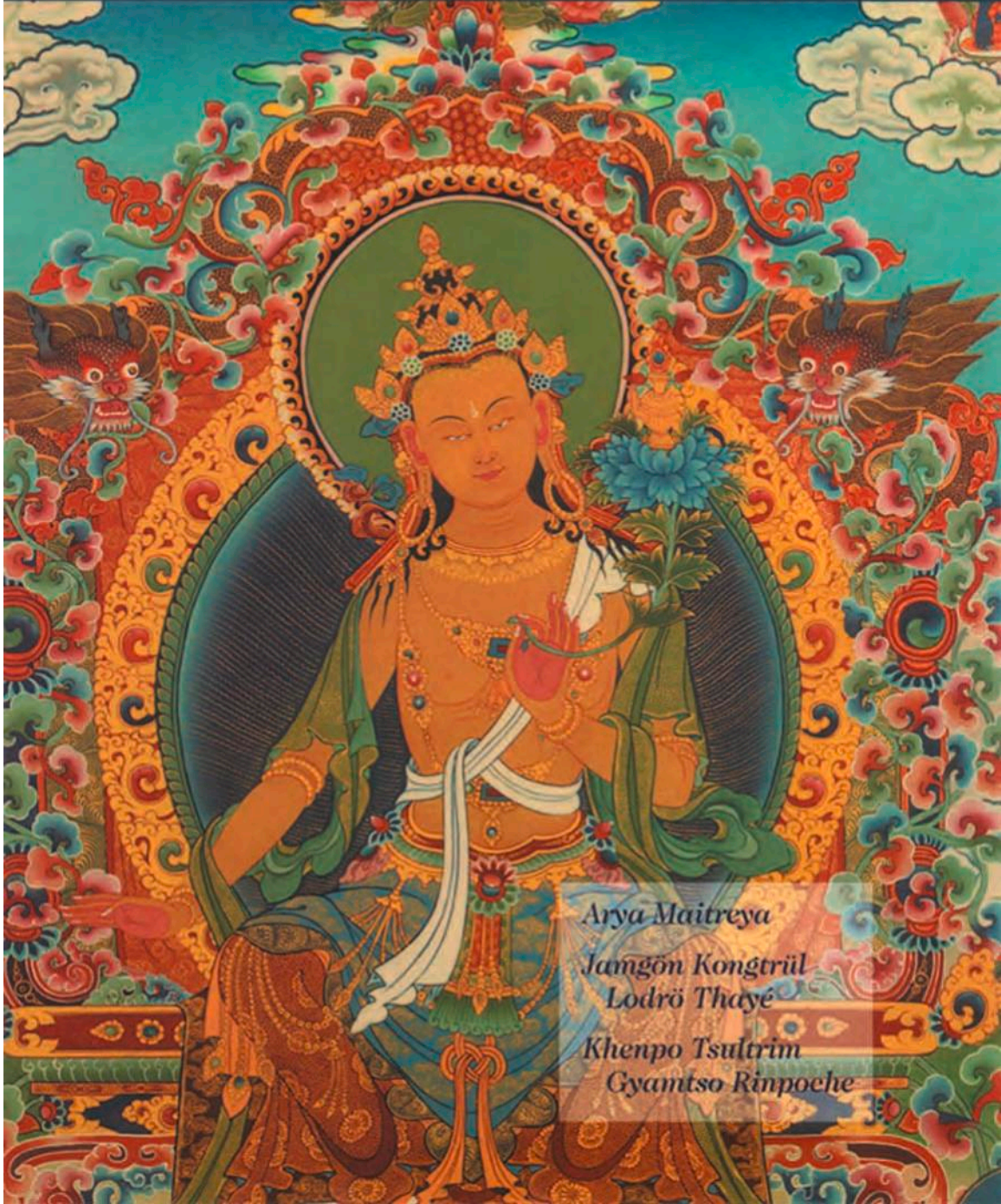


Buddha Nature

THE MAHAYANA UTTARATANTRA SHASTRA WITH COMMENTARY



Arya Maitreya
Jamgön Kongtrül
Lodrö Thayé
Khenpo Tsultrim
Gyantso Rinpoche

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The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra

By Arya Maitreya, written down by Arya Asanga.

