

UNENDING
AUSPICIOUSNESS



The Sutra of the Recollection
of the Noble Three Jewels

With Commentaries by Ju Mipham,
Taranatha, and the Author

By Tony Duff

A LITTLE EXPLANATION OF THE MEANING OF *THE SUTRA OF THE RECOLLECTION OF THE THREE JEWELS*

by Jetsun Taranatha

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om svāsti

I prostrate to the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. I will give a little explanation of the meaning of the *Sutra of the Recollection of the Three Jewels*.

Recollection as it is used here means to look into the way in which something has good qualities. This recollection, which is the root of positive dharmas in their entirety, is done for the purpose of arousing faith in the supreme objects (32).

The words “faith”, “appreciation (33)”, and “respect” often are used to refer to aspects of mind that are very different in character. However, they are sometimes used as different names for the same thing (34). In this text, the three terms are used with basically the same meaning, each one presenting a different shade of that basic meaning.

Faith is of three types: admiring, trusting, and aspiring. The first one is that, having heard here of the good qualities of the Three Jewels, they are understood and believed to be supreme and, moreover, there is a joy of mind with it that is complete in every way, a joy that amounts to being supreme (35).

Then, trusting faith (36) is like this. There is trust that the tathagata has such and such good qualities, trust that the explanations coming from the dharma of authoritative statement are true in meaning and correct in their wording, and trust that the dharma of realization and the sangha too have such and such good qualities (37).

There is trust that the superfactual dharma (38) is the truth of cessation and free of all faults, and that that, which is free of all faults, has all good qualities because that which does not have beneficial features is faulty (39).

Then, for aspiring faith: aspiring and wanting (40) to attain the rank of buddha and sangha, wanting to fully absorb the dharma of authoritative statement, wanting to manifest the dharma of the superfactual expanse, and wanting to produce the dharma of realization within the mind stream all are the actual aspiring faith. Those things that must be included with them, such as wanting to make offerings to the Jewels, wanting to broadcast their good qualities, wanting to spread the dharma of authoritative statement, and so on are put with aspiring faith (41). To take this further, when admiring and trusting faith have been engendered ahead of such activities, those activities are of the faithful kind but, when wanting the things mentioned is joined with offerings, and so on made for profit, fame, or competitive

purposes, that is merely aspiration for the things mentioned, not faith in connection with them.

“Appreciation” in general means to see certain qualities in something that does have those qualities. Here, it specifically means to know that something which has good qualities and is not deceptive does have good qualities and is not deceptive (42). For the most part it is trusting faith, though the Abhidharma also says that it is, “joy, respect, and wonder” and these do indeed accompany it. Here, “respect” means holding up the object as special, so it is mostly contained within admiring faith. Note that the Abhidharma explains a type of trusting faith, which it calls “respect for the trainings”, and mentions “respectful application” in relation to it, which it explains as a “strong perseverance”, but this subject does not apply here (43).

Someone who has a very complete type of faith in the Three Jewels will take up going for refuge, take on the vows of individual emancipation, and also will arouse the enlightenment mind. That person will then engage in the three principal trainings and the paramitas. Thus, the root of all paths is faith and that in turn only comes about through recollecting the Three Jewels. The recollection is initially done in relation to the Buddha. (44)

I. Sutra of the Recollection of the Buddha

The recollection starts with the words ***Thus it is: the bhagavat*** (45). The first nine phrases in this recollection are a summation, one which is common to and known to all in the Lesser and Great Vehicles. “***Thus it is:***” is to the effect “All of the good qualities to be explained are like this:” and those good qualities are then given in nine topics, topics which the *Summary* gives in these words:

Having defeated obstructors; perfections of
Explanation, abandonment, and wisdom;
The cause; how he went;
Looking at the world; taming fortunate ones;
And that teacher having nine good qualities
Who is the basis in whom they are present. (46)

Of those, his having defeated obstructors is connected with the with ***bhagavat*** at the start of the recollection. This term stands for “the buddha characterized as a bhagavat, where bhagavat is one who has the quality of having defeated obstructors”. The obstructors he has defeated are the four maras: the aggregates, the afflictions, the lord of death, and the son of the gods. He has the good quality of having defeated the four maras because he has abandoned the first three and has gone past being an object that could be harmed by the fourth. (47)

The Sanskrit term “bhagavan” has various meanings such as “chom ldan <> possessing the quality of having defeated”, “skal ldan <> possessing the quality of being fortunate”, “legs ldan <> possessing the qualities of goodness”, and so on, because of which Rishi Kapila, Kshatriya Krishna (48), and others were also known as “bhagavan”. Therefore, the term “ ’das <> transcendent” for “ ’jig rten las ’das pa <> transcendent over the world” was added to it in

order to make a term that would be distinguished compared to the original term. The bodhisatva translators (49) of the past chose to highlight the specific meaning involved despite the fact that in the Indian language this term does not include the equivalent of “ ’das <> transcendent” in it. A perfection of explanation is connected with **tathāgata** which was translated into Tibetan with “de bzhin gshegs pa <> gone to suchness”. Perfection of explanation is connected with the fact that he himself realized suchness without mistake, then taught it, unmistakably and just as he had realized it, to others. “Tatha <> suchness” means the non-mistakenness of something just exactly as it is and “gata <> gone and also going” is used to indicate both that he realized it himself and that others will realize it (50).

A perfection of abandonment is connected with **arhat** which was translated into Tibetan with “dgra bcom pa <> one who has defeated the enemy”. In regard to this, “afflictions together with their latencies” can be re-stated in more ordinary terms as “that which harms the dharmas of virtue”, and that can be further restated as “dgra <> an enemy”. Then, corresponding to that, abandonment of the afflictions will be referred to as “bcom <> defeated”. (51)

A perfection of wisdom is connected with **truly complete buddha**. He has cleared off the entirety of not knowing—similar to a man clearing off the thickness of sleep, which is related with his coming to know unmistakably the totality of the spheres of knowables. And the illumination of his intelligence has expanded, like a lotus that has bloomed, so that it spreads throughout all superficies. (52)

Those two perfections of abandonment and wisdom paired together are known as “a perfection of accomplishment”. Then, those two plus the perfection of explanation make a set of three that refer to his being a perfect teacher because of his ability to act unmistakably—that is, flawlessly—for the purpose of migrators. Now this kind of teacher is found only in a buddha. Raudra, Vishnu, and others like them (53) do not have this ability at all; it is a good quality not found amongst ordinary beings.

In regard to that, Rishi Vyasa, and so on whose works focus on disagreements between parties but which are not able to resolve the matters involved which anyway are of no account, are people whose intelligence has not fully spread throughout all dharmas (54). Nandaka, and so on who were controlled by desire, and those who are embroiled in suffering and living in evil deeds, have lost control of themselves to their own afflictions, so what capacity could they have for protecting others (55)? The pratyekas and others like them have realized the authentic but they do not talk about it so are not able to take on others as followers (56). That is why the perfection of explanation is mentioned here.

The cause of his attainment of the teacher perfect in those ways is **insight** (57) which is right view **and** its **feet** which are thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and samadhi of the path of the noble ones (58). Alternatively, higher prajna is insight and the trainings of discipline and mind are the feet (59). Alternatively again, insight is the three types of insight (60) and feet is the four perfections—discipline, conduct, reversal, and the blissful higher mind of seen dharmas (61).

