An Overview of the Five Texts of Maitreya

The Sun Rays that Open the Lotus of the Mahāyāna

by Karl Brunnhölzl

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MAITREYA AND ASAṄGA

As a bodhisattva on the tenth bhūmi, Maitreya was one of the eight major bodhisattvas at the time of Buddha Śākayamuni and appears in many sūtras as one of the interlocutors of the Buddha. His name "The Loving One" indicates his unique power of love and compassion. It is said that, as soon as he arrived at the entrance to a village or town, through the influence of his powerful mind full of love, all its inhabitants would immediately be free of any mental afflictions. Maitreya is said to reside at present as the regent of Buddha Śākyamuni in the heavenly realm Tuṣita, from where he will eventually descend to manifest as the next Buddha on earth.

Tradition has it that Asaṅga (4th century) withdrew from his monastery into solitary retreat to meditate on universal compassion and supplicate Maitreya, mainly out of dissatisfaction with the state of mahāyāna Buddhism and the two prevailing interpretations of the dharma in his day. Asaṅga considered the

abhidharma treatises of Nikāya Buddhism as overly realist and dualistic and the Madhyamaka texts by Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva as too nihilistic and frightening for many people. He wished for a true middle way between these extremes through a new and complete synthetic approach.

After Asaṅga had supplicated and meditated on Maitreya for twelve years, seeing no result, he gave up and left his cave. On the way, he saw an old dog infested with maggots, which triggered an overwhelming sense of love and compassion in him for that animal. He thought the only way to remove the maggots from the dog's body without killing them was to lick them up with his tongue and transfer them onto a piece of his own flesh. Thus, he cut a piece of flesh from his own thigh and put it on the ground. When he closed his eyes and bent down to lick up the maggots, he found his tongue touching the ground instead. He opened his eyes, and there stood Maitreya in all his splendor right in front of him. Asaṅga said, "I supplicated and meditated on you for twelve years, but you never showed up!" Maitreya answered, "I was there the whole time, you were just not ready to see me because you were too self-absorbed and lacking in compassion. If you don't believe me, put me on your shoulders and go to the next village." When Asaṅga arrived there, most people

did not see anything on his shoulders, a few saw a dog, and one old woman saw only Maitreya's feet.

Asaṅga then supplicated Maitreya to teach him, so Maitreya took him to Tuṣita to impart to him what are now called "the five texts of Maitreya." Upon his return to earth, Asaṅga wrote these teachings down and spread them far and wide in India. Based on these five texts, he also composed a number of his own works, which traditionally include the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (*Compendium of the Mahāyāna*), the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (*Compendium of Abhidharma*), the vast *Yogācārabhūmi* (*Stages of the Practice of Yoga*), and the fourth *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* (*Explication of the Analysis of the Jewel Disposition*).

Asaṅga also converted his younger half-brother Vasubandhu to the mahāyāna and together they are considered as the founders of the Yogācāra tradition. Vasubandhu commented on three of the five Maitreya works (see *The Scriptural Sources* below) and Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. He also wrote a number of independent Yogācāra works (*Viṃśatikākārikā, Triṃśikākārikā, Trisvabhāvanirdeśa, Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa*, and *Vyākhyāyukti*).

THE SCRIPTURAL SOURCES

The Five Texts of Maitreya

According to the Tibetan tradition, the five texts composed by Maitreya and transmitted by Asaṅga are:

1. ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRA
   The Ornament of Clear Realization
2. MAHĀYĀNASŪTRĀLAṂKĀRA
   The Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras
3. MADHYĀNTAVIBHĀGA
   The Distinction Between the Middle and Extremes
4. DHARMADHARMATĀVIBHĀGA
   The Distinction Between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena
5. RATNAGOTRAVIBHĀGA (MAHĀYĀNOTTARATANTRA)
   An Analysis of the Jewel Disposition (The Ultimate Continuum of the Mahāyāna)

The designation "the five dharmas of Maitreya" is not of Indian origin, but by the eleventh century at least some Indian texts considered all five works to be authored by Maitreya. Except for the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (of which there is only a fragment), the other four texts are preserved in Sanskrit in their entirety. During the early translation period in Tibet, only two among them were translated: the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* by Gawa Baldse (Tib. *Ka ba dpal brtsegs*) and the *Madhyāntavibhāga* by Yeshé Dé (Tib. *Ye shes sde*; both 8th century). The remaining three were translated during the 11th century— the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* by Ngog Lotsāwa (Tib. *Rngog lo tsā ba*), the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* by Shama Sengé Gyaltsen (Tib. *Zha ma seng ge rgyal mtshan*) and Nagtso Lotsāwa (Tib. *Nag tsho lo tsā ba;* revised by Su Gawé Dorje (Tib. *Gzu dga' ba'i rdo rje*), and the *Uttaratantra* by Ngog Lotsāwa and others.

At present, all five texts have been translated into English, together with a number of Indian and Tibetan commentaries (see *Bibliography*).

Indian Commentaries

Abhisamayālaṃkāra:

- Haribhadra
  ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRĀLOKĀ
  Illumination of *The Orament of Clear Realization*
- Haribhadra
  ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRANĀMAPRAJÑĀPĀRAMITO-PADEŚAŚĀSTRAVIVṚTI
  Commentary on *The Orament of Clear Realization*

Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra:

- Vasubandhu
  MAHĀYĀNASŪTRĀLAṂKĀRABHĀṢYA
  Explication of *The Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*
- Sthiramati
  SŪTRĀLAṂKĀRAVṚTTIBHĀṢYA
  Extensive Commentary on *The Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*
- Asvabhāva
  MAHĀYĀNASŪTRĀLAṂKĀRAṬĪKĀ
  Subcommentary on *The Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*

Madhyāntavibhāga:

- Vasubandhu
  MADHYĀNTAVIBHĀGABHĀṢYA
  Explication of *The Distinction Between the Middle and Extremes*
- Sthiramati
  MADHYĀNTAVIBHĀGAṬĪKĀ
  Subcommentary on *The Distinction Between the Middle and Extremes*

Dharmadharmatāvibhāga:

- Vasubandhu
  DHARMADHARMATĀVIBHĀGAVṚTTI
  Commentary on *The Distinction Between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena*

Ratnagotravibhāga (Mahāyānottaratantra):

- Ratnavajra
  UTTARATANTRAVṚTTI
  Commentary on *The Ultimate Continuum*

- Sajjana
  MAHĀYĀNOTTARATANTRAŚĀSTROPADEŚA
  Pith Instruction on the *Ultimate Continuum of the Mahāyāna*
- Vairocanarakṣita
  MAHĀYĀNOTTARATANTRAṬIPPAṆĪ
  Glosses on the *Ultimate Continuum of the Mahāyāna*

Main Kagyü and Nyingma Commentaries

Abhisamayālaṃkāra:

- The Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje
  The Noble One's Resting at Ease
- The Fifth Shamarpa Göncho Yenla
  Concise Elucidation of the Ornament of Clear Realization
- Patrul Orgyen Jigme Chökyi Wangpo
  General Topics of The Ornament of Clear Realization
- Patrul Orgyen Jigme Chökyi Wangpo
  Word Commentary on The Ornament of Clear Realization

Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra:

- Mipham Rinpoche
  Explanation of the Intended Meaning of The Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras: A Feast of the Nectar of the Mahāyāna

Madhyāntavibhāga:

- Mipham Rinpoche
  Commentary on The Distinction Between the Middle and Extremes: Garland of Light

Dharmadharmatāvibhāga:

- The Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje
  Ornament that Explains the Distinction Between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena
- Mipham Rinpoche
  Commentary on The Distinction Between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena Extremes: Light of Wisdom

Ratnagotravibhāga (Mahāyānottaratantra):

- Gö Lotsāwa
  Commentarial Explanation of The Ultimate Continuum of the Mahāyāna: The Mirror that Clarifies True Reality

- Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye
  Commentary on the Ultimate Continuum of the Mahāyāna: The Lion's Roar of Irreversibility
- Mipham Rinpoche
  Annotational Commentary on the Ultimate Continuum: The Words from the Mouth of Ajita

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE MAITREYA TEXTS IN INDIA AND TIBET

According to Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé, the intention of the sūtras of the third dharmacakra was elucidated by the four works of Maitreya except the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and also by Nāgārjuna's collection of praises. In India, these texts were explained and spread widely by Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Candragomī (6th/7th century), their followers, Ratnākaraśānti, and others. However, while the general philosophical system of Maitreya's texts — the contents of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, *Mahāyānasūtralaṃkāra*, and *Madhyāntavibhāga* — was explained in detail through many excellent teaching traditions (such as those of Dignāga and Sthiramati), the uncommon philosophical system of these texts was sustained in such a way that only the supreme disciples transmitted it orally, with the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and *Uttaratantra* being hidden away as treasure texts.

These two texts were not known in India until the eleventh century, when Maitrīpa is said to have rediscovered them inside an old stūpa and received instructions on them from Maitreya in a vision. Maitrīpa saw that the intention of the *Uttaratantra* in particular conformed to the Mahāmudrā teachings from his guru Śavaripa. From Maitrīpa, the Maitreya texts went to paṇḍita Ānandakīrti, the Kashmiri paṇḍita Sajjana (11th century), and paṇḍita Jñānaśrī and others.

