



The Sutra of the 35 Buddhas

And related practice

Collected Notes

Bodhi Path Natural Bridge

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Contact.tsony@gmail.com

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Life of Buddha Shakyamuni and his twelve deeds

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Among the many great religions of the world, Buddhism is a highly respected religion of reason and meditation. It has been considered by many of history's greatest minds to be the widest and most powerful field of human thought. In order to understand Buddhism one must gather reliable information about the teacher who taught the path. Lord Buddha, the originator of the sublime teachings, the basis of all happiness and peace is not to be understood as a jolly and corpulent man. This is a popular misconception. The word 'Buddha' is Sanskrit for one who is "fully enlightened" regarding the nature and meaning of life and all existent phenomena. In fact, it is not an ordinary name of a person, but a title designated for one who has reached the highest state of enlightenment.

Although the appearance of a Buddha in the world is as rare as the flower of the Udumbara tree, numerous "Buddhas" appear successively at suitable but long intervals. I would assume that there are actually many kinds of time but mainly two: that is, historical time measured in years and centuries, and cosmic time measured in eons or kalpas.

This is an exceptionally rare eon during which one thousand Buddhas are said to appear on this world. Owing to the auspiciousness of having a thousand Buddhas in one eon, the present eon (or kalpa) is known as "Bhadra-Kalpa", which means fortunate eon. Throughout this kalpa various Buddhas have appeared at times of different lifespan lengths of human beings of this planet (Jambudvipa, the Southern continent). They were Buddha Krakuchchanda, Kanakamuni, Kashyapa and Shakyamuni. The Buddha Krakuchchanda is said to have come when average human beings lived as old as 80,000. Kanakumuni and Kashyapa Buddha came when the human lifespan was 30,000 and 20,000 years respectively. It must have

taken billions and billions of years to decrease human beings' lifespan down to a hundred years. Our historical Buddha Shakyamuni came to the world when average human beings' lifespan was a 100 years, during an age of conflict as it is known in literal language. It was 2,528 years ago that he came to this world; that is 455 years before Christ. The average lifespan of human beings in this century would approximately be 70 years or even less.

The Mahayana tradition of Buddhism asserts that Shakyamuni Buddha, during his previous lives as a Bodhisattva, first generated Bodhicitta as an enlightened aspiration to benefit limitless sentient beings. Consequently, he accumulated the stocks of merit and exalted-wisdom for the duration of three great incalculable kalpas and finally reached enlightenment at the Buddha-realm of Akanishta. He came to the world to lead immeasurable sentient beings to the state of Buddhahood with the skillful demonstration of the twelve great deeds of an enlightened being.

The resolve to take supreme reincarnation

Previous to his life as the Indian Prince Siddhartha, Buddha, then a Bodhisattva, lived and taught Dharma in Tushita, the Joyous Buddha field. All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions advised him that the time had come to manifest the supreme rebirth in the world of Jambudvipa, the Southern continent. The Bodhisattva then handed Maitreya (the future Buddha of loving kindness) his jeweled crown. He then proclaimed to the Devas that Maitreya was now regent and would be taking the office of Teaching in Tushita heaven. Before entering the world, the Bodhisattva made five careful observations concerning the time, place, caste, lineage and mother to whom he would be born. As he developed his thought of enlightenment, he perceived that it was a suitable time for him to manifest when human beings only lived a hundred years of age in a period of great conflict.

Time must have ripened for the many fortunate sentient beings that would be guided when the Bodhisattva resolved to come to the world. Moreover, it is very

significant that he was conceived in his mother's womb when she had hardly a year to live. Buddhas only appear in the world to liberate sentient beings from the sufferings of rebirth and death. Regarding Jambudvipa, the southern continent was more suitable because human beings have extremely sharp faculties for developing pure renunciation. Human beings of other continents had excessive wealth and pleasure which intoxicated their minds and made them dull and unreceptive to spiritual teachings. When there are suitable places and fortunate beings, there a Buddha will take his manifestation. It is said that the supreme reincarnation of a Buddha only takes his rebirth either in a Kshatriya, the ruling class, or as a Brahmin, the class of people who officiate as priests and custodians of religious knowledge.

First deed: Descent from Tushita heaven

There was a city, once the dwelling and meditation place of the great saint, Kapila which was surrounded by the beauty of a lofty broad table-land as if by a line of clouds, and its high soaring palaces were immersed in the sky. High and beautiful peaks surrounded the northern region in the shape of a crescent moon. The city was named Kapilvastu and was the capital city of the Shakya clan whose powerful ruling king was Shudodhana. In that city, shining with the splendor of gems, darkness such as poverty could find no place; prosperity shone resplendently, like a smile. There the King dwelt with joy amidst the unsurpassingly excellent citizens. He was a king of great majesty, gentle, who was generous. Under his rule the little kingdom of Shakya was like the moon amidst the stars shining with a light of its own. He had a queen by the name of Mahamaya who was like a mother to her subjects. She was intent on their welfare, devoted to all, and worthy of reverence, shining on her Lord's family like the goddess of prosperity. She was the most eminent of goddesses in the whole world. Her parents were the Koliya King Suprabuddha and his Queen Lumbini.

A Buddha always takes his supreme reincarnation in a highly honored caste and at

that time, the Royal Shakya clan had been very pure for the previous seven generations. (Descendent of Ishwaku and Gautame, the Royal Shakya clan is also known as the Solar Race.) The Buddha also observed that Mahamaya had prayed and wished for a long time to be a mother of a Buddha and he knew that she had ripened karma.

Second deed: Conception into the Womb.

Buddha, after having been advised by a divinity to descend to earth, came down in the form of a six-tusked elephant. Descending from the host of beings in the Tushita heaven to destroy the evils of the world, the most excellent of Bodhisattvas suddenly entered Mahamaya's womb through her right side. This occurred at the auspicious time of midnight during the full moon. Prior to the Bodhisattva's entering the womb, there occurred innumerable signs and omens in the kingdom. Mahamaya had very unusual dreams in which she saw a crystal snow- and silver-colored elephant with six tusks who dissolved into her, giving her an experience of great bliss and joy. She asked the soothsayers about this and they predicted that a son had been conceived in her who would become a great universal monarch if he followed the life of a householder. But if he instead were to follow the life of a monk, he would become a fully enlightened being. Because Buddha blessed the womb of his mother, she was protected at all times by Yakshas. The Bodhisattva then gave continual teachings to the Devas of the Heaven of Thirty-three, Brahma and others, while at the same time maintaining the uncontaminated bliss in the womb for ten months. Mahamaya remained free from fatigue, depressions and fancies which usually accompany pregnancies. Pure herself, she longed to withdraw into the forest, where in the solitude and peace she could practice meditation.

Third deed: The birth of the Buddha

About ten miles away from the city of Kapilvastu, there was a beautiful park called "Lumbini," with trees of every kind, like the grove of Citraratha in Indra's paradise. This grove was named after Buddha's mother-in-law Lumbini, who had a great fondness for the delightful grove presented to her by her husband, the King of

Devadaha. One day, as the long awaited time of the child's birth was approaching, Queen Maya asked the King to accompany her, and so they left the city and went to the glorious garden of Lumbini. As the Queen noticed that the time of the delivery was approaching, she reached and grasped a branch of a royal palaksha tree, and as she looked to the sky, the son emerged from her right armpit, without causing her pain or injury.

The propitious constellation of Pushya shone brightly at that time. Like the sun bursting from a cloud in the morning, so Buddha too, when he was born from his mother's womb, made the world as bright as gold, bursting forth with his rays that dispelled the darkness. With glory, fortitude and beauty he shone like the young sun descended upon the earth; though of such surpassing brightness, he attracted all eyes like the moon. The sky was suddenly filled with a magnificent array of offerings by the Devas. Both Brahma and Indra approached the child with offerings of Kashika muslin, but the child arose and exclaimed, "Let me go!" Instantly he walked seven steps, firmly with long strides. He then gazed at the four quadrants of space and spoke these words full of meaning for the future.

"I am born for Enlightenment,
For the welfare of all that lives.
This is the last time
That I shall enter into this world."

When he was born, the earth, though fastened down by the monarch of mountains, shook like a ship tossed by the wind and from a cloudless sky there fell a shower of lotus and water-lilies perfumed with sandalwood. Pleasant breezes blew, soft to the touch, dropping down heavenly garments. The sun, although still the same, shone with augmented light and fire gleamed, unstirred, with a gentle luster. King Shudodhana, it is related, was greatly upset by these omens, which were to obsess him as his son grew up. But meanwhile the child was the focus of everyone's admiration. His skin, it is said, had a golden hue and gleamed with a metallic glow. His eyes were blue, "like the flower of the flax plant ", his hair was black with a

bluish tinge and his limbs were perfectly molded. Seven days after his birth, his mother, Queen Maya passed away and was reborn in the heavenly realm of Thirty-three gods. The lifespan of his mother was carefully considered before the child was conceived because there was a danger that she would have a heart attack if she had lived long enough to see her son leaving the palace for the forest. However, his mother's death did not deprive the child of motherly care, for the Queen's sister, Prajapati-Gautami took responsibility for him with the assistance of thirty-two other women.

Fourth Deed: Training in the Arts, Crafts and Sciences.

Buddha's childhood passed without serious illness, and in due course he reached maturity. After a few years Siddhartha went to school, where he joined the ten thousand children of the noble Shakya clan. His intelligence quickly impressed his teachers and he rapidly learned a wide range of subjects, including language, mathematics, logic, medicine and metaphysics without even having to be taught. He was tall, strong and handsome, and his pleasant manner and kindness endeared him to everyone.

Since the King of the Shakyas had, however, heard from Asita and others, that the supreme beatitude would be the Prince's future goal, he tried to tie the Prince down by sensual pleasures, so that he might not go away into the forest.

Fifth Deed: Marriage to Yashodhara, the birth of his son Rahula and the enjoyment of royalty.

At the age of sixteen, the King advised Siddhartha that it was time for him to take a wife and that a suitable consort from a family of good-standing should be sought. Although the Prince was perfectly aware of all the faults of desire, he also knew that the Bodhisattvas of the past had been able to provide for their wives and children without letting this hinder their spiritual practices. The Prince wrote that a woman

of thirty-two qualities would be highly acceptable for his consort. The King's ministers then scoured the countryside in search of a young woman possessing the necessary qualities. Finally, they came upon the daughter of a King named Dandapani, Princess Yashodhara, who was the cousin of the Prince, and seeing that she fitted the Prince's description, they invited her and many other maidens to come as prospective brides of Prince Siddhartha.

Upon their arrival, the Prince gave each of them a gift, but by the time Yashodhara came forward, there were no more gifts left. He then took a precious ring from his own hand and presented it to her. So the Prince's choice fell on Yashodhara, a beautiful and charming girl, a true goddess of fortune in the shape of a woman. To the King's great pleasure, they were married in a ceremony with much rejoicing. Thousands of other beautiful maidens were also brought as his queens including Gopi and Margadhaja who were specially chosen by the Prince on different occasions.

He spent most of his time in specially constructed apartments, furnished with the delights proper for every season, gaily decorated like heavenly chariots upon the earth, and were bright like the clouds of autumn, amidst the splendid musical concerts of singing women, who entertained him with soft words, tremulous calls, wanton swaying, sweet laughter, butterfly kisses and seductive glances. Prince Siddhartha became captive to these women who were well versed in the subject of sensuous enjoyment and were indefatigable in sexual pleasures. And it did not occur to him to come down from the palace to the ground, just as people who, as reward for their virtues, live in a palace in heaven are content to remain there, and have no desire to descend to the earth.

Sixth Deed: Renunciation of Samsara, Leaving his life as a Prince.

The Prince lived in the pleasure of the world in the palace with the company of his queens until the age of twenty-nine. Since it is the nature of truth that the

Bodhisattva actualizes every deed on time, one day he heard a voice speaking through the notes of the music played by his queens.

"The three realms of the world are aflame with the suffering of old age and death. Protectorless, sentient beings remain ignorant that this blazing fire of death arises from Samsara. And they live like bees circling about the inside of a vase the three realms are impermanent like the clouds of Autumn. The birth and death of sentient beings is like watching a drama . Like a flash of lightning, the life of sentient beings is passing; it is fleeting like a water-fall on a steep mountain"

Hearing these words, the Prince turned his thoughts toward enlightenment. That night the King dreamed that the Prince had taken to the wandering life, so he ordered guards to observe him and yet more pleasures to be offered to him. All the diversions provided by the King did not prevent the Prince from feeling bored and restless, and one day he summoned his charioteer and personal attendant Chandaka to take him for a drive in the countryside. The King heard the plan of his dearly beloved son, and arranged a pleasure excursion that would be worthy of both his own affection and royal dignity, and his son's youth. But he gave the orders that all the common folk with any kind of suffering should be kept away from the royal road, because he feared that they might agitate the Prince's sensitive mind. Very gently all cripples were driven away, as well as all those who were crazy, aged, ailing and the like, and also wretched beggars. So the royal highway became supremely magnificent.

On the day of the excursion the Prince ordered his charioteer to make ready his carriage. He left the palace through the eastern gate. They had not gone far, however before he saw amidst all the magnificence a hunched up tired-looking old man (This was an illusion created by the gods so that the Prince would see through the deception; in this way they hoped to induce him to leave his home.) The charioteer then explained to the Prince the meaning of old age. The Prince reacted to this unheard news like a bull when a lightning flash crashes down near him. His

lofty soul was shocked to hear of old age. He sighed deeply, shook his head, fixed his gaze on the old man, surveyed the festive multitude, and, deeply perturbed, said to the charioteer: "How can I delight to walk about in the park when my heart is full of fear of aging? Turn around the carriage and take me back to my palace." And the Prince went back into his palace, which now seemed empty to him, as a result of his anxious reflections.

Some time passed and once again the Prince decided on a second pleasure excursion. This time the same gods created a vision of a man with a diseased body. He was so weak that he could not stand up, but rolled and writhed on the ground. His eyes were bloodshot, his mouth was frothing and he groaned and beat his breast in agony. When this fact was explained to the Prince, he was dismayed, trembled like the reflection of the moon on rippling water, and in his compassion he uttered these words in a low voice: "This then is the calamity of sickness, which affects people! The world sees it, and yet does not lose its confident ways. Greatly lacking in insight it remains gay under the constant threat of disease. We will not continue this excursion, but go straight to the palace! Since I have learned of the danger of sickness, my heart is repelled by pleasures and seems to shrink into itself."

On a third excursion, the same gods displayed a funeral procession, which only the Prince and his charioteer could see being borne along the road. The charioteer again explained the meaning of this sight to the Prince. Courageous though he was, the Prince on hearing of death, was suddenly filled with dismay and he spoke these words in a forceful voice: "This is the end that has been fixed for all, and yet the world forgets its fears and takes no heed! The hearts of men are surely hardened to fears, for they feel quite at ease even while traveling along the road to the next life. How could an intelligent person pay no heed at a time of disaster, when he knows of his impending destruction?"

On a fourth excursion the same gods displayed a shaven monk, which was an

unaccustomed sight, awaiting the Prince and his Charioteer on the roadside. Chandaka explained that this man was an ascetic, one who renounced the world and instead traveled on a spiritual path to seek a solution to the enigma of life. Greatly impressed, the Prince did not this time turn back but drove on, deep in thought he said to himself: "I must become like that ascetic. I too shall renounce the world, this very day, and seek deliverance from suffering".

When the King learned of this, he ordered that the walls and gates of the palace be heavily guarded and that the wives of the Prince increase their efforts to amuse him. But the Prince, far from finding them seductive, felt as if he were in a cemetery when he gazed upon their sleeping bodies. He began to feel like a lion hit in the region of heart by an arrow smeared with a potent poison. Not for the first time, but now with overpowering effect, he felt the positive call to save not only himself but all living beings from birth in the world of suffering.

That night, one of his queens dreamed that there was an earthquake in the kingdom. The Bodhisattva also dreamed that he was stirring the ocean with his limbs using Mount Sumeru as his pillow, doing this he emanated an illuminating light that dispelled the darkness and a white canopy covered the entire world. The Bodhisattva then asked the King to grant him permission to give up the life of a householder and take up the life of an ascetic. The King was very reluctant but his son announced he would only remain if his father could free him from old age, sickness, and death. At his inability to grant this request and at the repeated requests of his son, the King replied in a low voice saying: "May your wishes be fulfilled".

The Prince then decided to escape for the homeless life and he bade farewell to his sleeping Queen in the middle of the night. The gods knew of his intention and provided every protection for the flight. All the palace doors were open and the Prince unhesitatingly went to the stables in the innermost courtyard. He roused Chandaka, and said him: "I want to depart from here tonight, and win the deathless

state; quickly saddle and bring my horse!" Catur-Maharaja, the four great Kings of the universe and many other beneficial gods led the flight. It was midnight as Siddhartha, accompanied by the faithful Chandaka, rode quietly out of Kapilvastu. Only when he had gone beyond the city gates did he pause to look back at the palace, now sleeping in the moonlight, where he had spent all his life and where he was leaving behind everyone he knew and loved.

Return of Chandaka

Riding through the night, Siddhartha and Chandaka came to a hermitage near to the town of Uriji and approached the bank of river Anumana. Siddhartha dismounted and took off his fine silk clothes and jewelery, handed them to Chandaka and told him to return them and his horse to his father. He then took off his sword and cut off his long hair. He threw his hair to the heaven of Thirty-three where it was housed in a stupa as an object of adoration. Since his princely garments were inappropriate to an ascetic, Siddhartha put on some orange-colored robes provided by a deity and took up a begging bowl and dismissed Chandaka with this message to his father: "I am going away to seek an escape from the misery of aging, sickness and death, and there is no reason why he should grieve for me. Some day in any case all unions must come to an end, however long they may have lasted. As soon as I realize the deathless state, I shall return and teach it to everybody. I shall strive for the highest enlightenment - that is my first resolve! Death confronts me all the time - how do I know how much of life is still at my disposal?"

Chandaka tried to dissuade the Prince once more but he received this reply: "Chandaka, stop this grief over parting from me! All of us must one day go our separate ways sooner or later. Just think of my mother, who bore me in her womb with great longing. Fruitless proves her labor now. Birds settle on a tree for a while, and then go their separate ways again. The meeting of all living beings must likewise inevitably end in their parting. It is therefore unwise to have a sense of ownership over people who are united with us as in a dream for a short while only,

and not in reality. My friend, you had better go away now and cease grieving! But if your love for me still holds you back, go now to the King, and then return to me. And please, give my message to the people of Kapilvastu who keep their eyes on me."

At last Chandaka agreed to return to the city. However, Kanthaka, the horse, refused to move. With all Chandaka's persuasion, the horse finally departed with his eyes shedding tears of grief to leave his master. Unfortunately, Kanthaka died of a broken heart on the way back. Chandaka gave the Prince's message to the King and everyone in the city, and with the blessings of the message they were freed from their grief.

Seventh Deed: Practice of Austerity and Renouncing them.

From then onwards the Prince led a religious life. He had no worldly ties with anybody and began the life of a wandering ascetic who followed the usual practice of begging for his food and finding shelter wherever he could. He visited and studied with Alara-Kalama, a noted Sage in Vaishali who was teaching several hundreds of disciples, but he could find no answer to his heart's imperious demand. He then went to Udraka, another sage, and he quickly equaled that teacher's insight, but he was still not satisfied, for he had not attained freedom from the misery of the chain of rebirth and death.

Although King Shudodhana and Prajapati-Gautame had sent about five hundred people to look after the welfare of the Prince, he kept only five of them and ordered the rest to go back home. Siddhartha and his five companions, in search of a lonely retreat, went to live on the bank of River Nairanjana, the purity of which appealed to his valor. It was a good spot for their purpose, a tranquil wooded area, with the river to provide water. They set up a hermitage, and resolved to try to find their own way, unaided by any teacher, to their spiritual goal. Sage Gautama, as he was then known, along with his five mendicants, now decided to practice mortification

of the body. He began by eating less. At first he restricted himself to one meal a day, then gradually it became a meal every several days. He no longer begged but he fed himself on a staple diet of fruit, roots and the leaves of certain plants. He undertook a strict method of fasting, very hard for men to endure and he emaciated his body for six years.

Eventually, he was content each day with a single jujube-fruit, a single sesame-seed and a single grain of rice - so intent was he on winning the further, unbounded, shore of Samsara. With this practice, he entered in the absorption of all - pervasive concentration for the entire six years. The weight of his body was greatly reduced by this self-torture, but by way of compensation his psychic power grew correspondingly more and more. Wasted away though he was, his glory and majesty remained unimpaired, and the sight of him gladdened the eyes of those who looked upon him. It was as welcome to them as the full-moon in autumn is to the white lotuses that bloom at night. His fat flesh and blood had all gone. Only skin and bone remained. Exhausted though he was physically, his depth seemed unexhausted like that of the ocean itself. Some Devaputras misinformed Sage Gautama's mother in the heaven of Thirty-Three that her son was going to die, this upset his mother. The Sage, knowing this through his clairvoyance, consoled his mother in these words:

"Even if the sun, moon, and all the stars were to fall on the earth, I would not fear them as an ordinary person. As I shall quickly reach the perfect Buddhahood, do not grieve for me just by seeing this!"

Sujata's grand food offering

After a time, however, it became clear to Siddharta that this kind of excessive self-torture merely wore out his body without any useful result. Impelled by both his dread of becoming (i.e. the continual cycle of death and rebirth in samsara) and by his longing for Buddhahood, he reasoned carefully that unless physical strength is constantly replenished, inward calm cannot be maintained. Only if the body is

reasonably nourished can undue strain on the mind be avoided. When the Sage told his companions that he would once again eat gross food, they were so disgusted -- at what must have seemed to them a failure of discipline if not actually a betrayal of the understanding that they had jointly agreed upon -- they would have no more to do with him. They lost faith in him and left for Varanasi, disparaging him as they went.

However the Bodhisattva, now left alone, went into the Nairanjana river to bathe in preparation for his first meal. Afterward he slowly and painfully worked his way up the river bank, and the trees on the slope reverently bent their branches low to give him a helping hand. Shortly after, when the Bodhisattva sat under a banyan tree, Sujata a daughter of a rich farmer, happened to pass there, her heart bursting with joy. She looked like the foamy blue waters of the Yamuna river, with her blue dress, and her arms covered with blazing white shells. When she saw him, faith further increased her joy, her lotus eyes opened wide, she prostrated herself before him and begged him to accept her offering of food. It was highly nutritious milk cooked with rice which she offered in a golden bowl with great respect and faith. The Bodhisattva accepted it as a timely gift, and his meal marked the most fruitful moment of her life. For himself however, he gained the strength to win enlightenment. Now that his body had been nourished, the Sage's bodily frame became fully rounded again. The original golden hue and the thirty-two physical marks indicating that he was destined to become a Buddha were once more clearly visible.

Eighth Deed: Taking His place at the Vajrasana in Bodh Gaya, the seat under the Bodhi Tree.

As he was definitely determined to win full enlightenment soon, the Bodhisattva proceeded to the root of the bodhi tree, which he had chosen as the place for his act of great meditation. Both the tree and the Bodhisattva were thirty-five years old and this was at the sacred place, Vajrasana, the diamond seat where all Buddhas

have achieved enlightenment. All the roads to Vajrasana were automatically swept by winds and rainfall caused by the Devas and all the trees bent down with respect to shade him as the Bodhisattva passed by. Brahma, the King of the whole universe ordered all the Devas to make every kind of offering to the Bodhisattva who would reach the goal very soon. The incomparable sounds of his foot steps woke Kala, a Naga of high rank, who was as strong as a king elephant. Aware that the great Sage had definitely determined to enlightenment, Kala uttered this homage:

"Your steps, O Sage, resounded like thunder reverberating in the earth; The light that issues from your body shines like the sun: No doubt that you today will taste the fruit you so desire! The flocks of blue jays which are whirling round up in the sky show their respect by keeping their right sides towards you; The air is full of gentle breezes: It is quite certain that today you will become a Buddha!"

The great Sage then met a grass-cutter named Swastika and, in these words, asked for some grass:

"Swastika, would you quickly give me some Kusha grass for it will be of great benefit for me today? I shall be achieving the peaceful and sublime Buddhahood by defeating the troops of the Maras."

Swastika happily gave the Sage some fresh bundles of Kusha grass, for this was considered a sacred grass for spiritual practitioners. Taking this, the great Sage walked to the bodhi tree and circumambulated three times . He laid down the stalks of fresh green grass with their tips meeting in the center at the foot of the tree. He then sat upon them facing the east in a meditative posture and vowed:

"Even if my body dries up and my skin, bones and flesh fall away, I shall not move from this seat until I have reached enlightenment."