Those three ways of enumerating them can be condensed into one key point of meaning. That is because right view, the higher training of prajna, and the insight of the exhaustion of

outflows (62) are contained in one thing; because the three insights of right insight, and so on and the training of discipline and the three of discipline, conduct, and reversal are all one entity; and because right samadhi and the training of mind and blissful higher mind of seen dharmas also have the same principal meaning.

The three insights mentioned above are the insights of former limits, of later limits, and of the exhaustion of outflows. A perfection of conduct is that he abides continuously in knowledge throughout all types of conduct and a perfection of reversal is that the doors of his faculties are restrained; those two make for a pure discipline and concentration at the same time. The blissful higher mind of seen dharmas mentioned above means that he is a person of pure four dhyanas and, in terms of them being without outflows, the fourth one is the main one among them. The extra-perceptions are produced from them, therefore the three insights arise from them (63). That sort of insight is knowing what is and unmistakably seeing in direct perception the topics of what is to be abandoned and what is to be taken up. Having that insight in conjunction with accomplishment and conduct consistent with it can be likened to going on a road that is being watched with the eyes, so they are called “feet”. Alternatively, according to someone else’s explanation, “insight is the six extra-perceptions” in accordance with the meaning explained above in “and the feet are the four legs of miracles”.

How he went is as follows. The Tibetan term is *bde bar gshegs pa*. The Sanskrit term “sugata” from which that is derived can be translated with: “bde bar gshegs pa <> he who has gone pleasantly to pleasantness”; “legs par gshegs pa <> he who has gone well to goodness”, and “rab tu gshegs pa <> he who has gone utterly to utterness”.

Of those, “bde bar gshegs pa <> gone pleasantly to pleasantness” indicates that he has, due to a pleasant path, gone to a pleasant or blissful fruition. At the time of the path, he abandoned activities that were not to be done, did not let arise what some others might find praiseworthy, did not shrink from the task and practiced avoidance, and generally practiced many things that were pleasing to mind. Thereby, at the time of the fruition, he had abandoned all types of unsatisfactoriness and obtained a perfection of unoutflowed bliss. Therefore, being and not being engaged with limits of accomplishment no longer matters to him (64); he has distinguished himself from samsaric beings with their accomplishment of the resultant suffering that comes from causal suffering. This might lead you to think, “The ones who live within the desire realm have that sort of suffering but not the ones who dwell in the dhyana and formless places”, but it is not like that and you should remember that the fruitions that result from being in those upper places definitely involve suffering.

Now for those who do not understand that, there is “*legs par gshegs pa <> gone well to goodness*” which is connected with the fact that he has finalized abandonment and does not relapse into samsara. As with a contagious disease where, once one has been well cured of it there will be no relapse into it again, for him all the obscurations of the afflictions, etcetera, that he has abandoned have been abandoned and are done with. Thus, what he has done is different from what the Tirthikas who engage the equilibria accomplish.(65)

You might think, “Yes, but this is the same as what the shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas have done, isn’t it?!”(66) For this, there is “*rab tu shegs pa <> gone utterly to utterness*” meaning that going by realizing every single one of the entirety of the dharmas to be realized, he has

realized them utterly and gone to such; it is like saying “filling every single vase, the vases are utterly filled”. This quality is found only in the Tathagata—having gone this way, he has permanently entered the wisdom that unimpededly knows every one of the knowables.

The last two sections have determined the meaning of his being “abandoned and realized”. Now for the third topic, which concerns his enlightened activity.

Of the nine topics, looking at the world is connected to **knower of the world**. He looks on constantly at all sentient beings and, with his great compassion and his knowledge of whether sentient beings are happy or pained, successful or in failure, and with good fortune or not and his knowledge of whether it is time to tame them or not, he knows all the methods needed to tame them. In other words, given that he knows the sufferings and their source without exception, he is the knower of the world.

His doing the deed of taming fortunate ones (67) is connected with **unsurpassed driver who tames** excellent humans meaning excellent **beings**. Excellent humans, that is, excellent beings, are those who have good fortune. For them, he does the deed of taming their mind streams and thereby placing them in the three enlightenments. For those who do not have the good fortune required to be tamed by actually following the path of emancipation, he does the deeds of drawing them back from the bad migrations, lessening the sufferings of those with great suffering, and placing them on the paths to the higher levels. It does not matter where someone is stationed within the higher levels or on the paths to liberation, there is never a case when someone’s great level of good fortune is diminished because of him; such a thing is never possible.

Driver concerns his skill at taming beings. He is like the drivers of horses, elephants, and chariots who take a good road because they are knowledgeable about the roads that can be taken. **Unsurpassed** is an adjective modifying driver which is explained like this: “It shows that his activity is such that he can put even the most difficult-to-tame ones into the shravaka’s enlightenment, as he did with his younger brother Nanda who had very great desire, Angulimala who had raging anger, Dasa’s Son and Pala and others who had extremely thick delusion, and Kashyapa of Uruvilva who had particularly great pride”. The Tathagata’s enlightened activity is indeed able to engage everyone, those who are vessels and those who are not vessels (68).

There is the statement which says that he is “the tamer of fortunate ones and tamer of excellent men”. The statement sets out a group of people who can take advantage of his enlightened activity. It consists both of those who have the good fortune needed for liberation because they are vessels fit for it compared to those who are not and of those who are from the human world because, among all the worlds, the human world is the one that is the principal source of buddhas. Note that this group is not a group made up of the only beings that the Buddha’s enlightened activity can engage.

His being a teacher in whom such enlightened activity is present connects with **teacher of gods and men**. In fact, he is the teacher of all sentient beings within the three realms, but gods and men are mentioned here because seeing truth or seeing the attainment of fruition through training in virtue or the attainment of the noble ones’ levels are things not seen by

anyone other than the excellent ones among migrators. Thus, gods and men are considered to be the principal ones to be tamed and are accordingly mentioned here. Note that that explanation is given from the standpoint of the common vehicle (69) but, in fact, in the world too, if one says, “the king bowed and prostrated”, even if it is not explicitly stated that the retinue also bowed and prostrated, it is understood by implication (70).

Now, to show the teacher in whom those kinds of good qualities are based, the words ***buddha bhagavat*** are repeated. There is no fault in this repetition; the first time was for the purpose of showing the good qualities themselves and this time it is primarily to understand the being in whom those good qualities are based. Next, the extensive explanation is given. Its topic headings have been ascertained to be: definite situation, body’s nature, what he is based on, function, methods, dwelling, detachment, how he enacted, and summary.

The two phrases ***The tathāgata corresponds to a cause of merit. His roots of virtue do not go to waste*** go with his having a definite situation, that is, with his being present in a steady way. In the expanse without remainder with good qualities that do not end, he perpetually shows deeds for the purpose of sentient beings. Samsaric beings’ virtues come to an end because they are used up in full-ripening (71) and shravaka and pratyeka’s virtues also come to an end, being used up in the expanse of no-remainder (72). Therefore these beings do not perpetually have an existence that corresponds to a cause of merit. The Buddha, previously when he was a bodhisatva, did not dedicate his generosity and the rest for the purpose of everyone’s happiness, but dedicated every bit of it to the emancipation of every sentient being. Because such merit does not end for as long as its aim has not been completed and because he cultivated it in a way that made it equal in extent to the expanse of all dharmas, the fruition, in correspondence with its cause, also never ends. The *Highest Continuum* also speaks of this and what it says should be remembered:

With infinite causes and unending sentient beings and
Love and miracles and knowledge all to perfection,
The Lord of Dharma has defeated the mara of death
and, Because of being no entity, is the perpetual guardian of
the world.