Sajjana was the elder son of paṇḍita Mahājana and the grandson of the siddha and paṇḍita Ratnavajra, the central one among the six gatekeepers of Vikramaśīla, where he mainly taught the five texts of Maitreya, the works on pramāṇa, and the Buddhist tantras for many years. He also wrote a still extant commentary on the *Uttaratantra.* Sajjana's *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstropadeśa* is a versified summary and commentary on the *Uttaratantra.* The esteem in which he held the *Uttaratantra* is illustrated by his handing Ngog Lotsāwa the folios of the text one by one and saying that if even a single page of this manuscript were lost, it would be equal to the passing away of Maitreya.

The five Maitreya works were transmitted from India to Tibet through at least four known lineages — one through Ngog Lotsāwa, two through Dsen Kawoché (Tib. *Btsan kha bo che*),

and one through Marpa Dopa Chökyi Wangchug (Tib. *Mar pa do pa chos kyi dbang phyug*). Both Ngog and Dsen traveled to Kashmir and studied the Maitreya works with Sajjana at the same time. Due to its purely scholarly approach, Ngog's lineage is often called "the explanatory tradition of the dharma works of Maitreya" (Tib. *byams chos bshad lugs*), while Dsen's more experiential approach represents "the meditative tradition of the dharma works of Maitreya" (Tib. *byams chos sgom lugs*). The tradition of Marpa Dopa and Parahitabhadra incorporates both these approaches.

Dsen Kawoché traveled to Kashmir at age fifty-five (1076). When he met Sajjana, he said, "Since I am old now, I won't study many teachings. However, I wish to make the dharmas of Maitreya my 'death dharma.' Therefore, please instruct me properly in them." Sajjana taught him the Maitreya works by relying on the translator Su Gawé Dorje, who is said to have written a (now lost) commentary on the *Uttaratantra* based on his notes of Sajjana's teachings. Su Gawé Dorje also revised an earlier translation of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*. Another translator, called Padma Sengé, also received explanations from Sajjana similar to those given to Dsen and composed an (equally lost) extensive commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* that contained his notes of Sajjana's explanations.

Dsen Kawoché and Su Gawé Dorje taught the Maitreya works to many masters in central Tibet. In particular, Dsen transmitted them to a certain Jangrawa (Tib. *Lcang ra ba*), who taught them to Tarma Dsöndrü (Tib. *Dar ma btson 'grus;* 1117–1192), a lineage holder of The Pacification of Suffering who composed a commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* in several volumes (now lost). This lineage continued through a number of Kadampa and Jonang masters. According to Jamgön Kongtrul, it reached the Nyingma and Kagyü schools, when it was transmitted to Gaḥto Tsewang Norbu (Tib. *Kaḥ tog tshe dbang nor bu;* 1698–1755) and the Eighth Situpa, Chökyi Jungné (Tib. *Chos kyi 'byung gnas;* 1699/1700–1774). Jamgön Kongtrul also received Jonang instructions directly from Ngawang Chöpel Gyatso (Tib. *Ngag bdang chos 'phel rgya mtsho*; c. 1788–1865). From Jamgön Kongtrul, all these teachings went to his many students in the Nyingma, Kagyü, and Sakya schools. Among these three schools, the Shentong instructions in this particular lineage are primarily upheld in the Karma Kagyu tradition.

Gö Lotsāwa (Tib. *'Gos lo tsā ba*) also mentions an anonymous Tibetan commentary on the *Uttaratantra* in Dsen's tradition that supplemented its explanations of the text with pith instructions on meditation. There are also several short (still existing) texts in the Kadampa School that contain pith instructions of the

Dsen tradition. Also, the great Kashmiri paṇḍita Śākyaśrībhadra (1140s–1225) gave pith instructions on the five Maitreya works in Tibet, but they were lost.

The third transmission lineage of the Maitreya texts went from Dsen Kawoché to someone from southern Ladö (Tib. *La stod*), Dopa Nyen (Tib. *Do pa snyan*), the Kadampa master Mönlam Tsültrim (Tib. *Smon lam tshul khrims*), Séu Chökyi Gyaltsen (Tib. *Se'u chos kyi rgyal mtshan*), and then continued in the Kadampa lineage.

The fourth transmission reached Tibet via Parahitabhadra and Marpa Dopa Chökyi Wangchug. Parahitabhadra, a student of the Kashmirian Mahāpaṇḍita Somaśrī, also studied Madhyamaka with Ratnavajra and was part of the eleventh-century Kashmirian paṇḍita scene that was involved with the Maitreya texts and transmitted them to Tibet. His main Indian student was Mahāsumati, and he also taught Ngog Lotsāwa, Su Gawé Dorje, Marpa Dopa, and many others. Together with them, Parahitabhadra translated or revised many sūtras, tantras, and treatises (more than twenty works in the *Tengyur*, among them the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*). He also collaborated with Sajjana, shown by their common revision of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*.

When Marpa Dopa Chökyi Wangchug traveled to Nepal, he met Marpa Lotsāwa Chökyi Lodrö (Tib. *Mar pa lo tsā ba chos kyi blo gros*), who had just returned from his last journey to India. Upon requesting teachings from Marpa Lotsāwa, Marpa Dopa was advised to receive instructions from the other main disciples of Nāropa since Nāropa himself was no longer available. Later, when he came across a large crowd at Tirhut, he heard that Nāropa had arrived and offered some gold to him, but Nāropa just threw it to the ground, silently gazed at him with wide-open eyes, and thus blessed him. After arriving in Magadha, Marpa Dopa received the empowerment and instructions of the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra* from Nāropa's students Manakaśrī, Prajñārakṣita, Bodhibhadra, and Pramudavajra. Having heard numerous teachings from other paṇḍitas, he returned to Nepal and received further instructions on Nāropa's system from Pamtingpa Abhayakīrti, his younger brother Vāgīśvara, and Kanakaśrī, as well as many teachings from Vajrapāṇi (born 1017), one of Maitrīpa's four main disciples. Primarily with the help of paṇḍita Sumatikīrti, Marpa translated numerous texts related to the Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī tantras and spread them in Tibet to many students. He also composed detailed commentaries and summaries of both the basic *Cakrasaṃvāratantra* and the *Yoginīsañcārya,* thus becoming famous for his contributions

to transmitting the teachings on Cakrasaṃvara. This lineage eventually reached Butön. Also, one of Gampopa's main disciples obtained Marpa Dopa's system of Cakrasaṃvara and composed an extensive commentary based on Gampopa's instructions, the basic tantra, and the *Yoginīsañcārya*.

Marpa Dopa also collaborated with Sajjana's son Mahājana in translating some texts by Ratnavajra and Sajjana, as well as with Ngog Lotsāwa. Thus, Marpa Dopa was familiar with Sajjana's and Ngog's tradition, and his contact with Vajrapāṇi marks a connection between the lineages of Mahāmudrā and the Maitreya texts. In this regard, Marpa Dopa's closeness to other students of the teachers of Marpa Lotsāwa is significant too. Marpa Dopa translated all five Maitreya texts and later transmitted them to the siddha Nyingpugpa Chökyi Tragpa (Tib. *Nying phug pa chos kyi grags pa;* 1094–1186), who also received these texts in the tradition of Dsen Kawoché from Jangrawa.[1]

1 For more details on the transmission of the Maitreya texts, see *When the Clouds Part. The Uttaratantra and Its Meditative Tradition as a Bridge between Sūtra and Tantra*, (Boston and London: Snow Lion, 2014, 81–91).

THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE YOGĀCĀRA TEACHINGS

The World is Merely Mind's Own Play

That the mind is continually involved in the essentially deluded, dualistic, and illusory activity of projecting or constructing its own world is highlighted by the Yogācāra terms *parikalpa* ("conception" or "imagination") and *abhūtaparikalpa* ("false imagination"). Both terms include all eight consciousnesses with their mental factors and functions, as well as their objects. In essence, they indicate mind's own confused play that constantly creates all kinds of appearances of subject and object.

That everything is mind's imagination or creation leads to the most wellknown but also most misunderstood notion of the Yogācāra School – *cittamātra* (or *vijñaptimātra*). It is often taught that this term means that outer objects do not exist and everything is "mind only" with "mind" being the only thing that re-

ally or ultimately exists. However, this is not really what the Yogācāra School itself says (which is not identical with what Tibetans usually call the "Mind-Only School").

Though cittamātra ("mere mind") or vijñaptimātra ("mere cognizance") means indeed that the existence of material outer objects is denied, the full scope and purpose of teaching cittamātra is much vaster — the realization of personal and phenomenal identitylessness. In this process, mere mind itself is no exception to being identityless and is thus ultimately as unreal as anything else. Cittamātra is not a metaphysical assertion of a transcendental reality consisting of "mind-only" but a description of our delusion — the dreams of this sleep from which the Buddha has awakened. If the dream-world saṃsāra is "merely mind," freedom and the Buddhist path are possible because we can change our minds through creating a counter-dream within the dream of our delusion. Most important, we can wake up from this dream.

That cittamātra is constantly referred to in Yogācāra texts as the delusional perception of what does not exist (these texts moreover abound with dreams, illusions, and so on as examples for it) hardly suggests that it exists in a real or ultimate way. Thus, the notion of "mere mind" refers only to the mistaken minds and mental factors of saṃsāra (the realities of suffering and its

origin) but not to the realities of the path or cessation. Many Yogācāra works make it clear explicitly and repeatedly that not only external objects but also "mere mind" does not exist and is to be relinquished in order to attain the realization of the path of seeing and eventually buddhahood.

