

Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra-Śāstra

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Introduction

After attaining the perfect and complete enlightenment, Śākyamuni Buddha, the Embodiment of Wisdom and Compassion, turned three Wheels of Doctrine at different places in India. The first Wheel of Dharma of the four noble truths was turned at Sarnath, Varanasi which was mainly prescribed for those of Śrāvaka family; the second Wheel of Dharma of signlessness was turned at Gṛdrakūṭa near Rājgir which was mainly prescribed for those of sharp-minded Mahāyāna family; and the third Wheel of Dharma of Good Discrimination was turned at Vaishali etc., which was also prescribed for the Mahāyāna family. Not only this, having appeared in the form of Vajradhara, the Complete Enjoyment Body of the Buddha, he also turned the Wheel of Tantra at Śrī Dhānyakūṭa at the request of King Chandragarbha for the disciples who are especially inclined towards the profound, i.e., the disciples of superior intelligence. Among the three Wheels of Doctrine, the Teacher spoke on *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (Wyl. *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i mdo*; Eng. Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra) in the middle Wheel of Doctrine.

There are several *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* of varying lengths. The most extensive of these is the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (One Hundred Thousand-Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra) which in the Tibetan translation occupies twelve volumes. There is also a medium length sūtra of twenty-five thousand stanzas in three volumes and a short and single-volume sūtra in eight thousand stanzas. In addition there is an even shorter sūtra in eight chapters of verse known as the Condensed Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra (Skt. *Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā*) too. On the other hand, terminologically it is divided into four: Natural (Real) *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Prajñāpāramitā* in scriptural form, *Prajñāpāramitā* of Path and Resultant *Prajñāpāramitā*. Among them, the second one has seventeen¹ types in total.

The Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras explain all the stages of the paths of wisdom and method, the paths which together are the means to attain full

¹ Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, Āryadaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā, Saptaśatikānāmaprajñāpāramitā, Pañcaśatikāprajñāpāramitā, Trīśatikāprajñāpāramitā (Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā), Prajñāpāramitāpañcaśatikā, Bhagavatīprajñāpāramitāpañcaśatikā, Kauśikaprajñāpāramitā, Suvikrāntavikramipariprcchānāmaprajñāpāramitā, Svalpākṣaraprajñāpāramitā, Ekākṣarīmātānāmaprajñāpāramitā, Bhagavatīprajñāpāramitāhṛdaya and Pañcaviṃśatikāprajñāpāramitāmukhanāma.

enlightenment or buddhahood. In particular, in these sūtras, Buddha set forth his ultimate view of the nature of reality and thus among sūtras the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras are held to be supreme.

The *Prajñāpāramitā* in scriptural form has two orders to annotate: the order of directly presented emptiness (Wyl. *dn̄gos bstan stong nyid kyi rim pa*; Skt. Pratyakṣanidarśanaśūnyātakrama) and the order of hidden meaning of Clear Realization (Wyl. *sbas don mngon rtogs kyi rim pa*; Skt. Guhyārtha Abhisamayakrama). In order to elucidate the former, Nāgārjuna, the second centurion adept from Nalanda, composed the Six Treatises on Middle Way (Skt. Ṣaṭ Madhyamakāśāstra)² while Maitreya composed the five treatises (Skt. Pañca Maitreya Dharmas)³ in order to annotate the latter. Among the five treatises, *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra-Śāstra* is one of them.

The treatise titled *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra-Śāstra* (Wyl. *theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*) rendered into English as ‘Great Vehicle Treatise on the Sublime Continuum’ is a very important work of Maitreya, also called Maitreya. It is the last of the five major works that was taught by Maitreya. It is a commentarial work on the teachings of the third Wheel of Doctrine called ‘the Wheel of Doctrine of Good Discrimination’ explaining the Tathāgatagarbha (Essence of Tathāgata). This treatise is said to have spoken to Ārya Asaṅga by Maitreya, the future Buddha, in the Tuṣita Heaven. This is a very important text for Mahāyānists, a very important commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*. It presents the Buddha’s definitive teachings on how we should understand this ground of enlightenment and clarifies the nature and qualities of the state of Buddha. The text belongs to the Mahāyāna, the Greater Vehicle because it has a greater view. The view is not only the selflessness of the person; rather it is the selflessness of both the person and phenomena. The action is not only renouncing *samsāra*, but renouncing both *samsāra* and nirvāṇa, and also helping sentient beings.

The root text was translated into Tibetan by a Kashmiri pandita and scholar Sajjana, the grandson of the Brāhmin Ratnavajra, a great scholar of Srinagar, and by the Tibetan Lotsawa Loden Sherab, who was a Sakya monk, and was the cousin of Legpe Sherab. The name of the place is ‘Incomparable City’ where the text was translated.

² There are six treatises on Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (The Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way), Vīgrahavyāvartanī (The Refutation of Wrong Views), Śūnyatāsaptati (The Seventy Verses on Emptiness), Yuktīṣaṭika (The Sixty Verses of Reasoning), Vaidalyaprakaraṇa (The Thorough Investigation) and Ratnāvalī (The Precious Garland).