Therefore, his roots of virtue do not go to waste because there is an uninterrupted fruition of all the roots of virtue that he made previously.

The six phrases ***He is ornamented with all patience*** (73). ***His basis is troves of merit. The excellent minor signs adorn him. The flowers of the major marks bloom on him. Perceiving his activity, it being just right, there is harmony. Seeing him, there is no disharmony*** show features which are the nature of his body. The teaching “he previously always acted uninterruptedly for the purpose of sentient beings” answers the question, “How did his body act for the purpose of migrators?” This is about the form bodies and the headings are: the root cause, the divisions of the causes, what it is, and the perfection of its function in any given circumstance.

He is ornamented with all patience is an explanation of the root cause of his body. His body size is tall and his color and shape are a perfection of beauty, all of which has come from

patience. Saying that he has a fruition ornamented with what are caused by patience means that his body is ornamented with a naturally produced beauty. It is a fruition that comes because of having abandoned the things that are not conducive to it, anger and hatred, and having attended to the cause of it, patience.

His basis is troves of merit explains those causes according to their divisions. The statement which says, “Each one even of the hair pores of his body is produced by ten times ten times the merit pile of all migrators ...” is pointing out that each of the parts of his body, each of the major and minor marks on it, and so on is produced through infinite amounts of the specified types of merit (74). Here, “trove” means unfathomable amounts. An extensive understanding of the meaning can be obtained from the Unending Perseverance chapter of the *Akṣhyamati Nirdeśha Sūtra*.

In terms of what the body is like, ***the excellent minor signs adorn him*** refers to the eighty minor marks and ***the flowers of the major marks bloom on him*** refers to the thirty-two excellent marks; these show the perfection of the body itself. “Flowers bloom on him” has the same meaning as “ornament him” and “adorn” means that they are accessories to the major marks and therefore enhance their beauty.

Perceiving his activity, it being just right, there is harmony refers to perfection in any given situation. Whatever he does—going and staying, and so on (75)—is neither done in great style nor in an overly unassuming way, and so on. What is seen by others never becomes a basis for attributing a fault of some kind of non-beauty in him.

Seeing him, there is no disharmony refers to perfection of the functioning of his body. Anything that he does—going, staying, sleeping, begging for alms, looking, speaking, and so on—never becomes a cause for thinking, “This is afflicted”, never scares others off, never causes them pain, and never produces craving or anything else of the sort. Every activity connected with his body which is seen or heard gives birth to compassion, renunciation, perseverance, correct discernment of the authentic, pacifies suffering, and so on; it only ever becomes a cause of others’ virtue and brings them to admire him. ***Disharmony*** here refers either to the being who is viewing his body not having faith in him or having afflicted thoughts aroused because of seeing him. Furthermore, it has been said,

Bodied beings who see you
Think well of you, think you are a holy being.
Merely seeing you brings total admiration;
I prostrate to you.

The three phrases ***He brings overt joy to those who long through faith. His prajna cannot be overpowered. His strengths cannot be challenged*** show what his activities done for the purpose of sentient beings depend on.

A person who comes before the teacher will come with one of two thoughts, either of faith or of outdoing him. The faithful includes a group of people who come driven by roots of virtue from the past but who have some doubts. It also includes a group of people who come with the highest level of faith; with that kind of ***faith***, these people come intent on attaining the

teacher's dharma. For all of the faithful, on seeing his body and hearing his speech, total admiration and **overt joy** arises in them. Those who come with the thought to outdo him also are of two types: those who want to outdo him with prajna such as the Nirgrantha Jains who went to argue the case for true existence, and those who want to outdo him with body strengths such as Atavika Yaksha. These beings must first be tamed (76). Because the Tathagata of no not-knowing and of infinite knowing has the confidence of knowledge to be able to teach dharma precisely in accord with any vessel, the Tathagata's prajna **cannot be** outdone by that of others.

The meaning of **his strengths cannot be challenged** is that, because the Tathagata has infinite strengths of body, other beings' strengths cannot not challenge the strengths of his body. This has been taught, for example, in the *Hurling A Boulder Sutra* (77). The Great Vehicle's way of classifying the strengths of the body of the Tathagata appears extensively in the *Sutra of Samadhi that Incorporates All Merit*.

Alternatively, there are those who have interest due to **faith**—the ones whose faculties are already tamed—and he makes them **joyful** through joy of dharma. **His prajna** that **cannot be overpowered** makes them joyful through giving them attainment, and so on. **His strengths cannot be challenged** means that, because he has wisdom with the ten strengths, he cannot be defeated by any opponent.

The four phrases **He is a teacher to all sentient beings, a father to the bodhisatvas, a king to the noble persons, a captain to those who journey to the city of nirvana** show the functioning of his activity for the purposes of sentient beings.

The first phrase is given in relation to showing the pleasant path, or you could say cause, to all sentient beings. For example, for some beings in the bad migrations, he sends light rays from his body that alleviate their sufferings and, having produced faith in them, places them in the good migrations. Then, for those in the happy migrations, he places them in various things such as generosity, discipline, and so on and so gradually ripens them into the three enlightenments.(78)

The remaining three phrases of this group of four are given in relation to showing the pleasant path to those sentient beings who have entered a vehicle. Among them, **a father to the bodhisatvas** is for those who belong to the Great Vehicle; they are bodhisatvas belonging to the family of the buddhas. Because they are born from the buddha's dharma (79) to begin with and then because, in terms of body, speech, mind, and activities, they come to abide as buddhas (80) or something corresponding to it, they are the sons of the buddhas. The Tathagata is their father because he is the object from whom they get their good qualities. That is how it works.

Then, **a king to the noble persons** is for those of the shravaka and pratyeka families. Stream-enterers, returners, non-returners, shravaka and pratyeka arhats, and so on are nourished by the buddha's dharma but do not make it as far as the Tathagata side of dharma (81). Therefore, they remain like ordinary commoners and, because of that, buddha is a king for them.

A chief of merchants both leads all merchants along and goes along with them, so for them, he

is their **captain**. The **city of nirvana** applies to the nirvana of all three vehicles. The Buddha unmistakably guides the ones wanting to go there, with the result that he is their captain, and the city of emancipation is their final destination.

The six phrases **His wisdom is unfathomable. His knowledgeability is inconceivable. His speech is complete purity. His melody is pleasing. One never has enough of viewing the image of his body. His body is unparalleled** show the means by which he enacts the purposes of others (82).

Of them, the enlightened activity of mind is that **his wisdom is unfathomable**. Given that he knows all of sentient beings' elements, inclinations, faculties, and karmic imprints, he is able unmistakably to employ all methods and timings needed for the purposes of migrators.

The enlightened activity of speech is that **his knowledgeability is inconceivable** (83). It is inconceivable based on attempting to write it out: if one started with one phrase about it then explained that with more and more other phrases, even if one were to do that for unfathomable kalpas, one would not finish the task. It is conceivable based on presentation of its meaning: if during unfathomable kalpas infinite sentient beings were at the same time to ask a completely different question, the Buddha could just one time, effortlessly giving a reply in various different ways, supply an ungarbled answer to each being; there would be only one instance of his speech but it would convey infinite meanings that would come forth in different, individual replies. There would be an infinite amount of speech yet each single being to be tamed would have his wisdom limitlessly increased because of it. "Knowledgeability" relates to his teaching dharma; "inconceivable" relates to its amazing, wondrous presentation.