In this context, the four "yogic practices" (Skt. *prayoga*) in Yogācāra works are the following four steps of realization:

1. Outer objects are observed to be nothing but mind
2. Thus, outer objects are not observed as such
3. With outer objects being unobservable, a mind cognizing them is not observed either
4. Not observing both, nonduality is observed

This means that stages (1)–(3) — and thus the notion of cittamātra — are progressively dealt with only up through the end of the path of preparation. Stage (4) marks the path of seeing (the first bhūmi), on which bodhisattvas have to let go of the notion of cittamātra as well. In other words, like so many other Buddhist notions, cittamātra is no exception to simply being an expedient pedagogic tool to realize a certain level on the path. However, it is neither the final realization, nor to be reified in any way (thus becoming an obstacle to this very realiza-

tion), but to be discarded once its intended function has been accomplished.

Mind's Play has Many Faces

False imagination as the most general term for mind's deluded mode of operation is further divided in several ways in terms of its various specific functions. What is described here are dynamic processes and not any kinds of static entities or states. Thus, when Yogācāras speak about eight consciousnesses (or three natures, five wisdoms, and three kāyas), they in no way mean three, five, or eight distinct "minds" or even just static properties of a single mind. Rather, different numbers of consciousness stand for different functions of the mind, all of which operate as momentarily impermanent and changing processes, none of which is truly existent.

The ālaya-consciousness is the most basic ground of saṃsāric mind, while the other seven consciousnesses (the afflicted mind, the mental consciousness, and the five sense consciousnesses) operate out of this ground and engage their respective objects (which are also nothing but different aspects of this basic ground). The ālaya-consciousness is nothing but the sum total of the virtuous, nonvirtuous, and neutral tendencies that make

up the mind stream of a sentient being. Thus, it is not like a container separate from its contents, but resembles the constant flow of all the water drops that are labeled "a river." When there are dualistic interactions of subjects and objects through the other seven consciousnesses, the imprints created by them merge back into and are "stored" in the ālaya, just as waves on the surface of a river emerge from and remerge into it. This does not mean that the ālaya actively creates anything, it is just the dynamic network of various causes and conditions interacting, otherwise known as dependent origination. In this way, it is said to be equivalent to fundamental ignorance and the karma accumulated by it, thus serving as the basis for all saṃsāric appearances and experiences, which at the same time represents the sum of all factors to be relinquished in order to attain nirvāṇa.

The afflicted mind is simply another expression for mind not recognizing its own nature. Technically speaking, it is the consciousness that solely focuses inward and thus mistakes the empty aspect of the ālaya-consciousness as being a self and its lucid aspect as what is "other." Usually, we think that not seeing or recognizing something is due to being too far away from it, but the afflicted mind is the most fundamental case of not recognizing something due to being too close to it. This is the starting point of fundamental subject-object duality, which then rami-

fies into the appearances of the remaining six consciousnesses and their objects, all of them being constantly filtered and afflicted through this basic self-concern. Thus, the afflicted mind is constantly associated with four afflictions — ignorance, the views about a real personality, self-conceit, and attachment to a self. Since the afflicted mind — the grasping at "me" and "mine" — is the root of all other afflictions, it must be relinquished in order to attain liberation from saṃsāra.

Though the term "mentation" is primarily used for the afflicted mind in Yogācāra texts, it is also generally used for the mental sense faculty (equivalent to the immediate condition) in the sense of any of the first six consciousnesses having just ceased. In brief, "mentation" can either designate the mental sense faculty, the afflicted mind, or the seventh consciousness as consisting of both the afflicted mind and the immediate condition of the mental consciousness. Thus, it is said that one aspect of mentation — the afflicted mind — is the support for consciousness being afflicted, while the other aspect of mentation (its being the mental sense faculty) is what triggers all kinds of consciousness.

Mind Operates on Three Levels

The three natures or characteristics are the main Yogācāra template to explain mind's operational modes when deluded and undeluded. They are the imaginary nature, the dependent nature, and the perfect nature. Yogācāra texts present us with a great number of sometimes very different presentations of what these three natures are and how they are interrelated. However, if we keep in mind that all of these models describe processes rather than three clearly separate and fixed things or realities, their descriptions are not contradictory but just emphasize different aspects of the same dynamics (similar to describing the features of the ever-changing and interacting movements of waves on the ocean versus the static features of a book).

The dependent nature is the process or experiential structure in which the world presents itself as a seeming (delusive) reality for beings whose minds have a dualistic perceptual structure (which is the imaginary nature). The perfect nature is the underlying fundamental process or structure of mind's true nature and its own expressions as they are unwarped by said dualistic perceptual structure. In other words, the dependent nature is the basic "stuff" or stratum all our saṃsāric experiences and appearances are made of. It is the mistaken imagination that appears as the

unreal entities of subject and object because these are appearances in dependence on the latent tendencies of ignorance. The dependent nature appears as the outer world with its various beings and objects, our body, the sense consciousnesses that perceive these objects and the conceptual consciousness that thinks about them, the clinging to a personal self and real phenomena, and the mental events (such as feelings) that accompany all these consciousnesses (the ālaya-consciousness is sometimes said to be an equivalent of the dependent nature). Thus, false imagination is what creates the basic split of bare experience into seemingly real perceivers that apprehend seemingly real objects. This duality of subject and object — the imaginary nature — does not even exist on the level of seeming reality, but the mind that creates this split does exist and function on this level. However, the dependent nature in no way exists ultimately since it is repeatedly described as illusionlike and so on. It is said to be what is to be relinquished, while the perfect nature is what is to be revealed.

The imaginary nature covers the entire range of what is superimposed (consciously or unconsciously) by false imagination onto the various appearances of the dependent nature. This starts from the most basic gut-level sense of subject-object duality — the very fact that, for example, sense objects naturally seem to appear to be "out there" and the perceiver is "here," people natu-

rally thinking and instinctively acting in terms of "me" and "others," and standard notions such as "my body" or "my mind." Progressively coarser levels of mistaken overlays include more reified conscious notions of a self and really existent phenomena up through the most rigid belief systems about what we and the world are. Thus, what appear as our own body and mind form the bases for imputing a personal self. What appear as other beings, outer objects, and the consciousnesses that relate to them provide the bases for imputing really existent phenomena. All of these exist only conventionally, as nominal objects for the dualistic consciousnesses of ordinary sentient beings, but are not established as really existent.

The perfect nature is emptiness in the sense that what appears as dependent false imagination is primordially never established as the imaginary nature. As the ultimate object and the true nature of the dependent nature, this emptiness is the sphere of nonconceptual wisdom, which is nothing other than phenomenal identitylessness. It is called "perfect" because it never changes into something else, is the supreme among all dharmas, and is the focal object of prajñā during the process of purifying the mind from adventitious stains. Just as space, it is without any distinctions, but conventionally it may be presented as twofold — the unchanging perfect nature (suchness) and the unmistaken

perfect nature (the nondual nonconceptual wisdom that realizes this suchness). At times, the perfect nature is also equated with the luminous nature of mind free from adventitious stains or buddha nature.

It is important to understand that the template of the three natures is not so much an ontological model but primarily a soteriological one. This becomes even clearer when the three natures are also referred to as "lack of nature" and "emptiness." That is, the imaginary, dependent, and perfect natures, represent the lack of nature in terms of characteristics, the lack of nature in terms of arising, and the ultimate lack of nature, respectively. Thus, according to Yogācāra, the prajñāpāramitā sūtras' key notion "lack of nature" is not to be understood literally in the sense of nothing existing at all. Rather, it needs to be interpreted correctly through understanding this threefold lack of nature in order to relinquish the extremes of superimposition and denial, that is, to prevent clinging to (1) the existence of the imaginary nature and (2) the nonexistence of those phenomena whose nature it is to be inexpressible.

This points to two of the main misconceptions that explain why the Yogācāras saw a need to interpret the message of the prajñāpāramitā sūtras in terms of the three natures. Since these

sūtras themselves teach one to reject what is afflicted and practice or adopt what is pure, in terms of the path it makes no sense to simply take emptiness to mean that nothing whatsoever exists on any level of reality because then there is nothing to adopt or to reject. Thus, given the emptiness of all phenomena on the ultimate level, the existence of skandhas, karmic actions, a person, adopting, rejecting, and so on can only be, and must be, accepted on the level of seeming reality. However, within that level, one needs to further distinguish clearly between mere imaginary labels (such as the person) and the functional phenomena (such as skandhas and actions) that are taken as the bases for such labeling and perform the functions to be worked with on the path, even though both do not exist ultimately (neither does the path, which nevertheless leads to the realization of the ultimate).

In brief, just as when mistaking the moving colors and shapes in a movie for a story line with actual persons and all their emotions and so on, the imaginary nature stands for the illusory display of dualistic appearances that do not really exist in the first place, let alone having any characteristics of their own. Therefore, it is called "the lack of nature in terms of characteristics." Just as the mere movement of those shapes and colors on the screen, the dependent nature consists of dependently originat-

ing appearances which means that they appear in an illusion-like manner but are without any nature of their own and do not "really" arise. Thus, the dependent nature is called "the lack of nature in terms of arising." The perfect nature is "the ultimate lack of nature," which has two aspects. First, although there is no personal identity, the perfect nature is what functions as the path that remedies the notion of a personal identity. Just as an illusory ship can be used to cross an illusory ocean, it serves as the means to cross the ocean of saṃsāra to the other shore of nirvāṇa. In terms of dependent origination, this remedial or path aspect is actually contained within the dependent nature, but since it is the cause for realizing the ultimate, it is included here in the category of "the ultimate lack of nature." The second aspect of the perfect nature is the one by virtue of which enlightenment is attained through actively engaging in it and is undifferentiable from phenomenal identitylessness. Like space, it is omnipresent and not established as anything whatsoever (just as the colors and shapes in a movie are nothing but the display of photons, which are ultimately unfindable). This aspect is "the ultimate lack of nature" per se.

