



FPMT
In-Depth Meditation Training



Year 3:
Madhyamaka and Tathagatagarbha

FPMT In-Depth Meditation Training

Year 3

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Figure 1. Prajñāpāramitā

*I bow to you, the dharmadhātu,
Who resides in every sentient being.
But if they aren't aware of you,
They circle through this triple world.
- Nagarjuna. In Praise of Dharmadhātu*

*By knowledge, no dwelling in samsara, by compassion, no dwelling in peace
- Abhisamayālaṅkāra*

Contents

1. ĀCĀRYA KAMALAŚĪLA'S BHĀVANĀKRAMA	8
2. GENERATING BODHICITTA	30
2.1 CANDRAKIRTI ON GREAT COMPASSION	30
2.2 NĀGĀRJUNA ON BODHICITTA.....	30
2.3 THE SEVEN POINTS OF MIND TRAINING	32
2.4 JE TSONGKHAPA ON EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER.....	36
3. EMPTINESS IN THE PALI CANON	46
3.1 AGGIVACCHASUTTA (MN 27).....	46
3.2 KACCĀNAGOTTASUTTA (SN 12.15)	49
3.3 CŪĻASUÑÑĀTASUTTA (MN 121).....	50
4. EMPTINESS IN MĀHĀYANA SŪTRA	54
4.1 VAJRACCHEDIKĀ (TOH 16).....	54
4.2 THE RICE SEEDLING (ŚĀLISTAMBA, TOH 210)	71
5. ATĪŚĀ'S SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OF THE MIDDLE WAY	82
6. NĀGĀRJUNA'S MŪLAMADHYAMAKĀRIKĀ	85
6.1 HOMAGE VERSES	85
6.2 CHAPTER I: EXAMINATION OF CONDITIONS	85
6.3 CHAPTER II: EXAMINATION OF MOTION	87
6.4 CHAPTER XVIII: EXAMINATION OF THE SELF AND PHENOMENA.....	90
6.5 CHAPTER XXII: EXAMINATION OF THE TATHĀGATA.....	92
6.6 CHAPTER XXIV: EXAMINATION OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS.....	94
6.7 CHAPTER XXV: EXAMINATION OF NIRVANA	98
6.8 CHAPTER XXVI: EXAMINATION OF THE TWELVE LINKS.....	101
7. GYALTSAB-JE ON TATHĀGATA ESSENCE: THE UTTARATANTRA	104
7.1 TATHĀGATA ESSENCE IS ILLUSTRATED IN THREE WAYS	104
7.2 CAUSAL RELATION WITH A BUDDHA'S BODIES	105
7.3 THE TEN PRESENTATIONS ESTABLISH THE CLEAR LIGHT NATURE OF THE MIND	106
7.4 SUMMARY	127
8. THIRTY-NINE UNCOMMON ASPECTS OF AN EXALTED KNOWER OF ALL ASPECTS	129
I. TEN STRENGTHS.....	129
II. FOUR FEARLESSNESSES.....	131
III. FOUR INDIVIDUAL CORRECT KNOWLEDGES	131
IV. EIGHTEEN UNMIXED QUALITIES OF BUDDHAS.....	132
V. ASPECT OF THUSNESS, THE ENTITY	135
VI. SELF-ARISEN ASPECT, THE SUPPORT.....	135
VII. ASPECT OF BUDDHA, THE OBJECT OF INTENT.....	136
9. INTERCONTEMPLATIVE DIALOGUE: THE TEVIJJASUTTA (DN 13)	137
BIBLIOGRAPHY	147





Figure 2. Refuge field



Figure 3. Merit field





Figure 4. Kamalaśīla

1. Ācārya Kamalaśīla's Bhāvanākrama¹

The middling stages of meditation

Homage to the youthful Mañjuśrī.

1. I shall briefly explain the stages of meditation for those who follow the system of Mahāyāna sūtras. The intelligent who wish to actualize omniscience extremely quickly should make deliberate effort to fulfil its causes and conditions.
2. It is not possible for omniscience to be produced without causes, because if it were everything could always be omniscient. If things were produced without reliance on something else, they could exist without constraint—there would be no reason why everything could not be omniscient.
3. Therefore, since all functional things arise only occasionally, they depend strictly on their causes. Omniscience too is rare because it does not occur at all times and in all places; and everything cannot become omniscient. Therefore, it definitely depends on causes and conditions.
4. Also from among these causes and conditions, you should cultivate correct and complete causes. If you put the wrong causes into practice, even if you work hard for a long time, the desired goal cannot be achieved. It will be like milking a [cow's] horn. Likewise, the result will not be produced when all the causes are not put into effect. For example, if the seed or any other cause is missing, then the result, a sprout, and so forth, will not be produced. Therefore, those who desire a particular result should cultivate its complete and unmistakable causes and conditions.
5. If you ask, "What are the causes and conditions of the final fruit of omniscience?", I, who am like a blind man, may not be in a position to explain [by myself], but I shall employ the Buddha's own words just as he spoke them to his disciples after his enlightenment.

He said, "*Vajrapāṇi, Lord of Secrets, the transcendental wisdom (jñāna) of omniscience has its root in compassion, and arises from a cause – the altruistic thought, the awakening mind of bodhicitta, and the perfection of skilful means (upāya).*" therefore, if you are interested in achieving omniscience, you need to practice these three: compassion, the awakening mind of bodhicitta, and skilful means.

¹ Translated [from tibetan into english] and edited by Venerable Geshe lobsang Jordhen, losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell for Stages of Meditation by The Dalai Lama (snow lion Publications, Ithaca, N. Y., 2001) © 2001 His Holiness Dalai lama. All rights reserved.



6. Moved by compassion, Bodhisattvas take the vow to liberate all sentient beings. then, by overcoming their self-centred outlook, they engage eagerly and continuously in the very difficult practices of accumulating merit and insight. Having entered into this practice, they will certainly complete the collection of merit and insight. Accomplishing the accumulation of merit and insight is like having omniscience itself in the palm of your hand. Therefore, since compassion is the only root of omniscience, you should become familiar with this practice from the very beginning.
7. The Compendium of Perfect Dharma reads, *“o Buddha, a Bodhisattva should not train in many practices. If a Bodhisattva properly holds to one Dharma and learns it perfectly, he has all the Buddha’s qualities in the palm of his hand. And, if you ask what that one Dharma is, it is great compassion (mahākaruṇā).”*
8. The Buddhas have already achieved all their own goals, but remain in the cycle of existence for as long as there are sentient beings. This is because they possess great compassion. They also do not enter the immensely blissful abode of nirvāṇa like the Hearers. Considering the interests of sentient beings first, they abandon the peaceful abode of nirvāṇa as if it were a burning iron house. Therefore, great compassion alone is the unavoidable cause of the non-abiding nirvāṇa of the Buddha.
9. The way to meditate on compassion will be taught from the outset. Begin the practice by meditating on equanimity. Try to actualize impartiality toward all sentient beings by eliminating attachment and hatred.
10. All sentient beings desire happiness and do not desire misery. Think deeply about how, in this beginningless cycle of existence, there is not one sentient being who has not been my friend and relative hundreds of times. Therefore, since there is no ground for being attached to some and hating others, I shall develop a mind of equanimity toward all sentient beings. Begin the meditation on equanimity by thinking of a neutral person, and then consider people who are friends and foes.
11. After the mind has developed equanimity toward all sentient beings, meditate on loving-kindness. Moisten the mental continuum with the water of loving-kindness and prepare it as you would apiece of fertile ground. When the seed of compassion is planted in such a mind, germination will be swift, proper, and complete. Once you have irrigated the mindstream with loving-kindness, meditate on compassion.
12. The compassionate mind has the nature of wishing all suffering beings to be free from suffering. Meditate on compassion for all sentient beings, because the beings in the three realms of existence are intensely tortured by the three types of sufferings in various forms. The Buddha has said that heat and other types of pain constantly torture beings in the hells for a very long time. He has also said that



hungry ghosts are scorched by hunger and thirst and experience immense physical suffering.

13. We can also see animals suffering in many miserable ways: they eat each other, become angry, and are hurt and killed.
14. We can see that human beings, too, experience various acute kinds of pain. Not able to find what they want, they are resentful and harm each other. They suffer the pain of losing the beautiful things they want and confronting the ugly things they do not want, as well as the pain of poverty. There are those whose minds are bound by various fetters of disturbing emotions like craving desire. Others are in turmoil with different types of wrong views. These are all causes of misery; therefore they are always painful, like being on a precipice.
15. Gods suffer the misery of change. For example, signs of impending death and their fall to unfortunate states constantly oppress the minds of gods of the desire realm. How can they live in peace?
16. Pervasive misery is what arises under the power of causes characterized by actions and disturbing emotions. It has the nature and characteristics of momentary disintegration and pervades all wandering beings.
17. Therefore, see all wandering beings as immersed in a great fire of misery. Think that they are all like you in not desiring misery at all: 'Alas! All my beloved sentient beings are in such pain. What can I do to set them free?' and make their sufferings your own.
18. Whether you are engaged in one-pointed meditation or pursuing your ordinary activities, meditate on compassion at all times, focusing on all sentient beings and wishing that they all be free from suffering. Begin by meditating on your friends and relatives. Recognize how they experience the various sufferings that have been explained.
19. Then, having seen all sentient beings as equal, with no difference between them, you should meditate on sentient beings to whom you are indifferent. When the compassion you feel toward them is the same as the compassion you feel toward your friends and relatives, meditate on compassion for all sentient beings throughout the directions of the universe.
20. Just as a mother responds to her small, beloved, and suffering child, when you develop a spontaneous and equal sense of compassion toward all sentient beings, you have perfected the practice of compassion. And this is known as great compassion.



21. Meditation on loving-kindness begins with friends and people you are fond of. It has the nature of wishing that they meet with happiness. Gradually extend the meditation to include strangers and even your enemies. Habituating yourself to compassion, you will gradually generate a spontaneous wish to liberate all sentient beings. Therefore, having familiarized yourself with compassion as the basis, meditate on the awakening mind of bodhicitta.
22. Bodhicitta is of two types: conventional and ultimate. Conventional bodhicitta is the cultivation of the initial thought that aspires to attain unsurpassable and perfectly consummated Buddhahood in order to benefit all wandering sentient beings, after having taken the vow out of compassion to release all of them from suffering. That conventional bodhicitta should be cultivated in a process similar to that described in the chapter on moral ethics in the Bodhisattvabhūmi, generating this mind by taking the Bodhisattva vow before a master who abides by the Bodhisattva precepts.
23. After generating the conventional awakening mind of bodhicitta, endeavour to cultivate the ultimate awakening mind of bodhicitta. The ultimate bodhicitta is transcendental and free from all elaborations. It is extremely clear, the object of the ultimate, stainless, unwavering, like a butter lamp undisturbed by the wind. This is achieved through constant and respectful familiarity with the yoga of calm abiding meditation (śamatha) and special insight (vipaśyanā) over a long period of time. The Unravelling of the Thought (Samdhanirmocana) Sūtra says: *“o maitreya, you must know that all the virtuous dharmas of Hearers, Bodhisattvas, or Tathāgatas, whether worldly or transcendental, are the fruits of calm abiding meditation and special insight.”*
24. Since all kinds of concentrations (samādhi) can be included in these two, all yogis must at all times seek calm abiding meditation and special insight. Again the Unravelling of the Thought Sūtra says: *“the Buddha has said it must be known that the teachings of various types of concentrations sought by his Hearers, Bodhisattvas, and Tathāgatas are all contained in calm abiding meditation and special insight.”*
25. Yogis cannot eliminate mental obscurations merely by familiarizing themselves with calm abiding meditation alone. It will only suppress the disturbing emotions (kleśa) and delusions temporarily. Without the light of wisdom (prajñā), the latent potential of the disturbing emotions cannot be thoroughly destroyed, and therefore their complete destruction will not be possible.
26. For this reason the Unravelling of the Thought Sūtra says, *“Concentration (dhyāna) can suppress the disturbing emotions properly, and wisdom can thoroughly destroy their latent potential.”*
27. The King of Concentration (Samādhirāja) Sūtra also says:



*“Even if you meditate with single-pointed concentration,
You will not destroy the misconception of the self
And your disturbing emotions will disturb you again;
This is like Udraka’s single-pointed meditation.*

*When the selflessness of phenomena is examined specifically,
And meditations are performed on the basis of that analysis,
That is the cause of the resultant liberation (nirvāṇa);
No other cause can bring peace (śānti).”*

28. Also the Bodhisattva Section (Bodhisattvapitaka) Sūtra says:

“Those who haven’t heard these various teachings of the Bodhisattva Collection and have also not heard the implemented teaching on monastic Discipline (vinaya), who think that singlepointed concentration alone is enough, will fall into the pit of arrogance due to pride. As such, they cannot gain complete release from rebirth, old age, sickness, death, misery, lamentation, suffering, mental unhappiness, and disturbances. Neither do they gain complete liberation from the cycle of the six states of existence, nor from the heaps of suffering mental and physical aggregates. Keeping this in mind, the Tathāgata has said that hearing the teachings will help you gain liberation from old age and death.”

29. For these reasons, those who wish to attain the thoroughly purified transcendent wisdom by eliminating all obscurations should meditate on wisdom while remaining in calm abiding meditation. The Heap of Jewels (Ratnakūṭa) Sūtra says:

“Single-pointed concentration is achieved by adhering to moral ethics (śīla). With the achievement of singlepointed concentration, you meditate on wisdom. Wisdom helps you to attain a pure pristine awareness (jñāna). Through pure pristine awareness your moral conduct is perfected.”

30. The Meditation on Faith in the Mahāyāna (Mahāyāna-śraddhā-bhāvanā) Sūtra says:

“O child of noble family, if you do not abide by wisdom, I cannot say how you will have faith in the Mahāyāna of the Bodhisattvas, or how you will set forth in the Mahāyāna. O child of noble family, you should know that this is because Bodhisattvas’ faith in the Mahāyāna and setting forth in the Mahāyāna occurs as a result of contemplating the perfect Dharma and reality with a mind free of distraction.”

31. A yogi’s mind will be distracted to various objects if he cultivates only special insight without developing a calmly abiding mind. It will be unstable, like a butter lamp in wind. Since clarity of pristine awareness will be absent, these two [special insight and a calmly abiding mind] should be cultivated equally.

32. Therefore, the Sūtra of the Great and Complete Transcendence of Suffering (Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra) says:



“Hearers cannot see Buddha-nature because their single-pointed absorption is stronger and wisdom is weaker. Bodhisattvas can see it, but not clearly, because their wisdom is stronger and their single-pointed concentration is weaker. Whereas, Tathāgatas can see all, because they possess a calmly abiding mind and special insight to an equal degree.”

33. Due to the power of calm abiding meditation, the mind will not be disturbed by the wind of conceptual thoughts, like a butter lamp undisturbed by the breeze. special insight eliminates every stain of wrong views, thus you will not be affected by [the views of] others. The Moon Lamp Sūtra says:

“By the force of calm abiding meditation, the mind will become unwavering, and with special insight it will become like a mountain. Therefore, maintain a yogic practice of them both.”

34. Initially the yogi should seek the prerequisites that can assist him in actualizing calm abiding meditation and special insight quickly and easily.
35. The prerequisites necessary for the development of calm abiding meditation are: to live in a conducive environment; to limit your desires and practice contentment; to not be involved in too many activities; to maintain pure moral ethics; and to fully eliminate attachment and all other kinds of conceptual thoughts.
36. A conducive environment should be known by five characteristics: providing easy access to food and clothes, being free of evil beings and enemies, being free from disease, containing good friends who maintain moral ethics and who share similar views, and being visited by few people in the daytime and with little noise at night.
37. Limiting your desires refers to not being excessively attached to many or good clothes, such as religious robes, and so forth. The practice of contentment means always being satisfied with any little thing, like inferior religious robes, and so forth. Not being involved in many activities refers to giving up ordinary activities like business, avoiding too close association with householders and monks, and totally abandoning the practice of medicine and astrology.
38. What is pure discipline (śīla)? It is not to contravene the foundation of the training—the two vows together with the avoidance of misdeeds whether natural or proscribed; and whenever you fail through lack of carefulness, to regret that lapse swiftly, and to repair it according to the teachings.
39. Even in the case of the statement that a transgression of the Hearers’ vows cannot be restored, if there is regret and an awareness of the intention not to repeat it, and an awareness of the lack of a true identity of the mind that performed the



action, or familiarity with the lack of a true identity of all phenomena, that person's morality can be said to be pure. This should be understood from the Sūtra on the Elimination of Ajātaśatru's Regret (Ajātaśatrukaukṛṭṭyavinodana-sūtra). You should overcome your regret and make special effort in meditation (bhāvanā).

40. Being mindful of the various defects of attachment in this life and future lives helps eliminate misconceptions in this regard. Some common features of both beautiful and ugly things in the cycle of existence are that they are all unstable and subject to disintegration. It is beyond doubt that you will be separated from all of these things without delay. So, meditate on why you should be so excessively attached to these things and then discard all misconceptions.
41. What are the prerequisites of special insight? they are: to rely on holy persons; to seek seriously extensive instruction; and to contemplate properly.
42. What type of holy person should you rely upon? one who has heard many [teachings], who expresses himself clearly, who is endowed with compassion, and able to withstand hardship.
43. What is meant by seriously seeking extensive instruction? this is to listen seriously with respect to the definitive and interpretable meaning of the twelve branches of the Buddha's teachings. The Unravelling of the Thought Sūtra says: *"Not listening to superior beings' teachings as you wish is an obstacle to special insight."* The same sūtra says, *"Special insight arises from its cause, correct view, which in turn arises from listening and contemplation."*
44. The Questions of Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā) says, *"through the experience of listening [to teachings] you gain wisdom, and with wisdom disturbing emotions are thoroughly pacified."*
45. What is meant by proper contemplation? It is properly establishing the definitive and interpretable sūtras. When Bodhisattvas are free of doubt, they can meditate single-pointedly. Otherwise, if doubt and indecision beset them, they will be like a man at a crossroads uncertain of which path to follow.
46. Yogis should at all times avoid fish, meat, and so forth, should eat with moderation, and avoid foods that are not conducive to health.
47. Thus, Bodhisattvas who have assembled all the prerequisites for calm abiding meditation and special insight should enter into meditation.
48. When meditating, the yogi should first complete all the preparatory practices. He should go to the toilet and in a pleasant location free of disturbing noise he should think, 'I will deliver all sentient beings to the state of enlightenment.' then he should manifest great compassion, the thought wishing to liberate all sentient



beings, and pay homage to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the ten directions by touching the five limbs of his body to the ground.

49. He should place an image of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, such as a painting, in front of him or in some other place. He should make as many offerings and praises as he can. He should confess his misdeeds and rejoice in the merit of all other beings.
50. Then, he should sit in the full lotus posture of Vairocana, or the half lotus posture, on a comfortable cushion. The eyes should not be too widely opened or too tightly closed. Let them focus on the tip of the nose. The body should not be bent forward or backward. Keep it straight and turn the attention inwards. The shoulders should rest in their natural position and the head should not lean back, forward, or to either side. The nose should be in line with the navel. The teeth and lips should rest in their natural state with the tongue touching the upper palate. Breathe very gently and softly without causing any noise, without labouring, and without unevenness. Inhale and exhale naturally, slowly, and unnoticeably.
51. Calm abiding meditation should be achieved first. Calm abiding is that mind which has overcome distraction to external objects, and which spontaneously and continuously turns toward the object of meditation with bliss and pliancy.
52. That which properly examines suchness from within a state of calm abiding is special insight. The Cloud of Jewels (Ratnamegha) Sūtra reads, *“Calm abiding meditation is a single-pointed mind; special insight makes specific analysis of the ultimate.”*
53. Also, from the Unravelling of the Thought Sūtra:

“Maitreya asked, ‘o Buddha, how should [people] thoroughly search for calm abiding meditation and gain expertise in special insight?’

The Buddha answered, ‘maitreya, I have given the following teachings to Bodhisattvas: sūtras, melodious praises, prophetic teachings, verses, specific instructions, advice from specific experiences, expressions of realization, legends, birth tales, extensive teachings, established doctrine, and instructions.

‘Bodhisattvas should properly listen to these teachings, remember their contents, train in verbal recitation, and thoroughly examine them mentally. With perfect comprehension, they should go alone to remote areas and reflect on these teachings and continue to focus their minds upon them. They should focus mentally only on those topics that they have reflected about and maintain this continuously. That is called mental engagement.



'When the mind has been repeatedly engaged in this way and physical and mental pliancy have been achieved, that mind is called calm abiding. This is how Bodhisattvas properly seek the calmly abiding mind.

'When the Bodhisattva has achieved physical and mental pliancy and abides only in them, he eliminates mental distraction. The phenomenon that has been contemplated as the object of inner single-pointed concentration should be analysed and regarded as like a reflection. This reflection or image, which is the object of single-pointed concentration, should be thoroughly discerned as an object of knowledge. It should be completely investigated and thoroughly examined. Practice patience and take delight in it. With proper analysis, observe and understand it. This is what is known as special insight. thus, Bodhisattvas are skilled in the ways of special insight.'

54. The yogis who are interested in actualizing a calmly abiding mind should initially concentrate closely on the fact that the twelve sets of scriptures – with sections for Sūtras, Melodious Praises, and so forth can be summarized as all leading to suchness (tathatā), that they will lead to suchness, and that they have led to suchness.
55. One way of doing this meditation is to set the mind closely on the mental and physical aggregates (skandha), as an object that includes all phenomena (dharma). another way is to place the mind on an image of the Buddha. The King of Meditative Stabilization Sūtra says:
- "With his body gold in colour,
The lord of the universe is extremely beautiful.
The Bodhisattva who places his mind on this object
Is referred to as one in meditative absorption."*
56. In this way place the mind on the object of your choice and, having done so, repeatedly and continuously place the mind. Having placed the mind in this way, examine it and check whether it is properly focused on the object. Also check for dullness and see whether the mind is being distracted to external objects.
57. If the mind is found to be dull due to sleepiness and mental torpor or if you fear that dullness is approaching, then the mind should attend to a supremely delightful object such as an image of the Buddha, or a notion of light. In this process, having dispelled dullness the mind should try to see the object very clearly.
58. You should recognize the presence of dullness when the mind cannot see the object very clearly, when you feel as if you are blind or in a dark place or that you have closed your eyes.
59. If, while you are in meditation, your mind chases after qualities of external objects such as form, or turns its attention to other phenomena, or is distracted by desire



for an object you have previously experienced, or if you suspect distraction is approaching, reflect that all composite phenomena are impermanent. Think about suffering and so forth, topics that will temper the mind.

60. In this process, distraction should be eliminated and with the rope of mindfulness and alertness the elephantlike mind should be fastened to the tree of the object of meditation. When you find that the mind is free of dullness and excitement and that it naturally abides on the object, you should relax your effort and remain neutral as long as it continues thus.
61. You should understand that calm abiding is actualized when you enjoy physical and mental pliancy through prolonged familiarity with the meditation, and the mind gains the power to engage the object as it chooses.
62. After realizing calm abiding, meditate on special insight, thinking as follows: 'all the teachings of the Buddha are perfect teachings, and they directly or indirectly reveal and lead to suchness with utmost clarity. If you understand suchness, you will be free of all the nets of wrong views, just as darkness is dispelled when light appears. Mere calm abiding meditation cannot purify pristine awareness, nor can it eliminate the darkness of obscurations.
63. When I meditate properly on suchness with wisdom, pristine awareness will be purified. Only with wisdom can I realize suchness. Only with wisdom can I effectively eradicate obscurations. Therefore, engaging in calm abiding meditation I shall search for suchness with wisdom. And I shall not remain content with calm abiding alone.'
64. What is suchness (tattva, tathatā) like? It is the nature of all phenomena that ultimately they are empty of the self of persons and the self of phenomena. This is realized through the perfection of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā) and not otherwise. The Unravelling of the Thought Sūtra reads:

“O Tathāgata, by which perfection do Bodhisattvas apprehend the identitylessness of phenomena?”

‘Avalokiteśvara, it is apprehended by the perfection of wisdom.’”

Therefore, meditate on wisdom while engaging in calm abiding.

65. Yogis should analyse in the following manner: a person is not observed as separate from the mental and physical aggregates, the elements (dhātu) and sense powers. Nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent. Others have imputed the person as permanent and single.



66. The person as a phenomenon cannot exist except as one or many, because there is no other way of existing. Therefore, we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly “I” and “mine” is wholly mistaken.
67. Meditation on the selflessness of phenomena should also be done in the following manner: phenomena, in short, are included under the five aggregates, the twelve sources of perception (āyatana), and the eighteen elements. The physical aspects of the aggregates, sources of perception, and elements are, in the ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is because when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity (svabhāva) can be found.
68. To immature beings, by the power of their attachment from time immemorial to the reality of physical forms and so forth, mind itself is perceived objectively outside as physical forms and other objects, in the same way as the contents of a dream are perceived while dreaming. Yet ultimately all of these physical forms, and other objects, are nothing other than aspects of the mind. Thinking this, reflect on the thought that all of this—the whole of the three realms—is only mind. Once you understand that all of the phenomena you have examined are therefore mind alone, if you examine the mind, you will be examining the nature of all phenomena. Thinking in this way, examine the nature of the mind. This is how you should investigate.
69. In the ultimate sense, the mind too cannot be real. How can the mind that apprehends only the false nature of physical form and so forth, and appears in various aspects, be real? Just as physical forms and so forth are false, since the mind does not exist separately from physical forms and so forth, which are false, it too is false. Just as physical forms and so forth possess various aspects, and their identities are neither one nor many, similarly, since the mind is not different from them, its identity too is neither one nor many. Therefore, the mind by nature is like an illusion (māyā).
70. Analyse that, just like the mind, the nature of all phenomena, too, is like an illusion. In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor that of the present, is perceived.
71. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, indemonstrable, and non-physical. If you ask, ‘What is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, indemonstrable, and nonphysical?’, the Heap of Jewels (Ratnakūṭa) states: *“o Kāśyapa, when the mind is thoroughly sought, it cannot be found. What is not found cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present.”*



72. Through such analysis, the beginning of the mind is ultimately not seen, the end of the mind is ultimately not seen, and the middle of the mind is ultimately not seen.
73. All phenomena should be understood as lacking an end and a middle, just as the mind does not have an end or a middle. With the knowledge that the mind is without an end or a middle, no identity of the mind is perceived. What is thoroughly realized by the mind, too, is realized as being empty.
74. By realizing that, the very identity, which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, and so forth, is also ultimately not perceived.
75. In this way, when the person does not ultimately see the identity of all phenomena through wisdom, he will not analyse whether physical form (rūpa) is permanent or impermanent, empty or not empty, contaminated or not contaminated, produced or non-produced, and existent or non-existent.
76. Just as physical form is not examined, similarly feeling, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness are not examined. When the object does not exist, its characteristics also cannot exist. So how can they be examined?
77. In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized.
78. Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analysing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom.
79. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way.
80. The Cloud of Jewels (Ratnamegha) also states:

“One skilled in discerning the faults engages in the yoga of meditation on emptiness in order to get rid of all conceptual elaborations. Such a person, due to his repeated meditation on emptiness (śūnyatā), when he thoroughly searches for the object and the identity of the object, which delights the mind and distracts it, realizes them to be empty. When that very mind is also examined, it is realized to be empty. When the identity of what is realized by this mind is thoroughly sought, this too is realized as empty. Realizing in this way one enters into the yoga of signlessness.”



