

Dzogchen Khenpo Choga Rinpoche's Oral Explanations of Khenpo Kunpal's Commentary on Shantideva's Bodhisattvacaryavatara (Entering into the Conduct of the Bodhisattva)

Notes:

"Text section"-s refer to Khenpo Kunpal's commentary on the BCA.

"BCA" refers to the Bodhisattvacaryavatara, by Shantideva.

The text sections relating directly to the individual stanzas of the BCA, which are the subject matter of Dharma Path classes, begin on "Text section 158" (P. 117) below.

Dzogchen Khenpo Choga's Oral Explanations, starting with "Text section 37" below are explanations both of the original BCA text, and also of Khenpo Kunpal's own commentary on this text.

For more background on these teachings, see also Dzogchen Khenpo Choga's "Introduction to the Dharma Path" available online at the Dzogchen Lineage website at: <http://www.dzogchenlineage.org/bca.html#intro>

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Text section 37:

This *word-by-word commentary* on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara was written by Khenpo Kunzang Palden, also known as Khenpo Kunpal, according to the teachings he received over a six-month period from his root guru, Dza Paltrul Rinpoche, who is here referred to as the *Manjugosha-like teacher*. These precious teachings are titled *Drops of Nectar*. The phrase *personal statement* connotes that Khenpo Kunpal received in person the oral instructions, which are themselves definitive statements, directly from Paltrul Rinpoche.

Text sections 38-44:

In his preface Khenpo Kunpal includes his declaration of respect, his pledge to compose the commentary, and a foreword. Text sections 38-42 cover the declaration of respect, text section 43 is the pledge to compose this commentary, and text section 44 is a short foreword.

Text sections 45-133 introduce the prefatory topics. The actual commentary begins at text section 134. In his declaration of respect, Khenpo Kunpal pays homage to his meditation deity and to the lineage of masters through whom the Buddhist teachings came down to him. This lineage begins with Buddha Shakyamuni, continuing on through the great bodhisattvas such as Maitreya, Manjugo Sha, the sixteen elders, the seven heirs to the doctrine, the great panditas and siddhas of India, the Tibetan translators, and all the great masters of the Old and New Translation Schools of Tibetan Buddhism, down to Khenpo Kunpal's root guru, Paltrul Rinpoche.

When the scholars of India and Tibet composed a treatise or a commentary they would always start out with lines of homage to their favored deity-form of the Buddha, called the *declaration of respect*. The purpose of this was to invoke the blessing of the Buddha and to dispel any obstacles that might hinder their composition. 'Declaration of respect' means 'to make respectful praises' or 'to supplicate the objects of offering', as well as meaning 'to offer prostrations'.

Both Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism emphasize the importance of this direct link between devotion to one's root guru, the downpour of the Buddha's blessings, and the dawn of realization within one's own mind-stream.

While the sutra tradition considers the guru to be similar to the Buddha, the tantric tradition considers the guru to be the actual Buddha in person. The guru is regarded as the root of blessings. If the blessings of the guru do not enter into one's mind, the mind's full potential can never be actualized.

Respect is declared out of the intent to fully actualize the mind's potential. If you compose a book, teach the Dharma, enter into a debate or into your private meditation, you must always begin by bringing the blessings of your gurus down upon you through a supplication which opens up your heart and mind. This will saturate your mind-stream with blessings and so lead you to realization.

Khenpo Kunpal first pays homage in Sanskrit to his chosen meditation deity, the

bodhisattva Manjushri, whom Khenpo Kunpal, due to his pure perception and devotion, views as identical to his root guru, Paltrul Rinpoche. 'Declaration of respect' also has the connotation of 'declaring one's respect to sublime objects'. 'Sublime objects', objects worthy of refuge, refers, in the context of a Mahayana treatise such as this book, to the three jewels: the jewel of the Buddha, the jewel of the Dharma, and the jewel of the Sangha. The Mahayana Sangha refers particularly to the bodhisattvas who dwell on the bodhisattva levels of realization, the ten bhumis.

When Khenpo Kunpal says *homage to the teacher Manjushri*, he pays respect to Manjushri with his body, speech, and mind. In doing so, he simultaneously acknowledges the Buddha as his teacher, the Dharma as his path, and the Sangha as his companions along the path. This is possible since all three jewels are embodied within the form of the teacher Manjushri. This declaration of respect is an expression of the faith, devotion, conviction, and certainty which Khenpo Kunpal places in the Buddha Dharma, in his meditation deity, and in his sublime teacher, Paltrul Rinpoche.

Declaring one's respect before composing a treatise renders it beneficial for manifold sentient beings. If future students of the Dharma find such a treatise, they will have faith in it, as they will be able to immediately recognize it as a Buddhist textbook. The declaration will inspire their faith and trust in the treatise. If the author did not declare his respect to the Buddhas at the very beginning of his treatise, future readers might have cause to doubt its validity.

A 'declaration of respect' is not the same thing as a 'presenting of offerings'. The 'declaration of respect' has several purposes: to cause any possible obstacles or adversities which might arise in the course of composing the treatise to subside, as well as to enable the author to successfully complete his composition free of obstacles in the beginning, during the middle, or at the end of the writing process. Beginning the treatise with such a declaration will inspire faith and trust in the reader and will sow an important seed of liberation in the reader's mind-stream.

Text section 38:

Namo means 'homage' in the Sanskrit language. *Guru* means 'master' or 'teacher'. *Manjushri* is the name of the bodhisattva who particularly embodies the 274 Khenpo Choga's Oral Explanations quality of knowledge and wisdom. *Jnana* means 'wisdom' or 'pristine cognition', and *sattva* means 'being'.

Khenpo Kunpal next declares his respect in verses to the lineage masters through whom the Buddhist teachings in general, and the explanations of the Bodhisattvacaryavatara in particular, came down to him.

Text section 39:

Buddha Shakyamuni, here saluted as *the Lion of the Shakyas*, is the root or source of the lineage. In our present cycle of time known as the *Fortunate Aeon*, it is said that one thousand Buddhas will appear. Buddha Shakyamuni is the fourth Buddha among these and is, therefore, called the 'Fourth Guide'

Hinayana and Mahayana cosmology both teach that myriads of world systems¹²⁶⁸ develop over immeasurable time-spans and that they follow periodic cycles of evolution and degeneration. The time-span it takes for one world system to develop, abide, be destroyed, and then to remain in a state of emptiness after its destruction is what is known as 'one great aeon', or 'one great kalpa' in Sanskrit.

These four stages of 'one great aeon' are also each individually regarded as aeons: the 'aeon of development', the 'aeon of abiding', the 'aeon of destruction', and the 'aeon of emptiness'. The duration of each of these four aeons is further broken down into twenty 'intermediate cycles'. Consequently, 'one great aeon' consists of eighty intermediate cycles'.

The twenty intermediate cycles of an aeon of abiding unfold according to three phases: the initial phase, the intermediate phase, and the final phase.

The initial phase: At the beginning, human life is measureless. The succession of birth within an aeon of abiding begins with birth as a god of 'Clear Light'. Here, in Buddhist cosmology, the arrival at a human birth in our world comes about through a process of involution, through a degeneration from the superior state of birth in the realm of the gods.

Slowly, due to craving, the stature of beings begins to deteriorate as their lifespan decreases from being measureless to being eighty thousand years until it is gradually reduced to a mere ten years.

This process of degeneration finally concludes with three periods of famine, plague, and war. Specifically, when the lifespan of beings is thirty years, they will experience a period of famine lasting for seven years, seven months and seven days. When the lifespan of beings is twenty years, there will be a period of plague lasting seven

months and seven days.

Finally, when the lifespan of beings has degenerated to a mere ten years, beings will experience a period of weapons and war lasting seven days. This entire sequence during which the lifespan of beings gradually decreases from measureless time down to a mere ten years is termed 'the initial lengthy decline', and is counted as 'one intermediate cycle'

The intermediate phase: The intermediate phase consists of 'the eighteen cycles of ascent and decline', also known as 'the eighteen intermediate cycles'. In this context, 'one intermediate cycle' refers to the phases of both ascent and decline. In other words, one 'intermediate cycle' is the time required for the lifespan of beings to rise from ten years all the way up to eighty thousand years, and then to decline from eighty thousand years all the way back down to ten years. Eighteen of such consecutive periods are referred to as 'the eighteen intermediate cycles'. Each of these cycles concludes at its nadir with the abovementioned periods of famine, plague, and war.

The final phase: Finally, after eighteen intermediate cycles, the lifespan of beings will again increase from ten years all the way up to measureless. This period is called 'the final lengthy ascent'.

Taken together, these three phases collectively comprise the 'twenty intermediate cycles'. Because of the slower pace during the ascent and decline at the beginning and end of the aeon, this lengthy initial decline and the lengthy final ascent are each counted independently as one intermediate cycle. During these twenty cycles of an aeon of abiding, the lifespans, body sizes, qualities, and degree of wealth of beings undergo cyclical fluctuations.