His speech is complete purity is like this: it has been made completely pure because all faults of speech—lying, intonation with an unpleasant sound, functioning in ways which create unhappiness of mind and the like, styles of expression such as being too fast, and so on—have been removed in their entirety. In addition, from the perspective of good qualities, **his** speech has an intonation or **melody** that **is pleasing** to hear—according to the Lesser Vehicle his speech has five main aspects of intonation, according to the Great Vehicle it has sixty main aspects, and so on.

The enlightened activity of the body is that **one never has enough of viewing the image of his body**. This is because the beautiful appearance of each of the limbs of his body and each one of the parts of those limbs outdoes all the beauty of the three realms; one cannot get enough of looking at his body.

His body is unparalleled means that, for all those included in the three realms, the six migrators, and the four places of birth, why raise the issue of something that they could find that would be superior to the color and shape of the bhagavat's body when there is nothing observable in their own experience that is even remotely comparable to his body?

The three phrases **He is not contaminated by the things of desire. He is very much not contaminated by the things of form. He is not mixed with the things of formlessness** show where the bhagavat abides. To take it further, they are saying "he does not abide in the three realms because he is situated in the expanse of dharmas (84), so, he acts

within the three realms but in doing so is not contaminated with their faults”.

In regard to that, when he is acting for the purpose of sentient beings in the desire realm, **he is not contaminated by** hankering after desirables or by harmful states of mind. When he is acting in the form and formless realms, the epithet says that **he is very much**, meaning highly, **uncontaminated by the** faults of equilibria in dhyana—craving, views, pride, doubt, and so on—that come from being in such places.

Moreover, this way of talking means that his body and speech were involved with the desire and form realms but that he was not contaminated with the things connected with those places. It is held that **not mixed with** was taught because that way of being contaminated does not exist in the formless realm; this term is applied in accordance with the fact that in the formless realm there is only **formlessness**. This also applies to those places where there is form; that form is extremely subtle so there is no contradiction if it is explained like that.

The three phrases (85) **He is utterly completely liberated from the skandhas. He does not possess dhatus. His ayatanas are restrained** teach that when he is acting for the purposes of sentient beings, he has no attachment at all. Because the skandhas belong to those who have the character of taking birth again and again and the Tathagata has no birth, he is utterly completely-liberated from them. The dhatus. were defined in relation to the birth of consciousness that grasps an object. Thus, given that he has abandoned the afflictions that depend on object and consciousness, he does not possess dhatus. The ayatanas were defined in relation to the cause of the production of visual and the other sense consciousnesses. Thus, given that he has restrained the afflictions that depend on them, his ayatanas are restrained. To sum this up, his is a body of wisdom which is transcendent over the meaning understood from the terms skandhas, dhatus., and ayatanas

Next, the way of enacting the purpose of migrators through abandonment and wisdom is shown. The first four phrases **He has cut the knots. He is completely liberated from the torments. He is liberated from craving. He has crossed over the river** (86) teach his enactment of the purpose of sentient beings from the perspective of what his abandonment is like. If afflictions as a whole are summarized, they come to craving, which has the character of being a knot that occurs on meeting with an object and to a river which has the characteristic of torment on not meeting with an object. The four are then connected with this teaching: “Because he has cut what are the knots, he is liberated from craving. Because he has liberated himself from torment, he has crossed over the river”. In that, **knot** means a restraint that holds non-liberation in place and its having been **cut** means that the craving for an object— body, possessions, and so on—that has been met with has been cut. In that, **torment**, which is the acting always within a greater level of affliction when an object thought of is not met with, has been abandoned. That is what it is saying. Thus, becoming is none other than craving that wholly incorporates the three realms, and the river of the afflictions is a current that carries mind off helplessly in its direction. Moreover, that is fourfold; there are the rivers of desire, becoming, ignorance, and views.(87)

The second four phrases **His wisdom is totally complete. He abides in the wisdom of the buddha bhagavats who arise in the past, present, and future. He does not**

abide in nirvana. He abides in the limit of the authentic itself show how he enacts the purpose of sentient beings from the perspective of what his wisdom is like.

Wisdom is threefold: the wisdom of the knowledge of all superficialities that knows all knowables; the wisdom of the knowledge of non-difference that views all buddhas within equality; and the wisdom of knowledge that is non-abiding because it does not abide in the extremes of samsara and nirvana even though it abides in the limit of the authentic (88). These connect sequentially to the first three phrases as follows. From the standpoint of the first, wisdom is something that totally and completely pervades without one exception the spheres of knowables belonging to the three times. Then, the wisdom of all buddhas of the past, future, and present is the wisdom of a single buddha and that wisdom of a single buddha is also the wisdom of all the buddhas of the three times, so his knowledge is one that is not different from theirs. Next, ***does not abide*** means that he does not abide in the limited nirvana of lesser types, an expanse in which the continuity of others' purposes is severed (89).

The limit of the authentic is the limit of being in the authentic only, meaning that he abides in the dharmakaya of utter complete purity, the suchness expanse of dharmas. It implies that he does not abide in samsara, which, combined with the last epithet, exposes the meaning of his non-abiding nirvana.

He abides on the level of looking upon all sentient beings is a phrase that sums up the meaning of all three. Of the Tathagata's three kayas, the dharmakaya abides looking on the nature of the situation of all sentient beings, seeing at the same time its own nature, and while not wavering from either. The sambhogakaya abides looking on the mind-streams of sentient beings of the pure levels, the mahasatvas (90), and teaching them dharma. The supreme nirmanakaya (91), because it functions as a liberator of the mind-streams of the shravakas, and so on and of the ordinary beings who have a very pure eye of intelligence, abides on the level of a dwelling place from which it views their elements and inclinations.

In that way, this later portion of the recollection was contained within nine topics: definite situation, body's nature, what he is based on, function, methods, dwelling, detachment, how he enacts the benefit of migrators through abandonment and wisdom, and a conclusion at which we have now arrived.

These are the true qualities of the greatness of the body of the buddha bhagavat is saying "all of the good qualities shown above are not found in others, they are the greatnesses owned by the Tathagata". It means that, even though it is possible that others might have something of this sort to some small extent, no-one else has all of this and has it complete like this.

That was an explanation of the meaning of the recollection of the Buddha. There are explanations made by both noble one Asanga and his brother of the first part of the recollection in nine parts and a commentary made by master Vasubhandu to the later part of the recollection. Compared to them, this explanation includes both parts and is clearer.

II. Sutra of the Recollection of the Dharma

The holy dharma can refer to any of the three dharmas of authoritative statement, realization, and nirvana.

It **is good in the beginning** refers to the fact that at the time of hearing it, its meaning is ascertained and a trusting faith in it is produced. **Good in the middle** means that at the time of contemplating it, joy will be produced from understanding that there will be an attainment of benefits and fruitions just as they were stated in the explanations of dharma. **And good in the end** means that at the time of meditation, it has the meaning of creating the cause of the intelligent mind which unmistakably realizes suchness.

Its meaning is excellent means that it shows without confusion the truths of fiction and superfact (92). **Its wording is excellent** means that it has a superior quality of being easy to understand and grasp and that the expressions used for that purpose are easy to listen to and pleasant to hear.