This shows that only those who have engaged in complete analysis can enter into the yoga of signlessness.

81. It has been explained very clearly that through mere elimination of mental activity, without examining the identity of things with wisdom, it is not possible to engage in non-conceptual meditation.
82. Thus, concentration is done after the actual identity of things like physical form and so forth has been perfectly analysed with wisdom, and not by concentrating on physical form and so forth. Concentration is also not done by abiding between this world and the world beyond, because physical forms and so forth are not perceived. It is thus called the non-abiding concentration.
83. [Such a practitioner] is then called a meditator of supreme wisdom, because by specifically examining the identity of all things with wisdom he has perceived nothing. This is as stated in the Sūtra of the Dialogue with Gaganagañja (Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā) and the Sūtra of the Dialogue with Ratnacūḍa, and so forth.
84. In this way, by entering into the suchness of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, you are free from concepts and analysis because there is nothing to be thoroughly examined and observed. You are free from expression, and with single-pointed mental engagement you automatically enter into meditation without exertion. Thus, you very clearly meditate on suchness and abide in it.
85. While abiding in that meditation, the continuity of the mind should not be distracted. When the mind is distracted to external objects due to attachment, and so forth, such distraction should be noted. Quickly pacify the distraction by meditating on the repulsive aspect of such objects and swiftly replace the mind on suchness.
86. If the mind appears to be disinclined to do that, reflecting on the advantages of single-pointed concentration, meditate with delight. The disinclination should be pacified by also seeing the defects of distraction.
87. If the function of the mind becomes unclear and starts sinking, or when there is a risk of it sinking due to being overpowered by mental torpor or sleep, then as before quickly attempt to overcome such dullness by focusing the mind on supremely delightful things. Then the object, suchness, should be held in very tight focus.
88. At times when the mind is observed to be excited or tempted to become distracted by the memory of past events of laughter and play, then as in the earlier cases, pacify the distraction by reflecting on such things as impermanence,



and so forth, which will help subdue the mind. Then, again endeavour to engage the mind on suchness without applying counter forces.

89. If and when the mind spontaneously engages in meditation on suchness, free of sinking and mental agitation, it should be left naturally and your efforts should be relaxed. If effort is applied when the mind is in meditative equipoise, it will distract the mind. But if effort is not applied when the mind becomes dull, it will become like a blind man due to extreme dullness and you will not achieve special insight.
90. So, when the mind becomes dull, apply effort, and when in absorption, effort should be relaxed. When, by meditating on special insight, excessive wisdom is generated and calm abiding is weak, the mind will waver like a butter lamp in the wind and you will not perceive suchness very clearly. Therefore, at that time meditate on calm abiding. When calm abiding meditation becomes excessive, meditate on wisdom.
91. When both are equally engaged, keep still, effortlessly, so long as there is no physical or mental discomfort. If physical or mental discomfort arises, see the whole world like an illusion, a mirage, a dream, a reflection of the moon in water, and an apparition. And think: 'these sentient beings are very troubled in the cycle of existence due to their not understanding such profound knowledge.' then generate great compassion and the awakening mind of bodhicitta, thinking: 'I shall earnestly endeavour to help them understand suchness.'
92. Take rest. Again, in the same way, engage in a single-pointed concentration on the non-appearance of all phenomena. If the mind is discouraged, then similarly take rest. This is the path of engaging in a union of calm abiding meditation and special insight. It focuses on the image conceptually and non-conceptually.
93. Thus, through this progress, a yogi should meditate on suchness for an hour, or half a session in the night, or one full session, or for as long as is comfortable. This is the meditative stabilization thoroughly discerning the ultimate as taught in the Descent into Lañka (Lañkāvatāra) Sūtra.
94. Then, if you wish to arise from the concentration, while your legs are still crossed think as follows: 'although ultimately all these phenomena lack identity, conventionally they definitely exist. If this were not the case, how would the relationship between cause and effect, and so forth, prevail?' the Buddha has also said, "*things are produced conventionally, but ultimately they lack intrinsic identity.*"
95. 'Sentient beings with a childish attitude exaggerate phenomena, thinking of them as having an intrinsic identity when they lack it. Thus, attributing intrinsic existence to those things that lack it confuses their minds, and they wander in the



cycle of existence for a long time. For these reasons, I shall endeavour without fail to achieve the omniscient state by accomplishing the unsurpassable accumulations of merit and insight in order to help them realize suchness.'

96. Then slowly arise from the crosslegged position and make prostrations to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Make them offerings and sing their praises. And make vast prayers by reciting the Prayer of Noble Conduct, and so forth. Thereafter, engage in conscious efforts to actualize the accumulations of merit and insight by practicing generosity and so forth, which are endowed with the essence of emptiness and great compassion.

97. If you act thus, your meditative stabilization will actualize that emptiness that possesses the best of all qualities. The Sūtra of the Dialogue with Ratnacūḍa states:

"Donning the armour of lovingkindness, while abiding in the state of great compassion, practice meditative stabilization that actualizes the emptiness possessing the best of all qualities."

What is the emptiness possessing the best of all qualities? It is that which is not divorced from generosity, from ethics, from patience, from effort, from meditative stabilization, from wisdom, nor divorced from skilful means."

98. Bodhisattvas must rely on virtuous practices like generosity as means to thoroughly ripen all sentient beings and in order to perfect the place, body, and manifold retinue.

99. If it were not so, what would be the causes of these fields, the field of Buddhas and so forth that the Buddha spoke about? The omniscient wisdom possessing the best of all qualities can be accomplished through generosity and other skilful means. Therefore, the Buddha has said that omniscient wisdom is perfected by skilful means.

100. Therefore, Bodhisattvas should also cultivate generosity and other skilful means and not only emptiness.

101. The Extensive Collection of All Qualities Sūtra also says:

"O maitreya, Bodhisattvas thoroughly accomplish the six perfections in order to attain the final fruit of Buddhahood. But to this the foolish respond: "Bodhisattvas should train only in the perfection of wisdom. What is the need for the rest of the perfections?" they repudiate the other perfections. Maitreya, what do you think of this: when the king of Kāśī offered his flesh to the hawk for the sake of a pigeon was it a corruption of wisdom?"



Maitreya replied, 'this is not so.'

The Buddha said, 'Maitreya, Bodhisattvas accumulated roots of merit through their deeds in conjunction with the six perfections. Are these roots of merit harmful?' Maitreya replied, 'o Buddha, this is not so.' the Buddha further spoke, 'Maitreya, you have also correctly practiced the perfection of generosity for sixty aeons, the perfection of ethics for sixty aeons, the perfection of patience for sixty aeons, the perfection of enthusiastic perseverance for sixty aeons, the perfection of meditative stabilization for sixty aeons, and the perfection of wisdom for sixty aeons. To this the foolish respond: "there is only one way to attain Buddhahood, and that is the way of emptiness." their practice is completely mistaken.'

102. A Bodhisattva possessing wisdom but not skilful means would be like the Hearers, who are unable to engage in the deeds of Buddhas. But they can do so when supported by skilful means. As the Heap of Jewels says, "*Kāśyapa, it is like this. For instance, kings who are supported by ministers can accomplish all their purposes. similarly, [when] the wisdom of a Bodhisattva is thoroughly supported by skilful means, such a Bodhisattva also performs all the activities of a Buddha.*"
103. The philosophical view of the path of Bodhisattvas is different from the philosophical paths of the non-Buddhists and Hearers. For example, since the philosophical view of the path of nonBuddhists perversely observes a [truly existent] self, and so forth, such a path is completely and always divorced from wisdom. Therefore, they cannot attain liberation.
104. The Hearers are separated from great compassion and devoid of skilful means. Therefore, they single-mindedly endeavour to achieve nirvāṇa.
105. In their path, Bodhisattvas enshrine wisdom and skilful means, so they endeavour to achieve the non-abiding nirvāṇa. The Bodhisattva path consists of wisdom and skilful means and, therefore, [they] attain the non-abiding nirvāṇa. Because of the power of wisdom, [they] do not fall into the cycle of existence; due to the power of skilful means, [they] do not fall to nirvāṇa.
106. The Hill of Gaya Head (Gāyāśīrṣa) Sūtra says, "*the Bodhisattva path, in short, is twofold. The two are skilful means and wisdom.*" the First Among the Supreme and Glorious (Śrīparamādi) also says, "*the perfection of wisdom is the mother and expertise in skilful means is the father.*"
107. The Sūtra of the Teaching of Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa) also says,
- "What is bondage for Bodhisattvas and what is liberation? upholding a life in the cycle of existence devoid of skilful means is bondage for Bodhisattvas. [But] to lead a life in the cycle of existence with skilful means is liberation. Upholding a life in the cycle of existence devoid of wisdom is bondage for Bodhisattvas. [But] to lead a life in the cycle of existence with wisdom is liberation. Wisdom not conjoined with skilful means is*



bondage, [but] wisdom conjoined with skilful means is liberation. Skilful means not conjoined with wisdom is bondage, [but] skilful means conjoined with wisdom is liberation."

108. If Bodhisattvas cultivate mere wisdom, [they] fall to the nirvāṇa desired by Hearers. Thus, it is like bondage. And [they] cannot achieve non-abiding nirvāṇa.
109. So wisdom separated from skilful means is bondage for Bodhisattvas. Therefore, just as a person chilled by the wind seeks the comfort of fire, so Bodhisattvas cultivate the wisdom of emptiness along with skilful means to eliminate the wind of wrong view. [But they] do not [endeavour] to actualize it as the Hearers do. The Ten Qualities (Daśadharmaka) Sūtra says:
- "O child of good family, it is like this. For instance, a person who is thoroughly devoted to fire, who respects it and regards it as guru, will not think: 'Because I respect, honour, and venerate fire, I should hold it in both hands.' this is because he realizes that to do so would give him physical pain and cause mental discomfort. Similarly, Bodhisattvas also are aware of nirvāṇa, but also do not try to actualize it. This is because [Bodhisattvas] realize that by doing so one would be turning away from enlightenment."*
110. If they rely merely on skilful means, Bodhisattvas will not transcend the ordinary level and thus there will only be bondage. Therefore, [they] cultivate skilful means along with wisdom. By the power of wisdom, Bodhisattvas can transform even the disturbing emotions into nectar, like poison under a tantric spell. There is no need to express [the goodness] of generosity, and so forth, which leads to naturally elevated states of existence.
111. The Heap of Jewels states:
- "Kaśyapa, it is like this. Due to the power of mantra and medicine, a poison may not cause death. Similarly, since the disturbing emotions of Bodhisattvas are under the power of wisdom, they cannot cause them downfalls."*
112. Therefore, due to the power of skilful means Bodhisattvas do not abandon the cycle of existence; they do not fall to nirvāṇa. Due to the power of wisdom, [they] eliminate all objects [misconceived as truly existent] and therefore [they] do not fall into the cycle of existence. Thus, they attain the non-abiding nirvāṇa of Buddhahood alone.
113. The Sūtra of the Dialogue with Gaganagañja also says, *"Because of the knowledge of wisdom, Bodhisattvas eliminate all disturbing emotions, and due to their knowledge of skilful means they do not abandon sentient beings."*
114. The Unravelling of the Thought Sūtra also says, *"I have not taught that someone who is not concerned for the welfare of sentient beings and who is not inclined to realize*



the nature of all composite phenomena will achieve unsurpassable and perfectly accomplished Buddhahood."

Therefore, those interested in Buddhahood must cultivate both wisdom and skilful means.

115. While you are meditating on transcendental wisdom or while you are in a deep meditative absorption, you cannot engage in skilful means such as practicing generosity. But skilful means can be cultivated along with wisdom during the preparatory and post-meditative periods. That is the way to engage in wisdom and skilful means simultaneously.

116. Moreover, this is the path of Bodhisattvas in which they engage in an integrated practice of wisdom and skilful means. This is cultivating the transcendental path that is thoroughly imbued with great compassion focusing on all sentient beings. And while practicing skilful means, after arising from meditative absorption, you practice generosity and other skilful means without misconception, like a magician. The Teaching of Akṣayamati (Akṣayamati-nirdeśa) Sūtra says:

"What are a Bodhisattva's skilful means and what wisdom is actualized? the Bodhisattva's skilful means are thinking and placing the mind closely on sentient beings with great compassion while in meditative absorption. And engaging in meditative equipoise with peace and extreme peace is wisdom."

117. There are many more such references. The Chapter on Controlling Evil Forces also says:

"Furthermore, the perfect activities of Bodhisattvas refer to conscious efforts by the mind of wisdom and the collection of all meritorious Dharma by the mind of skilful means. The mind of wisdom also leads to selflessness, the non-existence of [inherently existent] sentient beings, and of life, sustenance, and the person. And the mind of skilful means leads to thoroughly ripening all sentient beings."

118. The Extensive Collection of All Qualities Sūtra also states:

*"Just as a magician endeavours
To let his creation go,
Since he already knows the [nature of his] creation,
He has no attachment to it.
Similarly, the three worlds are like an illusion,
Which the wise Buddha knew about
Long before he knew the sentient beings in these worlds
And had undertaken efforts to help them."*



119. It is because of the Bodhisattva's practice of wisdom and skilful means that it is said: In their activities they remain in the cycle of existence, but in their thoughts they abide in nirvāṇa.
120. In this way, become familiar with generosity and other skilful means that are dedicated to unsurpassable and perfectly accomplished enlightenment, having the essence of emptiness and great compassion. In order to generate the ultimate awakening mind of bodhicitta, as was done earlier, practice calm abiding meditation and special insight as much as you can in regular sessions. As it was taught in the Pure Field of Engagement Sūtra, always familiarize yourself with skilful means by closely placing mindfulness on the good qualities of Bodhisattvas who work for the welfare of sentient beings at all times.
121. Those who become familiar with compassion, skilful means, and the awakening mind of bodhicitta in this way will undoubtedly excel in this life. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will always be seen in dreams, and other pleasant dreams will also occur, and appreciative gods will protect you. There will be immense accumulation of merit and insight at every moment. Disturbing emotions and other bad states of existence will be purified. You will enjoy much happiness and mental peace at all times and a great many beings will cherish you. Physically, too, you will be free of disease. You will attain supreme mental facility, and thus you will achieve special qualities like clairvoyance.
122. Then you will travel by miraculous power to innumerable worlds, make offerings to the Buddhas and listen to teachings from them.
123. At the time of death, too, you will undoubtedly see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In future lives you will be reborn in special families and places, where you will not be separated from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Thus, you will effortlessly accomplish all accumulations of merit and insight. You will have great wealth, a large following, and many attendants.
124. Possessing a sharp intelligence, you will be able to ripen the mindstreams of many beings. In all lives such a person will be able to recall past lives. Try to understand such immeasurable advantages that are also described in other sūtras.
125. In this way, if you meditate on compassion, skilful means, and the awakening mind of bodhicitta for a long time with great admiration, the mindstream will gradually become thoroughly purified and ripened. Then, like producing fire by rubbing together pieces of wood, you will accomplish your meditation on the perfect reality. You will thus achieve an extremely clear knowledge of the sphere of phenomena (dharmadhātu) free from conceptual elaborations, the transcendental wisdom free of the impeding nets of conceptual thought. This wisdom of ultimate bodhicitta is stainless like an unwavering butter-lamp



undisturbed by the wind. Thus, such a mind in the entity of ultimate bodhicitta is included within the path of seeing, which apprehends the selfless nature of all phenomena.

126. Through this achievement you enter into the path focusing on the reality of things and you are then born in the family of Tathāgatas; you enter the stainless state of a Bodhisattva, turn away from all wandering births, abide in the suchness of Bodhisattvas, and attain the first Bodhisattva level. You can find more details of these advantages in other texts such as the Ten Spiritual Levels (Daśabhūmika).
127. This is how meditative stabilization focusing on suchness is taught in the Descent into Lanka Sūtra. This is how Bodhisattvas enter into the non-conceptual meditation free from elaborations.
128. The texts emphasize that, at the aspirational level of practice, it is by the power of aspiration that one engages with that state, not by fabricating it. It is when that wisdom arises that one will have truly entered it.
129. In this way, a person who has entered the first level, later, on the path of meditation, familiarizes himself with the two wisdoms of the transcendental state and the subsequent wisdom and skilful means. In this way he gradually purifies the subtlest accumulation of obscurations that are the object of purification of the path of meditation. And in order to achieve higher qualities he thoroughly purifies the lower spiritual levels. All purposes and objectives are completely fulfilled by entering the transcendental wisdom of the Tathāgatas and by entering the ocean of omniscience.
130. In this way, by gradual practice, the mindstream is thoroughly purified. The Descent into Laṅkā explains this. The Unravelling of the Thought, too, reads, *“In order to achieve those higher levels, the mind should be purified just as you refine gold, until you realize the unsurpassable and perfectly consummated Buddhahood.”*
131. Entering the ocean of omniscience, you possess impeccable jewel-like qualities to sustain sentient beings, and these fulfil your previous positive prayers. The individual then becomes the embodiment of compassion, possessing various skilful means that function spontaneously and work in various emanations in the interest of all wandering beings. In addition, all marvellous attributes are perfected with total elimination of all defilements and their latent potential. All Buddhas abide to help every sentient being. Through such realization, generate faith in the Buddhas, the source of all wonderful knowledge and qualities. Everyone should endeavour to actualize these qualities.
132. The Buddha thus said. *“The omniscient transcendental wisdom is produced with compassion as its root, the awakening mind of bodhicitta as its cause, and is perfected by skilful means.”*



133. The wise distance themselves from jealousy and other stains;
 Their thirst for knowledge is unquenchable like an ocean.
 They retain only what is proper through discrimination,
 Just like swans extracting milk from water.

134. Thus, scholars should distance themselves
 From divisive attitudes and bigotry.
 Even from a child
 Good words are received.

135. Whatever merit I derive
 From the exposition of this middle Path,
 I dedicate for all beings
 To actualize the middle Path.

*The Second Part of The Stages of Meditation by Ācārya Kamalaśīla is here completed.
 Translated and edited into tibetan [from sanskrit] by the Indian abbot Prajñāvarma and the
 monk Yeshe De.*





Figure 5. Ārya Tārā

2. Generating Bodhicitta

2.1 Candrakirti on Great Compassion²

1.1 Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas arise from sovereign sages.

Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas.

The compassionate mind and nondual cognition as well the awakening mind: these are causes of bodhisattvas.

1.2 As compassion alone is accepted to be the seed of the perfect harvest of buddhahood, the water that nourishes it, and the fruit that is long a source of enjoyment, I will praise compassion at the start of all.

1.3 First, with the thought “I am,” they cling to a self; then, with the thought “mine,” they become attached to things; like buckets on a waterwheel, they turn without control; I bow to the compassion that cares for such suffering beings.

1.4 Beings are like reflections of the moon in rippling water; seeing them as fleeting and as devoid of intrinsic nature,
The bodhisattva’s mind falls under compassion’s sway, yearning to set free every transmigrating being.

2.2 Nāgārjuna on Bodhicitta³

In brief, the Buddha taught that agents,
actions, and consequences
are, in conventional terms,
empty things generated from empty things.

In this way, when yogis practice
meditating on that emptiness,
without a doubt, they grow attached
to the well-being of others.

² Jinpa, Thupten, 2021. Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakirti's Entering the Middle Way

³ Nāgārjuna’s Commentary on Bodhicitta (Bodhicittavivāraṇa), quoted from H.H. the Dalai Lama and Ven. Thubten Chodron, Vajrayana and the Culmination of the Path





Figure 6. Chekawa Yeshe Dorje

2.3 The Seven Points of Mind Training⁴

by Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101–1175)

2.3.1 The Preliminaries

First, train in the preliminaries.

2.3.2 The Main Practice

2.3.2.1 *Training in ultimate awakening mind*

Consider all things and events as dreamlike.

Examine the nature of unborn awareness.
Let even the antidote be freed in its own place.
Place your mind on the basis-of-all, the actual path.

Between sessions, be a conjurer of illusions.

2.3.2.2 *Training in conventional awakening mind*

Train in the two—giving and taking—alternately.

These two are to be mounted on the breath.
Three objects, three poisons and three sources of virtue.
In all activities, train by applying slogans.

Begin the process of taking with yourself.

2.3.3 Transforming Adversity into the Path of Enlightenment

When all the world is filled with negativity,
transform adversity into the path of enlightenment.
Drive all blames into one.
Meditate on the great kindness of all.

By meditating on illusions as the four buddha bodies,
Emptiness is protection unsurpassed.
The fourfold practice is the best of methods.
Whatever you encounter, apply the practice.

⁴ Translated by Adam Pearcey, 2012. <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/geshe-chekhawa-yeshe-dorje/seven-points-mind-training>. Edited by Ven. Gendun.



2.3.4 Applying the Practice throughout the Whole of Life

The essence of the instruction, briefly stated,
is to apply yourself to the five strengths.
As Mahayana's transference method is
The five powers alone, their practice is vital.

2.3.5 The Measure of Mind Training

All teachings share a single purpose.
Of the two witnesses, rely upon the principal one.
Always maintain only a joyful attitude.
If this can be done even when distracted, you are proficient.

2.3.6 The Commitments of Mind Training

Train constantly in three basic principles.
Change your attitude, but remain natural.

Do not speak of the defects of others.
Don't ponder others' flaws.
Train first with the strongest destructive emotions.
Abandon any expectations of results.
Give up poisonous food.
Don't maintain inappropriate loyalty.
Don't lash out in retaliation.
Don't lie in ambush.
Don't strike a vulnerable point.
Don't transfer the ox's burden to the cow.
Do not sprint to win a race.
Don't abuse this [practice] as a rite.
Don't reduce gods to demons.
Don't seek misery as a means to happiness.

2.3.7 The Precepts of Mind Training

Do everything with a single intention.
Counter all adversity with a single remedy.
Two tasks: one at the beginning and one at the end.
Whichever of the two occurs, be patient.

Keep the two, even at your life's expense.
Train in the three difficulties.
Adopt the three principal conditions.
Contemplate the three that are free of degeneration.



Keep the three from which you must not separate.
Apply the training impartially to all.
It is vital that it be deep and all-pervasive.
Meditate constantly on those who've been set apart.
Don't be dependent on external conditions.
Engage in the principal practices right now.

Don't apply misplaced understanding.
Don't be inconsistent.
Train wholeheartedly.
Gain freedom through discernment and analysis.
Don't be boastful.
Don't be irritable.
Don't be temperamental.
Don't seek acknowledgement.

Through this proliferation of the five degenerations,
Transform [every event] into the path of enlightenment.

When karmic seeds left over from former trainings were aroused in me, I felt great interest, and so, without regard for suffering or disparagement, I sought instructions on subduing ego-clinging. Now, even in death, I shall have no regrets.





Figure 7. Je Tsongkhapa

2.4 Je Tsongkhapa on Exchanging Self and Other⁵

I. The training based on the teachings of the conquerors' child Śāntideva

The training based on the teachings of the conquerors' child Śāntideva has three parts:

1. Contemplating the benefits of exchanging self and other and the faults of not exchanging self and other
2. The ability to exchange self and other if you accustom yourself to the thought of doing so
3. The stages of meditating on how to exchange self and other

2.4.1 Contemplating the benefits of exchanging self and other and the faults of not exchanging self and other

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds says:⁶

*Whoever wishes to quickly protect
Self and other
Must exchange self for other.
Practice this excellent secret.*

And:

*Whatever worldly joy there is
Arises from wishing for others' happiness.
Whatever worldly suffering there is
Arises from wishing for your own happiness.*

*What need is there to say more?
Look at the difference between these two:
Ordinary persons act for their own welfare;
The Sage acts for others' welfare.*

*If you do not genuinely exchange
Your own happiness for others' suffering,
You will not achieve buddhahood,
And even in cyclic existence, you will have no joy.*

⁵ From *The Great Treatise on The Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* by Tsong-kha-pa, translated by The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee

⁶ BCA: 8.120, 8.129-131.



Consider how being self-centered is the door to all suffering and being other-centered is the basis of all excellence.

2.4.1.1 The ability to exchange self and other if you accustom yourself to the thought of doing so

Take the example of your enemy becoming a friend. At first, when you heard even the name of your enemy, fear arose. Later you were reconciled and became such close friends that when this new friend was absent you were very unhappy. This reversal resulted from familiarizing your mind with a new attitude. So likewise, if you become habituated to viewing yourself as you presently view others [with an attitude of neglect] and to viewing others as you presently view yourself [with a cherishing attitude], you will exchange self and other. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:⁷

*Do not turn away from this difficulty.
Although you were frightened upon hearing someone's name,
Now, due to the power of conditioning,
You dislike that person's absence.*

And also:

*It is not difficult to consider my body
With the perspective I have toward another's body.*

Qualm: Since someone else's body is not your body, how can you develop the same attitude that you have toward your own?

Reply: Your body was produced from your father's semen and your mother's blood. Even though it was produced from a portion of someone else's body, you conceive it to be your own by the influence of previous conditioning. Similarly, if you become accustomed to cherishing another's body as you presently do your own, you will view it with the same perspective that you now have toward your own body. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:⁸

*Therefore just as you conceived "I"
With respect to the drops of semen
And blood of others, so you can be conditioned
To cherishing others as you do yourself.*

Reflect thoroughly on the benefits of being other-centered and the faults of being self-centered. Thereby you will produce from the depths of your heart a great delight in

⁷ BCA: 8.119, 8.112cd.

⁸ BCA: 8.111.



meditating on the exchange of self and other. Then recognize that you can actually generate it once you have become habituated to it.

2.4.1.2 The stages of meditating on how to exchange self and other

The phrases “exchanging self and other” and “making oneself others and others oneself” do not indicate a training in an attitude which thinks “I am others” or “Others’ eyes, etc., are mine.” They indicate a change in the orientation of the two states of mind of cherishing yourself and neglecting others, wherein you develop the attitude of cherishing others as you presently do yourself and neglecting yourself as you presently do others.

Therefore Śāntideva’s statement above that you must “exchange your own happiness for others’ suffering” means to view cherishing yourself as the enemy and then to stop emphasizing your own happiness. In addition, you must view cherishing others as a good quality, stop neglecting others’ suffering, and instead emphasize the removal of their suffering. In brief, this statement means that you remove others’ suffering while disregarding your own happiness.

There are two obstacles to training in this attitude of exchanging self and other:

1. You make a categorical differentiation between people who are happy or suffering – yourself and others – making them as different as blue and yellow. Then, you accomplish your happiness and remove your suffering because you think of them as “mine,” and you neglect others’ happiness and suffering because you think of them as “belonging to others.”

Therefore, the remedy for this is not to make a categorical distinction between self and other as being essentially different. Rather, understand that self and other are mutually dependent such that when you are aware of self, you are aware of other; and when you are aware of other, you are aware of self. It is like being aware of near mountains and distant mountains, for example. Relative to your being here, you think of a mountain there in the distance as being a distant mountain, yet when you go to this distant mountain, you think of it as a near mountain. So the awareness of self and other is not like the awareness of a color, for, regardless of what color blue is related to, you are aware of just blue and are not aware of some other color. Moreover, Śāntideva’s *Compendium of Trainings* states:⁹

*By becoming accustomed to the equality of self and other,
The spirit of enlightenment becomes firm.
Self and other are interdependent.*

⁹ Śikṣā samuccaya, Vaidya 1961b: 191; D3940: Khi 192a4-5.



Like this side and the other side of a river, they are false.

*The other bank is not in itself "other";
In relation to someone else it is "this bank."
Similarly, "self" does not exist in its own right;
In relation to someone else it is "other."*

Thus Śāntideva indicates that self and other are merely posited in relation to a particular reference point and do not essentially exist.