In general, a Buddha only appears during an aeon of abiding, and further, during such an aeon only appears when the lifespan and merit of beings is decreasing and beings are in a pitiable state. Moreover, in order for a Buddha to appear among beings, they must have collectively accumulated sufficient roots of virtue. The appearance of a Buddha occurs due to the auspicious conjunction of a Buddha's powerful aspirations with the aspirations and good karma of sentient beings.

A Buddha is one who has perfected his aspirations as well as having perfected the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. Through the power of his aspirations, a Buddha chooses a particular era in which to appear as a Buddha. In particular, a Buddha will appear at a time when the lifespan and the merit of sentient beings is decreasing, because at such a time beings are more inclined toward renunciation than in periods

when their merit, lifespan, and wealth are increasing. An aeon in which no Buddha appears is known as a 'dark aeon', and an aeon in which a Buddha appears is called a 'bright aeon'. There are said to be many 'dark aeons' and only very few 'bright aeons'.

Furthermore, it is a law of nature that in any given world system only one single perfectly enlightened Buddha, a supreme nirmanakaya, appears at a time. The sphere of activity of one perfectly enlightened Buddha is a cosmos consisting of a billion world systems in which he manifests countless emanations to benefit beings.¹²⁷⁰ Each of the one thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon appears when the lifespan of beings is declining from eighty thousand years down to one hundred years. No Buddha ever manifests when the lifespan of beings is over eighty thousand years or less than one hundred. This rule only applies to our world system during the Fortunate Aeon. In other world systems and in other aeons, Buddhas appear at various times.

The scriptures maintain two different versions in regard to the arising of Buddhas during the Fortunate Aeon. According to the Karunapundarika-sutra, 1005 Buddhas will appear; according to the Tathagatacintya-guhya-nirde Sha-sutra, 1000 Buddhas will appear. Now we will give a summary of the story of how the one thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon will appear, according to the Tathagatacintya-guhya-nirde Shasutra:

In former times, during the aeon known as 'Perfectly Ornamented', there appeared a Buddha named Ananta-gunananaratnavyaharaja. At that time, a universal monarch by the name of Dhrtarashtra, who ruled over four continents, had seven hundred thousand queens who gave him one thousand sons. Finally, his queens ¹²⁷⁰ One single world system includes Mount Sumeru, sun and moon, the four continents, the worlds of the gods of desire and the world of Brahma. The sum of 'a thousand single world systems' is called 'the first order of a thousand world systems' or 'the lesser order of a thousand world systems', which means 1.000 to the power of one.

One thousand 'lesser order of a thousand world systems' constitute 'the middle order of a thousand world systems' or 'the second order of a thousand world systems' which means a thousand to the power of two or one million separate world systems.

One thousand 'middle order of a thousand world systems' make 'the large order of a thousand world systems' or 'the third order of a thousand world systems', also called 'the third order, the larger order of one thousand world systems, which means a thousand to the power of three or one billion separate word systems—a trichilocosm. For further details see *Buddhist Cosmology, Illuminator, Myriad Worlds; and Prince Jin-Gim's Textbook*.

Anindita and Anupama each bore him a son, who were known as Dharmacetas and Dharmamati. Once, a unique thought arose in the mind of the universal monarch, "All my sons, the princes, are singularly inclined toward enlightenment. I must find out which of them will be the first to attain enlightenment." Accordingly, he wrote down the names of all the princes, deposited the name cards in an urn, and made extensive offerings for seven days. When the name cards were drawn, the name of Prince Vishuddhamati was the first to appear, and he received the prediction that he would become the Buddha Krakucchanda. Prince Vijayasana was to become the Buddha Kanakamuni; Prince Shantendriya was to become Buddha Kashyapa; Prince Savarthasiddha was to become Buddha Shakyamuni; Prince Mekhalin was to become Buddha Maitreya, etc.

The last of the one thousand sons was Anantamati. He made a special aspiration that the lifespans and activities of all the previous nine hundred ninety-nine Buddhas would be unified within him. Thus, the last of the one thousand Buddhas was predicted to be known as Buddha Rocana, meaning 'Buddha Aspiration'. Due to the power of this aspiration he will be the only Buddha in this Fortunate Aeon whose lifespan will be immeasurable.

From among the last two sons, Dharmacetas and Dharmamati, Dharmacetas made the aspiration to receive all the teachings of the one thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon and to become the Vajra-holder, the protector and guardian of the teachings of all the one thousand Buddhas. Thus, he was prophesied to become the bodhisattva Vajrapani, the compiler of the words of all the thousand Buddhas, and further, that in a future aeon he would become the Buddha Vajravikrama. The last son, Dharmamati, made the aspiration to be the one to request each of the one thousand Buddhas to set the wheel of Dharma in motion. Due to the power of this aspiration he was to become the god Brahma.¹²⁹² The father of all the one thousand and two sons, the universal monarch Dhrtarashtra,¹²⁹³ was to become the Buddha Dipankara,¹²⁹⁴ many aeons prior to our Fortunate Aeon.

According to Buddhist cosmology, India is called the 'Southern Rose Apple Continent', Jambudvipa. Each of the one thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon will appear in India, will attain perfect Buddhahood upon the vajraseat at Bodhgaya, and will then turn the wheel of Dharma.

The one thousand Buddhas appear in different eras. Buddhist cosmology states that the history of the 'Rose Apple Continent', Jambudvipa, unfolds in four distinct eras: the 'era of completeness', the 'era of three-quarters', the 'era of two-quarters', and the 'era of strife'.

The first era is called the 'era of completeness' because splendor and enjoyments are completely present. The second era is called the era of three-quarters because theft and sexual misconduct reduce the splendor and riches of the environment and its inhabitants by one quarter. Then, due to lying, the splendor and enjoyments are reduced to one half of their glory, and hence the third era is known as the 'era of two-quarters'. The fourth and final period is the 'era of strife', during which even the remaining one quarter of original abundance of riches and splendor gradually diminishes, this time principally due to murder and the other forms of nonvirtue committed by sentient beings.

Buddha Krakucchanda, the first among the thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon, appeared in this world toward the end of an 'era of completeness'. He is also referred to as the 'First Guide'. Buddha Kanakamuni, the second among the one-thousand Buddhas, appeared in this world during an 'era of three-quarters'. He is also referred to as the 'Second Guide'. During the 'era of two-quarters', Buddha Kashyapa, the third among the one thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon, appeared in this world. He is called the 'Third Guide'. Finally, toward the end of the fourth era, the 'era of strife' in which beings all quarrel with one another, Buddha Shakyamuni, the 'Fourth Guide', appeared. Each of the thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon may appear at any time within these four eras. But, among all these thousand Buddhas, only Buddha Shakyamuni appears at the end of an era of strife, at a time when the five degenerations are widely spread. It is this period in which we presently find ourselves.

The five degenerations are the degeneration of time, the degeneration of sentient beings, the degeneration of lifespan, the degeneration of actions, and the degeneration of afflictions. Sometimes the 'degeneration of views' is listed in place of the 'degeneration of actions'.

The 'degeneration of time' refers to the era of strife like our present time, in which beings are tormented by famine, illness, and war. The 'degeneration of sentient beings' refers to the situation of beings born during the era of strife and also implies that the character of beings has progressively deteriorated through the course of the four eras.

The 'degeneration of lifespan' refers to the fact that during the era of strife, the lifespan of beings declines from one hundred years all the way down to ten years. Note that Buddha Shakyamuni appeared at a time when the lifespan was at the limit of one hundred years. No Buddha in the Fortunate Aeon ever appears when the lifespan of beings is less than one hundred years.

The 'degeneration of actions' means that during the era of strife all sentient beings engage in the ten non-virtuous actions. The 'degeneration of afflictions' indicates that in the era of strife the afflictions of ignorance, desire, anger, jealousy, and pride are so strong that worldly remedies cannot overcome them. The 'degeneration of views' means that in this era of strife right views are decreasing, and views of eternalism and nihilism are flourishing.

At the times when the first five Buddhas from among the one thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon appear, the duration of the lifespan of beings will vary. During the time of Buddha Krakucchanda, the first of the thousand Buddhas, the average lifespan of beings was forty thousand years. During the time of Buddha Kanakamuni, the second Buddha, the average lifespan of beings was thirty thousand years. During the time of Buddha Kashyapa, the third Buddha, beings were able to live twenty thousand years. During the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, the fourth Buddha, beings were able to live only one hundred years.¹²⁹⁵ The fifth Buddha will be Buddha Maitreya,¹²⁹⁶ who at present dwells as a bodhisattva in the heaven of Tushita. All scriptures agree that when Maitreya appears as a Buddha, the lifespan of beings will once again have returned to eighty thousand years.

Perfectly enlightened Buddhas only appear when the lifespan of beings is on the decline from eighty thousand years all the way down to one hundred years. This may be either during the 'initial lengthy decline' or during the declining phase of any of the eighteen cycles of ascent and decline. PratyekaBuddhas also appear when the lifespan of beings is declining from eighty thousand down to one hundred years; in addition, pratyekaBuddhas are also able to appear in phases when the lifespan of beings is on the ascent from one hundred years all the way up to eighty thousand years. This is because Pratyekabuddhas principally appear for the sake of their personal realization and not for the sake of all sentient beings. A sentient being is able to attain the state of a pratyekaBuddha only after having gathered the two accumulations for one hundred great aeons.

