

Two Concepts of Meditation and Three Kinds of Wisdom in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākramas*: A Problem of Translation

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ABSTRACT: A close reading of the three *Bhāvanākramaḥ* texts, written by Kamalaśīla (740–795 CE), reveals that their author was aware of two competing concepts of meditation prevalent in Tibet at the time of their composition. The two concepts of meditation, associated with the Sanskrit words *bhāvanā* and *dhyāna*, can be related respectively to the Indian and Chinese sides of the well-known debates at bSam yas. The account of the Mahāyāna path outlined in these texts implies an acceptance of the precedence of *bhāvanā* over *dhyāna*. In this paper I argue that Kamalaśīla advocated *bhāvanā* – a conception of meditation which encompasses non-conceptual *dhyāna*, but which also includes a discernment of reality (*bhūta-pratyavekṣā*) that is conceptual in nature. Such conceptual discernment should not be understood simply as a process of ordinary rational understanding (*cintāmayī prajñā*) but rather as constituting a special kind of meditative wisdom (*bhāvanāmayī prajñā*). A failure to recognize the subtle differences between Kamalaśīla's employment of the terms *dhyāna* and *bhāvanā*, along with his advocacy of the latter, could easily lead to mistranslation and, with this, a basic misunderstanding of his position. In particular, it could lead to a conception of insight (*vipaśyanā*) that is overly intellectual in nature. Given the historically important role that these texts played in the formation of Tibetan Buddhism, the implications of such a misconception could be far-reaching. This paper attempts to clarify the key meditation terminology found in the *Bhāvanākramas* as well as demonstrate the rationale for using 'meditation' as the default translation for *bhāvanā*.

DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF MEDITATION

The following pages contain an analysis of a constellation of meditation-related terms found in three polemical treatises, identically entitled *Bhāvanākramaḥ* (*The Process of Meditation*). It is not clear why their author, Kamalaśīla, wrote three texts with the same title.¹ There is considerable overlap among the three, and not

1. The three texts were likely composed in Tibet between 792 and 794 CE, although see Taniguchi (1992) for an argument that the first *Bhāvanākramaḥ* was composed somewhat earlier in India.

infrequently repetition. That being said, the three treatises cover an extraordinary range of subjects, all united around the central purpose of providing guidance to new practitioners of the teachings of the Mahāyāna Sūtras.²

Historically, the *Bhāvanākramas*' account of meditation has been enormously influential. Paul Williams has referred to the texts as 'the principal systematic Indian sources for the integration of emptiness teachings into Madhyamaka meditation practice' (Williams, 1989: 72). Elsewhere they have been described as 'the origin of Tibetan tradition of how to meditate' (Taniguchi, 1992: 303). This paper argues that there are, in fact, two competing concepts of meditation present in the texts. These two concepts are identifiable with two specific Sanskrit words, both of which have been commonly translated into English as 'meditation' – *bhāvanā* and *dhyāna*. Because Kamalaśīla does not employ these terms as synonyms, a problem arises for the modern day translator: which word, if either, should be privileged in translation as 'meditation'? While neither can carry the same range of meanings as the English word (on which, see below), in this paper it is argued that Kamalaśīla regarded *bhāvanā* as normative for the practice of beginners in the way of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. As such, 'meditation' should be its default translation. For these texts, it is potentially misleading to translate *dhyāna* as meditation. The issue is more than academic. Depending on the choice made, Kamalaśīla's account of the Mahāyāna Buddhist path to Awakening will be radically altered. To that extent, our understanding of both the doctrinal and practical foundations of Tibetan Buddhism will be affected.

According to Edward Conze, 'The first explains the doctrine of the Mahāyāna, the second how it can be meditated upon, and the third what is the result of meditation' (1975: 177). Conze is here following a description contained in a Tibetan record cited in Tucci (1958: 40–41). The account has it that the Tibetan king, Khri Srong lde btsan, requested these explanations following Kamalaśīla's pivotal victory in debate over a Chinese rival of the Ch'an tradition (discussed below). The 'doctrine' of Bhk 1 is described as that of the three kinds of wisdom (*śrutamayī*, *cintāmayī*, and *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*). The way of meditation of Bhk 2 is explained in light of the realization that there is only one vehicle; it is the result of this meditation that Bhk 3 is said to explain. But such categorical statements are best made with caution; all three texts contain discussions of doctrine, meditation, and its result.

- Perhaps it is as much due to the excellence of scholarship already devoted to their study as it is to the breadth of their concern that the *Bhāvanākramas* tend to be among the most widely quoted of Indian Buddhist texts. Tucci has provided critical editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan of the Bhk 1 (1958) and the Sanskrit of the Bhk 3 (1971). Of the three texts, the original Sanskrit of the Bhk 2 is lost. As well, the first folio of the Sanskrit of Bhk 1 is missing, as are the edges of many of the pages of the manuscript of Bhk 3 from which Tucci worked. All three texts are, however, fully preserved in the Tibetan Tanjur. A critical edition of the Tibetan text of Bhk 2 based on the Narthang (N), Peking (P), Derge (D), and Cone (C) editions has been prepared by K. Goshima (1983). The Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies has published an edition of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, which occasionally serves to clarify Tucci (Namdol, 1997). This contains a Hindi translation and Sanskrit reconstructions of Bhk 2 and the first folio of Bhk 1. I have worked mainly from the editions of Tucci, Goshima, and the Derge Tanjur dBu ma KI (22a–41b, 42a–55b, and 56a–68b respectively for the three texts). Unless otherwise noted, references are to Tucci for the Sanskrit texts and to D for the Tibetan.

The three texts contain numerous instructions for the beginner in Mahāyāna meditation. Equally, the *Bhāvanākramas* constitute a kind of apology or justification for a particular approach to the Buddhist path. The Tibetan tradition regards them as containing a summary of arguments employed in the refutation of a Chinese Ch'an position being advocated at the time of the first great transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. The debate has been characterized in terms of gradualism vs. subitism (Gomez, 1987). The gradualist view, associated with the Indian side led by Kamalaśīla, held that Awakening can only be attained after a long process of training in which one deliberately cultivates certain causes and conditions conducive to its occurrence. These causes and conditions are both moral and cognitive – one must cultivate specific moral virtues as well as a specific conceptual knowledge of the nature of reality. Such cultivation (*bhāvanā*) is a gradual process – it takes time and has definite steps. The subitist position, represented by a Ch'an monk (*Hvashang*) named Mo ho yen (Sanskrit: Mahāyāna), held that Awakening occurs suddenly, all at once. Awakening was understood as a state requiring only the practice of a non-conceptual concentration or absorption (*dhyāna*), wherein one's mind is cleared from all obscuring mental activity. Attempts to cultivate specific moral virtues and views of reality were understood as counterproductive on the grounds that they accumulate karma and prolong one's sojourn through cyclical existence.³

The contrary view, argued by Kamalaśīla, held that a particular kind of cognitive process – a 'correct analysis' or 'discernment of reality' (*bhūta-pratyavekṣā*) – is essential to the achievement of Awakening. Because Awakening involves a kind of knowledge (i.e. non-conceptual knowledge, *nirvikalpa jñāna*), and not merely concentration, it is essential to first become established not only in concentration but also in a correct conceptual knowledge, which can then function to give rise to the sought after noetic state. The principle at work here is that like arises from like: one kind of knowledge arises on the basis of another. Kamalaśīla seems to have understood his opponent as arguing on the basis of the same causal principle, but focusing on the other aspect of Awakening – its non-conceptuality. Thus,

3. Bhk 3 13.15–14.1: *yas tu manyate / cittavikalpa samutthāpītasubhāsubha-karmavaśena sattvāḥ svargādi karmaphalam anubhavantaḥ saṃsāre saṃsaranti / ye punar na kiṃcic cintayanti nāpi kiṃcit karma kurvanti te parimucyante saṃsārāt / tasmān na kiṃcic cintayitavyam / nāpi dānādikuśalacaryā kartavyā / kevalam murkhajanam adhikṛtya dānādikuśalacaryā nirdeṣṭeti /*; D 61b1: *gang zhiḡ sems kyi rnam par rtog pas bskyed pa'i dge ba dang mi dge ba'i las kyi dbang gis sems can rnam mtho ri la sogs pa'i 'bras bu myong zhiḡ 'khor ba na 'khor ro / gang dag ci yang mi sems ci yang mi byed pa de dag ni 'khor ba las yongs su thar bar 'gyur ro / de lta bas na ci yang mi bsam mo / sbyin pa la sogs pa dge ba spyad par yang mi bya'o / sbyin pa la sogs pa spyod pa ni skye bo blun po'i dbang du mdzad nas bstan pa kho na yin no snyom du sems shiḡ de skad kyang smra ba des ni theg pa chen po mtha dag spangs pa yin no/*: 'But some consider, "Because they are subject to positive and negative actions generated by the conceptual mind, sentient beings spin around in cyclical existence experiencing the fruits of their actions, such as heaven. But those who do not think anything nor perform any action whatsoever, they are fully liberated from cyclical existence. Therefore nothing should be thought. Nor should the skillful conduct of giving and the rest be undertaken. The skillful conduct of giving and the rest is taught only with foolish people in mind"'.