However, while the Madhyamaka system greatly tends to speak only about the objective side of this "ultimate lack of nature," the Yogācāra tradition also emphasizes its subjective side. In

other words, the lack of nature or emptiness is not just limited to being something like the bare fact of photons being unfindable, but there is an awareness or experience of this very fact. Needless to say, for Yogācāras too, the true realization of the ultimate lack of nature also entails the emptiness or unfindability of that very experience, but any realization of this has to happen in the mind — it is not just an abstract fact like a mathematical equation at which no one looks. Fundamentally, all phenomena, including one's mind, have always been, are, and will be empty, but this fact alone makes nobody a buddha, unless it is made into an incontrovertible, allpervasive, and personal experience of boundless freedom and compassion that is as natural an outlook informing all one's actions as it is for ordinary beings to experience themselves and the world as real, dualistic, and suffering.

On the level of seeming reality, the imaginary nature is just nominally existent, while the dependent nature is substantially existent in the sense of what conventionally performs functions. The perfect nature does not exist in any of these two ways but is the ultimate incontrovertible state of mind experiencing its own true nature. By definition, this personally experienced wisdom is in itself completely without any reference points, such as its existing or not existing. For these reasons, the imaginary

nature is also called "the emptiness of the nonexistent," the dependent nature "the emptiness of the existent," and the perfect nature "the ultimate or natural emptiness."

Thus, just as in the case of the notion of cittamātra, the three natures are to be progressively engaged as the bodhisattva path, with each one to be transcended by the following one. Hence, one of the main reasons for speaking about the three natures and the dependent nature in particular is to account for the process of mind progressing from its mistaken state to unmistaken freedom, which takes place within the dependently originating structure of the dependent nature through realizing the nonexistence of the imaginary nature and revealing or becoming immersed in the perfect nature instead. From the perspective of the path, the imaginary nature is to be known for what it is — utterly nonexistent, the dependent nature is to be relinquished in the sense of mind ceasing to create dualistic appearances, and the perfect nature is that which is to be manifested or realized, which is simply the true nature of the first two natures, once the dependent nature ceases to project the imaginary nature. This is what is called "the fundamental change" (see below).

In brief, all the different models of the three natures can be summarized into two, (1) the pivotal model and (2) the progressive

model. The "pivot" in (1) is the dependent nature, with the imaginary and perfect natures just being its two "extreme" poles of how it mistakenly appears and actually is. Model (2) refers to the three natures as three levels of reality, progressing from dualistic delusion to nondual freedom from delusion, as well as the realizations of these levels as outlined in the four yogic practices above.

The Five Dharmas

Another typical Yogācāra way to classify all phenomena is found in "the five dharmas." Among these:

1. "Names" are mere designations, such as "book."
2. "Causal features" (Skt. *nimitta* can mean both "cause" and "characteristic" and is to be understood in this double sense here) refer to the bases for such designations, that is, dualistically appearing entities that, on the level of seeming reality, perform functions and have certain characteristics (such as an actual book that we can read).
3. "Conception" in this context is a collective term for the eight kinds of consciousness including their mental factors.
4. "Perfect wisdom" bears this name because it is the nonconceptual wisdom that is the perceiving subject of suchness.

5. "Suchness" — the dharmadhātu or identitylessness — is the ultimate object to be focused on through the path or nonconceptual wisdom.

Among these: (1) corresponds to the imaginary nature, (2)–(3) make up the other-dependent nature, and (4)–(5) represent the perfect nature. That is, perfect wisdom ("the unmistaken perfect nature") and suchness ("the unchanging perfect nature") constitute the ultimate subject and object, respectively. Needless to say, this explanation of the perfect nature as two is a pedagogical device to describe what is ultimately realized and what realizes it from the dualistic perspective of ordinary beings, but in no way implies any notion of a separate subject and object at the level of a buddha's mind realizing, or rather constituting, ultimate reality.

Mind's Fundamentally Different Outlook on Itself

The term "fundamental change" (Skt. *āśrayaparivṛtti*) is often rendered as "transformation," but as far as the dharmadhātu, natural purity, buddha nature, or the luminous nature of the mind are concerned, the whole point of this notion of "fundamental change" is that there is absolutely no transformation of anything into anything else. Rather, the revelation of mind's primordially

pure nature only manifests as a change from the perspective of the deluded mind — mind seeming to be obscured before and then unobscured later. But this does not refer to any change in nature, just as the sun first being covered by clouds and then being free from clouds is not called a transformation of the clouds into the sun, or even any transformation of the sun itself. It is solely from the perspective of those who watch the sun that its state seems to have changed (being with and without clouds, respectively). Thus, there is no change in nature or substance but only a revelation of the way things actually have always been, once the delusion of what is projected onto this is seen through. As far as the notion of "fundamental change" refers to this process of uncovering mind's fundamental nature, even when it is sometimes described as if there were a transformation of something impure (such as the skandhas or the afflictions) into something pure (such as the pure skandhas or wisdoms), this is just a conventional or expedient way of teaching.

The fundamental change always entails both a negative (relinquishment) and a positive aspect (attainment, purity), usually designating both a process and its result (cause and effect). By keeping in mind that the term "fundamental change" in Yogācāra texts sometimes refers to the first and sometimes to the second aspect, seeming contradictions in different ways of describing

or applying this term are resolved. In other words, "fundament" or "foundation" may either refer to the ālaya-consciousness (or all eight consciousnesses, or adventitious stains) as that which changes from the perspective of the path. Or, it may be understood as nonconceptual wisdom, buddha nature, or the dharmadhātu as the very state within which any "change" takes place but which itself remains changeless. Still, in terms of the eight consciousnesses or adventitious stains, there is no real change since all of them are delusive and illusionlike and thus actually nonexistent in the first place — the only "change" is the realization of exactly this fact. Thus, at any given time on the path, there is never any change in substance or nature (both on the sides of what is to be relinquished and what is to be attained). All that happens is a cognitive change or a change in one's outlook toward oneself and the world.

These two aspects also represent the two reasons why, from the perspective of the path, any change is possible at all. First, what seems to "change" (the adventitious stains) can appear to change precisely because it is merely an unreal and deceiving mental construct in the first place. Secondly, these fictitious mental projections are only superimposed onto, and occur nowhere else than within, the undeceiving ground of true reality, which is their actual nature, just to be revealed. This natural state is noth-

ing other than buddhahood or the dharmakāya, which is not just some indifferent state of lacking some things and seeing others but the most fundamental freedom and insight that can possibly be experienced, which is naturally immensely joyful.

Mind's Three Enlightened Bodies and Four Wisdom Eyes

The nature and the functions of buddhahood as the realization of ultimate reality are described as the four wisdoms, which represent the cognitive processes within the all-encompassing dharmadhātu that result in the two rūpakāyas performing enlightened activity within the dharmakāya. This description once again highlights that buddhahood is not an inactive or inert state. All of this is presented in the Yogācāra format of the fundamental change in terms of the eight consciousnesses on the one side and the four wisdoms or the three kāyas on the other. As explained before, this does not mean any miraculous transformation of something really bad into something excellent. Still, conventionally speaking, it is taught that upon being purified (or realized to be adventitious), the ālaya-consciousness manifests as mirrorlike wisdom, the afflicted mind as the wisdom of equality, the mental consciousness as discriminating wisdom, and the five sense consciousnesses as allaccomplishing wisdom.

Most fundamentally, once the emptiness in these consciousnesses has become pure, the dharmadhātu is completely pure. In other words, the fundamental change of the eight consciousnesses takes place within the basic space of the dharmadhātu while always being inseparable from it.

The set of the four wisdoms plus the pure dharmadhātu and the set of the three kāyas are absolutely equivalent – both describe complete buddhahood with all its qualities. Thus, the pure dharmadhātu as the very nature of buddhahood is equivalent to the svābhāvikakāya. When the stains of apprehender and apprehended in the ālaya-consciousness have been relinquished and thus the dharmadhātu has become mirrorlike wisdom, this is called "dharmakāya." The sambhogakāya refers to the afflicted mind having fundamentally changed and thus having become the wisdom of equality, as well as the mental consciousness having changed and thus having become discriminating wisdom. This is called "enjoyment body" because it provides the great enjoyment of the dharma for bodhisattvas who have entered the bhūmis. The nirmāṇakāya represents the fundamental change of the five sense consciousnesses and all-accomplishing wisdom, demonstrating the twelve deeds of a buddha and bringing sentient beings to spiritual maturity.

In this way, the four wisdoms and the three kāyas are nothing but divisions in terms of the functional aspects of buddhahood, which in itself is the single indivisible purity of the dharmadhātu. Thus, the four wisdoms are the processes that represent the main functional activities of the single nonconceptual wisdom of a buddha, cooperating with and supplementing each other.

