



The Path of the Sugatas

Study Material

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A concise practice of Buddha Shakyamuni with offerings

Study Material

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THE ORIGINAL RECOLLECTIONS OF BUDDHA, DHARMA, AND SANGHA TAUGHT BY THE BUDDHA:

PALI, SANSKRIT, AND ENGLISH TEXTS

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Pali

buddhanusatti

itipi so bhagava araham sammāsambuddho vijjacarasampanno
sugato lokavidu anuttaro purisadammasarathī sattha
devamanussanam buddho bhagava ti

dhammanusatti

svakkhato bhagavata dhammo sanditthiko akaliko ehipassiko
opaneyyiko paccattam veditabbo viññuhi ti

sanghanusatti

supatipanno bhagavato savakasangho/ ujupatipanno bhagavato
savakasangho/ ñayappatipanno bhagavato savakasangho,
samicippatipanno bhagavato savakasangho/ gadidam cattari
purisayugani attā purisapuggala / esa bhagavato savakasangho
ahuneyyo/ pahuneyyo/ dakkhineyyo añjalikarāṇiyo/ anuttaram
puññakkhettaṃ lokassa ti

Sanskrit

buddhanusmṛti

iti hi sa bhagavā tathagato 'rham samyaksambuddho vidya-
caranasampanna sugato lokavid anuttarah purusa-damya-sarathī
sasta devamanuṣyaṇam buddho bhagavā

dharmanusmṛti

svakhyato bhagavata dharmah samdrstiko nirjvara akalika
anupanayika ehipasyikam pratyatmavedyo vijñaih

sanghanusmrti

supratipanno bhagavatah sravakasanghah nyayapratipannah
rjdrsti pratipannah samicipratipannah dharmanudharmapra-
tipannah anudharmacari/ ahavaiyah prahavaniyh añjalikaraniyah
samicikaraniyah anuttaram puñyaksetram daksaniyo likasya

English

Thus indeed it is: the bhagavat, tathagata, arhat,
samyaksambuddha, possessor of insight and its feet, sugata,
knower of the world, unsurpassed driver who tames beings, and
teacher of gods and men is the buddha bhagavat.

The bhagavat teaches dharma just so. It is authentic sight, is
free from sickness, its time has no interruption, it brings one in,
it is a “come and see here!” sort of thing, it is known to the wise
through personal self-knowing.

The bhagavat’s shravaka sangha have entered into good, have
entered into insight, have entered into straightness, have
entered into harmony, are the four pairs of beings, are the eight
types of person, are worthy of all generosity, are worthy of total
generosity, are worthy of joined palms, are worthy of
prostration, are an unsurpassed field of merit, are the place of
good qualities within the world.

THE SUTRA OF THE RECOLLECTION OF THE NOBLE THREE JEWELS:
ENGLISH TEXT

I prostrate to the All-Knowing One.

Thus it is: the buddha bhagavat tathagata arhat samyaksambuddha, possessor of insight and its feet, sugata, knower of the world, unsurpassed driver who tames beings, and teacher of gods and men is the buddha bhagavat. This tathagata corresponds to a cause of merits. His roots of virtue do not go to waste. He is fully ornamented with all patience. 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. He brings overt joy to those who long through faith. His prajña cannot be overpowered. His strengths cannot be challenged. 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. 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. 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. He is completely liberated from the sufferings. He is utterly completely liberated from the skandhas. He does not possess dhatus. His ayatanas are restrained. He has totally cut the knots. He is completely liberated from the torments. He is liberated from craving. He has crossed over the river. 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. He abides on the level of looking upon all sentient beings. These are the true qualities of the greatness of the body of the buddha bhagavat.

The holy dharma is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end. Its meaning is excellent, its wording is excellent. It is not adulterated, is

totally complete, is total purity, is total purification The bhagavat has taught dharma well. It is authentic sight. It is free from sickness. Its time has no interruption It brings one in This is meaningful to see. It is known to the experts through personal self-knowing. The dharma spoken by the bhagavat was well taught for taming. It is renunciation It causes one to go to complete enlightenment. It is without disharmony and it has inclusion It has reliability. It does end the journey.

The sangha of the great vehicle have entered into good, have entered into insight, have entered into straightness, have entered into harmony. They are worthy of joined palms, they are worthy of prostration They are a field of the glory of merit. They are great ones thoroughly trained in gifts. They are a place for generosity. They are in all places even a great place for generosity.

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

by Jetsun Taranatha

From: Unending Auspiciousness
By Tony Duff PKTC
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oṃ 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 superficialities. (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 shravaka s 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 dhatu. 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 superficies 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)

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 Brahmans 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.

THE FIRST THREE VAJRA POINTS: THE THREE JEWELS

Excerpts from: **Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra With Commentary**

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Complementary Explanations by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

The First Vajra Point: Buddha

B.II.2. Detailed explanation of the parts

B.II.2.1. Detailed explanation of the Three Jewels as being what is to be attained

B.II.2.1.1. The Buddha who is the teacher

B.II.2.1.1.1. Presentation of the nature of the Buddha by means of a praise

Buddha is without beginning, middle, or end. He is peace itself, fully self-awakened and self-expanded in buddhahood. Having reached this state, he shows the indestructible, permanent path so that those who have no realization may realize. Wielding the supreme sword and vajra of knowledge and compassionate love, he cuts the seedling of suffering and destroys the wall of doubts along with its surrounding thicket of various views. I bow down to this Buddha.

Since buddhahood is free from an initial coming into existence, an abiding in the meantime, and a final cessation, it is uncreated. Since all thoughts and conceptual elaborations are pacified, it is spontaneously present. Since a Buddha is fully self-awakened and self-expanded without a teacher by means of self-aware primordial wisdom, buddhahood is not a realization due to extraneous conditions. These are the qualities constituting one's own benefit.

Since a Buddha has awoken from the sleep of ignorance and his understanding has expanded to embrace the knowable, he has gained possession of the most excellent knowledge. By means of this knowledge he shows within samsara the permanent path, the meaning of the indestructible true state (Skt. *dharmata*, Tib. *chos nyid*). This is compassionate love. Wielding the supreme sword of knowledge and compassionate love he cuts the shoot of "name and form," which knowledge and compassionate love, he destroys the wall of doubts about the

truth and about action and its fruit, which is surrounded by the thick forest of the various views that precede the formation of those views belonging to the fearful [or transitory] collection. This is ability or power. With these he possesses the qualities constituting the benefit of others. Therefore I bow down to this Buddha with great respect.

(The term “name and form” (Tib. *ming gzugs*) refers to the five skandhas: form (Skt. *rupa*, Tib. *gzugs*), feelings (Skt. *vedana*, Tib. *tshor ba*), discrimination (Skt. *saṃjñā*, Tib. *'du shes*), compositional factors (Skt. *samskara*, Tib. *'du byed*), and consciousness (Skt. *viññāna*, Tib. *rnam shes*). The term is used because, other than form, the remaining four can only be grasped by a name. When speaking of doubts about the truth and about action and its fruit, this refers to two things: the first are doubts about the meaning or validity of the Four Noble Truths or of the two truths, which are the absolute and the relative truth. The second are doubts about the fact that the practice of virtue acts as the cause giving rise to the fruit of happiness, the fact that suffering will arise on the basis of unvirtuous action, and so on. The views belonging to the fearful or transitory collection (Skt. *satkāyadṛiti*, Tib. *'jig tshogs la lta ba* [the text translated here reads *'jigs tshogs*) are views such as taking the skandhas as a self or as something that belongs to this self, and so forth. There are twenty of these described, for instance, in the *Madhyamakavatara* (Tib. *dbu ma la 'jug pa*) by Chandrakīrti. For further information in English, see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pp. 176 f., 258 f.)

B.II.2.1.1.2. Explanation of the meaning of the praise presented in categories

Being uncreated and spontaneously present, not a realization due to extraneous conditions, wielding knowledge, compassionate love, and ability, buddhahood has [the qualities of] the two benefits.

By the preceding section buddhahood is shown as having six or eight qualities: Since it is not engendered by causes and conditions, it has the quality of being uncreated and unchanging (1).

Since it is free from deliberate effort, it has the quality of being spontaneously present (2).

Since it is self-aware, it has the quality of not being realized due to extraneous conditions (3).

Since a Buddha possesses these three qualities, he has the quality of knowledge (4).

Since he leads the other beings to also attain this knowledge, he has the quality of great compassionate love (5).

Since he brings about the relinquishment of the causes of suffering of all other beings, thereby eradicating the suffering that is the fruit of these causes, he has the quality of being endowed with ability (6).

In terms of subject matter there are six different kinds of qualities. If classified according to aspects, the first three form the quality of best possible benefit for oneself, and the latter three form the quality of best possible benefit of others. Considering these as a whole, buddhahood possesses eight qualities.

(The usage of the terms “subject matter” (Tib. *rdzas*) and “aspect” (Tib. *ldog pa*) can be explained as follows: Taking a flower as an example, the flower itself is the subject matter. From the point of view that it has come into existence due to causes and conditions, the flower is compounded. From the point of view that it undergoes a process of destruction taking place from instant to instant—that it is continuously nearing cessation—the flower is impermanent. This way of distinguishing two different features with regard to the flower is a classification in terms of different aspects. On the basis of the flower itself, however, whatever is compounded is impermanent and whatever is impermanent is compounded. These two aspects have just one essence. With regard to the essence there is no variety. Nevertheless, since the flower is able to appear to thought as having various different features, it gains an according variety in terms of verbal expression. These aspects are a mere difference of terms; on the basis of the subject matter as such, all different aspects are indivisible. The terms “subject matter” and “aspect” play a very important role in the explanations of valid cognition (Tib. *tshad ma*). Having gained a proper understanding of the meaning of these terms, one will come to understand the way mind manifests. A subject matter is the object of the sense consciousnesses, which are free from thought. An aspect is the object of thought. When the eye-consciousness perceives a flower, it only perceives the subject matter. It does not perceive the flower in terms of “this flower is white, red, compounded, impermanent,” and so on. The conceptual mind makes these differences and divides the flower into various aspects, whereas the sense consciousness perceives the subject matter, or the individual characteristic (Tib. *rang mtshan*), of the sense-object just as it comes within the range of perception (Tib. *bzhin shar du*). Therefore the terms “subject matter” and “aspect of the subject matter” refer to the way in which an understanding that is free from thought

and one that is bound up with thought manifest. It is very important that these two different ways of manifestation are understood well.)