as a non-conceptual state of knowledge, Awakening might be thought of as only arising on the basis of non-conceptual concentration. According to Kamalaśīla, this is a misunderstanding; non-conceptual concentration, because it lacks a cognitive dimension, can not on its own result in a state of knowledge. At the same time, however, Kamalaśīla did recognize the concentrative nature of the resulting state of nonconceptual knowledge; he therefore accepted the necessity of initially combining the one-pointed quality of concentration with the noetic quality of conceptual knowledge. The resulting state could thus be both concentrated and noetic.⁴

To understand Kamalaśīla's views in more detail, I will attempt to demonstrate how he understood the logical relations obtaining between *bhāvanā* and *dhyāna*, as well as their relationships to other key terms denoting meditative states and processes. I will then attempt to demonstrate how it is that Kamalaśīla accepted as normative the concept of *bhāvanā*. But before entering into these topics it would perhaps be germane to say a few words about how I understand the English word 'meditation'.

In normal English usage, and in its most general conception, when one talks of 'meditation', in most cases one is referring to a deliberately undertaken introspective process which is aimed at reaching a qualitatively different state of mind – usually a spiritual state of some description (e.g. communion with God) or a heightened state of awareness. The process itself is marked by concentration – either upon some aspect of the goal sought or upon the activity itself. Such concentration usually follows a *technique*, which can be described and practised. Although introspective, this may involve a physical aspect. Practices of meditation vary widely, including everything from visualization, repetition of verbal phrases or prayers, to the walking of labyrinths. These diverse procedures share the features of voluntariness, introspection and concentration, and are all undertaken with the aim of bringing about an altered state of consciousness or a change in spiritual condition.

It is important to note, however, that in the western intellectual tradition there exists a second and related use of the word 'meditation' in which many of these features are not found. In this case the word meditation is employed to refer to processes of ordinary rational thought that are seriously undertaken and concerned with topics judged to be important or profound. 'Meditation' in this sense is a kind of intellectual contemplation or rumination, involving neither a special technique of concentration nor the idea of achieving of an altered state of consciousness. This employment of the word is perhaps most famously exemplified

4. Thus the two opponents both asserted that an initial practice of concentration was necessary, but they disagreed as to its nature. Just as from Kamalaśīla's perspective, Mo ho yen's difficulty was to explain the noetic aspect of Awakening on the basis of a non-cognitive practice; from Mo ho yen's perspective, Kamalaśīla's difficulty would be to explain Awakening's nonconceptuality arising on the basis of a conceptual process. In addition, as noted, Mo ho yen held that such conceptual activities were karmatic and thus counterproductive with respect to liberation.

in the title of René Descartes' *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* (1641). Clearly, in western culture there is a long-standing and distinct association between 'meditation' and ordinary discursive thought.

With these considerations in mind, we may now return our attention to the idea of meditation as found in the *Bhāvanākramaḥ* texts. It may be remarked in passing that, in their own way, these three works of Kamalaśīla have shown themselves to be as seminal to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as the reflections of the great French philosopher have proven to western philosophy. And the questions they raise appear equally profound. The issue we are concerned with here, namely the relations obtaining among diverse concepts of meditation, is an extraordinarily complex one. An initial listing of some of the main terms for meditation occurring within the *Bhāvanākramas* includes the following (I provide some of the more common English translations):

1. *dhyāna* – absorption, trance, concentration, *meditation*
2. *samādhi* – concentration, state of concentration, *meditation*
3. *bhāvanā* – cultivation, development, realization, actualization, *meditation*
4. *śamatha* – *tranquillity meditation*, serenity, calm, calm abiding
5. *vipaśyanā* – *insight meditation*, insight, wisdom

It can be seen that there are, in fact, at least three Sanskrit terms commonly translated by the English word 'meditation', plus two that are considered *kinds* of meditation. In order to understand Kamalaśīla's particular views, I will first of all briefly review and comment upon each of these.

Dhyāna – probably the term most commonly associated with the word 'meditation', this word is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root \sqrt{dhyai} (to think of, meditate upon) plus the primary affix (*kṛt-pratyaya*) 'lyuṭ', which forms abstract, instrumental or verbal nouns. In Chinese, as is well known, the transliterated term *Ch'an* (Japanese: *Zen*) came to refer to a number of schools emphasizing the meditation aspect of Buddhist practice. In the original Indian context, however, the word specifically referred to a set of four successive meditative absorptions (Pāli: *jhāna*) wherein one's mental contents are attenuated to a state of one-pointedness and equanimity free from all disturbing emotions and mental activity.⁵ Although much has been written about the *dhyānas*, for our purposes three points should be noted.

First, it is important to recognize that after the first *dhyāna*, all thought is said to have been eliminated. Both *vitarka* (relatively gross thought, as mental application) and *vicāra* (subtle thought, or examination) are absent from the second through to the fourth *dhyānas*. While some thought is present in the first *dhyāna*, this state is not defined as one in which a deliberate conceptual analysis of reality takes place.

5. The *dhyānas* are said to be optionally followed by another sequence of four 'formless attainments' (*ārūpya samāpatti*) occurring on the basis of the fourth *dhyāna*. See Griffiths (1986), Cran-
gle (1994: 201–7), and Gethin (1998: 184–6) for treatments of these attainments.

The second point is that Kamalaśīla subdivides the first absorption into two.⁶ The first division contains both *vitarka* and *vicāra*, the second contains *vicāra* but not *vitarka*. This second division he calls ‘intermediate absorption’ (*dhyānāntara*).⁷ We shall see that Kamalaśīla may actually have accepted the possibility of a deliberate conceptual analysis of reality occurring in the first *dhyāna*; if so, it might well have been the case that he particularly associated this possibility with the intermediate *dhyānā*. We shall return to this topic at the end of this paper. In any case, for now, it seems clear that he regarded his opponent as adhering to a general notion of *dhyāna* that excludes deliberate activities of conceptual analysis.

The third point to note is that the *dhyānas* are all said to share the quality of *ekagrata* or one-pointedness of mind. This quality is also said to characterize our next term, *samādhi*, as well as *śamatha*.

Samādhi - this term is often given as a gloss for *dhyāna*, but its scope is generally understood to be wider than that of the four *dhyānas*. While it encompasses these, it also refers to other states of mental one-pointedness. For example, it includes the preliminary state of ‘the capable’ (*anāgāmya* – equivalent to ‘access’