It is not adulterated means that it has uncommon good qualities which are not like the ordinary versions found in the doctrines of the Tirthika's and others; its versions of impermanence, formatives' suffering, lack of self, and so on are subtle presentations (93). **It is totally complete** means that it is not a partial sort of antidote that works only against afflictions of desire, rather, it works against the afflictions of each of the three realms⁹⁴. **It is total purity** means that it is the nature whose actuality is complete purity, the Dharmadathu, and the wisdom that observes it. **It is total purification** means that it is both the purifier of the adventitious stains and the fruition that comes from that, separation from the adventitious stains due to their abandonment.

Those three goodnesses together with excellent meaning and wordings makes a set of five that primarily shows the good qualities of the dharma of authoritative statement. The four of being not adulterated and so on, which are called "possessing the four qualities which are brahmacharya"(95), are the greatnesses of the holy dharma of an object that is uncompounded and holy dharma of perceiver of it that is realization. These four are explained in a commentary to the *Abhisamayalamkara* by Vasubhandu.

The buddha has taught dharma well or, as seen in some other editions, **buddha's dharma is well taught**. The dharma shown by the Tirthikas is badly taught because what it considers to be a path is not a path of emancipation, and because, as someone else said, what it considers to be a path to higher levels of being is actually a path to the bad migrations, and because, as someone else again said, although it shows a path to the higher levels, it shows it with impurities and incompleteness. The **dharma** that the bhagavat has shown is the opposite of that, therefore, it **is well taught**.

It is authentic teaching (96) means that the dharma, whether showing the fictional or superfactual situation, unmistakably shows the individual characteristics involved.

It is free from sickness means that because it functions as an antidote to every obscuration of the afflictions and karmic imprints, it is without the sickness of the obscurations.

The phrase ***Its time has no interruption*** has the meanings of: the uncompounded expanse that is changeless and fearless; the wisdom of the noble ones' path that is without corruption; and what is to be abandoned having been abandoned, there is no need to abandon it yet again.

The phrase ***It brings one in*** is explained like this. From the term “upanyika” we get “draws in close” which has the meaning that, through the approach of abandoning samsara which subsumes afflictions and unsatisfactoriness, one is brought or drawn into the un-outflowed expanse. One translator commented that this should be translated with “having insight”; if that were so, it would have to be “uparyayika”, so his translation does not quite fit.(97)

This is meaningful to see means that someone sees the dharma then gains the excellence of the fruitions and does not return, therefore it is meaningful. Some texts in the Indian language have “ehipashyikah” here which translates as “Look at this here!”, nonetheless, it is better to translate this epithet according to main meaning in contained in it.

It is known to the experts through personal self-knowing. In this phrase, the term experts refers to the noble ones. Their equipoise of wisdom without involvement in conceptual thinking realizes the dharma (98) in direct perception. It is not an object of consciousness and sophistry.

The phrase ***The dharma spoken by the bhagavat was well taught for taming*** is explained like this. It might be that the dharma is to be known through personal self-knowing but that does not mean that it is not known in authoritative statement (99). The word of the Tathagata corresponds in cause to the dharmakaya, therefore his expression of dharma in authoritative statement accords with how he knows that dharma with his dharmakaya. Thus, the implication contained in this epithet is that “what is known in personal self knowing is also explained in authoritative statement”. The phrasing ***well taught*** appears in some Indian language texts as “supragedita” which would have to be translated with “well and thoroughly distinguished”.

It is renunciation means that it is renunciation of samsara (100).

It causes one to go to complete enlightenment means that coming into contact with the dharma of authoritative statement causes a person to go along the path. The path that they are caused to go along is, according to the literal meaning of the words, that of the Great Vehicle (101). However, putting that aside, the paths of the shravaka s and pratyekabuddhas are implied because even shravaka s who have chosen to enter no-remainder do, after a long time has passed, without doubt, enter the Great Vehicle. Thus, this epithet actually shows a single, ultimate vehicle.

The phrase ***It is without disharmony*** means that the dharmata of what is to be realized also being one (102), the noble ones who are on the same level definitely do not have differing dharmas of their experience. ***And it has inclusion*** means that it has the good quality of the sort where one thing known allows total comprehension of many aspects, so the aspects are included in one; one wisdom realizes the entirety of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, lack of self, and so on.

It has reliability means that every single one of the virtuous dharmas, the entire expanse of phenomena (103), is dependent on Tathagatagarbha; that is the ultimate dharma Jewel.

It does end the journey means that all movements of mind and mental events are wholly cut by its application. At the level of a Tathagata this is the case at all times and in the equipoise of the bodhisatva noble ones it means that everything other than the alaya is stopped.

III. Sutra of the Recollection of the Sangha

The literal meaning of ***the sangha of the great vehicle*** (104) indicates that this recollection concerns the sanghas of non-reversing bodhisatvas (105). With that as the standpoint, they ***have entered into good*** means that they are abiding in the three types of discipline (106). They ***have entered into the types*** means that they have entered infinite samadhis (107). They ***have entered into straightness*** means that, not abiding in the extremes of permanence and nihilism, they have entered into the expanse of phenomena's equality. Those three taken as a progression are the higher trainings of discipline, mind, and prajna (108). They ***have entered into harmony*** means that they have entered into a path in which there is not the slightest discordance between any of the above—view, conduct, referenced object, and conduct done for the purpose of migrators.

They are worthy of joined palms because they see the profound dharmata not seen by others.

They are worthy of prostration because, as beings who have the great compassion that would liberate sentient beings from samsara, they have totally abandoned their own purposes, and they therefore are beings who have the great conduct of holy beings.

The phrase ***They are a field of the glory of merit*** means that the sangha are meritorious and have glory because of it—in other words, that they have a great accumulation of merit—and that a field such as that is an object to which respect could be paid.

They are great ones thoroughly trained in gifts. These beings who have abandoned what is bad and greatly adorned themselves with an inconceivable collection of good qualities are highly trained in benefiting infinite numbers of beings. Therefore, with their heap of merit equivalent to the third order thousand world, they could be worshiped with offerings perpetually but would never become obscured because of it, and, as well as that, the ones who make offerings to them will receive a very great level of benefit.

They are a place for generosity given that they are an outstanding field of generosity, like a field whose weeds have been removed. Seeing them causes all of the things of total affliction that are to be abandoned to be totally abandoned so, for the person making the gift, fruitions will grow infinitely (109).

They are in all cases even a great place of generosity (110) takes the meaning of the previous point even further. Because the class of what is to be abandoned, which includes being afflicted and being

obscured in relation to the knowables and the equilibria (111), consists of many things, there is just no knowing the totality of the fruitions. **All cases even** means “in all situations”. There is an explanation of how all of this could be connected with the shravaka sangha in which it is explained that **entered into goodness** means “entered into arhathood”, and so on.

This *Sutra of the Recollection of the Jewels* now under consideration is indeed a Great Vehicle sutra. For a recollection of the Three Jewels that belongs to the Lesser Vehicle there is a rough explanation by noble one Asanga, but I find myself wondering whether it is extracted from within a larger commentary (112). Then, there are so many differences seen between the wordings of these sutras that there is the question of how the two come to be so different, still, in the two later recollections, the ones that are consistent do suggest a commonality.

This complete explanation of the *Sutra of the Recollection of the Jewels* was given by the international Taranatha (113).

Mangalam (114). Corrected.(115)

Notes

32 Supreme objects refers to the Three Jewels.

33 Tib. mos pa. This is a specific state of mind which, having decided that something has desirable qualities, turns towards it and goes after it.