When pratyekaBuddhas finally reach their nirvana, they abide continuously in a tranquil state of cessation until radiant light rays emanating from a Buddha awaken them from this peaceful state, inspiring them and encouraging them to embark on the bodhisattva path to complete enlightenment. A universal sovereign appears in our world system only when the lifespan of sentient beings has progressed beyond eighty thousand years. It is said that a universal sovereign is adorned with preliminary indications of the thirty-two major marks of Buddhahood; however, having chosen the path of a universal sovereign, the signs on his body have not fully matured into the fruitional signs which only appear on the body of a perfectly enlightened Buddha.

According to the Bhadrakalpika-sutra, each of the one thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon can be identified by these following criteria: each will have an individual country of birth; each will be born in a particular caste; each will bear a particular family name; each will display a unique aura of light; each will have his own father; each will likewise have a mother; each will father a child; each will have one primary attendant; each will have a pair of students, one of whom is supreme in wisdom and the other who is supreme in magical powers; each will have an entourage, the Sangha; each Buddha will have a particular lifespan; each will have a definite time-span during which his teachings will endure; and each will leave specific relics. Once a Buddha has been cremated, it is possible for him to leave relics that continue to multiply, or he might leave one single relic, that is to say his entire body. For example, in the case of Buddha Shakyamuni, his physical remains, such as his bones, teeth, and so forth, continue to produce relics that in turn continue to multiply. On the other hand, when some Buddhas are cremated, what remains instead is one single relic, which is said to be indestructible.

For example, in the case of our present Buddha, Buddha Shakyamuni, the sutras tell us the following:

1. His country was the country of the Shakya clan.
2. His was of the royal caste.
3. The name of his family lineage was Gautama.
4. The extent of his aura was one fathom.
5. His father was Shuddodana.
6. His mother was Mayadevi.
7. His son was Rahula.
8. His principal attendant was Ananda.
9. His supreme pair of students were Upatissa, the one supreme in knowledge, and Kolika the one supreme in magical powers.
10. His entourage consisted of the 2500 monks of the original Sangha.
11. His lifespan was eighty years.
12. The span of time during which his teachings will endure is five thousand years.
13. The relics of Buddha Shakyamuni are of the type which continue to multiply.

Each of the one thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon will have the two assistants mentioned earlier. The first assistant is the bodhisattva Vajrapani, who will always preserve and protect the complete teachings of each of the thousand Buddhas. He is able to hear and retains the complete teachings of every Buddha in their entirety. The second assistant is the god Brahma, who requests each of the thousand Buddhas to turn

the wheel of Dharma. Therefore, they are called the 'one thousand and two', meaning the one thousand Buddhas and their two assistants.

These thousand Buddhas all appear when the lifespan of beings is decreasing from eighty thousand years to one hundred years. The only exception is the last of the one thousand Buddhas, 'Buddha Rocana'; due to the power of his special aspirations, Buddha Rocana will appear at a time when the lifespan of beings is measureless. Buddha Shakyamuni has four unique features that distinguish him from among the thousand Buddhas that appear in the Fortunate Aeon. His first unique feature is that he cares for the beings of this era of strife, an era in which the five degenerations are widespread. Among all the thousand Buddhas, he is the only one who appears in such an unfortunate time.

At the time when the Buddhas have not yet reached enlightenment but are still traveling the path as bodhisattvas, they all make specific aspirations for their future activities as Buddhas. Buddha Shakyamuni, when he was still a bodhisattva, made five hundred great aspirations, all of which specifically entailed helping beings at the time when they, in general, would be tormented by the five degenerations.

None of the other Buddhas that have appeared (or will appear) throughout the course of this Fortunate Aeon chose to emphasize such aspirations when they were traveling the bodhisattva path. Instead, it was their conclusion that sentient beings of the degenerate times would, in general, be unsuitable vessels for the Dharma. Hence, Buddha Shakyamuni is considered to be *more courageous than the other guides of the Fortunate Aeon*. This manifest courage is the second of the four unique features that distinguish him from the other Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon.

Due to his extraordinarily *compassionate development of bodhicitta* and the marvelous five hundred *aspirations* he made, Buddha Shakyamuni was 'praised as the White Lotus' by all the other Buddhas of this aeon. This is the third of the four unique features that distinguish Buddha Shakyamuni from the other Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon.

The fourth unique feature by which Buddha Shakyamuni is known is that of the immense power of blessing carried by his name. Whoever so much as hears his name will become a non-returner. Like a fish who has entered a fisherman's net, any being who makes a connection of any kind with Buddha Shakyamuni has entered into his net of compassion. The immense blessing power emanating from Buddha Shakyamuni arises on the basis of his immeasurable qualities and due to the strength of his former aspirations. His compassion is beyond all concepts and thoughts and thus reaches out to all sentient beings, free from even the most subtle bias or partiality.

We will now summarize the tale of the one thousand and five Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon, which includes the story of Buddha Shakyamuni's unique aspirations, as it is recounted in the Karuna-puṇḍarika:

In former times, in our present world-system, during an aeon known as Dharana, there lived a universal monarch named Aranemi, who reigned over four continents and fathered one thousand sons. His chief household priest was the Brahmana, Samudrarenu, who had eighty sons as well as one thousand Brahmana students. One of his sons, the Brahmana Samudragarbha, renounced the worldly life, entered into homelessness, attained perfect enlightenment, and came to be acclaimed as the Buddha Ratnagarbha. All the sons of the universal monarch as well as all the sons and students of Brahmana Samudrarenu gave rise to and developed the precious bodhicitta. Due to this, Buddha Ratnagarbha prophesied that each of them would attain Buddhahood in the future. Following these predictions, each made aspirations to appear as Buddhas in pure realms. Finally, the Brahmana Samudrarenu, looking with compassion upon the myriad beings scattered throughout the impure realms, those sentient beings who are bound to commit the ten non-virtuous actions and the five heinous crimes, and viewing their conditions, he made five hundred great aspirations.

Samudrarenu prayed that he would become a Buddha in an impure realm, at a time when the five degenerations blazed fiercely. Hearing these noble aspirations, Buddha Ratnagarbha, the Buddha of that era, spoke, "You are a bodhisattva who is like a white lotus; the other bodhisattvas resemble ordinary flowers." Thus, Buddha Ratnagarbha praised him and prophesied that he would become Buddha Shakyamuni, the fourth among the one thousand and five Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon. *In this time* refers to the time of the five degenerations. *You demonstrate your supreme, fully manifest enlightenment* means that after six years of seeking and practicing, at the age of thirty-five, Buddha Shakyamuni attained supreme and fully manifest enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree at Bodhgaya.

Then Sugata Ratnagarbha spoke: "Son of noble family! All other bodhisattvas are like flowers. You are like a white lotus" In the night preceding his enlightenment, Shakyamuni had formed the irrevocable resolve never to rise from his meditation seat unless he had attained fully manifest enlightenment. He entered into the 'vajra-like samadhi'; outwardly defeating all maras, inwardly purifying what remained of his cognitive obscurations, he reached fully manifest enlightenment at the break of dawn. At the very moment that heralded the dawn, he attained fully manifest enlightenment. Shakyamuni's enlightenment is called *fully manifest* because it resulted in the three

kayas; two of these, the 'form kayas', could later be perceived by sentient beings according to their capacities.

Ordinary beings, both pure and impure, were able to meet Buddha Shakyamuni's nirmanakaya. Bodhisattvas dwelling on the bhumis were able to meet his sambhogakaya. Nevertheless, even bodhisattvas dwelling on the tenth bhumi were unable to perceive his Dharmakaya. Having no equal in spiritual attainment throughout the entire universe, Buddha Shakyamuni had become the *incomparable teacher* of gods and men. Having taken birth in the Shakya clan, and being a great being, powerful like a lion, he became known as the *Lion of the Shakyas*. Khenpo Kunpal beseeches Buddha Shakyamuni, "Please protect me with your loving kindness!" He thus prays that the Buddha will always look after him through his enlightened body, speech, and mind.

Text section 40:

Ajita, the 'undefeatable one' or the 'invincible one', is one of the many epithets of the great bodhisattva Maitreya\$. Maitreya is said to presently dwell in the Tushita heaven and in the future will take rebirth in our world system as the Fifth Guide, the fifth Buddha. Maitreya belongs to the group of the eight great bodhisattvas, also called *the eight close sons*. These bodhisattvas are the major lineage holders of all the Buddha's Mahayana teachings.