6. Bhk 1 209.2–11: eṣā ca cittaikāgratā uttarottarakarmaṇyatāsamprayogād ālambanādiguṇaviśeṣayogā c ca dhyānārūpya[samāpatti]vimokṣādivyapadeṣaṃ labhate / tathā hi yadopekṣāvedanāsamprayuktā savitarkasavicārā sāvabhavati / tadānāgāmyam ucyate / yadā ca kāmātrṣṇayā [pāpadharmāih] viviktā bhavati [vitarkavicārā]pṛtisukhādhyātmāsamprasādāih samprayuktā bhavati / tadā prathamam dhyānam ucyate / ata eva prathamam dhyānam vitarkamātrarahitām dhyānāntaram ucyate / yadā vitarkavicārarahitā prathamadhyānabhūmitṣṇayā viviktā ca bhavati / pṛtisukhādhyātmāsamprasāda ih samprayuktā bhavati / tadā dvitīyam dhyānam ucyate /; D 32b 2–5: sems rtse gcig pa de phyi phyir las su rung ba nyid dang ldan zhing dmiḡs pa la sogs pa'i yon tan gyi khyad par thob pas bsam gtan dang / gzugs med pa'i snyoms par 'jug pa dang / rnam par thar pa la sogs pa'i ming thob po / 'di ltar gang gi tshe btang snyoms kyi tshor ba dang ldan zhing rtog pa dang bcas pa dang / dpyod pa dang bcas par gyur pa de'i tshe mi lcogs pa med pa zhes bya ste / [bsam gtan dang po'i sbyor ba'i sems so] / gang gi tshe 'dod pa'i sred pa dang / sdig pa'i chos mams dang bral zhing rtog pa dang / dpyod pa dang / dga' ba dang / bde ba dang ldan par gyur pa de'i tshe bsam gtan dang po zhes bya'o / bsam gtan dang po de nyid las rtog pa tsam med pa de ni bsam gtan khyad par can zhes bya'o / gang gi tshe rtog pa dang dpyod pa dang bral te bsam gtan dang po'i sa'i sred pa dang bral bar gyur nas dga' ba dang bde ba dang / rone yongs su dang ba dag dang ldan par gyur pa de'i tshe bsam gtan gnyis pa zhes bya'o': 'And this one-pointedness of mind receives the designation, "absorption", "formless attainment", "liberation", and so forth on account its being endowed with greater and greater capability and on account of possessing the distinct qualities of its object and so forth. That is, when it is conjoined with feelings of equanimity, and has gross thought and subtle thought, then it is called "capable" (*anāgāmya*, T. mi lcogs pa med pa, "not unable"). And when it is separated from the thirst for pleasure [as well as] conjoined with [gross and subtle thought,] joy, happiness, and internal clarity (*ādhyātma-samprasād*, i.e. mindfulness and clear comprehension), then it is called the first absorption. After this the first absorption without gross thought alone is called "intermediate absorption" (*dhyānāntara*). When it is without (both) gross thought and subtle thought, as well as separated from thirst for the stage of the first absorption – (but still) conjoined with joy, happiness, and clarity pertaining to the self – then it is called the second absorption'.

7. In including an intermediate stage between the first and second *dhyānas*, one in which *vitarka* is absent while *vicāra* remains, the account of the *dhyānas* found in the *Bhāvanākrāmas* appears to be following that of Vasubandhu. See *Abhk* viii 22d, 23d–e. Like Kamalaśīla, Vasubandhu divides the first *dhyāna* into two. However, according to Vasubandhu, the first *dhyāna* may contain either *vitarka* or *vicāra*, but not both in the same moment.

(*upacāra*) concentration in Theravāda Buddhism), a degree of mental focus that allows one to enter into the *dhyānas* proper, or else to turn one's attention to insight (*vipaśyanā*) practices. The word *samādhi* is thus arguably the broadest Indian term used in reference to states of meditation. In the context of spiritual practice, it is understood to exclude non-virtuous states of concentration, such as those an assassin and so forth. It usually denotes concentration as a mental state of nondistraction. As well, the word is sometimes used to refer to the processes that give rise to such mental states.⁸ Derived from the verbal root √*dhā* (to put, place, set, join, unite) in combination with the prefixes 'sam' (together) and 'ā' (around) and the masculine suffix 'ki', the sense of *samādhi* is one of 'placing (that which is) around together', or simply, 'unification'.

Bhāvanā - derived from the causative form of the verbal root √*bhū*, (√*bhū* + *ṇic* + either *lyu* or *lyuṭ*), the word *bhāvanā* literally means 'causing to be', 'making become', or 'giving rise to'. Hence among its most common translations we find 'cultivation', 'development', 'realization', and even 'actualization'. These translations are etymologically more precise than 'meditation'; in addition, the first two have the extra implication of a gradual progression toward a state that is sought.

Unlike the term *samādhi*, one does not properly speak of 'attaining' a state of *bhāvanā*; on the contrary, this word exclusively refers to processes through which one brings particular states into being. It should be noted, however, that translations such as 'cultivation' and 'development', while capturing this primary signification, do not necessarily imply *samādhi*. Outside of the context of spiritual practice, the word *bhāvanā* obviously can have a wider, non-technical sense that includes deliberately giving rise to things not necessarily characterized by concentration, nor indeed consistent with virtue. For example, the activities of watering a garden, cooking a meal, and plotting an act of revenge can all be considered as instances of *bhāvanā* in a broader sense of 'cultivation'. In the context of spiritual practice, however, this word refers to virtuous efforts, those that further the cause of liberation by generating positive states (*dharmas*) characterized by concentration (*samādhi*).⁹

8. See e.g. *Visuddhimagga* III 2-3, where the idea of a process is captured in its gloss: *samadhāna*. (Note again the *krt-pratyaya* 'lyuṭ' in a word indicating a process). The two uses of the word can be seen clearly in connection with the classical eightfold path, where *samādhi* not only appears as one of the eight aspects of the path, namely, right concentration (*samyak samādhi*), but also as the label for the set of three aspects that together constitute the meditation component of the path: right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The term is thus used to designate the meditation (*samādhi*) component of the three reliances of morality, meditation, and wisdom (*śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*), into which the eightfold path may be subdivided. On such use of the term *samādhi* to designate a list of items (though not necessarily items related to meditation) see Skilton (2002).

9. According to Vasubandhu, *bhāvanā* is divisible into four types corresponding to a classical fourfold division of right effort - efforts for the arising of non-arisen pure *dharmas*, for the growth of already arisen pure *dharmas*, for the non-arising of non-arisen impure *dharmas* and for the destruction of already arisen impure *dharmas*. *Abhk* 1081.1-5, 22-31. For a detailed treatment of the classical *Nikāya* account see Gethin (1992: 69-80). In terms of this term's relation to

Śamatha: in the Buddhist tradition *bhāvanā* is generally understood to be divisible into the two subcategories of tranquillity (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipāśyanā*). Kamalaśīla accepts this division.¹⁰ The term *śamatha* (Pāli *samatha*) is derived from the verbal root √*śam* (to be quiet, to cease, to rest).¹¹ The principal significations of *śamatha* are those of calmness and the capacity to remain continuously focused on one object of meditation. Thus the cultivation of tranquillity brings about states of concentration and calm, such as the *dhyānas*. With respect to Awakening, the function of *śamatha* is to stabilize the mind, thereby making *vipāśyanā* possible.

Vipāśyanā: this term is the Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit word corresponding to the Pāli *vipassanā*. It is derived from the verbal root √*pas* ‘to see’, plus the prefix *vi* which can have the senses of ‘apart, asunder’ and ‘different, distinct’. The resulting sense is one of ‘seeing into’ or ‘discerning’. Hence ‘insight’ is the usual translation for this term. In general, *vipāśyanā* is understood to refer to observational and analytic processes that lead to a knowledge of reality.

In the *Bhāvanākramas*, *vipāśyanā* is specifically identified with a technical term, namely, ‘the discernment of reality’ (*bhūta-pratyavekṣā*). As Kamalaśīla quotes from the *Sūtras*, ‘Tranquillity is one-pointedness of mind; insight is the discernment of reality’.¹²

The function of *vipāśyanā* is to perceive the elements of reality (*dharmas*) as they truly are. If the effect of *śamatha* is to enable *vipāśyanā*, it is *vipāśyanā* that allows for non-conceptual knowledge to occur. And on this basis Awakening is gradually achieved.

By the power of tranquillity the mind becomes steady on its object, like a lamp [burning] in a place without wind. By insight, the light of correct

samādhi, one might note that the process of making such efforts would involve concentrating (*samādhāna*) on the desired state. In addition, when specific states of concentration (such as those of *dhyāna*) are aimed at, this might be thought of as a case of the first right effort, that which is aimed at the arising of non-arisen pure *dharmas*. This, however, was apparently a point of controversy between different Buddhist schools. The Vaibāśīkas apparently considered *samādhi* a separate mental *dharma* while the Sautrāntikas thought it simply referred to a concentrated mind (*Abhk* 1126.6-1127.3).