When the great Sage took his seat, firm in his resolve, the dwellers in heaven

experienced supreme joy; the herds of beasts and the birds uttered no cry; and the trees moved by wind made no sound. The radiating lights that emanated from the eye brows of the Bodhisattva illuminated uncountable realms and the worlds and the whole universe rejoiced, but Mara, the inveterate enemy of the true Dharma, shook with fright. Kamadeva, the King of the Maras and his six children came with thousands of troops. Mara rules events connected with a life of passion, and he hates the very thought of liberation. His children asked him why he was so disconcerted in his mind. He replied, "Look over there at that Sage, clad in the armor of determination, with truth and spiritual virtue as his weapons, the arrow of his intellect drawn ready to shoot! He has sat down with the firm intention of conquering my realm. Is it any wonder that my mind is plunged in despondency? If he should succeed in overcoming me, and proclaims to the world the way to final liberation, then my realm would be empty today. But so far he has not yet won the eye of full omniscience. He is still within my sphere of influence. While there is time I therefore will attempt to break his solemn purpose, and throw myself against him like the rush of a swollen river breaking against its embankment."

Ninth Deed: Victory over the leader of Maras.

But Mara and his followers could achieve nothing against the Bodhisattva, instead due to the power of the Sage's loving-kindness and compassion, all their demonic weapons turned to flower garlands and offerings. The great Sage remained untroubled and suffered neither fear nor aversion like a lion seated in the midst of oxen. All the troops of Mara were then completely crushed, and fled in all directions and behaved like a hostile army whose commanders had been slain in battle. Then the moon, like a maiden's gentle smile, lit up the heavens, while a rain of sweet-scented flowers, filled with moisture, fell down on the earth from above.

Tenth Deed: Attainment of Enlightenment reached while meditating under the bodhi tree.

Having conquered the hosts of Mara by his firmness and calmness, the great master of meditation then entered into concentrated absorption during which he gained the highest insight devoid of contamination. When the Lord attained "Samyak Sambuddha", the omniscient state of perfect enlightenment, his body, in full meditation posture, rose into the sky to the height of seven palm trees and countless Bodhisattvas and Devas cast flowers and various offerings which richly adorned the bodhi tree with jewels. The happy earth shook in six different ways, like an overjoyed woman, when it was totally bathed by the brilliant light emanating from the Lord's body. All the Buddhas of ten directions praised the Buddha in the melodious sound of the Kalavinka bird and mighty drums of thunder resounded through the air.

In the first watch of the night, the compassionate One recollected the successive series of his former births. "There I was so and so; that was my name; deceased from there I came here." In this way he remembered thousands of lives, as though living them over again. And having remembered each birth in all of those various transmigrations, the Compassionate One felt pity for all living beings.

In the second watch of the night, he acquired the supreme divine eye to see the entire universe and the Karmic conditioning of each and every individual. He then found nothing substantial in the world of becoming, just as no core of heartwood is found in a plantain tree when its layers are peeled off one by one.

In the third watch of the night, he thought to himself: "Alas, living beings are themselves without essence. All this arises from vanity, over and over again they are born, they age, die, and then pass on to a new life. What is more, greed and dark delusion obscure their sight, and they are blind. Greatly apprehensive, yet they do not know how to get out of this great mass of suffering." He gained the complete realization of the twelve links of interdependent origination as he reached perfection. He then thought: "This is the authentic way that, in the past, so many Buddhas and great seers, who also know the complete nature of all living beings,

have traveled on to ultimate truth. Now I have obtained it."

In the fourth watch of the night, as the dawn broke, the great Seer took up the position that knows no more alteration, and the leader of all reached the state of omniscience. Pleasant breezes blew softly, rain fell from a cloudless sky, and though out of season, flowers and fruits dropped from the trees, showing reverence for him. Mandarawa flowers and lotus blossoms, and also water-lilies made of gold and beryl, fell from the sky on to the ground near the Shakya Sage, so that it looked like a place in the world of the Gods. Offering goddesses flew in the sky with many auspicious emblems in their hands. At that time, all the misfortunes and disasters of the world were eliminated and no one was angry or ill, as though they had reached full perfection. Everywhere the virtuous were strengthened, the influence of Dharma increased and the world rose above the stains of delusion. Filled with joy and wonder at the Sage's work, all the enlightened beings stood in their mansions in the heavens and showed him their reverence.

In this way, the great Seer gazed at the bodhi tree without loosening his lotus posture for the first week. During the second week, he traveled to the countless realms of the universe and examined the state of sentient beings. In the third week, he one-pointedly concentrated on the essence of Buddhahood. During the fourth week, he traveled as far as the oceans of the east and west and he promised not to pass away until he benefited countless sentient beings, although many evil Maras requested him to pass away.

He dwelled at the domain of the Naga King during the fifth week. During the sixth week, he sat under the foot of the nigrodha tree and benefited many evil spirits who thereafter forsook their violent and harmful activities. During the seventh week, he went to a grove of datura trees where he met Trapusa and Ballika. These merchants from Uttara Utkala prepared a meal of honey, sugar-cane and flour which they offered it to him. As the great Seer was pondering what kind of bowl the previous Buddhas had used for receiving alms, the four guardians of the four quadrant of space presented him with four golden bowls which he did not accept. He did,

however, accept a stone begging-bowl offered by a local deity and blessed him in return by explaining the merit he would gain from making the valuable offering.

Eleventh Deed: Teaching the Dharma.

The great Seer then roused himself again from his deep trance. In his great compassion he surveyed the world with his Buddha-eye, intent on giving it peace. When, however, he saw the world lost in distorted views and confused activities, thickly covered with the obscuration of defilements, and saw the exceeding subtlety of the Dharma of liberation, he felt inclined to take no action in teaching. Having thought this, he said to himself:

“Though I have realized the nectar-like Dharma which is profound, peaceful, clear-light, devoid of imagination, and unconditioned, no one would be able to understand even if I teach them. Hence, I should dwell in the forest in silence. Although, I have boundless loving-kindness to all living creatures I will not teach at anyone's request. I shall turn the wheel of Dharma if Brahma requests as all human beings are devoted to him.”

As the great Seer entered into a trance he caused lights to emanate from the tuft of hair between his eyebrows, which illuminated the whole darkness of the world. When it became dawn, Brahma, Indra and other gods grasped the Sage's intention to turn the wheel of Dharma at their request alone and so they approached the Sage to extend their requests. They reverently spoke to him these words, which were meant for the benefit of the world:

"Please do not condemn all those who live as unworthy of such treasure! Oh! Please engender pity in your heart for beings in this world! Now that you, O Sage, have crossed the ocean of the world of becoming, please rescue the other living beings who have sunk so deeply into suffering! As a generous lord shares his wealth, so may you also bestow your own virtues on others!"

Brahma and Indra made this formal request by making the offering of a thousand-spoked golden wheel and a right-swirling conch shell to the Sage who from his silence uttered an assenting, "So be it". Having made this request, the gods returned to their celestial abodes by the way they had come. In consequence the Sage was confirmed in his decision to set the world free by his teaching.

The Sage was now ready to begin his mission, and he contemplated to whom he should first expound the Dharma, who would be most likely to understand. "I will beat the drum of immortality in the darkness of the world." But preach to whom? His mind turned to his former teachers, Alara-Kalama and Udraka, but they had both passed away. Then he reflected upon the five mendicants who were dwelling at Deer Park of Rishipatana near Varanasi, about a hundred miles away. He set out on foot to make the long journey, which took many days of traveling. He saw the city of Kashi, which resembled the interior of a treasury. The city is better known these days as Varanasi which lies where the two rivers Varuna and Asi meet, and, between them the rivers hold the city in their embrace. Resplendent with majestic power, shining like the sun, he reached Deer Park. The cluster of trees resounded with the calls of the cuckoos as the great Sage arrived.

The five mendicants -- of Kaundinya clan, Mahanama, Vashpa, Ashvajit, and Bhadrakjit -- saw him from afar and, recollecting the scorn and resentment they had felt on parting from him, said to one another: "Look, here comes that so-called ascetic Gautama, the pleasure-loving fellow who could not keep up a life of austerity and so fell back into ease and comfort! When he comes to us, we must ignore him for he is not worth saluting. Of course, if he should wish to talk to us, let us by all means converse with him. For it is unworthy of saintly people to act otherwise towards visitors, whoever they may be."

As the Buddha came closer, however, they began to see that he had somehow changed. He had a majestic, authoritative vibration about him such as they had not seen before, and without their realizing it, their hostility disappeared. The nearer

he came, the weaker was their resistance. Soon they went back on their plans. They went forward to greet him, and while one respectfully took his bowl and robe, another prepared a place for him to sit and a third hurried off to fetch water to wash his feet. By these manifold tokens of respect they all treated him as their teacher.

One evening, he delivered his first teaching which is known as "The Turning of the Wheel of Dharma". He spoke of the two extremes of sensuality and mortification, and of the Middle Way, the most profoundly validated path which lies between. In these words he taught the Four Noble Truths of suffering, its causes, cessation of its causes, and of the Eightfold Path that leads to the end of the suffering:

"Listen, O large company of noble sons and daughters who form one vast congregation, as it was proclaimed by those Buddhas of the past, so shall I now proclaim it. These are the two extremes, O mendicants, of self-control -- the one which is devoted to the joys of desire, vulgar and common, and the other which is tormented by the excessive pursuit of self-inflicted pain in the mortification of the soul's corruption. These two extremes of the religious ascetic, are each devoted to that which is unworthy and useless. These have nothing to do with the true asceticism, renunciation of the world, or self-control, with true indifference or suppression of pain, or with any of the means of attaining deliverance. Let him, the Tathagata, the teacher of the world, proclaim the Noble Law which consists of the Four Noble Truths. What then is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, sickness is suffering, and death is suffering. To be conjoined with what one dislikes is suffering. To be separated from what one likes is suffering. Not to get what one wants, that also is suffering. In short all grasping at any of the five Skandas involves suffering. What then is the Noble Truth of the Origination of Suffering? It is that craving that leads to rebirth, accompanied by delight and greed, seeking its delight now here, now there, i.e. craving for sensuous experience, craving to perpetuate oneself, craving for extinction.

What then is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? It is the Noble Eightfold path, which consists of right view, right intention, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right mindfulness, right effort, and right concentration."

The Buddha gave extensive and repeated discourses on the Four Noble Truths which concluded with a strong emphasis on understanding and realizing them. He exclaimed:

"And so I came to the conviction that suffering must be comprehended, its causes given up, its stopping mastered, and this path developed. Now that I have comprehended suffering, have given up its causes, have realized its cessation, and have developed this path -- now I can say that my faculty of spiritual vision has been opened. As long as I had not seen these four divisions of Noble Truths, so long did I not claim to be emancipated, then did I see that I had reached my goal."

When the great Seer, full of compassion, had thus proclaimed the Dharma, the leader of the ascetics, Kaundinya, along with hundreds of gods, obtained the pure and stainless Dharma wisdom. Similarly, after further teachings over time, many others gained insight and finally reached Arhatship.

A wealthy merchant from Shravasti respectfully invited Buddha to spend a rainy season retreat in his area. Buddha sent his most intelligent disciple, Shariputra, in advance to prepare for his visit. By now, the King Shudodhana was longing to see his son. The King sent repeated messengers to ask his son to return home. In due course the Buddha went to Kapilvastu and preached the Dharma to his father, wife and all the citizens at a specially- constructed monastery called Banyan. Many of the Buddha's kinsmen including his closest relatives became his followers during his stay there. Five hundred Shakya youths became monks at this time including his own son, Rahula; his cousin, Ananda; his half brother Nanda; and Upali, the barber, who were to become his most important disciples.

After that the Buddha visited Shravasti where Shariputra and the wealthy merchant Anathapindika had already found the park of Prince Jeta which was a suitable place for a large assembly of monks to do retreat. Buddha accepted the gift of Jetavana grove in which King Prasendjit built a special hall where the Buddha challenged six teachers of other schools. On the first day of spring, which corresponds to the Tibetan New Year, the six other teachers took their seats and Buddha came to his, flying through the air. He sent forth fire and water from his body and the hall was destroyed then reformed as a transparent palace. Planting his toothpick in the ground, he caused a great tree to spring up, fragrant and fully laden with flowers and ripe fruit. He multiplied his body infinitely, filling all space with Buddhas expounding the Dharma. By performing these and many other miracles, the Buddha defeated his opponents, whose followers adopted the Buddhist doctrine. His miracles caused the people of Shravasti to honor and revere him greatly.

After this, Buddha departed from Shravasti and rose in glorious majesty miraculously above the triple world, reaching the heaven of Thirty-three where his mother dwelt. There he preached Abhidharma for her benefit. He passed the rainy season in the heaven. Then, descending from the world of the gods, he came to the region of Sankashya. A great assembly of kings and people from eight kingdoms gathered as they heard the news of his descent from heaven. As the Buddha descended, a flight of golden stairs appeared on which he descended. He was accompanied by Brahma and Indra as well as many hosts of gods who were holding a jeweled umbrella and many auspicious emblems. The kings on earth raised their faces to the sky, bowed low, and received the Buddha with great respect and honor.

Years later, the Buddha returned to Kapilvastu for another stay. In the meantime his father had died while his step-mother, who had raised Siddhartha after the death of his own mother, requested him to ordain her into his spiritual order. At first Buddha refused to ordain her, but at her repeated requests, and with Ananda's persuasion, she was ordained as the first woman in his order. In due course, she was joined by others, including Yashodhara.

Devadatta, one of Buddha's cousins had also joined the order. His mind, so proficient in trances, whirled round in a kind of delirium. He became quite frenzied and did many despicable things. After failing to achieve permission to lead the order, he became very jealous of Buddha. He created a schism in the order, and the resulting separation further increased his ill-will. He even hired professional assassins to murder Buddha, yet in the end they fell at the Buddha's feet in devotion. It was under his bad influence, that King Ajatasatru let loose a maddened elephant from his palace towards the Buddha who was on his way to beg alms. But the animal, affected by the Buddha's compassion and presence, fell on its knees paying homage to him. At the end of Devadatta's life, when he had been sick for a long time, he repented of his behavior and decided to make his peace with the Buddha. Buddha, with his boundless compassion received him back into the order, predicting that he would actually achieve Buddhahood.

Twelfth Deed: Passing away at the age of 83 in the town of Kushingara.

Years later, when the Lord was over eighty years of age, at Vaishali, the King of Mara appeared before him, requesting that he enter into final Nirvana. Previously, Buddha had mentioned several times to Ananda that a Buddha may remain alive until the end of an eon. However, as Ananda was very deluded at that time, he failed to request this of Buddha in time. So Buddha rejected prolonging his lifespan and promised to the Mara that he would enter into Nirvana within three months. Buddha entered into a trance, to indicate that he was giving up the physical life to help beings to understand the law of transitoriness. At the moment he gave up his claim to live to the end of the eon, the earth staggered in all directions, great firebrands fell from the sky. The Deva's thunderbolts flashed unceasingly on all sides, pregnant with fire and accompanied by lightning. Flames blazed up everywhere, as if the end of the world with its universal conflagration had come. Mountains toppled down and shed heaps of broken trees. There was a terrible sound of the heavenly drums thundering in the sky, like that of a cavern filled to the

brim with wind.

When Ananda saw the commotion in the world, his hair stood on end, he wondered what it might be, he trembled and lost his habitual serenity. He asked the Buddha, to explain the cause of this event. Buddha replied: "This earthquake indicates that I have given up the remaining years of life that are still due to me. For three months only, reckoned from today, will I sustain my life." On hearing this, Ananda was deeply moved and his tears flowed, as gum flows from a sandalwood tree.

Buddha then went to Kushinagar with Ananda and ordered him to arrange a couch between two sal trees. In his compassion, when he lay on his last resting place, the Buddha said to Ananda, who was deeply disturbed and in tears: "The time has come for me to enter Nirvana. Go, and tell the Mallas about it, for they will regret it later on if they do not now witness the Nirvana." Nearly fainting with grief, Ananda obeyed the order, and told the Mallas, the noblemen of Kushinagara, that the Sage was lying on his final bed. The Mallas on being informed of the Buddha's impending death, came and paid their respects; their faces covered with tears and anguish in their minds, they all stood around him. The Buddha spoke to them as follows:

"In the hour of joy it is not proper to grieve. Your despair is quite inappropriate and you should regain your composure! Everything comes to an end, though it may last for an eon. The hour of parting is bound to come in the end. Now I have done all I can do, both for myself and for others. To stay here from now on would be without purpose. I have disciplined in heaven and on earth, all those whom I could discipline, and I have set them in the stream. Hereafter, this Dharma, O monks, shall for generations and generations be practiced among living beings. Therefore recognize the true nature of the living world, and do not be anxious; for separation cannot possibly be avoided. Recognize that everything that lives is subject to this law; and strive from today onwards that it shall be thus no more! When the light of wisdom

has dispelled the darkness of ignorance, when all existence has been seen as without substance, peace ensues. When life draws to an end, it seems at last to cure a long sickness. Everything whether stationary or movable, is bound to perish in the end. Therefore, work for your own liberation with diligence! The time for my entry into Nirvana has now arrived! These are my last words!"

Then, passing through all the nine stages of meditative absorptions both in ascending and reversed process, he finally entered the Mahaparinirvana, the great passing away of the Lord. The earth shook, stars shot from the heavens, the sky in the ten directions burst forth in flames and the air was reverberating with heavenly music. Beautiful flowers grew out of season on the sal trees above the Buddha's couch, and the trees bent down over him and showered his golden body with flowers.

Relics and scriptures

In due course the weeping monks and the local noblemen placed the body of Lord Buddha on a precious bier of ivory inlaid in gold. They performed befitting ceremonies for the occasion, and honored him with many kinds of charming garlands and fine perfumes. Everyone took hold of the bier with great faith and devotion. Some held up a priceless canopy with white garlands, while others waved yak tails set in gold. They raised a beautiful pyre with aloe wood, sandalwood and sweet-scented barks and leaves. They then placed the body on it and tried to light the pyre with a torch, but it refused to burn due to the meditative power of Mahakashyapa. However, once he arrived, made prostrations and paid his respects, the pyre spontaneously burst into flames.

Sacred relics of the Holy one were found in the ashes of the pyre. Everyone worshiped the relics with great devotion and respect by placing them in golden pitchers. During the seven days of worshiping with utmost devotion ambassadors arrived from the seven neighboring kings, who asked for their share of the relics. Although the proud Mallas did not want to give relics to any of the other kingdoms, the wise and influential counselor, Drona, suggested they share the relics equally

between the eight kingdoms to avoid any conflict. Eventually, everyone got their equal share of relics, in honor of which they joyfully erected stupas in their respective capital cities. All the four pilgrimage spots of Buddhist devotees still have some remnants of these stupas. Hundreds of stupas around the world still house those precious relics of Buddha and his disciples. They have become the most valuable objects of adoration, veneration and circumambulation for faithful devotees.

In the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the Buddha predicted that there will be continuous activities such as circumambulation of these places by faithful devotees. He also encouraged his disciples to tell new monks, nuns and lay devotees that a pilgrimage to these places will help to purify their negative karma. He mentioned the names of four sacred places in particular to remember and go for pilgrimage: Lumbini, where the Enlightened One was born; Bodhgaya, where he attained enlightenment; Sarnath, where he turned the Wheel of Dharma; and Kushinagara, where he entered into Parinirvana. These four places have become immensely popular, and thousands of faithful devotees, pilgrims and tourists from all over the world visit them every year.

As soon as Lord Buddha demonstrated the law of impermanence, a council of five hundred Arhats assembled in Rajgriha, on the slope of a mountain under the patronage of King Ajatasatru. This council was presided over by Mahakashyapa, Upali and Ananda. There, they recollected all the teachings of Buddha so that the lamp of wisdom would abide in the world to dispel the darkness.

Since it was Ananda who had heard the Lord speak more often than anyone else, they decided, with the agreement of the ordained Sangha community, to ask him to recite his utterances. Ananda, seated on a high and glorious throne repeated the sermons as they had been spoken by the Best of All Speakers. He had the skill of non-forgetfulness. He repeated the original sermons by adding, "Thus I have heard", and with a statement of time, place, the occasion and the person addressed, at the beginning and how all listeners delightfully praised the Lord at the end of the

sermons.

The Buddha's teachings and sayings were divided into three sections that became known as the "Tripitaka" or "three baskets of teachings". They are:

1. the Vinaya-pitaka, the moral disciplines repeated by Upali, the oldest disciple;
2. the Sutra-pitaka, the collection of major discourses repeated by Ananda, Buddha's cousin; and
3. the Abhidharma-pitaka, the collection of metaphysical teachings repeated by Mahakashyapa, who was the most learned disciple of the Buddha.

All the teachings and works of the Buddha are recorded in the most sacred languages such as Sanskrit and Pali. Many of his works were translated into numerous other languages when Buddhism spread to diverse countries. However, there are not many languages which have preserved the whole teachings of Buddha. One of the best collections and most accurate translations of the entire teachings is luckily found in the Tibetan language. It is the most valuable thing to have in the world and we have preserved it in at least that one language over thousands of years.

Tirthika (Skt. tīrthika; Tib. mutegpa; Wyl. mu stegs pa) — a proponent of non-Buddhist views.

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1. Etymology

The Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit tirthika, mutegpa, is composed of teg which means steps or stepping stone and mu, the edge of a body of water. It refers to a spiritual path that is other than the Buddhist one but that nonetheless is a "muteg", a step at the edge of the great crossing to enlightenment.[1]

2. Definition

Könchok Jikmé Wangpo defines a tirthika as:

"A person who is a proponent of tenets, does not go for refuge to the Three Jewels, and asserts that there is a [perfect] teacher other than the Three Jewels." [2]

3.Subdivision

Traditionally, tirthika refers to the many philosophical traditions of ancient India other than the Buddhist one. These can be categorized in different ways, such as the 360 wrong views or the 62 views or the five tarka groups.

Yet Mipham Rinpoche states in the Gateway to Knowledge:

"Although [tirthikas] have many different beliefs, when condensing the root of all of them, there are two: proponents of eternalism and proponents of nihilism. The proponents of eternalism believe that either the Self, Time, the Almighty, is the creator of the entire world. They hold that this creator is permanent. The proponents of nihilism claim that the present world originated by itself without causes, such as past karma; that consciousness occurred suddenly from the four elements; and that since it is discontinued at the time of death, it is pointless to exert oneself on the path in order to achieve liberation. All of these are, however, proponents of the existence of a self." [3]

In his commentary to Shantarakshita's Ornament of the Middle Way he further explains how all of these views come down to one common denominator:

"Because all these worldly paths are posited from the point of view of the ordinary mind (which sees only partially and is concomitant with beginningless, coemergent ignorance) in the last analysis they all come down to one thing, the assertion of a truly existent entity." [4]

4.Refutation

The tirthikas' views embody the gross, simplistic view of eternalism, considering that phenomena are not momentary and the simplistic view of nihilism, the belief

that although phenomena are caused, they themselves do not generate their own effects—there are no past or future lives—or that actions will not give rise to karmic results. The way to refute them is to hold, on the one hand, that phenomena cease at every moment and, on the other, that if causes are present, effects will surely manifest. These two notions are in agreement with the nature of phenomena on the conventional level.[5]

5. Translations

Several English translations of this term have regularly been used.

1. "Outsider" actually translates the Tibetan term "chirolpa" which is the main synonym for "mutegpa" but is not the same.
2. "Non-Buddhist" is not incorrect but fails to capture the meaning of the original.
3. "Heretic" is a pejorative term carrying a meaning that is quite different from "mutegpa".
4. "Extremist" has been used because of the fact that, according to Buddhist thought, all tirthika traditions have a view that belongs to one of the two extremes; however, that is also not the meaning of the original term.
5. "Forder" carries some of the sense of the Tibetan and Sanskrit term but fails to convey accurately the idea of being at the edge; it suggests that the person is actually on their way across.

6. Notes

1 Tony Duff's Tibetan Dictionary called Illuminator, under mu stegs

2 Gon-chok-jik-may-wang-bo, Precious Garland of Tenets, Annotated translation. Appearing in part two of: Geshe Lhundup Sopa, Jeffrey Hopkins, Cutting Through Appearances: The Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism (Ithaca NY: Snow Lion Publications 1989).

3 Mipham Rinpoche, Gateway to Knowledge volume I , Translated by Erik Kunsang, edited by Kathy Morris (Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2002) [5,16-5,18].

4 Mipham Rinpoche - Shantarakshita, The Adornment of the Middle

Way: Shantarakshita's Madhyamakalankara with Commentary by Jamgon Mipham, Translated by Padmakara Translation Group (Boston: Shambhala, 2005), p. 97.

5 ibid, p. 336.

Taking refuge

Refuge in The Three Jewels.

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For a better understanding of taking refuge in the three jewels – the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, we need to know something about Samsara to begin with. For it is this cyclic existence of total dissatisfaction from which we wish to be sheltered.

Broadly speaking, there are two aspects to Samsara. There is the actual samsaric experience of misery and then there are the sentient beings who have suffered blindly in this intolerable state since beginningless time. These ignorant sentient beings are just ordinary beings, whose ordinary minds are in delusion. Being deluded in mind, their flawed thinking causes disturbing emotions to arise. Driven by negative disturbing emotions, they act unwisely, thus creating karma, and their maturing karma results involuntarily in rebirth in the six realms, again and again. Under these unfortunate conditions, Samsara comes into existence. An uninterrupted cycle of rebirth is what Samsara means. Here, continuity constitutes a problem.