B.II.2.1.1.3. Detailed explanation by combining the praise and its meaning

Its nature is without beginning, middle, or end; hence [the state of a Buddha] is uncreated. Since it possesses the peaceful dharmakaya, it is described as being “spontaneously present.” Since it must be realized through self-awareness, it is not a realization due to extraneous conditions. These three aspects being realized, there is knowledge. Since the path is shown, there is compassionate love. There is ability since the mental poisons and suffering are relinquished by primordial wisdom and compassion. Through the first three there is benefit for oneself. Through the latter three there is benefit for others.

Here buddhahood is explained in such a way that the statements made in the foregoing section on the different types of qualities are successively proven on the basis of the reasons taught in the praise:

(1) Whatever is compounded or created consists of the three aspects of beginning, middle, and end, or in other words, has the properties of coming into existence, of abiding, and then being destroyed. Since buddhahood is of a nature that is free from these, it is uncreated. Generally speaking there are four teachings with regard to the term “uncreated.” Depending upon the following criteria, the subject in question is considered as being created or uncreated: The first criterion is whether or not there is arising and cessation due to causes and conditions. The second is whether or not there is arising and cessation of karma and mental poisons. The third is whether or not arising through a body of mental nature and cessation in terms of an inconceivable death take place. The fourth is whether or not the subject in question appears to the disciples as something that arises and ceases.

In this context, Rongtönpa holds that in the light of these four criteria the dharmakaya of all Buddhas is uncreated, in the sense of not appearing to the disciples as something that comes into existence and ceases. It is therefore necessary to understand that buddhahood possesses the quality of being uncreated. Yet if one takes it as a whole as being uncreated, one needs to understand that this contradicts its having knowledge, compassionate love, and ability. (2) Buddhahood is endowed with the dharmakaya itself, which is complete peace. It is peace in the sense of freedom from any deliberate effort in terms of the concept-bound activity of body and speech, the conceptual activity of the mind, and so on. Therefore it is described as “spontaneously present activity.” (3) Since it must be realized by means of self-sprung primordial wisdom being self-aware, it is not a realization due to outer conditions such as other people’s utterances and so on. (4) Having realized the dharmadhatu in its three aspects of qualities, which are uncreatedness and so on, a Buddha [also] realizes that it is within all sentient beings alike. Thus he possesses the most excellent primordial wisdom of knowledge. (5) In order to also lead all other beings who are to be trained to this ultimate purity, he clearly demonstrates the path beyond the world in accordance with their respective karmic fortunes. Therefore he possesses the most excellent love and compassion. (6) By means of his primordial wisdom and his great compassion mentioned before, he is able to cause the relinquishment of the suffering of beings, eradicating their skandhas, which attract suffering, and their mental poisons, which cause these skandhas, up to their very end. Therefore he possesses the most excellent activity or ability. In this context it is explained that by the first three qualities the best possible benefit for oneself is accomplished, while the latter three accomplish the best possible benefit of others.

(Contrary to other worldly beings, arhats have an arising through a body of mental nature and a cessation in terms of an inconceivable type of death. The omniscient Rongtön was an eminent scholar and the teacher of the Sixth Karmapa Tongwa Dönden. He holds that buddhahood is uncreated in the sense of the fourth criterion of uncreatedness. According to Rongtön, the dharmakaya has the quality of uncreatedness since it does not appear to the disciples as something that arises and ceases, whereas the form kayas are created or compounded since these

appear to the disciples as something that arises and ceases. When it is said that a Buddha shows the path in accordance with the respective karmic fortune of the disciples, this means that he adapts his teaching to their respective intelligence and mental capacities. To less gifted disciples he gives a teaching enabling them to reach the state of a shravaka arhat on the basis of the Shravaka Vehicle. He teaches the path of the pratyekabuddhas to disciples of middling gifts, while highly gifted disciples receive the teaching of the path of the Mahayana. The first three qualities of buddhahood, that is, those of being uncreated, spontaneously present, and not a realization due to extraneous conditions, are the qualities of the dharmakaya, which constitutes the most excellent benefit for oneself. The last three qualities, that is, those of primordial wisdom of knowledge, compassionate love, and ability, are the qualities of the form kayas, which bring about the most excellent benefit of others.)

The Second Vajra Point: Dharma

B.II.2.1.2. The Dharma that is his teaching

B.II.2.1.2.1. Presentation of the subject matter by means of a praise

The Dharma is neither non-existent nor existent. It is not both existent and non-existent, nor is it other than existent and non-existent. It is inaccessible to such investigation and cannot be defined. It is self-aware and peace. The Dharma is without defilement. Holding the brilliant light rays of primordial wisdom, it fully defeats attachment, aversion, and dull indifference with regard to all objects of perception. I bow down to this sun of the sacred Dharma.

(1) The sacred Dharma in terms of the truth of cessation does not fall into the extreme of nihilism, which is the belief in non-existence, since the absolute truth, or in other words, the dharmadhatu, suchness, the true nature, exists as the field of experience of self-aware primordial wisdom. It does not fall into the extreme of eternalism, which is the belief in existence, since it has been free from arising as a relative adventitious thing since beginningless time. It is also not the common basis of a collection of the two aspects “existent” and “non-existent,” since on one hand it is neither of these, both having been refuted, and since on the other hand they contradict each other. Since it is impossible for something to be both existent and non-existent, it cannot be investigated as their contrary either, as

something other than both existent and non-existent. For this reason the Dharma is completely liberated from the conceptual elaboration consisting of the four extreme views (Tib. *mu bzhi*). Since it is inexpressible by means of symbols and terms and since it is truly beyond the field of experience of speech, it cannot be verbally defined. It cannot be explained by means of examples, logical reasonings, and so on. Not being an object of experience of an other-aware perception, it must be perceived by the noble ones through self-awareness. For these reasons it is inconceivable. Since karma and the mental poisons, the root of samsara, are pacified, it is free from these two aspects. Since their cause, improper mental activity, has come to complete peace, it is freedom from thought.

(2) The Dharma in terms of the truth of the path is utter purity, being free from the mental poisons along with their remaining imprints. It is clarity, since it is endowed with the brilliant light rays of the direct knowledge of all aspects. This is primordial wisdom, which is free from the veil of the hindrances to knowledge. With regard to the objects of perception, it fully overcomes desire and attachment towards agreeable objects, aversion and anger towards disagreeable objects, and the darkness of dull indifference, which is ignorance and delusion, when facing neutral objects. For this reason it acts as a remedy. I faithfully bow down to this sacred Dharma, which in these three aspects is similar to the sun.

[(A) The expanse or the open dimension (Tib. *dbying*s), which is complete peace beyond any conceptual elaboration, having neither up nor down, neither middle nor end, is called the dharmadhatu (Tib. *chos kyi dbying*s). It is similar to the depth or sphere of space, which is extremely vast and open and does not obstruct anything. suchness is equivalent to emptiness. The terms “dharmadhatu,” “suchness,” and “absolute truth” are synonymous in that both “dharmadhatu” and “suchness” denote emptiness, and the absolute truth is the way everything exists, which is also emptiness. In the context dealt with here, which is to say in the Shentong view, this emptiness is to be understood mainly in the sense of ultimate emptiness or the ultimate expanse. This is the nature of mind or the way the mind truly exists, being the inseparable union of spaciousness and awareness or of emptiness and clear light. According to the Madhyamaka, however, the nature of mind is to be understood solely from the point of view that all phenomena do not truly exist. In this view it is nothing but empty in the sense of not being accessible to any

conceptualization. It is very important to gain a proper understanding of these two different views. What is mainly taught in the system to which the *Uttara Tantra Shastra* belongs is the aspect of awareness (Tib. *rig pa*) or clear light (Tib. *od gsal*), whereas in the system of the Madhyamaka the aspect of emptiness in the sense of freedom from conceptual elaboration is exclusively taught. If one understands well what is meant by the inseparable union of emptiness and clear light, one comes very close to the path of the Vajrayana. In the system of the Vajrayana the nature of mind is then described as the inseparable union of clarity-emptiness (Tib. *gsal stong*), of bliss-emptiness (Tib. *bde stong*), of appearance-emptiness (Tib. *snang stong*), and of awareness-emptiness (Tib. *rig stong*). These are called the four “joint manifestations” (Tib. *zung ’jug bzhi*). Without knowing the meaning of the inseparable union of spaciousness and awareness one will not be able to understand these. Not having studied the views as presented in the *Uttara Tantra Shastra* and in the Madhyamaka system, one will not come to an understanding of the Vajrayana where the four joint manifestations are introduced. One would find oneself forced to leave the level of the Vajrayana “already reached,” in order to study the vehicle of characteristics that forms its basis. It is therefore advisable to study this first. If, for example, someone learns how to fly a plane without being able to drive a car, he might one day have to learn how to drive while he can already fly. Since the first is also much more difficult than the latter, one had better keep the appropriate order. In brief, one should endeavor to study and understand the views of the *Uttara Tantra Shastra* and the Madhyamaka properly, since they equally constitute the cause of one’s ability to follow the Vajrayana path. When it is said that the truth of cessation does not fall into the extreme of nihilism, this means that it does not fall into the extreme view of considering the absolute truth as being just empty in the sense of a bare nothingness or non-presence of anything. To describe this, the commentary partly uses words from the terminology of the Prasangika Madhyamaka. In this terminology the reasoning would be as follows: the truth of cessation does not fall into the extreme of nihilism, since it exists as the object of experience of self-sprung primordial wisdom. The literal meaning of the Tibetan term “künzob” (*kun rdzob*), which is here translated as “relative,” is “false from every angle” or “deceptive.” A phenomenon is called “adventitious” when it comes into existence as something fleeting and when it is able to be removed or abandoned. An example for this is water containing mud, which will settle by itself when the water is not stirred, and which does not affect the purity of the water itself. Another example is defilements in the sky such as clouds or smoke, which also do not impair the purity of the sky and are dispelled by a breeze. By means of these examples one should understand that there are defilements in terms of mental poisons and obstructions to knowledge as long as the state of buddhahood is not reached, but that the nature or essence of mind has been pure since beginningless time and is not afflicted in the slightest by the adventitious stains of confusion, by the mental poisons and so on, which are able to be removed. For this reason one can say: “The Dharmadhatu, the absolute truth, does not fall into the extreme of eternalism, since it has been free from arising as a relative, adventitious thing since beginningless time.” Generally speaking,