³ The five works of Maitreya— Ornament of Clear Realization (Abhisamayālaṅkāra), Ornament of Mahāyāna Discourse (Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra), Clear Distinction between the Middle way and Extremes (Madhyāntavibhaṅga), Clear Distinction between phenomena and their reality (Dharma-Dharmatāvibhaṅga) and The Sublime Continuum (Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra).

This treatise is also included among the so-called “Thirteen Great Texts⁴” which form the core of the curriculum in monastic institutions and on which Khenpo Shenga provided commentaries.

Source

Regarding the source of the subject matter of this text, it is very clearly illustrated in the *Dhāraṇiśvararājaparipṛcchāsūtra* (Wyl. *gzungs kyi dbang phyug rgyal pos zhus pa'i mdo*; Eng. *Sūtra Requested by King Dhāraṇiśvara*). From it, it is clear that the subject matter, the so-called seven Vajra points are not something made up by Maitreya-nāth. Rather they were taught in several sūtras⁵ and they are also taught within this sūtra. The first three vajra points are taught in the introduction of this sūtra, and the remaining four vajra points are taught in the subsequent chapters.

Buddhavacana or Sāstra

Although the text is incorporated in Tengyur (commentarial texts) section, yet it can be considered as being the Buddhavacana himself for the following two reasons: (1) It was spoken by Ārya Maitreya whom the Buddha empowered to be his representative in the Tuṣita Heaven (The Joyous Land) by placing his crown on Maitreya's head before he descended to the human world. (2) It is stated in *Sūtrasamuccaya* (Abridgement of Sūtras): All the rivers in the world, carrying the water that ripens bowers and fruits, and causes forests to thrive, bow due to the power of the Nāga King who resides in the Anavataptasāgara (Ever-cool Lake, another name of Mānasarovara). Similarly, any explanation, debate, composition, practice and attainment of result achieved by his retinue of disciples depends solely on the power of the Buddha himself. Therefore, it can be identified as being the Buddha's Approved Teaching or Blessed Teaching. However, as Maitreya himself proclaims by saying it is a treatise: In terms of explaining the intent of the Munindra, the Teacher of this Doctrine, he says in the text *Uttaratantra*:

The entire body of the treatise can be condensed
Into the following seven vajra-points. [1:1cd]

Seven Vajra Points

Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, Dhātu (race/family/constituent/element), Bodhi (enlightenment) Guṇa (quality of enlightenment) and Buddha-kṛtya (Buddha's activity), these seven are called the seven Vajra Points. These seven vajra points comprise a general summary of the text and give us a general idea of the subject.

⁴ The fundamental treatises on Buddhist philosophy covering the topics of Vinaya, the bodhisattva trainings, the five works of Maitreya covering Prajñāpāramitā etc., as well as Abhidharma, and Madhyamaka.

⁵ The ten sūtras describing the Buddha-nature (Essence of Tathāgata)— Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, Dhāraṇiśvararājaparipṛcchāsūtra, Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, Aṅgulimālānugrahasūtra, Śrīmālāsīmaṇīnādaparipṛcchāsūtra, Jñānālokālaṅkārasūtra, Apratipaddarśanasūtra, Mahāduṇḍubhisūtra, Avikalpapraśādhārāṇī and Sūtrāśaya.

But Buddha-nature is the main subject of this text. So, one who wants to know about Buddha-nature, then this is the text that he has to study.

These seven Vajra Points, for understanding the subject matter of the text are, just like vajra (adamantine/diamond), because the expressive expositions of the treatise are its points, and so they are called Vajra Points. In another way, it is explained that the seven are called ‘Vajra Points’ because ultimately they cannot be understood by ordinary hearing and contemplation, and must be realized by self-awareness wisdom (*prati-saṃvid-jñāna*). Since the seven are ultimately beyond the direct domain of words and thoughts, and cannot be understood by ordinary knowledge of hearing and contemplation, and also must be realized by the self-awareness wisdom, self-cognizant wisdom or discriminating awareness, they are called Vajra. It can be analogized— as a substantial vajra is difficult to break with other substance, so these points are also difficult to reach by ordinary knowledge of hearing and contemplation. Therefore, they are called vajra points. Literally, it is explained that since it possesses the nature that cannot be expressed by means of the understanding of words and thoughts, it is called vajra. And the group of words for elucidating that is its point. It means since it is the basis of understanding, elucidating and explaining the vajra, it is called point.

These ‘seven vajra points’ are not something which were made up by Maitreya-nāth. They were taught mainly in five sūtras, particularly the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra* (Sūtra Requested by King Dhāraṇīśvara). The other four being the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* (Wyl. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo*), *Śrīmālāsīmhanādasūtra* (Wyl. *dpal phreng seng ge sgra'i mdo*), *Mahāyāna-Upadeśanāmadarikatnaparipṛcchāsūtra* (Wyl. *theg pa chen po'i man ngag zhes bya ba bu mo rin chen gyis zhus pa'i mdo*), and *Sarvabuddhaviṣayāvatāra-jñānalokāṅkārasūtra* (Wyl. *sangs rgyas thams cad kyi yul la 'jug pa'i ye shes snang ba rgyan pa'i mdo*). Somewhere description of six sūtras is also found. The sixth one being the *Ārya Gṛhapati-Ugraparipṛccha-Nāma-Mahāyāna-Sūtra* (Wyl. *khyim bdag drag shul can gyis zhus pa'i mdo*; Eng. The Sūtra Requested by the Householder Ugra). As mentioned above, the seven Vajra-points are taught in different sūtras, and they are also taught within one sūtra titled *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*.