When we take the refuge, it is in the hope of finding a way out of this cyclic state of total confusion and delusion. It is, therefore, of vital importance that the refuge to which we are to entrust ourselves be very well qualified indeed. Obvious questions come to mind. Who has such power and capacity to liberate us from Samsara? Who has such qualities of mind to undertake so noble a mission? The unequivocal answer is: it is the Buddha. The Buddha protects. The Buddha saves. He bestows his blessing on one and all indiscriminately. It is we who need to become worthy

vessels in order to better receive it. In a downpour, it is the parched earth that is more thoroughly drenched. So being fervent in faith and in devotion to the Buddha makes us that much more receptive to his blessing. Not only do we need to know what the Buddha's quality of mind is in order to benefit from his blessing, but also we must supplicate one-pointedly for this benediction.

In the Buddha, there are two main distinguishing qualities: he is uncompromisingly self-accomplishing and at the same time he is unconditionally self-giving. These two qualities of mind, far from being mutually exclusive, are, in fact, logically complementary. When one is single-mindedly self-accomplishing, it is for the reason that one may better serve others. And in the process of serving, one is also self-accomplishing through the natural accumulation of merit. The accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom ultimately lead us to the perfect state of enlightenment, which is Buddhahood.

From then on, the Buddha's spontaneous activities are as limitless as his merit and his wisdom. In the accomplishing stages, merit and wisdom, however, must never be neglected, one at the expense of the other. Both are of equal importance in attaining Buddhahood.

For a follower in the Buddha-Dharma, there are essentially four different stages of development in accumulation and in accomplishment. The beginners are at the earlier stages; the Noble Sangha members are at the more advanced stages; the bodhisattvas are at the supra-mundane stages; while the maha-bodhisattvas are at the final stages, where both accumulations of merit and wisdom are being perfected before Buddhahood is finally attained.

There are three distinct aspects to a Buddha, which are generally referred to as the three kayas, the three bodies of the Buddha. They are the Dharmakaya, the Sambogakaya, and the Nirmanakaya. In Dharmakaya, we identify the Buddha as the full realization of uncontrived primordial wisdom. In the Sambogakaya, we identify him as a pure body of bliss, free from all suffering and all attachments. In

the Nirmanakaya, the Buddha appears in a communicative form, whereby we, as yet unenlightened, may better relate to him tangibly. With the pure motivation of benefiting all sentient beings, the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom are mutually nurturing; the accumulation of the one naturally enhances the accumulation of the other. When both are fully accomplished, Buddhahood is said to be attained.

Dharmakaya, the wisdom aspect in the Buddha, is where he is identified as immutable simplicity. Sambogakaya and Nirmanakaya are the kayas of the dynamic Buddha, where he is in the natural manifestations of uncontrived activities for the well-being of all sentient beings indiscriminately. Since the Buddha's spontaneous manifestations are limitless, equally limitless are his merits and his accomplishments. Knowing this, there can no longer be any doubt in our mind that the Buddha truly has the power and the ability to liberate us from Samsara. We can, with full confidence in him, commit ourselves to follow him. With this complete confidence and commitment we pray to him for guidance and for help, especially in times of need. May our thoughts never stray from the Buddha and may we all attain his level of spiritual perfection.

Let me say this: by aspiring to attain the same level as the Buddha does not mean that we are in competition with the Buddha; neither does it mean that we are thinking of taking his place. There is no need for that. For we ourselves are rightfully the natural Buddhas.

First and foremost, our refuge is in the Buddha. The Dharma and the Sangha are, as it were, supportive refuges instrumental to Buddhahood, the ultimate enlightenment. They may be compared to a sea-worthy vessel in an ocean crossing. For this reason it is important to know the quality and substance of Dharma. What is Dharma? It is the method and the means by which we reach ultimate enlightenment. It is the way to Buddhahood. The two aspects of Dharma are the path and the cessation. The path is concerned with the technique in applying the Buddhist principles to our daily life – how one can best accomplish the

accumulations.

The way to Dharmakaya is through the accomplishing of the accumulation of wisdom. The way to Sambogakaya and Nirmanakaya is through the accomplishing of the accumulation merit.

Briefly, cessation is the fruition of the path. In the development stages, there are the different levels of realization. There are the Arhats, the Sravakas, and the Pratyekabuddhas. In the Mahayana we have the different levels of Bodhisattvas whose ultimate realization is Buddhahood.

The cessation aspect of Dharma, however, is not to be our main concern today. So what is Dharma? Very simply, Dharma is all the teachings of the Buddha, with nothing excluded. Cessation here means the cessation of all Samsaric impurities, when the mind is finally purged of all suffering which causes notions. Ultimately this is none other than the blissful state of Buddhahood. As one travels along the right path, is it surprising that one ultimately arrives at the right destination?

And the Sangha? The Sangha members themselves practice the Dharma. The Sangha members also instructs. Being experienced in Dharma practice, they have acquired the skills to lead and to guide others who are relatively less advanced along the path.

The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, the three jewels of refuge, are closely interrelated. We should rely on them all in our quest for ultimate enlightenment. The Buddha, the accomplished and the enlightened is our inspiration. The Dharma is the method and the means to be utilized in progressing toward ultimate enlightenment. The Sangha, dedicated in Dharma, should for the moment represent the Buddha. (Rinpoche, presiding over the refuge ceremony is the Sangha. This is Sangha in the ideal state – the noble quintessential Sangha. It differs somewhat from the individual members of the Sangha community on the mundane level. Also, for the present, the Buddha image before us, on the shrine, is

Nirmanakaya Buddha.)

Following the refuge ceremony, there is the hair-cutting ceremony. Snipping off a strand of hair from the crown of the head, symbolizes the cutting off of all samsaric ties. It marks the commencement of the liberating process.

Having taken the refuge vow, it is of the utmost importance to hold steadfastly to the commitment, striving tirelessly for ultimate enlightenment. Only then are we able to benefit from the vow, to benefit from its true worth, in retaining the Buddha's blessing. Secure in this commitment, everything else falls naturally into place. Being guided by the Sangha, one can then vigorously pursue the Dharma. Strictly speaking, there are few hard and fast constraining rules and regulations, and there are no binding traditions. It is more a matter of self-discipline – just think: Without the Dharma, what else is there? Without the Buddha, who else is there?

We may have to remember from time to time, however, that we are living in an impure realm of Samsara. Much as we would like to act positively, negative results are not always avoidable. We can only ask ourselves to act conscientiously and let our intentions be always impeccable.

I was once asked: in the case of one suffering from life-threatening amoeba, how is it possible to avoid killing? The medication is meant to exterminate all the germs, and if the germs were not drastically eliminated, the patient would normally die. In such a dilemma, there is not really a choice. For one must regain one's health in order to be productive in life.

Another question once put to me was: hunting and fishing give me a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. Since physical well-being enhances mental health, one is therefore benefited both mentally and physically in the pursuit. How can it be wrong? This is obviously an extreme example, where the line of reasoning is totally erroneous.

Now that you have taken the refuge, remember, it is the very foundation upon which all Buddhist teachings and practices are based; it is also the support and the basis for all subsequent vows.

The Bringing the Three Jewels to Mind Sutra

© translation by Kunzig Shamar Rinpoché and Pamela Gayle White

I bow down before the Omniscient One.

The Buddha, the Glorious One, the Transcendant Victor, is the Arhat who has overcome all foes,

The Perfectly Authentic Awakened One, the Knowing and Venerable One.

He is the Sugata who has attained happiness, the Knower of the Universe, He Who Governs Beings.

He is the Unsurpassable, the Teacher of gods and humans: the Glorious Buddha.

The Tatagatha is in harmony with all sources of merit.

His roots of virtue are never depleted.

He is perfectly adorned with patience.

He is the foundation of the treasure of merit.

He is graced by the excellent minor marks.

The blossoms of his major marks have fully bloomed.

His activity and conduct are timely and relevant.

Those who behold him see harmony only.

Those who turn to him with trust are fully delighted.

The brilliance of his superior wisdom can not be eclipsed.

His powers are unassailable.

He is the Teacher of all sentient beings.

He is the father of all Bodhisattvas.

He is the monarch of all Noble Ones.

He is the captain who transports beings to the city beyond sorrow.

His wisdom is immeasurable.

His confidence is inconceivable.

His speech is perfectly pure.
His voice is melodious.
One never tires of looking at him.
His enlightened appearance is incomparable.
He is untainted by the desire realms.
He is unsullied by the form realms.
He has never integrated the formless realms.
He is absolutely liberated from all suffering.
He is entirely free of the samsaric aggregates.
He has none of the elements of ordinary existence.
He has mastered the sources of the sense faculties.
He has completely cut through the knot of afflictions.
He is totally liberated from anguish and misery.
He is free of craving.
He has crossed the river.
He is the perfection of timeless wisdom.
He is the timeless wisdom of the Glorious Buddhas of the past, of the present,
and of the future.
He does not remain in Nirvana.
He dwells in absolute truth.
He abides on the plane where he can look upon all sentient beings.
These are the exalted, perfect qualities of the Glorious Buddha's enlightened form.

The True Dharma is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good at the end.
Its meaning is excellent.
Its terms and syllables are excellent.
It is clear and well-defined.
It is absolutely complete.
It is altogether pure.
It is utterly refined.
The excellent expression of the Glorious One's teaching gives perfect

understanding.

It is without afflictions.

It is never-ending.

It precisely suits the purpose.

Its significance is grasped through insight.

It is personally confirmed by the knowledge of the Capable Ones.

The Dharma taught by the Glorious One skillfully demonstrates how the mind is tamed.

It involves truly renouncing.

It directs us to full awakening.

It is comprehensive, reliable, and without contradiction.

It brings all digressions to an end.

The renunciant community of the great vehicle, the Mahayana Sangha, has superbly entered the path.

Its members have entered with discernment.

They have entered with sincerity.

They have entered into harmony.

They are worthy of our gestures of respect.

They are worthy of our prostrations.

They are a magnificent field of merit; the act of offering to them is complete training and purification.

They are the great, all-inclusive sphere of our generosity.

The Buddha's qualities are inconceivable,

just as the true Dharma is inconceivable,

and the noble Sangha is inconceivable.

Once confidence in such inconceivable qualities has arisen,

their full ripening is also inconceivable.

Engendering Bodhicitta

Words of Advice

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All sentient beings experience the tiring and indefinite cycle of birth and death and mind illusions. Everything is ever changing at all times.

The Buddhadharma has a simple meditative technique to calm the mind, thus making it clear and luminous. The purpose is to purify our habitual tendencies and our mind, in order for us to benefit all sentient beings.

The focal point of this meditative technique is to benefit oneself and others. If you wish to benefit sentient beings, you will definitely benefit yourself in the same manner.

The Bodhisattva Vow

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In general, there are two aspects to the Bodhisattva Vow. The first aspect is the wish, the intention, or aspiration of a Bodhisattva. The second is the application of that intention or wish. The application of the wish means to actualize, or to put the wish into action. The Bodhisattva Vow should be taken after the Refuge Vow.

The Aspiration of the Bodhisattva Vow

First is the aspect of the wish or aspiration. This means that we set our minds toward a goal, on a target. What is this? It is all the beings that occupy space in a whole variety of forms of existences in all the worlds and planets. What characterizes a living being? It is that the living being has a mind. Its mode of existence is characterized by suffering due to the fact that the mind is deeply rooted in fundamental ignorance. A mind marked by fundamental ignorance produces nothing but disturbing emotions. Under such influences, inevitably we will act and accumulate karma. The karmic seeds when ripened produce suffering. It is this suffering that underlies and produces the various types of existences. The process generates itself life after life and forms an endless cycle of existences. By being concerned with all beings, their conditions of existence, and their suffering, we will develop authentic compassion.

Developing the Wish to Liberate All Beings

Keeping in mind the suffering that all beings experience, we need to develop a certain attitude. This mental attitude is a profound wish that we must honestly develop. The wish is for all beings to be completely and permanently liberated from suffering. Faced with this suffering of beings, one encourages oneself to develop the state of mind known as bodhicitta. In order to realize this wish, *i.e.* to relieve beings of suffering in a definite way, one has to work on oneself and be liberated from one's own suffering and confusion. Then afterward, one can acquire the true capacity to help others and to liberate them. This capacity is a complete and perfect awakening; it is the state of Buddhahood. It is a real capacity to benefit others in a spontaneous way. In order to achieve this awakened mind, one needs to have firmly created the cause for it.

The Awakened Mind

The development of bodhicitta, or the enlightened aspiration, is the cause of awakening. The development of this aspiration forms a seed in the mind that will ripen as enlightenment. To formalize our commitment, we take the Bodhisattva Vow. Having taken the Vow, we carry on by reinforcing this attitude of mind, and we continue our spiritual development. From life to life, we become increasingly capable of achieving the benefit of others. Eventually, we will realize the ultimate fruit that is the complete and perfect awakening, the state of Buddhahood. We will then benefit beings spontaneously, no longer in a conceptual manner, but in a completely spontaneous way without any obstacles. Just as the sun shines in the sky and illuminates everything, the activity of the Buddha will naturally benefit others. It is what is called the fruit of awakening, a complete and perfect awakening acquired by developing bodhicitta.

These are therefore the two points of view, the two reference points on the path to enlightenment: the fruit itself, and the seed or cause that produces the fruit. The

fruit is the genuine capacity to benefit others. Its cause is the development of bodhicitta, the development of the enlightened attitude, formalized by the Bodhisattva Vow.

Four Types of Beings

We have talked about the fruit of awakening. It is important to really understand what this fruit is and what it means to be awakened. A Buddha has the capacity to accomplish the benefit of others in a spontaneous and limitless way. We need to understand what that means.

A Buddha benefits others spontaneously through four levels of activity that correspond to four types of beings. Spontaneously, a Buddha's activity enables beings who are completely imprisoned in Samsara and its suffering – the first type – to have the opportunity to become liberated. This is especially the case for beings trapped in the suffering of the lower realms. A Buddha has the capacity to bring them to a rebirth in which they can experience relative happiness.

The second and third levels of activity concern the beings who are already on the Path of spiritual practice, the Arhats and the Pratyekabuddhas. (They are on the Path but their levels of realization are still not total enlightenment.) In this case a Buddha's activity takes the form of encouragement and support so that they can completely free themselves from Samsara.

Take for example the Arhats. Their practice will yield the realization of the Smaller Vehicle (Hinayana); the Buddhas can help them attain full enlightenment. The Arhats are those who have already established an inner peace of mind. They reside completely in this peaceful state. This achievement of inner peace is the fruit of the path of individual liberation, the awakened state of an Arhat. The Buddha's activity can influence an Arhat to advance toward full awakening rather than to remain in this state. The activity of a Buddha can effectively shake an Arhat out of the state of serenity and peace of his Samadhi or meditative absorption. The Buddhas exhort the Arhats to continue along their paths toward full awakening. The same applies to

the Pratyekabuddhas.

A Buddha's activity also benefits a fourth type of beings. They are practitioners who are on the higher levels of the Bodhisattva Path, that is, the eighth or the ninth level. These Bodhisattvas are encouraged and helped by the activity of a Buddha to continue their efforts, to persevere, until they realize by themselves the full awakening.

Thus, we can see how vast this awakened activity of a Buddha is. Its sphere simultaneously encompasses beings who are completely caught in Samsara, beings who are already on the Path of practice, as well as beings who have already attained various levels of the Path. In short, this activity benefits all types of beings, on all levels of the Path. So it is important that we understand the initial cause that precipitates this spontaneous and boundless activity: it is this promise, this commitment, and this oath to practice in order to help and to benefit others. The Bodhisattva Vow enables us to have this spontaneous, limitless result.

Putting the Enlightened Aspiration into Action

To actualize this enlightened aspiration and wish, we have to engage ourselves in the practice of the six paramitas, the six enlightened qualities. They are: generosity, ethics, patience, enthusiastic effort, meditation, and non-discriminating wisdom. A Buddha is someone who has brought these six qualities to full perfection and maturity. By practicing these qualities, complete awakening can be realized. The Buddhas have practiced and actualized these qualities, they have perfected them and thus have achieved enlightenment. They have gone through numerous existences rooted in their wish to truly help others. As a result, their enlightened qualities have blossomed. We should follow their example and as we take the Bodhisattva Vow, we should think: "Just as the Buddhas of the past, the present, and the future adopt the Path of practicing the six enlightened qualities, the six paramitas, I too will follow this Path."

The Discipline of the Bodhisattva Vow

We can activate and carry out the Bodhisattva Vow in the context of three types of discipline. Firstly, we reduce our negative actions that cause suffering. Secondly, we accumulate positive actions that generate positive results for ourselves and for others. And thirdly, we behave and act to benefit others.

In order to maintain and to carry out the Bodhisattva Vow, we have to train ourselves. The methods are clearly explained in Gampopa's 'Jewel Ornament of Liberation'. If we fully train in these methods, we will build a powerful base for the development of virtues and everything that is positive. The development itself is automatic when the Vow is not broken. Even when we sleep and even when the mind is not attentive, these positive benefits continue to develop. This is why it is said that the Bodhisattva Vow is like a fertile ground for the development of virtue.

The Four Limitless Thoughts

The attitude of a Bodhisattva is to want to help all beings find happiness and to relieve them of all their suffering. The Bodhisattva doesn't believe there are some beings who want happiness and others who don't. The Bodhisattva doesn't think that there are some who need to be freed from suffering and others who don't need to be freed from suffering. He or she realizes that absolutely all beings need to be helped to attain happiness and all beings need to be liberated from suffering. So the concern is for each and every being. In his commentaries, Patrul Rinpoche stressed the need for meditating on impartiality from the beginning of Buddhist practice. Normally, we meditate on the four immeasurables as they appear in the prayer which is in the order of limitless love, limitless compassion, limitless joy, and limitless impartiality. Patrul Rinpoche stresses the need for meditating on impartiality first because this removes the danger of having partial or biased love, partial or biased compassion. When we begin the Path, there is a strong tendency to have more love for those we like and less love for those we don't like. Once we have developed wisdom with this meditation, it becomes genuine love which cares

for each and every person without any bias. This is the purest compassion because it includes everyone equally. We meditate first to cultivate impartiality, then we go on to meditate on great love, then on great compassion, and finally on bodhicitta. The first immeasurable, impartiality, means not being influenced by attachment or aggression. Great love means wanting everyone to attain happiness. Great compassion means wanting to free everyone from suffering. Bodhicitta, however, is more subtle as it is the wish to attain Buddhahood to help all beings. Its very nature is a loving and compassionate mind. What makes it subtle is that bodhicitta implies the development of wisdom (Skt. *prajña*). Without that wisdom, the love and compassion of the Bodhisattva becomes incomplete love and incomplete compassion. With this incomplete love, one may really want to help others, but one may be ineffectual and may even harm the person one wants to help. With incomplete compassion one really wants to relieve the suffering of others and yet one doesn't know how to free them of their suffering. So, in the development of bodhicitta it is vital to develop one's wisdom and understanding along with one's love and compassion. This is the real meaning of bodhicitta which is the reason why it is subtle and hard to cultivate.

Love and Compassion

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In general when we practice the Dharma and commit ourselves to accomplishing positive actions we encounter obstacles and difficulties. This is due to the fact that our minds are laden with emotions. Of these negative emotions, the main one is pride which leads us to feel contempt for others (due to an over-estimation of oneself: I am the best, the strongest, etc). The existence of pride automatically gives rise to jealousy, hatred, or anger. With pride as its underlying cause, the emotion of anger creates the most powerful effects. This is because it leads us to carry out all kinds of seriously negative actions that will bring about future rebirths in the lower realms.

In Western societies, the distinction between pride and firmness of mind is often

confused. A lack of pride is construed to be a weakness. Pride is a built-up and concentrated form of ego grasping. So in this respect, it is a weakness. A person can have great strength of character and a strong resolve to achieve a goal, such as enlightenment, for example, without pride ever manifesting. We need to dissociate pride – the affirmation of our own supremacy over others which suggests a certain blindness – from firmness of mind that is a quality free of all the negative aspects of pride. In the same way we often have a distorted view which equates humility with a weakness of character. What we really need is courage and strength of character, without developing pride.

Mental calm and stability

The meditation on love and compassion goes hand in hand with the cultivation of mental stability. Indeed, with respect to pride and anger, it is difficult for the beginner to give up these emotions straight away. Until we are able to do this we need to practice mental calm in conjunction with the meditation on love and compassion. This is the very essence of Shinay meditation.

For example, we can examine the mental image or concept of anger. Think of a person who appears unpleasant to you, someone whom you regard as your enemy. If you do not have an enemy, try to think of a person who can make you angry. Once you actually feel the anger, do not act it out, as you may end up hurting someone. Instead, try to relate to the anger as a type of thought and try to see what it looks like and where it comes from. Does it come from the person or from yourself? If you think it comes from the mind, from where does it arise, how does it remain, and where does it go when it disappears? In this way one takes the anger itself as the object of meditation and reflection.

From time to time, you can practice a method of exchanging roles. Once you feel really angry with someone, you can put yourself in that person's place. For example, I am Shamar Rinpoche. I am angry with you. Then I imagine that I am

you. In this way, I adopt a different viewpoint, your viewpoint. The same exchange can be applied to the emotions of jealousy and pride. This is a form of Shinay (the pacification of the mind). By observing the strong emotional state of anger and then a peaceful state of mind, you will come to observe the nature of mind itself. This is the superior form of insight which we call Lhaktong. If you can apply this method for all of the disturbing emotions, it will be extremely beneficial for you.

If there are many thoughts in the mind and you manage to pacify them with this method, this is excellent. However when the emotions are so strong that we cannot control them, we need to stabilize the mind by focusing on our breathing. Concentrating on the in-and-out breaths in this case is more effective. Many people often take this meditation to be a breathing exercise. In fact, the important point here is not in the breathing but in focusing the mind, through being constantly aware of the in-and-out breaths without being distracted. The main point is really this concentration itself, this mental stability. Some people think that the physical aspect of the practice is significant, but this is not the case. What is essential is our familiarity with the practice. The success of meditations such as Shinay and Lhaktong does not depend on the conceptualization of these meditative states. Rather, the essence of these practices is in our becoming accustomed to the meditation process itself. We have to differentiate between Gompa which means to conceive and Sgompa which means to meditate, to train oneself or to become familiar.

The correct conception and understanding arises from meditation and familiarization with the practice. Therefore, the meditation itself must be established on very precise foundations. In order to attain the state of a Buddha, we have to turn away radically from becoming, in other words from all the forms of worldly happiness associated with the different realms. One might, for example, aim to achieve a relative happiness in a higher state of existence, or to be free from the sufferings of the lower realms. One might aspire to acquire the peaceful state of the Sravakas where there is no possibility of benefiting others. However, it is only in the ultimate state of enlightenment that the real power and capacity to act for the

benefit of others can be found.

Love and compassion - Relative level

The remedy for an attachment to the happiness of becoming is to reflect on impermanence and the "four fundamental thoughts which turn the mind away from the cycle of existences". As our attachments start to weaken, we may experience a certain peace in our mind. Grasping, or clinging to this mental state of calm may then arise. The remedy for grasping on to this peaceful state is to meditate on altruistic love and compassion. We should develop love and compassion within us until they have become completely natural attitudes for us. Love and compassion are qualities that will accompany us throughout our entire spiritual progression: from the moment we first give rise to the enlightened attitude right up until we achieve Buddhahood itself. This enlightenment will then be endowed with the body, speech, mind, and qualities of a Buddha.

Through the power of love and compassion, all unfavorable conditions, the disturbing emotions, Samsara and its causes will be destroyed and completely annihilated. Without love and compassion, we simply do not have enough energy. Even while we remain trapped in this prison of Samsara, subjected to the influences of the emotions and karma, the qualities of love and compassion allow us to be guided in the right direction.

This love and compassion has an object which is all beings. By beings, we do not simply mean those who are around us – humans. Anything that possesses a mind is a being. And where there is a being, there is suffering. Just as we have a mind and through this we experience suffering, the same is true for all other types of beings. Here, we must distinguish between that which is living and that which has a mind. A living thing does not necessarily have a mind. But where there is mind, there is consciousness and there is life. There are all kinds of beings, some which are very small, like insects. A common misconception is to attribute consciousness only to

beings of a certain size. We often associate the existence of consciousness first with a certain degree of intelligence and then to a given size. In this way, science and certain schools of philosophical thought are reluctant to acknowledge that smaller animals, insects, or tiny marine life possess a consciousness similar to ours even though they recognize that some larger sea dwellers such as dolphins do have consciousness.

In fact, even the tiniest and most miniscule of insects seeks pleasure and fears suffering. If we try to touch the fin of a small fish, its initial reaction is to move away. If it is tamed, then it may recognize the hand that feeds it to be a source of satisfaction. It will then approach the hand quite simply because, in the same way as humans, it seeks a state of wellbeing and flees suffering.