Among the immeasurable qualities of the Buddha, eight of his foremost qualities manifest as the eight bodhisattvas: 1) the personification of the Buddha's wisdom is Bodhisattva Manjushri; 2) the personification of the Buddha's compassion appears as Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara ; 3) the personification of the Buddha's power or capacity is Bodhisattva Vajrapani; 4) the personification of the Buddha's activity is Bodhisattva Maitreya; 5) the personification of the Buddha's merit arises as Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha; 6) the personification of the Buddha's qualities appears as Bodhisattva Sarvanivaranavishkambhi; 7) the personification of the Buddha's blessings arises as Bodhisattva Akashagarbha; and 8) the personification of Buddha's aspirations is manifest as Bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

A student of Mahayana Buddhism should have a special meditation deity, a form of the Buddha upon which to meditate. This meditation deity may be Buddha Shakyamuni or any bodhisattva, such as one of the eight bodhisattvas. However, one should understand that in reality the eight bodhisattvas are eight aspects of the Buddha, revealing eight of the Buddha's special qualities. Buddha is wisdom, the wisdom of the

Dharmakaya. This wisdom manifests on the sambhogakaya level as eight wisdom qualities of the Buddha, appearing in the form of the eight bodhisattvas.

The bodhisattva manifestations function as gateways or thresholds through which one approaches the wisdom of the Buddha. In this way we may understand the eight bodhisattvas to be none other than the natural expression of the Buddha's wisdom. This is the true reason they are known as the Buddha's close sons. When one understands the relationship of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas at this level, the sixteen elders are likewise understood to be the appearance of the natural expression of the Buddha's wisdom. That is why they are known as the 'sixteen emanated elders'. A practitioner may adopt Buddha Shakyamuni as his or her principal meditation deity.

If one feels a special affinity toward any of the abovementioned qualities, one may choose the corresponding bodhisattvas as the practice deities in order to evoke these particular qualities of the Buddha. For example, Shantideva's meditation deity was Bodhisattva Manjushri.

The bodhisattva Maitreya meditated unceasingly on loving kindness; thus the name Maitreya, 'Loving Kindness', was bestowed upon him. As the fifth of the one thousand Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon, he received a prophecy that he would in the future be known as Buddha Maitreya. When he was near to completing the two accumulations of merit and wisdom, the Buddhas of the three times conferred upon him the 'Great Rays of Light Empowerment'.

At the time of Buddha Kashyapa, the third of the thousand Buddhas, Buddha Shakyamuni took birth in Tushita heaven and remained there among the gods, giving them teachings. When the time came for him to appear in our world, Shakyamuni placed a crown on Maitreya's head, consecrating and empowering him as his regent. Ever since, Maitreya has been universally renowned as 'the regent Maitreyanatha'. Bodhisattva Maitreya continuously visualizes Buddha Shakyamuni above his head. Therefore, when other beings look at him, they are able to see an 'enlightenment stupa' over his head. Thus, he is depicted with an enlightenment stupa on his usni Sha, the protuberance that appears upon a Buddha's head.

It is said that Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings will vanish from this world five thousand years after his first promulgation of the Dharma. Buddhas appear only in phases of decline within a given aeon. Further, Buddha Shakyamuni appears near the very end of such a declining phase. Hence, during the time of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings, beings will have fallen increasingly under the power of afflictions, harming each other incessantly and committing many negative deeds.

Eventually, therefore, the merit of sentient beings in our world will decrease until their lifespan dwindles down to a mere thirty, twenty, and finally only ten years. The body size of sentient beings is eventually diminished to no more than the length of a thumb. Famine, plagues, and war will come to torment beings relentlessly. This suffering is a direct consequence of sentient beings repeatedly enacting the ten non-virtuous actions.

During the era when the lifespan of beings is declining from thirty years to ten years, three time periods called 'the three intermediate periods' will occur. These three intermediate periods occur at the end of every declining phase within a given aeon. These are known as: 1) the period of famine; 2) the period of plague; and 3) the period of weapons. During these times our human world will be as miserable as the hell realms themselves.

1) When the lifespan of beings has declined to a mere thirty years, the 'period of famine' will arise. This famine will last for seven years, seven months, and seven days. Since at this time beings exclusively enact the ten nonvirtuous actions, the nagas will become upset, and the rains will stop. There will be no harvest, and the three kinds of famine will ensue. Human beings will be described by such names as 'the hidden eaters', 'the spoon eaters', and 'the bare bones eaters'.

At the time of 'the hidden eaters', food will be extremely difficult to obtain, and people will live only on grain stored in the past. Even a small amount of inferior grain will be treasured like a jewel, stored in vessels and jealously guarded. People will fear that their food will be stolen and will keep it very secret and hidden; thus beings will be called 'the hidden eaters'. Hunger will render people so weak that if they fall to the ground they will be unable to stand again. Others will be unable to help them up, being themselves too weak to lift them. Whoever falls to the ground will simply die.

At the time of 'the spoon eaters', food will have become so scarce that people can obtain no more than a few spoons of food at any one time. The small store of grain that people have will be cooked as a soup and everyone will receive only a few spoonfuls. Everyone gathered will jealously oversee the meal, making certain no one gets either too much or too little. Therefore, human beings in such times will be known as 'the spoon eaters'.

At the time of 'the bare bones eaters', food has become such a rare commodity that people are forced to cook up the bare bones of the dead, subsisting on nothing more than a soup of human bone. The bones they cook will lack any trace even of fat. Because humans are reduced to surviving on the bones of their dead, they are known as 'the bare bones eaters'. They themselves are emaciated, wasted away to mere skeletons,

without an ounce of body fat. When that human birth has ended, those born in the times of the bare bones eaters will immediately take rebirth in the preta realm, the realm of the hungry ghosts.

2) When the lifespan of beings has fallen to twenty years, the 'period of plague' arises. This plague will last seven months and seven days, during which people will be stricken with virulent epidemics of infectious diseases. All types of diseases with no known cures will arise in the human world, all due to the karmic fact that the asuras, the demi-gods, will have become victorious in their celestial wars with the gods. This particular detail of the story of the period of plague reveals the interdependent karma of our world system.

When human beings abide by the ten virtuous actions, the merit they generate ensures the victory of the gods. On the other hand, when human beings spend their days committing the ten non-virtuous actions, the victory of the asuras is assured. For this reason we can easily understand that the gods protect those who lead meritorious lives.

The Buddhist scriptures explain to us that when human beings engage in negative conduct, this directly increases the presence of demons and malignant spirits until negative forces dominate conditions in our human world. The power of these negative forces produces all kinds of diseases. As many of these diseases are for the most part incurable, the majority of human beings will die from them, only to be reborn directly into the hell realms.

3) When the lifespan of humans has dwindled to a scant ten years, the 'period of weapons' will arise. This war will last seven days, and during this time people's minds will be filled with uncontrollable aggression. People will not live according to the Dharma but will single-mindedly pursue harmful intentions. Whatever they lay their hands on becomes a weapon; they will assault and murder one another on sight. The moment they die, they will take birth directly in the hell realms. The hell realms will be filled with countless former human beings.

After the period of weapons has passed, the remaining survivors will venture from the mountains and forests back toward towns and cities. Catching sight of others, for the very first time in their lives, they will experience joy and kindness. It is said that during the time after the period of weapons, an emanation of Bodhisattva Maitreya will appear in this world. The surviving human beings will have very small bodies, and the body of Maitreya will be somewhat larger. He will radiate charisma and be clothed in robes of saffron.

Seeing Maitreya, the human beings of that time will be amazed, wondering how he could be so much taller than they are. Maitreya will answer, "I have attained such a body because I practice patience and refrain from killing." Hearing this, the people will follow his example and abandon the senseless killing of their fellow human beings. This changed behavior will lead to an increase in lifespan of up to twenty years in their descendents. Hence, the emanation of Maitreya in this human world will mark the beginning of another ascending phase within a given aeon.

Just as Maitreya's first emanation will teach human beings not to kill one another, another emanation of Maitreya will appear to teach the second virtuous action, to refrain from theft. The virtuous karma gained by abandoning stealing will increase up to thirty years the lifespan of the descendents of these human beings. In this way, emanations of Maitreya will gradually appear, teaching human beings to abide by the ten virtuous actions, resulting in an increased human lifespan. Gradually, the lifespan will again rise back to eighty thousand years.

When the lifespan of human beings has increased to seven hundred years, the sixteen elders will appear to gather whatever remains in this world of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings. They will place them in a stupa made of the seven precious jewels. The sixteen elders will then sit around the stupa, pay homage to Buddha Shakyamuni, and pass into nirvana without any remainder. This will mark the final end of the presence of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings in our world.

Maitreya will appear in our world as a fully enlightened Buddha only when the lifespan of human beings has reached eighty thousand years. Many pratyekaBuddhas will appear in our world throughout the phase of ascent prior to this time. Just before Maitreya descends from Tushita heaven into our world, he will cast his gaze over the world, giving it a five-fold examination. Like all Buddhas he will choose the appropriate time, the appropriate country, the appropriate caste, the appropriate family, and the appropriate mother. When he perceives the perfect conditions, Maitreya will take rebirth as the fifth Buddha of this Fortunate Aeon.

These stories recount the Buddhas' spiritual histories. They begin with the moment each first generated bodhicitta and continue through their gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom for at least three incalculable aeons. They conclude with the Buddhas' attainment of enlightenment. These histories are found in both Hinayana and Mahayana sutras and represent the 'provisional meaning'. According to the 'definitive meaning' on the other hand, which is recounted only in the Mahayana sutras, all Buddhas are primordially enlightened and only demonstrate the appearance of

traversing the path to complete enlightenment in order to inspire deluded beings to follow that path. In reality, a Buddha is primordial wisdom beyond birth and death.