Twofold system of writing commentary

Taking direct perception into path and taking inferential cognition taking into path are the two basic methods for realizing the ultimate reality of phenomena. The former is the method to take direct perception into practice by following the profound instructions of realizing the appearance as mind and mind as empty; the Six Yogas of Naropa, the methods of practice; and Mahāmudrā (Great Seal), the path of liberation introduced by Mahāsiddha Saraha, Tilopa and so on. On the other hand, the latter is the method to establish the object-perceivers as being inherently non-existent, but ultimately empty analyzing by means of the four great logical reasonings introduced by Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti and other great Buddhist ācāryas. The former is not the view of proving by logical reasoning, rather, it is the swift path of emerging realization from in on the basis of experience while the

latter is the method to cut off the mental fabrication (*prapañca*) by correct view which gives rise to emerging especially perpetual judgment. These two methods of practice are not contradictory to each other, but one is the supplementary or support of other. One, who takes inferential cognition into path, follows the logical paths. It produces perpetual judgment or definitive ascertainment in him which then makes him able to practise. On the other hand, one who takes direct perception into practice, realizes the *dharmatā*, the fundamental nature. Gradually, he attains the Buddhahood easily. Here, *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra* is the text that annotates the detail system of taking the direct perception into path.

Commentary of the text

So far, thirty-one commentaries are written on the text by both the Indian and Tibetan scholars. Among them, one titled *Mahāyānottaratantrasāstravyākhyā* [Toh. 4025] is attributed to Ārya Asaṅga while the rest thirty are ascribed to the Tibetan scholars.

Origin and Lineage of teaching and learning the treatise

In terms of origin of the text, Gyalwa Rangjung Zhab and Kunkhyen Dolpopa asserted that the text mainly bases on the sūtras of definitive essence belonging to the last Wheel of Doctrine. According to them, the Complete and Perfect Buddha comprehended that all sentient beings possesses the essence of Buddhahood. However, since they are obstructed by the four obstructions such as hostility towards the Dharma and so on, they fail to understand it. As a result, they wander in the ocean of *samsāra* due to the five shortcomings such as discouragement, deprecating others and so on. Having understood it, the Buddha preached that sentient beings possess the essence of Buddhahood as well as the threefold method of practice [not clear, clear and very clear] to abandon the those shortcomings. The methods of practice were taught in the form of infinite doors of doctrine according to the levels of capacity and interests of his disciples. Among them, the best disciple was Bodhisattva who possessed sharp, matured and purified mind, as also correctly entered in all vehicles. On the basis of them, the four popular Cittamātra sūtras, namely *Sandhinirmocanasūtra*, *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, *Ghanavyūhasūtra* and *Avatamsakasūtra* were taught. Apart from these, he also taught the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, *Mahāduṇḍubhisūtra*, *Aṅgulimālāhita?*, *Śrīmālāsimhanādasūtra*, *Dhāraṇīśvarāraja-paripṛcchāsūtra*, *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, *Ratnakūṭasūtra*, *Prabhāsottamasūtra*, *Praśāntaviniścaya* and *Mahāmeghasūtra* which elucidate the essence of Buddhahood, correct expanse (samyak-dhatu), unchangeable dharmakāya, ultimate qualities and so on that exist in the mind of being. It is solely the object of experience of the Omniscient One. Thus, in order to retain the lesser fortunate disciples so that they won't be obstructed by the stains of non-comprehension and wrong comprehension, the text has been composed by summarizing the subject matters of those profound sūtras in the form of the Seven Vajra Points. On the other hand, Rongton Sheja Kunzig and others say that the text is not the commentary of intent of the third Wheel of Doctrine only, rather it is also the commentary of intent of the general

sūtras because it is also based on the fifteen sūtras such as *Mahākaruṇā-puṇḍarīkasūtra*, *Adhyāśayasañcodansūtra*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* and so on.