*Commentary by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayé: "The Unassailable Lion's Roar".
Explanations by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche.*

Translated by Rosemarie Fuchs

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INTRODUCTION

A. Part One: Introduction [not translated]

B. Part Two: Words and meaning of the actual text expanded in detail B.I. Title and salutation corresponding to the meaning [not translated] B.I.1. Title [not translated]

B.I.1.1. Combination of the two languages [not translated]

B.I.1.2. Explanation of their meaning [not translated]

B.I.2. Salutation of the translator

I bow down to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

For the term "buddha," as he is called in his native language, in Tibetan the term sangs rgyas [pronounced "sanjay"] is used, which literally means "awakened and expanded." This refers to two aspects: abandonment and realization. A Buddha has awoken from the sleep of ignorance just as, for example, one wakes up from ordinary sleep.

This is the aspect of abandonment. Similar to a fully blossomed lotus, his understanding has expanded with regard to the knowable. This is the aspect of realization.

The Tibetan equivalent for the Sanskrit term "bodhisattva" is byang chub sems dpa' [pronounced "jang chub sem pa"], the three components of which can be literally translated as "enlightenment" (Tib. byang chub), "mind" (Tib. sems), and "courage" (Tib. dpa'). This refers to the fact that a bodhisattva has two objectives. By means of his discriminative wisdom he focuses on enlightenment, and by means of his compassion he focuses on beings [literally, "on those who have a mind"]. The term sems dpa' can also be understood as "courageous mind" in terms of mental steadfastness, curative capacity, inner strength, and courage, which refer to the fact that a bodhisattva is capable of enduring great hardships for the sake of enlightenment.

To all these Buddhas and bodhisattvas I bow down respectfully with body, speech, and mind.

Before the great translators undertook a translation work, they first paid homage to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Likewise, we should follow their example and also begin by bowing down to our Yidam deity before we engage in an explanation or a similar task.

B.II. The actual commentary, which has supreme meaning

B.II.1. Presentation of the body of the text

B.II.1.1. Explanation of the body of the commentary as consisting of seven Vajra points

If condensed, the body of the entire commentary [consists of] the following seven vajra points: Buddha, Dharma, the Assembly, the element, enlightenment, qualities, and then Buddha activity.

In a condensed way, the entire content or body of the commentary to be explained is taught in terms of seven vajra points. The term “vajra” is used since a precious vajra is composed of indestructible material, and the subject to be expressed is difficult to penetrate by means of the discriminative wisdoms resulting from study and reflection.

The first point contains the explanation of perfect Buddhahood, which constitutes what is to be attained—this being the ultimate level of the two benefits, which are benefit for oneself and benefit for others.

The second point explains the sacred Dharma as having the characteristics of the two truths, which are free from attachment.

The third point is the Sangha of the noble ones, the assembly of those who do not fall back since they possess the two types of primordial Wisdom (Skt. *jñāna*, Tib. *ye shes*).

The fourth point explains the expanse (Tib. *dbyings*) or the element of beings that is by nature completely pure. This is what needs to be truly realized, its realization constituting the way in which Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are attained.

The fifth point is unsurpassable enlightenment, the essence of realization, the state in which this element is purified from all defilements without the slightest remainder.

The sixth point describes the qualities accompanying great enlightenment. They are the attributes of realization and consist of [two] fruits: those of freedom and complete maturation.

Finally, the seventh point explains Buddha activity, which is spontaneous and uninterrupted. This is the power or ability of the qualities, the means causing others to gain realization.

B.II.1.2. Reference to the sutras constituting their source

In the above order, which presents them in a logical sequence, these [vajra points] should be known to be derived from the Sutra Requested by King Dharanishvara.

The [first] three stem from its introductory chapter and the [latter] four from [its chapters] on the properties of those who possess understanding and the Victorious One.