the term “eternalism” refers to a view considering a subject that undergoes an arising and a ceasing as something that cannot be destroyed in any way. Here, in this context, the extreme of eternalism consists of a view holding a subject to be truly existent, to be inherently or of itself existent. The statement that the truth of cessation is completely freed from the conceptual elaboration that consists of the four extreme views, again stems from the terminology of the Prasangika Madhyamaka. According to this terminology the truth of cessation, that is, the dharmadhatu, the absolute truth, is completely freed from the four extreme beliefs in the non-existence of a subject, the existence of a subject, the simultaneous existence and non-existence of a subject, and a presence of a subject that is neither existent nor non-existent. Therefore it is completely freed from the conceptual elaboration that consists of the four extreme views. In the terminology of the scriptures explaining the dharmadhatu or the absolute truth, the name or the designation of a subject in question is called “symbol” (Tib. *brda*), whereas its properties are called “terms” (Tib. *tha snyad*). When a flower is called a “flower,” this is a symbol. When the flower is described as being white, red, or yellow, or as being impermanent, faded, and so on, these are terms. The dharmadhatu, or the ultimate absolute truth, is beyond symbols and it cannot be expressed by means of terms. As such it is completely beyond the field of activity of speech and is therefore inexpressible. The terms “self-aware” and “other-aware” denote two different types of perception. Whatever is perceived by the different sense consciousnesses—of the eye, the nose, and so on—is an other-aware perception. A self-aware perception does not focus outwards and perceive something else, but perceives its very own essence. At the time when emptiness or Mahamudra is realized, the essence of one’s own mind is realized by itself in such a way that there is no duality between an object to be realized and a realizing subject. The Dharma in terms of the truth of cessation has three qualities, the first being the fact that it is inconceivable. The commentary substantiates this by successive proofs. When these are traced back, the reasoning is as follows:

- (1) The true nirvana of the noble ones, constituting the absolute truth, is the object of perception of the self-aware, or self-sprung, primordial wisdom of the noble ones, since it is not an object for an other-aware perception.
- (2) The absolute truth is not an object for an other-aware perception since it cannot be explained by means of examples, logical reasonings, and so forth.
- (3) It cannot be explained by means of examples, logical reasonings, and so forth since it is inexpressible by means of symbols, terms, and so on and thus beyond the field of activity of speech.
- (4) It is beyond symbols, terms, and so on since any ideation is completely pacified.
- (5) All ideation is completely pacified since it is beyond the conceptual elaboration consisting of the four extreme views. An improper conceptual activity (Tib. *tshul bzhin ma yin pa’i rnam par rtog pa*) is a wrong way of thinking, such as taking something that is impure to be pure, something that does not exist as a self to be a self, and so on.

(B) The literal meaning of the Tibetan term “nyönmong” (*nyon mongs*), which is here translated as “mental poisons,” is “affliction.” The mental poisons are an affliction since they oppress and afflict the mind and above all cause it suffering. The “remaining imprints” (Tib. *bag chags*) are to be understood as the after-effect or the remaining force (Tib. *Nus pa*) of the mental poisons. If, for instance, a person has been drinking a considerable amount of alcohol over a long period of time and then stops doing so, he will still feel an urge from time to time, although he has given up his habit completely. The preceding behavior has an after-effect, a remaining force. The traditional example is musk that has been put on a piece of paper. Even after a long time, when the musk itself is completely gone, the smell will still be noticeable. The truth of the path is mainly equivalent to the primordial wisdom that directly realizes emptiness. The essence of this primordial wisdom is its utter purity, which is to be understood as complete purification. It is utterly pure in the sense that the defilements of the mental poisons and their remaining imprints are eliminated and no longer present. The veil of the hindrances to knowledge mainly consists of the following three aspects: the first is the fact that the so-called three circles (Tib. *'khor gsum*) or complexes, that is, actor, object, and action, are perceived as something truly existent. This is the coarse aspect of the obstructions to knowledge. A subtler aspect is the fact that the three complexes are perceived in terms of their characteristics. The third aspect consists of the fact that the three complexes appear as two. This perception of mere duality as such is the subtlest aspect of the veil of the hindrances to knowledge. Thus the truth of the path is primordial wisdom, which is free from the veil of the hindrances to knowledge. The “brilliant light rays of the direct knowledge of all aspects” are this primordial wisdom that directly realizes the true nature of all phenomena, or in other words, the absolute truth.]

B.II.2.1.2.2. Explanation of the meaning of the praise presented in categories

Inconceivable, free from the two [veils] and from thought, being pure, clear, and playing the part of an antidote, it is free from attachment and frees from attachment. This is the Dharma with its features of the two truths.

In the preceding section the rare and sublime Dharma is shown as having six or eight qualities. In terms of subject matter the Dharma has six qualities:

The first three consist of the facts that it is inconceivable in that it cannot be grasped by a conceptual understanding (1), it is free from the two [veils] of karma and the mental poisons (2), and it is free from their cause, which is improper

conceptual activity (3). The latter three consist of the facts that it is pure, since the defilements that [obscured] the essence have been purified (4), it is clear, since it illuminates all phenomena (5), and it plays the part of the very antidote that counteracts the three poisons (6). If classified in terms of aspects, the first three qualities constitute the fruit, the truth of cessation, which must be freed from attachment [and will then be revealed as being freedom from attachment] (7). The latter three constitute the cause, the truth of the path, which frees one from attachment (8). Thus it has the characteristics of the two truths, which comprise full purification. Together with these two aspects, in total there are eight qualities. That which possesses these eight qualities is called the sacred Dharma.

(A conceptual understanding is any worldly understanding that perceives the relative. The three poisons are desire, aversion, and mental blindness. When speaking of the two truths comprising complete purification, the term “complete purification” refers to the following: Two parts are to be distinguished: that of complete purification (Tib. *rnam byang phyogs*) and that of the mental poisons (Tib. *nyon mongs phyogs*). The first part includes the fruit of the process of purification, which is the state of utter purity from any defilement, as well as the means to bring about this purification. In the same way, the latter part includes the veils or obscurations as well as their causes.)

B.II.2.1.2.3. Summary of the categories in terms of the truth of cessation and the truth of the path

Freedom from attachment [as fruit and means] consists of the truths of cessation and path. Accordingly these should also be known by means of three qualities each.

Freedom from attachment or desire is called the Dharma. This consists of the truth of cessation, which is the fruit—that which is free from attachment—and of the truth of the path, which is the means to free oneself from attachment. In the given order these two truths should also be known as being explained by means of three qualities each. The truth of cessation, when it has twofold purity, is explained by means of the three qualities of being inconceivable, free from the

two veils, and free from thought. The truth of the path, which causes purification, is explained by means of the three qualities of being pure, clear, and an antidote.

(The term “freedom from attachment” covers three aspects: the means that frees one from attachment, the basis to be freed from attachment, and the state of freedom from attachment. When one speaks of the two types of purity, the first type is the utter purity of the nature, which is to say that the nature of mind, or the element, the sugatagarbha, has been free from all defilements such as the mental poisons and so on since beginningless time. From the viewpoint of the essence, gold contained in ore is also pure gold. Corresponding to this example, the nature of mind is completely pure. The second type of purity is freedom from the adventitious defilements. This is comparable to the purity achieved through processing the ore and removing the dross. Once the dross is completely removed there are two types of purity, the first being the purity that is also present while gold is contained in ore, and the second being the purity achieved through the complete removal of the dross.)

B.II.2.1.2.4. Explanation of the reasons by combining the praise and its meaning

Not being an object of conceptual investigation, being inexpressible, and [only] to be known by noble ones, the Dharma is inconceivable. Since it is peace, it is free from the two [veils] and free from thought. In its three [aspects of] purity and so on it is similar to the sun.

Taking the reasons from the above section, where the Dharma is explained in the form of a praise, its different categories are successively proven and explained as follows: The Dharma to be attained, the truth of cessation, is not an object to be investigated by means of an understanding that perceives in terms of the four extreme views of existence, non-existence, and so on. It is not an object to be expressed by means of words, terms, definitions, and so forth, and it has to be known by the noble ones through self-aware primordial wisdom, which is present during meditation. For these three reasons it is inconceivable for a worldly understanding. Since the karma bound up with pollution and the mental poisons fully raising this karma have come to peace, the truth of cessation is free from these two [veils]. It is free from thought since the improper conceptual

activity that acts as their cause has been pacified. The three aspects of purity and so on, that is, purity, clarity, and acting as an antidote, are the three qualities of the paths of seeing and meditation, which cause the attainment of this truth of cessation. These are to be understood as being like the sun in that there are three corresponding properties. Just as the orb of the sun is completely pure, the truth of the path is free from all the defilements of [even] the secondary mental poisons. In the same way as the sun illuminates the visible, the truth of the path illuminates all the aspects of the knowable, or in other words, all phenomena. Just as the sun acts as an antidote that overcomes darkness, the truth of the path acts as the antidote against all obstructions preventing the seeing of suchness.

(When speaking of self-aware primordial wisdom present during meditation, this is to be understood as follows: “meditation” here refers to a condition of balanced equipoise in which one directly dwells within the true state (Skt. *dharmata*), or in other words, within emptiness, the nature of mind, which is the absolute truth or reality. The term “self-aware” is also part of the terminology of the Chittamatra system (the Mind-Only School), yet is used there in another meaning. The system of the Chittamatra speaks of a self-aware consciousness. While the consciousnesses of the five senses focus outwards and perceive outer objects, the mental sense-consciousness focuses inwards and experiences by itself its own essence (Tib. *rang gi ngo bo rang gis myong ba*). In the system to which the *Uttara Tantra Shastra* belongs, however, the term “self-aware” denotes a realization that is self-sprung, by means of which the true state, the nature of mind, is realized directly, free from the duality of perceived and perceiver. A worldly understanding is the understanding of an ordinary being. This is any understanding that does not directly realize emptiness. Synonyms of the term “suchness” (Tib. *de bzhin nyid*) are the terms “true state” (Tib. *chos nyid*), “emptiness” (Tib. *stong pa nyid*), “dharmadhatu” (Tib. *chos kyi dbyings*), or “absolute truth” (Tib. *don dam pa'i bden pa*).)

