

Buddha Nature

The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra

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CHAPTER ONE

Tathagatagarbha

Introduction

I bow down to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

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

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

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

From the Buddha [stems] the Dharma, from the Dharma the Assembly of noble ones, from the Assembly the attainment of buddha nature, the element of primordial wisdom. This wisdom finally attained is supreme enlightenment, the powers and so on, [thus] possessing the properties that fulfill the benefit of all sentient beings.

The First Three Vajra Points: The Three Jewels

Buddha

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.

Being uncreated and spontaneously present, not a realization due to extraneous conditions,

wielding knowledge, compassionate love, and ability,
buddhahood has [the qualities of] the two benefits.

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

Dharma

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

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

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

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

Sangha

This mind being by nature clear light, they have seen the poisons to be essenceless

and therefore truly realize [the nature of] every being as peace, the ultimate non-existence of a self. They perceive that the Perfect Buddha pervades them all.

They possess the understanding that is free from the veils. Thus seeing that beings are utterly pure and that [this purity pervades] their limitless number,

they are endowed with the vision of primordial wisdom. I bow down to this [Sangha].

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

Realizing beings in their state of peace [the noble ones] know correctly, for [the mind] is by nature utterly pure and the poisons were always exhausted.

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

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

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

The Three Refuges

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

[The Dharma] will be abandoned and is of an unsteady nature.
It is not [the ultimate quality], and [the Sangha] is still with fear.
Thus the two aspects of Dharma and the Assembly of noble ones
do not represent the supreme refuge, which is constant and stable.
In a true sense only the Buddha is beings' refuge,
since the Great Sage embodies the dharmakaya,
and the Assembly also reaches its ultimate goal
when these [qualities of dharmakaya are attained].

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."

The Last Four Vajra Points

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.

The disposition of the Three Rare and Sublime Ones
is the object [of vision] of those who see everything.
Furthermore, these four aspects in the given order
are inconceivable, for the following four reasons:

[The buddha element] is pure and yet has affliction.
[Enlightenment] was not afflicted and yet is purified.
Qualities are totally indivisible [and yet unapparent].
[Activity] is spontaneous and yet without any thought.

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.

The Fourth Vajra Point: The Element

The perfect buddhakaya is all-embracing,
suchness cannot be differentiated,
and all beings have the disposition.
Thus they always have buddha nature.

The Buddha has said that all beings have buddha nature
"since buddha wisdom is always present within the assembly
of beings,
since this undefiled nature is free from duality,
and since the disposition to buddhahood has been named after
its fruit."

Essence, cause, fruit, function, endowment, manifestation,
phases, all-pervasiveness of suchness, unchangingness,
and inseparability of the qualities should be understood
as intended to describe the meaning of the absolute expanse.

Just as a jewel, the sky, and water are pure
it is by nature always free from the poisons.
From devotion to the Dharma, from highest wisdom,
and from samadhi and compassion [its realization arises].

[Wielding] power, not changing into something else,
and being a nature that has a moistening [quality]:
these [three] have properties corresponding
to those of a precious gem, the sky, and water.

Enmity towards the Dharma, a view [asserting
an existing] self, fear of samsara' s suffering,
and neglect of the welfare of fellow beings
are the four veils of those with great desire,
of tirthikas, shravakas, and pratyekabuddhas.
The cause that purifies [all these veils]
consists of the four qualities [of the path],
which are outstanding devotion and so on.

Those whose seed is devotion towards the supreme vehicle,
whose mother is analytical wisdom generating the buddha qualities,
whose abode is the blissful womb of meditative stability,
and whose nurse is compassion, are heirs born to succeed
the Muni.

The fruit is the perfection of the qualities
of purity, self, happiness, and permanence.
Weariness of suffering, longing to attain peace,
and devotion towards this aim are the function.

In brief, the fruit of these [purifying causes]
fully divides into the remedies [for the antidotes],

which [in their turn] counteract the four aspects
of wrong beliefs with regard to the dharmakaya.

The [dharmakaya] is purity, since its nature is pure
and [even] the remaining imprints are fully removed.
It is true self, since all conceptual elaboration
in terms of self and non-self is totally stilled.
It is true happiness, since [even] the aggregates
of mental nature and their causes are reversed.
It is permanence, since the cycle of existence
and the state beyond pain are realized as one.

Their analytical wisdom has cut all self-cherishing without
exception.
Yet, cherishing beings, those possessed of compassion do not adhere
to peace.
Relying on understanding and compassionate love, the means to
enlightenment,
noble ones will neither [abide] in samsara nor in a [limited] nirvana.

If the buddha element were not present,
there would be no remorse over suffering.
There would be no longing for nirvana,
nor striving and devotion towards this aim.

That with regard to existence and nirvana their respective fault and
quality are seen,
that suffering is seen as the fault of existence and happiness as the
quality of nirvana,
stems from the presence of the disposition to buddhahood. "Why so?"
In those who are devoid of disposition, such seeing does not occur.

Like the great sea it holds qualities
immeasurable, precious, and inexhaustible.
Its essence holds indivisible properties.
Thus [the element] is similar to a lamp.

Unifying the elements of dharmakaya,
a victor' s wisdom, and great compassion,
it is shown as being similar to the sea
by the vessel, the gems, and the water.

Clairvoyance, primordial wisdom, and absence of pollution
are totally indivisible and native to the unstained abode.
Thus it has properties corresponding
to the light, heat, and color of a lamp.