- MIRRORLIKE WISDOM is like an all-encompassing TV screen that simply reflects what is there, thus providing the "raw data" to be processed and used.
- DISCRIMINATING WISDOM means to intently look at this screen and clearly see all its distinct data without getting confused or mixing them up.
- THE WISDOM OF EQUALITY refers to being empathic but lacking any kind of judgment about the data seen on the screen, as well as making no difference between seer and seen.
- ALL-ACCOMPLISHING WISDOM represents the resultant impulse to altruistically act upon what is seen.

In other words, nonconceptual buddha wisdom reflects all sentient beings and phenomena within a buddha's field of activity without any bias and personal concern (mirrorlike wisdom). At the same time, this nonconceptual wisdom perceives and clearly

discerns all these beings and phenomena in every minute detail, just as they are, without any personal projections or superimpositions (discriminating wisdom). Nonconceptual wisdom is also completely nondual, which not only refers to its perceptual structure (no subject-object duality), but also to its "affective" structure. It neither takes saṃsāra as something bad to be avoided, nor nirvāṇa as something good to dwell in. It lacks any attachment and aversion to anybody or anything, and instead sees the buddha nature of all beings, which is not different in essence from a buddha's very own state, thus being naturally loving and compassionate toward all those who do not see this (the wisdom of equality). By virtue of all these features, nonconceptual wisdom is the most efficient mental mode of operation possible, which underlies everything that, from the perspective of those to be benefited, appears as a buddha's helpful activity in an effortless, unpremeditated, and uninterrupted way (all-accomplishing wisdom).

The Heart of a Buddha

In the term *tathāgatagarbha* (loosely meaning "buddha nature"), *tathāgata* can be read as "a thus-gone/thus-come one" or "one gone/come to thusness," with the former emphasizing the aspect of the path and the latter the result. *Garbha* literally means

"embryo," "germ," "womb," "the interior or middle of anything," "having in the interior," "containing," or "being filled with." It can also mean "core," "heart," "pith," and "essence." Thus, *tathāgatagarbha* can be understood as either "containing a tathāgata (as one's core, essence, or heart)" or "the core, essence, or heart of a tathāgata." Tathāgatagarbha is often equated with suchness, the dharmadhātu, the disposition (gotra), mind's natural luminosity, as well as emptiness. It is described as the completely nonsubstantial yet naturally luminous nature of the mind that is only adventitiously obscured by illusory stains but completely changeless in its own nature and endowed with all the immeasurable qualities of a buddha, such as limitless wisdom, compassion, and altruistic power. This buddha nature exists in all sentient beings equally but is not recognized by them. Therefore, they experience wandering through the different realms of saṃsāra. Once it has become freed from its adventitious obscurations, it is nothing other than buddhahood.[2]

2 For more details on all these topics, see *Luminous Heart* (Snow Lion Publications 2009, 12–78), *In Praise of Dharmadhātu* (Snow Lion Publications 2007, 57–109), *Gone Beyond. Vol. 1.* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2010, 428–88), *Mining for Wisdom within Delusion* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications 2012, 52–157) and *When the Clouds Part. The Uttaratantra and Its Meditative Tradition as a Bridge between Sūtra and Tantra,* (Boston and London: Snow Lion, 2014, 53–79).

THE CONTENTS OF THE FIVE MAITREYA TEXTS

Maitreya's works are crucial and celebrated because they provide a comprehensive overview of all the essential elements of mahāyāna motivation, view, meditation, conduct, and fruition in a very concise form. Thus, they resemble zip-files that contain all the profound and vast topics of the entire mahāyāna. Being classical Indian works, they are not exactly "light bedtime reading," but together with their commentaries (the extractors of the zip-files) they paint a complete and detailed picture of mahāyāna Buddhism.

1. Abhisamayālaṃkāra

The first of these five texts in their traditional order, *The Ornament of Clear Realization*, is a digest of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines*, blending the message of the prajñāpāramitā sūtras with Yogācāra templates of different levels of

afflictive and cognitive obscurations, various paths as their remedies, and the qualities of buddhahood as their fruition. Thus, the text comments on both emptiness (the object or the explicit meaning) as taught in the prajñāpāramitā sūtras and what happens in the minds of bodhisattvas who familiarize with this emptiness on the paths and bhūmis (the subject or the hidden meaning). Being the most complex text among the five, it combines the profundity of emptiness with the vastness of all paths of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas.

Essentially, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is a giant table of contents for the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines*, while fitting each of its sections into its proper place within the progressive stages of the path to buddhahood. This is reflected in the structure of the text, which consists of eight chapters or topics — "the eight clear realizations" — branching out into seventy points, which are further divided into about 1,200 subpoints. The eight topics are:

1. The knowledge of all aspects (*sarvākārajñatā*)
2. The knowledge of the path (*mārgajñatā*)
3. The all-knowledge (*sarvajñatā*)
4. The full realization of all aspects (*sarvākārābhisaṃbhoda*)

5. The culminating clear realization (*mūrdhābhisamaya*)
6. The serial clear realization (*ānupūrvikābhisamaya*)
7. The clear realization in a single instant (*ekakṣaṇābhisamaya*)
8. The dharmakāya

Among these eight topics, (1)–(3) represent what is to be known and realized on the path to buddhahood; (4)–(7) are the four kinds of trainings or yogic practices as the means to realize (1)–(3); and (8) discusses the fruition of these trainings.

1. The knowledge of all aspects

The knowledge of all aspects refers to a buddha's realization of all aspects, signs, and characteristics of all phenomena being unborn. This means being omniscient about all aspects of the true nature of phenomena and the entire variety of seeming appearances. In itself, the knowledge of all aspects encompasses all the remaining seven topics of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. However, though the knowledge of all aspects is in essence nothing but the fruition of the bodhisattva path, the text presents it in retrospect, that is, through the ten sets of causes on the bodhisattva path that, when practically engaged in, eventually lead to the at-

tainment of this knowledge and then also make up its intrinsic constituents. The ten points of the knowledge of all aspects are:

1. Generating bodhicitta
2. The tenfold instructions on how to practically apply bodhicitta
3. The path of preparation ("the branches conducive to penetration")
4. The foundation of practice (the "disposition" for buddhahood)
5. Tthe focal object or vast scope of mahāyāna practice
6. The aim of this practice
7. Armorlike practice
8. The ninefold practice of engagement
9. The practice of the seventeen equipments
10. The eightfold practice of final deliverance

2. The knowledge of the path

The knowledge of the path means that, while bodhisattvas travel through the five paths of the mahāyāna and in particu-

lar through the ten bhūmis, they realize that all three types of paths — those of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas — are primordially unborn and without any nature of their own. This knowledge also refers to all the activities performed on the bodhisattva path and primarily serves as the remedy for the cognitive obscurations, eventually resulting in the knowledge of all aspects. The eleven points of the knowledge of the path are:

1. The five causes for the knowledge of the path
2. The paths of śrāvakas
3. The path of pratyekabuddhas
4. The mahāyāna path of seeing
5. The function of the mahāyāna path of familiarization
6. The path of familiarization as aspiration
7. The path of familiarization as praise, eulogy, and laudation
8. The path of familiarization as dedication
9. The path of familiarization as rejoicing
10. The path of familiarization in terms of accomplishment
11. The pure path of familiarization

3. The knowledge of entities

Simply put, the knowledge of all entities refers to the full realizations of śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats that serve as the remedy for the afflictive obscurations, being the knowledge that all entities — skandhas, dhātus, and āyatanas — are empty of a personal self. In the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, however, the full scope of the knowledge of entities refers to the perspective of bodhisattvas (and buddhas), which includes their being fully aware of both the antagonistic factors and the remedies in the context of the knowledge of the path. This means that, from the perspective of the bodhisattva path, the above realizations of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas (their knowledge of the path) make up the antagonistic factors discussed here because these realizations still entail apprehending characteristics, while their remedies (the knowledge of the path of bodhisattvas) essentially consist of being free from apprehending any characteristics. Though the ways in which śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas gain their realizations are not to be cultivated by bodhisattvas and buddhas as something that leads to their own specific realizations on the path of the mahāyāna (and in fact are to be relinquished by them), they nevertheless need to know these ways in order to help and teach those on the paths of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. The nine points of the knowledge of entities are:

1. and 2. Dwelling in neither saṃsāra nor nirvāṇa
3. The knowledge of entities of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas being far from prajñāpāramitā
4. The knowledge of entities of bodhisattvas being close to prajñāpāramitā
5. The antagonistic factors (the knowledge of entities of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas)
6. The remedy (the knowledge of entities of bodhisattvas)
7. The trainings in nonreferential meditative equipoise
8. The training in equality
9. The path of seeing of bodhisattvas

4. The complete training in all aspects

The complete training in, or full realization of, all aspects refers to actually engaging in the practice of all the points of the three knowledges (1)–(3). It is the combined familiarization with all entities, all paths, and all aspects, including their respective knowledges, as being without nature in order to realize the three knowledges. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* discusses the one hundred and seventy-three aspects of all three knowledges in terms of

practicing, realizing, and mastering them in their entirety. The eleven points of the complete training in all aspects are:

1. The aspects of the training
2. The nature of the training
3. Fourteen distinct qualities
4. Forty-six flaws
5. The defining characteristics of the training
6. The mahāyāna path of accumulation ("the factors conduciveto liberation")
7. The path of preparation ("the factors conducive to penetration")
8. The persons who cultivate the training
9. The training in realizing saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as equality
10. The training in pure realms
11. The training in skill in means