10. Bhk 2 D46b1-2: *rnāl 'byor pas ni sgom pa'i dus thams cad du nya dang sha la sogs pa spang zhing mi mthun pa ma yin pa dang / zas tshod zin par bza' bar bya'o // de ltar byang chub sems dpa' zhi gnas dang lhag mthong gi tshogs mtha' dag bsags pa des bsgom pa la 'jug par bya'o //*: ‘The yogin, forsaking meat and fish at all times of meditation (*sgom pa, bhāvanā*), should eat only the proper amount of food and that which is not incompatible (with the scriptures). In this manner, *bodhisattvas* who have accumulated all the conditions of tranquillity and insight (*zhi gnas dang lhag mthong gi tshogs, śamatha-vipāśyanā-saṃbhāra*) should enter into meditation’.
11. Plus the *krī-pratyaya 'athac'*. See Pāṇini 3.3.92. Thanks to Sanjay Kumar Shastri of McGill University for clarifying the derivations of *samādhi* and *śamatha*.
12. Bhk 3 3.1-4: *tatra śamathas cittaikāgratā / vipāśyanā bhūtapratyavekṣeti saṃkṣepād āryaratnameghādau bhagavatā śamathavipāśyanayor lakṣanam uktam /*; D 56b3-4: *de la mdoṅ na zhi gnas ni sems rtse gcig pa nyid do / lhag mthong ni yang dag pa la rtog pa'o / zhes bcom ldan 'das kyis 'phags pa dkon mchog sprin la sogs pa las zhi gnas dang lhag mthong gi mthsan nyid bka' stsal to /*: ‘Thus in the noble Ratnamegha and elsewhere the Bhagavān concisely stated the definition of tranquillity and insight, “Tranquillity is one-pointedness of mind, insight is the discernment of reality”’. Also quoted at Bhk 2 D 47a2.

knowledge emerges on the basis of accurately realizing the true nature of *dharmas*. And on that basis all obscurations is removed, just as the night by the dawning of the sun.¹³

The difference between tranquillity and insight can also be understood in terms of the application of concepts to the object of the meditation. Adhering to the *Samādhinirmocana Sūtra*, Kamalaśīla asserts that *śamatha* is nonconceptual (*nirvikalpa*) and that *vipaśyanā* is conceptual (*saṅkalpa*).

[T]he *Bhagavān* taught four realities as meditation objects for yogis: a) a reflection without conceptualization b) a reflection accompanied by conceptualization c) the limit of things and d) the perfection of purpose. In this context, when by means of tranquillity one has committed oneself to a reflection of all *dharmas* or to a form like that of the Buddha, that which is depended upon is called a reflection without conceptualization (*nirvikalpa-pratibimbakam*). It is called without conceptualization here because of an absence of concepts determining the real object-meaning (*bhūtārtha*). And it is called a reflection because it is depended upon, having committed oneself to a reflection of *dharmas* as they have been learned and understood. When, by means of insight, the yogin analyses (*vicārayati*) that very reflection in order to realize reality, then it is called a reflection accompanied by conceptualization (*saṅkalpa-pratibimbakam*) on account of the presence there of a concept determining reality (*tattva*), which is the characteristic of insight.¹⁴

13. Bhk 3 1.10–14: *śamathabalena svāmbane cittam aprakampyaṃ bhavati nivāsthitapradīpavat / vipaśyanayā yathāvad dharṃatattvāvagamāt samyagjñānālokaḥ samutpadyate / tataḥ sakalam āvaranaṃ prahīyate / andhakāravād ālokaḥ dayāt / D 56a2–3: zhi gnas kyi stobs kyis ni mar me rlung med pa na gnas pa bzhin du dmigs pa las sems mi gyo bar 'gyur ro / lhag mthong gis mun par nyi ma shar ba bzhin du chos kyi de kho na ji lta ba bzhin du rab tu rtogs pas yang dag pa'i shes rab kyi snang ba 'byung ste / sgrib pa mtha dag spong bar 'gyur ro /*

14. Bhk 3 1.14–2.5: *ata eva bhagavatā catvāry ālambanavastūni yogināṃ nirdiṣṭāni / nirvikalpapratibimbakam / saṅkalpapratibimbakam / vastuparyantatā / kāryapariniṣpattiś ca / tatra śamathena yat sarvadharṃapratibimbakam buddhādirūpaṃ cādhimucyālambyate tan nirvikalpapratibimbakam ucyate / tatra bhūtārthanirūpaṇāvikalpābhāvān nirvikalpakam ucyate / yathāśrutodgrhītānān ca dharmānāṃ pratibimbakamadhimucyālambyata iti kṛtvā pratibimbakam ucyate / tad eva pratibimbakam yadā vipaśyanayā vicārayati yogī tattvādhighamārtham tadā saṅkalpapratibimbakam ucyate / tattvanirūpaṇāvikalpasya vipaśyanālakṣaṇasya tatra samudbhavāt / ; D 56a3–7: de lta bas na bcom ldan 'das kyis rnal 'byor pa rnam kyi dmigs pa'i dngos po bzhi bstan te / rnam par mi rtog pa'i gzugs brnyan dang / rnam par rtog pa dang bcas pa'i gzugs brnyan dang / dngos po'i mtha dang / dgos pa yongs su grub pa'o / de la zhi gnas kyis na chos thams cad kyi gzugs brnyan gang yin pa dang / sangs rgyas kyi gzugs la sogs pa la mos nas dmigs pa ste / de ni rnam par mi rtog pa'i gzugs brnyan zhes bya'o / de la yang dag pa'i don la rnam par rtog pa med pas na de rnam par mi rtog pa zhes bya'o / ji ltar thos pa dang ji ltar zin pa'i chos rnam kyi gzugs brnyan zhes bya'o / rnal 'byor pas de kho na'i don rtogs par bya ba'i phyr gang gi tshes lhag mthong gis gzugs brnyan de nyid la spyod pa de'i tshes lhag mthong gi mtshan nyid de kho na la rtogs pa'i rnam par rtog pa de na yod pas na rnam par rtog pa dang bcas pa'i gzugs brnyan zhes bya'o /*

Thus, according to Kamalaśīla, in *vipaśyanā* concepts (*vikalpa*) are deliberately applied when one analyses (*vicārayati*) the meditation object. Kamalaśīla's use of the verbal form, *vicārayati*, can be taken to indicate the fact that he considered a kind of subtle thought (*vicāra*) to be present in *vipaśyanā*. If this is so, it raises the question as to Kamalaśīla's views regarding the compatibility of *vipaśyanā* and *dhyāna*.

Before addressing this question directly, it would be prudent to investigate Kamalaśīla's understanding of the logical relations obtaining among the other key meditation terms. An important passage that captures these relations can be found at the opening of the third *Bhāvanākramaḥ*:

Homage to Tārā! The *Bhāvanākramaḥ* is related in brief for those who are beginners in the way of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. In that context, even if the *samādhi* of *bodhisattvas* was taught by the *Bhagavan* to be limitless, by way of the (four) immeasurables and all the rest, nevertheless all *samādhis* are subsumed under tranquillity and insight. Therefore, precisely that path which carries the union of tranquillity and insight is related.¹⁵

There are many points made in this brief passage. First, the universe of discourse is defined: as we have noted, the text is specifically addressing the spiritual practice of beginners who wish to become proficient in the way set out in the Mahāyāna Sūtras. Secondly, for our purposes, we must notice that every *samādhi* or state of concentration is here said to be included under the rubric of tranquillity and insight. It is notable that the division of tranquillity and insight is made among *samādhis* or states of concentration, and not within *bhāvanā* as such. Given the fact that *bhāvanā* is also divisible into tranquillity and insight, this consideration suggests a conception of *samādhi* as coextensive with *bhāvanā* within the intended universe of discourse for these texts. Assuming for the moment that this is so, we can imagine Kamalaśīla's working understanding of the relationship between the terms as follows. Like the concepts of lake and lakeshore, or parent and child, the concepts of *samādhi* and *bhāvanā* would be mutually implicative, although not identical in meaning. The difference in their usages would rest in the fact that *bhāvanā* is a term for meditative processes while *samādhi* is a term principally used to indicate meditative states, as well as processes.¹⁶ If this is so, then Kamalaśīla's working understanding of the relationship between

15. Bhk 3 1.2–6: *namas tārāyai / mahāyānasūtrāntanayapravṛttānām samkṣepato bhāvanākramaḥ kathyate / tatra yady api bodhisattvānām aparimito 'pramāṇādibhedena bhagavatā samādhir upadiṣṭaḥ, tathāpi śamathavipaśyanābhyāṃ sarve samādhayo vyāptā iti / sa eva śamathavipaśyanā-yuganaddhavāhī mārgas tāvat kathyate / D 56b6–57a2: 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo / theg pa chen po mdo sde'i tshul la zhugs pa rnams kyi phyir bsgom pa'i rim pa mdor brjod par bya'o / de la bcom ldan 'das kyi byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyi ting nge 'dzin tha dad pa tshad med dpag tu med pa la sogs pa bstan du zin kyang / zhi gnas dang lhag mthong gnyis kyi ting nge 'dzin thams cad la khyab pas na zhi gnas dang lhag mthong zun du 'brel pa 'jug pa'i lam de nyid brjod par bya'o /*

16. That *bhāvanā* is the principal term for meditative processes is reflected in the fact that it is typically a conjugation of the verbal root $\sqrt{bhū}$ (e.g. *bhāvayet*, one should meditate on, one should

samādhi and *bhāvanā* is as follows: any instance of *bhāvanā* implies *samādhi* and any instance of *samādhi* implies *bhāvanā* (*Bh* if and only if *S*). In effect, what this means is that we cannot conceive one without also implying the other. (It does not mean that every proposition that is true of the one is true of the other).