What we perceive as a Buddha arising in the world and passing into nirvana is only a manifestation or emanation of this wisdom. Though all Buddhas share the same wisdom realization, they are individually distinct, just as one thousand butter lamps share the same light while each shines on its own. Now we will mention the eight close sons, the sixteen elders, the seven generations of heirs to the doctrine, the six adornments of Jambudvīpa, and the two supreme ones.

First, *the eight close sons*: Among the infinite bodhisattva students of the Buddha, the eight close sons are the eight great bodhisattvas mentioned earlier, who dwelt constantly with the Buddha. Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, Sarvanīvaranaviśvakambhī, Akāśagarbha, Maitreya and Samantabhadra. They are called the eight close sons because they reached the tenth bodhisattva level and are thus close to the level of the Buddha's realization. They are also called the 'sons of the Victor' because they are considered to be Buddha's heart sons.

The *sixteen elders* represent the group of senior monks who attained the state of arhats. They are the senior elders, the leaders of the thousands of arhats among the Buddha's students. The term 'elder' means a senior monk, but not every arhat was an elder. Young children were also included among the many students of the Buddha who reached the spiritual attainment of an arhat.

These *sixteen elders*, along with the *seven generations of heirs to the doctrine*, are the lineage holders of the Hinayana teachings, also known as the śrāvakayāna, the 'vehicle of the listeners'. The śrāvakayāna teachings belong to the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, 'the first set of teachings, the Dharma wheel of the four truths'. Many śrāvakas were also present when the Buddha taught the second and the third turnings of the wheel of Dharma, but they did not become lineage holders of these teachings.¹³¹¹ The *seven generations of heirs to the doctrine* maintained the doctrine and the Saṅgha after the Buddha had passed away. The Buddha had first entrusted Kaśyapa with the care of both the doctrine and the Saṅgha. Just before Kaśyapa passed away, he in turn entrusted Ananda with this task.

The sixteen elders are: 1. Aṅgaś, 2. Ajita, 3. Vanavasin, 4. Mahakalika, 5. Vajriputra, 6. Śrībhadra, 7. Kanakavatsa, 8. Kanakabharadvaja, 9. Bakula, 10. Rahula, 11. Cūḍapāṇthaka,¹³¹² 12. Piṇḍola Bharadvaja, 13. Paṇthaka¹⁴, 14. Nagasena, 15. Gopaka, and 16. Abhedā. *The seven generations of heirs to the doctrine* are: 1. Mahakāśyapa, 2.

Ananda, 3. Shanavasika, 4. Upagupta , 5. Dhitika, 6. Krshna, and 7. Mahasudarshana. These arhats and patriarchs passed on the Buddha's teachings from one to another in turn.

One year after the Buddha had passed into nirvana, the Sangha held the very first council meeting. Five hundred arhats gathered at the Banyan Cave in Rajagṛha under the patronage of the Magadha king, Ajatashatru, the son of King Bimbisara. During the council meeting, Ananda recited the sutra pitaka, Upalirecited the vinaya pitaka, and Mahakashyapa recited the abhiDharma pitaka.

These teachings were recited from memory to an audience of the five hundred arhats. For the second council meeting at Vai Shali, one hundred and ten years after the Buddha's passing, seven hundred arhats gathered under the patronage of the Dharma king Ashoka. The council meeting was called in order to expunge ten specific transgressions that had arisen within the Sangha. During the meeting, the ten transgressions were repudiated as non-dharmic, and the seven hundred arhats together recited the sutra, vinaya, and abhiDharma pitakas, thus re-establishing harmony among the Sangha.

The third council meeting was called a few hundred years after the Buddha's passing. Over time many differences had arisen in regard to the Pratimokshasutra, the code of discipline. This had led to a division of the Buddhist tradition into eighteen schools. It is said that the monks began to write down the teachings after the second council meeting. During and after the third council meeting, the vinaya pitaka and the remaining teachings were written down. The precise location and dates of the third council remains subject to question.

The next groupings are the *six adornments of Jambudvīpa* and the *two supreme one*. They are the most famous of the great panditas, the scholars from the *noble land* of India. Among these sublime scholars, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, and Shantideva are also counted among the group of the eighty-four mahasiddhas, those realized yogins who accomplished both the relative as well as the supreme spiritual attainments.

The six adornments of Jambudvīpa, also known as 'the six adornments that beautify Jambudvīpa', are in three pairs. The first, the 'adornments of madhyamaka', are 1. Nagarjuna and 2. Aryadeva. The second pair of masters, the 'adornments of abhiDharma', are 3. Asanga and 4. Vasubandhu. The third pair, the 'adornments of valid cognition', are 5. Dignaga and 6. Dharmakirti. Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Dignaga are also identified with one another as the 'three authors of fundamental texts'.

Aryadeva, Vasubandhu, and Dharmakirti are similarly grouped as the 'three commentators' on the writings of the three former masters, Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Dignaga.

The two supreme ones are Gunaprabha and Shakyaprabha. Sometimes the phrase 'two supreme ones' is also used to refer to the two supreme masters from among the 'six adornments of Jambudvipa', that is, Nagarjuna and Asanga. Furthermore, also noteworthy are the 'two marvelous masters'. Glorious Candrakirti, according to some sources Candragomin, was the one with the marvelous view; and Shantideva, the author of Bodhisattva-caryavatara, was the master with the marvelous conduct. Khenpo Kunpal is paying respect to all of these masters by *placing them above his head with hundred-fold devotion*.

Text section 41:

The Victor, Buddha Shakyamuni, had prophesied that the Dharma would spread in the future to Tibet, the *snowy land*. The Indian scholar Shantarakshita came to Tibet and performed the original ceremony to ordain the first Tibetan monks at the monastery of Samye, the first Buddhist monastery formally established in Tibet. The Indian tantrika and spiritual teacher Padmasambhava tamed all the local spirits in Tibet and gave extensive teachings on all aspects of tantric Buddhism.

These masters were invited to Tibet under the reign of the Dharma King Trisong Detsen, under whose rule Buddhism took firm root in Tibet. King Trisong Detsen sent many young Tibetans to India on a mission to learn Sanskrit, to study with the great masters, so that they might be able to accurately translate the sutras and tantras into the Tibetan language. Famous translators such as Vairocana, Kawa Paltsek, Chokro Lui Gyaltzen, Zhang Yeshe De, and others became the editorial heads of translation groups. King Trisong Detsen invited many Indian panditas to Tibet and so was able to ensure that the Sanskrit texts were in fact accurately translated into Tibetan.

All these masters are considered emanations of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Therefore, Khenpo Kunpal's preface salutes them as the *treasure-trove of emanated translators and panditas*. *Treasure-trove* has the multiple connotations of 'perfection', 'glory', 'treasure', 'group', and 'chief'. Without these masters, the Dharma would never have taken root in Tibet, and a Tibet without the Dharma would have been a country of spiritual darkness.

These masters illuminated Tibet by teaching Buddha Dharma and are, therefore, called *eyes that gazed upon the snowy land*. Theirs are the eyes that clearly and directly saw the truth of the sublime Dharma. Paltrul Rinpoche taught that *three* supreme emanations of *Manjughosha*: Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen, Lord Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa, and the omniscient Longchen Rabjam.

Khenpo Kunpal pays respect to all *the non-sectarian lineages of the Old and New Schools* without exception. All the sutras, tantras, and commentaries that were translated during the time of the three great Dharma kings, Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Detsen, and Tri Ralpachen belong to this phase, known as the 'Early Translation Period'. This translation period began with the Tibetan translator and grammarian Thumi Sambhota, who was assisted by the Indian scholar Devavitsingha. The last great Indian pandita of this translation period was Smrtijnanakirti. The tantras, commentaries, and sutras that were later translated by Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) and the translators after him belong to the phase known as the 'Later Translation Period'.

Text section 42:

Khenpo Kunpal, as a Vajrayana practitioner, considers his root guru, Paltrul Rinpoche, as the manifestation of the omniscient wisdom, the loving compassion, and the powerful activity of all the Buddhas. He views Paltrul Rinpoche as inseparable from *the lords of the three families*: Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani.

From among these 'lords of the three families', Bodhisattva Manjushri personifies the omniscient aspect of all the Buddhas; Avalokiteshvara represents the compassion aspect; and Vajrapani embodies the power aspect.

The 'omniscient aspect' of a Buddha refers to the fact that a Buddha knows everything throughout the three times and the ten directions. Nothing whatsoever can remain hidden or unknown to him.

The 'loving compassion aspect' of a Buddha refers to the fact that the compassion and love of a Buddha extend equally and impartially to all sentient beings without a single exception. The 'power aspect' of a Buddha alludes to the blessing and benefit a Buddha continuously bestows upon sentient beings. The sphere of influence of a Buddha's activities extends to every sentient being. There is never even the slightest separation or obstruction between the Buddha and all sentient beings, not even for an instant. The Buddha's blessings are constantly permeating and influencing the minds of all sentient beings, regardless of whether or not they are aware of it. The Buddha's activity

constantly serves the happiness and benefit of all beings. This is what is known as the 'hidden' activity of the Buddha.