Beings have various sizes, but the mind is not proportional to the physical appearance. The degree of suffering or happiness depends upon individual karma. The same mind can reincarnate in a tiny feeble body, or in the body of a whale, or as a king endowed with a higher faculty of mind than that of an animal. However, size does not have any bearing on the quality or power of the mind.

Therefore, all beings, without any exception, should be the object of our love and compassion. Cultivate the same attitude for all beings as you would feel for your father, mother, or those whom you love the most. In traditional cultures, particularly in the East, family ties are extremely strong. The father and the mother are the people whom one reveres the most, and the idea of any harm coming to them is unbearable. For this reason, when we meditate on the enlightened attitude, we take this example considering all beings as our parents.

In the West, esteem for parents does not have the same intensity. But this difference does not matter for the meditation. Simply use the person whom you love the most and consider all beings as that person.

Of course, it is not possible for us to develop this love and compassion for each being individually. But we can regard all beings collectively as one entity and

meditate on the fact that they, too, wish to have happiness with the same fervor as we do. We develop this intense wish for their happiness by putting ourselves in their place. However, be careful not to make the wish into a fixation or attachment. Rather, concentrate on what beings have to go through. We must then continue to maintain the mind in this aspiration for their happiness while applying the same contemplation of its essence as was previously mentioned for the emotions such as anger, pride, and jealousy.

Love and compassion – Ultimate level

This love for all beings is, in the beginning, an artificial and fabricated attitude. We do not really feel it automatically. By training ourselves, it will develop gradually, and sooner or later this impartial love towards all beings will become a natural feeling. Right now, when we feel love for one or several beings, very often, this love is partial because it is selective, and it comes from our attachment. When we talk of spiritual love, this is not a partial and exclusive attitude, but is founded on the nature of mind which is emptiness. It is from emptiness that everything manifests.

We meditate on love; its nature is emptiness, non-existence. The object of this love (*i.e.* beings) is also empty in nature from the ultimate point of view. However, its relative nature does exist; it arises without contradicting its essence. If it were different and the existence of an intrinsic ultimate reality were enough in itself, it would not enable relative phenomena to manifest. If a dream were real, it could not take place in the space of the mind. If the dream's essence does not have an empty mirror-like quality, images cannot be reflected in it. Thus, the nature of beings' confusion is emptiness. Otherwise, how could it appear if it was exclusively solid and material?

Although this contemplation of bodhicitta's ultimate nature is something that one must realize; it comes later on. In the beginning, it is advisable to cultivate mainly the relative aspect of love and compassion in order to progress eventually to a recognition of emptiness or ultimate bodhicitta. Simultaneously with this

meditation on ultimate bodhicitta, a profound understanding will develop. If one meditates on love by means of emptiness, it becomes a superior love. Not only that, but at the same time, while meditating on the nature of love, we will achieve a stable pacification of mind (Shinay), and simultaneously the force of our positivity will increase. By constantly recollecting the enlightened attitude, we will be able to create a source of considerable benefit for others. Through the Samadhi (complete absorption) of love, we will penetrate the ultimate and authentic benefit. Our mind will be united with the unchanging ultimate reality so that our consciousness will no longer be inhabited by anything other than love for all beings. It will never be separated from this.

By the force of our meditation, our love for beings will be like the mother hen's love for her chicks. This process will develop itself by its own nature, until it embraces all beings in the state of enlightenment. Gradually we will gain the capacity to be of benefit to an increasing number of beings. This has nothing to do with telepathy or any particular intention, as if we were sending energy waves to help those who are inferior to us. But spontaneously, beneficial and positive activities will arise through the force of virtue. The power of this meditation is so strong that it has the ability to spread to others. This love extends outward and radiates and is born in the minds of other beings, particularly in small animals such as birds.

The Prayer in Seven Parts

(Excerpt from: “The King of the Path of Aspirations for the Excellent Activity of the Noble Ones”)

1. Prostrations

The branch of prostration has four subheadings:

- a. Combined prostration of all three doors
- b. Physical prostration
- c. Mental prostration

d. Verbal prostration

a. Combined prostration of all three doors of activities

The root text teaches that with four lines:

*In all of the worlds in all ten directions
reside the Tathagatas of past, present and future.
Before each and every one of these lions among men,
I bow down joyfully with body, speech, and mind.*

On every worldly realm and every period of time there are Buddhas abiding in the ten directions: there are those who came in the past, those who will come in the future, and the lions of men who are coming now. [4] I focus on all the bhagavan Buddhas and their children, however many and wherever they exist, and prostrate respectfully with clear body, speech, and mind, sincerely and without just imitating others. If there is inestimable merit in prostrating simply to one Buddha, there is no need to explain what happens when one prostrates by focusing in this way.

b. Physical prostration

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*By the power of wishes of Excellent Conduct,
each Buddha evoked becomes manifest.
With as many bodies as atoms in the universe,
I bow down deeply to the Victorious Ones.*

Moved by the strength of faith in the qualities of the noble conduct of the objects of refuge, I focus on the mental object that includes all conquerors in every direction and every period of time as if I could perceive them directly. Emanating as many replicas of my body as there are atoms in the various fields I bow touching the ground with my five limbs (two arms, two legs and the head.) and prostrate with utterly pure faith.

c. Mental prostration

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*Atop one particle, as many Buddhas as particles
are settled amidst Bodhisattvas, their spiritual heirs.
Thus Dharmadhatu, the entire sphere of being,
abounds with the Buddhas that I have envisioned.*

The number of Buddhas on every single atom is equal to the number of atoms that exist. [5] Each of these Buddhas abides in the center, surrounded by an entourage of bodhisattvas who are his or her children. In that manner, space is completely pervaded by the mind of conquerors abiding in equipoise in the Dharma sphere of Thusness, sporting with the gnosis of non-duality. Similarly, I appreciate that all realms of Dharma spheres are filled with (conquerors') bodies and (their pure) fields. I have faith in these inconceivable qualities.

d. Verbal prostration

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*Using every tone of a multitude of melodies
I revere them with boundless oceans of acclaim.
Singing the praises of Those Gone to Bliss,
I honor your qualities, O Victorious Ones.*

2. Offerings

This is presented in two subheadings:

1. Ordinary offerings
2. Unsurpassable offerings

1. Ordinary offerings

The meaning is taught in two verses:

*Sumptuous flowers, beautiful garlands,
precious parasols, fine cymbals and balms,
radiant lamps and the most fragrant incense:
I offer them to you, O Victorious Ones.*

*Such wonderful arrays, all perfectly presented -
exquisite apparel and sweet-smelling perfume,
jars of scented powder piled high like a mountain -
I offer them to you, O Victorious Ones.*

Flowers, garlands, cymbals, perfumed ointments, parasols, butter lamps, incense, garments, and aromas are easy to understand. Each of these words is accompanied by the terms immaculate and supreme. These words indicate that I make inconceivable offerings. Taking the flowers as an example, this refers to every flower that exists in the human and god realm, and to the assembly of countless perfections of every aspect such as that of every color, shape, aroma, and condition. Powdered incense refers to sweet smelling incense in a powdered form, packaged as loose powder or as incense sticks, that is further arranged in alternating patterns such as those of the colored sand particles of a mandala, vast and awesome, as high as supreme Mt. Meru. The arrangement of these offerings is particularly superior. Taking the flowers as an example, there are various arrangements for every type of flower. For example there are various shapes such as parasols made exclusively out of these flowers, as well as banners of victory, canopies, inestimable mansions, thrones, tassels, and so forth, all radiating light. Having emanated various aspects such as these, the same (visualizations) should be applied to the rest of the offerings such as the garlands and so forth.

2. Unsurpassable offerings

The meaning is taught in one verse:

These vast and superlative offerings

*express my confidence in all of the Buddhas.
With the strength of conviction in Excellent Conduct,
I bow and present them to the Victorious Ones.*

These are unsurpassable offerings of bodhisattvas with the extraordinary might of miracles and concentration. I manifest many things with noble characteristics that do not exist in this world, such as the noble vase, the wish-fulfilling tree, the wish-fulfilling jewel, and so forth. Then with a mere thought, countless (other) useful things as well as countless praising melodies and the sound of immaculate Dharma are emanated from these. These are vast since they completely fill all buddha fields. I also offer my own body, having emanated just as many replicas. The expression through the strength of faith in the noble conduct indicates the characteristic of the motivation. I prostrate and make offerings influenced by two types of faith, both very strong: faith through mental respect in the qualities of the objects receiving my offerings and faith vividly wishing to actualize their state.

3. Confession of negativity

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*Whatever misdeeds I may have committed
through body and speech, as well as through mind,
all outcomes of passion and anger and ignorance:
I openly disclose each and every one.*

Due to the three causes of attachment, hatred, and confusion, I have committed negativities that are non-virtuous in nature, namely the natural and proscribed negativities, through the bases of the three doors of physical, verbal, and mental activities. I have committed these, I have caused others to commit them, and I have rejoiced when those were done by others.

-I regret them and fearful that they might come to maturation I confess all of them.

-From now on I will restrain my mind.

-I am convinced that the objects of refuge have the power to protect me from the results of negativity.

-I comprehend the selflessness of the three rounds of negativity.

I confess these negative actions individually through the complete set of the four (aforementioned) strengths.

4. Rejoicing

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*I rejoice in each occurrence of merit produced
by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of all ten directions,
by Pratyekabuddhas, by those training on the path,
by Arhats beyond training, and by every single being.*

I meditate on the joy of rejoicing from the bottom of my heart, like a beggar who has found a treasure, in however merit exists among the five types of individuals. These are the Buddhas abiding in the ten directions, bodhisattvas, solitary realizers, hearers who are learners and beyond learning, and ordinary migrators.

5. Urging to turn the wheel of Dharma

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*O lanterns who illumine worlds in all ten directions,
by way of the progressive stages of awakening
you have become Buddhas, free from attachment.
Protectors, I entreat you all: turn the Supreme Wheel.*

All the Bhagavan Buddhas, the beacons dispelling the decline of the worlds in the fields of the ten directions, the enlightened Buddhas who have found knowledge without attachment and impediment, I urge them to quickly turn the unsurpassable wheel of vast and profound Dharma, having manifested replicas of

my body equal to their numbers.

6. Praying not to pass into Parinirvana

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*Palms joined, I beseech those among you
who mean to manifest the state beyond suffering:
for as many eons as there are atoms in the universe,
remain for the welfare and happiness of all beings.*

Having manifested inestimable bodies, I join together the palms of my hands and make this requesting prayer: for the sake of the ultimate benefit of migrators and in order to generate happiness in the present, I request those wishing to demonstrate the mode of passing into Parinirvana in the fields of the ten directions, to please remain without passing into Parinirvana for as many eons as there are atoms in the fields.

7. Dedication

The meaning is taught in one verse:

*Whatever small merit has been garnered here
through prostrating, offering and disclosing,
rejoicing, entreating and beseeching,
I dedicate it all for the sake of enlightenment.*

I share all roots of virtue represented by the six aforementioned branches, such as prostrating and so on, with all sentient beings and I dedicate them with the strong aspiration to become the cause for complete enlightenment. What stops me from actualizing the things I am praying for, as they are, further down in the text, is negativity and obscurations. And since the favorable factor purifying those and actualizing the prayer is merit, I need whatever acts as the causes for increasing this merit, whatever guarantees that it will never be exhausted, and whatever actualizes the things I am praying for. The seven limb prayer acts in three ways: it

purifies negativities and obscurations; it amasses the accumulation of merit; and increases the roots of virtue, while not allowing them to be exhausted. Therefore if the seven-limb prayer is done in the beginning, it amplifies the potency to actualize whatever one prays for further down the text.

Rejoicing in merit

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The most effective way of accumulating merit is to rejoice in the good performed by others. We think about all the positive actions accomplished by the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, monks and nuns, men and women, by everyone, everything ever done directed towards enlightenment, and we rejoice in it all. We associate ourselves with it by rejoicing mentally at these good deeds, and so take part completely in the actions of these beings, thus earning as much merit as they do. This is the ultimate way to accumulate merit.

To rejoice in the virtues of others, rejoice in the fact that they practice, that there are positive things being done, is the best way to accumulate merit. Often we are wrapped in jealousy because someone practices better than we, because he has more time, because he seems to understand the Dharma more easily than we, and so on. All these jealous ideas make us uncomfortable and are extremely negative. Just as rejoicing over the positive actions of others links us to them and leads us to enlightenment, feeling resentful, jealous, and angry when faced with the positive actions of others cuts us off from enlightenment. All the emotions that are generated are so many potential obstacles to our progress toward enlightenment since they will ripen one day and interfere with our practice.

In everyday life, we come up against this all the time. We see other people practicing and this irritates us. We are a little jealous, as when we are jealous of someone else's success. We are a bit irritated by this person who is too intelligent and understands everything while we understand nothing, by another who said something out of place, by someone who does things this way when anyone knows they should be done like that, and so it goes on. All the nastiness we develop creates a corresponding number of obstacles in our practice. Instead of focusing

on the outside and saying, "He didn't do that very well, he shouldn't have said that", it would be better to look inwardly and say to ourselves, "If this causes an unpleasant echo in me, it means there is something wrong with me. If I am irritated by the words of this person, it is because somehow my pride is hurt, it means that my pride that makes me say that things should be like this and not like that is injured, it means my jealousy is awakened".

What should we do? We must concentrate on ourselves and say, "There is jealousy in me that has to be gotten rid of, and I also have to get rid of my fixed ideas, my strong attachment". In this way, we work on our own faults and, in the end, what is outside no longer has very much importance.

If we don't act in this way, we cannot diminish our faults, we cannot reduce our emotions, and the situation quickly becomes intolerable. If we don't work from within, what happens? The emotions will continue to get bigger, especially jealousy. As the emotions within increase and we become better and better at picking out the faults of others outside, we start to find ourselves in a state of constant pain. We are hurt by everything people say or do, we see negativity everywhere, we are critical of everyone, and sooner or later this comes into the open and we start to express it in words, we are stirred to act and start to be aggressive with people. Finally, we take the last step and actively cause enormous pain to others, who will then obviously return aggression with aggression, and we will enter an infernal realm of never-ending hatred and unpleasantness.

The problem is that we have eyes that by nature look outwards, and so we see the faults of others, but those same eyes cannot look inwards and see what is inside us. So we have a natural tendency to look away from ourselves and criticize, judge, and evaluate what is outside of us. There is a Tibetan proverb which says, "It is easy to see the fly on the other person's nose, while ignoring the horse on your own".

We can counter this incapacity of our physical eyes to look inwards by developing the eye of wisdom. Contrary to our normal vision which is turned outward, the eye

of wisdom is inward-looking and can be used for introspection. When we start to look inward, we realize that we are not as brilliant as we thought, and our self-confidence receives a jolt. We see ourselves as we are, our pride and conceit get smaller, the emotions related to pride also get smaller and there is a general improvement in us. This necessarily leads to better relations with others, since we project our own ideas on others much less and are no longer so preoccupied with the tiny faults we used to see in them. There is a definite improvement in ourselves and our relationship with others.

Without this inner examination that allows us to see our own faults, we can never correct them. If our face was dirty, we could remain totally unaware of it. Everyone else would see that we had a great mark on our forehead, but we wouldn't be able to see it unless we found ourselves in front of a mirror whose reflection could show us our dirty face. This inner look at ourselves, to see what we are really like, allows us to realize that our face is dirty and to clean it, thus making a quality out of a fault. That is why, when we start to really practice the Dharma, there has to be a major change of perspective, one where we willingly bring ourselves into question. Before that, nothing can change. All is well, we don't really look at ourselves, we are fine, nice to know, there are no problems and so there is nothing to change. Then one day doubt creeps into our mind, "Maybe there is something to be done". We take the advice of the Dharma and start to take a closer look at ourselves, and in the process see a lot of unpleasant things. This is necessarily a disturbing experience. There is a time in our practice when we don't feel too good, when we realize what we are really like. This is the moment when we look in the mirror and see what a dirty face we have. That is part of the path. It is the recognition of what we are really like, a moment of honesty and one of great value, since it is only then that we can really get to work on ourselves.

Thirty-Five Buddhas Sutra

From *The confession of downfalls*. ISBN:81-85102-85-6

Excerpts from Nagarjuna's Commentary to Declaration of Downfalls of an

Awakening (Warrior)

Sanskrit: Bodhipattidesanavrtti

Tibetan: Byang-chub ltung-ba shags-pa'i 'grel-pa

(Translated from the Tibetan)

Homage to the superior, refined and glorious Manjusri

Homage to Sakyamuni, the Endowed Transcendent Destroyer (1)

Having paid homage to Gautama, who has gone to bliss, who keeps his mind free from conceptions, who understands everything non-conceptually and who, out of his great compassion, works for the sake of living beings, I shall explain from the scriptures and oral instructions the Declaration of Downfalls from Awakening, which cleanses the downfalls of an Awakening Warrior in order to benefit all sentient beings.

Sakyamuni, the Fully Awakened Being who understands everything, the Endowed Transcendent Destroyer, the Fully Awakened Being who possesses the Three Perfect Bodies (2) has taught many sacred Truths for the sake of all sentient beings. They all may be condensed into twelve scriptural categories (3) and from among them this teachings belong to the division of sutra, or discourses. When these twelve are condensed into the three baskets,(4) again the Declaration of Downfalls is included in the sutra basket, but strictly speaking it is included in the Great Vehicle practices of ethical restraint ('dul-ba, vinaya) subsection of the sutra basket since it shows both the foundation and the attributes of the Great Vehicle. It is said that the Declaration of Downfalls originated from an instance when thirty-five Awakening Warriors (5) who were beginners went begging and caused the death of (a beer-seller) woman's son. In order to lay this downfall bare they urged the Superior disciple Upali to request this sutra from Buddha, and thus the Endowed Transcendent Destroyer taught it.

If great evil, such as the unbounded (6) heinous actions, has been committed, then you should, without any break, apply the four forces of confession with extremely

strong regret for months or years, touching five parts of your body (i.e. knees, hands and forehead) to the ground. By confessing in this way, the signs of purification will appear and you will have become cleansed. For intermediate sins you should perform six sessions a day for six months. Lastly, for lesser evil actions you should perform three sessions daily for seven days. For one who is uncertain whether a downfall has been committed, one should perform one session of the practice. This is how. it is explained in the oral instructions.

Some people may think that this teaching is not a sutra because it does not begin with words such as "Thus have I heard..." This is not the case, because it is taught within the Stack of jewels Sutra (Ratnakutasutra), specifically the 'Phags-pa dkon-mchog brtsegs-pa chos-kyi rnam-grangs strong-phrag brgya-par gleng zhi.

There are only thirty-five Fully Awakened Beings mentioned because it was intended for thirty-five actual disciples of Buddha, who had an intimate connection with the Buddha. It is not that you do not proceed in making obeisance to other Fully Awakened Beings.

Not all of the thirty-five Buddhas are referred to as the "One Thus-Gone," or Tathagata. This epithet is mentioned in only a few instances merely to act as a basis. In your mind you should conceive of them all in the same way, knowing they all possess this quality. However, if you interpolate, you are altering the words of Buddha, for he taught it briefly worded(7).

It is entitled the Declaration of Downfalls of Awakening (Warriors), Warriors (sem-dpa', sattva) is added to Awakening (byang-chub, bodhi) since being courageous, like a warrior, is the cause of great awakening. Also if one has fallen from awakening it is called the Downfall from Awakening. Furthermore, this specifically refers to the downfalls of Awakening Warriors who are beginning and who abide in the practices of devotion.(8) It does not refer to Awakening Warriors from the first spiritual level (sa, bhumi) onwards (9).

Also, there are two forms of confession: ultimate and relative. The ultimate form of confession involves meditation on the lack of intrinsic existence of all phenomena. This is known as the greater confession. The relative confession is a combination of the four forces coupled with regret, prostrations and everything else, performed while cognizant of the illusory-like quality of phenomena. This is called the lesser confession.

When this sutra was first requested the Endowed Transcendent Destroyer radiated light rays which, for the sake of those Awakening Warriors, invoked the appearance of thirty-four Fully Awakened Beings from the ten directions, along with a multitude of others. They remained there in space while the penitent Awakening Warriors, after making offerings and generating the awakening mind, went for refuge. The disciples prostrated and laid bare their wrongs and by doing this only once were purified of all evil, and rose up to the first spiritual level as well as higher levels. You who live subsequent to this event should create a mandala and make offerings before images and paintings of these Fully Awakened Beings and then, having performed practices such as activating the awakening mind in accordance with your spiritual master's instructions, you should make confession. By doing so, all wrongs will be cleansed and as a result you will attain the completely perfected, fully awakened state of being. Thus it is said that you should perform the practice in this way. The actual way of confession first involves declaring wrongs through the door of reliance. Prior to relying on recitation of the text from "I, who am called by the name..." onwards, make offerings to the thirty-five Awakened Beings and the rest, generate the two aspects of the awakening mind (10) and, while maintaining this awareness, go for refuge reciting, "I, who am called by the name..." and so on. The Fully Awakened Beings (11) refers to the Teacher Buddha and the result, the three Perfect Bodies. "I go for refuge" means that you seek the highest protection in that fully awakened state. The Truth, or Dharma refers to the teachings as well as to the scriptures which are the cause, and the realization or the ultimate state of being which is the result. The Spiritual Aspirants or Sangha, refers to the spiritual practitioners and those who follow the Buddha-Dharma. It also refers to

Awakening Warriors, Hearers and Solitary Realizers (12). Here Awakening Warriors who are Spiritual Aspirants refers to those who cannot regress (13).

Next is the laying bare of evil actions by means of the force of thorough application of counter-actions. This entails reciting the names of the "One Thus-Gone." Also, by prostrating to the thirty-five Awakened Ones, who are specifically associated with the actual declaration of wrongs, you will become purified of sins.

Before reaching that point, visualize the Fully Awakened Beings before you, manifested on lotuses and lunar thrones decorated with precious Jewels and supported by lions. They radiate as the Perfect Body of Emanations with the thirty-two signs and the eighty exemplary marks(14). You should visualize the colors of their bodies, their heavenly fields, directions, boundaries, robes and so forth; hand implements, their sitting in the adamantine position,(15) with many attendants, and seated in stages in the ten directions as will be described below. Then imagine you have emanated many replicas of your own body and, reciting aloud, make prostrations with deep devotion. Otherwise, if your mind is too weak to do this visualization, imagine each with one face and two arms in postures such as teaching Dharma, going for alms, or touching the earth. Visualize them in whatever colors you prefer, such as white, and then make prostrations to them all with a devoted mind,

(1) The "One Thus-Gone" (bde-bzhin-gshegs-pa, tathagata) means the Buddha who teaches Thusness (bde-bzhin-nyid, tathata), the true nature of reality, through the force of speech and that he has cognized it. He has gone to Thusness and is above all others.

The "Foe Destroyer" (dgra-bcom-pa, arhat or ari-han) means Buddha has slain the foe of conflicting emotions and the obscurations to omniscience. This attainment makes him superior to an Awakening Warrior.

"Perfected" (yang-dag-pa, samyak) means he will not lead you into wrong views.

This quality makes him higher than a person in cyclic existence and a Low Vehicle follower(Sravakayana and Pratyekabuddhayana.) "Completely" (rdzogs-pa, sampanna) means he has completed the" two accumulations (of insight and physical merit) and has attained the two Perfect Bodies: the Perfect Body of Truth for the sake of himself and the Perfect Body of Form for sake of others(16). "Fully Awakened" (sangs-rgyas, buddha) signifies the two aspects of total accomplishment of having abandoned emotional afflictions and their traces, and of possessing insight into primordial awareness. These two show he is above all beings in both cyclic existence and the State Beyond Sorrow(17).

The one who embodies the characteristic of that fully awakened state is Sakyamuni, "the Subduer from the Sakya clan." The title Sakyamuni refers to his primordial awareness, ability and excellent qualities. Sa refers to his primordial awareness that understands all things without exception; kya refers to his insight, and muni means that he has bound himself to Truth without duality. "Subduer" (thub-pa, muni) carries the additional significance that he has overcome the detriment of having been born into an important position in the royal family of the Sakya. "Sakya" refers to his excellent quality of being above other beings. The special meaning of Subduer is that he has bound his body, speech and mind to Truth without duality. You should prostrate to him through the three gates of your body, speech and mind with sincere faith, imagining his body to be golden in color and seated on the central throne in the posture of bestowing the Dharma.

(2)."The Great Destroyer with the Adamantine Essence" (rdo-rje- snying-pos-rab-tu-'joms-pa, Vajrapramardi) sits directly above Sakyamuni in the heavenly field of the 'essence of space.' He is blue in color and in his hands he holds two adamantine scepters rdo-rje, vajra). "Adamantine" means his primordial or pristine awareness is non-conceptual; "Essence" signifies his excellent qualities (yon-tan, guna) are the essential source of all things, and "Great Destroyer" indicates his function (las, karma) is to destroy everything such as emotional afflictions.