34 Faith, appreciation, and respect are mental events listed in the Abhidharma, with each being presented as distinctly different from the others. In this text the three are used to refer to the same thing, faith, with each one representing a variation on that basic meaning. These variations of meaning are now explained in the text.

35 Admiring faith is a faith that has two aspects: a very clear idea of the object of faith and a strong joy because of it. The two add up to admiration for the object. This faith is sometimes called lucid faith because of the clarity accompanying it, but that loses the joy aspect.

36 Trusting faith is generally considered to be the most important of the three types of faith for a practicing Buddhist because it is the foundation for taking refuge from one’s heart.

37 The Buddha’s dharma is transmitted in two ways: authoritative statement and realization. Authoritative statement is the teaching conveyed in words, both oral and written. The sangha is put with the dharma of realization here because it is their realization in direct perception of the actuality pointed to by authoritative statement that makes them into the noble sangha that can be a true refuge.

38 The Buddha summed up all of his explanation of dharma into explanations of fictional and superfactual truths. See the glossary for these terms.

39 The superfactual dharma, the reality that a buddha has realized and abides in, is always without flaw. That is equivalent to having all good qualities and is the one thing that can be true liberation. This point supports the fact that the final accomplishment of buddhahood, which is shortly to be discussed, is the perfect abandonment of all faults or flaws and the perfect realization of all good qualities.

40 “Aspiring and wanting” refers to aspiring faith, which, is also called wishing or wanting faith.

41 They are aspiring faith, too, but they are not the actual aspiring faith, they are merely bits and pieces related to it.

42 Appreciation is a type of faith that inclines the mind toward something because it has been convinced of its usefulness. One has this faith in relation to the Three Jewels because of being sure that they have the two features of having good qualities and not being deceptive.

43 The Abhidharma explains that a vessel is a person to whom it is suitable to give the teaching because he will respect and pursue the trainings involved. A vessel will have two kinds of application, of which “respectful application” is explained as strong perseverance. This subject of the Abhidharma is not what is being discussed here.

44 Having a complete faith with all the aspects just discussed becomes the starting point for both entering and progressing through all levels of the Buddha’s path, so Taranatha has just laid out both in relation to the Great Vehicle. The technique for creating that kind of faith is the recollection of the good qualities of the Three Jewels, starting with the Buddha Jewel.

45 When the text of the Sutra is cited in the commentary, it is set off from the commentary by showing it in bold italics.

46 These six lines of verse come from Asanga’s Summary of the Great Vehicle (Skt. Mahayanasamgraha). They show the topic headings for each of the nine epithets, which Taranatha then uses to explain the nine epithets.

47 See the explanation of bhagavat on page 33 of the chapter on translation issues and in my own commentary. Mara: Skt. mara, Tib. bdud: A Sanskrit term closely related to the word “death”. Buddha spoke of four classes of extremely negative influences that have the capacity to drag a sentient being deep into samsara. They are the “maras” or “kiss of death” of: having a samsaric set of five skandhas; of having afflictions; of death itself; and of the son of gods, totally by sensuality.

48 These are the names of two other holy men of the Buddha’s time whose followers referred to them as bhagavat. The first was a teacher who taught his own religious system and the second is the great holy being of the Hindu religion, Krishna.

49 The thought behind his words “bodhisatva translators” is translators who were emanations of bodhisatvas dwelling on the bodhisatva levels and who were, therefore, especially knowledgeable and capable of making these translations from the Sanskrit language into the Tibetan language.

50 “Perfection of explanation” is the topic heading corresponding to this epithet. It refers to the fact that the Buddha has realized things as they are and that, therefore, his explanations of it to others come without mistake; they are perfect in every way.

51 The term is explained according to Tibetan understanding to be derived from the Sanskrit word “arhan” meaning “to be worthy of praise” or “venerable”. This fits with the Buddha’s explanation that an arhat is a person who has extricated himself from samsara and has therefore become noble, spiritually speaking, compared to those who are still in samsara. This new, higher position that makes an arhat worthy of praise or veneration. Unexpectedly then, the Tibetan translators have translated arhat with “dgra bcom pa” meaning “one who has defeated the enemy”. The rationale given is that, “An arhat in the Buddhist tradition is someone who has *defeated* (bcom) the principal *enemy* (dgra) of sentient beings, the afflictions”. Professor Jeffrey Hopkins has nicely translated the Tibetan into English with “foe destroyer”. Interestingly, Professor Hahn and other very learned European Sanskritists regard the position taken in Tibetan scholarship that the root of arhat is “arhan” as mistake that has developed in Tibetan circles. They point out that there is the Sanskrit combination of words “ari han” which means exactly “defeated the enemy”. They maintain that “ari han” is the root of arhat and that, therefore, the Tibetan term is a perfect translation! This difference of opinion over whether the root of arhat is arhan or ari han and, therefore, whether the meaning of arhat is “worthy of praise” or “foe destroyer” has not been resolved. It certainly is deserving of further study. The best way to resolve it would be to look into the discourses of the Buddha and see if the Buddha or his disciples said something that would determine it without question.

52 There is a very clear explanation of the meaning of the word buddha in the Sanskrit language. Its root is “budh” which conveys the sense of illumination with knowledge, an absence of darkness within the sphere of

knowing. Moreover, the primary synonym for “buddha” in Sanskrit is the word “avagamana” which translates as “full comprehension” or “full realization” (The official Tibetan equivalent for avagamana is “rtogs pa”. The Tibetan term is usually translated into English with “realization” though it contains more meaning than that. It means “full comprehension” or “full knowledge”). From a Sanskrit perspective, the main sense conveyed by the word buddha is knowledge, and knowledge that has had all obscuring factors removed from it. Please note that it does not have the sense of “waking” or “awakening” conveyed with it, about which more is said below. The above, by the way, is the result of study and much discussion with many scholars, especially the learned Brahmins of Varanasi who hold the lineage of Sanskrit in India nowadays. Furthermore, the explanations of Taranatha and Mipham clearly support this understanding that the main meaning in “buddha” is knowledge, illumination. A buddha, according to the meaning of the word itself, is an enlightened one, not an awakened one! Again the Tibetan translators did not use a literal translation but invented a new word in order to translate this word buddha. Their new word was “sangs rgyas”. There is a very clear explanation of how the term was derived in my own commentary, which is reproduced in brief below, and Mipham also gives the rationale for it. To make their word, the Tibetan translators relied on a famous description of the Buddha that existed in Sanskrit poetry. The poetry likened the Buddha to a lotus, picking out two particular features of a lotus that were applicable. A lotus starts in and grows up from a filthy swamp. When it has elevated itself some distance above and thus cleared itself of all the filth, it blossoms into a beautiful flower with many good qualities. The poetry makes it clear that the two, pertinent features are “being cleaned out” and “blossoming into something full of good qualities”. The Tibetans chose the two words from their language that matched these features “sangs” and “rgyas” respectively, combined them, and arrived at the new word “sangs rgyas”.