The Third Vajra Point: Sangha

B.II.2.1.3. The essence of the Sangha whose members hold this teaching

B.II.2.1.3.1. Presentation of the subject matter by means of a praise

This mind being by nature clear light, they have seen the poisons to be essenceless and therefore truly realize [the nature of] every being

as peace, the ultimate non-existence of a self. They perceive that the Perfect Buddha pervades them all. They possess the understanding that is free from the veils. Thus seeing that beings are utterly pure and that [this purity pervades] their limitless number, they are endowed with the vision of primordial wisdom. I bow down to this [Sangha].

Of the different types of Sangha, the bodhisattvas who do not fall back are an especially noble assembly. Since their own minds have directly revealed themselves as being by nature clear light and functioning as the antidote itself, they have seen that the essence of the mental poisons to be abandoned has been free from arising since beginningless time. Therefore the bodhisattvas truly realize the nature of every being just as it is. They realize it as a state of peace or as freedom from any conceptual elaboration: the ultimate selflessness of persons and of phenomena. By means of this realization they have primordial wisdom that knows correctly. They see that the nature of a perfect Buddha—the dharmakaya, the true state—has always been present within beings whose state is relative, such that it pervades them all. By means of this seeing they have the primordial wisdom that knows completely. These two types of primordial wisdom are the quality of awareness. In the given order, these are also an understanding that is free from the veil of attachment and one that is free from the veil of obstructions. With these understandings the bodhisattvas possess the discriminative wisdom beyond the worldly. By means of this discriminative wisdom, they have the perception that knows the utterly pure Dharmadhatu of beings, and furthermore knows that this dharmadhatu pervades their limitless number. Therefore they possess the completely pure vision of primordial wisdom with regard to the entire range of the knowable. This is the quality of liberation. I bow down to these [bodhisattvas] with open faith.

(When one has directly realized emptiness, one does not fall back to the level of the smaller vehicles. Since a bodhisattva, that is, a noble one, an heir of the Buddha (Tib. *rgyal sras*), has this realization, one speaks of the bodhisattvas who do not fall back. By the phrase “their own minds

have directly revealed themselves as being by nature clear light and functioning as the antidote . . . ,” the following is expressed: In the context explained here, “one’s own mind” is equivalent to the nature of mind or to the way the relative mind truly exists. This is the true state of the mind, which is the inseparable union of emptiness and clear light. It can be said to be an antidote since it is only the mind in terms of its true existence or state that counteracts the illusory appearances or the appearance of duality (Tib. *gnyis snang*). The fact that it has directly revealed itself (Tib. *mngon sum du gyur pa*), or in other words, that it is realized as it is, means the following: Two kinds of realization, direct realization (Tib. *mngon sum*) and inferred realization (Tib. *rjes dpag*), are to be distinguished. These terms are also used within the teachings on valid cognition (Tib. *tshad ma*). Generally speaking, the teachings on valid cognition represent “that which makes the mind free from being confused and deluded.” In this context all inferences and deductions taking place on the basis of symbols, characteristics, and logical reasonings are inferred valid cognitions (Tib. *rjes dpag mtshan ma*). A realization taking place without the support of these is a direct valid cognition (Tib. *mngon sum tshad ma*). Simply because it is in front of us, a flower, for instance, is perceived directly by means of the sense consciousness of the eye. This seeing, which is to say the sense consciousness perceiving the flower, is called direct valid cognition. If one makes inferences about the flower and finds that it is empty or does not exist as a self, the understanding perceiving it in such a way is an inferred valid cognition, since this understanding had to be derived. Put briefly, there are two ways of realizing any phenomenon: an inferred and a direct realization. The first takes place on the basis of symbols, characteristics, and logical reasonings. In the context of the second, the object is realized directly, without any obscuration and just as it appears. When the statement that the mind has revealed itself as being by nature clear light is seen in the light of the Shentong or Mahamudra views, it is equivalent to the direct or immediate realization of the nature of mind, or of the way the mind truly exists. The point at which one faces the nature of mind, the inseparable union of emptiness and clear light in which all conceptual elaboration has finally subsided, is called direct realization. The statement that the essence of the mental poisons has been free from arising since beginningless time refers to the following: The term “arising” means that something is by nature existent, truly existent, by its individual characteristics existent, and so on. Freedom from arising is therefore equivalent to the fact that the subject matter in question is not truly existent and so on. Generally speaking, we all can notice that the mental poisons arise within us. Yet, this arising is but a relative one. It only comes about as a dependent origination, due to the meeting of causes and conditions. In truth the mental poisons are free from arising. This can be shown by the example of dream. While dreaming, all kinds of images arise. Whatever arises comes about interdependently as an illusory appearance. In truth these appearances are free from arising. Whatever appears during a dream does not exist, not even in the form of a single atom. Arising as something adventitious and being able to be removed like mud in water or clouds in the sky, the mental poisons are not truly existent. Their essence has been free from

arising since beginningless time. When one dreams, for example, and the appearances in this dream are seen differently as friend and enemy, aversion in view of the enemy and affection and desire in view of the friend will arise. These mental poisons are free from arising; they do not truly exist. Since the object is free from arising, the subject perceiving it is also free from arising, or in other words, not truly existent. In this sense one should reflect thoroughly. While one has a dream containing the duality of friend and enemy, and while as a reaction desire and aversion arise, the objects, that is, friend and enemy, do not truly exist. While friend and enemy do not truly exist, at the same time they form the basis for the arising of the mental poisons. These arise fleetingly and do not have an arising in terms of being truly existent. When the perceived object does not truly exist, it is not permissible to state that the perceiving subject is truly existent. When reflecting in this way, in my opinion the Chittamatra view constitutes a very deep approach for a beginner. The view of the Madhyamaka, for instance, is not directly realized until the first bodhisattva level is reached. Its realization will be attained when, on the path of junction, a view is cultivated that corresponds to that of the Chittamatra system. This has been stated by the omniscient Pema Karpo and others in many scriptural passages. When, while traveling the path of junction, one believes in the truth of the Madhyamaka view, but for the sake of its direct realization cultivates that of the Chittamatra during one's meditation, these two aspects will become one. The passage "therefore the bodhisattvas truly realize the nature of every being . . ." is to be understood as follows: The nature of beings is equivalent to the way all beings truly exist. With regard to any subject matter, its way of existence (Tib. *gnas lugs*, *gnas tshul*) and its way of appearance (Tib. *snangs tshul*) are to be distinguished. The way in which all beings appear consists of the fact that they have the nature of an illusory appearance, which has come into existence due to the predominating influence of extraneous factors, that is, due to karma and mental poisons. We all are sentient beings. Our way of appearance is to wander about in the cycle of existence, driven by the attachment to a self. We perceive as a self what does not exist as a self, as mine what does not exist as mine, and experience manifold suffering under the sway of this perception. The fact that something that does not exist as a self is perceived as a self, and that something that does not exist as belonging to this self is perceived as belonging to this self, has the effect that the aspects "friend" and "enemy" are perceived, that "my friend" and "my enemy" come into existence. These two aspects of attachment and aversion act as the basis giving rise to the manifold forms of suffering. This is the way in which beings appear. The way of appearance of fire, for example, is that it is hot and burning. The way of existence of fire is the fact that it is by nature empty. When one dreams of being burnt by fire, this fire appears as something that is by nature hot and burning. Yet, the true nature or way of existence of this fire is emptiness in the sense that it is free from any conceptual elaboration, or in other words, free from the three aspects of arising, abiding, and ceasing. In the same way, the nature of all beings is the ultimate selflessness of persons and phenomena. The five skandhas do not exist as a self. Nevertheless the two aspects of perception, which contain the beliefs that the person exists as a self and that

phenomena exist as a self (Tib. *gang zag gi bdag dang chos kyi bdag*), arise within us on the basis of these skandhas. When on the basis of the physical body the thoughts “I” and “mine” arise, these result in a perception taking this body as being a self in the sense that a person truly exists. When these thoughts are not present, but the body is taken to be real and perceived as being truly existent, this is an understanding containing the belief that phenomena exist as a self. Yet this body exists neither as a self of the person nor of phenomena. Taking the mind for an example, thoughts such as “my mind is uneasy,” “I am unhappy,” and so forth represent the fault of the belief in the existence of a self of the person. If the mind is viewed as being by nature existent, this is the belief in the existence of a self of phenomena. The mind does not exist as a self. This is the selflessness of persons. The mind is by nature not existent. This is the selflessness of phenomena. This difference should be understood well. The ultimate selflessness of persons and phenomena is non-existence of self as taught by the Prasangika Madhyamaka. Non-existence of self is taught in gradual stages. In the view of the shravakas, for instance, it is to be understood solely as the selflessness of persons, whereas in the view of the Svatantrika Madhyamaka it denotes sheer voidness (Tib. *stong kyang*) comparable to empty space. In the view of the Prasangika Madhyamaka, non-existence of self is complete peace in the sense of complete freedom from the conceptual elaboration (Tib. *Spros pa*) consisting of the appearance of duality (Tib. *gnyis snang*). This is the true state or nature of everything (Skt. *dharmata*, Tib. *chos nyid*). With regard to the nature of mind, the two aspects “spaciousness” or “expanse” (Tib. *dbyings*) and “primordial wisdom” (Tib. *ye shes*) are to be distinguished. Spaciousness is the aspect of emptiness, primordial wisdom that of clear light. The term “peace” in the sense of freedom from conceptual elaboration refers mainly to the aspect of emptiness, synonyms of which are the terms “true state” (Tib. *chos nyid*), “dharmadhatu” (Tib. *chos kyi dbyings*), “suchness” (Tib. *de bzhin nyid*), “absolute truth” (Tib. *don dam pa'i bden pa*), and “thatness” (Tib. *de kho na nyid*). In the Mahamudra or Maha Ati systems one speaks of “the great symbol,” “the great gesture,” or “the great seal” (Tib. *phyag rgya chen po*) and of “the great perfection” (Tib. *rdzogs pa chen po*), respectively. As to peace or freedom from conceptual elaboration (Tib. *spros pa zhi ba*), two aspects are to be distinguished. The first is the fact that the object, the true state, is beyond conceptualization, and the second is the fact that the understanding realizing this object is free from conceptual elaboration. When the object, the true state, is described as being beyond conceptualization, this means that emptiness is not equivalent to either non-existence or to sheer voidness that merely refutes this non-existence (Tib. *med dgag*), nor is it truly existent and so forth. Put briefly, it is a state of complete peace, of freedom from the extreme views holding it to be existent, to be non-existent, both existent and non-existent, or neither existent nor non-existent. Nagarjuna has said in this context: *Permanence, impermanence and so on, where are they in this state of peace? Emptiness, non-emptiness and so on, where are they in this state of peace? The state of complete peace beyond permanence and impermanence, emptiness and non-emptiness, is called freedom from conceptual elaboration.* This is the aspect of the object, or