Given this understanding, we may now return to the question of Kamalaśīla's understanding of the relationship between *dhyāna* and *vipaśyanā*. We can approach this topic initially by asking how our author may have regarded the relationship between *dhyāna* and *bhāvanā*. While Kamalaśīla nowhere comments directly on this issue, given the analysis just made, *samādhi* can be seen as a kind of 'bridge term' linking his conceptions of *dhyāna* and *bhāvanā*. By recalling the relationship between *samādhi* and *dhyāna*, discussed earlier, a logical structure begins to emerge. The four *dhyānas*, it will be remembered, are all specific forms of meditative concentration (*samādhi*). Thus any instance of *dhyāna* is also an instance of *samādhi* (If *Dh* then *S*). The reverse, however, is not the case; we have seen that *samādhi* is the wider term, encompassing some forms of concentration not included in the four *dhyānas*. From this it follows that while *dhyāna* implies *bhāvanā* (If *Dh* then *Bh*), the reverse (If *Bh* then *Dh*) is not the case. There are some instances of *bhāvanā* where *dhyāna* is not involved.

With these considerations in mind, we can view our question concerning the interrelationship of meditation terms in the *Bhāvanākramas* as a kind of dilemma of translation. If, on the one hand, we translate *dhyāna* as meditation, then this would open the door to the logical possibility that some forms of *bhāvanā* would not be properly conceived of as meditation for these texts. This would be consistent with a view of *bhāvanā* as 'cultivation' in the wider, non-technical sense mentioned above. Some instances of *bhāvanā* would not have been considered by Kamalaśīla as involving that concentration or one-pointedness of mind which, in the Buddhist tradition, is the hallmark of meditative states of consciousness. In particular, this way of understanding the texts opens up the possibility that the *vipaśyanā* component of *bhāvanā* might have been conceived as a kind of complimentary intellectual process of logical reasoning (*yukti*) that is not fundamentally meditative in nature. *Vipaśyanā* might not have been understood as a form of meditative concentration in the technical sense of one pointedness of mind. According to this way of thinking, the term 'meditation' would be restricted to states of *samādhi* (including the *dhyānas*) in which there is no deliberate discursive activity.¹⁷

cultivate) that is employed when the actual procedure for meditating is being described. There are no instances of a conjugation of *sam + ā + √dhā* in these texts. In the Tibetan, as well, it is the verb *sgom pa* (equivalent to *bhāvanā*) that is employed in these contexts.

17. This way of reading the *Bhāvanākramas* would emphasize the continuity of Kamalaśīla's thought with that of the Buddhist epistemological tradition going back to Dignāga. Hayes (1988: 168) and Prévèreau (1994: 33) have both suggested that *cintāmayī prajñā* is identified as a kind of *vipaśyanā* meditation by Dignāga (c. 480–540). According to Prévèreau, Yaśomitra suggests that *vipaśyanā* is synonymous with *prajñā* (AKIV:14) so that there is not only the insight brought

This understanding, however, raises a problem. If *vipaśyanā*, as a process of conceptual analysis, is not understood as meditative in nature, this would appear to be at odds with Kamalaśīla's acceptance of the subdivision of *samādhi* into non-conceptual *śamatha* and conceptual *vipaśyanā*. We would be forced to conclude that Kamalaśīla's account is inconsistent.

If, on the other hand, *bhāvanā* is translated as 'meditation', then the process of *vipaśyanā* will necessarily be understood as meditative in nature. However, the nature of *vipaśyanā* as a mental process that is at once concentrative and analytic will be problematic. How can the mind remain focused on one point and engage in conceptual analysis at the same time? On this understanding, Kamalaśīla's account would appear to be unintelligible.

So how do we decide? In order to address this issue, I will discuss Kamalaśīla's ideas in light of a fundamental conceptual paradigm upon which the *Bhāvanākramas* are based. I will then argue that if we wish to take this deep structure of Indian thought seriously, the best term to translate as 'meditation' is *bhāvanā*. On this account, Kamalaśīla's conception of *vipaśyanā* would be one of a meditative process, rather than one of ordinary logical reasoning.

THREE KINDS OF WISDOM

The arguments found in the *Bhāvanākramas* rest upon a deep cultural presupposition that there exist three basic kinds of wisdom or learning (*prajñā*) – those associated with study, thinking, and meditation (*śrutamayī prajñā*, *cintāmayī prajñā*, and *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*). This paradigm constitutes one of India's oldest and most fundamental ways of conceiving the process of spiritual practice.¹⁸ It is already mentioned in the Pāli Canon and later in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*.¹⁹ Although conceptions of its scope and place on

about by mental discipline (*bhāvanā*) to which today's meditators tend to limit themselves, but also that brought about by critical reasoning (*cintā*). Prévère asserts that Dignāga introduced a new way of doing *vipaśyanā* consisting in critical reasoning. It could well be that a tendency to identify insight with profound (but nevertheless non-meditative) thinking originated with Dignāga. Even so, the influences upon Kamalaśīla were many and he may well have held to a conception of meditation based more upon the descriptions given in various *sūtras*, particularly those of the Yogācāra school. This is the light in which I have interpreted his views.

18. For recent treatments, see Balagangadhara (2005: 1005–7) and especially, for Vasubandhu and Kamalaśīla, Nichols (2005).

19. See *Dīgha Nikāya* III 219; *Vism* XIV, 14: 438. Interestingly, what appears to be a parallel version of the same schema is to be found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, where the terminology differs but the general threefold structure is clearly identifiable B.U. II 4.5: *ātmā va are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ / maitreyi ātmano vāre darśanena śravaṇena matyā vijñānenedaṃ sarvaṃ viditaṃ //*: 'You see, Maitreyī – it is one's self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate. For by seeing and hearing one's self, and by reflecting and concentrating on one's self, one gains the knowledge of this whole world' (trans. in Olivelle, 1996: 28–9). See also B.U. IV 5.6 (69–70). I am grateful to Christine Fillion for giving me these references. See Fillion (2004).

the Buddhist path vary, among western students of Buddhism this prototype has today become so generally accepted as to border on the platitudinous rather than the profound. Its significance, however, may not have always been fully appreciated. When examined, this apparently simple schema yields some rather curious and intriguing implications. Here we shall begin our examination with one of its early formulations – the account found in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*:

(The wisdom) arisen from study (*śrutamayī*) is a certitude born from the authority of a qualified person (*āpta-vacana-prāmāṇyajāta*); the wisdom arisen from thinking (*cintāmayī*) is born from the profound reflection of reasoning (*yukti-nidhyānājā*); the wisdom arisen from *bhāvanā* (*bhāvanāmayī*) ... is born from concentration (*samādhijā*).²⁰

The account given by Vasubandhu regards the three kinds of wisdom as progressive – the wisdom arisen from thinking basing itself on the wisdom arisen from study, and the wisdom arisen from *bhāvanā* basing itself on that arisen from thinking.²¹

Kamalaśīla describes the wisdom of thinking as a process in which one disentangles two kinds of scriptural statement, the *nītārtha* and the *neyārtha*. This important hermeneutical distinction is a tool developed by Buddhists in order to classify scriptural statements as respectively definitive or provisional in

20. Abhk 892.3–4: *āptavacanaprāmāṇyajātanīścayā śrutamayī, yuktinidhyānājā cintāmayī, samādhijā bhāvanāmayīti ...*

21. Abhk 861.4–6: *śrutvā cintayati / aviparītam cintayitvā bhāvanāyām prayujyate / samādhau tasya śrutamayīm prajñāṃ niśrītya cintāmayī jāyate / cintāmayīm niśrītya bhāvanāmayī jāyate /*: 'Having studied, he thinks. Having thought correctly, he engages in *bhāvanā*. Having relied on the wisdom arisen from study of one in *samādhi*, (the wisdom) arisen from thinking is born. Having relied on (the wisdom) arisen from thinking, (the wisdom) arisen from *bhāvanā* is born'.