It is particularly important to understand that the primary meaning of “sangs” is “to be cleared out”. For example, I have heard some Tibetan experts explain it as “to have pollution cleared out, as happens when the windows of a stuffy room are opened”. This is the meaning intended in the original poetry; for a buddha, the obscurations of mind that would prevent total knowledge have been cleared. There is a secondary meaning in Tibetan only in which “sangs” is equated with the verb “sad pa < to wake up”. Some Tibetans, not knowing of the Sanskrit poetry and its meaning, have assumed that this secondary meaning for “sangs” is the correct one then mistakenly explain “buddha” to mean “awakened and blossomed”. The mistake is compounded when Western translators take that as proof that “buddha” means “Awakened One”, then set that as the correct translation. This has happened and people have become very attached to what their teacher has said and reluctant to hear that it might be mistaken. For this reason, we non-Tibetans have to start with the Sanskrit language and its own definitions; from that we understand that the word buddha conveys the idea of knowledge that has been cleared of contamination, not awakening. It is important to note that one *could* say that the Buddha is an awakened person; it is an apt metaphor! However, it is *not* the metaphor that was in use when the Tibetans derived their word “sangs rgyas” and therefore could not be used to inform the translation into other languages of the word buddha. In short, and as Mipham observes in his commentary, the Tibetan word “sangs rgyas” describes a buddha but is not a straightforward translation of the original term. Moreover, it bears the danger of a mistaken understanding that can lead to a mistaken translation, as just noted. Thus, the Tibetan word is not a suitable basis for an English translation. Again, there is a word in English already that serves the purpose exactly. Another point of translation that surfaces here is the fact that the English language and other European languages are much closer to Sanskrit linguistically and have stronger ties to it culturally than to the Tibetan language. Thus, it often happens that Buddhist words can be translated into English without having to rely on the Tibetan, which is already a translation. There is yet another and no less important point that surfaces here. In Sanskrit, the two words buddha and bodhi have the same root “budh”. The connection between the two words is immediately obvious in the course of using the language, and that immediately promotes the acquisition of meaning. The Tibetans lost this great advantage when they did not translate the root “budh” with one Tibetan term and then create variants on it. The Tibetan translators produced different words to represent the derivatives of budh, none of which have an obvious connection. Contrast this with English: finding that there is an excellent match —enlighten—for “budh” in English, we can easily build translations of cognate terms whose connections are readily apparent. For example, buddha and bodhi become “enlightened one” and “enlightenment” respectively. This is a small but very important point in translation of Buddhist language.

53 Raudra is one of the four great kings in the first level of the desire realm gods and Vishnu is a very high level samsaric god. Taranatha has picked out gods who are commonly revered as saviors in Indian culture and pointed out that, despite their great powers, they do not have this ability that makes the Buddha a perfect teacher.

54 Rishi Vyasa and others like him were ancient Indian holy men who were very good with words and who wrote several works which have become the basis for Hindu religion, such as the Bhagavadgita. These compositions tell

wondrous stories of amazing godly beings and their fights for supremacy and, in doing so, pretend to examine issues of reality. However, the authors were not connected with reality in the way that a Buddha is. Therefore, their works are amazing compositions, but the logic in them is superficial and they contain investigations of things which, although they are set as the basis of true spirituality, do not contact reality.

55 Nandaka was a person living at the time of the Buddha who was revered by his followers but who was known by the Buddha to be trapped by sensuality.

56 Pratyekabuddhas have become arhats and left samsara by gaining direct insight into the absence of a personal self. However, they keep to themselves and do not teach others, so they cannot provide help, even though they have the realization needed to do so.

57 Tib. rigpa. Rigpa does not have a good equivalent in English. It is not a general “awareness” as is commonly translated these days. It is a dynamic, direct type of knowing. Here, it means the direct knowledge of a buddha, which is like insight.

58 Taranatha does not quote the Sutra here. The Sutra says that a buddha is someone with insight and what comes at its feet, an epithet which can be explained in many ways. The usual first explanation is the one he has just laid out, that insight and its feet correspond to the fruitional states of the eightfold noble path.

59 The usual second explanation of insight and what comes at its feet shows how the fruitional states of the three principal trainings taught by the Buddha correspond to insight and what comes at its feet. The Buddha taught three principal trainings: sila, samadhi, and prajna or discipline, concentration, and correctly discerning mind. He called them higher trainings to distinguish them from the trainings of the same names that were being propagated in one or another of the many other religious systems of India at the time. prajna is equated with insight and the other two trainings are equated with the feet that carry the insight around. Note that the second principal training is named concentration but is also—given that it is a training of mind per se—called mind, which is how Taranatha refers to it here and in other places in his commentary.

60 Three types of insight are enumerated in the Buddhist teachings. Taranatha speaks more of them a little further on.

61 The bliss of seen dharmas is a feature which accompanies abiding in the equilibria of the dhyanas. “Higher mind” is another way of saying mind abiding in the dhyanas. As with the things mentioned above, the items mentioned here are good qualities that can be developed on the path but now they are being talked about when they have become aspects of the fruition of a buddha.

62 Skt. sashrava, Tib. zag pa: The Sanskrit term means a bad discharge, like pus coming out of a wound. Outflows occur when wisdom loses its footing and falls into the elaborations of dualistic mind. Therefore, anything with duality also has outflows. This is sometimes translated as “defiled” or “conditioned” but these fail to capture the meaning. The idea is that wisdom can remain self-contained in its own unique sphere but, when it loses its ability to stay within itself, it starts to have leakages into dualism that are defilements on the wisdom. See also un-outflowed. Un-outflowed, Skt. asrava, Tib. zag pa med pa. Unoutflowed dharmas are ones that are connected with wisdom that has not lost its footing and leaked out into a defiled state; it is self-contained wisdom without any taint of dualistic mind and its apparatus.

63 because the three insights are three of the extra-perceptions of a buddha. Extra-perceptions are the various extra-sensory perceptions known in Buddhism. Six major types are listed in the sutras.

64 The issue of needing to practice or attain something or not needing to do so are no longer an issue for the Buddha because he has truly gone to a completely satisfactory—which is real meaning of “su”—situation.

65 The equilibria are states of complete absorption. The Tirthikas or non-Buddhists of India have mastered them and proclaim mastery of them to be liberation. The Buddha learned and mastered all of them, realized that they did not constitute emancipation, and continued on his journey until he found the true emancipation of buddhahood. His accomplishment is not at all like that of the Tirthika non-Buddhists.

66 The arhats also have achieved non relapse into samsara. However,

they do not have the full attainment of abandonment and realization that a buddha has.

67 “Doing the deeds” and phrases like it are part of the conventional Great Vehicle’s vocabulary. For example, a bodhisatva takes up the burden, does the deeds of his bodhisatva family line, and finally, having reached enlightenment, lays down the burden of having to do the deeds required of a bodhisatva on the way to enlightenment.

68 Vessel, meaning suitable vessel, was explained earlier. among all the worlds, the human world is the one that is the principal source of buddhas. Note that this group is not a group made up of the only beings that the Buddha’s enlightened activity can engage. His being a teacher in whom such enlightened activity is present connects with teacher of gods and men. In fact, he is the teacher of all sentient beings within the three realms, but gods and men are mentioned here because seeing truth or seeing the attainment of fruition through training in virtue or the attainment of the noble ones’ levels are things not seen by anyone other than the excellent ones among migrators. Thus, gods and men are considered to be the principal ones to be tamed and are accordingly mentioned here. Note that that explanation is given from the standpoint of the common vehicle

69 but, in fact, in the world too, if one says, “the king bowed and prostrated”, even if it is not explicitly stated that the retinue also bowed and prostrated, it is understood by implication

70. Now, to show the teacher in whom those kinds of good qualities are based, the words buddha bhagavat are repeated. There is no fault in this repetition; the first time was for the purpose of showing the good qualities themselves and this time it is primarily to understand the being in whom those good qualities are based.