2. You must remove the obstacle of thinking, "I will not make an effort to dispel others' suffering because others' suffering does not harm me." It would be like not accumulating wealth in your youth out of fear of suffering in your old age because you think that your suffering in old age does no harm to you in your youth. Or, as stated in Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds,¹⁰ it would be like not alleviating the pain in your foot with your hand, because your foot is "other." Old age and youth (or similarly, former and future lives) are just illustrations; this principle applies also to morning and evening, former and later days, and so forth.

Qualm: But old age and youth are one continuum and the foot and hand are one collection; therefore they are not the same as self and other.

Response: "Continuum" and "collection" are designated to many moments and to many parts; they do not have a self-sufficient essence. The "self" of yourself and the "self" of others must be posited to a collection and a continuum, so self and other are not established by way of an essence that can be posited independently.

However, since beginningless time you have found your own suffering unbearable because you have been conditioned to self-cherishing. Therefore, if you become conditioned to cherishing others, you will give rise to an attitude of finding others' suffering unbearable.

After you have eliminated the obstacles to exchanging self and other in this way, the actual way to meditate is as follows. Out of attachment to self, your self-cherishing attitude has produced all sorts of undesirable things throughout the beginningless time of cyclic existence up to now. Although you wanted to make things perfect for yourself, you emphasized your own welfare and engaged in improper methods. You have spent countless eons at this, but have not at all accomplished your own or others' aims. Not only have you not achieved these, you have been tormented only by suffering. If you had replaced concern for your own welfare with concern for others' welfare, you would certainly have already become a buddha long ago and would have completely and perfectly accomplished your own aims as well as those of others. As you did not do this, you have spent your time uselessly and laboriously.

¹⁰ BCA: 8.99, 101.



Make a firm determination by thinking, “Now I understand the faults of self-cherishing and the benefits of cherishing others. With great effort, relying on mindfulness and vigilance, I will discontinue the present self-cherishing, my greatest enemy, and I will not allow any potential self-cherishing to arise.” In this way frequently stop self-cherishing. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

*Self-cherishing has harmed me in all
My myriad lifetimes in cyclic existence.*

*You, O mind, though you spent countless eons
Wanting to accomplish your own welfare,
Through such great hardship
You have accomplished only suffering.*

And also:

*If formerly you had acted for others' welfare,
This condition which lacks
The perfect happiness of buddhahood
Could not possibly have occurred.*

Thus, neither be self-centered nor support self-centered tendencies. You must train again and again in the attitude of freely giving to all beings your own body, resources, and roots of virtue, and you must work for the welfare of those to whom you give these things. It is wrong to do the opposite, so stop the attitude which sees your own body, resources, and roots of virtue as being for your own purposes. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

*“I am controlled by others”;
You, O mind, know this for certain.
Now do not think of anything
Other than the welfare of all beings.*

*It is wrong to achieve my own aims
With my eyes, etc. that are under others' control.
Therefore, it is incorrect to do wrong to others
With my eyes, etc. that are for their welfare.*

If you lose the thought that your body, etc. are for others' welfare and think that they are for your own benefit, or if you see them as agents of physical, verbal, or mental harm to others, then stop this way of thinking by contemplating how this previously brought you limitless harm and how you are still mistaken with regard to its appearance of helpfulness, which is false. If you are controlled by this wrong way of thinking, it produces only unbearable suffering. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:



*When you [self-cherishing] ruined me before,
That was another time.
Now I recognize you; where will you go?
I will destroy all your arrogance.*

*Dispel the thought,
"I still have my own welfare."
I have sold you [my mind] to others.
Do not be dispirited; offer your energy.*

*If I become careless
And do not give you to beings,
You will certainly give me over
To the guardians of hell.*

*Thus you gave me over
To long periods of suffering.
Now I remember my grudges;
I will destroy your selfish thoughts.*

Similarly, when you repeatedly reflect on the benefits of cherishing others, you produce powerful enthusiasm from the depths of your heart. Discontinue your present attitude of disregarding others and keep your potential disregard of others from arising. Through affectionately viewing others as dear and beloved as much as you can, develop an attitude that cherishes others to the degree to which you previously cherished yourself—“Cherish others as you do yourself.”¹¹

To produce the attitude that cherishes beings in this way, you must remember their kindness or recognize that they help you. For example, once farmers see that through sowing healthy seeds they will reap a good and abundant harvest, they value a fertile field. Likewise, once you are certain that you will accomplish all temporary and final well-being through sowing the seeds of generosity and so forth in the field of living beings, you will cherish others. Reflect on this. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:¹²

*Living beings and conquerors are similar
From them you achieve a buddha's qualities.
How is it that you do not respect living beings
Just as you respect conquerors?*

In reference to this, killing living beings leads you to the three miserable realms. If you save others from being killed, you go to a happy realm and have a long life there. In the same way, stealing or giving away your resources, being hostile or cultivating love and compassion, will produce results such as leading you respectively to a miserable realm

¹¹ BCA: 8.136d.

¹² BCA: 6.113.



or to a happy realm. Contemplate especially that you need to focus on living beings as you develop the spirit of enlightenment, and that by accomplishing the bodhisattva deeds for the sake of living beings, you reach buddhahood—so these too depend on living beings. Also, reflect on bringing generosity, etc. to perfection in dependence on living beings as taught in the verses on the necessity of making living beings happy. Nāgārjuna's *Essay on the Spirit of Enlightenment (Bodhicitta-vivaraṇa)* states:¹³

*The desirable and undesirable effects
A life in the happy or miserable realms in this world
Arise through the benefit and harm
You do to living beings.*

*If you attain unexcelled buddhahood
In dependence on living beings,
Why be at all amazed that in these three realms,
The resources of deities or humans*

*Relied upon by Brahmā, Indra, Rudra,
And the worldly protectors
Are also brought about by
Just helping living beings?*

*All of the many sufferings
Living beings experience
As animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings
Come from harming living beings.*

*The sufferings of hunger,
Thirst, violence, and torture,
Which are difficult to reverse and inexhaustible,
Are the results of harming living beings.*

The śrāvakas' goal is inferior because they do not emphasize others' welfare, whereas buddhas attain the final goal because they stress others' welfare. It is said that once you have contemplated the principle here, you should not for even an instant be attached to your own welfare. The *Essay on the Spirit of Enlightenment* states:¹⁴

*With effort eliminate as a poison
Your lack of care for living beings.*

*Don't śrāvakas' attain an inferior enlightenment
Because they lack caring?
By not forsaking living beings
Perfect buddhas attain enlightenment.*

¹³ Bodhicitta-vivaraṇa: 77-80, Lindtner 1986: 206-208; D1801: Nya 41a5-b1.

¹⁴ Ibid.: 82cd-84, Lindtner 1986: 208; D1801: Nya 41b1-3.



*Once bodhisattvas ascertain the effects
Arising from helping and not helping,
How can they remain even for a moment
Attached to their own welfare?*

Therefore, after conquerors' children understand that full absorption in others' welfare and the goal of enlightenment arise from the sprout of the spirit of enlightenment, and after they see that its root is compassion, they are very intent on cultivating compassion. They become thoroughly conditioned to it so that their compassion and spirit of enlightenment become firm. Thereupon they cannot help but engage in the deeds of the great undertaking that is most challenging. *The Essay on the Spirit of Enlightenment* states:¹⁵

*The fruit of enlightenment solely for others' welfare
Grows from the sprout of the spirit of enlightenment
Which has a root of firm compassion.
This is what conquerors' children cultivate.*

*One who stabilizes this through conditioning,
Though initially terrified by the suffering of others,
Later gives up even the bliss of meditative stabilization
And enters the Unwavering Hell.*

*This is amazing! This is praiseworthy!
This is the superior way of excellent beings.*

Now also develop certainty about these methods by means of the sayings of excellent beings, as follows:

Atisha said, "Tibet recognizes 'bodhisattvas' who do not know how to train in love and compassion." Someone then asked, "Well then, how should bodhisattvas practice?" He replied, "They must learn in stages from the beginning."

Lang-ri-tang-ba (Glang-ri-thang-pa) said, "Sha-bo-ba (Shva-bopa) and I have eighteen human strategies and one horse strategy for a total of nineteen.¹⁶ Our human strategy is simply to develop the spirit of highest enlightenment and then learn to do whatever we do for the sake of living beings. Our horse strategy is this: since self-cherishing keeps that spirit of enlightenment which has not arisen from arising, and destabilizes that which has arisen and prevents its increase, train by keeping self-cherishing away

¹⁵ Ibid.: 85-87ab, Lindtner 1986: 208-210; D1801: Nya 41b3-4.

¹⁶ Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan (mChan: 612.3-5) explains that the human strategies are to sustain friends and the horse strategy, to overcome enemies. The eighteen do not need to be enumerated because the cause of the spirit of enlightenment is living beings—our friends and thus eighteen indicates that they are numerous. The import of the horse strategy is that our enemy is just one—self-cherishing.



and doing what you can to damage it. Cherish living beings and do whatever you can to help them.”

Nal-jor-ba-chen-bo (rNal-'byor-pa-chen-po) explained to Geshe Drom-dön-ba that he had this and that meditative concentration wherein the energy balances and absorbs, and so forth. Geshe Drom-dön-ba replied, “Even if you have a meditation undisturbed even by the beating of a large drum close to your ear, if you do not have love, compassion, and the spirit of enlightenment, you will be reborn in a place that to avoid you must now confess day and night.” Drom-dön-ba thinks that Nal-jor-ba-chen-bo is proceeding so as to cause his rebirth in a state lacking leisure, such as rebirth as an ordinary being of the formless realm or the like.

Kam-lung-ba (Kham-lung-ba) said, “Through our disinterest in living beings, who are what is most important, they will also do the same [i.e., not bring the benefit of virtues] to us.”

Whether you plant the roots of the Mahāyāna or not, or whether you have genuinely entered the Mahāyāna or not, is all founded upon this [love, compassion, cherishing others, and the like]. Therefore always consider what you should do to develop these. It is excellent if you do develop them; if you have not, do not let it remain that way. Always rely on a teacher who gives this kind of teaching. Always associate with friends who are training their minds in this way. Constantly look at the scriptures and their commentaries which describe these. Amass the collections as causes for these. Clear away the obstructions which prevent these. Moreover, if you train your mind in this way, you will definitely acquire all the seeds for developing these, so this work is not insignificant; take joy in it. The Great Elder [Atisha] said:¹⁷

One who wishes to enter the door of the Mahāyāna teachings
Should develop through effort over eons
The spirit of enlightenment, which is like the sun that clears away darkness
And the moon that quells the torment of heat.

¹⁷ Mahāyāna-patha-sādhana-varṇa-saṃgraha (Concisely Written Method of Achieving the Mahāyāna Path), D3954: Khi 300a6-7.





Figure 8. Buddha Śākyamuni

3. Emptiness in the Pali canon

3.1 Aggivacchasutta (MN 27)¹⁸

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Then the wanderer Vacchagotta went up to the Buddha and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, he sat down to one side and said to the Buddha:

“Mister Gotama, is this your view: ‘The cosmos is eternal. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That's not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘The cosmos is not eternal. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That's not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘The cosmos is finite. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That's not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘The cosmos is infinite. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That's not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘The soul and the body are the same thing. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That's not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘The soul and the body are different things. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That's not my view, Vaccha.”

¹⁸ Translation by Bhikkhu Sujato. <https://suttacentral.net/mn72/en/sujato>



“Then is this your view: ‘A realized one still exists after death. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That’s not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘A realized one no longer exists after death. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That’s not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘A realized one both still exists and no longer exists after death. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That’s not my view, Vaccha.”

“Then is this your view: ‘A realized one neither still exists nor no longer exists after death. This is the only truth, anything else is futile?’”

“That’s not my view, Vaccha.”

“Mister Gotama, when asked these ten questions, you say: ‘That’s not my view.’ Seeing what drawback do you avoid all these convictions?”

“Each of these ten convictions is the thicket of views, the desert of views, the twist of views, the dodge of views, the fetter of views. They’re beset with suffering, distress, anguish, and fever. They don’t lead to disillusionment, dispassion, cessation, peace, insight, awakening, and extinguishment. Seeing this drawback I avoid all these convictions.”

“But does Mister Gotama have any convictions at all?”

“A realized one has done away with convictions. For a realized one has seen: ‘Such is form, such is the origin of form, such is the ending of form. Such is feeling, such is the origin of feeling, such is the ending of feeling. Such is perception, such is the origin of perception, such is the ending of perception. Such are choices, such is the origin of choices, such is the ending of choices. Such is consciousness, such is the origin of consciousness, such is the ending of consciousness.’ That’s why a Realized One is freed with the ending, fading away, cessation, giving up, and letting go of all conceiving, all churning, and all I-making, mine-making, or underlying tendency to conceit, I say.”

“But Mister Gotama, when a mendicant’s mind is freed like this, where are they reborn?”

“They’re reborn’ doesn’t apply, Vaccha.”

“Well then, are they not reborn?”



“They’re not reborn’ doesn’t apply, Vaccha.”

“Well then, are they both reborn and not reborn?”

“They’re both reborn and not reborn’ doesn’t apply, Vaccha.”

“Well then, are they neither reborn nor not reborn?”

“They’re neither reborn nor not reborn’ doesn’t apply, Vaccha.”

“Mister Gotama, when asked all these questions, you say: ‘It doesn’t apply.’ I fail to understand this point, Mister Gotama; I’ve fallen into confusion. And I’ve now lost even the degree of clarity I had from previous discussions with Mister Gotama.”

“No wonder you don’t understand, Vaccha, no wonder you’re confused. For this principle is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, sublime, beyond the scope of logic, subtle, comprehensible to the astute. It’s hard for you to understand, since you have a different view, creed, and belief, unless you dedicate yourself to practice with the guidance of tradition.

Well then, Vaccha, I’ll ask you about this in return, and you can answer as you like.

What do you think, Vaccha? Suppose a fire was burning in front of you. Would you know: ‘This fire is burning in front of me?’”

“Yes, I would, Mister Gotama.”

“But Vaccha, suppose they were to ask you: ‘This fire burning in front of you: what does it depend on to burn?’ How would you answer?”

“I would answer like this: ‘This fire burning in front of me burns in dependence on grass and logs as fuel.’”

“Suppose that fire burning in front of you was extinguished. Would you know: ‘This fire in front of me is quenched?’”

“Yes, I would, Mister Gotama.”

“But Vaccha, suppose they were to ask you: ‘This fire in front of you that is quenched: in what direction did it go—east, south, west, or north?’ How would you answer?”

“It doesn’t apply, Mister Gotama. The fire depended on grass and logs as fuel. When that runs out, and no more fuel is added, the fire is reckoned to have become quenched due to lack of fuel.”



“In the same way, Vaccha, any form by which a realized one might be described has been given up, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future. A realized one is freed from reckoning in terms of form. They’re deep, immeasurable, and hard to fathom, like the ocean. ‘They’re reborn’, ‘they’re not reborn’, ‘they’re both reborn and not reborn’, ‘they’re neither reborn nor not reborn’ – none of these apply.

Any feeling ... perception ... choices ... consciousness by which a realized one might be described has been given up, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated, and unable to arise in the future. A realized one is freed from reckoning in terms of consciousness. They’re deep, immeasurable, and hard to fathom, like the ocean. ‘They’re reborn’, ‘they’re not reborn’, ‘they’re both reborn and not reborn’, ‘they’re neither reborn nor not reborn’ – none of these apply.”

When he said this, the wanderer Vacchagotta said to the Buddha:

“Mister Gotama, suppose there was a large sal tree not far from a town or village. And because it’s impermanent, its branches and foliage, bark and shoots, and softwood would fall off. After some time it would be rid of branches and foliage, bark and shoots, and softwood, pure, and consolidated in the core. In the same way, Mister Gotama’s dispensation is rid of branches and foliage, bark and shoots, and softwood, pure, and consolidated in the core.

Excellent, Mister Gotama! ... From this day forth, may Mister Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life.”

3.2 Kaccānagottasutta (SN 12.15)¹⁹

At Sāvattthī.

Then Venerable Kaccānagotta went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Sir, they speak of this thing called ‘right view’. How is right view defined?”

“Kaccāna, this world mostly relies on the dual notions of existence and non-existence.

But when you truly see the origin of the world with right understanding, the concept of non-existence regarding the world does not occur. And when you truly see the cessation of the world with right understanding, the concept of existence regarding the world does not occur.

¹⁹ Translation by Bhikkhu Sujato. <https://suttacentral.net/sn12.15/en/sujato>



The world is for the most part shackled by attraction, grasping, and insisting.

But if—when it comes to this attraction, grasping, mental fixation, insistence, and underlying tendency—you don't get attracted, grasp, and commit to the thought, 'my self', you'll have no doubt or uncertainty that what arises is just suffering arising, and what ceases is just suffering ceasing. Your knowledge about this is independent of others.

This is how right view is defined.

'All exists': this is one extreme.

'All does not exist': this is the second extreme.

Avoiding these two extremes, the Realized One teaches by the middle way:

'Ignorance is a condition for choices. Choices are a condition for consciousness. ... That is how this entire mass of suffering originates.

When ignorance fades away and ceases with nothing left over, choices cease. When choices cease, consciousness ceases. ... That is how this entire mass of suffering ceases.'"

3.3 Cūḷasuññatasutta (MN 121)²⁰

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvattthī in the stilt longhouse of Migāra's mother in the Eastern Monastery.

Then in the late afternoon, Venerable Ānanda came out of retreat and went to the Buddha. He bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

"Sir, this one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans where they have a town named Townsville. There I heard and learned this in the presence of the Buddha: 'Ānanda, these days I usually practice the meditation on emptiness.' I trust I properly heard, learned, applied the mind, and remembered that from the Buddha?"

"Indeed, Ānanda, you properly heard, learned, applied the mind, and remembered that. Now, as before, I usually practice the meditation on emptiness.

Consider this stilt longhouse of Migāra's mother. It's empty of elephants, cows, horses, and mares; of gold and silver; and of gatherings of men and women. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely, the oneness dependent on the mendicant Saṅgha. In the same way, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of the village and the perception of

²⁰ Translation by Bhikkhu Sujato. <https://suttacentral.net/mn121/en/sujato>



people—focuses on the oneness dependent on the perception of wilderness. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that perception of wilderness. They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the perception of village or the perception of people. There is only this modicum of stress, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of wilderness.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of the village. It is empty of the perception of people. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of wilderness.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure.

Furthermore, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of people and the perception of wilderness—focuses on the oneness dependent on the perception of earth. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that perception of earth. As a bull’s hide is rid of folds when fully stretched out by a hundred pegs, so too, ignoring the hilly terrain, inaccessible riverlands, stumps and thorns, and rugged mountains, they focus on the oneness dependent on the perception of earth. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that perception of earth. They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the perception of people or the perception of wilderness. There is only this modicum of stress, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of earth.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of people. It is empty of the perception of wilderness. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of earth.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure.

Furthermore, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of wilderness and the perception of earth—focuses on the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of infinite space. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that perception of the dimension of infinite space. They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the perception of wilderness or the perception of earth. There is only this modicum of stress, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of infinite space.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of wilderness. It is empty of the perception of earth. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of infinite space.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure.

Furthermore, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of earth and the perception of the dimension of infinite space—focuses on the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness. They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the perception of earth



or the perception of the dimension of infinite space. There is only this modicum of stress, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of earth. It is empty of the perception of the dimension of infinite space. There is only this modicum of stress, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure.

Furthermore, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of the dimension of infinite space and the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness—focuses on the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of nothingness. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that perception of the dimension of nothingness. They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the perception of the dimension of infinite space or the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness. There is only this modicum of stress, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of nothingness.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of infinite space. It is empty of the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of nothingness.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure.

Furthermore, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness and the perception of the dimension of nothingness—focuses on the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness or the perception of the dimension of nothingness. There is only this modicum of stress, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of infinite consciousness. It is empty of the perception of the dimension of nothingness. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely the oneness dependent on the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure.

Furthermore, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of the dimension of nothingness and the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—focuses on the oneness dependent on the signless immersion of the heart. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that signless immersion of the heart. They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the perception of the



dimension of nothingness or the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. There is only this modicum of stress, namely that related to the six sense fields dependent on this body and conditioned by life.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of nothingness. It is empty of the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely that related to the six sense fields dependent on this body and conditioned by life.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, and pure.

Furthermore, a mendicant—ignoring the perception of the dimension of nothingness and the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—focuses on the oneness dependent on the signless immersion of the heart. Their mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided in that signless immersion of the heart. They understand: ‘Even this signless immersion of the heart is produced by choices and intentions.’ They understand: ‘But whatever is produced by choices and intentions is impermanent and liable to cessation.’ Knowing and seeing like this, their mind is freed from the defilements of sensuality, desire to be reborn, and ignorance. When they’re freed, they know they’re freed.

They understand: ‘Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.’

They understand: ‘Here there is no stress due to the defilements of sensuality, desire to be reborn, or ignorance. There is only this modicum of stress, namely that related to the six sense fields dependent on this body and conditioned by life.’ They understand: ‘This field of perception is empty of the perception of the defilements of sensuality, desire to be reborn, and ignorance. There is only this that is not emptiness, namely that related to the six sense fields dependent on this body and conditioned by life.’ And so they regard it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains they understand that it is present. That’s how emptiness manifests in them—genuine, undistorted, pure, and supreme.

Whatever ascetics and brahmins enter and remain in the pure, ultimate, supreme emptiness—whether in the past, future, or present—all of them enter and remain in this same pure, ultimate, supreme emptiness. So, Ānanda, you should train like this: ‘We will enter and remain in the pure, ultimate, supreme emptiness.’ That’s how you should train.”

That is what the Buddha said. Satisfied, Venerable Ānanda approved what the Buddha said.



4. Emptiness in Māhāyāna sūtra

4.1 Vajracchedikā (Toh 16)²¹

Sanskrit: Ārya Vajracchedikā Nāma Prajñāpāramitā Mahāyāna Sūtra

English: The Exalted Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Wisdom Gone Beyond called The Vajra Cutter

I prostrate to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavān was dwelling at Śhrāvastī, in the grove of Prince Jeta, in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada, together with a great Sangha of bhikṣhus of 1,250 bhikṣhus and a great many bodhisattva mahāsattvas.

Then, in the morning, having put on the lower and upper Dharma robes and carried the begging bowl, the Bhagavān entered the great city of Śhrāvastī to request alms. Then, having gone to the great city of Śhrāvastī to request alms, the Bhagavān afterwards enjoyed the alms food, and having performed the activity of food, since he had given up alms of later food, put away the begging bowl and upper robe. He washed his feet, sat upon the prepared cushion, and having assumed the cross-legged posture, straightened the body upright and placed mindfulness in front. Then, many bhikṣhus approached to the place where the Bhagavān was and, having reached there, bowing their heads to the Bhagavān's feet, circumambulated three times and sat to one side.

Also at that time, the venerable Subhūti, joining that very assembly, sat down. Then, the venerable Subhūti rose from the seat, placed the upper robe over one shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, bowed, joining the palms, toward the Bhagavān, and said this to the Bhagavān: "Bhagavān, the extent to which the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Enlightened Buddha has benefited the bodhisattva mahāsattvas with highest benefit, the extent to which the Tathāgata has entrusted the bodhisattva mahāsattvas with highest entrustment – Bhagavān, it is astonishing; Sugata, it is astonishing. Bhagavān, how should one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva's vehicle abide, how practice, how control the mind?"

That was said, and the Bhagavān said to the venerable Subhūti, "Subhūti, well said, well said. Subhūti, it is so; it is so. The Tathāgata has benefited the bodhisattva mahāsattvas with the highest benefit. The Tathāgata has entrusted the bodhisattva mahāsattvas with the highest entrustment. Subhūti, therefore, listen and properly retain it in mind, and I will explain to you how one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva's vehicle should abide, how practice, how control the mind."

²¹ Translated by Gelong Thubten Tsultrim (George Churinoff). © 2011 FPMT Inc.



Having replied, “Bhagavān, so be it,” the venerable Subhūti listened in accordance with the Bhagavān, and the Bhagavān said this: “Subhūti, here, one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle should generate the mind [of enlightenment] thinking this: ‘As many as are included in the category of sentient being – born from egg, born from the womb, born from heat and moisture, born miraculously; with form, without form, with discrimination, without discrimination, without discrimination but not without [subtle] discrimination – the realm of sentient beings, as many as are designated by imputation as sentient beings, all those I shall cause to pass completely beyond sorrow into the realm of nirvana without remainder of the aggregates. Although limitless sentient beings have thus been caused to pass completely beyond sorrow, no sentient being whatsoever has been caused to pass completely beyond sorrow.’

“Why is that? Subhūti, because if a bodhisattva engages in discriminating a sentient being, he is not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’ Why is that? Subhūti, if anyone engages in discriminating a sentient being, or engages in discriminating a living being, or engages in discriminating a person, they are not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’

“Further, Subhūti, a bodhisattva gives a gift without abiding in a thing; gives a gift without abiding in any phenomenon whatsoever. A gift should be given not abiding in visual form; a gift should be given not abiding in sound, smell, taste, tactility, or phenomenon either. Subhūti, without abiding in discriminating anything whatsoever as any sign, thus does a bodhisattva give a gift. Why is that? Subhūti, because the heap of merit of that bodhisattva who gives a gift without abiding, Subhūti, is not easy to take the measure of.

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Do you think it is easy to take the measure of space in the east?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, similarly, do you think it is easy to take the measure of space in the south, west, north, above, below, the intermediate directions, and the ten directions?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, similarly, the heap of merit of that bodhisattva who gives a gift without abiding is also not easy to take the measure of.

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Is one viewed as the Tathāgata due to the perfect marks?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so; one is not viewed as the Tathāgata due to the perfect marks. Why is that? Because, that itself which the Tathāgata called perfect marks are not perfect marks.”



He replied thus, and the Bhagavān said this to the venerable Subhūti: “Subhūti, to the degree there are perfect marks, to that degree there is deception. To the degree there are no perfect marks, to that degree there is no deception. Thus, view the Tathāgata as marks and no marks.”

He said that and the venerable Subhūti replied to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, in the future period, at the end of the five hundred, when the holy Dharma will totally perish, will any sentient beings produce correct discrimination upon the words of sūtras such as this being explained?”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, do not say what you have said, ‘...in the future period, at the end of the five hundred, when the holy Dharma will totally perish, will any sentient beings produce correct discrimination upon the words of sūtras such as this being explained...’ Moreover, Subhūti, in the future period, at the end of the five hundred, when the holy Dharma will totally perish, there will be bodhisattva mahāsattvas, endowed with morality, endowed with qualities, endowed with wisdom. Subhūti, those bodhisattva mahāsattvas moreover will not have made homage to just a single buddha; they will not have produced roots of virtue to just a single buddha. Subhūti, there will be bodhisattva mahāsattvas who have made homage to many hundred thousands of buddhas and produced roots of virtue to many hundred thousands of buddhas.

“Subhūti, those who will acquire merely a single mind of faith upon the words of such sūtras as this being explained, Subhūti, the Tathāgata knows. Subhūti, they are seen by the Tathāgata; Subhūti, all those sentient beings will produce and perfectly collect an unfathomable heap of merit. Why is that? Subhūti, because those bodhisattva mahāsattvas will not engage in discriminating a self and will not discriminate a sentient being, will not discriminate a living being, will not engage in discriminating a person.