It is important to notice that Vasubandhu interprets the affix (*taddhita-pratyaya*) *-mayāṭ* in a very specific way, namely, as indicating a cause (*hetu*) and thus having a sense of 'arisen from' or 'transformation of'. The idea of 'cause' appears to be intended here in the sense of a preceding, effective cause. Abhk 892.4–5: *tadyathā - annamayāḥ prāñāḥ, tṛṇamayyo gāva iti /*: 'Vital breaths are the result of food, cows are the result of grass'. However, it is also normal to understand the suffix more in the sense of a present, material cause meaning 'made of', 'consisting of', or even 'having the nature (*svabhāva*) of'. See Pāṇini 4.3.82 ff.

The ambiguity here may be understood to imply another important ambiguity: that between 'state' and 'process'. If we accept the understanding of *-mayāṭ* as indicating a preceding effective cause, then the wisdoms associated with study, thinking and *bhāvanā* are more readily conceived 'statically' as results, which is to say as states of knowledge that have arisen. On the other hand, if we take the affix to indicate a cause in the sense of a present material cause ('consisting in', 'having the nature of') then the three kinds of wisdom may also be interpreted in a more 'dynamic' sense, as processes. The affix *-mayāṭ* is ambiguous and lends itself to being interpreted in either one of the two senses noted, depending on context. Another way of making the same point would be to say that it can function analogously to either a *pañcāmī tatpuruṣa* (ablative determinative) or a *karmadhārya* compound. On the latter interpretation, wisdom would be identified with the very processes of studying, thinking and *bhāvanā*, not with the results of these processes. It appears to me that Kamalaśīla's understanding shifts between these two conceptions. I therefore translate *-mayāṭ* in an open ended manner, analogous in meaning to a *śāṣṭhī tatpuruṣa* – i.e. the wisdom of thinking.

meaning. For the Madhyamaka tradition, the distinction is cashed out in terms of their reference: definitive statements are those that pertain to ultimate truth (i.e. variously *anutpāda*, *sūnyatā*, *parama-tattva*, *tathatā*, *pudgala-dharma-nairātmya*, etc.), provisional statements refer to the conventional (Thurman, 1978: 26, 32–4). According to Kamalaśīla’s account, it is the task of the wisdom of thinking to identify which statements refer to the real object or meaning (*bhūtam arthaṃ*) and which do not. The task of the wisdom of *bhāvanā* is to realize the meaning or object that is real.

There, first of all, the wisdom of study should be generated. For through it one initially enters into the meaning of the scriptures. Thereafter one penetrates their provisional and definitive meanings by the wisdom of thinking. After that, having ascertained the meaning that is real (*bhūta*, i.e. *nītārtha*) by means of that (wisdom of thinking), one should realize (*bhāvayet*) it, not that which is unreal (*abhūta* i.e. *neyārtha*).²²

Thus Kamalaśīla’s discussion of the wisdom of *bhāvanā* details the process for experientially realizing the conclusions regarding ultimate reality that have already been reached through the wisdom of thinking. It is intriguing to observe that the same verbal root √*bhū* lies at the basis of both *bhāvanā* and the word we have here translated as ‘real’, *bhūta*.

We should also notice another important conceptual link made by Kamalaśīla himself in this context: that between *bhāvanā* and another term derived from √*bhū*, namely, *anubhāva*, ‘experience’ (literally, ‘following the real’). In the first *Bhāvanākramaḥ*, Kamalaśīla commences his discussion of *bhāvanāmayī prajñā* with the statement, ‘Experience (*anubhāva*) belongs to those who practice’.²³ This kind of experiential wisdom can be seen to depend on and encompass the other two kinds of wisdom. One ‘realizes’ or ‘meditates on’ the conclusions already reached by thinking. What it means to realize or meditate in this way is a rather subtle question. While it definitely includes a conceptual dimension, it also appears to be different from a simple case of thinking deeply about some profound topic. The wisdom of *bhāvanā* is conceived as having a ‘direct’ character, it is ‘experiential’ – this is what distinguishes it from the mere wisdom of thinking (*cintāmayī*

22. Bhk 1 198.10–13: *tatra prathamam tāvat śrutamayī prajñotpādāniyā / tayā hi tāvad āgamārtham avadhārayati / tatas cintāmayyā prajñayā nītaneyārtham nirvedhayati / tatas tayā niścītya bhūtam arthaṃ bhāvayen nābhūtam /*. Also see Bhk 2 D 46a7–b1: *tshul bzhin bsam pa gang zhe na / gang nges pa'i don gyi mdo sde dang drang ba'i don gyi mdo sde la sogs pa legs par gtan la 'bebs pa ste / de ltar byang chub sems dpa' the tshom med na bsgom pa la gcig tu nges par 'gyur ro // de lta ma yin na the tshom gyis 'phyang mo nyug pa'i theg pa la 'dug pa ni lam kha brag gi mdor phyin pa'i mi ltar gang du yang gcig tu nges par mi 'gyur ro //*: ‘And who is correct in thought? He is one who is settled with regard to the system of the Sūtras of definitive and provisional meaning. If a *bodhisattva* is without doubt in this regard, he will be certain in meditation. If it was not like this, if one was on an uncertain course due to doubt, then he couldn’t become certain of anything at all – just like a man who has arrived at the juncture of a forked road’.

23. Bhk 1 204.14–15: *anubhāvas ca pratipattīñām*. D 30b 3: *sgrub pa po rnams la yang nyams yod de /*

prajñā). It is an experiential process of discerning reality, one that occurs in a concentrated state (*samādhi*).

In the Buddhist context, direct experience possesses an epistemologically privileged position; it is considered indubitable in a way that conclusions reached through reasoning alone are not. Here the two forms of wisdom may be contrasted as 'thinking through' what one has studied (*cintāmayī prajñā*) versus actually 'going through' or concentratedly 'experiencing' the reality of what one has already thought through (*bhāvanāmayī prajñā*). In the third *Bhāvanākramaḥ*, Kamalaśīla makes this point using an analogy:

And whatever is known through the wisdom of study and thinking is itself to be realized through the wisdom of *bhāvanā* (*bhāvanāmayyā prajñayā bhāvanīyaṃ*), nothing else. (For example), it is like a horse running along a previously indicated running track. Therefore the discernment of reality (*bhūta-pratyavekṣā*) is to be undertaken.²⁴

Thus Kamalaśīla maintains that *bhāvanāmayī prajñā* is required for Awakening and that this form of wisdom constitutes a more direct realization than *cintāmayī prajñā*. From this he concludes that the 'discernment of reality' (*bhūta-pratyavekṣā*) should be undertaken. It will be recalled that this 'discernment of reality' is explicitly identified by Kamalaśīla with insight (*vipāśyanā*). Thus it seems that *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*, conceived as a process for realizing the true nature of reality, can here be especially identified with one branch of the well-known two-branch schema of *bhāvanā*: *śamatha* and *vipāśyanā*.

As the most profound of the three kinds of wisdom, *bhāvanāmayī prajñā* is identifiable with insight *par excellence*. Given this fact it would seem reasonable to translate *bhāvanā* as 'meditation' in the context of these texts. The problem with translating *dhyāna* as 'meditation' is that Kamalaśīla's opponent is portrayed as adhering to a conception of *dhyāna* that does not include processes of *bhūta-pratyavekṣā*. While Kamalaśīla himself may have accepted the idea that *vipāśyanā* can occur in the first *dhyāna*, his opponent is portrayed as definitely not accepting any such conjunction.

How then are we to understand the relation between the two concepts of meditation for these texts? The answer is that *bhāvanā* is best conceived as the broader term: *bhāvanā* includes *dhyāna* – a term which is principally associated with non-conceptual meditation – but it is not exhausted by it. If this is so, then *dhyāna* would perhaps be translated as 'absorption', or as some other term suggestive of its status as a subspecies of meditation. After all, one would not normally wish to translate '*pomme*' as 'fruit'!