71 Full-ripening is one of the several types of karmic ripening that the Buddha taught his followers. The meaning here is that sentient beings are involved in a karmic process of becoming and because of that are constantly exhausting whatever seeds of virtue they create.

72 No-remainder is the state of nirvana which arhats enter at their time of death.

73 This epithet in Taranatha’s edition of the Sutra differs slightly from the same epithet in the editions of the Sutra used in this book and by Mipham.

74 This is part of a well-known teaching on how a buddha’s body is produced by merit. The teaching mentions each part of the body and specifies what kind and how much merit was needed to create it. A longer quotation from the teaching is cited in Mipham’s commentary and will help to clarify what Taranatha has just said.

75 All behavior is traditionally summed up under the four headings of coming and going, staying and moving.

76 The faithful are sufficiently tamed that they can be worked with immediately. The others have to be given some taming before they can hear the teaching.

77 A significant portion of this sutra is cited in Mipham’s commentary.

78 The first epithet says that he shows all sentient beings the cause of enlightenment though many do not take advantage of it. The remaining three epithets are for people who have heard the call and are doing something with the cause that he showed.

79 Buddha’s dharma here means the dharma corresponding to the path to truly complete buddhahood—the bodhisatva’s dharma—as opposed to the arhat’s dharma.

80 Meaning truly complete buddhas as opposed to arhat buddhas.

81 The Tathagata’s side of dharma is the bodhisatva side.

82 “Enacts the purposes” is more of the same type of vocabulary as “does the deeds”.

83 Tib. spobs pa. The quality of knowledgeability refers to an ability to instantly recall to mind the knowledge needed, for example, when teaching someone, and a confidence of knowledge that comes with it. This good quality is clearly explained in my own commentary.

84 Skt. Dharmadathu. The meaning is that he does not abide in a particular location within the places of samsara because he has released himself into the sphere of wisdom which pervades the entire expanse of phenomena.

85 The phrase in the Sutra “he is completely liberated from the sufferings” comes at this point but is not mentioned in Taranatha’s commentary.

86 Taranatha’s version of the Sutra gives these epithets as shown; they differ slightly from the version of the Sutra used for this book.

87 Taranatha is presenting a very short summation of a body of teaching that the Buddha gave in the first turning of the wheel. He is writing for someone who is already familiar with that body of teaching.

88 These three types of wisdom form the basis of the explanations of the prajnaparamita. They are explained in Maitreya-Asanga’s Abhisamayalamkara, Ornament of Manifest Realizations.

89 He does not abide in the arhat’s nirvana, an expanse of realization in which one stays selfishly in a private peacefulness, without thoughts of the greater good.

90 Mahasatva, meaning great beings, is a specific term of the Great Vehicle meaning bodhisatvas on the eighth to tenth bodhisatva levels, the levels of the pure ones. It is usually said that the sambhogakaya teaches only the tenth level bodhisatvas.

91 The supreme nirmanakaya is the nirmanakaya manifestation that appears as a buddha and turns the wheel of dharma, for example like Shakyamuni Buddha.

92 Superfactual, Skt. paramartha, Tib. don dam, Superfactual truth, Skt. paramarthasatya, Tib. don dam bden pa: This term is paired with the term “fictional” Skt. samvriti, Tib. kun rdzob, Fictional truth, Skt. samvrisatya, Tib. kun rdzob bden pa. Until now these two terms have been translated as “relative” and “absolute” but those translations are nothing like the original terms. These terms are extremely important in the Buddhist teaching so it is very important that their translations be corrected but, more than that, if the actual meaning of these terms is not presented, the teaching connected with them cannot be understood. The Sanskrit term literally means “a superior or holy kind of fact” and refers to the wisdom mind possessed by those who have developed themselves spiritually to the point of having transcended samsara. That wisdom is superior to an ordinary, un-developed person’s consciousness and the facts that appear on its surface are superior compared to the facts that appear on the ordinary person’s consciousness. Therefore, it is superfact or the holy fact, more literally. What this wisdom knows is true for the beings who have it, therefore what the wisdom sees is superfactual truth.

93 The non-Buddhist and Buddhist religious teachers of India often presented their dharma using the same words as the Buddha. However, the way that the Buddha explained anything was uncommon compared to their very ordinary explanations.

94 It is complete antidote because it solves every samsaric delusion.

95 Ways of purity. For an explanation of this term, see my own commentary.

96 The text of the Sutra cited here by Taranatha agrees with the extended recollection found in the Derge edition of the Translated Treatises but differs from the text used for translation and from Mipham’s commentary both of which say, “It is authentic sight”.

97 See the explanation of upanyika in the other two commentaries and on page 39 of the chapter on translation issues.

98 Dharma here specifically means the superfactual dharma.

99 The previous epithet means that the dharma is the dharma of realization. This epithet continues by saying that it is also the dharma of authoritative statement.

100 The Sanskrit and Tibetan words behind renunciation mean “turned towards what is definite”. Thus, the explanation here actually means “the dharma is that which causes one to head towards that which is final, definite, and fully reliable”.

101 ... because “complete enlightenment” means the enlightenment of a truly complete buddha attained through following the path of the Great Vehicle.

102 The previous good quality pointed out a single, ultimate vehicle that all Buddhists follow and now, in a similar way, the final realization also is a single, ultimate one. Therefore, there is no inconsistency—no disharmony—in the realizations of the followers at their various levels.

103 Dharmadathu or expanse of phenomena in general means the region in which all dharmas, good, bad, and otherwise, appear and are contained. However, from the perspective of nirvana, all dharmas are virtuous dharmas or dharmas of purity and thus the region of all dharmas from that perspective consists only of such dharmas.

104 This is the one place where the original recollections were deliberately changed in meaning to include the Great Vehicle teaching. See my own commentary for an extensive discussion of this point.

105 Bodhisatvas on all ten bodhisatva levels are non-reversing in that they cannot fall back into samsara. The bodhisatvas of the eighth level and above are also non-reversing in that they cannot fall back to a lower level. The first meaning is the one in use here. Taranatha is saying that the sangha Jewel refers to the noble bodhisatvas.

106 The three disciplines constitute the paramita of discipline of the Great Vehicle.

107 The original recollection has the word vidya which translates into Tibetan with “rig” and English with “insight”. The Tibetan term has been mistakenly spelled in some Tibetan editions as the word “rigs <> types”. This mistake is present in Taranatha’s copy of the Sutra and he has given his explanation according to it. Buddhism lists many types of samadhi including the one for insight into reality. The former is the mistaken understanding and the latter is the correct understanding.

108 As before, mind here means samadhi in the three higher disciplines.

109 The dharmas of samsara are “total affliction”.

110 The edition of the Sutra used by Taranatha differs slightly here from the one used for this book and the one by Mipham, hence the translation differs.

111 ... of the absorptions ...

112 The commentary to which he is referring can be found in Tibetan translation in the Tangyur or Translated Treatises.

113 Taranatha was Tibetan but went to India to try to find the Buddha’s dharma and lived there for some time because of which he gave himself this name. Its use suggests that he has a personal great knowledge of Sanskrit and is therefore able to speak directly to the meanings contained in this text.

114 Mangalam is a Sanskrit word meaning “Goodness!” It is standard to use either it or something similar at the end of a composition to seal the composition with the thought “May there be goodness!”

115 The edition used for the translation was the Dzamthing edition, which is regarded as the best edition of Taranatha’s works because it was carefully edited. This is shown by the last words in the text, which mean that the text was carefully examined for errors and that any errors found were corrected before it was committed to

printing.