“Subhūti, those bodhisattva mahāsattvas will not engage in discriminating phenomena nor discriminating non-phenomena; nor will they engage in discrimination or non-discrimination. Why is that? Subhūti, because if those bodhisattva mahāsattvas engage in discriminating phenomena, that itself would be of them grasping a self and grasping a sentient being, grasping a living being, grasping a person. Because even if they engage in discriminating phenomena as non-existent, that would be of them grasping a self and grasping a sentient being, grasping a living being, grasping a person.

“Why is that? Further, Subhūti, because a bodhisattva should not wrongly grasp phenomena, nor grasp non-phenomena.”

Therefore, thinking of that, the Tathāgata said, “If, by those who know this Dharma treatise as like a boat, even dharmas should be given up, what need is there to mention non-dharmas?”



Further, the Bhagavān said to the venerable Subhūti, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, exist whatsoever? Has any Dharma been taught by the Tathāgata?”

He said that, and the venerable Subhūti replied to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, as I understand this meaning that was taught by the Bhagavān, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever. That dharma that was taught by the Tathāgata does not exist whatsoever. Why is that? Because any dharma manifestly and completely realized or taught by the Tathāgata is not to be grasped, not to be expressed; it is not dharma nor is it non-dharma. Why is that? Because ārya beings are differentiated by the uncompounded.”

The Bhagavān said to the venerable Subhūti, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? If some son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage, completely filling this billionfold world system with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts, do you think that son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an immense heap of merit on that basis?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, immense. Sugata, immense. That son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an immense heap of merit on that basis. Why is that? Bhagavān, because that very heap of merit is not a heap; therefore, the Tathāgata says, ‘Heap of merit, heap of merit.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, compared to any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who, completely filling this billionfold world system with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts, if someone, having taken even as little as one stanza of four lines from this discourse of Dharma, also were to explain and correctly and thoroughly teach it to others, on that basis, the heap of merit produced would be much greater, incalculable, unfathomable.

Why is that? Subhūti, because the unsurpassed perfectly completed enlightenment of the tathāgata arhat perfectly completed buddhas arises from it; the buddha bhagavāns also are produced from it. Why is that? Subhūti, because the buddha dharmas called ‘buddha dharmas,’ are those buddha dharmas taught by the Tathāgata as non-existent; therefore, they are called ‘buddha dharmas.’

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does the stream-enterer think, ‘I have attained the result of streamenterer?’”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so. Why is that? Bhagavān, because one does not enter into anything whatsoever; therefore, one is called ‘stream-enterer.’ One has not entered into form, nor entered into sound, nor into smell, nor into taste, nor into tactility, nor entered into a phenomenon; therefore, one is called ‘stream-enterer.’



Bhagavān, if that stream-enterer were to think ‘I have attained the result of stream-enterer,’ that itself would be a grasping of that as a self, grasping as a sentient being, grasping as a living being, grasping as a person.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does the once-returner think, ‘I have attained the result of once-returner?’”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so. Why is that? Because the phenomenon of entry into the state of the oncereturner does not exist whatsoever. Therefore, one says, ‘once-returner.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does the non-returner think, ‘I have attained the result of non-returner?’”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so. Why is that? Because the phenomenon of entry into the state of the nonreturner does not exist whatsoever. Therefore, one says, ‘non-returner.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does the arhat think, ‘I have attained the result of arhatship?’”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so. Why is that? Because the phenomenon called ‘arhat’ does not exist whatsoever. Bhagavān, if the arhat were to think, ‘I have attained the result of arhatship,’ that itself would be a grasping of that as a self, grasping as a sentient being, grasping as a living being, grasping as a person.

“Bhagavān, I was declared by the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha as the foremost of those who abide without afflictions. Bhagavān, I am an arhat, free of attachment; but, Bhagavān, I do not think, ‘I am an arhat.’ Bhagavān, if I were to think, ‘I have attained arhatship,’ the Tathāgata would not have made the prediction about me saying, ‘The son of the lineage, Subhūti, is the foremost of those who abide without afflictions. Since not abiding in anything whatsoever, he abides without affliction, he abides without affliction.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does that dharma that was received by the Tathāgata from the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha Dīpaṅkara exist whatsoever?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so. That dharma that was received by the Tathāgata from the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha Dīpaṅkara does not exist whatsoever.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, if some bodhisattva were to say, ‘I shall actualize arranged fields,’ they would speak untruly. Why is that? Subhūti, because arranged fields called ‘arranged fields,’ those arrangements are taught by the Tathāgata as non-



existent; therefore, they are called ‘arranged fields.’ Subhūti, therefore, the bodhisattva mahāsattva thus should generate the mind without abiding, should generate the mind not abiding in anything. They should generate the mind not abiding in form, should generate the mind not abiding in sound, smell, taste, tactility, or phenomenon.

“Subhūti, it is like this: If, for example, the body of a being were to become thus, were to become like this, as big as Sumeru, the king of mountains, Subhūti, what do you think about this? Would that body be big?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, that body would be big. Sugata, that body would be big. Why is that? Because it is taught by the Tathāgata as not being a thing; therefore, it is called a ‘body.’ Since it is taught by the Tathāgata as not being a thing; therefore, it is called a ‘big body.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? If there were also just as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, would their grains of sand be many?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, if those very Ganges Rivers were many, there is no need to mention their grains of sand.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, you should appreciate; you should understand. If some man or woman, completely filling with the seven kinds of precious things that many world systems as there are grains of sand of those rivers Ganges, were to offer that to the tathāgata arhat perfectly completed buddhas, Subhūti, what do you think about this? Would that man or woman produce much merit on that basis?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, much. Sugata, much. That man or woman would produce much merit on that basis.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, compared to someone who, completely filling that many world systems with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts to the tathāgata arhat perfectly completed buddhas, if someone, having taken even as little as a stanza of four lines from this discourse of Dharma, were to explain it and correctly and thoroughly teach it also to others, on that basis the merit that itself would produce would be much greater, incalculable, unfathomable.

“Furthermore, Subhūti, if, at whatever place on earth even a stanza of four lines from this discourse on Dharma is recited or taught, that place on earth is a real shrine of the world with devas, humans, and asuras, what need to mention that whoever takes up this discourse of Dharma, memorizes, reads, understands, and properly takes to mind will be most astonishing. At that place on earth [where] the Teacher resides; other levels of gurus also abide.”



He said that and the venerable Subhūti replied to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, what is the name of this discourse of Dharma? How should it be remembered?”

He said that and the Bhagavān replied to the venerable Subhūti, “Subhūti, the name of this Dharma discourse is the ‘wisdom gone beyond’; it should be remembered like that. Why is that? Subhūti, because the very same wisdom gone beyond that is taught by the Tathāgata is not gone beyond; therefore, it is called ‘wisdom gone beyond.’

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does the dharma that is taught by the Tathāgata exist whatsoever?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, the dharma that is taught by the Tathāgata does not exist whatsoever.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do think about this? Are the quantities of particles of earth that exist in a billionfold world system many?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, the particles of earth are many. Sugata, they are many. Why is that? Bhagavān, because that which is a particle of earth was taught by the Tathāgata as not being a particle; therefore, it is called ‘particle of earth.’ That which is a world system was taught by the Tathāgata as not being a world system; therefore, it is called a ‘world system.’”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Is one to be viewed as the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha due to those thirty-two marks of a great being?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so. Why is that? Bhagavān, because those thirty-two marks of a great being that are taught by the Tathāgata are taught by the Tathāgata as no marks; therefore, they are called ‘thirtytwo marks of the Tathāgata.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Further, Subhūti, compared with some man or woman completely giving up bodies numbering the grains of sand of the river Ganges, if someone, taking even as little as a stanza of four lines from this discourse of Dharma, also were to teach it to others, they would produce on that basis many greater merits, incalculable, unfathomable.”

Thereupon, the venerable Subhūti, due to the impact of the Dharma, shed tears. Having wiped away the tears, he replied to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, this discourse on Dharma taught thus by the Tathāgata, Bhagavān, is astonishing. Sugata, it is astonishing. Bhagavān, since my production of exalted wisdom, I have never before heard this discourse on Dharma. Bhagavān, those sentient beings who will produce correct discrimination upon this sūtra being explained will be most astonishing. Why is that? Bhagavān, because that which is correct discrimination is not discrimination; therefore, correct discrimination was taught by the Tathāgata saying ‘correct discrimination.’



Bhagavān, upon this Dharma discourse being explained, that I imagine and appreciate is not astonishing to me. Bhagavān, in the final time, in the final age, at the end of the five hundred, those sentient beings who take up this Dharma discourse, memorize, read, and understand it will be most astonishing. Furthermore, Bhagavān, they will not engage in discriminating a self; will not engage in discriminating a sentient being, discriminating a living being, discriminating a person. Why is that? Bhagavān, because that itself which is discrimination as a self, discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, and discrimination as a person is not discrimination. Why is that? Because the buddha bhagavāns are free of all discrimination.”

He said that and the Bhagavān replied to the venerable Subhūti, “Subhūti, it is so; it is so. Upon this sūtra being explained, those sentient beings who are unafraid, unterrified, and will not become terrified will be most astonishing. Why is that? Subhūti, because this highest wisdom gone beyond, taught by the Tathāgata, the highest wisdom gone beyond that is taught by the Tathāgata, was also taught by unfathomable buddha bhagavāns – therefore, it is called ‘highest wisdom gone beyond.’

“Further, Subhūti, that itself which is the patience gone beyond of the Tathāgata has not gone beyond. Why is that? Subhūti, because when the king of Kaliûga cut off my limbs and appendages, at that time there did not arise in me discrimination as a self, discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, nor discrimination as a person, and in me there was no discrimination whatsoever, yet there was also no non-discrimination. Why is that? Subhūti, because, if at that time there had arisen in me discrimination as a self, at that time there would also have arisen discrimination of malice; if there had arisen discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, discrimination as a person, at that time there would also have arisen discrimination of malice.

“Subhūti, I know with clairvoyance that in the past period, during five hundred lifetimes, I was the rishi called ‘Preacher of Patience’; even then there did not arise in me the discrimination as a self; there did not arise the discrimination as a sentient being, discrimination as a living being, discrimination as a person. Subhūti, therefore, the bodhisattva mahāsattva, completely abandoning all discrimination, should generate the mind for unsurpassed perfectly complete enlightenment. One should generate the mind not abiding in form. One should generate the mind not abiding in sound, smell, taste, tactility, or phenomena. One should generate the mind not abiding in non-phenomena either. One should generate the mind not abiding in anything whatsoever. Why is that? Because that itself which is abiding does not abide. Therefore, the Tathāgata taught, ‘The bodhisattva should give gifts not abiding.’

“Further, Subhūti, the bodhisattva should thus totally give away gifts for the welfare of all sentient beings. However, that itself which is discrimination as a sentient being is non-discrimination. Those themselves who were taught by the Tathāgata saying ‘all sentient beings’ also do not exist. Why is that? Subhūti, because the Tathāgata teaches reality, teaches truth, teaches what is; the Tathāgata teaches what is without error.



“Further, Subhūti, the dharma that is manifestly and completely realized or shown by the Tathāgata has neither truth nor falsity. Subhūti, it is like this, for example: if a man with eyes has entered darkness, he does not see anything whatsoever; likewise should one view the bodhisattva who totally gives up a gift by falling into anything.

“Subhūti, it is like this, for example: upon dawn and the sun rising, a man with eyes sees various kinds of forms; likewise should one view the bodhisattva who totally gives up a gift by not falling into anything.

“Further, Subhūti, those sons of the lineage or daughters of the lineage who take up this Dharma discourse, memorize, read, understand, and correctly and thoroughly teach it to others in detail are known by the Tathāgata, they are seen by the Tathāgata. All those sentient beings will produce an unfathomable heap of merit.

“Further, Subhūti, compared to some man or woman, at the time of dawn, totally giving up bodies numbering the grains of sand of the river Ganges – also totally giving up bodies numbering the grains of sand of the river Ganges at the time of midday and evening, in such number totally giving up bodies for many hundred thousands of ten million, hundred billion eons – if someone, having heard this Dharma discourse, would not reject it, if they themselves would produce much greater merit on that basis, incalculable, unfathomable, what need to mention someone who, having written it in letters, takes it up, memorizes, reads, understands, and correctly and thoroughly teaches it to others in detail?

“Further, Subhūti, this Dharma discourse is unimaginable and incomparable. This Dharma discourse was taught by the Tathāgata for the benefit of sentient beings who have correctly entered into the supreme vehicle, the welfare of sentient beings who have correctly entered into the best vehicle. Those who take up this Dharma discourse, memorize, read, understand, and correctly and thoroughly teach it to others in detail are known by the Tathāgata; they are seen by the Tathāgata. All those sentient beings will be endowed with an unfathomable heap of merit. Being endowed with an unimaginable heap of merit, incomparable, immeasurable, and limitless, all those sentient beings will hold my enlightenment on the shoulder. Why is that? Subhūti, this Dharma discourse is unable to be heard by those who appreciate the inferior, by those viewing a self, by those viewing a sentient being, by those viewing a living being; those viewing a person are unable to hear, to take up, to memorize, to read, and to understand because that cannot be.

“Further, Subhūti, at whatever place on earth this sūtra is taught, that place on earth will become worthy to be paid homage by the world with devas, humans, and asuras. That place on earth will become worthy as an object of prostration and worthy as an object of circumambulation. That place on earth will become like a shrine.

“Subhūti, whatever son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage takes up the words of a sūtra like this, memorizes, reads, and understands, they will be tormented; will be



intensely tormented. Why is that? Subhūti, because whatever non-virtuous actions of former lifetimes that were committed by those sentient beings that would bring rebirth in the lower realms, due to torment in this very life, those nonvirtuous actions of former lifetimes will be purified, and they will also attain the enlightenment of a buddha.

“Subhūti, I know with clairvoyance that in the past period, in even more countless of countless eons, much beyond even beyond the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha Dīpaṅkara, there were eighty-four hundred thousands of ten million, hundred billion buddhas whom I pleased, and having pleased, did not upset. Subhūti, from whatever I did, having pleased and not having upset those buddha bhagavāns and in the future period, at the end of the five hundred, from someone taking up this sūtra, memorizing, reading, and understanding, Subhūti, compared to this heap of merit, the former heap of merit does not approach even a hundredth part, a thousandth part, a hundred-thousandth part; does not withstand enumeration, measure, calculation, similarity, equivalence, or comparison.

“Subhūti, at that time, the sons of the lineage or daughters of the lineage will receive a quantity of heap of merit that, if I were to express the heap of merit of those sons of the lineage or daughters of the lineage, sentient beings would go mad, would be disturbed.

“Further, Subhūti, this Dharma discourse being unimaginable, its maturation indeed should also be known as unimaginable.”

Then, the venerable Subhūti replied to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, how should one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle abide, how practice, how control the mind?”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, here, one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle should generate the mind thinking this: ‘I shall cause all sentient beings to pass completely beyond sorrow into the realm of nirvana without remainder of the aggregates. Although sentient beings were caused to pass completely beyond sorrow like that, no sentient being whatsoever was caused to pass beyond sorrow.’ Why is that? Subhūti, because if a bodhisattva engages in discriminating a sentient being, he is not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’ Also, if he engages in discriminating a person, he is not to be called a ‘bodhisattva.’ Why is that? Subhūti, because the dharma called ‘one who has correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle’ does not exist whatsoever.

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata from the Tathāgata Dīpaṅkara, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, exist whatsoever?”

He said that and the venerable Subhūti replied to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata from the



Tathāgata Dīpaṅkara, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever.”

He said that and the Bhagavān replied to the venerable Subhūti, “Subhūti, it is so. It is so, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata from the Tathāgata Dīpaṅkara, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever. Subhūti, if that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata were to exist at all, the Tathāgata Dīpaṅkara would not have made the prediction to me, saying, ‘Young brahmin, in a future period you will become the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha called Śākyamuni.’ Subhūti, thus, since that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever, therefore, the Tathāgata Dīpaṅkara made the prediction to me, saying, ‘Young brahmin, in a future period you will become the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha called Śākyamuni.’ Why is that? Because, Subhūti, ‘Tathāgata’ is an epithet of the suchness of reality.

“Subhūti, if someone were to say, ‘The Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha manifestly and completely realized unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment,’ they would speak wrongly. Why is that? Subhūti, because that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever. Subhūti, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata has neither truth nor falsity. Therefore, ‘all dharmas are buddha dharmas’ was taught by the Tathāgata. Subhūti, ‘all dharmas’, all those are non-dharmas. Therefore, it is said that ‘all dharmas are buddha dharmas.’ Subhūti, it is like this, for example: like a human endowed with a body and the body became large.”

The venerable Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, that taught by the Tathāgata, ‘a human endowed with a body and a large body,’ is taught by the Tathāgata as not being a body.

Therefore, ‘endowed with a body and a large body’ is said.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, it is so; if some bodhisattva were to say, ‘I shall cause sentient beings to completely pass beyond sorrow,’ he should not be called ‘bodhisattva.’ Why is that? Subhūti, does the dharma that is called ‘bodhisattva’ exist whatsoever?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it does not.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, therefore, it was taught by the Tathāgata that ‘all dharmas are without a sentient being, without a living being, without a person.’

“Subhūti, if some bodhisattva were to say, ‘I shall actualize arranged fields,’ he too should be expressed similarly. Why is that? Subhūti, because the arranged fields called



‘arranged fields’ are those taught by the Tathāgata as non-arranged. Therefore, they are called ‘arranged fields.’ Subhūti, whatever bodhisattva appreciates that dharmas are selfless, saying ‘dharmas are selfless,’ he is expressed by the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha as a bodhisattva called a ‘bodhisattva.’

“Subhūti, What do you think about this? Does the Tathāgata possess the flesh eye?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is so; the Tathāgata possesses the flesh eye.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this?

Does the Tathāgata possess the divine eye?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is so; the Tathāgata possesses the divine eye.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this?

Does the Tathāgata possess the wisdom eye?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is so; the Tathāgata possesses the wisdom eye.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this?

Does the Tathāgata possess the dharma eye?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is so; the Tathāgata possesses the dharma eye.”

The Bhagavan said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does the Tathāgata possess the buddha eye?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is so; the Tathāgata possesses the buddha eye.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? If, there being also just as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, there were just as many world systems as there are grains of sand of those, would those world systems be many?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is so; those world systems would be many.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, as many sentient beings as exist in those world systems, I totally know their continua of consciousness of different thoughts. Why is that?

Subhūti, because a so-called ‘continuum of consciousness’ is that taught by the Tathāgata as a non-continuum. Therefore, it is called a ‘continuum of consciousness.’

Why is that? Subhūti, because past consciousness does not exist as an observable, nor does future consciousness exist as an observable, nor does present consciousness exist as an observable.



“Subhūti, what do you think about this? If someone, completely filling this billionfold world system with the seven types of precious things, were to give gifts, do you think that son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an enormous heap of merit on that basis?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, enormous. Sugata, enormous.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, it is so. It is so; that son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage would produce an enormous heap of merit on that basis. Subhūti, if a heap of merit were a heap of merit, the Tathāgata would not have taught a heap of merit called a ‘heap of merit.’

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Should one be viewed as the Tathāgata due to total achievement of the form body?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so; one should not be viewed as the Tathāgata due to total achievement of the form body. Why is that? Bhagavān, because ‘total achievement of the form body’ is that taught by the Tathāgata as not being total achievement; therefore, it is called ‘total achievement of the form body.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? Is one to be viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so; one is not to be viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks. Why is that? Because that which was taught by the Tathāgata as perfect marks was taught by the Tathāgata as not being perfect marks; therefore, they are called ‘perfect marks.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, what do you think about this? If it is thought that the Tathāgata considers, ‘the dharma is demonstrated by me,’ Subhūti, do not view it like that, because the dharma that is demonstrated by the Tathāgata does not exist whatsoever. Subhūti, if someone were to say ‘the dharma is demonstrated by the Tathāgata,’ Subhūti, he would deprecate me since nonexistent and wrongly seized. Why is that? Subhūti, because that demonstrated dharma called ‘demonstrated dharma,’ which is referred to saying ‘demonstrated dharma,’ does not exist whatsoever.”

Then, the venerable Subhūti said to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, in the future period, will there be any sentient beings who, having heard this demonstration of such a dharma as this, will clearly believe?”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, they are not sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. Why is that? Subhūti, so-called ‘sentient beings,’ because they were taught by the Tathāgata as non-sentient beings, therefore are called ‘sentient beings.’



“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Does that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, exist whatsoever?”

The venerable Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, that dharma that was manifestly and completely realized by the Tathāgata, unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment, does not exist whatsoever.”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, it is so; it is so. For it, even the least dharma does not exist and is not observed; therefore, it is called ‘unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment.’

“Further, Subhūti, that dharma is equivalent since, for it, inequivalence does not exist whatsoever; therefore, it is called ‘unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment.’ That unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment – equivalent as selfless, without sentient being, without living being, without person – is manifestly and completely realized through all virtuous dharmas. Subhūti, virtuous dharmas called ‘virtuous dharmas,’ they, taught by the Tathāgata as just non-dharmas, are therefore called ‘virtuous dharmas.’

“Further, Subhūti, compared to any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage collecting a heap of the seven types of precious things about equaling whatever Sumeru, king of mountains, exist in a billion world systems, and giving gifts, if someone, having taken up even as little as a stanza of four lines from this wisdom gone beyond, were to teach it to others, Subhūti, compared to this heap of merit, the former heap of merit having not approached even a hundredth part, does not withstand comparison.

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? If it is thought that the Tathāgata considers, ‘Sentient beings are liberated by me,’ Subhūti, do not view it like that. Why is that? Subhūti, because those sentient beings who are liberated by the Tathāgata do not exist whatsoever. Subhūti, if some sentient being were to be liberated by the Tathāgata, that itself would be, of the Tathāgata, grasping a self, grasping a sentient being, grasping a living being, grasping a person. Subhūti, so-called ‘grasping a self,’ that is taught by the Tathāgata as non-grasping, yet that is grasped by childish ordinary beings. Subhūti, so-called ‘childish ordinary beings,’ they were taught by the Tathāgata as just non-beings; therefore, they are called ‘childish ordinary beings.’

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? Is one to be viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is not so; one is not viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks.”



The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, it is so; it is so. One is not viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks. Subhūti, if one were viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks, even a cakravartin king would be the Tathāgata; therefore, one is not viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks.”

Then, the venerable Subhūti said to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, as I understand the meaning of what the Bhagavān has said, one is not viewed as the Tathāgata due to perfect marks.”

Then, these verses were spoken by the Bhagavān at that time:

“Whoever sees me as form, whoever knows me as sound, has wrongly engaged by abandoning, those beings do not see me.

The buddhas are dharmatā viewed; the guides are the dharmakāya.

Since dharmatā is not to be known, it is unable to be known.”

“Subhūti, what do you think about this? If one grasps that ‘the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha is due to perfect marks,’ Subhūti, you should not view so for, Subhūti, the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha does not manifestly and completely realize unsurpassed perfect and complete enlightenment due to perfect marks.

“Subhūti, if one grasps that ‘some dharma has been designated as destroyed or annihilated by those who have correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle,’ Subhūti, it should not be viewed so; those who have correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle have not designated any dharma whatsoever as destroyed or annihilated.

“Further, Subhūti, compared to any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who, completely filling with the seven kinds of precious things as many world systems as there are grains of sand of the rivers Ganges, were to give gifts, if any bodhisattva attained forbearance that dharmas are selfless and unproduced, on that basis the heap of merit they themselves would produce would be much greater. Further, Subhūti, a heap of merit should not be acquired by the bodhisattva.”

The venerable Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, should not a heap of merit be acquired by the bodhisattva?”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, acquire, not wrongly grasp;⁶⁴ therefore, it is called ‘acquire.’

“Subhūti, if someone says, ‘The Tathāgata goes or comes or stands or sits or lies down,’ he does not understand the meaning explained by me. Why is that? Subhūti, because ‘the Tathāgata’ (‘the One Gone Thus’) does not go anywhere nor has come from anywhere; therefore, one says, ‘the Tathāgata Arhat Perfectly Completed Buddha.’



“Further, Subhūti, if some son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage were to render as many atoms of earth as exist in a billionfold world system, like this for example, into powder like a collection of subtlest atoms, Subhūti, what do you think about this? Would that collection of subtlest atoms be many?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it is so. That collection of subtlest atoms would be many. Why is that? Bhagavān, because if there were a collection, the Bhagavān would not have said ‘collection of subtlest atoms.’ Why is that? Because that ‘collection of subtlest atoms’ that was taught by the Bhagavān was taught by the Tathāgata as no collection; therefore, one says ‘collection of subtlest atoms.’ That ‘billionfold world system’ that was taught by the Tathāgata was taught by the Tathāgata as no system; therefore, one says ‘billionfold world system.’ Why is that? Bhagavān, because if there were to be a world system, that itself would be grasping a solid thing. That taught by the Tathāgata as grasping a solid thing was taught by the Tathāgata as no grasping; therefore, one says ‘grasping a solid thing.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, grasping a solid thing is itself a convention; that dharma does not exist as expressed, yet it is grasped by ordinary childish beings. Subhūti, if someone were to say, ‘Viewing as a self was taught by the Tathāgata and viewing as a sentient being, viewing as a living being, viewing as a person was taught by the Tathāgata,’ Subhūti, would that be spoken by right speech?”

Subhūti replied, “Bhagavān, it would not. Sugata, it would not. Why is that? Bhagavān, because that which was taught by the Tathāgata as viewing as a self, was taught by the Tathāgata as no viewing; therefore, one says, ‘viewing as a self.’”

The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, those who have correctly entered the bodhisattva’s vehicle should know, should view, should appreciate all dharmas like this; they should appreciate like this, not abiding whatsoever in any discrimination as a dharma. Why is that? Subhūti, because discrimination as a dharma, called ‘discrimination as a dharma,’ is taught by the Tathāgata as non-discrimination; therefore, one says ‘discrimination as a dharma.’

“Further, Subhūti, compared to any bodhisattva mahāsattva who, completely filling unfathomable and incalculable world systems with the seven kinds of precious things, were to give gifts, if any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who, having taken as little as a stanza of four lines from this perfection of wisdom, were to memorize or read or understand or correctly and thoroughly teach it to others in detail, on that basis the merit he himself would produce would be more, incalculable, unfathomable.

“How should one correctly and thoroughly teach? Just how one would not correctly and thoroughly teach; therefore, one says, ‘correctly and thoroughly teach.’



“As a star, a visual aberration, a lamp, an illusion, dew, a bubble, a dream, lightning, and a cloud – view all the compounded like that.”

That having been said by the Bhagavān, the elder Subhūti, those bodhisattvas, the fourfold disciples – bhikṣhus, bhikṣhunīs, upāsakas and upāsikās – and the world with devas, humans, asuras, and gandharvas, overjoyed, highly praised that taught by the Bhagavān.

The Exalted Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Wisdom Gone Beyond called The Vajra Cutter is concluded.

Colophon to the Lhasa Zhol text:

Compiled, revising the translation of the Indian abbot Śīlendra Bodhi and Yeshe sDe with the new language standard.

Colophon to the English translation:

This translation of the Vajra Cutter Sūtra is based on the Tibetan Lhasa Zhol text, having compared it with various other Tibetan printings as well as with Sanskrit versions, and having viewed several excellent earlier English translations. It was completed on 22 March 2002 at the Chandrakīrti Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre, near Nelson, New Zealand, by Gelong Thubten Tsultrim (George Churinoff).