In general, Ācārya Dignāga, Sthiramati and other authentic lineage-masters spread the system of teaching and learning the definitive Madhyamaka tenets and the three works of Maitreya. Since the extra-ordinary text is difficult to comprehend for all, the system of teaching and learning commissioned through ears to ears of excellent disciples, and later the two— *Uttaratantra* and *Dharmātavibhaṅga*— were hidden as treasure. Therefore, the two Ornaments— *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (Ornament of Clear Realization) and *Sūtrālaṅkāra* (Ornament of the Sūtras)— and *Madhyantavibhaṅga*, these three were translated by Lotsawa Kawa Paltsek and Zhang Yeshe De during the Early Spread of Buddhism (Pūrva Śāsanakāla). Regarding the root texts and commentary of *Uttaratantra* and *Dharmātavibhaṅga*, history says that having received the teachings on the Mahāyāna treatises particularly the five works from Maitreya, Asaṅga returned to Jambūdvīpa (the world). Thereafter, he built a monastery in Piluvana in Magadha where he also gave teachings on the five works of Maitreya to his disciples. At the same time, apart from composing the Five Treatises on the Ground⁶, he also wrote down the five works of Maitreya. As a result, Mahāyāna system of learning, contemplating and practice widely spread. Haribhadra says that the five treatises were composed for Ārya Asaṅga while Abhayakaragupta says that these were composed during the Buddhist Council. Gö Lotsawa Zhonnu Lodrö says in the *Blue Annals*: “Once Ngadak Maitripa happened to see light emitting from the hole of a stūpa. While exploring to know the fact what it was, he found two volumes of scriptures. Getting the volumes of treatises, he strongly supplicated Maitreya who appeared in the expanse of cloud. He then gave vision to Maitripa and also gave him oral transmission of the treatise. Later, he handed over the transmission to Pandita Gawey Dakpa (Ānandakīrti/Nandakīrti). After this, the pandita journeyed to Kashmir in the costume of a beggar. During that time, a pandita named Sajjana, the eldest son of Pandita Sugata, was residing in Srinagar. He recognized Maitreya as being a wise person, and then studied the texts from him. Thereafter, the great bodhisattva and translator known as Ngog Lotsawa Loden Sherab (1059-1109 C.E.), while doing study of religion and philosophy in Kashmir, translated the texts into Tibetan and propagated the system of teaching and learning the texts in Tibet⁷. In fact, Loden Sherab was sent to Kashmir at the age of seventeen for the purpose of study. During that time, Tsan Khawoche and others were his accompanies. After their arrival in Kashmir, they served six main teachers such as Sajjana, Parahitabhadra and so on. After doing study there for seventeen years, they returned to Tibet. Thus, the tradition of teaching and learning *Uttaratantra* introduced by him in particular is still going on.

⁶ Yogacarabhūmi (Ground of Yogic practices), Vastusaṅgraha (Compendium of Bases), Paryāyasaṅgraha (Compendium of Enumeration), Nirṇayasaṅgraha (Compendium of Ascertainment) and Vivaraṇasaṅgraha (Compendium of Explanation).

⁷ KRPC, p. 10

Followed by it, *Uttaratantra* was translated again by Nagtsho Lotsawa Tshultrim Gyalwa. On the basis of it, although Sharawa Chenpo wrote commentary on it, but most of the disciples preferred the translation attributed to Ngog Lotsawa Loden Sherab. Though later Patshab Lotsawa, Marpa Dopa and several others translated the text *Uttaratantra*, but the lineage of teaching and learning these translations did not last for long. Later, Ngog Lotsawa Loden Sherab wrote a short commentary titled “Tik-Chung”. On the basis of this commentary, his disciple Dro-Lungwa Lodro Jungne and the guru of Zhang-Tshe-Pang-Pa-Cho wrote commentary each. Following these commentaries, Nyang-Drenwa Chokyi Sherab wrote commentary. After that, Chapa Chokyi Seng-ge and his disciples Tsang-Nagpa Tsondu Seng-ge, Dan-Bagpa Mawe Seng-ge and so forth also wrote several commentaries. Following those commentaries, their disciples Lodro Tshungme, Phagdru Gyaltsan Zangpo, Rongton Sheja Kunzig and many other scholars also wrote commentaries on the text made Tibet full of teaching and learning the text. All those scholars mostly followed the translation and commentary of Ngog Lotsawa Loden Sherab.

Composition of the treatise ‘Uttaratantra’

Known to all that the text titled *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra* was composed by Maitreya. Basically according to Mahāyāna assertion, in terms of definitive meaning, Maitreya already attained the state of Complete Buddhahood many *kalpas* ago. But for the sole benefits of sentient beings, he just demonstrated taking the form of a Bodhisattva abiding in the tenth level, and so was also enthroned as being the representative of the Śākymuni Buddha. At the same time, he will be the fifth Buddha in this Kalpa of Light (Pradīpa Kalpa) through accomplishing the practices of the tenth pāramitās and purifying the Buddhaland. This future Buddha, who is endowed with all qualities like that of Śākaymuni Buddha, initially composed *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and roughly annotated the doctrinal exposition of the great middle path in short. Followed by it, he composed *Sūtralaṅkāra*, *Madhyantavibhaṅga* and *Dharmatāvibhaṅga* respectively. Finally, he composed *Mahayana-Uttaratantra* incorporating the extra-ordinary essential meaning of sūtras.

System of Composition

Buddhist texts usually begin with the author’s homage to his or her masters or deities, which is the traditional homage that comes before writing or teaching anything. For example, Chandrakīrti’s *Madhyamakāvatāra* (Introduction to the Middle Path) pays homage to compassion. However, in this case, only the first of the five works titled *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (Wyl. *mngon rtogs rgyan*; Eng. Ornament of Clear Realization)’ which is a commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā, contains homage. The other four texts don’t have homage and similarly only the *Uttaratantra*, has a dedication. However, this text has translator’s homage, which is a homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It indicates that this text belongs to the Sūtrapiṭaka.

