions a potentially Mahāyānist concept. I say ‘potentially’ because the concept of bodhisattva (Pali, *bodhisatta*) as an appellation of the Buddha of our aeon as well as of other previous or future Buddhas at any time before their full Awakening is also known in the Śrāvakayāna tradition. Unfortunately, the *Śrāvakahūmi* does not offer any clue as to the exact meaning of the term ‘bodhisattva’ here.

III Concluding Remarks

In spite of its peculiarities, the *Śrāvakahūmi* remains a work firmly anchored in the Śrāvakayāna tradition. True, a certain role is allotted to a non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) form of knowledge based upon direct perception (*pratyakṣajñāna*) said to engender certain cognition (*niścaya-jñāna*) of the Noble Truths. This is in itself a very interesting category, which might represent an innovation, or an emphasis, peculiar to the Proto-Yogācāra contemplatives.⁵⁶ It will actually be a meditative strategy developing the idea of deep tranquillity (*śamatha*) and non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) cognition that will gain the upper hand in the later Yogācāra sources.⁵⁷ For the *Śrāvakahūmi*, however, this remains only a step – important as it may have been – on a spiritual road dominated by reflective methods of meditations. The practitioner bound to attain Arhatship has to tread basically the same path and follow contemplative strategies similar to those prescribed in the mainstream Sarvāstivādin model.

⁵⁶ I must stress that this statement is highly conjectural. For more certainty, one needs to check up earlier sources, mainly the discouragingly voluminous **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*, to see whether prototypes of such ideas had already been formulated before the *Śrāvakahūmi*.

⁵⁷ As aptly pointed out by Schmithausen (2005, 232-235), in the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*, i.e. the auto-commentarial portion of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, a similarly described deep tranquillity in which the mind appears to have no more object and to have ceased functioning is *the* decisive experience, actually the very insight (*abhisamaya*) into the Truth Itself (*tathatā*). ‘The insight into the four Noble Truths, which is liberating insight proper for the ŚrBh [i.e. *Śrāvakahūmi*], is merely a subsequent conceptual analysis of this non-conceptual experience of undiversified True Reality. The VinSg [i.e. *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*] passages thus presuppose the same experiences as the ŚrBh, but the evaluation of the two phases is reversed’ (ibid. p. 234).

Abbreviations and Citation Conventions

For Pali sources, I have followed the widely accepted system of the *Epilegomena to Volume I of A Critical Pāli Dictionary*. I have relied upon PTS editions with the sole exception of the Vism = *Visuddhimagga* (Warren ed.). References to the latter are to page and section (marked as §).

Citations of and references to Sanskrit sources are done according to the following model: AKBh 115.3 stands for the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, page 115, line 3. Sometimes, I quote or refer to verse rather than to page number. Thus, AKBh ch. III ver. 5 stands for the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, chapter III, stanza (*kārikā*) 5.

Citations of and references to Tibetan translations are done according to the following model: D Wi 111a1 stands for the *sDe-dge Canon*, volume Wi (i.e. traditional Tibetan numeration), folio 111, recto, line 1.

In the case of Chinese texts, T 30.527b16 stands for the *Taishō Canon*, volume 30, page 527, segment b (middle segment), column 16.

The abbreviations below include mainly Sanskrit titles. The modern editions which have been consulted are indicated in brackets. The list does not include Tibetan and Chinese titles (which are referred to by pointing out the location in their respective *Tripitakas*).

As far as the modern literature (listed in the Bibliography below) is concerned, I follow the author-date style of reference. Where a reprint has been consulted, the original date of publication is inserted in square brackets.

AKBh = *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan ed.)

Ch. = Chinese

D: sDe-dge edition of the Tibetan *Tripitaka* (for modern reprint, see Takasaki et al. ed.)

P = Peking edition of the Tibetan *Tripitaka* (for modern reprint, see Suzuki ed.)

ŚrBh = *Śrāvakahūmi**

ŚrBh-Gr I: Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 1998.

ŚrBh-Gr II: Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 2007.

ŚrBh-Gr (22): Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 2008.

ŚrBh-Gr (25): Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai ed. and tr. 2011.

ŚrBh-MS: Taishō University and China Library of Nationalities facsimile ed.

ŚrBh-Sh = Shukla ed.

See also Deleanu 2006 and Schmithausen ed. [1982] 1984.

T: Taishō edition of the Chinese *Tripitaka* (Takakusu and Watanabe ed.)

Tib.: Tibetan

Vism = *Visuddhimagga* (Warren ed.)

YoBh = *Yogācārabhūmi*.

ZC = Zhonghua edition of the Chinese *Tripitaka* (*Zhonghua Canon* Editing Bureau ed.)

ZT = Zhonghua edition of the Tibetan *Tripitaka* (*Tripitaka* Collation Bureau of China) Tibetology Centre ed.

* Citations and references to the *Śrāvakahūmi* throughout this paper are basically given to Shukla's edition. In spite of its shortcomings, it remains the only complete edition of the text to this day and probably still the most widely used one. The excellent edition prepared by the Shōmon ji Kenkyū-kai or *Śrāvakahūmi* Study Group of Taishō University is still in progress (for more details, see note 17 below). Although not constantly, I have also often given the page and line number of the text in the latter edition as well as in the passages contained in Schmithausen ed. [1982] 1984 and Deleanu 2006.

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