4.2 The Rice Seedling (Śālistamba, Toh 210)²²

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavān was residing on Vulture Peak mountain in Rājagṛha with a large saṅgha of 1,250 bhikṣus and with a great many bodhisattva mahāsattvas. At that time, venerable Śāriputra went to the place frequented by the bodhisattva mahāsattva Maitreya and, after they had exchanged courtesies upon meeting each other, they both sat down on a flat rock.

Venerable Śāriputra then said to the bodhisattva mahāsattva Maitreya, “Maitreya, here today, the Bhagavān, gazing at a rice seedling, spoke this aphorism to the bhikṣus: ‘Bhikṣus, whoever sees dependent arising sees the Dharma. Whoever sees the Dharma sees the Buddha.’ Having said this, the Bhagavān fell silent. Maitreya, what is the meaning of this aphorism spoken by the Sugata? What is dependent arising? What is the Dharma? What is the Buddha? How does one see the Dharma by seeing dependent arising? How does one see the Buddha by seeing the Dharma?”

The bodhisattva mahāsattva Maitreya then replied to the venerable Śāradvatīputra, “Venerable Śāriputra, you want to know what dependent arising is in the statement made by the Bhagavān, the Lord of Dharma, the Omniscient One: ‘Bhikṣus, whoever sees dependent arising sees the Dharma. Whoever sees the Dharma sees the Buddha’? Well, the phrase dependent arising means that something arises because something else already exists; something is born because something else was already born. That is to say, ignorance causes formations. Formations cause consciousness. Consciousness causes name and form. Name and form cause the six sense sources. The six sense sources cause contact. Contact causes sensation. Sensation causes craving. Craving causes appropriation.

Appropriation causes becoming. Becoming causes birth. And birth causes aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, despair, and anxiety. Thus does this entire great heap of suffering arise.

“When ignorance ceases, formations cease. When formations cease, consciousness ceases. When consciousness ceases, name and form cease. When name and form cease, the six sense sources cease. When the six sense sources cease, contact ceases. When contact ceases, sensation ceases. When sensation ceases, craving ceases. When craving ceases, appropriation ceases. When appropriation ceases, becoming ceases. When becoming ceases, birth ceases. And when birth ceases, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, despair, and anxiety cease. Thus does this entire great heap of suffering cease. This is what the Bhagavān has called dependent arising.

²² Translated by the Dharmasāgara Translation Group, <https://84000.co/translation/toh210>



“What is the Dharma? The Dharma is the eightfold path of the noble ones: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This eightfold path of the noble ones, combined with the attainment of its results and nirvāṇa, is what the Bhagavān has called the Dharma.

“Who is the Bhagavān Buddha? A buddha, so-called because of comprehending all dharmas, is endowed with the wisdom eye of the noble ones and the body of Dharma, and thus perceives the dharmas of those still in training and those beyond training.

“How does one see dependent arising? On this point the Bhagavān said, ‘One who sees dependent arising as constant, without life force, devoid of life force, true, unmistaken, unborn, not arisen, uncreated, uncompounded, unobstructed, imperceptible, tranquil, fearless, incontrovertible, inexhaustible, and by nature never stilled, and who likewise sees the Dharma to also be constant, without life force, devoid of life force, true, unmistaken, unborn, not arisen, uncreated, uncompounded, unobstructed, imperceptible, tranquil, fearless, incontrovertible, inexhaustible, and never stilled, clearly understands the Dharma of the noble ones, and by thus acquiring such right knowledge, sees the Buddha, the body of the unsurpassable Dharma.’

“Why is it called dependent arising? It is called dependent arising because it is causal and conditional, not non-causal and non-conditional. In this connection, the Bhagavān concisely taught the characteristics of dependent arising as follows: ‘Results come from their own specific conditions. Whether tathāgatas appear or not, this true nature of things will remain. It is the true nature; the constancy of Dharma; the immutability of Dharma, consistent with dependent arising, suchness, unmistaken suchness, unchanging suchness, actuality, and truth; unmistaken; and unerring.’

“Moreover, dependent arising emerges from two principles. From what two principles? From a causal relation and a conditional relation. Furthermore, it should be understood as twofold: outer and inner.

“What is the causal relation in outer dependent arising? It is as follows. From a seed comes a sprout, from a sprout a leaf, from a leaf a stem, from a stem a pedicel, from a pedicel a pistil, from a pistil a flower, and from a flower comes a fruit. If there is no seed, the sprout cannot arise and so on, until finally, without the flower, the fruit cannot arise. If there is a seed, the sprout will form and so on, until finally, if there is a flower, then the fruit will form.

“In that process, the seed does not think, ‘I form the sprout.’ Nor does the sprout think, ‘I am formed by the seed.’ Likewise, the flower does not think, ‘I form the fruit.’ Nor does the fruit think, ‘I am formed by the flower.’ Yet, if there is a seed, the sprout will take form and arise, and so on, until finally, likewise, if there is a flower, the fruit will take form and arise. Thus is the causal relation in outer dependent arising to be seen.



“So how is the conditional relation in outer dependent arising to be seen? As due to the coming together of six elements. As due to the coming together of what six elements? Namely, conditional dependent arising is to be seen as due to the coming together of the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and season. The earth element functions as the support for the seed. The water element moistens the seed. The fire element ripens the seed. The wind element opens the seed. The space element performs the function of not obstructing the seed. And season transforms the seed. Without these conditions a sprout cannot form from a seed. But when the outer element of earth is not deficient, and likewise water, fire, wind, space, and season are not deficient, then from the coming together of all these factors, a sprout forms as the seed is ceasing.

“The earth element does not think, ‘I support the seed.’ Nor does the water element think, ‘I moisten the seed.’ Nor does the fire element think, ‘I ripen the seed.’ Nor does the wind element think, ‘I open the seed.’ Nor does the space element think, ‘I make sure the seed is not obstructed.’ Nor does the season think, ‘I transform the seed.’ Nor does the seed think, ‘I form the sprout.’ Nor does the sprout think, ‘I am formed by these conditions.’ Yet when these conditions are present and the seed is ceasing, the sprout forms. Likewise, when finally there is a flower, the fruit forms.

“The sprout is not created by itself, not created by another, not created by both, not created by Īśvara, not transformed by time, not derived from prakṛti, and not born without any cause. Nevertheless, through the coming together of the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and season, the sprout forms as the seed is ceasing.

“Thus is the conditional relation in outer dependent arising to be seen.

“Here, outer dependent arising is to be seen in terms of five aspects. What five aspects? As not permanent, as not discontinuous, as not involving transmigration, as the production of a large result from a small cause, and as a continuity of similar type.

“How is it not permanent? It is not permanent because the sprout and the seed are different. The sprout is not the seed. The sprout does not come from the seed after it has ceased, nor does it come from the seed while it has not yet ceased. Rather, the sprout is born precisely as the seed ceases.

“How is it not discontinuous? It is not discontinuous because a sprout is not born from a seed that has already ceased, nor from a seed that has not yet ceased. Rather, like the beam of a scale tilting from up to down, a sprout is born precisely when the seed has ceased.

“How does it not involve transmigration? It does not involve transmigration because the sprout and the seed are different; that which is the sprout is not the seed.



“How does it entail the producing of a large result from a small cause? A large fruit is produced from the planting of a small seed. Therefore, it entails the producing of a large result from a small cause.

“Lastly, fruit is produced precisely according to the type of seed planted. Therefore, it involves a continuity of similar type.

“Thus is outer dependent arising to be seen in terms of five aspects.

“Similarly, inner dependent arising also arises from two principles. From what two principles? From a causal relation and a conditional relation.

“What, then, is the causal relation in inner dependent arising? It starts with ignorance causing formations and so on, until finally, birth causes aging and death. If ignorance does not arise, then formations do not manifest and so on, until finally, if birth does not arise, then aging and death do not manifest. Likewise, from the existence of ignorance, formations occur and so on, until finally, from the existence of birth, comes aging and death.

“Ignorance does not think, ‘I produce formations.’ Nor do formations think, ‘We are produced by ignorance,’ and so on. Finally, birth does not think, ‘I produce aging and death.’ Nor do aging and death think, ‘I am produced by birth.’ Nevertheless, formations take form and arise through the existence of ignorance and so on, until finally aging and death take form and arise through the existence of birth.

“Thus is the causal relation in inner dependent arising to be seen.

“How is the conditional relation in inner dependent arising to be seen? As due to the coming together of six elements. As due to the coming together of what six elements? Namely, the conditional relation in inner dependent arising is to be seen as due to the coming together of the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness.

“Here, what is the earth element in inner dependent arising? That which assembles to form the solidity of the body is called the earth element. That which provides cohesion in the body is called the water element. That which digests whatever the body eats, drinks, chews, and tastes is called the fire element. That which performs the function of the body’s inhalation and exhalation is called the wind element. That which allows the body to have hollow spaces inside is called the space element. That which produces the sprouts of name and form like reeds in a sheaf—the combination of the five collections of consciousness, together with the defiled mental consciousness —is called the consciousness element. Without these conditions the body cannot be born. But when the inner earth element is not deficient, and likewise the elements of water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness are not deficient, then from the coming together of all these factors, the body forms.



“In this process, the earth element does not think, ‘I provide the solidity of the body by assembling.’ Nor does the water element think, ‘I provide cohesion for the body.’ Nor does the fire element think, ‘I digest whatever the body eats, drinks, chews, or tastes.’ Nor does the wind element think, ‘I perform the function of the body’s inhalation and exhalation.’ Nor does the space element think, ‘I create hollow spaces inside the body.’ Nor does the element of consciousness think, ‘I produce the name and form of the body.’ Nor does the body think, ‘I am produced by these conditions.’ Yet, when these conditions are present, the body is born.

“The earth element is not a self, not a being, not a life force, not a creature, not a human, not a person, not female, not male, not neuter, not me, not mine, and not anybody else’s.

“Similarly, the water element, the fire element, the wind element, the space element, and the consciousness element are also not a self, not a being, not a life force, not a creature, not a human, not a person, not female, not male, not neuter, not me, not mine, and not anybody else’s.

“Here, what is ignorance? That which perceives these same six elements to be unitary, whole, permanent, constant, eternal, pleasurable, a self, a being, a life force, a creature, a soul, a man, an individual, a human, a person, me, and mine, along with the many other such variations of misapprehension, is called ignorance. The presence of such ignorance brings desire, aversion, and delusion toward objects. Such desire, aversion, and delusion toward objects are the formations caused by ignorance. That which distinguishes between individual objects is consciousness. The four aggregates for appropriation that emerge in conjunction with consciousness, [along with the aggregate of material form], are name and form. The faculties based on name and form are the six sense sources. The conjunction of the three factors (dhammas) is contact. The experience of contact is sensation. Attachment to sensation is craving. The intensification of craving is appropriation. Action that comes from appropriation and causes rebirth is becoming. The emergence of the aggregates from such a cause is birth. The maturation of the aggregates after birth is aging. The perishing of the decrepit aggregates is death. The inner torment of the deluded, attached, dying person is sorrow. The utterance that comes from sorrow is lamentation. The experience of discomfort associated with the collection of the five consciousnesses is suffering. The mental suffering accompanied by attention is despair. Moreover, any other subtle defilements of this kind are called anxiety.

“They are called ignorance in the sense of obscuring, formations in the sense of forming, consciousness in the sense of knowing, name and form in the sense of mutual support, the six sense sources in the sense of entryways, contact in the sense of contact, sensation in the sense of experience, craving in the sense of thirst, appropriation in the sense of appropriating, becoming in the sense of giving birth to



repeated becoming, birth in the sense of the emergence of the aggregates, aging in the sense of the maturation of the aggregates, death in the sense of perishing, sorrow in the sense of grieving, lamentation in the sense of wailing, suffering in the sense of bodily torment, despair in the sense of mental torment, and anxiety in the sense of subtle defilement.

“Furthermore, not knowing reality, in the sense of not apprehending it and misapprehending it, is ignorance.

“If such an ignorance is present, three types of formations develop: those that lead to meritorious states, those that lead to unmeritorious states, and those that lead to immovable states. This is what is meant by ‘ignorance is the condition for formations.’

“From formations that lead to meritorious states comes consciousness that leads to meritorious states. From formations that lead to unmeritorious states comes consciousness that leads to unmeritorious states. And from formations that lead to immovable states comes consciousness that leads to immovable states. This is what is meant by ‘formations are the conditions for consciousness.’

“The four immaterial aggregates – consciousness and those that arise together with it – as well as any form, is what is meant by ‘consciousness is the condition for name and form.’

“Due to the development of name and form, the performance of actions through the entryways of the six sense sources occurs. This is what is meant by ‘name and form are the conditions for the six sense sources.’

“From the six sense sources arise the six collections of contact. This is what is meant by ‘the six sense sources are the condition for contact.’

“Sensations occur precisely according to the type of contact that occurs. This is what is meant by ‘contact is the condition for sensation.’

“Relishing those different kinds of sensations, taking delight in them, clinging to them, and having that clinging remain is what is meant by ‘sensation is the condition for craving.’

“From relishing, taking delight, clinging, and having that clinging remain comes an unwillingness to let go, with the repeated wish: ‘May I never part from these dear and delightful forms!’ This is what is meant by ‘craving is the condition for appropriation.’

“Such wishing gives rise to rebirth-producing actions by means of body, speech, and mind. This is what is meant by ‘appropriation is the condition for becoming.’



“The formation of the five aggregates born from such actions is what is meant by ‘becoming is the condition for birth.’

“The maturation of the development of the aggregates formed from birth, and their disintegration, is what is meant by ‘birth is the condition for aging and death.’

“Thus, this twelvefold dependent arising –which comes from several different causes and from several different conditions, is neither permanent nor impermanent, is neither compounded nor un-compounded, is not without any cause or condition, is not an experiencer, and is not something exhaustible, something destructible, or something that ceases has proceeded from time immemorial, without interruption, like the flow of a river.

“This twelvefold dependent arising –which comes from several different causes and from several different conditions, is neither permanent nor impermanent, is neither compounded nor un-compounded, is not without any cause or condition, is not an experiencer, and is not something exhaustible, something destructible, or something that ceases –has indeed proceeded from time immemorial, without interruption, like the flow of a river. Nevertheless, there are four links that serve as the cause for assembling this twelvefold dependent arising. What four links? Namely, ignorance, craving, karma, and consciousness.

“Consciousness functions as a cause by having the nature of a seed. Karma functions as a cause by having the nature of a field. Ignorance and craving function as causes by having the nature of afflictions.

“Karma and afflictions cause the seed of consciousness to grow. Here, karma functions as the field for the seed of consciousness. Craving moistens the seed of consciousness. Ignorance sows the seed of consciousness. Without these conditions, the seed of consciousness does not develop.

“In this process, karma does not think, ‘I function as the field for the seed of consciousness.’ Nor does craving think, ‘I moisten the seed of consciousness.’ Nor does ignorance think, ‘I sow the seed of consciousness.’ Nor does the seed of consciousness think, ‘I am produced by these conditions.’ Yet when the seed of consciousness grows, planted in the field of karma, moistened by the water of craving, and strewn with the manure of ignorance, the sprout of name and form manifests within whichever mother’s womb one will take rebirth through.

“And this sprout of name and form is not created by itself, not created by another, not created by both, not created by Īśvara, not transformed by time, not derived from prakṛti, not dependent on a single factor, and not born without any cause. Nonetheless, from the combination of the union of the parents, the period of ovulation, and other conditions, the seed of consciousness, filled with appetite, produces the sprout of name



and form within whichever mother's womb one will take rebirth through. For although things are devoid of owner, devoid of ownership, ungraspable, space-like, and their nature is the mark of illusion, there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions.

“For instance, the eye consciousness arises by way of five principles. What five principles? Namely, the eye consciousness arises based on the eye on which it depends, form, light, space, and the appropriate attention. Here, the eye functions as the basis for the eye consciousness. Form functions as the object of perception for the eye consciousness. Light functions as visibility. Space functions by not obstructing. Appropriate attention functions as mental reflection. Without these conditions, the eye consciousness cannot arise. But when the inner sense source, the eye, is not deficient, and likewise, when form, light, space, and appropriate attention are not deficient, then from the coming together of all these factors, the eye consciousness arises.

“The eye does not think, ‘I serve as the basis for the eye consciousness.’ Nor does form think, ‘I serve as the object of perception for the eye consciousness.’ Nor does light think, ‘I function as the visibility for the eye consciousness.’ Nor does space think, ‘I do not obstruct the eye consciousness.’ Nor does appropriate attention think, ‘I provide mental reflection for the eye consciousness.’ Nor does the eye consciousness think, ‘I am produced by these conditions.’ Yet, the eye consciousness is born from the presence of these conditions. Similarly, a corresponding analysis should be applied to the rest of the faculties.

“Here, there is nothing whatsoever that transmigrates from this existence to the next. And yet, because there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions, the result of karma nonetheless manifests. It is like the appearance of the reflection of a face on the surface of a well-polished mirror. The face has not shifted onto the surface of the mirror, but because there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions, the face nonetheless appears there.

“Similarly, there is nobody at all who transmigrates from here after death and is born elsewhere. And yet, because there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions, the result of karma nonetheless manifests. It is like how the orb of the moon travels at a distance of forty-two thousand yojanas above earth, and yet its reflection nonetheless appears in small vessels filled with water. It is not that the moon moves from its position and enters the small vessels filled with water. Yet, because there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions, the orb of the moon nonetheless appears there.

“Likewise, that there is nobody at all who transmigrates from here after death and is born elsewhere, and yet, because there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions, the result of karma nonetheless manifests, is like how a fire ignites from the assemblage of its requisite causes and conditions, and not when deficient of its requisite causes and conditions.



“In the same way, although things are devoid of owner, devoid of ownership, ungraspable, space-like, and their nature is the mark of illusion, because there is no deficiency of requisite causes and conditions, the seed of consciousness born of karma and afflictions will nonetheless produce the sprout of name and form within whichever mother’s womb one will take rebirth through.

“Thus is the conditional relation in inner dependent arising to be seen.

“Here, inner dependent arising is to be seen in terms of five aspects. What five aspects? As not permanent, as not discontinuous, as not involving transmigration, as the production of a large result from a small cause, and as a continuity of similar type.

“How is it not permanent? It is not permanent because the final aggregates at death are one thing and those at birth are another; that is, the final aggregates at death are not the ones at birth. And yet, only when the final aggregates at death cease do the aggregates at birth arise.

“How is it not discontinuous? It is not discontinuous because the aggregates at birth do not arise from the final aggregates at death either when they have already ceased, or when they have not yet ceased. Like the beam of a scale tilting from up to down, the aggregates at birth arise precisely when the final aggregates at death have ceased.

“How does it not involve transmigration? It does not involve transmigration because beings from different classes of existence bring about their rebirth in a common form of birth.

“How does it entail the production of a large result from a small cause? The ripening of a large result is experienced from having performed a minor action. Thus, it entails the production of a large result from a small cause.

“It involves a continuity of similar type because the ripening of an action is experienced precisely according to the action performed.

“Venerable Śāriputra, whoever sees with perfect wisdom this dependent arising, perfectly taught by the Bhagavān, as it actually is –as always and forever without life force, devoid of life force, true, unmistakable, unborn, not arisen, uncreated, uncompounded, unobstructed, imperceptible, tranquil, fearless, incontrovertible, inexhaustible, and by nature never stilled—whoever fully and truly sees it as unreal, vain, hollow, unsubstantial, as a sickness, a boil, a thorn, as miserable, impermanent, painful, empty, and self-less, such a person does not reflect on the past thinking, ‘Did I exist in the past, or not? What was I in the past? How was I in the past?’ Nor does such a person reflect on the future thinking, ‘Will I exist in the future, or not? What will I be in the future? How will I be in the future?’ Nor does such a person reflect on the present



thinking, ‘What is this? How is this? Being what, what will we become? Where does this being come from? Where will it go when transmigrating from here at death?’

“Whichever dogmas mendicants and brahmins hold throughout the world, whether they involve belief in a self, belief in a being, belief in a life force, belief in a person, or belief in ceremonies and festivities, such dogmas, prone to agitation and dullness, are all abandoned at that time. Fully understood as false, these dogmas are severed at the root and wither like the head of a palm tree, never to arise or cease in the future.

“Venerable Śāriputra, whoever is endowed with such acceptance of the Dharma and thus perfectly understands dependent arising is prophesied for unexcelled, perfect, and complete awakening by the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the perfectly and completely awakened one, the one with perfect knowledge and conduct, the Sugata, the knower of the world, the incomparable charioteer of those who need taming, the teacher of gods and humans, the Bhagavān, the Buddha, in this way: ‘Such a person will become a perfect and complete buddha!’ ”

After the bodhisattva mahāsattva Maitreya had thus spoken, venerable Śāriputra, together with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas, rejoiced and praised what the bodhisattva mahāsattva Maitreya had taught.

This concludes the noble Mahāyāna sūtra, “The Rice Seedling.”





Figure 9. Atiṣa Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna

5. Atiśa's Special Instructions of the Middle Way²³

I bow down to the Protector of the World
 I bow down to that supreme holy person, whose light rays of speech
 Opens the lotuses of the hearts
 Of all the deluded like me without exception.

The special instructions of the Mahāyāna's Middle Way are as follows: Conventionally, all things, from the perspective of the deluded whose vision is narrow, including all presentations of cause and effect and so forth, are real according to how they appear. Ultimately or actually, when the conventional as it appears is closely examined and clarified by the great reasonings, one should thoroughly understand with certainty that even something the size of the tip of a hair that is split a hundred times cannot be grasped.

While sitting in a cross-legged position on a comfortable seat, [contemplate] for awhile as follows: there are two kinds of entities, those having form and those not having form. In this regard, those that have form are collections of minute particles. When these are closely examined and broken up according to their directional parts, not even the most subtle [part] remains and they are completely without appearance. That which does not have form is the mind. In regards to this, the past mind has ceased and perished. The mind of the future has not yet arisen or occurred. Even the mind of the present is extremely difficult to examine: it has no color and is devoid of shape, since it is similar to space, it is not established, and since it is free of unity and multiplicity, unproduced, and having a luminous nature and so forth, when it is analyzed and examined with the weapon of reasoning, one realizes that it is not established.

In this way, when those two are not established as having any nature at all and do not exist, the very wisdom which individually discriminates is not established either. For example, through the condition of fire occurring by rubbing two sticks together, the two sticks are burned up and become non-existent. Just as the very fire which has burned subsides by itself, likewise, when all specific and generally characterized things are established as non-existent, wisdom itself, without appearance and luminous, is not established with any nature at all. All faults such as laxity and excitement and so forth are eliminated. In this interval of meditation, consciousness does not at all conceptualize, does not apprehend anything at all. All recollection and mental engagement are eliminated. Consciousness should reside in this way for as long as the enemies or thieves of signs and conceptual thought do not arise. When you wish to arise, slowly release from the cross-legged position and stand up. Then, with a mind

²³ Madhyamakopadéśa, translated by James B. Apple 2022



which sees all things like illusions,²⁴ do as many virtuous deeds as you are able with body, speech, and mind.

Accordingly, when one practices with devotion, for a long time, and uninterruptedly, then those with good fortune will see reality in this very life and all things will be directly realized, effortlessly and spontaneously, like the center of space. Through the attainment [of wisdom] after [meditation], all things are understood to be like illusions and so forth. From the point of time onwards when the vajra-like concentration has been realized, [Buddhas] will not have any subsequent attainment as they are settled in meditative equipoise at all times.

I will not speak here regarding the reasonings and scriptures that make statements such as, “If it is not like that, what is the difference from bodhisattvas?” Through the power of gathering the accumulations and making aspiration prayers for countless aeons for the welfare of others, [Buddhas] will become just as those who are to be taught wish [them to be]. There are many scriptures and reasonings [on this topic], but I will not elaborate upon them here.

The [text] called Special Instructions of the Middle Way composed by the paṇḍita Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna is completed. The Indian master himself and the great editor translator and monk, Tshul-khrims rgyal-ba, translated, edited, and set the final version at the 'Phrul-snang temple in Lhasa.

²⁴ Literally, “with an illusion like mind.”





Figure 10. Nāgārjuna

6.Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā²⁵

6.1 Homage verses

I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,
 The best of teachers, who taught that
 Whatever is dependently arisen is
 Unceasing, unborn,
 Unannihilated, not permanent,
 Not coming, not going,
 Without distinction, without identity,
 And free from conceptual construction.

6.2 Chapter I: Examination of Conditions

1. Neither from itself nor from another,
 Nor from both,
 Nor without a cause,
 Does anything whatever, anywhere arise.
2. There are four conditions: efficient condition;
 Percept-object condition; immediate condition;
 Dominant condition, just so.
 There is no fifth condition.
3. The essence of entities
 Is not present in the conditions, etc....
 If there is no essence,
 There can be no otherness-essence.
4. Power to act does not have conditions.
 There is no power to act without conditions.
 There are no conditions without power to act.
 Nor do any have the power to act.
5. These give rise to those,
 So these are called conditions.
 As long as those do not come from these.
 Why are these not non-conditions?
6. For neither an existent nor a non-existent thing
 Is a condition appropriate.

²⁵ Translated by Geshe Ngawang Samten and Jay L Garfield. Reprinted with permission from Prof. Jay L Garfield.



If a thing is non-existent, how could it have a condition?
 If a thing is already existent, what would a condition do?

7. When neither exists nor
 Non-existents nor existent non-existents are established,
 How could one propose a "productive cause?"
 If there were one, it would be pointless.
5. You have stated emphatically that it is not the case that
 An existent phenomenon has an object.
 So since phenomena are without objects,
 How could there be an objective condition?
6. Since phenomena are not arisen,
 Cessation is not tenable.
 Therefore an immediate condition makes no sense.
 If something has ceased, what would its condition then be?
7. Since there is no existence
 Of essenceless things,
 The phrase "When this exists, this will arise"
 Is not tenable.
8. An existent entity (mental episode)
 Has no object.
 Since a mental episode is without an object,
 How could there be any percept-condition?
9. Since things are not arisen.
 Cessation is not acceptable.
 Therefore, an immediate condition is not reasonable.
 If something has ceased, how could it be a condition?
10. If things did not exist
 Without essence,
 The phrase, "When this exists so this will be,"
 Would not be acceptable.
11. In the several or united conditions
 The effect cannot be found.
 How could something not in the conditions
 Come from the conditions?
12. However, if a nonexistent effect
 Arises from these conditions,



Why does it not arise
From non-conditions?

13. If the effect's essence is the conditions,
But the conditions don't have their own essence,
How could an effect whose essence is the conditions
Come from something that is essenceless?
14. Therefore, neither with conditions as their essence,
Nor with non-conditions as their essence are there any effects.
If there are no such effects,
How could conditions or non-conditions be evident?

6.3 Chapter II: Examination of Motion

1. What has been moved is not moving.
What has not been moved is not moving.
Apart from what has been moved and what has not been moved,
Movement cannot be conceived.
2. Where there is change, there is motion.
Since there is change in the moving,
And not in the moved or not-moved,
Motion is in that which is moving.
3. How would it be acceptable
For motion to be in the mover?
When it is not moving, it is not acceptable
To call it a mover.
4. For whomever there is motion in the mover,
There could be non-motion
Evident in the mover.
But having motion follows from being a mover.
5. If motion is in the mover.
There would have to be a twofold motion:
One in virtue of which it is a mover,
And one in virtue of which it moves.
6. If there were a twofold motion.
The subject of that motion would be twofold.
For without a subject of motion,
There cannot be motion.