Summary of the beginning and end

The first verse of the text “*Buddha, Dharma, the Assembly, the element, enlightenment.....*” shows the body of the entire text. Followed by it, the words shown in the third verse, “*From the Buddha the Dharma, from the Dharma the assembly of noble ones,.....*” shows the link of order between the former and latter. It says that only the Complete Buddha is the one who possesses the matchless and non-deceptive knowledge of all knowables. On account of the power of purifying the adventitious stains, he is able to see everything as it is. Therefore, Buddha is the main subject matter among all. Regarding the holy dharma, it is the one which was taught out of compassionate thought in the form of path as he realized. Sangha is the one who has entered the path and has been practising the path paved by the Buddha. As it is stated:

As you have gone,
The disciples are also following the same path.⁸

Thus, the entire Buddhavacana and sastra fully illustrate the entity, qualities, activities etc., of the Three Jewels. Here, having linked the meaning with the given verse, the base of exposition is shown at the beginning. Among the seven points, Buddha is endowed with two qualities— self purpose and the purpose of others. Self purpose includes three qualities— uncompounded, spontaneously arisen and not to be realized by external causes. These three are the qualities of self-purpose referring to enlightenment. On the other hand, knowledge, compassion and ability, these three are the qualities for the purpose of others. Secondly, Dharma is the one that imbibed with the characteristics of the two truths— the truth of path and truth of cessation. The truth of cessation comprises of three characteristics— inconceivability, non-duality and non-conceptuality. Similarly, the truth of path also has three qualities— purity, clarity and antidote. Thirdly, the Sangha is endowed with two characteristics— awareness and liberation. The former is imbibed with qualities, namely the knowledge as it is, the knowledge as it exists and the self-awareness. On the other hand, the latter is comprised of the awareness which is free from the obscuration of attachment, obstruction and to the lower. However, by combining the base of division and entity of division, there are eight qualities. It is divided into three as being the temporal objects of refuge while only the Buddha is regarded as being the ultimate object of refuge. In addition to that, by annotating the etymological meaning of Jewel, the presentation of Jewel is clearly elucidated. Followed by it, the rest four points which are meant to accomplish the worldly and trans-worldly Jewels are presented in detail. The four are: element, enlightenment, quality and activity. Among the four, element is the object to be realized. It is temporarily covered with stains, but inherently pure; the entity of enlightenment is free from

⁸ fiG-q-Vim-qô-Mãh-„À-ṣô-ŭ-zÇem-zTôĀ-Ç%oŭP-qô-ŭ-hôm-ṣPôm-
Āṣṣ-¼ṣ-Hŭ-zĀh-Æô¼-hP-ç¼-qô-ŭ-nṣ-q¼-eli¼-q-xŭ¼-ṣŭ-çkôG-qô-ŭ-
ĀiP-Giô-ŭ-P-¼ôü, KRPC, 1999, p. 26

all stains; the quality is associated with the enlightenment; and activity is the force of quality which is to be realized by others too. Among them, in order to annotate that all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature, from the view point of suchness referring to the family (Gotra), Maitreya cites:

It is said that all beings possess buddhahood's essence
Since the buddha-jñāna has ever been in them present,
Also since the immaculate nature is non-dual
And the buddha-potential is named after its fruit. [1:26]

This verse has three logical reasonings. Although each verse is able to prove the existence of Buddha-nature, yet in terms of the individual disciple, it is annotated in many enumerations. All remaining are its ancillary meanings. For example, the establishment of the intent meaning of the *dharmatā*, the ultimate truth which is pure by nature, is the summary of Tathāgatagarbha; by means of the individual sutra, ten presentations are established; by means of the intents of the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtras*, nine analogies are illustrated to introduce how Buddha-nature is wrapped by defilements; how these are proved; and the reason of annotating Buddha-nature.

Reason of annotating in such fashion

All the seven vajra points are to be perceived by means of the system of two truths: Buddha is the ultimate jewel while Dharma and Saṅgha are the conventional Jewels; the ultimate Tathāgatagarbha is luminous and empty; the correctly assumed family is the conventional Tathāgatagarbha; the Dharmakāya is the ultimate enlightenment whereas the two form bodies are the conventional enlightenment; the quality of separation is ultimate while the quality of maturation is conventional; and the activities of the Dharmakāya is ultimate while the activities of Rūpakāya (Form Body of the Buddha) is conventional.

The four dharmas, purpose and so forth (Wyl. *dgos sogs chos bzhi*)

Regarding the subject matter and so forth of this great text, it is annotated that the 'Seven Vajra-Points' that include the meaning of the essential Mahāyānasūtras which is difficult to understand by hearing and contemplation are its subject matter. At the beginning, by means of the knowledge acquired through hearing, its expressive terms are understood; in the middle, by means of the knowledge acquired through contemplating, ascertainment is gained in the form of general understanding. Just like finding out the address of a house of a poor person containing treasure, easily becoming able to enter into the meaning of the definitive quintessential scriptures together with their intent commentaries depending upon the three valid cognitions and fourfold reliance is its purpose. Having entered into it, preceded by the threefold faith, one cultivates the knowledge acquired through meditation in the quintessential meaning. It gives rise to experiencing the identical realization of the abiding mode of the quintessential *dharmatā* as if gaining underground treasure in hand. Gradually,

the realization becomes clearer. Finally, the stainless wisdom being free from conceptuality and confusion for directly realizing it arises. As a result, the naturally pure Dharmakāya being free from the adventitious stains is clearly manifested. It is its ultimate purpose. The ultimate purpose depends on purpose and purpose on subject matter which means in the absence of the former, there is no possible existence of the latter. Just like the relation between fire and smoke or the sun and its rays, the formation of a relation of identical nature and a relation of origination is its relation.