in other words, of emptiness being beyond any conceptualization. The aspect of the understanding, the realizing subject, being free from conceptual elaboration should be understood as follows: When realizing that the object, the true state, is beyond conceptualization, the subject, the realizing understanding, attains the state of freedom from conceptualization while abiding at balance within this realization. If the object is not free from being conceptualized, accordingly the realizing subject will not attain the state of freedom from conceptual elaboration. If the object is viewed as being just empty and is realized as such, the realizing subject will reach a state of mere emptiness, in which nothing whatsoever is present. This understanding still contains an idea, or in other words, a conceptual elaboration. When the object is viewed as clarity, the subject gains a corresponding realization and perceives clarity. Similarly, the subject appears as peace, as freedom from thought and conceptual elaboration, when the object is realized as being beyond conceptualization. The fact that the realizing understanding is free from conceptual elaboration means that all thoughts, all perceptions bound up with or tinged by conceptual grasping (Tib. *'zin pa*), are completely pacified. In this context some followers of the Mahamudra system are of the opinion that the explanation of the two aspects of freedom from conceptual elaboration, as given in the Sutrayana system, means that one absorbs oneself into the object, the true state free from conceptual elaboration, and into the subject, the realizing understanding, separately during meditation. This is an error. The proponents of the Sutrayana say on the contrary that one first gains conviction that the object is beyond conceptualization and then absorbs the subject within this freedom from conceptual elaboration. The system of the Mahamudra teaches that one has to absorb oneself into the nature of mind itself in such a way that one naturally dwells within it just as it appears. Some who receive this teaching without understanding the explanations given in the Sutrayana system will undergo a second error. The Pandita Atisha said: *With regard to the fact that the true state is beyond conceptual elaboration, the realizing understanding is absorbed into a condition of freedom from conceptual elaboration.* Some who practice Mahamudra meditation misunderstand this, thinking that according to the Madhyamaka view one has to absorb the understanding into the true state, into emptiness, which is free from conceptual elaboration. On this basis they believe that the object into which one has to absorb oneself and the understanding that absorbs itself are the same and not two different aspects. They believe this, since according to the Mahamudra system absorption means to naturally abide within the nature of mind itself. This is a slight error due to misunderstanding the teachings of the Madhyamaka, according to which one gains conviction that the nature of mind is beyond conceptualization and then absorbs the realizing understanding into freedom from conceptual elaboration. This error, however, is but a misunderstanding of words. It does not mean that one necessarily errs with regard to one's own true nature as well. From the point of view of one's own realization, realization will arise from naturally abiding within the essence of mind. There are numerous examples of persons who did not know the meaning of absorption as it corresponds to the Madhyamaka view and yet directly

realized Mahamudra, the nature of their own mind. This difference should also be understood well. The system of the Madhyamaka contains many different kinds or levels of explanations on the way in which one should meditate according to this system. It is said, for instance, in the scriptures teaching the gradual stages of meditation on the highest aspect of the knowable (Tib. *shes bya'i mchog*): Perceived phenomena are empty according to their very own essence (Tib. *rang rang ngo bos stong*). The perceiving mind is also emptiness; it is free from conceptual elaboration. To rest unmoved within the state of freedom from conceptual elaboration, the union of emptiness and clarity, is the main practice of the highest aspect of the knowable. In the context of the gradual stages of meditation on the perfection of discriminative wisdom, the most excellent kind of practice is described as follows: One gains conviction that all perceived phenomena are empty according to their very own essence. One gains conviction that the perceiving mind is also empty, free from conceptual elaboration. Then one absorbs oneself into the state of freedom from conceptual elaboration. Similar statements are to be found in many scriptural passages. It is important that these different kinds of explanation are understood well. Sakya Pandita remarks in this context that there is not the slightest difference between the view of freedom from conceptual elaboration as taught in the system of the Paramita Yana [the vehicle of the six perfections] and the views of the Mahamudra or Mantrayana. One should be aware that if on the level of the Mahamudra or Secret Mantrayana one develops a view that does not include freedom from conceptual elaboration as taught in the Prasangika Madhyamaka system, one holds a view that is flawed with ideas, with conceptual elaboration. When speaking of the two types of primordial wisdom, those knowing correctly and completely, this means the following: The literal meanings of the Tibetan terms here translated as “correctly” and “completely” are “as it is” (Tib. *ji lta ba*) and “as much as there is” (Tib. *ji snyed pa*). Generally speaking, the term “correctly” refers to emptiness, to the absolute truth, while the term “completely” refers to the relative truth. Correct knowledge knows what truly is. If, for example, we dream of a burning fire, what is true about this phenomenon of fire? This fire is without the three aspects of arising, abiding, and cessation and as such is empty. What is not true about it? The burning of the fire is not true; it is an illusory appearance and comes about through delusion. The term “completely” refers to what is not true or correct, to the aspect of appearance that manifests as a variety. The understanding that perceives what is true or correct is therefore called “primordial wisdom that knows correctly,” and the understanding that perceives what is not true, the relative aspect of appearance, is called “primordial wisdom that knows completely.” A Buddha possesses these two kinds of primordial wisdom. His correct knowledge is the immediate seeing of emptiness. His complete knowledge extends to anything relative. The statement “they see that the true state has always been present within beings whose state is relative” should be understood as follows: The literal meanings of the Tibetan terms translated here as “true state” and “those whose state is relative” are “nature” or “quality” (Tib. *chos nyid*) and “that which has this nature or quality” (Tib. *chos can*). In the context of the *Uttara Tantra Shastra* the first refers to the absolute aspect,

to the way a subject matter truly exists, while the latter refers to the relative aspect, to the way a subject matter appears. When one dreams of fire, the state of this fire is relative. Its true state is the fact that it is free from the three aspects of arising, abiding, and ceasing. This is the true nature of fire. When speaking of beings, this refers to whoever possesses a mind (Tib. *sems can*). What these beings are in truth is the way in which their relative nature or relative state actually exists, this being their true state. The true state of beings is the nature of a perfect Buddha, or in other words, the tathagatagarbha, the all-pervading dharmakaya. In the view of the Rangtong Madhyamaka this dharmakaya is solely considered as emptiness in the sense of complete freedom from conceptual elaboration. In the view of the Shentong Madhyamaka it is the inseparable union of emptiness and clear light. In the speech of Dharma this is occasionally also called the inseparable union of spaciousness and awareness (Tib. *dbyings rig dbyer med*). The term “spaciousness” refers to the aspect of emptiness or freedom from conceptual elaboration; the term “awareness” refers to the aspect of clear light. In the following section of the praise, the two primordial wisdoms constituting the quality of awareness are shown from the viewpoint of being liberated from the veils. Primordial wisdom that knows correctly is freed from attachment to objects—it is free from the veil of the mental poisons. Primordial wisdom that knows completely is freed from obstructions, which is to say, freed from the veil of the hindrances to knowledge. They are called “obstructions” since one will not attain the unhindered knowledge of all relative phenomena as long as they are not removed. In order to reach the omniscient primordial wisdom that knows all phenomena, all aspects of the knowable, the veiling net of the hindrances to knowledge has to be eliminated. The correctly realizing understanding free from the veil of the mental poisons and the completely realizing understanding free from the veil of the hindrances to knowledge are the two aspects of the discriminative wisdom beyond the worldly (Tib. *jig rten las 'das pa'i shes rab*). By means of this discriminative wisdom, noble bodhisattvas know the utterly pure dharmadhatu, or way of existence of beings, as being by nature not truly existent. This is the absolute truth, emptiness, the Buddha nature. They know furthermore that this dharmadhatu pervades the limitless number of all sentient beings. Buddha nature is called “all-pervasive” since it is present within all beings alike. As far as Buddha nature goes, there is no distinction between “good beings” who have attained a precious human body and “inferior beings” such as animals and so forth. It undifferentiatedly pervades all sentient beings, no matter whether they are happy or suffer, whether they dwell in the higher or lower realms of existence. Since they have these two types of understanding, bodhisattvas possess the completely pure vision of primordial wisdom with regard to the entire range of the knowable. Whatever is able to be an object of understanding is part of the knowable (Tib. *shes bya*), this being its characteristic. The term “vision” of primordial wisdom is here equivalent to the discriminative wisdom beyond the worldly. When it is said that this vision is completely pure, this means that it is an authentic seeing that is undistorted, free from error, and complete. In this way the bodhisattvas have the quality of liberation. The element or the sugatagarbha is present within all beings, yet is not freed

from the fetter of the veil of the mental poisons and from the net of the veil of the hindrances to knowledge. When these are removed one has attained the quality of liberation. One may wonder whether someone who has reached the bodhisattva levels is freed from all the veils of the mental poisons and hindrances to knowledge. This is not the case. At this point the veils are partly purified. This process of purification continues while one travels through the bodhisattva levels, in a degree corresponding to each level. From the point of view that Buddha nature in the state of the basis is also completely free from the mental poisons and obstructions to knowledge, and not in the slightest sullied by these, there is utter purity. From the point of view of the gradual removal of the adventitious defilements there is a continuous process of purification. This is expressed in the explanation of the fourth vajra point, where it is said: “[The element] is pure and yet has affliction. [Enlightenment] was not afflicted and yet is purified.” An example for this is the fact that ore also contains pure gold, but that a second type of purity, a state of purification, is achieved through the removal of the dross.)

B.II.2.1.3.2. The Sangha is established as having two or six qualities

The assembly of those who have understanding and thus do not fall back has unsurpassable qualities, since their vision of inner primordial wisdom, which knows correctly and knows completely, is pure.