24. Bhk 3 20.3–6: *kiṃ ca yad eva śrūtacintāmayyāprajñayā viditaṃ tad eva bhāvanāmayyā prajñayā bhāvanīyaṃ nānyat / saṃdiṣṭa[dhāvana]-bhūmyaśvadhāvanavat / tasmāt bhūtapratyavekṣā kartavyā / D 64a2-3: yang thos pa dang bsam pa las byung ba'i shes rab kyi rtoḡs pa gang yin pa de nyid bsgom pa las byung ba'i shes rab kyi bsgom par bya'i / gzhan du ni ma yin te rta dkyu sa kyi sa bstan nas rgyug pa bzhin no / de lta bas na yang dag par so sor brtag par bya'o / . On the analogy of the running horse, see Abhk 328: 10–13.*

We can see that the question of the best Sanskrit equivalent for ‘meditation’ in the *Bhāvanākramas* is not unrelated to the debate between Kamalaśīla and Mo ho yen. It is perhaps not without reason that these three texts were so repetitively entitled ‘The Process of *Bhāvanā*’. *Bhāvanā* is a term for processes that include the development of wisdom through concentrated conceptual activity. In the *Bhāvanākramas*, Kamalaśīla portrays his opponent as adhering to a conception of *dhyāna* that excludes deliberate conceptual activity. Kamalaśīla’s charge against his Ch’an rival consisted precisely in the claim that he failed to understand the necessity of conceptual activity in the achievement of Awakening. As an advocate of *dhyāna*, Mo ho yen was viewed as interpreting Awakening as an accomplishment achieved simply by ceasing all mental activity.²⁵ But according to Kamalaśīla, it is only through the particular conceptual activity that is the discernment of reality (*bhūta-pratyavekṣā, vipaśyanā, prajñā-bhāvanā*) that nonconceptual knowledge or gnosis (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) can arise.²⁶

While Kamalaśīla’s criticisms of Mo ho yen are centred upon the idea of knowledge (*jñāna*), Mo ho yen’s critique of Kamalaśīla can be viewed as focusing on the idea of action (*karma*). It is the deliberate, volitional nature of the conceptual activities enjoined by Kamalaśīla that he objects to. Volitional activity is precisely that which binds sentient beings to the wheel of rebirth. As such, it is counterproductive. This would seem to be the crux of the disagreement. For Kamalaśīla, some actions are necessary to the achievement of Awakening.

If, then, *bhāvanā* is to be considered the broader term for meditation in these texts, and if *vipaśyanā* is a kind of *bhāvanā* that is necessary for Awakening, we

25. This doctrine is ascribed to the Ājīvakas. Bhk 3 20.14–16: *yac cāpy ucyate / na kimcit kuśalādikarma kartavyam iti / tatraivaivaṃvadatā karmakṣayān muktir ity ājīvakavādābhyupagamo bhavet /*; D 64b1 4: *yang dag ba la sogṣ pa’i las ci yang mi bya’o zhes zer ba de ni de skad smra bas las zas nas grol bar ‘gyur ro zhes mu stegs can kun tu tshol ba’i smra ba khas blang par ‘gyur ro /*: ‘Now as for what is also said – that not a single action, skillful or otherwise, should be performed – those who speak thus would here be accepting the doctrine of the Ājīvakas, that is, liberation on the basis of karma’s destruction’.

26. When the practitioner reaches the point of comprehending emptiness nonconceptually, this constitutes ‘the limit of things’ mentioned above (Bhk 3 2.8–10; D 56a7–b1) and the arising of the first stage and transcendent path of the *bodhisattva*. On this basis, gradually but inevitably the *bodhisattva*’s purpose is perfected and the omniscience of Buddhahood is achieved. Quoting from the *Ratnakūṭa*, the ultimate justification for the practice of insight is dramatically explained. Bhk 2 D 49b5–b6: *gang shes rab kyis dngos po’i ngo bo nyid so sor brtags nas mi bsgom gyi / yid la byed pa yongs su spong ba tsam ‘ba’ zhis sgom par byed pa de’i rnam par rtog pa nam yang mi ldog (NP rtog) cing ngo bo nyid med pa nyid (NP omit nyid) rtogs (Goshima follows NP: rtog) par yang mi ‘gyur te / shes rab kyis snang ba med pa’i phyir ro // ‘di ltar “yang dag par so sor rtog pa nyid las yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin du shes pa’i me byung na gtsubs shing gtsubs pa’i me bzhin du rtog pa’i shing sreg go” zhes bcom ldan ‘das kyis bka’ stsal to //*: ‘Someone who only cultivates the mere abandonment of mental activity, but who does not meditate having analysed the nature of entities with wisdom, will never get rid of concepts and will not come to realize the absence of inherent nature – on account of the absence of the light of wisdom. So it is said by the Illustrious One, “When the fire of knowing reality as such arises from the very discernment of reality, it incinerates the wood of concepts, just as the fire of firesticks rubbed together [consumes the sticks themselves]”’. See also Bhk 3 30.8–11.

may well ask what precisely its undertaking was thought to involve. Here I can only give a brief indication of Kamalaśīla's conception, in relation to other meditation terminology already discussed.

First of all, the process is described as being undertaken while actually abiding in a state of *śamatha*. '[H]aving renounced all obscurations, one who wants pure knowledge to arise must cultivate wisdom while abiding in tranquillity'.²⁷

Similar considerations apply to *samādhi*. Quoting from the *Samḍhinirmocana Sūtra*:

... [H]aving abandoned mental distractions, he inwardly discerns those very same previously considered *dharmas* as reflections in the sphere of concentration (T. *ting nge 'dzin*, Skt. *samādhi*). In this manner, discriminating the meaning of what is to be known in those reflections in the sphere of concentration, thoroughly discriminating, completely considering, completely investigating, forbearing, accepting, classifying, looking and knowing – *That* is called insight. So it is that the bodhisattva is skilled in insight.²⁸

Thus while Kamalaśīla's views regarding the compatibility of *vipaśyanā* with both *samādhi* and *śamatha* are clear, the question still remains as to whether he regarded its conjunction with *dhyāna* as possible. In the *Bhāvanākramas* the two terms are never mentioned in the same breath. In spite of this fact, my suggestion is that Kamalaśīla did regard them as compatible and that, given the presence of thought (*vitarka-vicāra*) within the first *dhyāna*, it is precisely this meditative state that theoretically allows the two to come together. Indeed, among the *dhyānas*, this conjunction would have been considered possible *only* in the first *dhyāna* – since thought is absent from the second to the fourth *dhyānas*. In particular, it may well have been the higher, intermediate division of the first absorption (*dhyānāntara*) that Kamalaśīla associated with the possibility of the practice of insight meditation. It will be recalled that it is in this division that gross thought (*vitarka*) is absent while subtle thought (*vicāra*) remains. If we associate the activity of subtle thought with the verbal form *vicārayati*, employed by Kamalaśīla in

27. Bhk 2 D 44b7–45a1: *de lta bas na sgrib pa 'mtha dag spangs nas yongs su dag pa'i ye shes 'byung bar 'dod pas zhi gnas la gnas shing shes rab bsgom par bya'o //*. While basic, such a notion has been taken by some scholars as suggesting a conceptual tension in Buddhist meditation theory. How can conceptual analysis occur in a state of one-pointed meditation? According to Griffiths, it led to various attempts to regard insight as occurring in 'liminal states' between the *dhyānas*. This difficulty may well provide some explanation for the postulation of an intermediate *dhyāna*. (1983: 245–51, 285–7; also see Vetter, 1988: xxv–xxvii).

28. Bhk 2 D 47a7–47b2: *sems kyi rnam par g.yeng ba spangs nas ji ltar bsams pa'i chos de dag nyid nang du ting nge 'dzin gyi spyod yul gzugs brnyan du so sor rtog par byed / mos par byed do // de ltar ting nge 'dzin gyi spyod yul gzugs brnyan de dag la shes bya'i don de rnam par 'byed pa dang / rab tu rnam par 'byed pa dang / yongs su rtog pa dang / yongs su dpyod pa dang / bzod pa dang / 'dod pa dang / bye brag 'byed pa dang / lta ba dang / rtog pa gang yin pa de ni lhag mthong zhes bya ste / de ltar na byang chub sems dpa' lhag mthong la mkhas pa yin no" zhes gsungs so //*. (See Powers, 1995: 150–52, 341–2).

describing the practice of insight according to the *Sam̐dhinirmocana Sūtra*, the connection would be made.²⁹