(3) In the east, in front of Sakyamuni, sits "the Jewel Radiating Light" (rin-chen

'od-'phro, Ratnarcis) in the celestial field 'endowed with jewels.' He is white and holds a scepter and a sun. Jewel indicates his excellent qualities are, like a precious jewel, the source of all excellence such as power; his pristine awareness is clear like "Light" free from the darkness of not knowing reality; and "Radiating" refers to his function of eliminating the ignorance of every sentient being.

(4) "The Ruling King of Serpent Spirits" (klu dbang-gi rgyal-po, Nagesvararaja) is seated to the southeast of Sakyamuni in the heavenly field 'pervading the serpent spirits.' His body is blue in color and he holds a tree of serpent spirits and a blue snake. "Serpent Spirits" refers to his primordial awareness which is cooling and is likened to a serpent or a malevolent spirit because, separated from conflicting emotions, it kills grasping at things as having characteristics. His function is "Ruling" because he has power over everything, and his excellence is like a "King(s)" because he is glorious among others, is handsome and lacks any fear.

(5) "The Leader of the Warriors" (dpa'-bo'i-sde, Virasena) is seated in the south in the heavenly field 'endowed with warriors.' He is yellow and holds in his hands a scripture and a sword. "Warrior" refers to his primordial awareness which is matchless and indefeatable; warrior also refers to his function of destroying all battles that arise in the cycle of existence, and "Leader"(18) refers to his excellent quality of being, endowed with many accumulations of excellences.

(6) "The One Pleased to be a Warrior" (dpa'-bo dgyes, Viranandi(19)) is seated in the southwest in the heavenly field 'endowed with pleasure.' His body is orange in color and he holds in his hands a sun and a red lotus. "Warrior" refers to his primordial awareness and functions as stated before, and "Pleased" refers to his excellence of mind which, because of its compassionate nature, is pleased to engage in activities for the benefit of sentient beings.

(7) "The Jewel Fire" (rin-chen-me, Ratnagni) is seated in the west in the heavenly field 'endowed with luminosity.' He is red and holds a precious jewel and a ring of fire. "Jewel" refers to his primordial awareness which fulfills his purpose without

discursive thought; it also refers to his excellence from which arises meditative absorption and total completeness (phun-sum-tsogs-pa, sampannama) which is beyond worldly actions; and "Fire" refers to his function of benefiting sentient beings with his primordial awareness and great energy which burns away their emotional afflictions.

(8).The "Jewel Moonlight" (rin-chen -'od, Ratna-candraprabha) sits in the north-west in the celestial field of 'good light.' His body is white in color and he holds in his hands a jewel and a moon. "Jewel" refers to his excellence as before, "Moon" refers to his pristine awareness that is full, bright and cool; "Light" indicates his function to clear away contaminated actions and conflicting emotions, and that he illuminates the actual Truth of phenomena.

(9) In the north sits the "One With Vision and a Purpose" (mthong-ba-don-yod, Amoghadarsi) in the heavenly field of 'drum-beat.' He is green in color and holds the two eyes of a fully awakened being. "Vision" indicates his primordial awareness is unobscured; it also refers to his excellent quality that his eyes of intelligent awareness and compassion clearly see the Truth of reality itself (chos-nyid, dharmata) and the purpose of sentient beings. His function is that he has a "Purpose" to lead all sentient beings to partake in the fruit of definite goodness and higher status(20).

(10) "The Jewel Moon" (rin-chen zla-ba, Ratnacandra) is seated in the north-east in the celestial field 'abounding in radiant light' He is pale-green in color and he holds a precious jewel and a moon. "Jewel" refers to his excellent quality as noted before and "Moon" refers to his pristine awareness and function as stated before.

(11) "The Stainless One" (dri-ma med-pa, Vimala) is seated directly below Sakyamuni in the celestial realm 'covered by ash particles'. His body is the color of smoke and he holds two stainless mirrors. "Stainless" indicates his pristine awareness without obscurations; (that his function abides in) his ability to make others stainless, and that his excellent qualities, such as his power to brilliantly

illuminate beings, distinguishes them from the traces of beings affected by unexpected occurrences.

That is the first group of ten Fully Awakened Beings around Buddha Sakyamuni to whom you should pay homage. The second group of ten is positioned directly above the first group.

(12) The One Thus-Gone who is "Bestower of Courage" (dpa'-sbyin, Suradatta) resides in the direction above Shakyamuni in the celestial field 'endowed with glory.' His body is white in color and he holds a tree trunk with leaves and fruits. "Courage" (21) refers to his primordial awareness that puts an end to all discursive thoughts; it also refers to his excellence of unflinchingly giving total completeness and happiness to others; and "Bestower" indicates his function is to bestow pleasure or whatever is wished for on all sentient beings of the three realms (22).

(13) "The Pure One" (tshang-pa, Brahma) sits in the eastern direction in the heavenly field 'free from obscuration.' He is orange in color and holds a lotus and a sun. His pristine awareness is "Pure" as it is free from all obscurations; also his function is to purify as he cleanses all sentient beings from cyclic existence; and furthermore his excellent qualities are pure because, through the strength of his immeasurable excellence, he cleanses both himself and others.

"The One Who Gives out of Purity" (tshang-pas-sbyin, Brahmadatta) is seated in the south-east in the celestial field 'without sorrow.' He is yellow and holds a moon and a lotus. "Purity" refers to his pristine awareness and excellence as noted before. His function is to "Give" all sentient beings pure happiness.

(15) "The Water Deity" (chu-lha, Varuna) sits encircled by water in the south in the 'stainless' celestial field. He is blue and is in the gesture of bestowing Dharma. "Water" refers to his pristine awareness which is extremely clear and unstained; it also refers to his function of compassionately moistening the mental continuum of sentient beings with the sacred Truth of Dharma; "Deity" indicates his marvelous quality of having magical powers by which he is able to conjure up emanations.

(16) "The Deity of the Water Deity" (chu-lha'i-lha, Varunadeva) is seated in the south-west and his body is white in color. He holds the circle, or mandala of the Water Deity and a mirror. "Water" refers to his pristine awareness as noted before; "Deity" refers to his function which is to work for the sake of all sentient beings through performing tasks such as miraculous emanations; and also refers to his excellent quality as noted before.

(17). "The Glorious Good" (dpal-bzang, Sribhadra) is seated in the west in the heavenly field 'endowed with bliss.' He is red and holds a lotus and a twig from the wish-fulfilling tree. "Glorious" indicates his excellence of possessing complete perfection for the sake of himself and others; "Good" refers to his primordial awareness which is extremely supreme; and also to his function of leading others along the good path to the state Beyond Sorrow.

(18) "The Glorious Sandalwood" (tsan-ldan-dpal, Candana-Sri) sits in the north-western direction in the celestial field 'pervaded by a sweet perfume.' He is orange and holds the trunk of a sandalwood tree and a glorious fruit. "Sandal-wood" refers to his primordial awareness since it cools and cleanses the pain of emotional afflictions such as ignorance; it also refers to his excellence since, (just as the scent of sandalwood pervades a whole room), all things are likewise imbued with his supreme qualities such as his powers; and "Glorious" refers to his function as noted before.

(19) "The One of Unlimited Splendor" (gzi-brjid-mtha-yas, Anantatejas) resides in the north in the celestial field 'endowed with splendor.' He is red in color and holds two suns in his hands and is surrounded by a large retinue. "Splendor" refers to his pristine awareness which is clear and is able to suppress and bring others to clarity; "Limitless" indicates his function is to benefit innumerable sentient beings and that his pre-eminent qualities are infinite.

(20). "The Glorious Light" ('od-dpal, Prabhasasri) abides in the north-east in the heavenly field 'endowed with great significance.' His body is white in color and he holds a ring of white light. "Light" refers to his pristine awareness which, like the sun, dispels the gloom of both the obscurations to liberation and omniscience of himself and others; "Glorious" refers to both his function and his excellent quality as noted before.

(21) "The Glorious One Without Sorrow" (mya-ngan-med-pa'i-dpal, Asokasri) is seated below the Stainless One in the celestial field 'separated from obscuration.' He is pale blue and holds an Asoka tree (23). "Without sorrow" refers to his primordial awareness which has transcended cyclic existence and is separated from all obscurations; also it indicates his function of liberating all sentient beings from the sorrows of suffering and the cycle of existence; and "Glorious" refers to his excellence as noted before.

This concludes the second group of ten Fully Awakened Beings. Above them is the third group.

(22) Elevated above Sakyamuni in the celestial field 'separated from passion' sits "the Son of the Passionless One" (srid-med-kyi-bu, Narayana). His body is blue and his hands are in the gesture of Mount Meru and a lotus. "Passionless" refers to his primordial awareness which is divorced from discursive thought; and also to his function of freeing sentient beings from their attachment to cyclic existence; and "Son" indicates his excellent quality of being born like a son from the fully awakened state, and refers to his good qualities such as loving kindness.

(23). "The Glorious Flower" (me-tog-dpal, KusumaSri) resides in the eastern direction in the celestial field 'where many flowers blossom.' He is yellow and holds a yellow flower and a glorious fruit. "Flower" indicates that his excellent qualities are blossoming and beautiful and that his primordial awareness is like a flower because it is unfolding; and "Glorious" refers to his function of endowing everyone with complete perfection like himself.

(24) "The One Thus-Gone who Understands Clearly, Enjoying the Radiant Light of Purity" (de-bzhin gshegs-pa tshang-pa'i 'od-zer rnam-par rol-pas mngon-par mkhyen-pa, Tathagatabrahamajyotivikriditabhijna) sits in the south-east in the heavenly field 'pervaded by purity.' He is white and holds a lotus and a pool of light. [The epithet "One Thus-Gone" is ascribed to this and the following fully Awakened Being, but it should be remembered that it applies equally to all thirty-five Awakened Ones.] "Purity" refers to his primordial awareness as noted before; "Radiant Light" refers to his excellence, his great ability that is extremely clear; "Enjoying" indicates his function of benefiting sentient beings through such feats as miraculous emanations; and through his primordial awareness of mind he clearly understands such things as the means for being of benefit.

(25) "The One Thus-gone who Understands Clearly, Enjoying the Radiant Light of the Lotus" (de-bzhin gshegs-pa pad-ma'i 'od-zer rnam-par rol-pas mngon-par mkhyen-pa, Tathagatapadmajyotivikriditabhijna) sits in the south in the heavenly field 'endowed with lotuses.' He is red and his hands are in the gesture of a lotus and a sun. "Lotus" refers to his primordial awareness which blossoms and is not attracted to worldly faults; and "Clearly Understands, Enjoying the Radiant Light" refers to his function and good qualities as noted before.

(26) "The Glorious Gem" (nor-dpal, DhanaSri) abides in the south-west in the heavenly field 'endowed with gems.' He is brilliant-red and holds his hands in the gesture of two jewels, "Gem" refers to his pristine awareness which is great and unceasing; it also indicates his function of fulfilling all desires by being endowed with great marvelous attributes like the qualities of a gem; and his excellence is indicated by "Glorious" which has two implications as noted before.

(27) "The Glorious One Who is Mindful" (dren-pa'i-dpal, Smṛti Sri) is seated in the western direction in the heavenly field 'endowed with clarity.' He is yellow and holds a text and a sword. "Mindful" indicates his great primordial awareness never forgets; it also indicates his excellence which is his inconceivable ability to

remember his previous life; and "Glorious" refers to his function as noted before.

(28) "The Glorious One Whose Name is Extremely Renowned" (mtshan-dpal zhin-tu yongs-grags, SuparikirtitanamaghepaSri) is seated in the north-west in the celestial field. 'without any characteristics.' He is green and with his two hands he holds the crown of a Buddha above his head. "Name" refers to his primordial awareness that cannot be expended; "Glorious" refers to his function; and "Extremely Renowned" indicates his excellent quality is such that his great fame pervades throughout the three realms of the universe.

(29) "The King of the Victory Banner of the Pinnacle of Sensory Powers" (dbang-po'i tog gi rgyal-mtshan gyi rgyal-po, Indraketurdhvajaraja) is seated in the north in the celestial field of 'clear sensory powers.' He is yellow and holds a victory banner and its precious pinnacle (24). The "Pinnacle of Sensory Powers" refers to his primordial awareness because, just as we perceive objects through our sensory powers, he perceives the Truth of reality through his pristine awareness; and it is like a pinnacle since it beautifies reality; "Victory Banner" refers to his excellent quality of being victorious over cyclic existence; and "King" indicates his function is to do all that is needed to be done.

(30) "The Glorious One Who Vanquishes Utterly Within" (shin-tu rnam-par non-pa'i-dpal, Suvikranta) is seated in the north-east in the heavenly field 'endowed with merriment.' He is white and sits in the earth-touching posture. "Perfectly" refers to his primordial awareness which is perfect; "Subdues" indicates his function is to destroy the emotional afflictions and malevolent forces within all sentient beings; and "Glorious" refers to his excellences as noted before.

(31) Below the "Glorious One Without Sorrow" in the celestial field 'where there are no conflicting emotions' sits the "One who is Utterly Victorious in Battles Within" (gyul-las shin-tu rnam-par rgyal-ba, Yuddhajaya). He is black and holds a shield and a sword. "Victorious in Battles Within" indicates his function of turning back inner enemies which are the conflicting emotions and contaminated actions of all

sentient beings; "Extremely" refers to his primordial awareness; and "Victorious" refers to his excellent quality of being endowed with the ability to gain victory over cyclic existence for the sake of himself and others.

This concludes the third group of Awakened Beings. Outside the immediately preceding circle of fully awakened beings are the remaining four.

(32) "The Glorious One who has Transcended by Vanquishing Within" (rnam-par gnon-pa'i gshegs-pa'i-dpal, VikrantagamSri) is seated to the east of Sakyamuni in the heavenly field "endowed with glory." He is white and his hands are positioned in the earth-touching and the fearless gestures. "Vanquishing Within" refers to vanquishing the inner enemies of conflicting emotions and contaminated actions; and "Glorious" refers to his excellence as noted before.

(33) "The Glorious One who Enhances and Illuminates Totally" (kun snang-ba bkod-pa'i-dpal, Samantavabhasavyiisavyuhashri) is in the southern direction in the celestial field "where luminosity is enhanced." He is yellow and holds a sun and the stem of a precious jewel. "Illuminates Totally" refers to his function which is to eliminate the ignorance of sentient beings through his pristine awareness; "Enhances" indicates that his pristine awareness is limitless; and "glorious" refers to his excellence.

(34) In the western direction, in the heavenly field 'endowed with glory' sits the "One who Subdues by a Jewel and a Lotus" (rin-chen pad-ma'i rnam-par gnon-pa, Ratnapadmavikrami). He is red and holds a jewel and a lotus. "Jewel" refers to his excellences; "Lotus" indicates his primordial awareness is stainless; and "Subdues" refers to his function as noted before.

(35) In the north, in the celestial field of 'precious jewels' sits the "One Thus-Gone, the Foe Destroyer, the Completely Perfected Fully Awakened Being, the King of Powerful Mount Meru who is Firmly Seated upon a Jewel and a Lotus" (de-bzhin

gshegs-pa dgra-bcom-pa yang-dag-par rdzogs-pa'i sangs-rgyas rin-po-che dang
 pad-ma la rab-tu bzhugs-pa ri-dbang-gyi rgyal-po,
 Ratnapadmasupratisthitasailendraja). His throne consists of a lotus, moon, lions
 and precious jewels. He is sky-blue and his two hands support Mount Meru. You
 should understand that "Jewel" and "Lotus" refer to both his throne as well as to
 that of the others, indicating their excellences, function and primordial awareness.
 "Powerful Mount Meru" refers to his primordial awareness and excellent quality.
 His primordial awareness is unshakeable like the king of the mountains and his
 excellent quality is like Mount Meru. "King" indicates his function of doing what is
 needed to be done.

You should pay homage to these thirty-five Fully Awakened Beings through the
 three gates of your body, speech and mind. The Awakening Warriors who were
 mentioned previously did not actually commit any downfalls, but this prayer was
 intended for use by people in later times. Thinking that this prayer is particularly
 meant for you, you should make sincere confession.

(The commentary continues by stating that you should visualize the sky filled with
 Awakened Beings.)

"However many exist" indicates that space is filled beyond number with Ones
 Thus-Gone; "alive" indicates that with their eyes of compassion they protect
 sentient beings from fear; "abide" means that they will remain for as long as cyclic
 existence continues; the "Endowed Transcendent Destroyer" means they have
 destroyed the four malevolent forces (25) and are endowed with good fortune; and
 from "in this birth" onwards indicates the time during which wrong actions have
 been done.

(The commentary continues briefly through the various categories of unwholesome
 actions as elaborated in the text.)

The ten unwholesome actions (Skt. Daśākuśala; Tib. mi gé wa chu)
are:

taking life

taking what is not given
sexual misconduct
lying
sowing discord
harsh speech
idle gossip (or worthless chatter)
covetousness
ill will (or wishing harm on others)
wrong views

Effects

Effects Similar to the Cause

The Precious Garland says:

By taking life, we will be short-lived.
Violence will bring us lots of harm.
Through stealing, we will lack possessions.
Through adultery, we will face rivals.
Through speaking falsely, we'll face slander.
Divisive talk will separate us from our friends.
Harsh speech will mean hearing unpleasant words.
Gossip will cause our speech to lack nobility.
Covetousness will destroy our hopes.
Malice will bring us many fears.
And wrong view will bring inferior beliefs.

"Having been obscured by many obstacles of action," and so on, indicates that one realizes the faults of these wrong actions. Furthermore, by feeling uncomfortable at the thought that these seeds of unskillful actions will ripen in the way it is

mentioned in this next section, your weary mind will seek to eliminate them and you will thereby make confession out of a sense of deep regret. This is the significance of mentioning the unwholesome actions and their possible consequences. Also, being obscured by those actions implies your pristine awareness has been obstructed.

(The commentary follows by briefly outlining the unfortunate realms in which one may born, as detailed in the root text.)

The eight states without opportunity to practise the Dharma:

hells

preta realms

animals

long-living gods

uncivilized lands

incomplete faculties

with wrong views

a buddha has not come

Chökyi Drakpa says:

"Firstly, if you were born in the hell, preta or animal realms, you would suffer from intense heat and cold, from hunger and thirst, or from enslavement, and it would be impossible for you to practise the Dharma. If you were born amongst the long-living gods, it would also be impossible because you would not have any thought of practising the Dharma. The Buddha's teachings are not found in uncivilized lands of the border regions, so living there is also an impossible state. Those with wrong views do not have any possibility of practising the Dharma because their minds are contaminated by false beliefs, and they are just like Devadatta or Lekpé Karma. If you were born in a

world where a buddha had not come, or during a dark kalpa, it would be impossible because even the words "Three Jewels" would be unknown. If you were born incapable of understanding, it would be impossible to practise the Dharma because you would not be able to understand the meaning of the teachings. When you have a physical body that is free from these 'eight states where there is no chance for Dharma practice', it is known as possessing a support for Dharma practice complete with the eight freedoms."

The epithets "Fully Awakened Beings" and "Endowed Transcendent Destroyers" refers to Sakyamuni and the rest. They "became primordially" aware indicates they understand everything; "became visionary" implies they clearly discriminate between skillful and unskillful deeds; "became witnesses" indicates that they have impressed on their minds the distinctions between good and faulty actions; "became valid" means that words they have spoken are non-deceptive and without error; "see by their knowledge" means by knowing everything of the mind, they see everything through eye of intelligent awareness.

I "acknowledge" implies that you mention your faults verbally; "lay them bare" means that you think of each of them; "without concealing" means you promise to make your faults known; and "without keeping anything secret" means you will actually keep none secret. If you lay bare your faults in these four ways you will become purified. This is the second force of confession.

Then comes confessing wrongs through the force of continually turning away from faults. This is done by vowing hereafter to refrain from these actions. In this way you will become cleansed of evil; this is the third force of confession.

Next is the thorough application of countermeasures, which in this case means calling upon the Fully Awakened Beings. Not allowing unskillful actions to proliferate again, and accumulating merit - which means that you rely on

wholesome actions - should be understood to be like medicine.

Then follows the dedications and so forth, all of which contain the six transcending perfections (pha-rol tu-phyin-pa, paramita) of an Awakening Warrior. These six transcending perfections should be incorporated within your dedication, of which there are two types; (1) the dedication which is surpassable, including the first five perfections and (2) the dedication related to the transcending perfection of intelligent awareness.

"In this birth and others" refers to a good birth, which implies birth in any of the three realms (of desire, pure forms and formlessness) as a celestial being or in the desire realm as a human being. The practice of giving (sbyin-pa, dana) is indicated by the words "giving even," although you should understand this includes giving things that are of greater value than this particular case. Even though the receiver of your gift, an animal such as a dog, is lowly, you should take it as meaning a being of higher status. Also, though the actual thing given, a morsel, is small, you should understand that something larger is implied.

The practice of ethical discipline (tshul-khrims, Sila) is indicated by "discipline" which implies; (1) vows, or bonds; (2) the bringing together of virtuous practices and; (3) working for the sake of sentient beings. It is a source of virtue because it produces positive actions.

The practice of patience (bzod-pa, ksanti) is related to "abiding in pure conduct" which means parting yourself from wrongs and abiding in pure love and the like. This implies following the practices of wholesome training (dge-sbyong, Sarmana) such as (1) not returning harsh words; (2) not retaliating if someone beats you; (3) not speaking of the faults of others who speak of yours and (4) not returning anger. Patience does not necessarily mean being separated from desire and attachment.

The practice of enthusiastic energy (brtson-'grus, virya) is indicated by the words "acting to spiritually ripen sentient beings." Through enthusiastic energy and by

means of the five heightened awareness (mngon-shes, abhijnana(26)), you turn all sentient beings from the wrong view and path. Also by engaging in the practice of wholesome deeds, you ripen your own mind-stream. You should also understand that enthusiastic energy provides the means for gaining release from cyclic existence and for reaching the limit of Buddhahood.

The practice of meditative stability, or concentration (bsam-gtan, dhyana) is included in "activating my mind towards full awakening" which implies both the relative awakening mind, (the aspiration for and venturing into the awakened state of being), and the ultimate awakening mind (meditation on emptiness). Abiding single-pointedly in this awakening mind is associated with meditative stability.

"Unsurpassable pristine awareness," incorporated within the dedication along with the transcendent perfection of intelligent awareness (shes-rab, prajna), means there is nothing which is higher. This indicates the realization of the actual truth of non-duality brought about by the accumulation of primordial awareness. As to the six perfections, the first four involve the accumulation of physical merit; the sixth, the accumulation of primordial awareness; while the fifth applies to both. Thus all six perfections are included within these two accumulations. These accumulations of merit are all brought together and dedicated to the "unsurpassable" which is the fully awakened state of being that is superior to the Hearers' attainment; "that of which there is no higher" means an Awakened Being; the "high" is from the point of view of worldly beings; the Awakening Warriors are even "higher than" them; the Fully Awakened Being, of whom there is no higher, is supreme over even the supreme Awakening Warriors. Furthermore, a Fully Awakened Being, himself is the greatest Awakening Warrior as he understands everything.

I "fully dedicate" implies that your dedication is made with complete purity of the three circles - the object of dedication, the act and the actor - not apprehending them as having inherent existence. The above description is the ordinary form of dedication of an Awakening Warrior. The unsurpassable form of dedication employed by a Fully Awakened Being is the most skillful method of dedication. Just

as they, the Fully Awakened Beings, dedicate. So should you, in the same way make your dedication; even though you do not fully understand such dedication. The Three Heaps (phung-po gsum, triskandha) are contained in this dedication. "All wrongs individually I confess" is the heap of confessing wrongs. Rejoicing in the merits of both ordinary beings, who are impure, and Superior Beings or Aryas, who are pure--making them the object of your rejoicing is the heap of joy. Beseeching the Fully Awakened Beings not to (die and) pass into the state Beyond Sorrow, and requesting them to continually turn the wheel of the doctrine is the heap of making request. Through these Three Heaps you accumulate immeasurable amounts of merit.

Then incidentally, you generate an aspiration for the path (smon-lam, pranidhana), aspiring to attain the fully awakened state of being, by reciting "may I attain the ultimate and supreme pristine awareness that is unsurpassable."

The supreme opponent for all evil is taking refuge, and here again you seek refuge in "the supreme men, the Conquerors" and the rest. Previously refuge was explained by making use of the ordinary objects of refuge - Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - but the ultimate refuge, as here, is just the Fully Awakened Being, which is why the other two are not included here. Supreme men means the Perfect Body of Emanations, or Nirmanakaya, taking birth as men; "excellences" implies such things as the powers of a Fully Awakened Being. Physically you join your palms in prayer and take refuge.

In this way, by applying the four forces, you will become cleansed of neuroses and, completing your accumulations, will attain the fully awakened state.

To Gautama who clarifies all views, who teaches in a perfect way who, like lion, has destroyed all malevolent forces, I pay homage.

Colophon

The Commentary to the Declaration of Downfalls of an Awakening (Warrior, composed by the great master, the superior Nagarjuna), is complete. This has been translated, checked and settled (from Sanskrit into Tibetan) by the Indian Bodhisattva Abbot Santaraksita and the Tibetan translator Devaghosa.