(1)By the preceding section the rare and sublime Sangha is shown as having two qualities: Focusing on the true state as their object, noble ones perceive the presence of suchness just as it is. They see this in a way that is not held in common with other beings: by means of inner self-aware primordial wisdom. This vision is purified from the veil of attachment. For this reason they have the quality of primordial wisdom that knows correctly. Focusing on those whose state is relative as their object, noble ones perceive that the dharmadhatu is all-pervasively present within all sentient beings alike, no matter how many there are. This is also seen in a way that is not held in common with others: by means of inner self-aware primordial wisdom. This vision is purified from the veil of obstruction. For this reason they have the quality of primordial wisdom that knows completely. Since they possess these qualities, the members of the rare and sublime Sangha, the assembly of bodhisattvas who have understanding and thus do not fall back from great perfect enlightenment, are superior to the

shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. They are therefore said to possess the quality of unsurpassable primordial wisdom. (2) Or, according to another explanation, the assembly of the bodhisattvas who have understanding, the Sangha of the noble ones who do not fall back, is presented as having eight qualities: Since they have the visions of primordial wisdom that knows correctly, of primordial wisdom that knows completely, and of inner primordial wisdom, there are the three qualities of awareness. Since they are purified from the two veils of attachment and obstruction, and since they have the quality of being unsurpassable, there are the three qualities of liberation. Adding to these six qualities the two aspects of awareness and liberation that are their basis, the bodhisattvas who have understanding possess eight qualities altogether. The first is the individual presentation as intended by the Sanskrit commentary, the latter corresponds to the usual explanation of the early Tibetan commentaries.

(The object to be realized is the true state, or in other words, suchness, the way all phenomena actually are. This is emptiness: the nature of mind, the element, or the sugatagarbha. The means necessary to realize this object is the primordial wisdom of the noble ones. When the noble ones are said to perceive this object as being present just as it is, this means that they realize the element, or the way in which beings exist, as being the luminous Buddha nature, the inseparable union of spaciousness and awareness or of emptiness and clear light. This is the object of perception of the primordial wisdom of the noble ones. This object of perception is seen in a way that the noble ones do not have in common with others. This can be illustrated by a general example: Whenever we have a mental experience, this is an experience we do not have in common with others. Whatever a sentient being experiences is the experience of his or her own mind, which is not shared with anybody else. Corresponding to this example, the noble ones experience or realize the nature of their own minds, just as it is. This realization is a vision by means of inner self-aware primordial wisdom, which is to say that it is not a seeing that focuses outwards. Contrary to that, the tathagatagarbha, the true nature of mind, is called self-aware. On the level of explanation, the object, the true state, and the subject realizing this true state are both to be understood as self-sprung primordial wisdom (Tib. *rang byung gi ye shes*). During meditation these self-sprung primordial wisdoms are simultaneously realized as peace, as being free from conceptual elaboration. While receiving explanations, one gains the understanding that the object, the true state, as well as the realizing subject, are self-sprung primordial wisdom. During meditation, when a condition is reached in which all conceptualization containing the duality of subject and object has subsided and come to peace, perception proves to be self-aware. It proves

furthermore to be “seeing itself by itself” or to be “self-seeing according to its own essence.” The two aspects of perception, an object that is seen and a seeing subject, are no longer present. When an ordinary being first hears that “self-aware” is equivalent to “seeing itself by itself,” this statement is a mere thought, since it is only during meditation that the object, the true state, proves to be self-aware. On this level, the term “self-aware” means that the conceptual elaboration that contains subject and object, a perceived object and a perceiving mind, is completely appeased, that both aspects manifest as self-sprung primordial wisdom, and that one dwells within this condition of self-sprung primordial wisdom wherever it manifests, in its very own place (Tib. *rang sar du gnas pa*). When the system of the Chittamatra speaks of “self-aware,” this means that the consciousness experiences itself by itself. Self-awareness in this context is therefore equivalent to the self-experience of the consciousness (Tib. *rnam shes rang myong*). When it is said that the state of beings is relative or, literally speaking, that they are those who have a particular state or nature (Tib. *Chos can*), this means that all beings have a true state (Tib. *chos nyid*), which is the dharmadhatu, the Buddha nature, or the tathagatagarbha. This dharmadhatu pervades all beings no matter how many there are, which is to say that it is undifferentiatedly present within all beings, in those of low or high rank, in those who are good or evil alike. Here, the term “dharmadhatu” is equivalent to inseparable spaciousness and awareness or inseparable spaciousness and primordial wisdom (Tib. *Dbyings dang ye shes dbyer med pa*). This inseparable union of spaciousness and primordial wisdom is the Buddha nature, the tathagatagarbha. In the view presented by the *Madhyamakavatara* (Tib. *dbu ma la 'jug pa*) the dharmadhatu is to be understood exclusively as freedom from conceptual elaboration. The aspect of primordial wisdom is not explained there. This difference should be understood well. The object of perception of the noble ones is the fact that the dharmadhatu or Buddha nature is all-pervasively present within all sentient beings. This means that their perception first focuses on the state or nature of sentient beings and that in this way the true state is perceived. The perception focused on the entirety of beings, on all those who have this state, is the aspect of the primordial wisdom that knows completely. Generally speaking, the aspects of correct and complete knowledge refer to the knowledge of a Buddha. In this context the realization of emptiness, the fact that the absolute truth is seen, is called correct knowledge. The realization of each and every aspect that is part of the relative is called complete knowledge. Noble bodhisattvas do not have a realization equaling the correct and complete knowledge of a Buddha. Merely the same terms are being used here. Noble bodhisattvas master correct and complete knowledge to a certain extent, corresponding to the level they have reached, yet their realization does not cover all the fields and kinds of the knowable. When a bodhisattva realizes the absolute truth, this is a realization free from the veil that hinders this very realization. What is realized at this point is the fact that the true state of a sentient being is peace. This is the correct knowledge of a bodhisattva. From this knowledge the recognition results that this peace, which is the true state of a sentient being, pervades all, no matter how many there are. This is the complete knowledge of a

bodhisattva.

The realization of a Buddha means that he directly sees the nature of all phenomena. This is his correct knowledge. He has complete knowledge from the point of view that he sees the entire range of the knowable. As opposed to that, the passage explained here only refers to a being or to beings respectively. When the nature of one's own mind is realized directly, the power of this realization leads one to see that all sentient beings are the same in that their true state is equally peace; one realizes that the true state that has been realized pervades them all. In other words, there are two objects of realization. The nature of one's own mind is realized directly. From this realization a second is deduced. The first object of realization is the true state of beings, which is peace. From this viewpoint there is correct knowledge. The second object of realization is the fact that not a single being is exempted from this true state, that it pervades them all. From this viewpoint there is complete knowledge. When it is stated that bodhisattvas see these objects of realization in a way that they do not have in common with others, this means they have command of a knowledge unequaled by that of an ordinary being, a shravaka, or a pratyekabuddha. In the view presented by the *Madhyamakavatara* and similar scriptures, the three kinds of noble ones, that is, shravaka arhats, pratyekabuddha arhats, and bodhisattvas who have reached the bhumis, are considered as being on the same level. In this view the noble shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have also realized emptiness. Yet, when talking about emptiness in this context, this refers only to the aspect of spaciousness (Tib. *dbyangs*), to freedom from conceptual elaboration. In the context of the *Uttara Tantra Shastra* the object of realization is Buddha nature, the tathagatagarbha, being the inseparable union of spaciousness and awareness. This is very difficult to understand. With this understanding bodhisattvas have a realization that they do not hold in common with shravaka and pratyekabuddha arhats. For bodhisattvas who have reached the bodhisattva levels, different names are used. They are also called "those who have understanding" (Tib. *blo ldan*), "the heirs of the Victorious One" (Tib. *rgyal sras*), or "shoot of the Victorious One" (Tib. *rgyal ba'i nyu gu*). The noble bodhisattvas are more excellent than the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas since they excel these in understanding. When one speaks of the inner primordial wisdom, this means that noble bodhisattvas realize the nature of their own minds, the sugatagarbha, independently from extraneous conditions, by means of self-sprung primordial wisdom. This realization takes place in such a way that the conceptual elaboration, containing the duality of an object realized and a realizing subject, has come to complete peace. Through the power of inner realization there is correct and complete knowledge. Since noble bodhisattvas have directly realized the nature of their own minds, they possess the inner realization. Through the power of this realization they see that the true state of a sentient being is peace. This is correct knowledge. Subsequently they see that this peace pervades all beings without exception. This is complete knowledge. These three aspects are the quality of awareness. Noble bodhisattvas are purified from the two veils of attachment and obstruction, which is to say, from the veils of the mental poisons and hindrances to knowledge. With regard to both veils, a coarse, a subtler, and an extremely

subtle aspect are distinguished. Having reached the first bodhisattva level, one is purified from the gross aspects of the veils of the mental poisons and hindrances to knowledge. The coarse aspect of the veil of the hindrances to knowledge is the belief in true existence. The two subtler aspects, that is, the perception of characteristics and the appearance of duality as such, are to be removed gradually while traveling the bodhisattva levels. The quality of being unsurpassable means that noble bodhisattvas are freed from inferior views, from the understanding derived from the lesser vehicles. These are the three aspects of the quality of liberation.)

B.II.2.1.3.3. Detailed explanation by combining the praise and the presentation of the qualities

B.II.2.1.3.3.1. Explanation of the way they realize correctly

Realizing beings in their state of peace [the noble ones] know correctly, for [the mind] is by nature utterly pure

By means of their self-aware primordial wisdom the awakened noble ones realize directly that the nature of mind of all sentient beings has a state of peace beyond any conceptual elaboration. Therefore they possess the primordial wisdom that knows correctly. This is because they realize that the minds of beings are by nature utterly pure and luminous clarity, and that the adventitious mental poisons [obscuring] their minds have never arisen [or existed] and are therefore exhausted and ceased.

B.II.2.1.3.3.2. Explanation of the way they realize completely

Their understanding, which realizes the knowable as well as [its] ultimate condition, sees that the state of omniscience is within all beings. Thus the [noble ones] know completely.

Their understanding, or in other words, the discriminative wisdom beyond the worldly, realizes all knowable objects and realizes suchness, their ultimate condition. By means of self-aware primordial wisdom this understanding sees directly that the state of omniscience, the tathagatagarbha, is all-pervasively present within all beings, no matter how many there are, as the nature [of their

minds]. Therefore the awakened noble ones possess the primordial wisdom that knows completely—knowing all those whose state is relative. As is stated in [Asanga’s own] commentary, this seeing arises from the first bodhisattva level onwards, since the dharmadhatu is realized as being all-pervasive.

(The vision of primordial wisdom that knows completely arises from the first bodhisattva level onwards, since at the time when one reaches this level the meaning of the true state is seen directly.)