What this actually tells us is that the Buddha is the true cause of happiness. Every manner of happiness that we can possibly experience is a direct blessing of the Buddha. Any circumstance that may occur that leads to happiness is also a direct blessing of the Buddha.

Bodhisattva Manjushri is described as the body manifestation of all the Buddhas. In the same way, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is considered the speech manifestation of all the Buddhas, and Bodhisattva Vajrapani is known as the mind manifestation. For a Buddha, body, speech, and mind are inseparable. A Buddha is wisdom only, not a trace of anything else.

Generally, the term 'body' refers to the 'aspect of phenomenal appearance'. The term 'speech' is the 'resounding aspect'; and 'mind', the aspect which benefits beings, refers to 'power' or 'capacity'. All of these sublime qualities of the Buddhas are fully present in Khenpo Kunpal's root guru, Paltrul Orgyen Jigme *Chokyi Wangpo*. Khenpo Kunpal's other *venerable masters*, his other teachers such as On Urgyen Tendzin Norbu,¹³³⁷ Mipham Rinpoche,¹³³⁸ and others are considered to be the *quintessence of all the Buddhas*. Khenpo Kunpal prays, "*Reside in the lotus of my heart until I attain the essence of enlightenment,*" thus promising to meditate on his root guru seated upon a lotus in the very center of his heart until he attains complete enlightenment.

Paltrul Orgyen Jigme *Chokyi Wangpo* lived the life of a vagabond yogin. Considered to be an incarnation of Shantideva, he was both an excellent scholar and a widely revered meditation master of the Nyingma School. In particular, he was a holder of the renowned and widely practiced Longchen Nyingthig lineage, which he On Urgyen Tendzin Norbu, a nineteenth century scholar, was a student of Paltrul Rinpoche and a nephew of Gyalse Zhenphan Thaye. For biographical notes on the life of On Urgyen Tendzin Norbu see *Masters of Meditation*, pages 226-227. received from his root guru Gyalwe Nyugu, a direct student of Jigme Lingpa. Paltrul Rinpoche was famous for his great skill in giving oral commentaries on and explanations of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. Khenpo Kunpal had received extensive instructions on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara from Paltrul Rinpoche, as well as from many of his other teachers.

Text section 43:

Here, Khenpo Kunpal cites *his explanations*, literally 'the explanations that I received from him'. This refers to all of the explanations and teachings Khenpo Kunpal received directly from Paltrul Rinpoche. From among Paltrul Rinpoche's complete explanations, which are like *undefiled essential nectar*, Khenpo Kunpal wrote down *only a fraction* of these in this commentary. For this reason he calls his commentary a mere *composition of letters*. Khenpo Kunpal thus adopts a posture of humility. *The supreme guru* refers again to Paltrul Rinpoche. Khenpo Kunpal is praying, "Through the blessings of Paltrul Rinpoche and through the blessings of the three jewels, may this commentary *help the doctrine and sentient beings*." *The (three) jewels* are, of course, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

The word 'nectar' is used here as a metaphor to denote the 'nectar of the gods', which is said to have the power to cure all diseases. The *undefiled essential nectar* of Paltrul Rinpoche's teachings has the power to cure the disease of afflictions. Khenpo Kunpal makes the aspiration to receive the blessings of his root guru and of the three jewels so that his commentary on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara may *help the doctrine and sentient beings*. Thus he ends the metrical preface.

Text section 44:

Now Khenpo Kunpal addresses the Buddhas of the three times: *The Buddhas of the past* refers to all the Buddhas before Buddha Shakyamuni. The most prominent of these is Buddha *Dipankara*. In the story of the one thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon, the universal monarch Dhrtarashtra himself was said to have become the Buddha Dipankara in an aeon prior to our own.

The scriptures mention seven Buddhas, also called 'the seven heroic Buddhas' as well as 'the seven generations of Buddhas'. They are: 1) Buddha Vipashyin, who appeared in a former aeon when the lifespan of human beings was eighty thousand years; 2) Buddha Shikin, who appeared in a former aeon when the lifespan of human beings was seventy thousand years; 3) Buddha Vishvabhukra appeared in a former aeon when the lifespan of human beings was sixty thousand years; 4) Buddha Krakucchanda, the first Buddha of our aeon, appeared when the lifespan of human beings was forty thousand years; 5) Buddha Kanakamuni,¹³⁴⁷ the second Buddha of our aeon, appeared when the lifespan of human beings was thirty thousand years; 6) Buddha Kashyapa,¹³⁴⁸ the third Buddha of our aeon, appeared when the lifespan of human beings was twenty thousand years; 7) Finally, Buddha Shakyamuni, the fourth Buddha of our aeon, appeared when the lifespan of human beings was only one hundred years.

The Buddhas Vipashyin, Shikin, and Vishvabhukra appeared in former aeons and are, therefore, not counted among the thousand Buddhas to appear in the Fortunate Aeon. The Hinayana scriptures tell us that our teacher Buddha Shakyamuni began his spiritual path under the Buddha known as the 'Great Buddha Shakyamuni' and served seventy-five thousand Buddhas up to the time of Buddha Rashtrapala. Over this period Buddha Shakyamuni gathered the accumulations of merit and thus completed the 'first incalculable aeons' of his journey to enlightenment. Then, beginning with Buddha Sadhukara and continuing to the time of Buddha Indradhvaja, our teacher further served seventy-six thousand Buddhas. This period represents the 'second incalculable aeon' of Shakyamuni's path as a bodhisattva. Then, beginning with the time of Buddha Dipankara and continuing on through the time of Buddha Kashyapa, our teacher Shakyamuni served seventy-seven thousand Buddhas. In this final period, Shakyamuni completed the 'third incalculable aeon' of gathering the accumulations. At the time of Buddha Kashyapa, when the lifespan of human beings was twenty thousand years, our teacher was reborn as a Brahmana's son called 'Guru'. After he passed away, he took rebirth in the Tushita heaven as Bodhisattva Shvetaketu and taught the Dharma to the gods. From Tushita he emanated into our world system as Buddha Shakyamuni, the fourth Buddha of this Fortunate Aeon, and performed the twelve deeds. The scriptures also recount that Buddha Shakyamuni principally gathered the accumulation of merit for the first incalculable aeon; that he then proceeded to rise from the first through the seventh bodhisattva levels during the second incalculable aeon; and that he continued from the eighth bodhisattva level all the way up to the level of complete enlightenment during the third incalculable aeon.

Buddha Shakyamuni is the Buddha of the present era in our world system. Our world system is only a small part of his total field of activities, which actually covers an entire cosmos of a billion world systems. Outside of this cosmos of a billion world systems, even now innumerable Buddhas are still appearing simultaneously in other cosmic universes of a billion world systems. These Buddhas likewise share an equally vast activity field and are all referred to as *Buddhas of the present*.

The future Buddha, who will appear after Buddha Shakyamuni, will be the *venerable Maitreyanatha, great being, the regent of the Victor*. He and all the Buddhas after him are called *Buddhas of the future*. Together, all of these constitute what are known as the Buddhas or *victors of the three times* of past, present, and future. With regard to the *precious bodhicitta*, this bodhicitta is known as the *great path*, which all Buddhas of the past have traversed, which all the Buddhas of the present travel, and which all the Buddhas of the future will traverse on the journey to perfect enlightenment. It is the *sole source* which gives rise to all possible *accumulations of goodness*, leading to *welfare and happiness* in samsara and nirvana, in *worldly existence* and in *peaceful nirvana*.

Bodhicitta is the most noble attitude, the ultimate of all motives. Whoever is endowed with bodhicitta will move from one happiness to the next in this and all future lifetimes and is certain to eventually reach perfect enlightenment. The highest attainment possible for any being is the state of complete enlightenment, Buddhahood. The wish that all sentient beings may reach the level of Buddhahood is the supreme of all wishes. Wishing that all beings become Buddhas means to wish for them the greatest attainment possible for any being. This unexcelled wish is called the most precious bodhicitta; it is most precious because it is directed to the most precious of all achievements, enlightenment.

If one maintains a virtuous attitude yet remains fettered by ego-clinging, this virtuous and positive character will still lead one on to happy conditions within samsara, within the sphere of *worldly existence*. If one maintains a virtuous attitude while also becoming free of ego-clinging selfishness, one will be able to transcend samsaric existence and reach instead the *peaceful state of nirvana*, a state free from any suffering.

This peaceful state of nirvana corresponds to the realization and attainment of shravaka arhats and pratyekaBuddhas . Both have realized the truth of cessation, and both have overcome all afflictions. In order to reach perfect enlightenment, however, far more is required than just a positive, virtuous attitude. Complete enlightenment is only possible if one is truly endowed with bodhicitta.