Contents of the Text

The text contains 405 verses including the introductory and concluding ones. They are subsumed into seven Vajra-points which are the subject matters of this text. They are: Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, Element, Enlightenment, Qualities, Spiritual Activity and Benefits. The text that describes these seven points is elaborated into five chapters. They are: The Element (Dhātu), Enlightenment (Bodhi), Qualities (Guṇa), Spiritual Activity (Kṛtya) and Benefits (Anuśāṁsā). According to the Sanskrit origin, among the five chapters, the first chapter contains 167 verses, second 73, third 39, fourth 98 and fifth 28.

Among the seven Vajra-Points, the first three are the objects to be acquired while the rest four are the methods of acquiring them. (A) The first chapter of the text contains 167 verses. Among them, the following nineteen verses indicate the detail presentation of the Triple Jewel.

Buddha is without beginning, middle, or end. He is peace itself, fully self-awakened and self-expanded in buddhahood.

Having reached this state, he shows the indestructible, permanent path so that those who have no realization may realize.

Wielding the supreme sword and vajra of knowledge and compassionate love, he cuts the seedling of suffering

And destroys the wall of doubts along with its surrounding thicket of various views. I bow down to this Buddha. [1:4]

.....to.....

Their occurrence is rare, they are free from defilement,

They possess power, they are the adornment of the world,

They are sublime, and they are unchanging.

Thus [they are named] “rare and sublime.” [1:22]

In this part, the three refuges are presented through discussing the following four sub-themes:

- Individual entity of the Three Jewels,
- Reason of establishing the Dharma and Saṅgha as being the temporal refuges,
- Establishing the Buddha as being the ultimate refuge
- The etymological meaning of Three Jewels.

The detail presentation of the Three Jewels which is also annotated in other treatises is mainly based on this text. Followed by the points of the Three Jewels, the rest four points are annotated in the following four verses:

The virtuous Three Jewels, which are rare and sublime,
Arise from suchness bound up with pollution, from the one free from pollution,
From the qualities of unpolluted buddhahood, and from the deeds of the Victor.

This is the object of those who see the ultimate truth.

.....to.....

Constituting what must be realized, realization,
Its attributes, and the means to bring it about,
Accordingly the first is the cause to be purified
And the [latter] three points are the conditions.

As shown in the first verse among the four, the stained suchness is the object of realization or the cause which is the object to be purified while the rest three, namely enlightenment, Buddha's quality and benefits are the means of realization or the conditions that purify them. Thereafter, Maitreya says that all sentient beings are endowed with Buddha-essence for three reasons. They are: the all-embracing body of the Perfect Buddha, inseparable suchness and possessing of disposition. The text states:

The body of the Perfect Buddha is all-embracing,
Suchness cannot be differentiated,
And all beings have the disposition.
Thus they always have Buddha-nature. [1:27]

Besides, the Buddha-nature is also established in ten ways, which is described in the text *Vyākhyāyukti* (Wyl. *rnam bshad rig pa*; Eng. The Well Explained Reasoning). After that, he introduces nine examples to clearly illustrate how Buddha-nature is wrapped by defilements. It is illustrated in the following thirty-three verses of *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra*:

Just like a Buddha in a decaying lotus, honey amidst bees,
A grain in its husk, gold in filth, a treasure underground,
A shoot and so on sprouting from a little fruit,
A statue of the Victorious One in a tattered rag, [1:96]

.....to.....

It is said that the shroud of the mental poisons, [which causes the veils] of the element of beings,
Has had no connection with it since beginningless time,
While the nature of mind, which is devoid of stains,
[has been present within them] since beginningless time. [1:129]

The Buddha-essence corresponds to the Buddha and the other eight examples because it is the union of three natures, namely, the Truth Body, suchness and the Buddha-essence. These should be understood respectively through the first three examples, the fourth one and the last five. The Truth Body should be known as twofold: —the perfectly-immaculate *dharmadhātu* and the favourable conditions for it — the teachings in their profound and manifold aspects.

a. Because this transcends the world there is no suitable example for it manifest within the world. Therefore it has been explained here by drawing a similarity between the Buddha-nature and the body of the suchness in the lotus.

b. The teachings in their subtle and deep aspect should be known as being similar to the one taste of honey and the teachings in their manifold aspect as similar to the grains inside their various husks. The suchness is described as similar to the substance of gold because this, the true nature of mind, is immutable, noble and perfectly pure.

The Buddha-essence should be known as having two aspects respectively similar to the buried treasure and the tree sprung from a fruit. They are known as: — a. the naturally abiding disposition or essence presents since beginningless time and b. the disposition being developed, perfected through proper adoption of virtue.