The order in which these seven vajra points are explained here, where they are presented in a logical sequence corresponding to their essence or characteristics, is the same as given in the sutra famed as The Explanation of the Great Compassion of the Tathagata, or the Sutra Requested by King Dharanishvara. In this context the first three vajra points, the explanation of the Three Jewels, should be known as being derived from the introductory chapter of this sutra. The bodhisattva Dharanishvararaja says there [in answer to a question of the Buddha]:

O Bhagavan! He is directly and perfectly awakened and expanded within the equality of all phenomena. He faultlessly turns the wheel of Dharma. He possesses a limitless assembly of extremely well trained disciples... and so on.

As for the remaining four vajra points, first the buddha element is elucidated by means of “The Explanation of the Sixty Methods of Completely Purifying the Qualities or Properties of the Path of a Bodhisattva who Possesses Understanding,” which follows upon the introductory chapter. In relation to this [Nagarjuna], in the Dharmadhatustava (Tib. *chos kyi dbyings su bstod pa*), says:

If the element is present and one labors, pure natural gold will be seen. If the element is not present, no matter how much one labors, one only exhausts oneself in weariness and pain. Since a ground to be purified from the defilements is present in the form of the tathagatagarbha or the dharmadhatu, which is by nature pure, it is justified to show ways of complete purification for the sake of its direct manifestation.

The sixty methods of complete purification are the four ornaments of a bodhisattva, the eight aspects of appearance, the sixteen kinds of great compassion, and the thirty-two kinds of activity.

The last three vajra points should be understood as being derived from “The Explanation of the Eighty Types of Qualities of the Victorious One.” Following the explanation of the dharmadhatu, enlightenment is elucidated from the explanation of the sixteen kinds of great compassion. After that, the qualities are clarified by means of the explanation of the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, and the eighteen exclusive or unmixed features of a Buddha. Subsequently, activity is elucidated by means of the explanation of the thirty-two aspects of the unsurpassable activity of a Tathagata. With the passage: “O Son of Noble Family, the action of a Tathagata consists of these thirty-two!” action and actor are expressed simultaneously.

Due to the formulation in the root text [the last syllable of the stanza (Skt. Sloka) explained here being a particle that could either be understood as a finishing or a combining particle] some scholars hold that the way in which the seven vajra points are explained is derived from different sutras. According to this opinion the Three Jewels are derived from the Sutra Teaching Higher Reflection. The element is derived from the Sutra that is Free from Increase and Obscuration. Enlightenment stems from the Lion’s Roar of Shrialadevi Sutra the qualities from the Sutra that is Free from Increase and Obscuration, and activity from the Sutra Showing the Realm of the Inconceivable Qualities and Wisdom of the Tathagata

B.II.1.3. Explanation of their sequence by means of the given order

From the Buddha [stems] the Dharma, from the Dharma the Assembly of noble ones, from the Assembly the attainment of Buddha nature, the element of primordial wisdom.

This wisdom finally attained is supreme enlightenment, the powers and so on, [thus] possessing the properties that fulfill the benefit of all sentient beings.

From whoever is directly and perfectly awakened and expanded within the expanse of the equality of all phenomena stems the faultless turning of the wheel of Dharma. From the Dharma being practiced as it was taught stems the Assembly of the noble ones, a limitless number of extremely well trained disciples. In their streams of being, the element or Buddha nature, which has become the cause of primordial wisdom, is attained in the sense that it is [apparently] present. From having become [a member of] the Sangha, this primordial wisdom of a Buddha is finally attained at the end of the process in which the defilements obscuring the Buddha nature are removed. This is the attainment of supreme enlightenment. This enlightenment possesses the qualities, which consist of the powers and so on. These qualities in their turn constitute the primary condition for the arising of the endowment with properties equivalent to activity, which fulfills the benefit of all sentient beings.

Acknowledging this sequence, the commentary is therefore presented in this order.

THE FIRST THREE VAJRA POINTS: THE THREE JEWELS

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 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 are the immediate causes of suffering. Wielding the supreme vajra of 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.

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.

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 that 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.