The shravakas and prateykaBuddhas have reached a state of peace beyond sorrow. Although they have left behind the realms of suffering forever, nonetheless, they have still not arrived at the state of Buddhahood. They are unable to reach a state beyond that of 'the mere absence of suffering'. This is only because they still lack the precious bodhicitta. Though their attitude may undoubtedly be beneficial to sentient beings, they themselves have not yet truly generated the precious bodhicitta. On the shravaka and pratyekaBuddha path, one trains in the virtuous qualities of loving kindness and compassion while, however, failing to give rise to the precious bodhicitta. Although the qualities of loving kindness and compassion are without any doubt the true basis from which bodhicitta arises, the real meaning of bodhicitta entails much more than merely wishing for all beings to be happy and free from suffering. Bodhicitta is much more profound and powerful; it is the courageous commitment: "I will free all sentient beings from their suffering and establish them all on the level of perfect enlightenment." In order to fully understand bodhicitta one must understand it in two ways: in its aspect of compassion and in its aspect of knowledge.

What is the special compassion unique to the bodhicitta motivation? With compassion one focuses on benefiting others through the steadfast resolve: “I will free all beings from suffering.” This is the compassion aspect of the bodhicitta motivation.

What, then, is the knowledge aspect of the bodhicitta motivation? With knowledge one is focused on perfect enlightenment through the similar resolve: “I will establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment.”

The bodhisattvas aspire to reach the state of Buddhahood, perfect enlightenment, and, in addition, are fully committed to themselves establishing all sentient beings on the very same level. The personal aspiration to become an arhat or pratyekaBuddha requires no involvement with the bodhicitta motivation whatsoever. Bodhicitta is, in fact, exactly the opposite of any self-oriented motive. Thus, through bodhicitta, one is able to overcome every conceivable form of ego-clinging. The Buddha teaches that *goodness* must necessarily spring from a virtuous source; the supreme source of all goodness is the precious bodhicitta.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is principally concerned with instructing us in the ways of this precious bodhicitta. The precious bodhicitta is praised as being far more valuable than even the *wish-fulfilling jewel, king of powers*. How can this be so? Quite simply, the powerful wish-fulfilling jewel may be able to grant any material wish a sentient being might have, but it is completely unable to grant the state of enlightenment. Like the wish-fulfilling jewel, the precious bodhicitta fulfills all relative wishes; moreover, it alone can lead to the ultimate happiness, to the attainment of complete and perfect enlightenment.

Text Section 48-49:

Here Khenpo Kunpal mentions that a Buddha teaches in *three types of miraculous displays*: through his body, speech, and mind. The powerful miraculous displays performed by a Buddha differ significantly from the magical displays performed by an arhat. The miraculous displays of a Buddha greatly surpass the magical displays of an arhat. At the beginning of a teaching a Buddha sits in silence for a short period of time and then sends forth manifold light rays from the curled hair between his eyebrows, from his mouth, or from the center of his heart.

In the Mahayana sutras such as the Ratna-kuta and the Avatamsaka, many individual light rays emanating from the Buddha are described in detail; hundreds of different light rays are mentioned by name. The light rays penetrate and pervade one billion world systems—‘the third order of a thousand world systems’—the entirety of The term ‘third order of thousand (world systems)’, often translated as ‘three

thousand-fold world systems', means 1.000 to the power of three, which equals one billion single world systems. One single world system includes Mount Sumeru, sun and moon, the four continents, the worlds of the gods of desire and the world of Brahma.

The sum of 'a thousand single world systems' is called 'the first order of a thousand world which is the activity realm of one single Buddha. These light rays emanated by the Buddha invite all beings within one billion world systems who, through former karma or aspirations, have a connection with the Buddha.

In this way, in preparation for giving a particular teaching, the Buddha would send out light rays, gathering all beings yet to be included into his entourage. Sometimes the Buddha's light rays reach directly to a particular place in order to gather specific beings into his assembly. At other times, infinite light rays spiral through a myriad of entire universes to summon all appropriate beings dwelling there into the Buddha's presence. This is the miraculous display of the magical power of the Buddha's body when he teaches the Dharma.

Once the audience has been gathered, the Buddha performs a miracle with his tongue, inspiring faith and trust in the newly gathered audience. It is said that his tongue covers a trichiliocosm—one billion world systems—in an inconceivable way. This is one aspect of the miraculous display of magical powers stemming from the infinite qualities of the Buddha's speech. The Buddha gained these infinite qualities of speech through the practice of abandoning lying for countless aeons, rebirth upon rebirth, as he traversed the bodhisattva path. In general, the Buddha is endowed with thirty-two major marks and eighty minor signs. The most precious of all the marks and signs is the major mark of Buddha's speech endowed with the sixty aspects.

The following example well illustrates the unfathomable degree of merit represented by the Buddha's speech. If one were to combine the total accumulation of merit of every single ordinary sentient being, as well as that of all shravakas and pratyekaBuddhas, and then were to further multiply this by ten, proportionally this would still equal only the minute degree of merit contained in but a single hair in a single pore on the surface of the Buddha's body. If one were in turn to combine the total accumulation of merit contained within all such pore hairs systems' or 'the lesser order of a thousand world systems', which means 1.000 to the power of one.

One thousand 'lesser order of a thousand world systems' constitute 'the middle order of a thousand world systems' or 'the second order of a thousand world systems', which means a thousand to the power of two or one million separate world systems.

One thousand 'middle order of a thousand world systems' make 'the large order of a thousand world systems' or 'the third order of a thousand world systems', also called 'the third order, the larger order of one thousand world systems', which means a thousand to the power of three or one billion separate word systems—a trichiliocosm. found on the Buddha's body and were to multiply this by one hundred, then this would represent the enormous scale of merit necessary to manifest just one of the eighty minor signs found on the body of the fully enlightened Buddha.

Were one then to again add up the total accumulation of merit represented by all of the Buddha's eighty minor signs taken together and were then to further multiply that by one thousand, this would illustrate the tremendous scale of merit required to manifest any one of the thirty-two major marks, except for the *curled hair between his eyebrows*, the ushnisha, and the Dharma conch.

Leaving aside these three final marks, if one were to combine the accumulation of merit that represents the other twenty-nine marks and multiply this by ten thousand, only then would there be the sufficient accumulation of merit necessary to manifest the curled hair between the Buddha's eyebrows. If we again multiply the merit contained in the curled hair between the Buddha's eyebrows by one hundred thousand, only then would there be a degree of merit sufficient to manifest the ushnisha which appears at the top of the Buddha's head. Finally, it would be necessary to multiply all the merit contained within the ushnisha by one trillion to accumulate the prodigious degree of merit necessary to manifest the Dharma conch, which actually refers to the voice or speech of the Buddha.

In general, each and every sentient being can comprehend and understand the Buddha's speech. All the words the Buddha speaks resound in the particular language of each being who hears him. What the Buddha teaches exactly accords with the state of mind and capacities of each listener. Whatever he says is clear, pleasant, soft, inspiring, and so on. Thus, the Buddha's voice is lauded as 'one voice with an ocean of facets'. As the body of the fully enlightened Buddha is endowed with perfection, whatever he does—whether walking, sitting, lying down, strolling, and even down to the slightest movement of one fine hair in a pore of his skin—will always benefit beings. It is taught that the Buddha himself is always in perfect harmony with the character, capacities, and thoughts of whoever beholds him.

For all other beings, the Buddha's mind can only be spoken of inferentially, indirectly, through deductive reasoning. No one other than another Buddha can directly comprehend the Buddha's mind. As Buddha Shakyamuni said,

“Except for me or those like me, beings should not fathom beings”. This statement means: except for Shakyamuni, or those like him who have attained Buddhahood, ordinary beings should not try to fathom the spiritual level of other beings, let alone attempt to discern the mind of a Buddha.

, the Buddha compared practitioners to the fruit of the mango tree: 1) Some practitioners are like mango fruits that are ripe on the outside but are not ripe on the inside. Some practitioners may externally appear to be exemplary monks or bodhisattvas, when, in fact, they are ridden with afflictions inside. 2) Some practitioners are like mango fruits that are ripe on the inside but have not yet ripened on the outside. Such practitioners will appear to be quite ordinary when they are in truth great bodhisattvas, endowed with immeasurable qualities. Such was the case with Shantideva. 3) Some practitioners are, on the other hand, likened to mango fruits that are neither ripe on the inside nor the outside. These are pseudo-practitioners, who outwardly display coarse behavior full of character defects while inwardly being overwhelmed with a gamut of afflictions such as aggression, jealousy, greed, and so forth. These ‘practitioners’ do not really look like practitioners, and, in fact, they are not. 4) Finally, some practitioners are like mango fruits that have ripened both on the inside and on the outside. Such is the case with great masters like Milarepa or Longchenpa. Outwardly, they live a life of impeccable virtue, abiding in the discipline and conduct of a monk or a bodhisattva. Internally, such masters are endowed with immense qualities of discipline, samadhi, and knowledge. As they are perfect in their conduct and in their qualities, people automatically revere them.

This illustrates that, having no means to judge other practitioners or to fathom the level of practice any other being may have reached, we should not judge others at all. Simply practicing pure perception toward them is far better.