5) The culminating training

The culminating training, or culminating clear realization, represents the highest forms of familiarization with all entities, all

paths, and all aspects as being without nature, which take place on the paths of preparation, seeing, and familiarization, respectively. In other words, it consists of the various levels of "breakthrough experiences" and their signs that manifest on the progressive paths of bodhisattvas as the results of their cultivating the complete training in all aspects. The eight points of the culminating training are:

1. The culminating training of the level of heat of the path of preparation
2. The culminating training of the level of peak
3. The culminating training of poised readiness
4. The culminating training of the supreme dharma
5. The culminating training of the path of seeing
6. The culminating training of the path of familiarization
7. The culminating training of the final uninterrupted path of the path of familiarization
8. Sixteen mistaken notions in terms of the two realities seeming to be contradictory

6) The serial training

As for the serial training in a general sense, it is a brief overview of the sequential nature of the entire path, emphasizing the progressive stabilization of momentary and culminating insights in terms of all the different aspects of the three knowledges. More specifically, it refers to being able to train in all these aspects together in a very swift sequential manner due to one's great familiarity with them. The thirteen points of the serial training are:

1. to 6. Practicing the six pāramitās
7. Recollecting the Buddha
8. Recollecting virtuous, nonvirtuous, and neutral dharmas
9. Recollecting the saṃgha of irreversible bodhisattvas
10. Recollecting ethics
11. Recollecting giving
12. Recollecting the noble ones who appear as deities
13. The training in realizing the nature of the lack of entity

7. The instantaneous training

The instantaneous training, or the clear realization in a single instant, refers to a bodhisattva's simultaneous realization of all

aspects of the three knowledges in the vajralike samādhi during the last moment of the tenth bhūmi, which is immediately followed by the attainment of buddhahood. This training is the natural culminating outflow of training (6), in particular due to having cultivated all the pāramitās in a sequential manner. In terms of its nature, the instantaneous training cannot be divided, but by way of its general characteristics, isolates, or distinct capacities, it is fourfold:

1. The instantaneous training in terms of nonmaturation
2. The instantaneous training in terms of maturation
3. The instantaneous training in terms of the lack of characteristics
4. The instantaneous training in terms of nonduality

8. The dharmakāya

The last topic discusses the final fruition of the four trainings — buddhahood — as the three (or four) kāyas and their enlightened activity. The primary buddhakāya is the dharmakāya. In terms of its nature and purity, it is referred to as the svābhāvikakāya; in terms of its enjoyment of the dharma of the mahāyāna, as the sāmbhogikakāya; and in terms of its manifesting in all kinds of

pure and impure forms in various realms, as the nairmāṇika-kāya. The four points of this chapter are:

1. The svābhāvikakāya
2. The sāmbhogikakāya
3. The nairmāṇikakāya
4. Enlightened activity

In sum, the teachings on the three knowledges serve to cut through doubts about what is to be known and practiced, with the respectively higher ones among the three knowledges including the lower. They are taught in order to know what is to be made a living experience — that all entities (skandhas, dhātus, and āyanatas), paths, and aspects are unborn. The four trainings are the means to make the three knowledges a living experience, and the dharmakāya is taught as the outcome of these trainings.

2. Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra

Roughly speaking, *The Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras* as the by far longest one of the Maitreya works (864 verses) is a synopsis of all the topics of those mahāyāna sūtras that are not covered by *The Ornament of Clear Realization* and the *Ultimate Contin-*

uum of the Mahāyāna. In brief, the text presents the vast and profound details of bodhisattva motivation, view, meditation, conduct, and fruition.

Twenty-one chapters of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*:

CHAPTER 1 establishes the authenticity of the mahāyāna as being a genuine teaching of the Buddha.

CHAPTER 2 discusses taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha.

CHAPTER 3 explains the nature and the divisions of the disposition (gotra) from a Yogācāra point of view (disposition meaning "roots of virtue").

CHAPTER 4 treats the characteristics, types, and greatness of generating bodhicitta.

CHAPTER 5 discusses the characteristics of the practice of bodhisattvas in a general way.

CHAPTER 6 sixth explains the characteristics of true reality, its nature of identitylessness, and how bodhisattvas enter the direct realization of true reality.

CHAPTER 7 speaks about the various powers of bodhisattvas.

CHAPTER 8 presents the signs of the maturity of bodhisattvas.

CHAPTER 9 discusses buddha awakening or omniscience in detail through its characteristics, the notion of fundamental change, its activity, the profundity and perfection of the uncontaminated dharmadhātu, its many forms of mastery through the fundamental change of the eight consciousnesses, the three buddhakāyas, the four buddha wisdoms and their causes, the manner of attaining buddhahood, and the unity of the enlightened activity of all buddhas.

CHAPTER 10 explains the different types of confidence (or faith), its obscurations, its benefits, and its fruitions.

CHAPTER 11 is about investigating the dharma (sūtra, vinaya, and abhidharma) in various ways through investigating the focal object (the dharma itself), the mental engagement, true reality, the illusionlike nature of phenomena, knowable objects, afflicted and purified phenomena, mere cognizance, characteristics, liberation, the lack of nature, the single yāna, and nourishing the dharmadhātu. This chapter also discusses the three natures and the results of the fundamental change of the ālaya-consciousness and the afflicted mind.

CHAPTER 12 deals with teaching the dharma in terms of motivation, usefulness and uselessness, perfection of teaching, differentiation of various intentions and flexible intentions of the teachings, and the benefits.

CHAPTER 13 explains the practice of bodhisattvas in terms of its distinctions, its types, its scope of awareness, liberation from the afflictions through the afflictions themselves, relinquishing the mindsets of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, overcoming fear of phenomena's lack of nature and natural purity, overcoming the concern that bodhisattvas commit wrongdoings driven by desire, and the purification of the three spheres (agent, object, and action).

CHAPTER 14 on instructions and directions refers to the culmination of the training of bodhisattvas, that is, seeking for instructions and directions, as well as sharing them with others, in order to bring the paths of seeing and familiarization to their culmination and purify them.

CHAPTER 15 briefly discusses bodhisattva activity in its being associated with skillful means.

CHAPTER 16 presents the six pāramitās in terms of their number, characteristics, order, hermeneutical etymologies, quali-

ties of their repeated practice, analysis, antagonistic factors, qualities, mutual determination, and the four means to attract disciples.

CHAPTER 17 on worship, service, and the immeasurables explains the worship of the Buddha, the services to one's spiritual friend, and the four immeasurables (love, compassion, joy, and equanimity) in terms of their objects, divisions, fruitions, and benefits.

CHAPTER 18 gives a detailed presentation of the thirty-seven factors concordant with awakening in seven sets: (1) the four foundations of mindfulness, (2) the four correct efforts, (3) the four limbs of miraculous powers, (4) the five faculties, (5) the five powers, (6) the seven branches of awakening, and (7) the eightfold path of the noble ones.

CHAPTER 19 discusses the many wondrous qualities of bodhisattvas that they use in an impartial manner in order to benefit and guide sentient beings through the six pāramitās and so on. It also distinguishes between fake and genuine bodhisattva qualities and explains how bodhisattvas investigate phenomena, fully comprehend true reality, practice the four immeasurables, and receive the prophecy of buddhahood. Furthermore, it speaks

about the fruition of the teachings, the greatness of the mahāyāna, and what characterizes a true bodhisattva.

CHAPTERS 20–21 on being established in conduct present the signs of being a bodhisattva, the roles of householder and mendicant, the superior intention of bodhisattvas, how they take care of sentient beings, and how they are reborn. These chapters also discuss the eleven bhūmis, what bodhisattvas train in on them, what they achieve on them, the signs on them, their benefit, and their hermeneutical etymologies. Chapter 21 consists of verses of praise for the many qualities of a buddha, such as omniscient wisdom, compassion, supernatural knowledges, the major and minor marks, the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, the eighteen unique qualities, and the perfection of the pāramitās.

3. Madhyāntavibhāga

The Distinction Between the Middle and Extremes (109 verses plus 3 additional ones from Vasubandhu's commentary) explains the basic principles as well as the vast paths of all three yānas, emphasizing the Yogācāra view and the distinctive features of the mahāyāna. In particular, in the first and fifth chapters, the text presents the profound Yogācāra Middle Way through clearly and finely differentiating what does not exist ultimately and what

does exist on the levels of relative and ultimate reality, as well as through eliminating all kinds of dualistic extremes.

Five chapters of the *Madhyāntavibhāga:*

CHAPTER 1 on the characteristics discusses the characteristics of afflicted phenomena (consisting throughout of false imagination or mental projections) in terms of the three natures and how these afflicted phenomena arise. What is purified (emptiness) is taught through its characteristics (the lack of duality, the very nature of the lack of duality, being neither existent nor nonexistent, and being neither one nor different), its synonyms (such as suchness and dharmadhātu), its divisions (being stained and stainless or consisting of the sixteen emptinesses), and the rationale for its being afflicted and purified.

CHAPTER 2 on the obscurations teaches all afflictive and cognitive obscurations, which consist of (1) the nine obscurations that prevent liberation (the afflictive obscurations), (2) the thirty obscurations that inhibit the ten qualities, and (3) the obscurations that inhibit the three remedies. The latter obscurations consist of (a) the obscurations of the thirty-seven factors concordant with awakening, (b) the obscurations of the ten pāramitās, and (c) the obscurations of the ten bhūmis.