B.II.2.1.3.3.3. Explanation of the particularity of complete purification

Such realization is the vision of wisdom that is self-aware. This wisdom is pure, since it [sees] the undefiled expanse, free from attachment and obstruction.

Such realization is the vision of the noble ones. It is the realization of the path beyond the worldly achieved through the two types of primordial wisdom. This vision takes place in a way that is not held in common with others: through self-aware primordial wisdom. This wisdom knows correctly since it perceives that the dharmadhatu, which is by nature undefiled, pervades everything, and since it is free from the veil of the mental poisons, which are bound up with attachment. It knows completely since it realizes that this dharmadhatu pervades all knowable things, and since it is free from the veil of the hindrances to knowledge, which are bound up with obstruction. Therefore these two types of primordial wisdom are of extreme and utter purity in comparison to a seeing by means of an ephemeral primordial wisdom.

(One speaks of the path beyond the worldly or the path of the noble ones, since bodhisattvas who have reached the bodhisattva levels have a realization that is beyond the stage of an ordinary being. They see the dharmadhatu in a way that they do not have in common with others, that is, with ordinary beings, shravakas, and pratyekabuddhas, just as it is, by means of self-aware or self-sprung primordial wisdom. When this dharmadhatu is called “by nature undefiled,” this means that the defilements cannot touch the essence of mind at all, that the essence of mind is

free from pollution. This undefiled basis is the element, the Buddha nature, or sugatagarbha, which pervades all beings without exception. The fact that bodhisattvas realize this, is called complete knowledge. There are two ways of explaining complete knowledge. In the section commented here it is described as the realization that the dharmadhatu pervades all knowable things. In this case the dharmadhatu is to be understood as emptiness in the sense of complete freedom from conceptual elaboration, as it is explained in the Rangtong Madhyamaka system. When exclusively viewed as emptiness or as being beyond conceptual elaboration, the dharmadhatu pervades everything, all sentient beings as well as all things. When viewed in the light of the Shentong Madhyamaka, the dharmadhatu is the inseparable union of spaciousness and awareness. This is the nature of mind or the way the mind truly exists. As such it does not pervade outer objects. An ephemeral primordial wisdom is to be understood as a temporary or provisional one, such as that of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas who only see the selflessness of persons. In comparison with such provisional primordial wisdom, the bodhisattvas' primordial wisdom knowing correctly and completely is of extreme purity. From the viewpoint of the primordial wisdom of a Buddha, however, this is not the case. From this perspective the primordial wisdom of a bodhisattva who has reached the first bodhisattva level is similar to the new moon, whereas the realization of a Buddha is like the full moon. A Buddha and a bodhisattva are equal as far as the realization of the meaning of the dharmata or the true state is concerned, but there is a great difference in terms of the power or ability of their understanding, in terms of its clarity and expandedness. When it is said that the primordial wisdom of bodhisattvas is free from the veils of the mental poisons and hindrances to knowledge, this does not mean that a bodhisattva is free from all these veils without any remainder. Utter purification from the veils is not achieved until the level of buddhahood is reached. When a bodhisattva attains the first bodhisattva level he has freed himself from the veils that obstruct the direct realization of the true state, which is to say, he is free from veils during meditation while one-pointedly abiding within the true state itself, seeing the Buddha nature. This can be compared to the way in which the sense consciousness of the eye is unobscured and free from veils when it perceives a flower just as it appears. In other words, the primordial wisdom of a bodhisattva is a selective or individual perception and understanding. It is not comparable to the primordial wisdom of a Buddha, which covers all aspects without exception. This is due to the fact that a bodhisattva who has reached the first bhumi has purified the veils to a certain extent. Taking the veil of the hindrances to knowledge as an example, a coarse, a subtler, and a very subtle aspect are distinguished. The attainment of the bodhisattva levels is equivalent to the moment in which emptiness is seen directly, in such a way that there is not only a passing experience but an immediate realization that cannot be lost. This realization takes place when the coarse aspect of the veil of the hindrances to knowledge, that is, the belief in true existence, is abandoned. As long as one holds things to be truly existent, one cannot realize emptiness. Once one has attained this realization and thereby the first bodhisattva level, the subtler and very subtle aspects of the veil of the

hindrances to knowledge, which are the perceptual grasping of characteristics and of duality as such, are to be given up gradually while traveling the nine levels above. There are three different explanations as to the way in which the veils are gradually abandoned. Two of these hold that the main part of the veil of the mental poisons and the coarse aspect of the veil of the hindrances to knowledge are abandoned when the bodhisattva levels are reached. According to the third it is only the coarse aspect of the veil of the mental poisons that is eliminated at this point. The subtler aspects of this veil are gradually purified until the seventh bodhisattva level is reached; the purification from the veil of the hindrances to knowledge only starts when the eighth level is attained. This is the explanation of the Gelugpa tradition, when the Prasangika Madhyamaka system is presented. There are further differences according to the Svatantrika Madhyamaka system.)

B.II.2.1.3.3.4. Explanation of its being a sublime refuge

Their vision [of] primordial wisdom is pure and [nears] unsurpassable Buddha wisdom. The noble ones who do not fall back are therefore a refuge for all beings.

Since they have the vision of the two types of primordial wisdom, thus possessing the quality of awareness, and since they are purified from the veils of attachment and obstruction, thus possessing the quality of liberation, they are near to the unsurpassable primordial wisdom of a Buddha. Therefore the noble ones who directly see the true state and thus do not fall back from perfect enlightenment have become a refuge protecting all sentient beings from having to feel suffering within samsara.

THE THREE REFUGES

B.II.2.1.4. Explanation of the three kinds of refuge

B.II.2.1.4.1. The necessity to present three types of refuge

There being the teacher, his teaching, and his disciples leads to respective aspirations towards three vehicles and to three different activities [of veneration]. Viewing this, the refuge is shown as threefold.

For the following reason the refuge is presented as being threefold: The fact that the qualities of the Buddha who is the teacher are taught entails two different reactions. On one hand there are those [individuals] who see the qualities of this teacher and thereupon strive for the attainment of buddhahood. Of the three vehicles they follow the Mahayana. On the other hand there are those who of the three types of activities of veneration have the aspiration of venerating the Buddha as being supreme among gods and humans. Considering this, buddhahood is presented as the first of the three refuges. Likewise, the fact that the qualities of the sacred Dharma are taught leads to two reactions. On one hand there are those [individuals] who see the qualities of this teaching and thereupon wish to realize and attain the profound Dharma of interdependent origination on their own. They follow the Pratyekabuddhayana. On the other hand there are those who have the aspiration of venerating the Dharma as being supreme among that which is free from desire. Considering this, the Dharma is presented as the second refuge. The fact that the qualities of the Sangha, of the assembly of disciples, are taught leads to the following two reactions: On one hand there are those [individuals] who see the qualities of these disciples and thereupon wish to attain their state, [the state of an arhat], by practicing the teaching [of the Buddha] as taught by others. They follow the Shravakayana. (*Śrāvakayāna is one of the three yānas known to Indian Buddhism. It translates literally as the "vehicle of listeners [i.e. disciples]". Historically it was the most common term used by Mahāyāna Buddhist texts to describe one hypothetical path to enlightenment. Śrāvakayāna is the path that meets the goals of an Arhat—an individual who achieves liberation as a result of listening to the teachings (or lineage) of a Samyaksambuddha.*

At least some of the early Buddhist schools used the concept of three vehicles including Śrāvakayāna. For example, the Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins are known to have employed the outlook of Buddhist practice as consisting of the Three Vehicles: Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna and Bodhisattvayāna

The Dharmaguptakas regarded the path of a śrāvaka (śrāvakayāna) and the path of a bodhisattva (bodhisattvayāna) to be separate. One of their tenets reads, "The Buddha and those of the Two Vehicles, although they have one and the same liberation, have followed different noble paths."

In Mahāyāna traditions, In the 4th century Mahāyāna abhidharma work

Abhidharmasamuccaya, Asaṅga describes those who follow the Śrāvaka Vehicle (Skt. śrāvakayanika). These people are described as having weak faculties, following the Śrāvaka Dharma, utilizing the Śrāvaka Piṭaka, being set on their own liberation, and cultivating detachment in order to attain liberation. While those in the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle (Skt. pratyekabuddhayānika) are portrayed as also utilizing the Śrāvaka Piṭaka, they are said to have medium faculties, to follow the Pratyekabuddha Dharma, and to be set on their own personal enlightenment. Finally, those in the Mahāyāna (Skt. mahāyānika) are portrayed as utilizing the Bodhisattva Piṭaka, as having sharp faculties, following the Bodhisattva Dharma, and set on the perfection and liberation of all beings, and the attainment of complete enlightenment.) On the other hand there are those who have the aspiration of venerating the Sangha as supreme among assemblies. Considering this, the Sangha is presented as the third refuge. Put briefly, the refuge is presented as being threefold in consideration of the fact that the three aspects [of teacher, teaching, and disciples] result in six types of individuals. This presentation is taught in order to enable beings to gradually gain access [to the path].

(During their last existence those who follow the pratyekabuddha vehicle concentrate exclusively on the twelve links of interdependent origination. Relying on this means as their sole support they endeavor to attain the fruit on their own. While traveling the path of training, pratyekabuddhas rely on numerous spiritual friends. Their last existence is the one in which they attain the state of a pratyekabuddha arhat. During this last existence they absorb themselves in their own interdependent origination without the help of a spiritual friend and reflect how this interdependent origination is to be reversed. Through their investigation of interdependence they realize that ignorance gives rise to karmic activity, which in its turn gives rise to birth up to aging and death, that in this way the entirety of samsara comes about. This leads to the understanding that death and old age have ceased when birth is ceased, that birth has ceased when karmic activity is ceased and that karmic activity has ceased when ignorance is ceased. While reflecting on the way in which this dependent origination is gradually reversed, they come to realize what ignorance means. When they are able to see and understand ignorance, they realize that ignorance is by nature not truly existent. They realize the profound meaning of interdependence and thus attain the fruit they have been striving for.)

B.II.2.1.4.2. Explanation of which is the ultimate refuge and which are not

[The Dharma] will be abandoned and is of an unsteady nature. It is not [the ultimate quality], and [the Sangha] is still with fear. Thus the

two aspects of Dharma and the Assembly of noble ones do not represent the supreme refuge, which is constant and stable. In a true sense only the Buddha is beings' refuge, since the Great Sage embodies the dharmakaya, and the Assembly also reaches its ultimate goal when these [qualities of dharmakaya are attained].

