

The Source of conflict regarding Theravada and Mahayana concepts of Arahant and Bodhisattva

Dear Kalyanamittas,

Below is an extract from our earlier sharing on the *article from Amaravati Buddhist Monastery that discusses the Theravada and Mahayana concepts of Arahant and Bodhisattva for sharing by all.*

The Source of conflict

The source of this conflict, along with the other ten thousand woes and struggles to which the human mind is **prone**, is conceiving the Arahant and the Bodhisattva **in terms of self**. When we **no longer** look at the issue through the lens of **self-view**, the picture changes **radically**.

‘Bhikkhus, held by two kinds of views, some devas and human beings hold back and some overreach; **only those with vision see**.

‘And how, bhikkhus, do **some hold back**? Some devas and humans enjoy being, delight in being, are satisfied with being. When the Dhamma is taught to them for the cessation of being, their minds **do not enter** into it or **acquire confidence** in it or **settle upon it** or become **resolved upon it**. Thus, bhikkhus, do **some hold back**.

‘How, bhikkhus, do **some overreach**? Now some are troubled, ashamed and disgusted by this very same quality of being and they **rejoice in** [the idea of] **non-being**, asserting, “Good sirs, when the body perishes at death, this **self is annihilated and destroyed** and *does not exist* anymore – this is **true peace**, this is **excellent**, this is **reality!**” Thus, bhikkhus, do **some overreach**.

‘How, bhikkhus, do those **with vision see**? Herein one sees what has come to be as having come to be. Having seen it thus, one practises the course for turning away, for dispassion, for the cessation of what has come to be. Thus, bhikkhus, do those **with vision see**.’ [Iti 49]

As long as **self-view** has not been **penetrated** in either its **coarse form of sakkāya-ditthi** (identification with the body and personality) or the more refined **asmimāna** (the conceit of ‘I am’), the **mind will miss the Middle Way**.

The ‘**no more coming into any state of being**’ ideal will thus tend to be co-opted by the nihilist view (uccheda-ditthi), while the ‘endlessly returning for the sake of all beings’ ideal will tend to be pervaded with the eternalist view (sassata-ditthi).

When the **two extremes are abandoned** and the *sense of self* is seen through, the **Middle Way is realized**. Whether we talk in terms of *utter emptiness*, the *arahant* of the Pali Canon, or the *absolute zero of the Heart Sutra*, or in terms of the infinite view of the *four bodhisattva vows*, there is a **direct realization** that these expressions are **merely modes of speech**. They **all derive** from the **same source**, the **Dhamma**. They are simply **expedient** formulations which *guide the heart* of the *aspirant to attunement with that reality* of its *own nature*. That attunement is the **Middle Way**.

Bye! and with metta always,

Teoh