7. If without a mover
It would not be correct to say that there is motion,
Then if there were no motion,
How could there be a mover?
8. Inasmuch as a real mover does not move,
And a non-mover does not move,
Apart from a mover and a non-mover,
What third thing could move?
9. When without motion,
It is unacceptable to call something a mover,
How will it be acceptable
To say that a mover moves?
10. For him from whose perspective a mover moves,
There would be the consequence that
Without motion there could be a mover.
Because a mover moves.
11. If a mover were to move,
There would be a twofold motion:
One in virtue of which he is a mover,
And one in virtue of which the mover moves.
12. Motion does not begin in what has moved,
Nor does it begin in what has not moved.
Nor does it begin in what is moving.
In what, then, does motion begin?
13. Prior to the beginning of motion,
There is no beginning of motion in
The going or in the gone.
How could there be motion in the not-gone?
14. Since the beginning of motion
Cannot be conceived in any way.
What gone thing, what going thing,
And what non-going thing can be posited?
15. Just as a moving thing is not stationary,
A non-moving thing is not stationary.
Apart from the moving and the non-moving,
What third thing is stationary?



16. If without motion
It is not appropriate to posit a mover,
How could it be appropriate to say
That a moving thing is stationary?
17. One does not halt from moving,
Nor from having moved or not having moved
Motion and coming to rest
And starting to move are similar.
18. That motion just is the mover itself
Is not correct.
Nor is it correct that
They are completely different.
19. It would follow from
The identity of mover and motion
That agent and action
Are identical.
20. It would follow from
A real distinction between motion and mover
That there could be a mover without motion
And motion without a mover.
21. When neither in identity
Nor in difference
Can they be established,
How can these two be established at all?
22. The motion by means of which a mover is manifest
Cannot be the motion by means of which he moves.
He does not exist before that motion,
So what and where is the thing that moves?
23. A mover does not carry out a different motion
From that by means of which he is manifest as a mover.
Moreover, in one mover
A twofold motion is unacceptable.
24. A really existent mover
Doesn't move in any of the three ways.
A non-existent mover
Doesn't move in any of the three ways.



25. Neither an entity nor a non-entity
 Moves in any of the three ways.
 So motion, mover and
 And route are non-existent.

6.4 Chapter XVIII: Examination of the Self and Phenomena

1. If the self were the aggregates,
 It would have arising and ceasing (as properties).
 If it were different from the aggregates,
 It would not have the characteristics of the aggregates.
2. If there were no self,
 Where would the self's (properties) be?
 From the pacification of the self and what belongs to it,
 One abstains from grasping onto "I" and "mine".
3. One who does not grasp onto "I" and "mine,"
 That one does not exist.
 One who does not grasp onto "I" and "mine,"
 He does not perceive.
4. When views of "I" and "mine" are extinguished,
 Whether with respect to the internal or external,
 The appropriator ceases.
 This having ceased, birth ceases.
5. Action and misery having ceased, there is nirvana.
 Action and misery come from conceptual thought.
 This comes from mental fabrication.
 Fabrication ceases through emptiness.
6. That there is a self has been taught,
 And the doctrine of no-self,
 By the buddhas, as well as the
 Doctrine of neither self nor nonself.
7. What language expresses is nonexistent.
 The sphere of thought is nonexistent.
 Unarisen and unceased, like nirvāna
 Is the nature of things.



8. Everything is real and is not real,
Both real and not real,
Neither real nor not real.
This is Lord Buddha's teaching.
9. Not dependent on another, peaceful and
Not fabricated by mental fabrication,
Not thought, without distinctions,
That is the character of reality (that-ness).
10. Whatever comes into being dependent on another
Is not identical to that thing.
Nor is it different from it.
Therefore it is neither nonexistent in time nor permanent.
11. By the buddhas, patrons of the world,
This immortal truth is taught:
Without identity, without distinction;
Not nonexistent in time, not permanent.
12. When the fully enlightened ones do not appear,
And when the disciples have disappeared,
The wisdom of the self-enlightened ones
Will arise completely without a teacher.



6.5 Chapter XXII: Examination of the Tathāgata

1. Neither the aggregates, nor different from the aggregates,
The aggregates are not in him, nor is he in the aggregates.
The Tathāgata does not possess the aggregates.
What is the Tathāgata?
2. If the Buddha depended on the aggregates, He would not exist through
an essence.
Not existing through an essence,
How could he exist through otherness-essence?
3. Whatever is dependent on another entity,
Its selfhood is not appropriate.
It is not tenable that what lacks a self Could be a Tathāgata.
4. If there is no essence,
How could there be otherness-essence?
Without possessing essence or otherness-essence,
What is the Tathāgata?
5. If without depending on the aggregates
There were a Tathāgata,
Then now he would be depending on them.
Therefore he would exist through dependence.
6. Inasmuch as there is no Tathāgata
Dependent upon the aggregates,
How could something that is not dependent
Come to be so?
7. There is no appropriation.
There is no appropriator.
Without appropriation
How can there be a Tathāgata?
8. Having been sought in the fivefold way,
What, being neither identical nor different,
Can be thought to be the Tathāgata
Through grasping?
9. Whatever grasping there is
Does not exist through essence.
And when something does not exist through itself,



It can never exist through otherness-essence.

10. Thus grasping and grasper
Together are empty in every respect.
How can an empty Tathāgata
Be known through the empty?
11. "Empty" should not be asserted.
"Nonempty" should not be asserted.
Neither both nor neither should be asserted.
They are only used nominally.
12. How can the tetralemma of permanent and impermanent, etc.,
Be true of the peaceful?
How can the tetralemma of finite, infinite, etc.,
Be true of the peaceful?
13. One who grasps the view that the Tathāgata exists,
Having seized the Buddha,
Constructs conceptual fabrications
About one who has achieved Nirvāna.
14. Since he is by nature empty,
The thought that the Buddha
Exists or does not exist
After Nirvāna is not appropriate.
15. Those who develop mental fabrications with regard to the Buddha,
Who has gone beyond all fabrications,
As a consequence of those cognitive fabrications,
Fail to see the Tathāgata.
16. Whatever is the essence of the Tathāgata,
That is the essence of the world.
The Tathāgata has no essence.
The world is without essence.



6.6 Chapter XXIV: Examination of the Four Noble Truths

1. If all of this is empty,
Neither arising nor ceasing,
Then for you, it follows that
The Four Noble Truths do not exist.
2. If the Four Noble Truths do not exist,
Then knowledge, abandonment,
Meditation and manifestation
Will be completely impossible.
3. If these things do not exist,
The four fruits will not arise,
Without the four fruits, there will be no attainers of the fruits.
Nor will there be the faithful.
4. If so, the spiritual community will not exist.
Nor will the eight kinds of person.
If the Four Noble Truths do not exist,
There will be no true Dharma.
5. If there is no doctrine and spiritual community,
How can there be a Buddha?
If emptiness is conceived in this way,
The three jewels are contradicted.
6. Hence you assert that there are no real fruits.
And no Dharma.
The Dharma itself
And the conventional truth Will be contradicted.
7. We say that this understanding of yours
Of emptiness and the purpose of emptiness
And of the significance of emptiness is incorrect.
As a consequence you are harmed by it.
8. The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma
Is based on two truths:
A truth of worldly convention
And an ultimate truth.
9. Those who do not understand



The distinction drawn between these two truths
Do not understand
The Buddha's profound truth.

10. Without a foundation in the conventional truth,
The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught.
Without understanding the significance of the ultimate,
Liberation is not achieved.
11. By a misperception of emptiness
A person of little intelligence is destroyed.
Like a snake incorrectly seized
Or like a spell incorrectly cast.
12. For that reason-that the Dharma is
Deep and difficult to understand and to learn—
The Buddha's mind despaired of
Being able to teach it.
13. You have presented fallacious refutations
That are not relevant to emptiness.
Your confusion about emptiness
Does not belong to me.
14. For him to whom emptiness is clear,
Everything becomes clear.
For him to whom emptiness is not clear,
Nothing becomes clear.
15. When you foist on us
All of your errors
You are like a man who has mounted his horse
And has forgotten that very horse.
16. If you perceive the existence of all things
In terms of their essence,
Then this perception of all things
Will be without the perception of causes and conditions.
17. Effects and causes
And agent and action
And conditions and arising and ceasing
And effects will be rendered impossible.



18. Whatever is dependently co-arisen
That is explained to be emptiness.
That, being a dependent designation,
Is itself the middle way.
19. Something that is not dependently arisen,
Such a thing does not exist.
Therefore a nonempty thing
Does not exist.
20. If all this were nonempty, as in your view,
There would be no arising and ceasing.
Then the Four Noble Truths
Would become nonexistent.
21. If it is not dependently arisen,
How could suffering come to be?
Suffering has been taught to be impermanent,
And so cannot come from its own essence.
22. If something comes from its own essence,
How could it ever be arisen?
It follows that if one denies emptiness
There can be no arising (of suffering).
23. If suffering had an essence,
Its cessation would not exist.
So if an essence is posited,
One denies cessation.
24. If the path had an essence,
Cultivation would not be appropriate.
If this path is indeed cultivated,
It cannot have an essence.
25. If suffering, arising, and
Ceasing are nonexistent,
By what path could one seek
To obtain the cessation of suffering?
26. If nonunderstanding comes to be
Through its essence,
How will understanding arise?
Isn't essence stable?



27. In the same way, the activities of
Relinquishing, realizing, and meditating
And the four fruits
Would not be possible.
28. For an essentialist,
Since the fruits through their essence
Are already unrealized,
In what way could one attain them?
29. Without the fruits, there are no attainers of the fruits,
Or enterers. From this it follows that
The eight kinds of persons do not exist.
If these don't exist, there is no spiritual community.
30. From the nonexistence of the Noble Truths
Would follow the nonexistence of the true doctrine.
If there is no doctrine and no spiritual community, How could a Buddha
arise?
31. For you, it would follow that a Buddha
Arises independent of enlightenment.
And for you, enlightenment would arise
Independent of a Buddha.
32. For you, one who through his essence
Was unenlightened,
Even by practicing the path to enlightenment
Could not achieve enlightenment.
33. Moreover, one could never perform
Right or wrong actions.
If this were all nonempty what could one do?
That with an essence cannot be produced.
34. For you, from neither right nor wrong actions
Would the fruit arise.
If the fruit arose from right or wrong actions,
According to you, it wouldn't exist.
35. If, for you, a fruit arose
From right or wrong actions,
Then, having arisen from right or wrong actions,



How could that fruit be nonempty?

36. If dependent arising is denied,
Emptiness itself is rejected.
This would contradict
All of the worldly conventions.
37. If emptiness itself is rejected,
No action will be appropriate.
There would be action which did not begin,
And there would be agent without action.
38. If there is essence, the whole world
Will be unarising, unceasing,
And static. The entire phenomenal world
Would be immutable.
39. If it (the world) were not empty,
Then action would be without profit.
The act of ending suffering and
Abandoning misery and defilement would not exist.
40. Whoever sees dependent arising
Also sees suffering
And its arising
And its cessation as well as the path.

6.7 Chapter XXV: Examination of Nirvana

1. If all this is empty,
Then there is no arising or passing away.
By the relinquishing or ceasing of what
Does one wish nirvana to arise?
2. If all this is nonempty,
Then there is no arising or passing away.
By the relinquishing or ceasing of what
Does one wish nirvana to arise?
3. Unrelinquished, unattained,
Unannihilated, not permanent,
Unarisen, unceased:
This is how nirvana is described.



4. Nirvana is not existent.
It would then have the characteristics of age and death.
There is no existent entity
Without age and death.
5. If nirvana were existent.
Nirvana would be compounded.
A noncompounded existent
Does not exist anywhere.
6. If nirvana were existent,
How could nirvana be nondependent?
A nondependent existent
Does not exist anywhere.
7. If nirvana were not existent,
How could it be appropriate for it to be nonexistent?
Where nirvana is not existent.
It cannot be a nonexistent.
8. If nirvana were not existent,
How could nirvana be nondependent?
Whatever is nondependent
Is not nonexistent.
9. That which comes and goes
Is dependent and changing.
That, when it is not dependent and changing,
Is taught to be nirvana.
10. The teacher has spoken of relinquishing
Becoming and dissolution.
Therefore, it makes sense that
Nirvāna is neither existent nor nonexistent.
11. If Nirvāna were both
Existent and nonexistent,
Passing beyond would, impossibly,
Be both existent and nonexistent.
12. If Nirvāna were both
Existent and nonexistent,
Nirvana would not be nondependent.
Since it would depend on both of these.



13. How could Nirvāna
Be both existent and nonexistent?
Nirvana is uncompounded.
Both existents and nonexistents are compounded.
14. How could nirvana
Be both existent and nonexistent?
These two cannot be in the same place.
Like light and darkness.
15. Nirvāna is said to be
Neither existent nor nonexistent.
If the existent and the nonexistent were established,
This would be established.
16. If Nirvāna is
Neither existent nor nonexistent,
Then by whom is it expounded
"Neither existent nor nonexistent"?
17. Having passed into nirvana, the Victorious Conqueror
Is neither said to be existent
Nor said to be nonexistent.
Neither both nor neither are said.
18. So, when the victorious one abides, he
Is neither said to be existent
Nor said to be nonexistent.
Neither both nor neither are said
19. There is not the slightest difference
Between cyclic existence and nirvana.
There is not the slightest difference
Between nirvana and cyclic existence.
20. Whatever is the limit of nirvana,
That is the limit of cyclic existence.
There is not even the slightest difference between them,
Or even the subtlest thing.
21. Views that after cessation there is a limit, etc.,
And that it is permanent, etc.,
Depend upon Nirvāna, the final limit,



And the prior limit.

22. Since all existents are empty,
What is finite or infinite?
What is finite and infinite?
What is neither finite nor infinite?
23. What is identical and what is different?
What is permanent and what is impermanent?
What is both permanent and impermanent?
What is neither?
24. The pacification of all objectification
And the pacification of illusion:
No Dharma was taught by the Buddha
At any time, in any place, to any person.

6.8 Chapter XXVI: Examination of the Twelve Links

1. Wrapped in the darkness of ignorance,
One performs the three kinds of actions
Which as dispositions impel one
To continue to future existences.
2. Having dispositions as its conditions,
Consciousness enters transmigration.
Once consciousness has entered transmigration,
Name and form come to be.
3. Once name and form come to be,
The six sense spheres come into being.
Depending on the six sense spheres,
Contact comes into being.
4. That is only dependent
On eye and form and apprehension.
Thus, depending on name and form,
And which produces consciousness-
5. That which is assembled from the three-Eye and form and consciousness,
Is contact.
From contact



Feeling comes to be.

6. Conditioned by feeling is craving.
Craving arises because of feeling.
When it appears, there is grasping,
The four spheres of grasping.
7. When there is grasping, the grasper
Comes into existence.
If he did not grasp,
Then being freed, he would not come into existence.
8. This existence is also the five aggregates.
From existence comes birth,
Old age and death and misery and
Suffering and grief and...
9. Confusion and agitation.
All these arise as a consequence of birth.
Thus this entire mass of suffering
Comes into being.
10. The root of cyclic existence is action.
Therefore, the wise one does not act.
Therefore, the unwise is the agent.
The wise one is not because of his insight.
11. With the cessation of ignorance
Action will not arise.
The cessation of ignorance occurs through
Meditation and wisdom.
12. Through the cessation of this and that
This and that will not be manifest.
The entire mass of suffering
Indeed thereby completely ceases.





Figure 11. Gyaltshab Dharma Rinchen

7. Gyaltsab-Je on Tathāgata Essence: The Uttaratantra

7.1 Tathāgata essence is illustrated in three ways

- by the effect (phala) of the resultant tathāgata,
- by the nature (svabhava) of the tathāgata and
- from the point of view of it being the cause (hetu) of the tathagata

Illustration: meditating on the path of utilizing the basic element results in the attainment of the dharmakāya of a perfect buddha whose enlightened activities emanate and pervade to all sentient beings. These enlightened activities of the dharmakāya are capable of engaging with sentient beings and exist exclusively for the mind streams of sentient beings. Because of this it is said that all sentient beings possess tathāgata essence.

Suchness by its nature is divorced from defilement and is the nature of both buddhas and sentient beings.

*Because the [activities] of the dharmakāya are pervasive,
Because suchness is undifferentiable,
And because of having the lineage,
All sentient beings always have the buddha essence. (1.27)*

*Because the exalted wisdom of a buddha abides in the multitudes of sentient beings,
Because the undefiled nature is nondual,
And because buddha essence is labelled [buddha, the name of] its result,
It is said that all living beings are endowed with buddha essence. (1.28)*

Buddha lineage or tathagata essence: that which has the ability to transform into a buddha

- **Naturally-abiding lineage:** the reality or emptiness of a mind that is together with defilements
- **Developmental lineage:** potential to suitably generate supramundane phenomena that exists in the mind of sentient beings²⁶

The support (for realizing the nature) of the naturally-abiding lineage is the mind, whereas the naturally-abiding lineage is that which is supported by this mind, that is

²⁶ Geshe Tenphel 2005



necessarily a mind that is defiled or contaminated by the afflictions. It changes due to causes and conditions, a sign of its lack of inherent existence.

All sentient beings are constantly endowed with the tathāgata essence because of three reasons:

- The enlightened activities of the dharmakāya of the tathāgatas are capable of engaging with sentient beings;
- Suchness with stains from the point of view of its nature is not differentiable from the suchness of the tathāgatas;
- Being endowed with the lineage of the tathāgatas.

7.2 Causal relation with a Buddha's bodies

*From Buddha, the Dharma, from the Dharma, the assembly of āryas,
From the assembly, the [tathāgata] essence.
Exalted wisdom is attained upon the ending of the element.
Attainment of this exalted wisdom is attaining supreme enlightenment
Endowed with attributes of powers and so on, that bring forth the welfare of all sentient beings. (1.3)*

*The dharmakāya is to be known as twofold:
The [first is the] utterly undefiled dharmadhātu,
Which is the concordant cause of the [second, the dharmakāya of] teaching, by way of
Profound [definitive] and various [interpretable sūtras]. (1.146)*

*As the nature is
Unchanging, virtuous, and of natural purity,
So suchness is said [to be] (1.149abc)*

*The lineage is known to be twofold
The beginningless naturally abiding [lineage],
And the [developmental lineage] perfectly arising [through hearing and contemplating the
naturally abiding lineage]. (1.150)*

	Impermanent (compounded)		Permanent (uncompounded)
Lineages	Developmental lineage		Naturally abiding lineage
Buddha kāyas/bodies	Complete enjoyment body (sambhogakāya)	Supreme emanation body (nirmāṇakāya)	Truth body (dharmakāya)
			Wisdom body (jñānakāya)
			Nature body (svābhāvikakāya)



The arising of the ultimate Three Jewels in our own continuum is through meditating on the correct view, which itself arises based on two causes:

1. One's own basic element
2. Correct mental attention

and the two conditions:

1. The enlightenment and so forth of previous tathāgatas
2. The teachings of others. These are included within enlightened activities.

7.3 The ten presentations establish the clear light nature of the mind

7.3.0 Overview

*(1) Nature, (2) cause, (3) result, (4) function, (5) possession, (6) manifestation, (7) State, and similarly (8) the meaning of all-pervasiveness, (9) Immutability, and (10) indivisibility of qualities
Are said to be the intended meaning of the ultimate basic element. (1.29)*

Advantages of understanding the meaning of the ten presentations and the nine similes:

- One will overcome discouragement
- One will not look down on others
- One will understand that the tathagata essence exists
- One will understand that the afflictions are adventitious and do not engage the nature of the mind
- One will exchange self with others, understanding the equality of self and others²⁷

Nature²⁸ refers to the tathāgata essence in its three aspects and the manner of its division into three.

Cause refers to devotion, and so forth, which are the causes for the activation and purification of the three aspects. Therefore these are causes that depend upon the three aspects, and should not be held as causes that create the three aspects. They are the causes for cleansing suchness of defilement and for the preparation and

²⁷ Geshe Tenphel 2005

²⁸ The following “ten aspects” are in Sanskrit: svabhava, hetu, phala, karman, yoga, vritti, avasthaprabheda, sarvatraga, avikara, abheda.



purification of the lineage. The result of this purification is the attainment of the dharmākaya.

Result refers to the fruit of attaining the perfection of purity, and so forth by the purification of the basic element through the practices of devotion, and so forth.

Function refers to the birth of renunciation that arises from seeing the faults of samsara and to the generation of striving that arises from understanding the benefits of nirvana. These and others are activities²⁹ that happen due to the existence of the lineage.

Possession refers to the possession of the four causal qualities, such as devotion, and possession of the seven resultant qualities such as clairvoyance.

Categories of manifestation, which are formed by the element's existence in the impure phase, etc., refer to its entity in different categories. States, all-pervasiveness, immutability, and indivisibility of qualities are ascertainments of the categories of manifestation.

State: In its nature it is undifferentiated and it is only in certain states that it is differentiated.

Meaning of all-pervasiveness: one single nature is all pervasive in all states.

Immutability: In all three states its emptiness by nature is immutable. Its state of utter purity is the reason for its immutability.

Indivisibility of qualities: At the time of the ultimate result the three qualities, which are the three freedoms of the hearers, and so forth, from the point of view of their nature possess an undifferentiability of quality. This means that there is no ultimate hearer or solitary realizer freedom that is of a separate nature from the qualities of the Buddha.

7.3.1 Nature

Tathagatagarbha or dharmadhatu is by nature always free from the defilement of the mental poisons and thus utterly pure.

*Because of [having] power,
Being unchangeable, and by nature moistened [with compassion],
It resembles the qualities of
A precious jewel, space, and water. (1.31)*

²⁹ Note that “function” here translates karman.



7.3.1.1 *Specific characteristics:*

1. **Precious [wish-fulfilling] gem:** the dharmakaya wields the power to accomplish all wishes (all worldly and supramundane excellence) and intentions just as they are
2. **Sky:** since throughout all phases suchness does not change into another nature
3. **Water:** since the disposition is a nature having a moistening quality, as it is endowed with compassion that pervades all beings

Add. 3 On compassion: by focusing on all sentient beings individually at different times, there is no sentient being who has not experienced the compassion of wishing others to be free of suffering. Therefore, all sentient beings have existed as objects of compassion, and also as developers of compassion. Because the conducive conditions are incomplete and because opposing conditions destroy it, it is mere compassion and should not be classified as great compassion.

7.3.1.2 *General characteristics*

Since they are permanently free from defilement and by nature utterly pure, they have a property corresponding to the quality of a wish-fulfilling gem, the sky, and water, which are [also] by nature pure.

Afflictions also do not exist by their own nature, their mode of apprehension is not in accord with reality.

7.3.2 Cause

(1) Animosity toward the [Mahāyāna] Dharma,
 (2) view of self,
 (3) Fear of the sufferings of samsara, and
 (4) Lack of concern for the welfare of sentient beings are the four obstructions
 Of (1) those of great desire, (2) tīrthikas, (3) hearers (Śravakas), and (4) the self-arisen (Pratyekabuddhas). (1.32bcd)

7.3.2.1 *Three categories and four types of beings*

- **Those who desire existence,**
 - beings who have the disconnected disposition
 - beings of great desire who have definitely fallen into the cycle of existence.



- **Those who desire freedom from existence,**
 - Tirthikas, Vātsīputrīya's and those that conceitedly hold a view on emptiness which sees emptiness as truly existing, who desire freedom from existence but apply inappropriate means,
 - Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas who desire freedom from existence and apply appropriate means.
- **Those who desire neither of these two, and who:**
 - dwell perfectly within the Mahāyāna
 - enter a path in which samsara and nirvana are equalized
 - have a mind reliant upon non-abiding nirvana
 - and have conduct reliant upon samsara devoid of mental affliction

7.3.2.2 *Four veils preventing manifestation of the tathagatagarbha, due to the four above individuals:*

1. The first obscures the aspect of the purity of the dharmakaya.
2. The second obscures the aspect of its being true self.
3. The third obscures the aspect of its being true happiness, and
4. the fourth obscures the aspect that the dharmakaya is of true permanence.

All those who would travel the Mahāyāna path must abandon these four.

The cause of purifying [these] is the four Dharmas, Such as the superior devotion and so forth. (1.32ef)

The cause that completely purifies the adventitious defilements consists of

- **Devotion towards the Mahayana Dharma:** antidote for hatred and anger toward the Mahāyāna Dharma, which is the obstruction of those with strong desire.
- **Perfection of wisdom** or highest discriminative/analytical wisdom realizing the non-existence of a self: antidote for the views on self, which is the obstruction of the Tirthankara outsiders
- **Treasury of space samādhi** or limitless samadhi endowed with bliss: antidote to seeing samsara as suffering and to abandoning other sentient beings, which is the obstruction of those of the hearer doctrine who are frightened by the sufferings of samsara.
- **Great compassion** focusing on sentient beings as its point of reference: antidote to the obstructions of the solitary realizers

*Those who have the seed of devotion to the Mahāyāna Dharma,
Whose mother is the wisdom that gives birth to a buddha's truth [body],
Who abide in the womb of blissful concentration, and whose nurse is compassion
Are the heirs to succeed the subduer. (1.33)*



In keeping with the expression, “mother is wisdom, father is method,” the wisdom realizing emptiness is a cause common to the enlightenments of all three vehicles and is therefore, “mother.” Method is an exclusive cause and is therefore designated “father.”

7.3.3 Result

The perfection of the qualities of purity, self, bliss, and Permanence is the result. (1.34ab)

In summary, the result of these [four causes] is Distinguished by the four antidotes That oppose The fourfold misconceptions regarding the dharmakāya. (1.35)

7.3.3.1 The fruit of these four [purifying] causes consists of four aspects

Holding wrong views regarding the dharmakāya refers to holding to the true existence of the impermanent aggregates. Thus ordinary beings entertain a strong attachment in terms of the belief in purity, in the existence of a self, in happiness, and in permanence.

Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas reverse these four aspects of an exaggerated view that engages erroneously with the conventional world of the truth of suffering. In doing so they get attached to [their vision of] impurity, purity, non-existence of self, suffering, and impermanence.

7.3.3.2 The four aspects of the [true] purity of dharmakaya and so on act as the remedies for this attachment

Conqueror, the bodhisattva, by gaining the equality of samsara and nirvana, has the recognition of permanence. He has the recognition of the twelve links of dependent origination, summarized by the obstructions to omniscience, as being phenomena to be abandoned, and by meditating on their antidotes he has the recognition of bliss. By understanding the mere negation of the elaborations of the self of persons and the self of phenomena as the actual way that phenomena exist and their final nature, he has the recognition of self. By recognizing that within the natural purity the imprints of body, speech and mind are phenomena to be abandoned, he has the recognition of purity.