This commentary has been translated from the Narthang edition of the Tan-gyur (bstan-'gyur), sutra section, volume ji fol. 209b to 220b in the collection of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Notes and References

1. *The etymological derivation of the epithet "Endowed Transcendent Destroyer" (bcom-ldan- 'das, bhagavan) according to the Composition in Two Sections (sgra-sbyor bam-po gnyis-pa) in the Tibeto-Sanskrit Lexicographical Materials edited by Sonam Angdu, New Delhi, 1973, p.8 is as follows:*

Bhag has two meanings: "destroyed" (bcom) and "six goodness" (legs-pa drug); van means "endowed with" (ldan). A Bhagavan has destroyed the four malevolent forces (bdud, mara) of emotional afflictions, the psycho-physical constituents, the sons of the gods and the lord of death. He is endowed with the six good qualities of form (gzugs), fame (grags-pa), power (dbang-phyug), glory (dpal), intelligent awareness (shes-rab) and energy (brtson-pa).

In order to distinguish this epithet of Buddha from that of worldly spiritual beings the Tibetan translations added 'das', meaning one who is "transcendent" or beyond the world. For worldly spiritual beings they translated Bhagavan as legs-ldan or 'one endowed with good qualities,' which is how the term was defined by the non-Buddhists themselves.

2. *The Three Perfect Bodies are: (i) the Perfect Body of Truth (chos-kyi sku, Dharmakaya) the omniscient mind of a Fully Awakened Being; (ii) the Perfect Body of Complete Enjoyment (longs-spyod rdzogs-pa'i sku, sambhogakaya) which according to the general interpretation means the form of a Fully Awakened Being that is (a) only perceived by beings of pure vision, (b) always resides in Buddha-fields, (c) is always fully adorned with all (major and minor) characteristics, (d) always lives until the end of cyclic existence, (e) always teaches the Great Vehicle path and (f) this to a circle of Superior Awakening Warriors only; and (iii) the Perfect Body of Emanations (sprul-pa'i sku, nirmanakaya), the person in which an Awakened Being appears in the world.*

3. *The twelve scriptural categories are: (1) Sutra(s) presenting the discourses of Buddha in a brief format; (2) geya(s) are verses which Buddha uttered during the course of and at the conclusion of his sutras; (3) vyakarana(s) are Buddha's revelations of what has happened in the past or prophesies of what will occur in the future; (4) gatha(s) are two to six-lined verses; (5) Udana(s) are praises Buddha uttered in joy for the sake of the long life of his teachings; (6) Nidana(s) are rules, codified by Buddha for those who are ordained, concerning which actions constitute a breach of their vows; (7) avadana(s) are teachings given by the use of examples; (8) itivrttika(s) are stories Buddha told from ancient times; (9) jataka(s) are accounts of the difficult ascetic practices Buddha performed in his previous lives while engaging in the conduct of an Awakening Warrior; (10) vaipulya(s) are presentations of the vast and profound aspects of such topics as the six transcending perfections and the ten spiritual levels; (11) Abhutadharma(s) are descriptions of such marvelous things as the wisdom, extra-physical powers and saintly deeds of the Buddha, Solitary Realizers and Hearers; and (12) upadesa(s) which indicate precisely the meaning of the works in the "Basket of Sutras" by specifying the individual and general*

definition of things.

4. The Three Baskets (sde-snod-gsum, tripitaka) are: (1) the basket of discourses or sutra containing scriptures mainly dealing with the subject of the training in higher concentration, (2) the basket of higher truths, or abhidharma dealing mainly with the training in higher intelligent awareness and (3) the basket of moral restraint, or vinaya, dealing mainly with the training in higher discipline.

5. Awakening Warriors who are beginners are those who have not yet gained insight into emptiness and abide in either of the first two spiritual paths of accumulation and application. For a description of the five spiritual paths cf. sGam-po-pa, The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, translated by H.V. Guenther, Shambhala, Berkeley, 1971, pp. 232-38.

6. Unbounded actions (mtshams-med-las) according to the late Apho Rinpoche, a yogi of Milarepa's lineage, mean "the most non-virtuous of actions." At the time of death and after-death processes, a being who has committed actions of a non-heinous nature experiences the clear light, the bardo or intermediate stage-- the existence intermediate stage and then rebirth. A being who has committed any of the unbounded heinous actions experiences at death none of these processes but takes direct rebirth in hell. Therefore there is no boundary."

7. In many of the large monasteries in Tibet the title bde-zhin gshegs-pa, or Tathagata was added to the names of the thirty-five Buddhas. Although such a title cannot be added to the actual written texts of Buddha (i.e. bka'-gyur), it may be added, for use in practice in order to inspire faith.

8. The practices of devotion are on the first two spiritual paths.

9. There are ten spiritual levels extending from a practitioner's initial direct

insight into emptiness on the 'path of seeing' up to the final attainment of complete awakening. Thus these levels cover the last three of the five 'paths'; the paths of seeing, meditation and no more learning. Cf. sgam-po-pa, Jewel Ornament of Liberation, Chap. 19, "The Spiritual Levels", pp. 239-56.

10. The two aspects of the awakening mind are the relative aspect, which is both the aspiration for full awakening and the venturing into the practices for its achievement; and the ultimate aspect which is meditation on emptiness.

11. It seems the original Sanskrit version of the Declaration of Downfalls did not contain the homage to the spiritual master. This was no doubt added due to the strong influence from tantric practices in which the spiritual master is considered the embodiment of the Three Supreme Jewels.

12. Hearers (nyan-thos, Sravaka) and Solitary Realizers (rang-sangs-rgyas, pratyekabuddha) are both Lesser Vehicle followers who lack the all-encompassing compassion of the Awakening Warrior and mainly strive for liberation for themselves alone, believing this to be the ultimate attainment. Cf. sGam-po-pa, op-cit., p. 4. It should be noted that there can be many such practitioners actually following the tenets of the Great Vehicle, just as there can be Awakening Warriors following Lesser Vehicle practices.

13. Those who do not regress are those who have attained the path of seeing the true nature of reality.

14. Nagarjuna, in the Precious Garland, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1975, enumerates these thirty-two signs in the traditional manner, pp. 4346.

15. The adamant position is with the legs crossed and the feet resting on the opposite thighs or calves. The lotus position actually refers to a position

of the consort in tantric practices.

16. The Perfect Body of Truth, or Dharmakaya, can be further divided into the Perfect Body of Truth of Pristine Awareness (ye-shes chos-sku, jnanadharmakayas) which is the mind of a fully awakened being that understands everything; and the Perfect Body of Universal Essence (ngo-bo-nyid sku, svabhavikakaya) which is the ultimate nature of emptiness of that mind. The Perfect Body of Form (gzugs-kyi sku, rupakaya) is divided into the Perfect Body of Enjoyment and the Perfect Body of Emanations. See note 2.

17. Nirvana or the state "Beyond Sorrow" (mya-ngan-las 'das-pa) either can refer to emptiness, known as the natural nirvana, or to the state to be attained. With regard to the latter, in the Great Vehicle it is identical to the fully awakened state, whereas in the Lesser Vehicle it refers to merely liberation (thar-pa, moksa) from cyclic existence, This last interpretation is the general connotation of the term. See "What is Nirvana?" by L.T. Doboomb Tulku, The Tibet Journal, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 87-93.

18. The term for leader (sde, sena) in Sanskrit and Tibetan means a collection of things; hence the explanation in the commentary.

19. According to the commentary his name is warrior (dpa'-po) and not glorious (dpal) as is found in many Tibetan versions.

20. "Definite goodness" refers to Buddhahood and the state of liberation from cyclic existence; "higher status" refers to birth in one of the three higher realms of humans, demi-gods and gods.

21. Again it should read dpa' and not dpal as is found in many Tibetan versions.

22. *The three realms are the realms of desire, form and formlessness.*

23. *It is said in Indian poetry that the flower of the Asoka tree cannot blossom by the light of the sun or moon, but will only do so if a virgin touches it with her anklet.*

24. *Pinnacle refers to the topmost ornament adorning banners and flags.*

25. *The four malevolent forces (bdud, mara) are those of (i) emotional and psychological afflictions; (ii) the five psycho-physical constituents, which are maintained by the force of contaminated actions and emotional afflictions; (iii) the sons of gods, which means being attached to the pleasurable enticements of meditative absorption; and (iv) the lord of death, who interrupts one's progression in the practice because one then has to be reborn favorably to continue. H.V. Guenther in the Jewel Ornament of Liberation states that "Mara implies a deadening influence on life." Note 1, p. 199.*

26. *H.V. Guenther, op. cit, p. 52, states that the five heightened awarenesses are:*

(i) miraculous powers such as multiplying oneself, walking through walls and so on; (ii) hearing human and divine voices near and far; (iii) knowing other's thoughts; (iv) recollection of former lives; and (v) the vision of beings passing away and then reincarnating.

The Sutra of Three Heaps

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Introduction

The foundation of spiritual realization is the maintenance of pure ethical discipline, not committing any unwholesome action or transgressing any of the three types of

vows. These vows are: (I) the vows of individual liberation (so-sor thar-pa, pratimoksa) including those of laymen and monks; (ii) the bonds of commitments of an Awakening Warrior; and (iii) the tantric pledges of those actively following the tantra, The way to keep them pure while reducing or eliminating the strength of instincts of previous unwholesome actions, is repeatedly to lay bare one's transgressions and to curtail the tendency to repeat them.

The principal characteristic of confession is reflected in the literal meaning of its Tibetan equivalent shag-pa (bshags-pa), which means 'splitting open' 'laying bare' or 'declaring.' For example, willfully killing a being, even a small insect, is a transgression of fundamental Buddhist tenet not to kill. Keeping this act secret rather than exposing it would make the eradication of its possible detrimental effects more difficult. Opening up and exposing our faults is the meaning of confession. Openness and honesty in every situation is the essence of the Buddhist path.

"bshags pa" "to declare or to express one's faults for the purpose of not keeping them secret." E.g., "rang skyon 'chags pa" "to admit one's faults".

In the Buddhist sense, it specifically means "to declare or express one's faults and in so doing to lay them down so that they cease to be part of one's conduct." This additional meaning has been clearly explained at length to the author of this dictionary by a number of teachers, including [VCT] Trungpa Rinpoche. The additional meaning does not include a promise or commitment regarding the future but simply means that, one is declaring some wrong-doing or fault (so that it is not kept secret) and is now putting aside and finishing with that (past) action. [VCT] coined "to lay aside" for this which is very apt. Hence also "to lay down". Common usages are "sdiḡ pa bshags pa" "to lay down degrading actions"; "ltung ba bshags pa" "to lay down one's downfalls".

The word "bshags pa" is usually translated as "confession" but there are

considerable problems with this. Firstly, "bshags pa" has the specific meaning of "letting go of something", "dropping it". It is important to note that this term does not also involve the decision henceforth not to do something again; that is another state of mind which is said to be required in "laying aside" but which is provided by what are called the four powers. This is clearly described in the teaching on the four powers for clearing away negative karmas, which are called the "gnyen po'i stobs bzhi" "four opponent powers of (involved in) laying aside degradation." These are also known as "four powers of the antidote":

1) "rten gyi stobs" "the power of the support"; 2) "sun 'byin pa'i stobs" "the power of rejection"; 3) "nyes pa las slar ldog pa'i stobs" "the power of turning away from repeating the fault"; 4) "gnyen po kun tu spyod pa'i stobs" "the power of thorough application of the antidote".

Alternatively:

1) "rten gyi stobs" "power of the support"; 2) "gnyen po'i stobs" "power of the antidote"; 3) "rnam par sun 'byin pa'i stobs" "power of total rejection"; 4) "nyes pa las slar ldog pa'i stobs" "power of turning away from repeating the fault" with the same meanings as above.

The power of support is force that comes from the good object, usually a spiritual object, that one uses as a witness for the laying aside. The power of rejection is the force connected with the decision that this was a bad thing; it entails regret and note that it is not the decision not to repeat the fault. The power of turning away from repeating the fault is the force that comes from the decision not to do it again. The power of thorough application of the antidote is the force that comes from performance of some rite or act that purifies the negativity created by the degradation; in Buddhism there are many rituals for the purpose, e.g., the recitation of "phung po gsum pa" The Sutra of the Three Heaps.

Each one is a specific force that adds weight to the basic practice of admitting and laying aside some bad deed. The buddha explained how each of the four specifically cuts off each of four types of karmic fruition associated with any negative karma that has been created. The use of all four provides a total force that has the power to eliminate any kind of bad deed that has been created.

Secondly, the word "bshags" always has "mthol lo" implied as a preceding word "mthol lo bshags so" because, in the process of correct and complete "bshags pa ""laying aside", the non-virtue, whatever it was, has to be both admitted and laid aside. For that reason," bshags" alone should always be understood to have "mthol ba" joined before it. The admitting, a vocal action, is done with "mthol", the laying aside, a mental action, is done with "bshags." There is no word for this in English. Words such as disclose, admit, and acknowledge might be suitable for "mthol" but none of them fit with "bshags." The word "confess" also is on the side of mthol but has all of the meanings of the Christian confession in it—the great Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche regarded it as totally unsuitable. Apologize also is totally unsuitable, since i) it falls on the side of "mthol" and ii) it does not imply that one has remorse or is willing even to lay it aside; even in English one has to say, "I apologize, I will not do it again" in order to gain the meaning of "bshags." Laying aside was first coined by the Trungpa Rinpoche in 1975 (see the 1975, Vajradhatu, Hinayana-Mahayana transcripts).

It is characteristic of water to flow downwards and of fire to burn upwards. Similarly, worldly beings are imbued with emotional and psychological afflictions such as greed, aggression and ignorance which naturally lead them into conflict and bewilderment thus increasing their misery. The principal source of suffering and confusion stems from the mind and one's outlook on life. If harmful mental factors are reduced, peace of mind and harmony will arise. Water will never flow upwards nor will fire burn downwards. The arising of mental afflictions can be stopped

through confession and repeated application of the four forces opposing past, present and future detrimental deeds.

The first force is that of reliance, which means entrusting oneself to a faultless object of refuge. The second is the force of counter-measures involving thorough application of antidotes counteracting the wrongs done. This is not merely blind penance, but depends on understanding the law of cause and effect. The third force is repentance, generating a strong feeling of remorse and regret at having done harmful deeds. The fourth force is a strong intention to turn away from committing such acts again.

Understanding the value of confession depends on an understanding of the law of cause and effect. Basically this means realizing that skillful actions lead to pleasure and happiness, unskillful ones to frustration and suffering. Furthermore, since all beings are alike in wishing to avoid misery and to gain happiness, we must live in accordance with the law of cause and effect in order to achieve this universally shared aim. This is the main teaching of the Fully Awakened Being, Buddha Sakyamuni. All higher insights depend on this foundation.

Unless we realize and believe the consequences of neurotic actions will be suffering, discomfort, and confusion, it will never be possible for us to generate a real sense of regret. This genuine feeling of remorse is the most important of the four forces because it naturally leads to the other three. Although we may regret many things, we rarely regret the wrongs we have done. This shows we are too short-sighted. We feel we will witness or experience the effect of our actions committed in this life. However, most of the consequences of actions committed in this life, especially of serious non-virtues, are not experienced in the same lifetime but ripen as intense misery in future lives. Therefore, not experiencing pain immediately after committing a non-virtuous act does not disprove the law of cause and effect. If we accept that an oak-tree certainly grows from an acorn, why not accept that misery results from non-virtue, and happiness arises from virtue? Real awareness of day-to-day activities reveals that acting on inclination towards greed, anger and so on

results in dissatisfaction both for ourselves and others.

One of the most powerful opponents to past adverse instincts is confession;, and of the various means of confession the most potent is the practice of the Sutra of Three Heaps. The great being Shantideva in the Guide to the Bodhi-Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhisattvacaryavatara) says, " Be certain to perform the Three Heaps Three times in the day and in the night. Having stabilized [your mind before] the Conqueror and Awakening Warriors, By that (practice) pacify your remaining downfalls."

The first of the "Three Heaps" is the heap of confession, the second, dedication, and the third, rejoicing. They are called heaps (phung-po, skandha) because a heap arises from many things, such as grains or stones, being gathered together. Here, heap implies that this practice is a synthesis of various methods of confession, dedication and rejoicing. It includes a recitation of the names of thirty-five fully Awakened Beings, mentioned because they have taken specific oaths and pledges to destroy defilements and obstacles that exist in the minds of living beings. The venerable Je Tsong Khapa, founder of the Gelug tradition, his Nying-ma teacher, Lho-dr'ag Drub-ch'en La-kyi dor-je and the translator Mar-pa, founder of the Kagyu tradition, performed their preliminary practices in connection with this sutra. It is said Je Tsong Khapa did 100,000 prostrations to each of the thirty-five Awakened Beings. Whether intensely followed as part of the preliminary practices or as a daily recitation, if this practice is done with sincerity and a strong conviction in the law of cause and effect, it will definitely lead to meditational insight and increased happiness in daily life.

Applying the Four Forces

The first opponent force, relying on the Three Supreme Jewels, is explicitly expressed at the beginning of the sutra, but the generation of the awakening mind is not so obvious. It is, however, implicitly indicated at the end of the text, where merit is dedicated to the peerless awakening of absolute perfection, so that we may

attain the ultimate supreme primordial awareness that is unsurpassable. This demonstrates the nature of the awakening mind which, in order to benefit others, both aspires to and actively engages in those actions leading to the fully awakened state.

The second opponent force is application of special virtuous actions to overcome the obstacles of evil and emotional afflictions. There are six ways in which this can be done. The first is repetition of mantra, or the names of the thirty-five Buddhas to whom homage is paid. The other five special virtuous actions are: meditating on Vajrasattva and reciting his one hundred syllable mantra; reading texts dealing with the profound subject of emptiness, especially the Prajnaparamita Sutras; actually meditating on emptiness, the most powerful opponent force of all; and presenting offerings to invite the ordained Sangha of different traditions and make offerings to them as one asks them to recite various 'Paths of Aspirations' and making statues or paintings, or building reliquary monuments (mchod-rten, stupa).

The third opponent force is repentance or remorse. This is the most crucial among the four forces. Having requested the Fully Awakened Beings to grant their attention, we review the possible categories of unwholesome actions that we have done and may still be doing. By contemplating deeply on the meaning of the text, great regret and a feeling of repentance should arise.

The fourth opponent force is the promise to turn away from doing such actions again. "Without concealing them" implies that immediately after committing a wrong action, we lay it bare rather than conceal it for even a short time. "Without keeping anything secret" means we shall not continue to hide our wrong-doings, nor shall increase them. The phrase, "Hereafter ! pledge to refrain from these actions again" is the essence of this force. This pledge does not constitute a formal vow but rather an intention to avoid any similar unskillful actions in the future. Nevertheless, confession does have the power to maintain the purity of formal vows.

In addition to these four forces, there is the force of dedication. This is the second of the three heaps, and its importance is difficult for ordinary beings to imagine. In general, there are three types of dedication of merit, each having its respective objective. The first objective is for the attainment of Full Awakening; the second is for the preservation of the sacred Doctrine; and the third is for the securing of the care and guidance of spiritual masters throughout all our future lives. In this text, the dedication is of the first kind-- confirming our application of the four forces. Any method of accomplishment (sgrub-thabs, sadhana) should conclude with the dedication of merits that may have accrued during the practice. If this is done with aspiration for the path, the practice becomes solid and well-founded.

The thirty-five awakened beings

The standard way to confess by means of this sutra entails repeating the names of thirty-five Fully Awakened Beings. Each has specific powers to eliminate various obstacles from residual wrong actions committed over many eons. To make this clearer, an explanation of the Buddhist concept of time is needed.

The largest unit of time in Buddhist cosmology is a Great Eon which is divided into eighty inter-aeons. These eighty are classified into the four Great Events of the universe, with each Event lasting twenty inter-aeons. The first twenty inter-aeons are known as the inter-aeons of formation during which the universe is being re-created after its previous destruction. The second twenty are characterized by the prevalence of sentient life; the third twenty are the inter-aeons of destruction; and the fourth are empty inter-aeons during which there is nothing at all.

The duration of the twenty inter-aeons of each universal event is calculated in terms of the increasing and decreasing human life-spans of the second event. At the outset of the second Great Event of Abiding, the human life-span is eighty thousand years. Each two hundred years, this life-span decreases by one year until the average person dies at the age of ten. The duration of time required for this decrease constitutes the first inter-eon of the twenty inter-aeons and is called the 'era of the great downwards reduction of life span.'

Following this first inter-eon, the life span increases from ten back to eighty thousand years at the rate of one year every hundred, and then again descends or 'curves' downwards to begin the next era of decrease back to ten years at the same rate. Each increase or decrease in life span is called a 'curve of time' and is repeated, alternately increasing and decreasing eighteen times. The last of the twenty inter-aeons is the 'era of the great upward increase of life span' during which the average length of the human life again increases from ten to eighty thousand years at the same rate as it so decreased during the first inter-eon. Each Great Event is measured in the same way.

Although the main events of a great eon are formation, abiding, destruction and emptiness, other lesser events characterize the present cycle of time such as the eras of famine and weapons. When the life span dwindles to thirty years, a time of famine will occur and everyone will die of starvation. When it has dwindled to ten years, whatever implements are held will become weapons and everyone will hate and kill one another.

Further details about Buddhist cosmology can be found in the Abhidharma texts and commentaries, such as the Treasury of Higher Truths (5) by Vasubandhu and the Compendium of Higher Truths (6) by his brother Asanga. Understanding the enormous duration of aeons should make us extremely grateful that the consequences of unwholesome deeds committed over such expanses of time can be eliminated.

Reciting the epithets of the first of the thirty-five Buddhas, the Fully Awakened Being of the present world-age, eliminates the ripening of effects of wrongs done over ten thousand great aeons. The epithets ascribed to him are etymologised in the following way. He is "Teacher" because he teaches the sacred Dharma. It is said that the Teacher is unequaled, that he alone has spoken the word, and what he has said is definitive. He is the "Endowed Transcendent Destroyer" since he destroys all

emotional defilements and the two obscurations-- one to liberation and the other to omniscience--and possesses every excellence of insight and compassion. He has transcended existence and abides in the ultimate reality. He is the "One Thus-gone" because he has gone beyond the misery of cyclic existence having reached Full Awakening, and thus has abandoned all psychological afflictions along with their instincts. It also implies he has attained the understanding of Thusness. He is the "Foe Destroyer" because he has overcome the foe of conflicting emotions. This indicates that Full Awakening is attained by destroying internal, not external enemies. The Sanskrit word arhat also connotes one who is worthy of offerings. He is the "Completely Perfected Fully Awakened Being" because he has completed his accumulation of excellent qualities and maintains perfect, non-erroneous recollection of the essence of all phenomena. He has awoken from the sleep of ignorance and, like a blossoming lotus, has fully spread his intellect to all that is knowable. He is "Glorious" (7) because he has passed beyond the godly realms and has reached the definite goodness of release from cyclic existence. He is the "Conqueror"(8) because he has overcome all mental obstacles. He is the "Subduer" as he has subdued all types of reality and is completely in control and capable. He is a descendent of the ancient Indian warrior clan, the Sakyas, These are the titles by which he is known.

The other thirty-four Fully Awakened Beings eliminate the traces of evil either accumulated over varying specific lengths of time, or from specific non-virtuous actions.

The "Great Destroyer with the Adamantine Essence" eliminates non-virtue committed over a period of ten thousand great aeons; the "Jewel Radiating Light," over a period of twenty thousand great aeons; the "Ruling King of the Serpent Spirits" eliminates those committed over one thousand great aeons; the "Leader of the Warriors" also for one thousand; the "One who is Pleased to be a Warrior" for two thousand aeons; the "Jewel Fire" also for two thousand aeons; the "Jewel Moonlight" for eight thousand aeons; the "One with Vision and a Purpose"

eliminates wrongs done over one eon; and the "Jewel Moon" specifically eliminates the imprints of the five unbounded heinous actions. The "Stainless One" eradicates the latent traces of the five lesser unbounded actions; the "Bestower of Courage" eliminates those of anger; the "Pure One" eliminates those arising from the attachment of ten thousand aeons; and the "One Who Gives out of Purity" eliminates those of the general non-virtues of ten thousand aeons. The "Water Deity" eliminates imprints of the sins of one thousand aeons; and both the "God of the Water Deity" and the "Glorious Good" eradicate those of five thousand aeons. The "Glorious Sandalwood" does away with the traces of wrongs done for seven thousand aeons as does the "One of Unlimited Splendor." The "Glorious Light" can eliminate the stains of previous evil actions of unlimited time. The "Glorious One Without Sorrow" eliminates the potencies of actions done out of ignorance; and the "Son of the Passionless One", those done out of the instincts of ignorance. The "Glorious Flower" eliminates the latent traces of all bodily non-virtues; the "One Who Understands Clearly, Enjoying the Radiant Light of Purity" eliminates those of speech; and the "One who Understands Clearly, Enjoying the Radiant Light of the Lotus" eliminates those of mind. The "Glorious Gem" eliminates the imprint arising from the non-virtue of stealing from monasteries; the "Glorious One Who is Mindful" eliminates those arising from despising others or abusing them; and the "Glorious One Whose Name is extremely Renowned" eliminates those arising from jealousy. The "King of the Victory Banner of the Pinnacle of Sensory Powers" eliminates those arising from arrogance and conceit; the "Glorious One Who Vanquishes Utterly Within" eliminates those arising out of slander; and the "One Who is Utterly Victorious in Battles Within" eradicates those arising out of all types of non-virtuous actions. The "Glorious One Who has Transcended by Vanquishing Within" eliminates the stain of encouraging others to act improperly; and the "Glorious One Who Enhances and Illuminates Totally" eliminates those of rejoicing in unwholesome deeds. The "One Who Subdues by a Jewel and a Lotus" eliminates the imprints of all forms of abandoning spirituality; and finally, the "King of Powerful Mount Meru Who is Firmly Seated upon a Jewel and a Lotus" eradicates the stains arising from disparaging your Spiritual Master.