Based upon the manifestation of suchness dividing into that of an ordinary being, that of a noble one, and that of a perfect buddha, He who Sees Thatness has explained the nature of the Victor to beings.

[it manifests as] perverted [views in] ordinary beings,
[as] the reversal [of these in] those who see the truth,
and [it manifests] as it is, in an unperverted way,
and as freedom from elaboration [in] a tathagata.

The unpurified, the both unpurified and purified,
and the utterly purified [phases]
are expressed in their given order
[by the names] "being," "bodhisattva," and "tathagata."

The element as contained
in the six topics of "essence" and so on
is explained in the light of three phases
by means of three names.

Just as space, which is by nature free from thought,
pervades everything,
the undefiled expanse, which is the nature of mind,
is all-pervading.

As the general feature [of everything], it embraces [those with]
faults,
[those with] qualities, and [those in whom the qualities are]
ultimate
just as space [pervades everything] visible,
be it of inferior, average, or supreme appearance.

Having faults that are adventitious
and qualities that are its nature,
it is afterwards the same as before.
This is dharmata ever unchanging.

[Though] space permeates everything,
it is never polluted, due to its subtlety.
Likewise the [dharmadhatu] in all beings
does not suffer the slightest pollution.

Just as at all times worlds arise
and disintegrate in space,

the senses arise and disintegrate
in the uncreated expanse.

Space is never burnt by fires.
Likewise this [dharmadhatu]
is not burnt by the fires
of death, sickness, and aging.

Earth rests upon water and water upon wind.
Wind fully rests on space.
Space does not rest upon any of the elements
of wind, water, or earth.

Likewise skandhas, elements, and senses
are based upon karma and mental poisons.
Karma and poisons are always based
upon improper conceptual activity.
The improper conceptual activity
fully abides on the purity of mind.
Yet, the nature of the mind itself
has no basis in all these phenomena.

The skandhas, entrances, and elements
are to be known as resembling earth.
Karma and the mental poisons of beings
should be envisaged as the water element.
Improper conceptual activity is viewed
as being similar to the element of wind.
[Mind' s] nature, as the element of space,
has no ground and no place of abiding.

The improper conceptual activity
rests upon the nature of the mind.
Improper conceptual activity brings about
all the classes of karma and mental poisons.
From the water of karma and mental poisons
the skandhas, entrances, and elements arise.
As this [world] arises and disintegrates,
they will arise and disintegrate as well.

The nature of mind as the element of space
does not [depend upon] causes or conditions,
nor does it [depend on] a gathering of these.
It has neither arising, cessation, nor abiding.

This clear and luminous nature of mind
is as changeless as space. It is not afflicted
by desire and so on, the adventitious stains,
which are sprung from incorrect thoughts.

It is not brought into existence
by the water of karma, of the poisons, and so on.
Hence it is also not consumed by the cruel fires
of dying, falling sick, and aging.

The three fires of death, sickness, and aging
are to be understood in their given sequence
as resembling the fire at the end of time,
the fire of hell, and an ordinary fire.

Having realized thatness, the nature of the [dharmadhatu], just as it is,
those of understanding are released from birth, sickness, aging, and
death.

Though free from the destitution of birth and so on, they demonstrate
these,
since by their [insight] they have given rise to compassion for beings.

The noble have eradicated the suffering
of dying, falling ill, and aging at its root,
which is being born due to karma and poisons.
There being no such [cause], there is no such [fruit].

Since they have seen reality as it is,
they are beyond being born and so on.
Yet, as the embodiment of compassion itself
they display birth, illness, old age, and death.

After the heirs of the Victorious One
have realized this changeless state,
those who are blinded by ignorance
see them as being born and so forth.
That such seeing should occur is truly wonderful and amazing.
When they have attained the field of experience of the noble,
they show themselves as the field of experience of the children.
Hence means and compassion of the friends of beings are supreme.

Though they are beyond all worldly matters,
these [bodhisattvas] do not leave the world.
They act for the sake of all worldly beings
within the world, unblemished by its defects.
As a lotus will grow in the midst of water,

not being polluted by the water' s [faults],
these [noble ones] are born in the world
unpolluted by any worldly phenomena.

Viewing the accomplishment of their task,
their understanding always blazes like fire.
And they always rest evenly balanced
in meditative stability, which is peace.

By the power of their former [prayers]
and since they are free from all ideation,
they do not exert any deliberate effort
to lead all sentient beings to maturation.
These [heirs of the Victorious One] know precisely
how and by what [method] each should be trained—through
whatever teachings, form kayas, conduct,
and ways of behavior are individually appropriate.
Always [acting] spontaneously and without hindrance
for sentient beings whose number is limitless as space,
such [bodhisattvas] who possess understanding
truly engage in the task of benefitting beings.

The way the bodhisattvas [unfold activity]
in the post-meditative phase
equals the tathagatas' [action] in the world
for beings' true liberation.
Though this is true, indeed, whatever difference lies
between the earth and an atom or else between
[the water in] the sea and in an ox' s hoofprint,
is the difference between a buddha and a bodhisattva.

[The dharmakaya] does not change into something else, since it has
inexhaustible properties.
It is the refuge of beings, since [it protects them] without any limit of
time, until the final end.
It is always free from duality, since it is foreign to all ideation.
It is also an indestructible state, since its nature is uncreated.

It is not born, and it does not die.
It suffers no harm and does not age
since it is permanent and steadfast,
the state of peace and immutability.
(Continues...)