These four perfections, which are qualities of the tathāgata dharmakāya, are the results, explained here in an order that is the reverse of the order of the four causes explained previously, namely:



Perfection of purity as the result of devotion to Mahayāna Dharma: Buddha-dharmakaya, which is the fruit, has the general characteristic of having been by nature utterly pure since beginningless time, and it has the specific characteristic of the adventitious stains along with their remaining imprints being eliminated without any exception. *If we bring the mahayana path to its culmination and thereby abandon the afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge, we will become an enlightened being endowed with the two purities:*

- *the purity of natural defilements and*
- *the purity of adventitious defilements.*

The perfection of the highest self as the result of meditation on the perfection of wisdom: The conceptual elaboration consisting of the belief in the existence of a self as it is imputed by the tirthikas and so on, and the conceptual elaboration consisting of the belief in the non-existence of a self as it is imputed by the shravakas and so on, have been totally stilled and pacified without any remainder. *It is the result of meditating upon and eliminate the objects of negation:*

- *Non-Buddhists' object of negation (permanent, unitary, independent self)*
- *Hinayana schools' object of negation, (self-sufficient substantially existent self)*
- *The higher schools' object of negation, truly existent self.*

The perfection of highest bliss as the result of meditation on the perfection of meditative concentration: All suffering has been ceased without any exception; [even] the skandhas, which are of mental nature, and their causes have been exhausted; and even the imprints of ignorance and undefiled karma have been removed. *Hīnayāna Nirvāṇa is bliss, but the bliss higher than that is the bliss attained by way of meditating a meditative stabilization on emptiness that is conjoined with great compassion, that is, by way of combining method and wisdom. Thus, it becomes the perfection of concentration.*

The perfection of permanence as the result of meditation on great compassion: Samsara and nirvana, the cycle of existence and the state beyond torment and pain, have been realized as being equal in that they are not two different things that should be rejected and adopted, respectively. Thus the two benefits are uninterrupted and the dharmakaya.

Therefore, these two phenomena of wisdom and compassion are taught as being the root causes of the highest enlightenment.



*With wisdom, it severs all clinging to self.
Because of clinging to sentient beings, those endowed with compassion do not reach [the extreme of] peace.
By trusting the methods for enlightenment – compassion and cognition
The āryas do not turn to [the extremes of] samsara or nirvana. (1.38)*

*By knowledge, no dwelling in samsara, by compassion, no dwelling in peace
- Ornament for Clear Realization*

7.3.4 Function

*It has the function of being weary of suffering, and the
Intention and aspiration to attain peace. (1.34cd)*

*If the buddha element did not exist,
The aversion to suffering would not occur.
There would be no wanting, no striving, no aspiration
For nirvana. (1.39)*

If the naturally pure, basic element of a buddha and the uncontaminated seed did not exist, it follows that aversion arising from seeing the disadvantages of suffering would not occur.

The proof thrown up by this consequence is: the lineage of the Buddha exists in sentient beings because the wish to abandon samsara brought on by aversion to it and the wish to attain nirvana can be seen to exist.

Wanting: means moving in the direction of achieving the goal means wanting to attain these qualities.

Striving: means seeking a method to attain the goal one desires.

Aspiration: means moving the mind towards the goal that one desires refers to the joy felt on seeing that through this method one will attain nirvana.

*Seeing [respectively] the faults of suffering and the benefits of happiness
In samsara and nirvana
Is the function of the lineage,
Since those without the lineage are without [seeing these]. (1.40)*

7.3.4.1 Forward reasoning

A person of white Dharma in accord with liberation, by thinking on the general and specific disadvantages of samsara will see the faults of suffering within samsara and the benefits of the bliss of nirvana. This is the functioning of the lineage of freedom within the mind stream. However, without causes, without conditions, this cannot arise.



When teachings on the disadvantages of samsara and the benefits of nirvana and just the word “emptiness” cause the hairs on your body to stand up and so on, it means that that you possess roots of virtue in accord with liberation.

Without such an outlook it is difficult for a natural growth of the vows of individual liberation to take place. Therefore work hard to see the faults of samsara and to plant the imprints of renunciation. Even when your teacher explains something just once, you possess the roots of virtue in accord with liberation.

7.3.4.2 *Reverse reasoning*

If seeing the faults and benefits of samsara and nirvana arose not by erasing grave wrongs such as killing, but arose without cause, without condition, it follows that those of great attachment, who belong to the lineage that will not attain nirvana, would also see the faults and benefits of samsara and nirvana at that time.

When the lineage, pure of defilement and present since the beginning, is truly possessed of the four wheels or conditions for the attainment of liberation and so forth, the lineage will awaken:

1. Relying on holy beings
2. Previous accumulation of merit
3. Earnest prayer together with
4. Proper attention of the mind

Eventually, even the bodies of those whose mind streams have definitely gone wrong are touched by the rays of exalted wisdom from the sun disc of the tathagata.

7.3.5 Possession

7.3.5.1 *Possessing the quality of cause*

Limitless like the great ocean

[Is the lineage] – source of inexhaustible jewel-like qualities. (1.41ab)

Because the basic element comprises

The dharmakāya, exalted wisdom of the victor, and great compassion,

It resembles an ocean

By way of a vessel, jewels, and water. (1.42)

The presence of the lineage in sentient beings is like the great ocean, a source or repository of inexhaustible, causal, jewel-like qualities. Just as these jewels and the water of the ocean exist together, so the ocean-like basic element is the basis of four qualities:



- **Devotion to the Mahāyāna Dharma**, the cause of the pure dharmakāya, is likened to a *repository* because it produces every Dharma of the Buddha. They are the actual cause of the purification that results in the truth body.
- **Uncommon Mahāyāna calm abiding and special insight** are the causes that achieve the exalted wisdom of the conquerors and are likened to *jewels* from the point of view of its own nature it is capable of producing the result of limitless qualities, and
- **Great compassion of the bodhisattva** is the cause that flows into the compassion of the tathāgata and is likened to *water*, because it is of a nature of one-taste supreme “moistness” toward all sentient beings, wanting to separate them from suffering.

Great compassion is said to be important at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. In the beginning it is likened to a seed, in the middle it is likened to water, fertilizer, and so forth, and at the end it is likened to the fruit to be enjoyed.

These three causes for **creating**, **achieving** and **entering** the three phenomena of the **dharmakāya**, the **exalted wisdom of the conquerors**, and **great compassion**, respectively, are the four causal qualities linked to and possessed by the basic element.

7.3.5.2 Possessing the quality of result

*It is like the flame of a lamp,
Whose entity is endowed with indivisible qualities. 1.41cd)*

*In the undefiled basis, the clairvoyances, the exalted
Wisdom, and undefiled suchness
Are indivisible. Therefore, they resemble a lamp’s light,
Warmth, and color. (1.43)*

Like the flame of a lamp possessed of indivisible qualities it possesses the five kinds of clairvoyance and two knowledges:

1. Miraculous powers,
2. Possessing the ear of the gods,
3. Knowing the minds of others,
4. Knowing previous lives, and
5. Knowing birth and death.
6. Exalted wisdom of the extinction of contamination and
7. Suchness of the extinction of contamination.

These seven resultant qualities are, from the point of view of their nature and reality, inseparable from the undefiled basis.



The resultant qualities of the five types of clairvoyance are like

- **The illumination of a lamp** because they destroy the darkness that prevents the experience of the phenomena. The whereabouts of one's teacher, companions, disciples, and so forth are all clearly visible. Attachment or non-attachment in the minds of others is clearly apparent. One's and others' previous lives stretching to infinity are clearly visible and the disciples one has connections with are directly perceivable.
- **Like heat** because it has burnt away the firewood of karma and affliction.
- **Like the color of the flame** because it is clear light, undefiled and pure.

7.3.6 Categories of Manifestation

By way of the different manifestations of suchness in Ordinary beings, āryas, and perfect buddhas, The perceiver of suchness taught the essence of the conquerors To sentient beings. (1.44)

The essential basis for sentient beings to attain enlightenment is this natural purity within the minds of sentient beings because through focusing and meditating on it, it becomes the source that produces the qualities of a buddha. Because suchness with defilement categorizes the essence of the method to attain the complete buddhahood of the Conqueror, it is known as the essence of the Conqueror.

Ordinary beings are mistaken [in seeing the truth]. Those who see the truth oppose [this mistaken view]. [The minds of] the tathāgatas see things as they really are, Free from error and elaboration. (1.45)

Suchness exists as three types:

1. **In error:** refers to the suchness of ordinary foolish beings. Of the four recognitions, these beings have the recognition of impermanence as permanent, and so forth.
2. **Not in error:** āryas are the opposite of that and have even abandoned some of these errors.
3. **Perfectly freed from error and without elaboration:** perfect buddha's

It is not that there are three different kinds of suchness. Just because there are three different types of support of the suchness, three types of suchness can be posited.



The categories of manifestation have four branches that are the last four of the ten presentations:

1. **States:** from the point of view of its entity or nature, the tathagata essence cannot be divided but from the point of view of particular characteristics it can be divided,
2. **All-pervasive:** by nature it is one but it pervades all temporal states.
3. **Immutability:** by its nature it does not change.
4. **Indivisibility:** at the time of complete purity the qualities are indivisible.

7.3.7 State

*Impure, impure and pure, and
Totally pure are respectively
Indicating [the ultimate nature of the mind] of sentient beings,
Bodhisattvas, and tathāgatas. (1.46)*

1. Suchness unpurified of a single seed of obscuration
2. Suchness unpurified of all defilement
3. Totally purified

These three types of suchness are spoken of as the basic element of ordinary sentient beings, the basic element of the minds of ārya bodhisattvas, and as the tathāgata.

The three kinds of suchness are bases for imputing the existence of the three kinds of person. This is similar to a person being imputed in dependence on an aggregate collection and continuum, and yet no illustration of that person can be established within their aggregate collection, their continuum, or separate from them.

*“Form is emptiness, emptiness is form”
- Heart Sutra*

Like a phenomenon not existing by its own nature is conventionalized as form, similarly here, to understand how a phenomenon not existing by its own nature is conventionalized as the three kinds of person, is to perceive the meaning of the tathāgata essence.

The suchness with defilement, the basic element, is imputed as the three kinds of person by way of its gradual progression and is taught by three names. These are not actual illustrations of the three kinds of person, because Prasangika’s, in contrast to lower tenet schools, do not accept such illustrations.



Both truths exist on the same object:

- The conventional truth is that which is perceived by a valid cognizer analyzing for a conventionality.
- An ultimate truth is found by a valid cognizer analyzing for an ultimate.³⁰

The person who is a mere imputation by thought and the person who is the user of the aggregates are the same.³¹

7.3.8 All-Pervasiveness

Space is not an object of the five senses; it is an object of the mental consciousness alone. The object of the mental consciousness is the phenomena source.

The basic element of the tathāgata in the three states. This emptiness by nature pervades all three states. If this emptiness in terms of its own nature was divided and differentiated, it would contradict the assertion that it pervades the three states without differentiation.

Although the ultimate nature of the mind is indivisible, these three states or occasions make these divisions of the naturally-abiding lineage possible, like the space in various vessels. A clay vessel is a simile for ordinary beings, a copper vessel for arya beings, and a gold vessel for buddhas. The space-like naturally-abiding lineage in these three types of beings is unchanging, like the space in the three types of vessels.

*Just as space with its nonconceptual nature
Pervades all, in the same way,
The nature of the mind, the undefiled realm,
Pervades [all phenomena]. (1.48)*

Just as space pervades every absence of obstructing tangibility, and is of a nonconceptual nature that never thinks, “I pervade the emptiness within the world,” likewise emptiness, the defilement-free sphere that is the nature of the mind, by nature pervades all phenomena. Defilement-free sphere indicates that the defilements are not of the nature of the mind, and does not refer solely to the absence of adventitious defilement.

Unconditioned space is the mere negation of obstructing tangibility; it does not take the form of a self-sustaining affirmation. Although it pervades different “receptacles,” it is only given different names on the basis of these individual phenomena.

³⁰ Geshe Tenphel 2005

³¹ Ibidem



*[The ultimate nature of the mind's] general character
Pervades faults, qualities, and the final [qualities],
Just as space pervades forms in their lesser, intermediate, and
Supreme aspects. (1.49)*

7.3.9 Immutability

It would seem that the suchness of the mind gradually transforms from being contaminated up to being the suchness of the completely pure truth body. However, the suchness does not change, it is immutable. Thus, the suchness of the mind of the ordinary being and the suchness of the mind of the buddha are identical.

Types of practitioners:

1. Those definite in the Mahayana lineage
2. Those not definite in the Mahayana lineage:
 - who meet a Hinayana teacher and through his force abandon the Mahayana and turn to the Hinayana
 - who enter the Mahayana and due to not meeting a Hinayana teacher do not turn to the Hinayana but remain in the Mahayana.
3. Those who are definite in the hearer lineage,
4. Those who are not definite in the hearer lineage,
5. Etc. of the solitary realizer lineage

*Because of having adventitious faults
And being naturally endowed with qualities,
As in the earlier, so in the later states
It is in its true nature of being changeless. (1.50)*

You may ask, “If the first two states are with fault and the third state is without fault and endowed with excellent qualities, then how can it be claimed that the latter exists in the same way as the former?” There is no contradiction here. The faults are adventitious in that they can be removed, every quality of the Buddha can be developed and the focus for the development of these qualities exists innately.

7.3.9.1 Immutable during the impure state

*Just as the all-pervading space
Is subtle and therefore untainted by faults,
In the same way, this state in all sentient beings
Is not altered [by karma and afflictions]. (1.51)*



The naturally pure basic element, this non-afflicted state, pervades the minds of all sentient beings and yet because it is not transformed or altered by karma and affliction it remains untainted.

*Just as all worlds
Arise and disintegrate in space,
Similarly, the senses arise and disintegrate
In the unconditioned sphere. (1.52)*

*Just as space
Has never been burned by fire,
Likewise, the [basic element] has never been burned
By the fires of death, sickness, and old age. (1.53)*

*Similarly, the aggregates, constituents, and sense powers
Are based on karma and afflictions.
Karma and afflictions are always based
On incorrect mental attention. (1.55)*

*Incorrect mental attention
Depends on the purity of the mind,
[While] the nature of the mind
Does not abide in all those phenomena. (1.56)*

Incorrect mental attention abides in the natural purity of the true state of the mind. However, the ultimate truth of the mind, being the final mode of existence, does not dwell in any of the phenomena of karma and delusion, etc. This does not mean that suchness with defilement cannot be transformed into suchness without defilement by the power of the antidotes.

When examining karma and affliction, etc., to see if they exist by way of their own nature or not, one finds not a trace of anything existing by way of its own nature.

This analysis is concentrating on the mind's emptiness by nature, its emptiness of existing by way its own characteristics, its emptiness of true existence, its existence as a natural purity, as the true state of phenomena, and as the ultimate truth. By doing this, one establishes incidentally that the defilements are adventitious.

*Just like the element of space, so too the nature of the mind
Lacks causes and conditions and
Lacks the collection [of causes and conditions]; it [therefore]
Has no arising, disintegration, and abiding. (1.61)*



There is no coming together of causes and circumstances to produce the nature of the mind. It has no birth, no final destruction, and nor does it remain in existence by the power of causes. If it cannot be transformed by birth and destruction then it is easy to understand how it cannot be transformed by karma and affliction.

*The mind's nature of clear light
Is unchanging – just like space.
Those adventitious stains such as desire, which derive from wrong concepts,
Do not afflict [the emptiness of the mind]. (1.62)*

In the manner that the afflictions associate with the mind by way of similar focus, the afflictions and the mind are separate existences. The measure of the mind is its apprehension of an object, and the ultimate nature of an object is its suchness, but the afflictions within one's continuum pollute the mind by its association with it and so prevent the seeing of the ultimate nature of its objects. The afflictions cannot maintain their existence by associating with the wisdom that perceives emptiness and can have no focus at all on suchness. Therefore, suchness is in no way polluted by the afflictions.

7.3.9.2 *Immutable during the impure and pure state*

*The [ārya bodhisattvas], freed from the sufferings of aging, [sickness, and death]
And realizing the [basic element's] nature as thusness,
Are liberated from the misery of rebirth and so forth.
But [having realized the basic element's nature], the intelligent ones display [birth] in
order to cultivate compassion. (1.65)*

*Ārya [bodhisattvas] have eradicated
The sufferings of death, sickness, and old age from the root.
They are free from the [sufferings of samsara] because they are not reborn
By the force of karma and afflictions. (1.66)*

*Because [of the method aspect] and the direct realization [of the basic element] just as it is,
They are beyond birth and so forth.
Having the essence of compassion,
They manifest death, sickness, and old age. (1.67)*

The causes of bodhisattvas for taking birth in samsara:

1. Taking birth in order to complete one's collection of merit
2. For the purpose of caring for other sentient beings
3. To meet the Buddha in another body
4. So as not to become discouraged in the practice of caring for disciples
5. To preserve the holy Dharma of the conquerors
6. To generate enthusiasm in working for the welfare of others



7. For the state of mind that works for the bodhisattva conduct and for the basis of the conduct, the bodhicitta
8. For the practice of the perfections motivated by that state of mind

7.3.9.2.1 *Qualities of those who develop ultimate bodhicitta first (Path of Seeing)*

Qualities for the accomplishment of one's own welfare

*[Even though] the children of conquerors realize the immutable nature,
They are seen by those who are blinded by ignorance
As [taking] rebirth and so forth
This is truly wonderful! (1.68)*

The children of the conquerors first develop the mind that passes beyond the world and move to the first level where they perceive directly the immutable reality. Although they are free from the troubles of samsara and from birth and death caused by karma and affliction, nevertheless by the power of compassion and prayer and in the manner of those blinded by afflicted ignorance they are born, become sick, grow old and die.

Qualities for the accomplishment of other's welfare

*Those who have attained the domain of āryas
Display themselves in the domain of the childish
This is the method of those friends of migrators
And supreme compassion. (1.69)*

With the attainment of the domain of the ārya, which refers to the total severance of the sufferings of birth, death, etc., the first level bodhisattva motivated by compassion shows birth and so forth within the domain of ordinary beings. Therefore, they are friends to sentient beings, in possession of the best methods and of great compassion.

7.3.9.2.2 *Qualities of those engaged in activities (path of meditation)*

*Although gone beyond all worlds
They do not depart from the world.
For the sake of the world
They engage in the world without being affected by its defilements. (1.70)*

Although bodhisattvas from the second to the seventh level have passed beyond the worlds of ordinary beings and hearers and solitary realizers, they remain in the world and do not move away from taking birth, etc. Although they remain in the world, they stay and act in the world for the sake of those in the world, and are untainted by its contaminations.



*Just as a lotus growing in water
Is unsullied by [impurities] in the water,
In the same way, they are born in the world
But are not sullied by worldly dharmas. (1.71)*

These bodhisattvas who are engaged in their activities, although they are born in the world, are not sullied by worldly dharmas because they are liberated from birth and death brought on by karma and affliction and have the complete mastery to decide on their births.

7.3.9.2.3 Qualities of the non-returners (eighth pure ground)

*Accomplishing tasks,
Their mind constantly blazes like fire.
They permanently abide in equipoise within
The concentration of the absorption of pacification. (1.72)*

In their work for the welfare of sentient beings, the minds of the complete non-returner bodhisattvas on the eighth level constantly blaze like fire, referring to the perfect accumulation for the sake of others. Having abandoned forever all affliction, they dwell constantly in the meditative stabilization and the meditative absorption of the total pacification of all suffering and striving, because they have attained complete mastery over nonconceptual exalted wisdom.

Although they have the ability to actualize the nirvana that is the pacification of the all-pervading suffering, they have destroyed any possibility of the kind of mind arising that strives for liberation solely for their own welfare. They have achieved the yoga of the equality of samsara and nirvana.

“*Dwelling constantly in absorption, in the meditative stabilization of total pacification*” does not refer to an uninterrupted continuation of a single meditative equipoise because a direct and unobstructed mental placement upon suchness while at the same time directly realizing conventional phenomena and teaching sentient beings is only possible for a buddha. It means, therefore, that having completely dispelled coarse striving, it is no great effort for these bodhisattvas to enter a meditative equipoise on suchness, and during the post meditation sessions it is not possible for all activities not to be held by the essence or core of that mental placement upon the direct realization of suchness.

7.3.9.2.4 Qualities of those obstructed by one life (Ninth and tenth pure ground)

*By the propelling power of [prayers]
And because of being separated from all conceptuality,
In order to ripen sentient beings
They do not [need] to employ effort. (1.73)*



Because of the power of their previously planted intentions, referring to coarse or obvious striving, in which they prayed that they would be able to effortlessly and spontaneously work for the good of sentient beings, and because they are divorced from all conceptuality of apprehending the true existence of phenomena, the bodhisattvas obstructed by only one life can spontaneously engage in working to ripen living beings by teachings and so forth, without any great effort of motivation.

*They know precisely by whatever [appearance] and with which [method]
Each [student] needs to be tamed,
Whether by teaching, by [displaying] a form body,
By conduct, or by deeds. (1.74)*

*This [mode] of the bodhisattvas
In post meditation sessions
Is [renowned] in the world as being equal to the tathāgatas
By way of perfectly liberating sentient beings. (1.76)*

*It is true to say that
The difference between the earth and a speck of dust, and
Between the great ocean and [the water in] the hoof print of an ox,
Is the difference between a buddha and a bodhisattva. (1.77)*

Tenth-ground bodhisattvas have not yet fully abandoned all the obscurations to knowledge. Because of this, they still need a subtle kind of effort or motivational force in order to teach, whereas buddhas do not. In addition, they are unable to work for the welfare of others in meditative equipoise, because for them there is a difference between their meditative equipoise and their subsequent attainment, whereas for buddhas there is not.³²

7.3.9.3 *Immutable during the totally pure state*

*[The dharmakāya of the tathāgatas in the totally pure state is] immutable because of being endowed with the qualities of inexhaustibility.
It is the refuge of migrators because it is continuous and without end, is always without
The two [extremes of deprecation and superimposition] and without conceptuality, and
Is in the nature of not being subject to destruction because it is not formed [by karma].
(1.78)*

The totally pure state, the dharmakāya of the tathāgatas, is a permanent phenomenon because it is unconditioned in the sense of being an attainment whose ultimate nature is not the mutability of the mental body created by the ground of the imprints of ignorance and the non-afflicted karma, in which a former body is abandoned, and a

³² Geshe Tenphel 2005



later body gained. This is because the dharmakāya is possessed of ultimate qualities that are by nature unending. It is the ultimate unfailing refuge for living beings because in its natural purity it is also a body pure of all adventitious defilement, which will abide continuously and without end. This is because if this purity, freed from all adventitious defilement were to later change, it could not be the ultimate refuge for sentient beings.

It is naturally free from the two extremes of deprecation and superimposition because with all error at an end, it is a body dwelling without conceptuality in suchness.

*There is no birth, no death,
There is no harm, and no aging.
Therefore, [the dharmakāya of the tathāgatas] is
Permanent, constant, at peace, and unalterable. (1.79)*

*[The dharmakāya of the tathāgatas] is not born with a
Mental body because it is permanent.
It does not die and transmigrate with inconceivable transformation
Because it is constant. (1.80)*

*It is not harmed by the sicknesses
Of the subtle imprints because it is pacified.
It does not age by unaltered, non-afflicted [karma]
Because it is eternal. (1.81)*

*Because the [dharmakāya] is endowed with limitless qualities,
It has the meaning of being immutably permanent.
Because it is equal to the limit (of samsara),
It has the meaning of being a constant entity of refuge. (1.83)*

*Because it is in the nature of nonconceptuality,
It has the meaning of pacified reality, free from duality [of the two extremes].
Because it [is endowed] with the quality of not being produced [by the two karmas],
It is not subject to destruction – this is the meaning of being eternal. (1.84)*

7.3.10 Indivisibility of Qualities

Like the previous presentation that even though there are three types of persons (unpurified, partially purified, and totally purified), their suchness remains indivisible, similarly here, when all contaminations have been abandoned and the state of



enlightenment has been achieved, the qualities of insight (realization) and abandonment are indivisible.³³

Perfect buddhas indivisibly possesses the qualities of wisdom and so forth of the hearers and so forth, because:

1. They are the dharmakaya or truth body that is pure from the very beginning, and the qualities of foe-destroyers and so forth are ultimately indivisible from the dharmakaya
2. They possess the final quality of directly realizing thusness or suchness, they are known as “tathagatas” or “ones gone thus.”
3. They are the final abandonment that is the exhaustion of all adventitious defilements, they are the ārya truth of cessation.
4. They are a non-abiding nirvana.³⁴

*[The perfect complete buddha] is the dharmakāya, the tathāgata, the ārya’s ultimate truth, and [non-abiding] nirvana
These [four] are just as indivisible as the sun and its rays.
And because of the indivisibility of the qualities,
There is no [non-abiding] nirvana apart from buddhahood. (1.85)*

The perfect Buddha possesses indivisibly every wisdom, exalted wisdom and quality of freedom of the hearer, solitary realizer and Mahāyāna. He is the ultimate dharmakāya pure from the beginning; he is the tathāgata possessing the ultimate quality of directly realizing suchness; although naturally pure he is the ultimate abandonment of all adventitious defilement and is therefore the ārya truth of cessation, which can be summarized as the ultimate truth; and he is the non-abiding nirvana. This is like the inseparability of the disc of the sun and the rays that emerge from the sun.

Because of this indivisibility of qualities there is no nonabiding nirvana apart from the perfect buddha. This is not to say that the hearers and solitary realizers do not attain an authentic nirvana, rather that the development of liberation and exalted wisdom to their ultimate degree beyond which there can be no further development, is found only in a buddha.

That the qualities of the hearer and solitary realizer are indivisible from those of buddhas shows that they are not final vehicles, and shows that the buddha alone is the final vehicle.

³³ Geshe Tenphel 2005

³⁴ Ibidem



*Indivisible from the qualities of the buddha,
Attainment of the lineage as it is,
Reality that is non-deceptive and not false,
And by nature at peace since beginningless time. (1.87)*

There are four qualities that exist indivisibly in the dharmakaya that is a non-abiding nirvana:

- (1) The dharmakaya in its naturally pure aspect,
- (2) The gnosis that directly perceives this natural purity,
- (3) The total abandonment of all adventitious defilement, and
- (4) The attainment of that state by the antidotal forces.

Add 1. Because it exists indivisibly from the potential for the arising of a buddha's qualities in the continuum of sentient beings as characterized by the naturally pure basic element, this ultimate purity is the dharmakāya.

Add 2. Because it is an ultimate attainment of the direct realization of that suchness lineage, it is the tathāgata.

Add 3. Because it is a phenomenon that is not false and not deceiving, and one in which all defilement has been removed, it is the ārya ultimate truth.

Add. 4. Because it is an abandonment attained by application of antidotes, even though by nature it has been at peace since beginningless time, it is the non-abiding nirvana.

Indivisible from the qualities of the Buddha means: since beginningless time the tathāgata essence has existed indivisibly from the potential to develop the phenomena of the antidotes, and from the potential to be separated from all types of adventitious defilement.

*Thoroughly complete enlightenment in all aspects,
Abandonment of defilements with their imprints,
Buddhahood, and non-abiding nirvana
Are ultimately nondual. (1.88)*

*Liberation is inseparable in its character from
All aspects, the innumerable, the inconceivable, and
The quality of being without defilement.
Whatever is this liberation is also the tathāgata. (1.89)*

- **The quality of possessing all aspects** means that every kind of excellent quality is complete.
- **Beyond number** means limitless examples of clearly defined individual qualities. These demonstrate the vastness of the qualities.
- **Unconceivable** means it is difficult to understand their powers and number. This refers to the quality of depth.



- **Without defilement** means the abandonment of all defilements and their imprints, and refers to the quality of abandonment.

7.4 Summary

The statement “The nature of the mind is clear light” can indicate both truths; it indicates the conventional nature of the mind and the emptiness that is supported on that nature. Thus, “The nature of the mind is clear light” indicates the conventional nature of the mind, clear and knowing, and the nature of the mind that is the lack of existence from its own side.