One may wonder whether the three kinds of refuge explained above equally represent an ultimate refuge. This is not the case. The Dharma in terms of teaching is to be abandoned like a boat is left behind once one has crossed the water. Of the two aspects of Dharma in terms of realization, the realization of those who travel the path of training proceeds from one level to the next and is therefore of an unsteady or changing nature. The truths of cessation of the lesser vehicles and of [bodhisattvas] traveling the path of training do not constitute the ultimate quality. The Sanghas of arhats of the lesser vehicles and of noble bodhisattvas who are on the path of training are still with the fear of the veils. As long as they have not arrived at the level of a Buddha who is free from fear, they themselves will take refuge in the Buddha as well. For these reasons, neither the two aspects of Dharma, that is, teaching and realization, which constitute the training, nor the assemblies of the noble ones who are the trainees, are the constant and stable supreme refuge. In a true or definitive sense only a Buddha is the ultimate refuge of the limitless number of sentient beings, since the Great Sage, the Buddha, is the embodiment of the dharmakaya, which is the completion of freedom from desire and attachment, and since the members of the assembly, the Sangha, also reach their ultimate [goal] when they attain the qualities of this [dharmakaya]. Here [in the context of the *Mahayana Uttara Tantra Shastra*] the Buddha is called “the inexhaustible refuge,” “the permanent refuge,” “the immutable refuge” (Tib. *g.yung drung gi skyabs*), and “the absolute refuge.” In the given order this explanation refers to the fact that a Buddha is free from death, free from birth, free from aging, and that he is unfailing. This is also the intention of the *Aryashrimalasutra* (Tib. *'phags pa dpal phreng gi mdo*).

(Dharma in terms of teaching comprises all the teachings of the great and lesser vehicles. When

speaking of abandoning, two aspects are to be distinguished. These are abandonment by means of an antidote, and a natural process of abandonment taking place through attaining the ultimate fruit. The veils of the mental poisons and hindrances to knowledge are to be abandoned by means of an antidote suitable to each, respectively. As far as the Dharma in terms of teaching is concerned, no antidote is needed. It is abandoned in a natural way by attaining the ultimate fruit. Once this fruit is attained, it is no longer necessary to rely on teachings, just as a boat is no longer needed once one has reached the far bank of the river. The two aspects of Dharma in terms of realization are the truth of the path, being the means freeing one from attachment, and the truth of cessation, which constitutes freedom from attachment. The path of training consists of four aspects: the paths of accumulation, junction, seeing, and meditation. The realization of those who travel the path of training is fleeting, since it undergoes a continuous development and progresses from one stage to the next. While following the path of junction, for instance, one meditates on emptiness in such a way that one has a view or an opinion of it. One attributes a certain meaning to emptiness. Once one goes beyond this stage during which emptiness is realized as a complete non-presence of anything and so on, and realizes emptiness directly, the preceding meditation proves to be a changeable phenomenon. During the path of accumulation one meditates on suffering and impermanence, and realizes these to be facts. During the path of junction one sees them in the light of emptiness. When emptiness is realized directly, suffering and impermanence do not truly exist. In this way realization changes on the path of training, developing gradually from one stage to the next. The truths of cessation of bodhisattvas who travel the path of training up to the tenth bodhisattva level and of arhats of the lesser vehicles are not an ultimate refuge since they do not constitute the ultimate quality. In other words, they do not embody the true ultimate fruit, since the ultimate quality is not realized. A refuge that does not embody the ultimate quality is not suited to be an ultimate refuge. To a respective extent, the Sanghas of arhats of the lesser vehicles and of bodhisattvas who have attained the bodhisattva levels have not yet purified the subtle parts of the veils, and are therefore bound up with the fear of these veils. They have not reached the state of utter fearlessness, which is the state of a Buddha. Until this is achieved, the members of these Sanghas themselves take refuge in the Buddha. Therefore they are also not an ultimate refuge. In truth, only a Buddha who is purified from the two veils and the corresponding remaining imprints, and whose understanding is expanded to cover the highest object of knowledge, is the ultimate refuge of all sentient beings without exception. When the commentary speaks of the completion of freedom from desire and attachment, this refers to freedom from the two veils. Only a Buddha is ultimately free from the two veils of the mental poisons and hindrances to knowledge, while arhats and noble bodhisattvas are freed from these veils to a certain extent, corresponding to the respective level they have reached. Only when a member of the Sangha reaches the level of buddhahood has he attained his ultimate fruit, having become a Buddha himself. A Buddha is an inexhaustible refuge since he is free from death. He is a permanent refuge since he is free from birth. He is an immutable or unchanging refuge since he is

free from aging. He is the absolute or true refuge since he is not fleeting or unsteady, and therefore is unailing.)

B.II.2.1.4.3. Explanation of the meaning of the name “rare and sublime”

Their occurrence is rare, they are free from defilement, they possess power, they are the adornment of the world, they are sublime, and they are unchanging. Thus [they are named] “rare and sublime.”

One may wonder what is the meaning of the term “rare and sublime” (Tib. *dkon mchog*). It is derived from the term “ratna” [Skt. For “jewel”] and is here defined by means of six aspects corresponding to the properties of a precious [wish-fulfilling] gem. A [wish-fulfilling] jewel is difficult to find. Its essence is free from defilements. It possesses the power to fulfill needs and wishes. Due to its beauty it becomes an adornment. It is more sublime than an artificial gem and it does not change through being praised, blamed, and so on. Likewise, the occurrence of the three refuges is also rare, since those who have not cultivated the roots of virtue will not even meet them in the course of many kalpas or eons. The three refuges are free from the pollution of the two veils. They possess the inconceivable power of the qualities of clairvoyance and so on. Since they are the cause of all virtuous thoughts and intentions of sentient beings in the world, they have become its adornment. Since they are beyond the world, they are more sublime than anything worldly. Since they are not created by karma, mental poisons, and so on, they are unchanging. For these reasons they are similar to a precious [wish-fulfilling] gem and are therefore expressed by means of the name “rare and sublime.”

Benefits Of The Offering Clouds Dharani

ཨོཾ་མོ་ནི་ག་མ་ཏེ། བཛྲ་སྒྲ་ར་ཐ་མད་ནེ། ཏ་ཐ་ག་ཏུ་ཡུན་ཏེ། སུམ་མྱོ་བརྒྱ་ཡ། ཏུ་ཐ། ཨོཾ་བཛྲ་བཛྲ། མ་དུ་བཛྲ། མ་དུ་ཏེ་ར་བཛྲ། མ་དུ་
ཐི་བཛྲ། མ་དུ་ཐོན་ཅིན་བཛྲ། མ་དུ་ཐོན་མཛྲ་པ་སྒྲ་མ་ཏེ་བཛྲ། སཐ་ཀམ་བ་ར་ཏ་ཐི་ཐོན་ན་བཛྲ་སྒྲ་དུ།

**Namo Ratna Trayaya Om Namu Bhagawate Benza Sara Tramar
Dhane Tatagataya Arhate Samyak Sambuddhaya Teyata: Om Benze
Benze Maha Benze Maha Tedzo Benze Maha Vidya Benze Maha
Bodhicitta Benze Maha Bodhi Mendopa Samtramana Benze Sarwa
Karma Awarana Bishodhana Benze Soha**

Homage to the Three Jewels. Homage to the Blessed One, the Vajra Decimator of Strife, the Tathagata, the Destroyer of the Enemy, the Consummately Perfect Buddha! So it goes: Om to the Vajra, to the Vajra, the Magnificent Vajra, the Magnificent Light Vajra, the Magnificent Awareness Vajra, the Magnificent Enlightened Attitude Vajra, the Magnificent Circle of Enlightenment, the Vajra that moves through every stage, the Tamer of all Karmas, the Vajra of Purity: Svaha!!

This mantra is not only for blessing, it also has the power to multiply the offerings. There are numberless Buddhas and by reciting this mantra each Buddha receives clouds of offerings. That's why it's called the mantra of the clouds of offerings. The mantra has two functions: blessing and increasing.

There are **eight benefits** of reciting this mantra explained in the Buddha's teachings, the Kangyur:

- 1/ The minute you remember this mantra, you gain the benefit of having made offering to all the Buddhas abiding in the ten directions, equaling the number of the atoms of the sand grains of the Ocean.
- 2/ You get the benefit of having prostrated to the holy feet of all those Buddhas.
- 3/ You receive the benefit of having made offering of flowers, incense, garlands of flowers, ornaments, ointments, Dharma robes, umbrellas, banners, flags, animals, sitting cloths, divine dress, food, various ornaments and so forth to all the Buddhas abiding in the ten directions (as above).
- 4/ You are freed from all negative karma.
- 5/ You gain all the merits.
- 6/ You will see all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and they will "give you breath"

(Inspire you to generate Bodhicitta).

7/ You will be protected by Nagas, Devas, Yakshinis (Tib. Nöjin Shyi are female protector deities of Tibet, bound under oath by Guru Padmasambhava.), Gandharva (Skt.; Tib. dri za. 'scent-eaters' the 'musicians of the heavens' who reside in the two heavens at the very top of Mount Meru.), Demi-gods (Skt. asura; Tib. lha min. One of the six classes of beings. They are powerful and intelligent beings who dwell in cavities inside Mount Meru down to the universal golden basis and whose pleasures and abundance rival those of the gods.), Garudas (On the outer level, the garuda is a mythical semi-divine bird-like creature that is the enemy of the nagas. It is represented in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. In the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition, the garuda was associated with the khyung, which are important deities of the Bön pantheon, and practised during healing rituals in order to counter certain illnesses provoked by nagas.), The Four Haughty ones (Tib.myemchi), Vajrapani the Owner of the Secrecy, and the Four Guardians (The Eight Guardians of the World are composed of four Hindu gods: Brahma, Shambhu (Shiva), Narayana (Vishnu), Indra the Thousand-Eyed, and the Four Great Kings: Dhritarashtra, Virudhaka, Virupaksha, Vaishravana). They will always follow you perfectly, protect you and guide you. If others try to inflict harm, they will hide you from that.

8/ When you die, your consciousness will transfer from this world to Amitabha Buddha's pure land, the Blissful Realm.

You receive all these qualities and benefits just by remembering this mantra once.