In many Tibetan editions of this sutra, the words, the "One Thus-Gone", are prefixed before all of the names of the thirty-five Buddhas. This title was added by Je Tsong Khapa after experiencing a vision of the thirty-five Buddhas, each without a head. Upon showing increased respect by adding *de-bzhin gshegs-pa*, their heads appeared.

The Buddha Sakyamuni spoke of the advantages of repeating these thirty-five names or just remembering them once. Such benefits derive not from the mere repetition of their name, but from the pledge to help sentient beings in the specific ways these Awakened Beings have made in their previous lives. Remembering their abilities constitutes the application of antidotes that counteract wrongs. When united with the other three forces, the latent traces of non-virtue will certainly be eliminated.

Having thus recited the names of the thirty-five Buddhas, you now request their attention. You then recite the many unskillful actions you have committed in this and previous lifetimes, including such actions as instigating or rejoicing in the unwholesome deeds of others.

The first such action mentioned is stealing wealth from places-of-offering (*mchod-ten*, stupa). The stupa represents one aspect of the first object of refuge-- a Buddha's Perfect Body of Truth, the Dharmakaya. Since the Perfect Body of Truth, the all-knowing awareness of a Buddha, cannot be perceived by ordinary beings, it is symbolically represented in the physical form of a stupa. The other aspect-- the Perfect Body of Emanations, or the form in which a Buddha appears, the Nirmanakaya--is usually represented by statues or paintings. Therefore, if any offering made to a stupa is stolen, or if even a scarf draped over a statue is taken, such a theft constitutes a non-virtue of this type. An example would be the local children at Bodh Gaya stealing the offering candles. The action, according to the law of karma, only serves to perpetuate their poverty.

Next is stealing the wealth from Those Intent on Virtue, the Sangha. This means stealing from anyone who belongs to the monastic community. The text mentions, "stealing the wealth from Those Intent on Virtue throughout the ten directions," meaning from a large number of monks. The consequences of such an act are so serious that the karmic imprints created through such an act are more difficult to eliminate than those of having committed a wrong against the Buddha or the Dharma. Even after the application of the four opponent forces, consequences may still be experienced in such a form as headaches and toothaches. Having developed great regret, you must confess and to return to each his portion of what was stolen before the monks have dispersed. If you were to delay doing so until the monks have gathered again, it would be unlikely all those previously there would again be present. Thus it would be difficult to eliminate such non-virtue completely. Stealing offerings yourself or sending or encouraging someone else to do so both constitute this type of theft.

The text next mentions the five unbounded heinous actions. These are: killing your father, mother, or a saint liberated from cyclic existence; causing a schism among the Sangha; and intentionally drawing blood from a Fully Awakened Being. The first three and the last of these crimes are not very common, but causing a schism among followers of the Dharma is dangerously possible so you must exercise great caution to avoid such an action. Many scriptures state that the Doctrine will not be destroyed by external foes, but by dissension and conflict from within. No one Buddhist tradition should be set against another as they are all valid paths that lead to the same goal and differ only in the techniques they employ to suit differing dispositions and inclinations of the adherents. Holding sectarian views shows your eye of intelligence is as small as the eye of a needle.

Five lesser heinous crimes are mentioned in Vasubhandu's Treasury of Higher Truths, namely (i) attempting to cause a female saint to lose the purity of her vows; (ii) killing a Bodhisattva who is in a definite position to attain Buddhahood; (iii)

killing an Arya who is still learning and has not reached the path of no more learning; (iv) stealing or taking monastic funds and (v) destroying objects of worship.

The text then mentions the ten non-virtuous actions: three of the body (killing any living being, stealing, and sexual misconduct); four of speech (lying, slander, harsh language, and senseless chatter); and three of mind (craving, ill-will and wrong views).

There follows a list of some of the unsatisfactory states you may be born into because of the force of ripening karma created by previous contaminated actions. One teacher has said our past non-virtues and their imprints are as numerous as the heirlooms of an ancient family. The mass of our unskillful instincts is like a royal treasury. Though many beings are materially very poor, all are rich in traces of non-virtue, which are actually limitless. Meditate deeply on this, arouse a strong feeling of regret and confessing often, dedicate your merits.

The dedication of sources of virtue and merit to the "unsurpassable" refers to the Perfect Truth Body of Primordial Awareness, (ye-shes chos-sku, Jnanadharmakaya), the wisdom of the Buddhas. "That of which there is no higher" is the Perfect Body of Universal Essence (ngo-bo-nyid sku, Svabhavikakaya), the essence of Buddha's wisdom empty of true existence, "That which is even higher than the high" refers to the Perfect Body of Enjoyment (longs-spyod sku, Sambhogakaya) endowed with the five certainties enjoyed only by Superior Aryas. It is above the high (The tenth stage Awakening Warrior). The "supreme surmounting even the supreme" refers to the perfect body of Emanation (spul-sku, Nirmanakaya), the person or personality of an enlightened being appearing to ordinary people. They are the supreme of even the supreme because such a Perfect Body is the spiritual superior to even Hearers and Solitary Realizers, Foe Destroyers, as well as Awakening Warriors abiding in, the pure stages--the eighth, ninth and tenth spiritual levels.

Towards the end of the sutra it says "all wrongs individually I confess", implying that as soon as an individual wrong is done you lay it bare. According to another interpretation, it refers to a transgression of vows, to be confessed in front of the individuals against whom the infraction was made, Transgressions of ordination vows are confessed before the five monks who administered the vows. Laymen confess to their spiritual teacher. Transgressions of Bodhisattva vows are confessed before the visualized assembly of Awakened Beings and their spiritual sons. Broken tantric commitments are confessed before the celestial mansion (dkyil-'khor, mandala) of one's personal deity (yi-dam, istadevata) and its entourage.

After this confession, you "rejoice" in the merit of all beings; "beseech" the fully Awakened Beings to turn the wheel of the Dharma teachings and "request" them to live long lives, remaining in this world. This is followed by activation of the awakening mind. The text then concludes with praise and refuge.

If you follow this method of applying the four opponent forces in combination with repeating the names of the thirty-five Awakened Beings once or twice only, you may not feel that obstacles from previous non-virtues have been eliminated. This is simply because they are so abundant, having been accumulated over aeons of time. However, if you repeat the practice many times while prostrating with deep faith in the power of the prayer, it will be very effective. Practice should be continued until some signs of purification occur. Frequent dreams of vomiting food or poison, eating yogurt or drinking milk, seeing sunrise or moonrise, flying through the sky, bursting into flames, seeing something burning, overcoming buffaloes or figures dressed in black, meeting monks or nuns, sitting on lion-supported thrones, riding horses or elephants, and listening to spiritual teachings are a few such signs. If such indications occur five or more times fairly consecutively, it is good sign of purification. Should they happen, but once it may be just by chance. An even clearer indication of successful purification is your intelligence becoming sharper, enabling you to penetrate into deeper subjects with increased comprehension. If this method of applying the four opponent forces is performed daily, insights in

meditation will also increase.

Therefore, whether you are a layman or are ordained, this practice is of great benefit and will lead to the ultimate realization of the Fully Awakened State.

Notes and References

1. *From the Bodhisattvacaryavatara, Chapt. 5, stanza 98, published by L.T.W.A. and the Siksasamuccaya (bslab-btus) translated into English by C. Bendall and W.H.D. Rouse Siksasamuccaya, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1971.*
2. *It will be noted that this classification of the "Three Heaps" differs somewhat from that given by Nagarjuna.*
3. *H.V. Guenther states that "essentially mantra is a name for symbolic transformation processes and their experience, in which language partakes, being, as it were, its final shape. Inseparable from mind, mantra is its activity as such." (Dawn of Tantra, Berkeley, Shambhala, 1975.) It is defined as "that which protects the mind."*
4. *"Aspiration for the path" according to F. Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in Tibetan Book of the Dead, Berkeley, Shambhala. (1975), is "often translated simply as prayer, but means literally 'wish path' (smon-lam). It is not a request to an external deity, but a method of purifying and directing the mind. It acts as an inspiration by arousing the mind's inherent desire for good, which attracts the fulfillment of its aim."*
5. *Abhidharmakosakarika, Chos-mngon-pa'i mdzod-kyi tshig-le'ur byas-pa.*
6. *Abhidharmasamuccaya, Chos-mngon-pa kun-btus.*
7. *Glorious appears to have been added to many of the Tibetan editions.*
8. *Conqueror also appears to have been added to many of the Tibetan editions.*

Prostrations

@Gendune Rinpoche

The Approach to Suffering

Sometimes we might experience difficulties doing prostrations. Pain and fatigue will be in our way. There is always some concern; pain in our knees, elbows, lower back, everywhere. There is no reason to be discouraged by it or lose confidence in our practice. Neither should we strengthen the feeling by saying to ourselves, "I suffer so much, I feel so weak.". By doing this we completely block ourselves. We lose the ability to act. When the pain is allowed to "have a say ", it can become a real obstacle on the path of our further practice. We should use every unpleasant experience, whether physical or mental, as a means to get enlightened. Such experiences should mobilize us toward greater effort on our path.

Everything we experience depends on the state of mind we are in. If we want to experience things differently, we must change the state of our mind. If we manage to efficiently transform suffering into a positive and beneficial experience, the suffering will disappear completely without a trace. This will give us more happiness and joy.

Prostrations are a way of accumulating truly good potential. They are an easy and effective way to purify negative actions from our past. On the other hand, if - due to pain and fatigue - we continue doing prostrations being while depressed, true purification does not take place.

The Techniques of Working with Unpleasant Experiences

1 - Depletion of Karma

We should not think of suffering as something very serious. We should remember that suffering is just karma, that it is impermanent like everything else. Suffering has its end. When our karma ripens, we should remain relaxed and observe this natural flow of things. If we manage to infuse our practice with the understanding

of the impermanence of karma, it will dissolve by itself. Karma is not something we have to accept or reject. It is like the obligation to pay our bills which appears automatically. When we have paid our debts karma dissolves by itself and there is nothing to reject.

2 - Purification of Karma through Physical Indisposition

Dharma practice eliminates veils and stains that are results of our former actions. We should perceive the physical indisposition we experience during the practice as the result of the compassion of the Three Jewels. This relatively small suffering dissolves future karma which will then not ripen. For this reason we should experience this suffering with joy and confidence. Such unpleasant experiences indicate that the practice works. The use of purifying methods may result in many unpleasant experiences on the level of body, speech, and mind. At the same time, we are getting rid of difficulties and veils in our minds. As we experience purification as a result of our practice, our confidence in the Three Jewels increases. We feel deep gratitude because these relatively small nuisances help free us from conditions that would otherwise ripen as much greater suffering.

3 - Noticing Ego-Clinging through Suffering

We should regard every suffering as an antidote to ego-clinging. Experiencing one's own suffering is in itself a proof of our egocentric attitude towards all phenomena. At the same time, such situations (where we experience suffering) give us the possibility to get rid of our ego clinging. If we have no ego-illusion we can experience no suffering. We should also understand the cause of our suffering: we experience it because of our former actions which resulted from our ego clinging. Being so focused on ourselves, we have sown many karmic seeds which have now ripened as suffering. We can treat suffering as a teaching showing us the results of actions that result from being focused on oneself. From beginningless time this ego clinging has been the cause of us being caught in the cycle of existence (samsara).

4 - Observing Our Ego

Ego wants to be satisfied all the time. As long as everything is all right our ego is content and tries to keep this state. Our "self" clings to this contentment and our mind is distressed with desire -- the poison of attachment. When nice circumstances are gone, ego still clings to them because it wants to be content. More attachment and desire appear in our mind. In the cases of unpleasant situations the ego reacts with anger and hatred. It tries to avoid them and replace them with pleasant experiences. In this way our mind is anxious and unhappy. We can recognize the continuous influence of ego in every situation. It ceaselessly categorizes experiences as pleasant or unpleasant. If we follow our ego we accumulate karma which will sooner or later ripen as different kinds of suffering.

5 - Unpleasant experiences as a test of our perseverance

We should remember about our promise to use our body, speech, and mind for the benefit of others. Knowing that we work for the benefit of all beings we should keep our promise, subdue our internal difficulties, and continue our practice.

Mandala-Offering

World systems

The Buddha taught that the earth is not the center of the universe and is not the only planet with intelligent life. He taught that there are an infinite number of world-systems, that some of those worlds are inhabited by intelligent life, and that on some of those worlds other Buddhas also teach the Buddhadharma.

Description of a world system

"One sun, one moon, one Mount Sumeru, and one set of four great continents is what is called 'a set of four continents under heaven', that is, a world-system. In our world-system, a smaller version of the larger whole, Asia could be called Southern

Jambudvipa. Probably America is equivalent to Eastern Purvavideha, Europe to Western Aparagodaniya, and the Soviet Union to Northern Uttarakuru. However the Buddhist Sutras say that the inhabitants of Northern Uttarakuru do not see the Buddha, do not hear the Dharma, and do not see members of the Sangha. They say that when it is daytime in Southern Jambudvipa, it is nighttime in Northern Uttarakuru. Every world-system has these four great continents, and perhaps sometimes the directions of the four can be different. Don't get attached to it."

A great world system of a billion worlds

A thousand world-systems of four great continents, etc. comprise a 'small world-system.' A thousand small world-systems comprise a middle-sized world system, and a thousand middle-sized world-systems comprise a great world-system of a billion worlds, or literally a thousand times a thousand times a thousand worlds (Skt. Trisahasramahasahasralokadhatu).

Mandala Offering

The Thirty-seven Points of the Mandala Offering composed by Chögyal Pakpa are:

- 1) Mount Meru
- 2-5) The four continents
- 6-13) The eight subcontinents
- 14) The jewel mountain
- 15) The wish-fulfilling tree
- 16) The wish-fulfilling cow
- 17) The harvest which needs no sowing
- 18-24) The seven attributes of royalty
- 25) The vase of great treasure
- 26-33) The eight offering goddesses
- 34) The sun
- 35) The moon

- 36) The precious umbrella
- 37) The royal banner victorious in all directions

1) Mount Meru

Mount Meru or Mount Sumeru (Skt. Sumeruparvata; Wyl. ri rab) is a mountain square in shape with four sides, larger at the top than at the bottom. It is 80,000 yojanas (450,000 km) high. It lies at the center of the world. Around it are seven freshwater lakes separated by seven rings of golden mountains. Outside, in a great salty ocean, are the four continents and eight subcontinents (two out at sea, left and right of each of the continents). We humans live on the southern continent called 'Jambudvipa'. This entire world system is surrounded by a ring of iron mountains. The universe is made of many such worlds. For instance, a trichiliocosm is composed of one billion such worlds.

At the top of Mount Meru is the lowest abode of the gods of the Desire Realm. On its sides are the terraces of the Four Great Kings. In the space above are the five other abodes of the gods of the Desire Realm and those of the gods of the Form Realm. It rests on the universal golden basis. Usually it is said that the pretas live on its sides, in cavities between the limit of the waters down to the golden basis.

Its four sides are made of four different precious substances: the south of lapis-lazuli, the west of ruby; the north of gold; and the east of crystal (Tib. Shel). Since we are living on the southern continent of Jambudvipa and the southern side of Mount Meru is blue, this explains why the seas around and the sky above us are blue. The shine of the blue lapis-lazuli reflects on the marine waters in front. Upon hitting the surface it reflects and appears in the space above. So rather than there being something blue above us, the space appears blue because of the reflection of the lapis-lazuli of Mount Meru's

southern side. Similarly the oceans and the sky are respectively red, yellow and white in the West, North, and East directions of Mount Meru.

2-5). Four continents (Wyl. gling bzhi) — the four island-continents (Skt. dvīpa; Wyl. gling) which surround Mount Meru according to the cosmology of the Abhidharma. They are:

1.Purva Videha (Skt. Pūrvavideha; Tib.Lüpakpo; Wyl. lus 'phags po; Eng. 'Surpassing the Body') in the East, which is semi-circular and white in colour;

2.Jambudvipa (Skt. Jambudvīpa; Tib.Dzambuling; Wyl. 'dzam bu gling; Eng. 'Rose-Apple Continent') in the South, which is trapezoidal and blue (this is the continent we human beings live on);

3.Aparagodaniya (Skt.; Tib. Balangchö; Wyl. ba lang spyod; Eng. 'Enjoyer of Cattle') in the West, which is circular and ruby red; and

4.Uttarakura (Skt.; Tib. Draminyen; Wyl.sgra mi snyan; Eng. 'Unpleasant Sound') in the North, which is square and green.

Each of the four continents is flanked by two subcontinents (Skt. ksudradvīpāni; Wyl. gling phreng) of the same shape (see eight subcontinents).

Apart from the Chamara subcontinent of Jambudvipa, which is inhabited by rakshasa demons, all the other island-continents are inhabited by human beings of different characteristics, life styles, and life-spans. Each continent also has a specific attribute (see four attributes of the four continents).

6-13) Eight subcontinents (Tib. ling tren gyé; Wyl.gling phran brgyad) —

there are two subcontinents for each of the four continents which surround Mount Meru according to the cosmology of the Abhidharma. The subcontinents are of identical shape to the continent they surround, but of half its size. The eight subcontinents are:

1. Deha (Skt.; Tib. Lü; Wyl. Lus) and
2. Videha (Skt.; Tib. Lüpak; Wyl. lus 'phags) which surround Purvavideha;
3. Chamara (Skt. Cāmara; Tib. Ngayab; Wyl.rnga yab) and
4. Aparachamara (Skt. Aparacāmara; Tib.Ngayab shyen; Wyl. rnga yab gzhan) which surround Jambudvipa;
5. Shatha (Skt. Śāthā; Tib. Yoden; Wyl. gyo ldan) and
6. Uttaramantrina (Skt. Uttaramantrina; Tib.Lam chok dro; Wyl. lam mchog 'gro) which surround Aparagodaniya;
7. Kurava (Skt.; Tib. Dra mi nyen; Wyl. sgra mi snyan); and
8. Kaurava (Skt.; Tib. Drami yen gyi da; Wyl. sgra mi snyan gyi zla) which surround Uttarakuru.

14).The jewel mountain

15).The wish-fulfilling tree

Kalpavriksha is a mythological, wish-fulfilling divine tree that is a common trope in Sanskrit literature from the earliest sources onwards. Along with the kamadhenu, or 'wish-giving cow', the kalpavriksha originated during the Samudra manthan or "churning of the milk ocean", and the King of the gods, Indra returned with it to his paradise. While there is no attested Sanskrit source conclusively identifying this mythological tree with any real, known tree kalpavriksha can figuratively refer to a source of bounty.

17). The harvest which needs no sowing

16). The wish-fulfilling cow

In Hindu mythology, Kamadhenu was a divine cow who was believed to be the mother of all cows. Like her daughter Nandini, she could grant any wish for the true seeker. Kamadhenu provided Vasishta with his needs for the sacrifices. Kamadhenu (kama-dhenu, 'wish-cow'), was a miraculous cow of plenty who could give her owner whatever he desired.

18-24) The seven emblems of royalty (Skt. saptaratna; Tib. gyal si na dñn; Wyl. rgyal srid sna bdun) are the seven possessions of a universal monarch (Skt. cakravartin). They symbolize the Seven noble riches (Wyl. 'phags pa'i nor bdun)

1. faith (Tib. dépa; Wyl. dad pa)
2. discipline (Tib. tsultrim; Wyl. tshul khrims)
3. generosity (Tib. tongwa; Wyl. gtong ba)
4. learning (Tib. töpa; Wyl. thos pa)
5. dignity (Tib. ngo tsa shepa; Wyl. ngo tsha shes pa)
6. propriety (Tib. trel yöpa; Wyl. khrel yod pa)
7. wisdom (Tib. sherab; Wyl. shes rab)

The seven emblems of royalty are:

1. the precious golden wheel (Skt. cakraratna; Wyl. 'khor lo rin po che), the golden wheel has one thousand spokes, five hundred 'Paktse' long (500 Km). It is high in the sky, and very radiant, like a second sun. It can carry four "multitudes" of people. It can go through space to the four continents and to the realms of the devas very quickly. You can visualize numberless wheels, not just one, in space on the eastern side and offer them. Then dedicate: "By my offering this precious wheel may all sentient beings achieve control of the Dharma activity". That means sentient beings receiving all the teachings, understanding the meanings of the words and having the realizations. It could also mean that through having an understanding of the meanings of the words and having the realizations being able to do Dharma activities to benefit other sentient beings. Saying "all sentient beings" also includes

yourself. If you are a sentient being!

2. the precious wish-fulfilling jewel (Skt. *maniratna*; Wyl. *nor bu rin po che*).

The wish-granting jewel, on the southern side, is lapis lazuli. Iconographically the precious jewel is usually depicted as a cluster of elongated and multicolored club-shaped stems that stand upon a small moon disc and lotus. This eight-faceted jewel is described as being of the deep lapis lazuli hue of the *vaidurya* gemstone, with a radiant blue light that can illuminate the entire palace gardens or the four divisions of the *chakravartin*'s army. Even the nighttime appears as day to the sentient beings. The wish-granting gem fulfills all the desires of the *chakravartin*, and of those who come within its sphere of radiance. Like the legendary red *kaustubha* gem that surfaced during the churning of the ocean, and which became the breast adornment of both Vishnu and Krishna, the precious jewel possesses eight magical qualities, (1) Its radiance illuminates the darkness of night for a distance of one or a hundred leagues. (2.) It cools when the days are hot, and warms when the days are cold. (3) It causes a spring or a rivulet of sweet water to appear when one is thirsty. (4) It brings into existence everything that the *chakravartin* desires. (5) It controls the *nagas*, preventing floods, hailstorms, and torrential rain from occurring. (6) It emits various colored light from each of its facets, which heal all emotional afflictions and imperfections of nature. (7) Its radiance cures all illnesses. (8) It prevents untimely death, ensuring that death from natural causes occurs in the auspicious sequence of grandfather, father, and finally son.

Its main quality is that whatever sentient beings wish for they can receive immediately. There are many stories about *bodhisattvas* who went to the oceans to get these wish-granting jewels. They had to be cleaned three times as they were completely covered by mud. After cleaning off the mud they were then cleaned another time, and the last cleaning was done with cotton. Then on special days they were placed on banners on the roof. By praying, whatever

enjoyment the person wished for he received due to the power of the jewel. They are regarded as the most precious among materials. They are used as a simile for sentient beings—to give an idea of how precious sentient beings are, because each one is so kind. Actually, there is no material which can compare with how precious sentient beings are. Even if entire space were filled with wish-granting jewels, and all the jewels which people consider most precious, it still cannot compare with the value of each sentient being to oneself. Because each one is so kind to oneself. But in order to give some idea, the Kadam lamas used the wish-granting jewel as a simile because it is the most precious. Then dedicate: "Due to my offering the precious jewel may all the sentient beings accomplish the Dharma exactly as they wish".

3. the precious queen (Skt. Strīratna or raniratna; Wyl. btsun mo rin po che)

The queen is in the west. She is the most beautiful and virtuous of all mortal women. She is likened to the Indian goddess of good fortune, Lak-shmi. Her body has the natural scent of camphor and sandalwood, and her breath bears the fragrance of the blue utpala or 'night lotus'. She possesses the thirty-two auspicious marks of divine feminine beauty, and is as youthful and lusty as a sixteen-year-old. She is perfectly proportioned, with a straight body, long and gentle fingers, red lips, clear eyes, and long black hair. She has firm round breasts, a lotus-shaped navel, long ear lobes, a soft and radiant complexion, and bears three creases upon her neck. She has abandoned the five mistakes of a woman—such as anger, jealousy, dissatisfaction and attachment etc. She is endowed with the eight perfect qualities of a refined woman, (1) She is faithfully devoted to her lord, the chakravartin, and desires no other man. (2.) She is not jealous if the chakravartin displays amorous feelings towards other women. (3) Her womb is fertile and will bear many healthy sons. (4) She works for the welfare of all beings in her lord's kingdom. (5) She possesses innate feminine wisdom, and always supports her lord's plans. (6) She always speaks the truth and uses no frivolous words. (7) She is not attracted to sensual objects, stimuli, or material possessions. (8) She holds no false views.