With respect to the conventional nature of the mind: the stains do not abide in the nature of the mind, but are adventitious. If the defilements such as anger and so forth were the nature of the mind, it would follow that the mind itself would be the defilements; anger would always be manifest; or if anger was eliminated, the mind would be eliminated, too, yet mind continues on, even when the defilements are removed from it. This shows that the defilements are not the nature of the mind, instead the nature of the mind is clear light.³⁵

³⁵ Geshe Tenphel 2005





Figure 12. Vajradhara

8. Thirty-nine Uncommon Aspects of an Exalted Knower of All Aspects

The thirty-nine aspects of an exalted knower of all aspects are uncommon in the sense that they are unique to a buddha. They do not exist in the learner aryas—the hearer, solitary realizer, and bodhisattva aryas. Therefore, these thirty-nine are unsurpassable; they are the highest qualities that can be attained.

There are seven groups of uncommon aspects:

- I. Ten strengths
- II. Four fearlessnesses
- III. Four individual correct knowledges
- IV. Eighteen unmixed qualities of buddhas
- V. Aspect of thusness, the entity
- VI. Aspect of the self-arisen, the base
- VII. Aspect of buddha, the object of intent

I. Ten strengths

The definition of a strength of buddhas is a final exalted knower distinguished by being able to outshine its discordant classes, in dependence on a final concentration, that serves as its empowering condition.

A “strength” in this context is that which cannot be overcome by antagonists, but instead is capable of overcoming them. The ten strengths are exalted knowers; thus, they are consciousnesses. They are possessed by all buddhas.

1. *Strength that knows sources and non-sources* – This is the exalted knower that knows the results of actions; a buddha knows the appropriate and inappropriate causes of results. For example, the knowledge that happiness arises from virtue is a strength that knows sources since a buddha knows the appropriate cause (virtue) for the result (happiness). The knowledge that happiness does not arise from non-virtue is a strength that knows non-sources since a buddha knows that non-virtue is not a source of happiness.
2. *Strength that knows the fruition of actions* – This is the exalted knower that directly realizes actions and their results without exception; buddhas know the specific causes of particular results. Although some bodhisattvas know the law of actions and results roughly, only buddhas know it in detail.
3. *Strength that knows the varieties of interests* – This strength is an exalted knower of the varieties of interests of sentient beings, who are predisposed to different paths leading to high status and definite goodness. High status refers to a



rebirth in the upper realms as a human being or god, while definite goodness refers to liberation. There are different paths to high status and definite goodness. A buddha knows the varieties of interests of trainees who are predisposed or inclined to the different paths.

4. *Strength that knows the many classes in the world systems* – There are two different interpretations of this. Some interpret this as referring to the interests of the trainees. However, the preferred interpretation is that this is an exalted knower of the realms of existence, elements, and constituents.
5. *Strength that knows superior and inferior faculties* – A buddha knows who has superior, middling, and inferior faculties. The level of one's faculties is related to the strength of the five powers: faith, joyous effort, mindfulness, meditative concentration, and wisdom. If the five powers are strong, then one's faculties are superior; if their strength is middling, then one's faculties are middling, and if their strength is weak, then one's faculties are inferior.
6. *Strength that knows the paths that proceed everywhere* – This strength knows the paths that progress to high status and definite goodness without obscuration and impediment. For example, a buddha knows that to attain a high rebirth one needs to create meritorious or immovable karma; without doing this, one cannot attain such a rebirth.
7. *Strength that knows the thoroughly afflicted and the completely pure* – This strength knows thoroughly afflicted phenomena and completely pure phenomena. A buddha knows the obscurations caused by attachment to absorption in the concentrations and liberations, which are thoroughly afflicted phenomena, and knows the freedom from these obscurations, which are completely pure phenomena. Here, "thoroughly afflicted phenomena" refers to the attachment that arises when one enters the absorption of concentrations and liberations, while "completely pure phenomena" refers to freedom from such attachment.
8. *Strength that remembers former states* – This strength remembers one's own and others' past lives. This means that a buddha knows where he and all others were born in the past.
9. *Strength that knows death-transference and rebirth* – This is the strength that knows when others will die and where they will be reborn. This strength is related to future states, while the previous strength is related to past states of rebirth.
10. *Strength that knows exhaustion of contaminations* – This strength knows that while hearers and solitary realizers have eliminated merely the afflictive obscurations, a buddha has eliminated all stains, both the afflictive and the knowledge obscurations.



II. Four fearlessnesses

The definition of a fearlessness is a final exalted knower distinguished by the absence of anxiety in the midst of a retinue with regard to teaching the excellent Dharma, in dependence on a final concentration that serves as its empowering condition.³⁶

Buddhas possess four types of fearlessness, which are posited with respect to four assertions:

1. **Fearlessness with regard to perfect realization** – A buddha is fearless with respect to proclaiming that “I am clearly and completely enlightened in all ways with respect to all phenomena.”
2. **Fearlessness with regard to revealing hindering phenomena** – A buddha is fearless regarding the presentation of the obstacles to liberation and omniscience: attachment and so forth are afflictive obscurations that impede liberation, and knowledge obscurations impede omniscience.
3. **Fearlessness with regard to revealing the paths of definite emergence** – A buddha is fearless with respect to presenting the antidotes (such as the knower of bases and the knower of paths) that lead to liberation and omniscience.
4. **Fearlessness with regard to perfect abandonment** – A buddha has no fear of proclaiming that she has abandoned all contaminations without exception.

A buddha is able to proclaim his qualities without any fear. The four fearlessnesses can be condensed into two:

- 1) **Fearlessness regarding one’s own welfare.** This includes the first and the last:
 - a) fearlessness with regard to perfect realization
 - b) fearlessness with regard to perfect abandonment
- 2) **Fearlessness regarding others’ welfare.** This includes the remaining two:
 - c) a) fearlessness with regard to revealing hindering phenomena
 - d) b) fearlessness with regard to revealing the paths of definite emergence

III. Four individual correct knowledges

The definition of an individual correct knowledge that is a knower-aspect of an exalted knower of all aspects is a final exalted knower distinguished by having abandoned the grasping and obstruction with respect to the subject matter to be explained and the means of explaining it, in dependence on a final concentration that serves as its empowering condition.³⁷

³⁶ Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen , Ocean of Sport, vol. 2, p. 116.

³⁷ Ibid.



There are four individual correct knowledges:

1. individual correct knowledge of phenomena
2. individual correct knowledge of meanings
3. individual correct knowledge of terminology
4. individual correct knowledge of confidence

The first two are without grasping and obstruction with regard to the subject matter to be explained, while the last two are without grasping and obstruction with regard to the means of explaining it.

Without grasping and obstruction with regard to the subject matter to be explained:

- *Individual correct knowledge of phenomena* – A meditative concentration and wisdom that know the many enumerations of names of thoroughly afflicted phenomena and completely pure phenomena without grasping and obstructions. It also refers to knowing the many synonyms for the same thing.
- *Individual correct knowledge of meanings* – A meditative concentration and wisdom that know the general and specific characteristics of phenomena without grasping and obstructions.

Without grasping and obstruction with regard to the means of explaining:

- *Individual correct knowledge of terminology* – A meditative concentration and wisdom that know the languages of all sentient beings of the six realms without grasping and obstructions to the means of explaining.
- *Individual correct knowledge of confidence* – A meditative concentration and wisdom that know the classifications of entities and aspects of phenomena. A buddha has confidence in discriminating between them without grasping and obstructions.

A similitude of the four individual correct knowledges is present on the ninth bodhisattva ground, but only a buddha possesses the actual individual correct knowledges.

IV. Eighteen unmixed qualities of buddhas

The definition of an unmixed quality of buddhas is a final exalted knower distinguished by classes and sets of excellent qualities that are not even slightly mixed with those of lesser aryas, in dependence on a final concentration that serves as its empowering condition.³⁸

These eighteen qualities of buddhas are unique in that they are not shared even remotely with bodhisattvas. In other words, bodhisattvas cannot generate even a

³⁸ Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen , Ocean of Sport, vol. 2, p. 117.



similitude of these qualities. In contrast, bodhisattvas can develop a similitude of the other uncommon aspects of an exalted knower of all aspects.

The unmixed qualities of buddhas are of eighteen types, divided into four groups:

- a. six included within behavior
- b. six included within realizations
- c. three included within exalted activities
- d. three included within exalted wisdoms

a. Six included within behavior

Body

1. Unmistaken bodily behavior – A buddha does not have any mistaken physical behavior such as stepping on snakes or taking a wrong road.

Speech

2. Without senseless speech – A buddha does not have uncontrolled speech such as shouting.

Mind

3. Without decrease in mindfulness – A buddha does not have memory lapses nor does his mindfulness degenerate.
4. Without non-equipoise of mind – A buddha's mind is always in meditative equipoise on emptiness.
5. Without discrimination of difference – A buddha knows that both cyclic existence and nirvana are not different in being empty of true existence.
6. Without the indifference of not examining individually – A buddha constantly investigates whether sentient beings are ready to be ripened. When conditions are ripe, she engages in enlightened activities for their sake.

b. Six included within realizations

1. Non-degeneration from aspiration – A buddha constantly acts for sentient beings' welfare due to his love and compassion.
2. Non-degeneration from joyous effort – A buddha always exerts joyous effort to enact the welfare of even one single sentient being in hundreds of realms.
3. Non-degeneration from mindfulness – A buddha is constantly mindful, without forgetfulness, of benefiting sentient beings.
4. Non-degeneration from meditative concentration – This refers to a buddha's mind, which is always set in equipoise on the emptiness of all phenomena.
5. Non-degeneration from wisdom – A buddha possesses the wisdom discriminating all phenomena. He has an exalted knower that teaches the Dharma according to the needs of sentient beings.
6. Non-degeneration from liberation – A buddha's liberation, the abandonment of obscurations, does not degenerate. It lasts until all sentient beings are free from cyclic existence.



c. Three included within exalted activities

1. Exalted activities of the exalted body – There are four modes of behavior by which a buddha performs exalted activities of body. There are two ways of presenting these four modes of behavior: (a) the four behaviors of walking, sitting, lying, and standing, and (b) the four behaviors of radiating rays of light, walking, gazing with open eyes, and closing his eyes, all for the benefit of sentient beings, who receive some benefit to the mind with each of these activities.
2. Exalted activities of the exalted speech – A buddha gives teachings in accordance with the interests, dispositions, and needs of sentient beings.
3. Exalted activities of the exalted mind – A buddha has constant love and compassion.

If something is an exalted activity of a buddha, it is necessarily an exalted activity of the body, speech, or mind of a buddha. These three exalted activities are not shared by lesser aryas. They are preceded by exalted wisdom, accompanied by exalted wisdom, and followed by exalted wisdom. They are preceded by exalted wisdom because the empowering condition for these three is exalted wisdom. In addition, these three arise simultaneously with exalted wisdom and are followed by exalted wisdom.

d. Three included within exalted wisdoms

There are three types of unimpeded, unobstructed exalted wisdoms: those regarding (1) the past, (2) the future, and (3) the present.

A buddha directly knows all phenomena of the past, future, and present without impediment or obstruction. The three times are defined differently in the various systems.

According to Svatantrika-Madhyamaka,

The definition of a past at a certain time is that which has disintegrated at that time.³⁹

The definition of a future at a certain time is
 (1) that which is any of the three—past, future, or present—at that time, and
 (2) is a common locus of being that which has not been produced and being that which has not yet ceased at that time.⁴⁰

³⁹ Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen , Ocean of Sport, vol. 2, p. 120.

⁴⁰ Ibid.



*The definition of a present at a certain time is that which is a common locus of being that which has been produced at that time and being that which has not yet ceased at that time.*⁴¹

V. Aspect of thusness, the entity

The definition of an aspect of thusness that is a knower-aspect of an exalted knower of all aspects is an exalted wisdom set in meditative equipoise on thusness⁴² in a manner of not arising again.⁴³

The emptiness of a buddha's mind is the aspect of thusness because it is the thusness explained by all the buddhas of the three times qualified by the extinction of all stains. From the point of view of the subject or knower, the aspect of thusness is a buddha's exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise observing thusness in a manner of not arising again, that is, the omniscient mind is always absorbed in meditative equipoise on thusness, or emptiness. A buddha descends into the world for the purpose of clarifying the reality of phenomena to sentient beings, and because all buddhas explain thusness, it is emphasized here.

The term "entity" refers to the entity of the quality of a buddha's mind, which is continuously in meditative equipoise on thusness.

VI. Self-arisen aspect, the support

*The definition of a self-arisen aspect that is a knower-aspect of an exalted knower of all aspects is a final exalted wisdom distinguished by having attained mastery over the turning of all the wheels of Dharma without exception.*⁴⁴

The very culminated principal perfection of wisdom is the self-arisen aspect that has mastered all the Dharma because it is an exalted wisdom that has attained mastery over the turning of all the wheels of Dharma for trainees without exception. A buddha who appears as a supreme emanation body⁴⁵ has perfectly mastered turning the wheel of Dharma for those beings who need to be subdued. He does so in dependence upon an exalted knower of all aspects.

The wheel of Dharma is of two types: scriptural and realizational. The scriptural wheel of Dharma is a very positive quality included in the words of the Buddha; it includes the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² In general, 'thusness' is synonymous with 'emptiness' in the sense of an object's final reality.

⁴³ Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen, *Ocean of Sport*, vol. 2, p. 122.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ A supreme emanation body is an emanation body of a buddha that displays the twelve activities of a buddha.



three wheels of Dharma turned by Shakyamuni Buddha. The realizational wheel of Dharma is any clear realization in the continuum of one who has entered the path. “Turning the wheel of Dharma” refers to the first, the scriptural wheel of Dharma.

The term “support” is used because a buddha has many qualities such as the ten strengths and so forth that are supported on the self-arisen aspect that has mastered all the Dharma. In short, it is the support of all the above-mentioned qualities of a buddha.

VII. Aspect of buddha, the object of intent

The definition of an aspect of buddha itself indicated here is a final exalted wisdom that clearly (i.e. manifestly) and completely (i.e. perfectly) realizes (i.e. is enlightened with respect to) all aspects of all phenomena that are the modes and varieties.⁴⁶

The exalted knower of all aspects is an aspect of buddha because it is the realization of manifest complete enlightenment regarding all phenomena in all aspects.

⁴⁶ Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen, Ocean of Sport, vol. 2, p. 122.



9. Intercontemplative dialogue: the Tevijjasutta (DN 13)⁴⁷

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of five hundred mendicants when he arrived at a village of the Kosalan brahmins named Manasākaṭa. He stayed in a mango grove on a bank of the river Aciravatī to the north of Manasākaṭa.

Now at that time several very well-known well-to-do brahmins were residing in Manasākaṭa. They included the brahmins Caṅkī, Tārukkha, Pokkharasāti, Jānussoṇi, Todeyya, and others.

Then as the students Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja were going for a walk they began a discussion regarding what is the path and what is not the path.

Vāseṭṭha said this: “This is the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of Divinity; namely, that explained by the brahmin Pokkharasāti.”

Bhāradvāja said this: “This is the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of Divinity; namely, that explained by the brahmin Tārukkha.”

But neither was able to persuade the other. So Vāseṭṭha said to Bhāradvāja, “Bhāradvāja, the ascetic Gotama—a Sakyan, gone forth from a Sakyan family—is staying in a mango grove on a bank of the river Aciravatī to the north of Manasākaṭa. He has this good reputation: ‘That Blessed One is perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those who wish to train, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’ Come, let’s go to see him and ask him about this matter. As he answers, so we’ll remember it.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Bhāradvāja.

9.1 What is the Path and What is Not the Path

So they went to the Buddha and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, they sat down to one side and Vāseṭṭha told him of their conversation, adding: “In this matter we have a dispute, a disagreement, a difference of opinion.”

⁴⁷ Translated by Bhikkhu Sujato, <https://suttacentral.net/dn13/en/sujato>



“So, Vāseṭṭha, it seems that you say that the straight path is that explained by Pokkharasāti, while Bhāradvāja says that the straight path is that explained by Tārukka. But what exactly is your disagreement about?”

“About what is the path and what is not the path, worthy Gotama. Even though brahmins describe different paths—the Adhvaryu brahmins, the Taittirīya brahmins, the Chāndogya brahmins, the Cāndrāyaṇa brahmins, and the Bahvṛca brahmins—all of them still lead someone who practices them to the company of Divinity.

It’s like a village or town that has many different roads nearby, yet all of them meet at that village. In the same way, even though brahmins describe different paths—the Adhvaryu brahmins, the Taittirīya brahmins, the Chāndogya brahmins, the Cāndrāyaṇa brahmins, and the Bahvṛca brahmins—all of them still lead someone who practices them to the company of Divinity.”

9.2 Questioning Vāseṭṭha

“Do you say, ‘they lead someone’, Vāseṭṭha?”

“I do, worthy Gotama.”

“Do you say, ‘they lead someone’, Vāseṭṭha?”

“I do, worthy Gotama.”

“Do you say, ‘they lead someone’, Vāseṭṭha?”

“I do, worthy Gotama.”

“Well, of the brahmins who are proficient in the three Vedas, Vāseṭṭha, is there even a single one who has seen the Divinity with their own eyes?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“Well, has even a single one of their tutors seen the Divinity with their own eyes?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“Well, has even a single one of their tutors’ tutors seen the Divinity with their own eyes?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“Well, has anyone back to the seventh generation of tutors seen the Divinity with their own eyes?”



“No, worthy Gotama.”

“Well, what of the ancient seers of the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas, namely Aṭṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamadaggi, Aṅgīrasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāseṭṭha, Kassapa, and Bhagu? They were the authors and propagators of the hymns. Their hymnal was sung and propagated and compiled in ancient times; and these days, brahmins continue to sing and chant it, chanting what was chanted and teaching what was taught. Did they say: ‘We know and see where the Divinity is or what way he lies?’”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“So it seems that none of those brahmins have seen the Divinity with their own eyes, and not even the ancient seers claimed to know where he is. Yet the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas say: ‘We teach the path to the company of that which we neither know nor see. This is the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of Divinity.’

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? This being so, doesn’t their statement turn out to have no demonstrable basis?”

“Clearly that’s the case, worthy Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

Suppose there was a queue of blind men, each holding the one in front: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. In the same way, it seems to me that the brahmins’ statement turns out to be comparable to a queue of blind men: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. Their statement turns out to be a joke—mere words, vacuous and hollow.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Do the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas see the sun and moon just as other folk do? And do they pray to them and exalt them, following their course from where they rise to where they set with joined palms held in worship?”

“Yes, worthy Gotama.”

“What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Though this is so, are the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas able to teach the path to the company of the sun and moon, saying: ‘This is the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of the sun and moon?’”

“No, worthy Gotama.”



“So it seems that even though the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas see the sun and moon, they are not able to teach the path to the company of the sun and moon.

But it seems that even though they have not seen the Divinity with their own eyes, they still claim to teach the path to the company of that which they neither know nor see.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? This being so, doesn't their statement turn out to have no demonstrable basis?”

“Clearly that's the case, worthy Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

9.2.1 The Simile of the Finest Lady in the Land

Suppose a man were to say, ‘Whoever the finest lady in the land is, it is her that I want, her that I desire!’

They'd say to him, ‘Worthy man, that finest lady in the land who you desire—do you know whether she's an aristocrat, a brahmin, a peasant, or a menial?’ Asked this, he'd say, ‘No.’

They'd say to him, ‘Worthy man, that finest lady in the land who you desire—do you know her name or clan? Whether she's tall or short or medium? Whether her skin is black, brown, or tawny? What village, town, or city she comes from?’

Asked this, he'd say, ‘No.’

They'd say to him, ‘Worthy man, do you desire someone who you've never even known or seen?’

Asked this, he'd say, ‘Yes.’

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? This being so, doesn't that man's statement turn out to have no demonstrable basis?”

“Clearly that's the case, worthy Gotama.”

“In the same way, doesn't the statement of those brahmins turn out to have no demonstrable basis?”

“Clearly that's the case, worthy Gotama.”



“Good, Vāseṭṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

9.2.2 The Simile of the Ladder

Suppose a man was to build a ladder at the crossroads for climbing up to a stilt longhouse.

They’d say to him, ‘Worthy man, that stilt longhouse that you’re building a ladder for – do you know whether it’s to the north, south, east, or west? Or whether it’s tall or short or medium?’

Asked this, he’d say, ‘No.’

They’d say to him, ‘Worthy man, are you building a ladder for a longhouse that you’ve never even known or seen?’

Asked this, he’d say, ‘Yes.’

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? This being so, doesn’t that man’s statement turn out to have no demonstrable basis?”

“Clearly that’s the case, worthy Gotama.”

“In the same way, doesn’t the statement of those brahmins turn out to have no demonstrable basis?”

“Clearly that’s the case, worthy Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

9.2.3 The Simile of the River Aciravatī

Suppose the river Aciravatī was full to the brim so a crow could drink from it. Then along comes a person who wants to cross over to the far shore. Standing on the near shore, they’d call out to the far shore, ‘Come here, far shore! Come here, far shore!’

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Would the far shore of the Aciravatī river come over to the near shore because of that man’s call, request, desire, or expectation?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“In the same way, Vāseṭṭha, the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas proceed having given up those things that make one a true brahmin, and having undertaken those



things that make one not a true brahmin. Yet they say: ‘We call upon Indra! We call upon Soma! We call upon Varuṇa! We call upon Īsāna! We call upon the Progenitor! We call upon the Divinity! We call upon Mahinda! We call upon Yama!’

So long as they proceed in this way it’s impossible that they will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Divinity.

Suppose the river Aciravatī was full to the brim so a crow could drink from it. Then along comes a person who wants to cross over to the far shore. But while still on the near shore, their arms are tied tightly behind their back with a strong chain.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Could that person cross over to the far shore?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“In the same way, the five kinds of sensual stimulation are called ‘chains’ and ‘fetters’ in the training of the Noble One. What five? Sights known by the eye, which are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing. Sounds known by the ear ... Smells known by the nose ... Tastes known by the tongue ... Touches known by the body, which are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing.

These are the five kinds of sensual stimulation that are called ‘chains’ and ‘fetters’ in the training of the Noble One. The brahmins proficient in the three Vedas enjoy these five kinds of sensual stimulation tied, infatuated, attached, blind to the drawbacks, and not understanding the escape. So long as they enjoy them it’s impossible that they will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Divinity.

Suppose the river Aciravatī was full to the brim so a crow could drink from it. Then along comes a person who wants to cross over to the far shore. But they’d lie down wrapped in cloth from head to foot.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Could that person cross over to the far shore?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“In the same way, the five hindrances are called ‘obstacles’ and ‘hindrances’ and ‘encasings’ and ‘shrouds’ in the training of the Noble One. What five? The hindrances of sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. These five hindrances are called ‘obstacles’ and ‘hindrances’ and ‘encasings’ and ‘shrouds’ in the training of the Noble One.

The brahmins proficient in the three Vedas are obstructed, hindered, encased, and shrouded by these five hindrances. So long as they are so obstructed it’s impossible that they will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Divinity.



9.3 Converging

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Have you heard that the brahmins who are elderly and senior, the tutors of tutors, say whether the Divinity is encumbered with possessions or not?”

“That he is not, worthy Gotama.”

“Is his heart full of enmity or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is his heart full of ill will or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is his heart corrupted or not?”

“It is not.”

“Does he wield power or not?”

“He does.”

“What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Are the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas encumbered with possessions or not?”

“They are.”

“Are their hearts full of enmity or not?”

“They are.”

“Are their hearts full of ill will or not?”

“They are.”

“Are their hearts corrupted or not?”

“They are.”

“Do they wield power or not?”

“They do not.”



“So it seems that the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas are encumbered with possessions, but the Divinity is not. But would brahmins who are encumbered with possessions come together and converge with the Divinity, who isn’t encumbered with possessions?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha! It’s impossible that the brahmins who are encumbered with possessions will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Divinity, who isn’t encumbered with possessions.

And it seems that the brahmins have enmity, ill will, corruption, and do not wield power, while the Divinity is the opposite in all these things. But would brahmins who are opposite to the Divinity in all things come together and converge with him?”

“No, worthy Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha! It’s impossible that such brahmins will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Divinity.

But here the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas sink down where they have sat, only to drift apart, while imagining they’re crossing over to drier ground. That’s why the three Vedas of the brahmins are called a ‘salted land’ and a ‘barren land’ and a ‘disaster’.

When he said this, Vāseṭṭha said to the Buddha, “I have heard, worthy Gotama, that you know the path to company with Divinity.”

“What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Is the village of Manasākaṭa nearby?”

“Yes it is.”

“What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Suppose a person was born and raised in Manasākaṭa. And as soon as they left the town some people asked them for the road to Manasākaṭa. Would they be slow or hesitant to answer?”

“No, worthy Gotama. Why is that? Because they were born and raised in Manasākaṭa. They’re well acquainted with all the roads to the village.”

“Still, it’s possible they might be slow or hesitant to answer. But the Realized One is never slow or hesitant when questioned about the realm of divinity or the practice that leads to the realm of divinity. I understand the Divinity, the realm of divinity, and the practice that leads to the realm of divinity, practicing in accordance with which one is reborn in the realm of divinity.”



When he said this, Vāseṭṭha said to the Buddha, “I have heard, worthy Gotama, that you teach the path to company with Divinity. Please teach us that path and elevate this generation of brahmins.”

“Well then, Vāseṭṭha, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Vāseṭṭha.

9.4 Teaching the Path to the Divinity

The Buddha said this:

“It’s when a Realized One arises in the world, perfected, a fully awakened Buddha ... That’s how a mendicant is accomplished in ethics. ... Seeing that the hindrances have been given up in them, joy springs up. Being joyful, rapture springs up. When the mind is full of rapture, the body becomes tranquil. When the body is tranquil, they feel bliss. And when blissful, the mind becomes immersed.

They meditate spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

Suppose there was a powerful horn blower. They’d easily make themselves heard in the four quarters. In the same way, when the heart’s release by love has been developed like this, any limited deeds they’ve done don’t remain or persist there. This is a path to company with Divinity.

Furthermore, a mendicant meditates spreading a heart full of compassion ...

They meditate spreading a heart full of rejoicing ...

They meditate spreading a heart full of equanimity to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of equanimity to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

Suppose there was a powerful horn blower. They’d easily make themselves heard in the four quarters. In the same way, when the heart’s release by equanimity has been developed and cultivated like this, any limited deeds they’ve done don’t remain or persist there. This too is a path to company with Divinity.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? When a mendicant meditates like this, are they encumbered with possessions or not?”



“They are not.”

“Is their heart full of enmity or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is their heart full of ill will or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is their heart corrupted or not?”

“It is not.”

“Do they wield power or not?”

“They do.”

“So it seems that that mendicant is not encumbered with possessions, and neither is the Divinity. Would a mendicant who is not encumbered with possessions come together and converge with the Divinity, who isn’t encumbered with possessions?”

“Yes, worthy Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha! It’s quite possible that a mendicant who is not encumbered with possessions will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Divinity, who isn’t encumbered with possessions.

And it seems that that mendicant has no enmity, ill will, corruption, and does wield power, while the Divinity is the same in all these things. Would a mendicant who is the same as the Divinity in all things come together and converge with him?”

“Yes, worthy Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha! It’s quite possible that that mendicant will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Divinity.”

When he had spoken, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja said to him, “Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what’s there, worthy Gotama has made the teaching clear in many ways. We go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge for life.”



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