After that, the following thirteen and half verses annotate the means of purifying the nine stains that include the karmic latency and so on:

Desire, aversion and ignorance,
These in their strongly active state or as latent imprints,
That to be abandoned through insight, that to be abandoned through
meditation, the impurities present in the impure
And the impurities present in the pure — [1:130]

.....to.....

One should know the potential as having aspects two,
Similar to the treasure and the tree grown from the fruit:
That since beginningless time naturally-present
And that perfected through proper cultivation. [1:149]

Maitreya also adds by presenting that by dint of the disposition, the three Bodies of the Buddha can be achieved. He says in the following verse:

From this twofold disposition there is
Achievement of the three bodies of the Buddha:
The first body through the former
And the other two through the latter. [1:150]

The achievement of the three bodies of the Buddha is considered as coming from these two aspects of the Buddh-essence. The first body (Truth Body) comes about through the first aspect and the other two bodies (Perfect Enjoyment Body and Emanation Body) come through the second aspect.

The Buddha-essence is in itself devoid of any of its affects – the intrinsic characteristics of which are foreign to it. It is not however devoid of the supreme qualities — their intrinsic characteristics being undifferentiated from it.

The first chapter ends by explaining the purpose of annotating the presentation of Tathāgatagarbha in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* and so forth through the following verses.

There are five mistakes: faint-heartedness, contempt for those of lesser ability,
To believe in the false,
To speak about the true nature badly
And to cherish oneself above all else and so on. [1:157]

Question may be raised by asking what the Buddha had taught on Buddha-nature during the third Wheel of Doctrine? In this text, Maitreya answers by saying that Buddha taught in various places that every object of knowledge is empty, like a cloud, a dream or an illusion. Despite he declared that Buddha-nature exists in every sentient being as if butter pervades in milk. Again another question may arise: Why did the Buddha declare that Buddha-nature pervades in every being? It is responded by saying that the Buddha fully realized that each and every being possesses the Buddha-nature, but there are the four obscurations⁹ that always wrap the Buddha-nature. As a result, they fail to know the reality. It causes them getting entangled in five faults: faint-heartedness, contempt for those of lesser ability, believing in the false, speaking about the true nature badly and cherishing oneself above all else. Maitreya says in *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra*:

With regard to faint-heartedness, contempt for inferior beings,
Perceiving the untruth, disparaging the true nature
And exceeding self-cherishing,
He said this to persuade those who have any of these five to abandon their defects. [2:157]

Through hearing about Buddha-essence in such a way, five positive qualities, namely enthusiasm for practice, respect for all beings as though they were the Buddha, knowledge, wisdom and great loving kindness will arise in the trainees and disciples. Through the growth of these five qualities, the five faults will be exhausted and the similarity of beings will be seen. Through understanding the faultlessness and inherent qualities of the nature of mind and through loving kindness, which sees the similarity of oneself and all beings, attainment of Buddhahood will be swiftly achieved.

Once one has heard this
Joy will be born. Respect towards the Teacher (Buddha)

⁹ Hostility towards the dharma, the view that there is a self-entity,
Fear of *saṃsāra*'s sufferings
And disregard for benefitting beings
Are the four sorts of obscuration. [1:32]

Knowledge, wisdom and great love will arise. [2: 66]

There is another pertinent issue relating to the annotation of the Buddha-essence. In Tibetan history, we find two lineages or traditions defining the term ‘Buddha-essence’ in particular. Or it can be said that there has been two traditions of writing commentary on the text *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra*. Rangtong (Wyl. *rang stong*; Skt. Sva-Śūnyatā; Eng. Emptiness of itself) and Zhentong (Wyl. *gzhan stong*; Skt. Para-Śūnyatā; Eng. Emptiness-of-other). The former indicates that it is an aspect of the Madhyamika School in Tibet focusing on emptiness devoid of inherent existence while the latter shows that it is an aspect of the Madhyamika School in Tibet focusing on emptiness indivisible from luminosity, asserting that the bodies and wisdoms of Buddhahood are naturally present within the Buddha-essence. Ācārya Tsongkhapa (1357-1419 C.E.), in particular, the founder of Gelukpa School, is the pioneer of the former one while the great Jonang Scholar Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsan (1292-1361 C.E.), in particular, is said to be the pioneer of the latter one.

(B) The second chapter discusses the presentation of Bodhi (Enlightenment), the result attained upon completion of the path. Here, Bodhi refers to the state of the attainment of unsurpassable enlightenment. There are eight points that discuss the Bodhi. They are: essence, cause, result, action, possessor, entering, unchanging and inexpressible. In terms of the eight points or eight characteristics, there is a question: ‘How do the eight points relate to the three bodies of the Buddha?’ It is answered that the three bodies of the Buddha will never cease to exist, which is unchanging, permanent. And their suchness cannot be understood except by the Buddha’s uncontaminated wisdom. Here, ‘Bodhi’ is the one which is endowed with twofold purity— naturally pure and adventitiously pure. It is also called the purity of the two obscurations of delusions and knowables. The text explains:

This lucid clarity is uncreated.
It is that which pervades without any differentiation,
Having all buddhahood’s qualities,
Far greater in number than the sand grains in the river Ganges.