CHAPTER 3 on true reality is a detailed presentation of the three natures in terms of their characteristics and their relationship with the four realities of the noble ones (suffering, its origin, cessation, and the path), coarse seeming reality, subtle ultimate reality, common consensus, purity, the five dharmas as a summary of the three natures, the seven types of suchness as their further division, and the ten topics of expertise. The ten topics of expertise are (1) the skandhas, (2) the dhātus, (3) the āyatanas, (4) dependent origination, (5) what is and what is not the case, (6) the faculties, (7) time, (8) the realities, (9) the yānas, and (10) conditioned and unconditioned phenomena. These ten serve as the respective antidotes for ten kinds of views about a self: believing that the self is (1) singular, (2) a cause, (3) the experiencer, (4) a creator or agent, (5) in control, (6) a sovereign, (7) permanent, (8) the basis of afflicted and purified phenomena, (9) the one who engages in yoga (meditation for liberation), and (10) that which is bound and liberated.

CHAPTER 4 discusses the path as the remedy for the obscurations in Chapter Two in terms of its (1) features, (2) phases, and (3) fruitions. (1) The features of the path consist of the thirty-seven factors concordant with awakening: the four foundations of mindfulness, the four correct efforts, and the four limbs of miraculous powers on the path of accumulation, the five

faculties and the five powers on the path of preparation, the seven branches of awakening on the path of seeing, and the eightfold path of the noble ones on the path of familiarization. The text also explains how these factors, which are common to all three yānas, are superior in bodhisattvas in terms of their focus, mental engagement, and attainment. (2) The phases of the path from a beginner up through the tenth bhūmi are described as nine and as three (impure, both impure and pure, and completely pure). (3) The fruitions of the path are explained in a general way through the classical five results of the abhidharma and, more specifically from the perspective of the path, as ten resultant stages.

CHAPTER 5 on the unsurpassable yāna (the mahāyāna) explains its unsurpassable character through its (1) practice, (2) focus, and (3) true accomplishment.

UNSURPASSABLE PRACTICE is discussed as (a) the nature and functions of the ten pāramitās in terms of their being genuine in twelve ways. (b) Through the mental engagement that consists of the three prajñās arising from studying, reflecting, and meditating, bodhisattvas train in the ten dharma activities of writing, venerating, giving, listening, reading, memorizing, explaining, reciting, reflecting, and meditating.

(c) The practice of the factors that concord with true reality consists of undistracted calm abiding and unmistaken superior insight. Superior insight investigates syllables, how meanings derive from them, how conceptual mental engagement originates, how not to stray into either existence or nonexistence, specific characteristics and general characteristics, impurity and purity, their adventitiousness with regard to the naturally pure dharmadhātu, as well as fearlessness and lack of arrogance with regard to ultimately nonexistent phenomena. This is followed by an alternative presentation of superior insight through the ten vajra words taken from Vasubandhu's commentary. (d) The middle way free from all dualistic extremes is explained by way of eliminating two sets of seven pairs of mistaken dualistic views or thoughts (being one or different, existent or nonexistent, and so on). (e)–(f) The points of difference and nondifference refer to specific pāramitās being predominantly practiced on each one of the ten bhūmis (such as generosity on the first bhūmi) and the general practice of all pāramitās on all bhūmis equally.

THE TWELVEFOLD UNSURPASSABLE FOCUS consists of a fourfold focus in terms of its nature and an eightfold focus in terms of the stages of the path. In terms of its nature, bodhisattvas focus on (a) the entire vast diversity of the

teachings of the buddha as well as on (b) their profound ultimate nature (suchness). (c) Their object of focus consists of the ten pāramitās and (d) the way in which they focus on them is to make them truly transcendent through realizing the lack of the three spheres (agent, object, and action). In terms of the path, they focus on (e)–(g) study, reflection, meditation on the paths of accumulation and preparation, (h) the supreme realization that is the direct perception of the dharmadhātu on the path of seeing, (i) the full unfolding of that realization on the second to the seventh bhūmis, (j) the lack of characteristics on the seventh bhūmi, (k) natural resting on the eighth bhūmi, and (l) threefold eminence — perfect wisdom, activity, and purity — on the ninth, tenth, and eleventh bhūmis, respectively.

THE TENFOLD UNSURPASSABLE TRUE ACCOMPLISHMENT consists of (a) the complete presence of the conditions for the awakening of the mahāyāna disposition, (b) not abandoning the mahāyāna under any cirumstances, (c) not being distracted by the mindsets of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, (d) the perfection of the ten pāramitās, (e) the arising of truly transcendent qualities on the first bhūmi, (f) the maturation of sentient beings on the second through seventh bhūmis, (g) the cultivation of buddha realms on the eighth bhūmi, (h) receiving

the prophecy about one's future attainment of buddhahood, (i) the complete relinquishment of both afflictive and cognitive obscurations, and (j) the uninterrupted manifestation of the three kāyas.

4. Dharmadharmatāvibhāga

The Distinction Between Phenomena and Their Nature is a short text (300 lines) that discusses the difference between saṃsāric confusion and the liberating power of nonconceptual wisdom — the heart essence of all profound sūtras. It thus enables us to discriminate ignorance and its manifestations from wisdom as the motor of the path to liberation.

The introductory section of the text (lines 1–35 in the versified version) first provides the distinction and the defining characteristics of phenomena and the nature of phenomena. Second (lines 24–31), "the rationale" for both the ultimate nonexistence of phenomena and their seeming appearance is that both these elements are necessary in order to account for mistakenness and unmistakenness as well as affliction and purification. Third (lines 32–35), when investigated, phenomena and their nature are neither the same nor different.

The detailed explanation of phenomena (lines 36–87) contains six points, with points (1)–(3) (lines 36–45) repeating the three points of the introduction. Points (4) and (5) (lines 46–79) consist of the twofold "matrix of phenomena" or the twofold manner in which phenomena manifest — the world as the environment and the sentient beings that live in it. The world as the surroundings of sentient beings is experienced as something in common among them. As for sentient beings, certain elements (such as behaviors, qualities, and faults) are also experienced in common, while others (such as happiness, suffering, karma, bondage, and liberation) are strictly individual "private" experiences. In general, however, both the world and the beings in it consist of nothing but a multitude of individual mind streams. That certain groups of beings (such as humans) experience a seemingly common external world is only due to the fact of the mind streams of these beings containing similar imprints that appear to each one of them individually as their own projections of a world, but are mistaken by all of them for constituting an actual shared environment outside of their individual mind streams. The text also makes it clear that the minds of others can never be a direct object of another mind (only a reflection in that other mind), be it in ordinary states of mind or in meditation. Thus, the text (and the Yogācāra system in general) maintains that whatever is perceived is nothing but appearances in individual mind streams, without thereby falling

into the extreme of solipsism. Point (6) (lines 80–87) discusses "the nonexistence of the appearance of apprehender and apprehended." What appear as objects do not exist externally apart from mind as the perceiver, in which they appear. Consequently, what appear as the apprehenders of such objects do not exist either. Nevertheless, it is by virtue of beginningless latent tendencies that the seeming duality of apprehender and apprehended keeps appearing to ordinary beings.

The detailed explanation of the nature of phenomena (88–300) makes up the bulk of the text (70%) and has six points.

1. Point (lines 88–94) — the defining characteristic — was already covered in the introduction above.

2. "The matrix of the nature of phenomena" (lines 95–96), or where the nature of phenomena is found, consists of all phenomena as well as the Buddha's teachings that explain this nature.

3. "Penetration" (lines 97–100) refers to the path of preparation of properly engaging in the mahāyāna scriptures through conceptual study, reflection, and meditation.

4. "Contact" (lines 101–4) represents the path of seeing, on which the nature of phenomena is realized directly in a nonconceptual manner for the first time.

5. “Recollection” (lines 105–8) is the path of familiarizing with what was seen on the path of seeing, thus gradually eliminating all afflictive and cognitive obscurations.

6. “The arrival at the true nature of the nature of phenomena” (lines 109– 300) is the main subject of the entire text. It is explained as “the fundamental change” in ten points, which represents the most detailed discussion of this topic in Buddhist literature.

(a) “The nature” of the fundamental change (lines 121–25) refers to the direct appearance of suchness without any adventitious stains whatsoever.

(b) The threefold “substance” or “entity” of the fundamental change (lines 126–33), that is, what changes into suchness, consists of mind appearing as the outer world, mind appearing as sentient beings, and the dharmadhātu as found in the sūtras all having changed into suchness, which respectively result in the manifestation of pure buddha realms and the realization of qualities, the ability to teach the profound and vast dharma, and the direct perception of everything that is to be known.

(c) “The persons” who undergo this fundamental change (lines 134–39) are twofold — the foundation that is the such-

ness of the mind streams of buddhas and bodhisattvas changes completely so that it is free from all obscurations, while the fundamental changes of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are only partial.

(d) "The distinctive features" of the fundamental change (lines 140–46) are the attainment of the dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya with their respective qualities and activities.

(e) "The prerequisites" for the fundamental change (lines 147–51) consist of previous aspiration prayers, the mahāyāna teachings as the focal object, and the training on the ten bhūmis.