The precious queen is adored by her subjects, and she in turn worships and respects her lord. Together they spread peace, prosperity, stability, and harmony throughout the kingdom. Their conjugal union brings forth a lineage of male heirs who are endowed with all the dignity, wisdom, and beauty of their parents. Any sentient being who touches her experiences bliss in body and mind. She stops the sorrows and the hunger and thirst of the sentient beings who are in that continent. These are the benefits she gives others. Think of the qualities, then offer, and dedicate: "Due to my offering this queen may all sentient beings enjoy the happiness without fall". Happiness without fall means the happiness that is uncontaminated by delusion.

4. the precious minister (Skt. Purusaratna, Mahajanaratna or parināyakarātna; Wyl. blon po rin po che)

The precious minister, in the north. He is endowed with the divine eye of the gods, which can perceive events over a thousand leagues away. His intelligence is as sharp as a razor, with great patience and listening ability, which ensures that he gives perfect council to the chakravartin. His mind is so attuned to his lord's will that even before the chakravartin has issued a command his diligent minister has already begun to implement it. The minister desires to do only good works to promote the Dharma, protecting and benefiting all beings. With his divine vision he is able to locate buried treasures within a radius of one league, and thus in the service of his lord he increases the coffers of the royal treasury. In this capacity he is also known as the 'minister for home economies' (Skt. Gebapati). A cultured diplomat, he excels at political strategy, affairs of state, social welfare, religious duties, and ethical discipline, clearly understanding and fulfilling the wishes of the chakravartin. The precious minister is often depicted with a wish-granting gem or treasury box in his right hand. He does not harm other sentient beings; has abandoned anything that is not Dharma; is not upset about doing virtuous activities to benefit others; expertly accomplishes whatever work the

king has in mind without needing to be told; is expert in leading the armies. Offer, then dedicate: "Due to my offering this precious minister may all sentient beings be able to fulfill exactly the wishes of the Buddhas."

5. the precious elephant (Skt. hastiratna; Wyl. glang po rin po che)

The precious elephant, in the south-east. It is as huge as a snow-mountain. The precious elephant has the strength of a thousand ordinary elephants. He is the lord of all bull elephants, and as unshakeable as a mountain. His skin is as white as snow, or silver like moonlight upon snow peaks, and his trunk, tail, and scrotum reach down to the ground. The rutting fragrance that exudes from his forehead glands overpowers all other elephants, enticing them meekly toward him. It wears a golden head ornament, a jeweled necklace, and a silk carpet covers his back. He is described as possessing seven mighty limbs, which consist of his four sturdy legs, his versatile trunk, and his two powerful tusks. In battle the precious elephant is inexhaustible, fearless, and unassailable. It can defeat enemies. It has more power than thousands of elephants. His endurance enables him to circumambulate the entire continent of Jambudvīpa three times in a day. In peacetime he is wise and dignified. His steps are serene, measured, and gentle and he moves with great majesty and beauty. It does not harm others and moves in a very subdued way without disturbing the person riding on it. As the regal mount of the chakravartin the precious elephant is perfectly obedient to his master, following his mental directions with perfect telepathic accord.. He can be led by the thinnest of cords, and possesses a supernatural ability to travel through the heavens. The precious elephant is often depicted carrying the precious wheel, or the cloth-covered alms bowl of the Buddha, upon his back. Offer the elephant to the merit field and then dedicate: "Due to my offering this precious elephant may all the sentient beings ride the great vehicle and go to enlightenment".

6. the precious horse (Skt. aśvaratna; Wyl. rta mchog rin po che),

The precious horse, in the south-west, white like the flower Kumuta (*Nymphaea esculenta*) which opens at the appearance of the moon, decorated in a similar way to the elephant with the jeweled and golden trappings of the gods. In some traditions he is described as having a black head and a peacock-blue body. Its color and size are perfect. If one wishes, it can circumambulate all the continents three times in one day. It has a very healthy body, free of disease. The precious horse is endowed with the thirty-two marks of a divine steed, with his eyes, ears, tongue, gums, teeth, forehead, skull, mane, neck, breast, tail, bones, sinews, legs, knees, fetlocks, and hooves all bearing specific marks of distinction. Like the wind-horse (Tib. *Rlung-rta*), he gallops swiftly and effortlessly, and he is capable of encircling the entire continent of Jambudvīpa three times in a single day, possessing the ability to traverse all of the four continents surrounding Mt Meru in an instant.

The precious horse is neither startled by sounds, nor by fearful sights. His form and composure are perfect, with a soft mane of ten thousand knotless hairs and a long flowing tail that streams like a comet. He speedily bears the chakravartin upon the 'wings of the clouds and winds', with his tireless hooves silent, light, and unfaltering. Like the wind-horse he often wears the precious jewel upon his saddle, spreading auspicious blessings throughout the chakravartin's realm, for wherever this jewel travels it brings all of its divine qualities in its wake.

It is very glorious and never tires. "Due to my offering this precious horse may all sentient beings have the power of the four limbs of magical emanation".

Four bases of miraculous powers (Wyl. *rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi*) are the third group of practices in the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment, practiced at the greater level of the path of accumulation. They are called bases (literally 'legs') of miraculous powers because they provide the foundation for the subsequent attainment of the six clear perceptions and so on. They are:

intention
diligence
attention
discernment

The Sutra of the Ten Bhumis says:

"One trains in the base of miraculous powers of samadhi based on intention with the antidotes for abandoning. One remains in isolation, one remains free from attachment, and one remains in cessation and meditates on complete transformation. It is similar for the base of miraculous powers of samadhi based on diligence with the antidotes for abandoning, the base of miraculous powers of attention with the antidotes for abandoning and the base of miraculous powers of discernment with the antidotes for abandoning."

Khenpo Namdrol says:

"These four bases of miraculous powers are related to the four noble truths. 'Remaining in isolation' means isolation from suffering. 'Free from attachment' means freedom from the origin of suffering. Remaining in cessation denotes the cessation of suffering, and the meditation on complete transformation is the path."

7. the precious general (Skt. Khadgaratna or senāpatiratna; Wyl. dmag dpon rin po che).

The precious general, in the north-west. The precious general or commander-in-chief (Tib. dmag-dpon) wears the armor and helmet of an ancient warrior, forged of thin metal plates bound together with leather thongs. In his right hand he wields an unsheathed sword and in his left a shield, symbolizing his readiness to repulse incursions (sword) and defend the kingdom (shield). Because he has attained mastery of the sixty-four strategic arts of war, his

military prowess ensures that he is never defeated in battle. He avoids fighting at all costs, but if war is unavoidable he chooses his weapons, chooses his ground, and fearlessly vanquishes the enemy. His will is attuned to that of the chakravartin. He knows the exact wishes of his lord, and he instills this will throughout the fourfold division of his army: infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots. The precious general fights for truth and justice. Having abandoned non-virtuous actions he causes no harm to the welfare and property of peace-loving people. When the righteousness of Dharma has been established throughout the realm, and the peace of wisdom and compassion prevails, the general removes his armor and appears in the form of the precious householder (Tib. Kbyim-bdag).

25) The vase of great treasure (Skt. nidhana-kumbha; Tib. gter-gyi bum-pa)

The golden treasure vase, or 'vase of inexhaustible treasures', is modeled upon the traditional Indian clay water pot. This pot is known as a kalasha or kumbha, with a flat base, round body, narrow neck, and fluted upper rim. This womb-like sacred kumbha is venerated in India at the great religious 'pot festival' of the Kumbh Mela. This festival (Skt. mela) is held in rotation every three years at the cities of Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik, and Ujain, and commemorates the spilling of the divine nectar of the gods (Skt. amrita) at these four sacred sites.

The treasure vase is predominantly a symbol of certain wealth deities, including Jambhala, Vaishravana, and Vasudhara, where it often appears as an attribute beneath their feet. One form of the wealth goddess Vasudhara stands upon a pair of horizontal treasure vases that spill an endless stream of jewels. As the divine 'vase of plenty' (Tib. bum-pa bzang-po) it possesses the quality of spontaneous manifestation, because however much treasure is removed from the vase it remains perpetually full.

The typical Tibetan treasure vase is represented as a highly ornate golden

vase, with lotus-petal motifs radiating around its various sections. A single wish-granting gem, or a group of three gems, seals its upper rim as a symbol of the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The great treasure vase (Tib. gter chen-po'i bum-pa], as described in the Buddhist mandala offering, is fashioned from gold and studded with a multitude of precious gems. A silk scarf from the god realm is tied around its neck, and its top is sealed with a wish-granting tree. The roots of this tree infuse the contained waters of longevity, miraculously creating all manner of treasures. Sealed treasure vases may be placed or buried at sacred geomantic locations, such as mountain passes, pilgrimage sites, springs, rivers, and oceans. Here their function is both to spread abundance to the environment and to appease the indigenous spirits who abide in these places.

26-33) The eight offering goddesses (Wyl. mchod pa'i lha mo brgyad) are the consorts of the eight great bodhisattvas, the eight female bodhisattvas.

They are as mentioned in the Thirty-seven Point Mandala Offering:

1. Goddess of Beauty (Alternatively, of charm, of laughter) (Skt. Lāsyā; Tib. Gekpama; Wyl. sgeg pa ma) the consort of Kshitigarbha;
2. Goddess of Garlands (Skt. Mālyā; Tib. Trengwama; Wyl. phreng ba ma) the consort of Akashagarbha;
3. Goddess of Song (Alternatively, of music) (Skt. Gītā; Tib. Luma; Wyl. glu ma) the consort of Vajrapani;
4. Goddess of Dance (Skt. Nirtī; Tib. Garma; Wyl. gar ma) the consort of Avalokiteshvara. The dancing goddess, in the east. Her body is in the aspect of a dancing movement, in an S-like shape.
5. Goddess of Flowers (Skt. Pūspā; Tib. Metokma Wyl. me tog ma) the consort of Sarvanivaranavishkambhin
6. Goddess of Incense (Skt. Dhupā; Tib. Dukupöma; Wyl. bdug spos ma) the consort of Maitreya
7. Goddess of Light (Skt. Alokā; Tib. Marmema or Nangselma; Wyl. mar me ma/snang gsal ma) the consort of Samantabhadra;
8. Goddess of Perfume (Skt. Gandhā; Tib. Drichabma; Wyl. dri chab ma)

the consort of Mañjushri.

These eight goddesses are higher up Mount Meru than the seven possession of a Chakravartin king (wheel, jewel, etc). Each of them has the same nature as the sixteen offerings, or vajra, goddesses (Wyl. mchod pa'i lha mo bcu drug)

1. The lute goddess (Tib. Piwangma);
2. The flute goddess (Tib. Lingbuma);
3. The clay drum goddess (Tib. Dzangama);
4. The round drum goddess (Tib. Ngadumma);
5. The goddess of charm (Tib. Gekmoma);
6. The goddess of laughter (Tib. Shyéma) / goddess of garlands (Tib. Trengwama);
7. The goddess of song (Tib. Luma);
8. The goddess of dance (Tib. Garma);
9. The goddess of flowers (Tib. Métokma);
10. The goddess of incense (Tib. Dukupöma);
11. The goddess of light (Tib. Marméma) / lamp goddess (Tib. Nangselma);
12. The goddess of perfume (Tib. Drichapma);
13. The goddess of form (Tib. Zukma) / mirror goddess (Tib. Mélongma);
14. The goddess of taste (Tib. Roma);
15. The goddess of touch (Tib. Rekchama);
16. The goddess of dharmadhatu (Tib. Chökyiyingma).

Each has a beautiful shape that is an offering to the eye-senses of the merit field; has scents coming from her mouth and body, so is an offering to the nose-sense; sings extremely sweet songs, so is an offering to the ear-sense; has a nature of bliss and voidness so is an offering to

the mental-sense. Thus each goddess is an object of all the six senses. There are numberless manifestations of each one in space.

34). The sun represents the wisdoms of all the paths: the wisdom of the lesser vehicle path, the wisdom of the paramitayana path, the wisdom of tantra. The wisdom of tantra refers to the subtle mind which directly realizes shunyata — the simultaneously-born bliss.

35). The moon represents the methods of the lesser vehicle path, the paramitayana path and of the tantra path.

Visualizing the sun and moon, the method and the wisdom of the whole path, creates the cause within one's mind to generate the whole path of method and wisdom and achieve the rupakaya and dharmakaya.

36). The precious umbrella, in the west.

It has one thousand golden radiant spokes. It has eight corners which are adorned with lapis-lazuli. On the top is a sapphire and around the edges are various jewels with hanging garlands of pearl. From the pearls and jewels nectar flows which liberates sentient beings from suffering. This umbrella protects sentient beings from the heat and other sufferings, and it also protects them from the cause of suffering by these purifying nectars. You should think that the essence of the umbrella is all the qualities of the cessations.

The right-seeing, uninterrupted path is the remedy to the delusions; the right-seeing path of abandonment liberates one from the delusions. That is one cessation. Then, the path of meditation ceases the obscurations of the lesser vehicle path, paramita path, and tantra path, which is the second cessation. The essence of the umbrella is the qualities of the cessation of both the obscurations.

37). The banner which is victorious over all the directions, in the east. (Skt. dhvaja; Tib. Rgyal-mtshan)

The dhvaja, meaning banner, flag, or ensign, was originally a military standard of ancient Indian warfare. This standard adorned the rear of a great warrior's chariot, and was mounted behind the great parasol (Skt. ata-patra), or royal parasol (Skt. chatra). Each standard bore the specific ensign of its champion or king. Krishna's chariot was adorned with a garuda-topped banner. Arjuna's bore the device of a monkey, Bhishma's bore the emblem of a palm tree. But primarily the dhvaja was the ensign of Shiva, the great god of death and destruction, whose banner was topped with a trident. This trident symbolized Shiva's victory over the three worlds, or the 'three cities', which were located above, upon, and below the earth.

In Indian warfare the military banner frequently took on horrific forms that were designed to instill terror in the enemy. The impaled head and flayed skin of an enemy or victim was one such gruesome emblem. The heads and skins of ferocious animals, particularly those of the tiger, crocodile, wolf, and bull, were commonly employed. Large effigies were also fashioned of other frightening creatures, such as the scorpion, snake, vulture, raven, and garuda.

The crocodile-headed banner or makara-dhvaja was originally an emblem of Kama-deva, the Vedic god of love and desire. As the 'tempter' (Skt. mara), or 'deluder' (Skt. maya), Kamadeva was the Hindu counterpart of Mara, the 'evil one', who attempted to obstruct the Buddha from attaining enlightenment. In early Buddhism the concept of Mara as a demonic obstructor to spiritual progress was presented as a group of four maras or 'evil influences'. These four maras were originally based upon the four divisions of Mara's army: infantry; cavalry; elephants; and chariots. The first of these four maras is the demon of the five aggregates of the personality (Skhanda-mara). The second

is the demon of emotional defilements (Kle-sha-mara). The third is the demon of death (Mrityu-mara). The fourth is the 'son of the god Mara' [Devaputra-mara], or the demon of desire and temptation. It is this fourth mara, Devaputra-mara, who is identified as Kamadeva, the 'king of the gods of the highest desire realm'. The Buddha is said to have defeated the sensual temptations of Kamadeva in the dusk before his enlightenment by meditating upon the 'four immeasurables' of compassion, love, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. At dawn he overcame both the mara of the aggregates and the mara of defilements. But it was only three months before the end of his long life that he finally overcame the mara of death, through the power of his fearless resolve to enter into the ultimate nirvana (parinirvana).

As a symbol of the Buddha's victory over the four maras, the early Buddhists adopted Kamadeva's emblem of the crocodile-headed makaradhvaja, and four of these banners were erected in the cardinal directions surrounding the enlightenment stupa of the Tathagata or Buddha. Similarly the gods elected to place a banner of victory on the summit of Mt Meru, to honor the Buddha as the 'Conqueror' (Skt. jina; Tib. rgyal-ba) who vanquished the armies of Mara. This 'victorious banner of the ten directions' is described as having a jeweled pole, a crescent moon and sun finial, and a hanging triple-banderole of three-colored silks that are decorated with the 'three victorious creatures of harmony'.

Within the Tibetan tradition a list of eleven different forms of the victory banner is given to represent eleven specific methods for overcoming defilements. Many variations of the banner's design can be seen on monastery and temple roofs, where four banners are commonly placed at the roof's corners to symbolize the Buddha's victory over the four maras. In its most traditional form the victory banner is fashioned as a cylindrical ensign mounted upon a long wooden axle-pole. The top of the banner takes the form of a small white parasol, which is surmounted by a central wish-granting gem.

This domed parasol is rimmed by an ornate golden crest-bar with makara-tailed ends, from which hangs a billowing yellow or white silk scarf. The cylindrical body of the banner is draped with overlapping vertical layers of multicolored silk valances and hanging jewels. A billowing silk apron with flowing ribbons adorns its base. The upper part of the cylinder is often decorated with a frieze of tiger skin, symbolizing the Buddha's victory over all anger and aggression. As a hand-held ensign the victory banner is an attribute of many deities, particularly those associated with wealth and power, such as Vaishnavana, the great guardian king of the north. The essence of the banner is the qualities of all the realizations. This is offered so one becomes a holder of the teachings and is able to do Dharma activities .

Ashta-mangala, Eight Auspicious Signs of Buddhism

@<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtamangala>

Ashtamangala are a sacred suite of Eight Auspicious Signs endemic to a number of Dharmic Traditions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. The symbols or 'symbolic attributes' (Tibetan: chag tsen; Wylie: phyag mtshan) are yidam and teaching tools. Not only do these attributes, these energetic signatures, point to qualities of enlightened mindstream, but they are the investiture that ornaments these enlightened 'qualities' (Sanskrit: guna; Tibetan: yoenten; Wylie: yon tan). Many cultural enumerations and variations of the Ashtamangala are extant.

Groupings of eight auspicious symbols were originally used in India at ceremonies such as an investiture or coronation of a king. An early grouping of symbols included: throne; swastika; handprint; hooked knot; vase of jewels; water libation flask; pair of fishes; lidded bowl. In Buddhism, these eight symbols of good fortune represent the offerings made by the gods to Shakyamuni Buddha immediately after he gained enlightenment.

Ashtamangala (Sanskrit: ashta, "eight"; mangala, "auspicious";) or the Eight

Auspicious Objects or Signs are endemic to a number of cultures including Buddhist symbolism, etc. The Eight Auspicious Signs are pronounced in Tibetan somewhat like "Tashi Tag-gya" (Tibetan: Tachi tagye; Wylie: bkra shis rtags brgyad).

Tibetan Buddhists make use of a particular set of eight auspicious symbols, ashtamangala, in household and public art. Some common interpretations are given along with each symbol although different teachers may give different interpretations:

1 Right-turning conch

The right-turning white conch shell (Sanskrit: Sankha; Tibetan: dung gye kyil; Wylie: dung gyas 'khyil), representing the beautiful, deep, melodious, interpenetrating and pervasive sound of the Buddhadharma which awakens disciples from the deep slumber of ignorance and urges them to accomplish their own welfare and the welfare of others; In Hinduism the Conch is an attribute of Vishnu as is the Wheel (Sudarshana). Vaishnavism holds that Shakyamuni Buddha is an avatar of Vishnu. The conch shell is thought to have been the original horn-trumpet; ancient Indian mythical epics relate heroes carrying conch shells. The Indian god Vishnu is also described as having a conch shell as one of his main emblems; his shell bore the name Panchajanya meaning 'having control over the five classes of beings'.

2 Knot

The 'endless knot' or 'eternal knot' (Sanskrit: srivatsa; Tibetan: Palbeu; Wylie: dpal be'u) as Chandra et. al. (1902: p.69) state denotes "...the auspicious mark represented by a curled noose emblematical of love...". Moreover, it represents the inter-twining of wisdom and compassion; the mutual dependence of religious doctrine and secular affairs; the union of wisdom and method; the inseparability of 'emptiness' (Sanskrit: Sunyata) and 'Dependent Co-arising' (Sanskrit: Pratitya-

samutpada at the time of the path); at the time of enlightenment the union of 'wisdom' (Sanskrit: Prajña) and 'great compassion' (Sanskrit: Karuna); also symbolic of knot symbolism in linking ancestors and omnipresence and the magical ritual and meta-process of binding (refer etymology of Tantra, Yoga and religion) (see Namkha), the knot, net and the web metaphor also conveys the Buddhist teaching of the Doctrine of Interpenetration.

3 Fish

The 'two goldfish' (Sanskrit: Gaur-matsya; Tibetan: ser nya; Wylie: gser nya), representing the state of fearless suspension in a harmless ocean of samsara, metaphorically often referred to 'buddha-eyes' or 'rigpa-sight' symbolises the auspiciousness of all sentient beings in a state of fearlessness without danger of drowning in the Samsaric Ocean of Suffering, and migrating from place to place and teaching to teaching freely and spontaneously just as fish swim freely without fear through water; In the following quotation, the two golden fishes are linked with the Ganges and Yamuna, and nadi, prana, and carp:

“ The two fishes originally represented the two main sacred rivers of India - the Ganges and Yamuna. These rivers are associated with the lunar and solar channels which originate in the nostrils and carry the alternating rhythms of breath or prana. They have religious significance in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist traditions but also in Christianity (the sign of the fish, the feeding of the five thousand). In Buddhism, the fish symbolize happiness as they have complete freedom of movement in the water. They represent fertility and abundance. Often drawn in the form of carp which are regarded in the Orient as sacred on account of their elegant beauty, size, and life-span.”

4 Lotus

The lotus flower (Sanskrit: Padma; Tibetan: pema; Wylie: pad me), representing 'primordial purity' (Tibetan: kadag; Wylie: ka dag) of body, speech, and mind,

floating above the muddy waters of attachment and desire represents the full blossoming of wholesome deeds in blissful liberation.

5 Parasol (Sanskrit: chhatraratna; Tibetan: rin chen gdugs) See pp.117

6 Vase (Tibetan: Bumpa) See pp.114

7 Wheel

The Wheel of Law (Sanskrit: Dharmacakra; Tibetan: Korlo; Wylie: khor lo), sometimes representing Sakyamuni Buddha and the Dharma teaching; also representing the mandala and chakra. This symbol is commonly used by Tibetan Buddhists where it sometimes also includes an inner wheel of the Gankyil (Tibetan), but in Nepal the Wheel of Law is not used by Nepalese Buddhists in the eight auspicious symbols. Instead of the Dharma wheel, a Fly Whisk may be used as one of the ashtamangala symbolizing Tantric manifestations and is made of a yak's tail attached to a silver staff and used during ritual recitation and fanning the deities in an auspicious religious ceremony (puja); another guise of the Dharmacakra which unites the functionality of the yak's tail with the doctrinal aspect of the "Wheel of Law" is the Mani wheel. The Sudarshana Chakra is a Hindu wheel-symbol.

8 Victory Banner (Skt. dhvaja; Tib. Rgyal-mtshan) See pp.117

Suggested readings

About the 35 Buddha sutra practice

Everlasting Rain of Nectar: Purification Practice in Tibetan Buddhism

Gueshe Jampa Gyatso, Frances Lincoln

Wisdom publications

ISBN-10: 0861711068

ISBN-13: 978-0861711062

Confession of Downfalls The Confession Sutra and Vajrasattva Practice

Arya Nagarjuna Brian , C. Beresford

ISBN-10: 8185102856

ISBN-13: 978-818510285

A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras: Selections from the Maharatnakuta Sutra

Garma C. C. Chang

Publisher: Pennsylvania State University Press; annotated edition edition
(June 1, 1983)

ISBN-10: 0271034289

ISBN-13: 978-0271034287

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Authors: Jitari , Acarya Nagarjuna, Dipamkarasrijnana

Format: Hardcover

Series: Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica Series , XLIX

Pub. date: 01.01.2001, 1st ed.
Publisher: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies
Languages: Sanskrit, Tibetan, Hindi
Bagchee ID: BB3797
<http://www.bagchee.com/books/BB3797/aryatriskandhasutram-and-its-three-commentaries/>

About Buddha Nature and refuge

Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra with Commentary

Arya Maitreya
Publisher: Snow Lion Publications (August 25, 2000)
ISBN-10: 1559391286
ISBN-13: 978-1559391283

Progressive exposition of the path (Lam.rim)

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation: The Wish-Fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings

Gampopa , Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche
Publisher: Snow Lion Publications; First Edition edition (January 19, 1998)
ISBN-10: 1559390921
ISBN-13: 978-1559390927

The Words of My Perfect Teacher

Patrul Rinpoche, Padmakara Translation Group
Publisher: Shambhala; Rev Sub edition (October 27, 1998)
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A Guide to the Words of My Perfect Teacher

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A Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols

Robert Beer

Publisher: Shambhala; 1 edition (October 14, 2003)

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ISBN-13: 978-1590301005

Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins

Akira Sadakata , Hajime Nakamura

Publisher: Kosei Publishing Company (April 15, 1997)

ISBN-10: 4333016827

ISBN-13: 978-4333016822