The defilement and cognitive veils
Are said to be like covering clouds
Since they are, by nature, non-existent,
They spread everywhere and are but accidents. [2:5-6]

The chapter also discusses the seven causes of the Form Body as being permanent and three causes of the Truth Body as being permanent. In terms of the former, the text presents the four cause of the Form Body for its abidance in the *samsāra* and three causes of not abandoning it. Further, it also explains that the Truth Body is permanent by nature, the Perfect Enjoyment Body is permanent without interruption and the Emanation Body is permanent of continuous.

(C) The third chapter explains the presentation of the sixth vajra point called ‘Buddha’s Activity’. In fact, the dual body of the Buddha possesses all Buddha qualities. They are condensed into two: the quality of the result of separation and

the quality of maturation. In total, there are sixty-four Buddha qualities which are subsumed into the two: thirty-two are the former such as the ten powers and so on and these included into three categories. On the other hand, the rest thirty-two qualities are the latter such as the marks¹⁰ of great being. Maitreya says in *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra*:

Fulfillment for oneself and benefit for others are
The ultimately-true body and its dependent relatively-true body.
The results of liberation and perfect maturity
Are their sixty-four qualities. [3:1]

(D) The fourth chapter annotates the spiritual activities of the Buddha. In general, Buddha's entire activities are subsumed into two: spontaneous and uninterrupted. His activities are spontaneous because he knows what is required to teach his disciples. He knows how to tame sentient beings and so he acts spontaneously as he has no conception. Similarly, his activities are uninterrupted because he knows the same as the Buddha-essence of sentient beings. There are three causes why the activities of the Buddha are uninterrupted: His renunciation was for the sake of liberating sentient beings, he sees that he is no different from the nature of sentient beings and he knows that defilements are removable. The text states:

His renunciation [is accomplished] for the sake of others.
He sees the equality of themselves and sentient beings
And his activity is not completed to its full extent.
His their deeds will never cease while *samsāra* exists. [4:12]

The text presents nine examples for Buddha activities. It states:

Like Indra, the drum (of the gods), clouds, Brahma,
The sun, a precious jewel,
An echo, space,
And earth is the Tathāgata. [4:13]

(E) The fifth, the last chapter of the text explains that by means of the knowledge of realizing the four points, one becomes able to remove both the delusive obscuration and the obscuration of wisdom together with their latencies. The only way to remove the two obscurations is to cultivate wisdom, and the only way to

¹⁰ The thirty-two major marks of a Buddha— Hands and feet are marked by wheels; feet are well set; fingers and toes are webbed; hands and feet are smooth and tender; seven features of the body are prominent; fingers are long; heels are broad; body is huge and straight; ankles do not protrude; hair of the body coils upward; ankles are like those of an antelope's; long and beautiful hands; private organ is concealed in a sheath; gold coloured complexion; skin is smooth; every hair of the body coils to the right; face is adorned by a hair-treasure between the eye brows; upper part of the body is like that of a lion's; shoulders are perfectly round; shoulders are broad; he tastes the most excellent taste; his body has the proportion of a banyan tree; he has a crown protrusion on the head; tongue is long; voice is like that of god Brahmā's; jaws are like that of a lion's; his teeth are white; his teeth are of the same size; teeth are evenly set; he has a total of forty teeth; he has deep blue eyes and eye-lashes are like those of a heifer's.

obtain wisdom that is by having motivation and aspiration in the four points. Maitreya says in *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra*:

Other than discriminative wisdom,
There is no means for removing these;
Therefore discriminative wisdom is supreme.
The four (vajra points) being study; such study is supreme. [5:15]

Therefore, one who studies and ponders the treatise and scripture that explain four points acquires great benefits.

System of studying the Treatise

Generally, in most Buddhist schools, collected topics (Wyl. bsdus grwa) and logic are studied first which is followed by Madhyamika because it helps to deconstruct all kinds of concepts. Madhyamika is followed by Vinaya, Abhidharma and all that. And *Uttaratantra* is studied at a later stage, often as the last text in the Buddhist curriculum. Many masters of the past say that *Uttaratantra* is like a bridge between the sūtras and tantra. For instance, in Kagyu School, the three most important texts, namely ‘Profound Inner Meaning/Profound Inner Topics’ (Wyl. *zab mo nang don*; Skt. Gambhira-antarartha), The ‘Two Segments/Condensed version of Hevajra Tantra’ (Wyl. *brtag pa gnyis pa*; Skt. Hevajra Tantra) and finally, comes ‘Treatise on the Sublime Continuum’ (Wyl. *rgyud bla ma*; Skt. Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra).

Most scholars assert that *Uttaratantra* contains the subject matter of definitive meaning, but Sakya Pandita thinks this teaching cannot be taken literally, so it’s only interpretative meaning.¹¹

Keywords:

Good Discrimination (Supravicya), Signlessness (Nirlakṣaṇa), Buddha-essence/ Buddha-nature (Tathāgatagarbha), Self-awareness wisdom (Prati-saṁvid-jñāna), Great Seal (Mahāmudrā).

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