(f) The sixth point — nonconceptual wisdom as "the foundation" of the fundamental change (lines 152–239) — is the main topic in the discussion of the fundamental change and may be considered the heart of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*. This nonconceptual wisdom is explained in six points, starting with (1) its "focal objects" (lines 159–64) — the mahāyāna teachings, aspiring for them, gaining certainty about them, and completing the accumulations of merit and wisdom. (2) "The relinquishment of characteristics" (lines 165–72) consists of abandoning the four progressively more subtle conceptions about antagonistic factors, their remedies, suchness, and realization (as explained in detail in the *Avi-*

kalpapraveśadhāraṇī). (3) The fourfold "correct yogic practice" to approach nonconceptual wisdom (lines 173– 78) consists of the four well-known mahāyāna prayogas of observing all phenomena as being nothing other than mind, not observing them as external objects, not observing the observer or apprehender of such objects either, and observing that the duality of apprehender and apprehended is actually unobservable. (4) "The defining characteristics" of nonconceptual wisdom (lines 179–97) are threefold. The first characteristic (abiding) means that nonconceptual wisdom rests in the nondual and inexpressible nature of phenomena. The second characteristic (nonappearance) means that duality, designations, sense faculties, objects, cognizance, and the outer world do not appear for nonconceptual wisdom. The third characteristic (appearance) means that all phenomena appear equal to space during meditative equipoise and appear like illusions during subsequent attainment. (5) "The benefit of nonconceptual wisdom" (lines 198–202) is the attainment of the dharmakāya, supreme bliss, mastery over seeing the suchness and the variety of all knowable objects, and mastery over the manifold ways of teaching as is appropriate fordifferent beings. (6) "The thorough knowledge of nonconceptual wisdom" (lines 203–39) is fourfold. (a) "The knowledge about its being a remedy" (lines 209–15) means that nonconceptual wisdom remedies the fivefold clinging to what

is nonexistent — clinging to phenomena, persons, change (the arising and ceasing of phenomena), any difference between phenomena and the nature of phenomena, and denying even the imputed existence of phenomena and persons. (b) "The thorough knowledge of the defining characteristic" (lines 216–20) of nonconceptual wisdom refers to the exclusion of five misconceptions about what nonconceptual wisdom is—the total absence of any mental engagement, mundane meditative states, a complete lack of conceptions (such as when sleeping or fainting), matter, or just thinking of nonconceptuality. (c) "The knowledge of its distinctive features" (lines 221–26) refers to its five features of being nonconceptual, not being limited in its scope of realizing all specific and general characteristics of all knowable objects, not abiding in saṃsāra or nirvāṇa, remaining even in the nirvāṇa without any remainder of the skandhas, and being unsurpassable. (d) "The knowledge of its functions" (lines 227–39) refers to its five functions of distancing itself from conceptions, granting unsurpassable bliss, freeing from the afflictive and cognitive obscurations, engaging in all aspects of knowable objects, and, finally, purifying buddha realms, maturing sentient beings, and granting omniscience.

(g) The seventh among the ten points of the fundamental change — "the mental engagement" (lines 240–68) — means

to realize that, by virtue of being ignorant about suchness, the delusive appearance of actually nonexistent false imagination and duality out of the ālaya-consciousness prevents the appearance of the nature of phenomena, and that the nature of phenomena appears once false imagination and duality cease to appear. The manner of approaching such realization consists of the fourfold yogic practice as explained above.

(h) "The trainings" to accomplish the fundamental change (lines 269–85) consist of the level of engagement through aspiration (the path of preparation), the direct realization on the first bhūmi (the path of seeing), the remaining six impure and three pure bhūmis (the path of familiarization), and the effortless and uninterrupted enlightened activity of a buddha (the path of nonlearning).

(i)–(j) The last two points of the fundamental change — "the shortcomings of there being no fundamental change" and "the benefits of there being this fundamental change" (lines 286–96) — are fourfold each, with the benefits being the reverse of the shortcomings. As for the shortcomings, if there were no fundamental change, there would be no support for the afflictions not operating, no support for engaging in the path, no basis for designating those persons who have passed into nir-

vāṇa, and no basis for designating the differences between the realizations of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas.

The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* concludes by providing examples (lines 297–300) for both the fleeting nature of the adventitious stains (like illusions, dreams, and so on) and the immutability of the nature of phenomena — suchness or mind's natural luminosity — as the ever-unchanging foundation of the fundamental change that is only revealed once the stains have been eliminated (like space, gold, and water).

5. Ratnagotravibhāga (Mahāyānottaratantra)

The Ultimate Continuum of the Mahāyāna (405 verses) represents a general commentary on all buddha-nature sūtras and represents a bridge between sūtra and tantra. It discusses the true nature of our mind as the very basis of everything on the Buddhist path.

THE UTTARATANTRA'S FIRST CHAPTER begins with a brief introduction of its seven main topics, called "vajra points" (I.1–3). This is followed by descriptions of the first three of these points — the jewels of the Buddha, the dharma, and the saṃgha (I.4–22) — and an overview of the inconceivability of the last four vajra points (I.23–26).

Buddha nature or the tathāgatagarbha (vajra point 4) — the central subject of the text — is primarily discussed by way of three topics: (a) three reasons for all beings possessing buddha nature (I.27–28), (b) a presentation in ten points (tathāgatagarbha's nature, cause, fruition, function, endowment, manifestation, phases, all-pervasiveness, changelessness, and inseparability of qualities; I.29–95ab), and (c) nine examples for buddha nature being covered but unaltered by adventitious stains (I.95cd–152). The conclusion of this section on buddha nature is its being realized through faith or confidence (I.153), its being empty of adventitious stains but not empty of its inseparable qualities (I.154–55), and the purpose of its being taught, which also removes qualms about other sūtras teaching that all phenomena are emptiness (I.156–67).

CHAPTER 2 on buddha awakening (vajra point 5) starts by listing the eight points through which this topic is discussed (II.1–2), followed by their detailed explanation: awakening's nature and cause (II.3–7), fruition (II.8–17), function (II.18–28), endowment (II.29–37), manifestation (II.38–61), permanence (II.62–68), and inconceivability (II.69–73).

CHAPTER 3 on the qualities of awakening (vajra point 6) briefly introduces the thirty-two qualities of freedom belonging to the dharmakāya and the thirty-two qualities of maturation be-

longing to the rūpakāyas (III.1–3). This is followed by a verse with an example for each one of the three sets of the qualities of freedom: the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen unique buddha qualities (III.4), which are then explained in detail (III.5–7, 8–10, and 11–16, respectively). Next, there is a list of the thirty-two qualities of maturation (III.17–26), which consist of the major marks of a buddha. The chapter concludes with a summary of all sixty-four qualities (III.27–39).

CHAPTER 4 on enlightened activity (vajra point 7) opens with two verses about this activity's main features of being effortless and uninterrupted (IV.1–2). Buddha activity is explained in more detail through six points: deliverance (the ten bhūmis), their cause (the two accumulations), the result of that (awakening), those who take hold of it (bodhisattvas), its obscurations (afflictions and their latent tendencies), and the condition for overcoming them (a buddha's compassion) (IV.3-12). Then, the features of enlightened activity are illustrated through nine examples and their summary (IV.13–88). Finally, it is explained how enlightened activity is partially similar and yet superior to each one of these examples (IV.89–98).

CHAPTER 5 on the benefit of the teaching on the tathāgata heart first demonstrates how the merit of even just hearing about

it, let alone studying and practicing it, is superior to generosity, discipline, and dhyāna (V.1–15). This is followed by four verses that describe on which basis the *Uttaratantra* was explained, what caused its composition, how it was explained, and what its characteristics are (V.16–19). Then, there are several verses on the means of protecting oneself from becoming deprived of the dharma, as well as on the causes and results of deviating from the dharma (V.20–24). The next verse is the dedication of the merit attained by the author through this teaching (V.25). The last three stanzas are a summary of the meaning of the previous ten verses (V.26–28).

In sum

The five Maitreya texts are mainly based on prajñāpāramitā (Madhyamaka), the classical teachings of Yogācāra, and the teachings on buddha nature. In that way, they cover the three main streams of Indian mahāyāna Buddhism. Different Tibetan masters have voiced all kinds of opinions about the Maitreya texts representing the views of certain Buddhist schools, such as Mind-Only, Yogācāra, Madhyamaka, or Shentong.[3] However, as far as one's practice goes, Thrangu Rinpoche says, it is neces-

3 For an overview of Tibetan views on the nature and scope of these texts, see *Mining for Wisdom within Delusion* (Snow Lion Publications 2012, 21–46)

sary to determine — even in the Madhyamaka view — that appearances are nothing but mind, to resolve that mind is empty, and to realize mind's emptiness in meditation. According to the so-called "Mind-Only School," that mind is ultimately existent, but nothing like that is said anywhere in the Maitreya texts. So from that point of view, it can be said that all five texts belong to Madhyamaka in general. In particular, *The Distinction Between Phenomena and Their Nature* and *The Ultimate Continuum* present the view of the Shentong Madhyamaka School and are also considered as foundations for Mahāmudrā.

CHART:

THE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE OF THE EIGHT CONSCIOUSNESSES INTO THE FOUR WISDOMS AND THE THREE (FOUR) KĀYAS

Consciousness	Wisdom	Kāya	Bhūmi of change
1 eye consciousness 2 ear consciousness 3 nose consciousness 4 tongue consciousness 5 body consciousness	All-accomplishing wisdom	Nirmāṇakāya	1
6 mental consciousness	Discriminating wisdom	Samboghakāya	8
7 afflicted mind	Wisdom of equality		8
8 ālaya-consciousness	Mirrorlike wisdom	Dharmakāya	10

DHARMADHĀTU (svābhāvikakāya)

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