The other possibility, as discussed, is that insight be understood in terms of

29. Indeed this would seem to be confirmed by Kamalaśīla's employment of the same verb in describing the experiential process of conceptual analysis outlined in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. In editing the Sanskrit text of Bhk 1, Tucci created a separate section for this description, No. 16, which he entitled 'Method of meditation according to the *Laṅkāvatāra*; vicāra on the dharmas (no object, no subject), etc'. This section occurs immediately following Kamalaśīla's discussion of *dhyāna*; both are set in the overall context of *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to deal extensively with Kamalaśīla's account of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, a brief excerpt should suffice to demonstrate the experiential quality of the language he employs. After having stabilized the mind on the five aggregates as a meditation object (Bhk 1 206.7–15), the analytic process is described as commencing with an analysis of *dharmas* with material form: Bhk 1 210.16–211.4: *prathamam yogi ye rūpiṇo dharmā bhāvyārthatayā paraiḥ parikalpitās teṣu tāvad vicārayet / kim ete vijñānād anye, āhosvid vijñānam evaitat tathā pratibhāsate, yathā svapnāvasthāyām iti / tatra vijñānād bahiḥ paramāṇuśo vicārayet / paramāṇuś ca bhāgasāḥ pratyavekṣamāṇo yogi tān arthān na samanupaśyati / tasyāsamānupaśyata evam bhavati / cittamātram evaitat sarvaṃ na punar bāhyo 'rtho vidyate / tad evam / "cittamātram samāruhya bāhyam arthaṃ na kalpayet" rūpidharmavikalpān tyajed ityarthah / teṣām upa[labdhi]lakṣaṇaprāptānām vicārayed anupalabdeḥ / evam rūpiṇo dharmān vibhāvyrūpiṇo vibhāvayet /; D 33a4–34b1: thog mar rnal 'byor pas chos gzugs can gang dag gzugs la sogs pa phyi rol gyi don du gzhan dag gis brtags pa de dag la ci 'di dag rnam par shes pa las gzhan zhig yin nam / 'on te rnam par shes pa de nyid de ltar snang ste / rmi lam gnas skabs ji lta ba bzhin nam zhes dpyad par bya'o / de la rnam par shes pa las phyi rol pa rdul phra rab tu bshig ste / rdul phra rab rnam kyang cha shas kyis so sor brtags na rnal 'byor pas don de dag mi mthong ngo / des de dag ma mthong bas 'di snyam du 'di dag thams cad ni sems tsam ste phyi rol gyi don med do snyam du sems so / 'di ltar / sems tsam la ni rab brten nas / phyi rol don la mi brtag go / zhes de skad 'byung ba ni chos gzugs can la rnam par rtag pa spong ba'o zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go / dmigs su rung ba'i mtshan nyid du gyur pa de dag rnam par dpyad na mi dmigs pa'i phyir ro / de ltar chos gzugs can rnam rnam par bshig nas gzugs can ma yin pa rnam par bshig par bya ste /: 'First of all the yogin should analyse (*vicārayet*, T. *dpyad par bya*) those *dharmas* having a material form, imagined by others as being external objects: "Are these other than consciousness, or is it this consciousness itself appearing in that manner – just as in dreamstate?" In that regard [i.e. if the position held is that they have a nature] outside of consciousness, he should break them down into atoms (*paramāṇuśo vicārayet*, T. *rdul phra rab tu bshig ste*). And discerning (*pratyavekṣamāṇaḥ*, T. *so sor brtags pa*) those atoms by way of parts, the yogin does not see (*na samanupaśyati*, T. *mi mthong*) those things. Not seeing (them), he thinks: "All this is indeed mind-only, an external object does not exist". Therefore thus: "Having ascended to mind-only, one would not imagine an external object". The meaning is that he would abandon conceptualizations of *dharmas* that have a material form. He should draw a conclusion (*vicārayet*, T. *rnam par dpyad*) from the non-apprehension of those things that are in principle apprehensible. Thus having broken down (*vibhāvya*, T. *rnam par bshig nas*) *dharmas* with a material form, he should break down (*vibhāvya*, T. *rnam par bshig bya*) those without material form'.*

It is apparent that here the conceptual analysis or 'breaking down' of experienced realities is considered part of the process of insight. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to consider the inferences comprising this analysis as instances of *cintāmayī prajñā*. Because they are undertaken while in the sphere of *samādhi*, they are properly considered as meditative in nature; they form part of what is meant by *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*. They appear to be distinct from cases of ordinary inference insofar as they seem to be conceived as directly 'based upon' objects and objective states of affairs being concurrently experienced in meditation. This appears to be so in the sense that the meditator is thought of as being able to remain one-pointedly focused upon such objects, holding them in view while 'analysing' them.

non-experiential processes of ordinary reasoning (*cintāmayī prajñā*); this opens the door to two possible ways of translating. The first would take *dhyāna* as the default term for meditation, exclusively referring to states in which there is no deliberate discursive activity. *Vipaśyanā* would be understood as a complimentary intellectual process that is not meditative in nature. But the problem with this suggestion is that it does not recognize Kamalaśīla's acceptance of *vipaśyanā* as a subdivision of *samādhi*, as discussed above. A second, more sophisticated possibility would treat both nonconceptual *dhyāna* and rational *vipaśyanā* as kinds of meditation – albeit forms which are distinct and mutually exclusive in their natures. As rational insight, *vipaśyanā* would count as a kind of meditation much in the same way as do Descartes' reflections for the western intellectual tradition. On this account, the process of meditation would have to consist of a serial alternation, back and forth, between the modes of ordinary rational thought and wholly non-conceptual concentration.³⁰ While coherent, the problem with this account is that it fails to take seriously the Indian division of wisdom into three kinds and the clear connection between *vipaśyanā* and *bhāvanāmāyī prajñā*. Furthermore, and perhaps more tellingly, it does not accurately reflect Kamalaśīla's own descriptions of the process of insight. A careful reading of the texts shows that Kamalaśīla's understanding of the discernment of reality is not that of a kind of ordinary reasoning, but that of a special kind of conceptual analysis that occurs *while actually abiding in a state of meditative concentration (samādhi)*.

While it is true that Kamalaśīla nowhere explicitly states that this includes the first *dhyāna*, there is no reason in principle to exclude this possibility, given the presence of thought therein. In fact, given Kamalaśīla's descriptions of the analytic process, the upper 'intermediate' division of the first *dhyāna* seems the most likely candidate for the sphere of concentration in which this special kind of conceptual analysis is practised. As described in the *Bhāvanākramas*, the discernment of reality involves cultivating an accurate perception of the true nature of the constituents of conventional reality. In other words, it involves the 'discrimination of *dharmas*' (*dharma-pravicaya*). This discrimination involves mindfulness practices (*smṛtyupasthāna*) and specific acts of what might be called 'perceptual judgement' as to the ultimate emptiness of *dharmas*. At one point Kamalaśīla describes this experiential process of examining the nature of *dharmas* as being so vivid that it is like looking at the blemishes on one's face through its reflection in a mirror.³¹ It

30. On the conception of the process of meditation as a kind of serial alternation, see Williams (1989: 72–4) and Ruegg (1989: 111–12).

31. Bhk 3 2.5–8: *tasyaiva ca pratibimbasya svabhāvaṃ nirūpayan yogī, darpaṇāntargatasvamukhap ratibimbapratyavekṣaṇena svamukhagatavairūpyāṇāṃ viniścayavat, sarvadharmāṇāṃ yathāvat svabhāvāgamāt /*; D 56a7–8: *rnal 'byor pa gzugs brnyan de nyid kyi ngo bo nyid la rtog pas chos thams cad kyi ngo bo nyid ji lta ba bzhin du khong du chud de / bdag gis bzhin gyi gzugs me long gi nang du byung ba la brtags na bdag gi bzhin la mi sdug pa la sogs pa mngon pa bzhin no /*: 'And in determining the nature of that very reflection on the basis of understanding the nature of all *dharmas* as they are, the yogin is as if ascertaining blemishes upon his own face by discerning its reflection in a mirror'.

seems clear that Kamalaśīla is not describing a case of ordinary logical reasoning, but rather a subtle form of *meditative* analysis. It is an intentionally undertaken practice that occurs in a heightened state of one-pointed consciousness, a practice that is at once conceptual analysis and meditation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abhk	<i>Abhidharmakośa & bhāṣya</i> of Ācārya Vasubandhu with <i>Sphutārthā</i> commentary of Ācārya Yaśomitra, Swami Dwārikādās Śāstrī (ed.) (Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1987).
B. U.	<i>Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad</i>
Bhk	<i>Bhāvanākramah</i>
Pāṇini	<i>Aṣṭadhyāyī</i> of Pāṇini, Roman transliteration and English trans. Sumitra M. Katre (1987) (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989).
Skt.	Sanskrit
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
T.	Tibetan

Editions of the Tibetan Tanjur: C – Cone; D – Derge; N – Narthang; P – Peking

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