Text section 50:

Here, Khenpo Kunpal continues introducing the qualities of the fully enlightened Buddha. The Buddha’s mind is utterly impartial, free of any subjective judgement or bias. The Buddha perceives not the slightest difference between a demon and a god, between a faithless person and the most devout. The Buddha’s mind knows everything, whether near to him or far from him. The Buddha always directly knows what every single being is doing, saying, and thinking at any given moment of time throughout the past, present, and future. Thus, when it is said that the Buddha is omniscient, this is literally true.

The Buddha is endowed with the *miraculous display of an all-communicating mind*. The Buddha manifests a miraculous display through his body, his voice, and his mind. The miraculous display of his body and voice appears through form and color, as for instance his tongue displaying emanations of multicolored rainbows. Through the all-communicating miraculous display of the Buddha's mind, he knows the outer as well as the inner conditions of the bodies and the minds of all sentient beings without exception.

When he teaches, Buddha presents the Dharma in a way that precisely accords with the *minds, capacities*, as well as all of the *latent tendencies* of each person present in his audience. Beings are classed as having high, average, or lesser capacities to understand the Dharma, and Buddha is able to teach the Dharma in a manner that corresponds exactly to each being's state of mind. Although those who constitute his audience are beings of vastly differing capacities, yet in the course of a single teaching session the Buddha can simultaneously guide each of those present in a manner appropriate to their level of understanding.

People's various mindsets and mental capacities are the direct result of the merit they may or may not have accumulated in former lifetimes. When we speak of the individual *capacities* unique to a particular person, this refers to the degree to which he possesses any of these following five capacities: 1) the capacity of faith, 2) the capacity of diligence, 3) the capacity of remembering, 4) the capacity of meditation, and 5) the capacity of knowledge.

Taken together, these five capacities enable an individual to truly practice virtue. Being endowed with these five capacities is no small accomplishment. Their presence in oneself indicates that one has practiced extensively in former lifetimes. For example, through the power of practicing meditation in former lifetimes, it is possible that one could realize the Dharmakaya at the very moment one hears the Buddha's teachings, or even at a moment of merely remembering the Buddha. On the other hand, a person of lesser capacities will require a far longer period of time to gain such realization and will be liberated from the cycle of rebirth only gradually. The term *capacity* is also used to refer, in a general way, to a person's 'physical and mental condition', particularly when speaking of the condition of his five sense organs.

Even a tiny insect will benefit to some degree from hearing the Buddha teach. In contrast, beings with impaired sense organs, such as the deaf or the blind, will as a consequence be unable to perceive various aspects of the Buddha's miraculous displays of body, speech, and mind. This obstruction of the sense faculties results from

a previous accumulation of negative deeds. It is said that the more acutely developed a being's sense organs are, the better will that being be able to absorb the Buddha's teachings.

What are the *latent tendencies* Khenpo Kunpal mentions here? Latent tendencies means 'hidden tendencies', because latent tendencies are highly deceptive. Latent tendencies function as a hidden agenda that both oneself and others generally tend to be unaware of. It often happens, for example, that a person's mind may be dominated by desire while expressing itself outwardly through anger.

Conversely, a person's mind may be dominated by anger and aggression and appear outwardly full of desire. All this illustrates how a person's latent tendencies often differ from their outward conduct. Such tendencies are frequently so deceptive that you can easily fail to observe them in yourself. Similarly, you can easily note that you sometimes have no idea what compels you to behave and to react in certain ways. Your habitual patterns, both positive and negative, may be quite obvious to others while remaining completely hidden from yourself. It also happens that when you appear to be expressing positive qualities, hidden negative tendencies and behavior patterns may be hiding in the Shadows of your being.

In contrast to these types of obscurations which sentient beings possess, the Buddha knows perfectly all the mental and physical dispositions, capacities, and latent tendencies of those in his audience. He clearly sees each being's hidden agenda; nothing can be hidden from the Buddha's wisdom mind.

In a single teaching, Buddha elucidates many vehicles of the Dharma to many types of beings. The Buddha never expounds the Hinayana teachings separately to an audience of lesser capacity, moving on to expound the Mahayana teachings to another audience of intermediate capacity, before finally presenting the Vajrayana teachings to an audience of the highest capacity. A further profound quality of the Buddha is that he is at no time in any way separated from all sentient beings. This is because the wisdom mind of the perfectly enlightened Buddha permeates the minds of all sentient beings throughout the three times, not excluding a single one. This is the result of having fully realized Buddha nature.

In fact, the dualistic minds of sentient beings have never for an instant been separated from their own inherent Buddha nature. Buddha nature is the very essence of the dualistic mind. The Buddha is one in whom the direct realization of the Buddha nature is fully awakened. The Buddha's activity is to awaken this realization of the Buddha nature within the experience of all sentient beings. This inevitable function of the

enlightened state means that as long as sentient beings exist in any of the infinite world systems, Buddhas will definitely continue to manifest on their behalf.

While the qualities of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind are inconceivable to the minds of beings, for their sake his teachings appear in their minds through the medium of words and letters. The individual listener's capacity is the only thing that ever limits the potential impact of the Buddha's teaching. As one might imagine, a tenth level bodhisattva will undoubtedly perceive a different depth of meaning in the Buddha's teaching than will an ordinary person. Thus, it is said the same teaching will be perceived on many different levels by different members of the Buddha's audience. In general, there are two ways of listening to the Buddha's teachings. First is to try to understand the words and their meaning. Secondly, and more important, is to try to understand how these teachings can actually benefit one's own mind, how they can be applied to one's mind and thus transform it.

An example of the first way of listening is that of a rich person who simply counts his money. The example of the second way of listening is that of a person who ponders how to use his money for some beneficial purpose. This helps us understand that the first style of learning characterizes pedantic scholars and intellectuals, while the latter is that of the genuine practitioner. The teachings of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism emphasize that the second manner of listening must be applied when receiving oral instructions from a master.

The Buddha performs miraculous displays in order to instill faith and trust in the minds of his audience. Only when faith and trust have developed can one really listen to the teachings with a properly attentive and suitably open mind. Merely listening to the teachings without faith and trust will inevitably cause many important elements of the teachings to remain hidden.

Text section 51:

Now we come to another sublime quality of the Buddha, the *miraculous display of universally-corresponding speech*. What this means is that the speech of the Buddha resounds in the mind of each of his listeners in their respective languages. Thus, the nagas will perceive the Buddha's teachings in naga language, the gods in the language of the gods, and humans in their own particular language or dialect.

Those who prefer a high-pitched voice will hear the Buddha's voice in that way, while those who prefer a low tone will hear the Buddha's voice resonate according to their

preference. The Buddha never needs a translator since he communicates directly with each being according to that being's culture, language, capacities, and needs.

The main point here is that the Buddha always teaches the Dharma in whatever way is appropriate to the unique needs of beings. Echoing this, the Tibetan master Gorampa described the Buddha's speech thus: "Sounds, words, and letters appear in the individual mind-streams of the audience due to the conditional basis of the Buddha's presence". This means that based on the wisdom power, the appropriate sounds, words, and letters of the Dharma naturally appear in the mind of each individual member of his audience. The moment beings come into the Buddha's presence, the Dharma arises spontaneously in their minds. This does not result from any effort on the Buddha's part; the Dharma simply manifests naturally in the mind-stream of any being included within his audience.

Furthermore, when people meet the Buddha, he always appears to be facing each member of the audience from their individual perspective. Even if the people are gathered all around the Buddha, each person will perceive himself to be sitting right in front of the Buddha. This is because the Buddha appears according to the wishes and expectations of each person who approaches him. Hence, to be accurate, if an individual wanted to see the face of the Buddha, he would see his face; by the same token, if someone wanted to see the Buddha from the back, he would definitely do so.

Due to the unusual fact that the Buddha communicates with various beings on multiple levels simultaneously, different accounts of the Buddha's life and teachings have come down to us. Even the most ordinary being could see a glowing halo of light surrounding the Buddha's body. However, some beings did at times perceive the Buddha to be ill or aging. This impression was nothing more than those beings' obscured or impure perception. The Buddha, as he is understood in the Mahayana tradition, is utterly unchanging wisdom. Mahayana practitioners never view the Buddha as a physical body subject to disease and aging. Whatever changes are perceived in the Buddha take place only in the viewer's subjective perception; the wisdom body of the Buddha is never subject to any kind of change.

Furthermore, the Buddha appears only due to his own aspirations coupled with the fortunate karma and aspirations of sentient beings. This mere appearance of the Buddha as it occurs in the minds of beings is not the 'Buddha' that Mahayana teachings refer to. Rather, what the Mahayana considers to be the Buddha is utterly unchanging wisdom. This wisdom is the 'basis for his appearance' in the perception of beings.

The Buddha's appearance in the mind of an ordinary being is the personal mental perception of that being. This is because the 'true Buddha' is beyond the reach of conceptual mind. Conceptual mind is always understood to be delusion. Hence, whatever a deluded mind perceives, even the appearance of the Buddha, must be understood to be deluded perception.

Again, the causes for the Buddha to appear within the deluded perception of beings are the auspicious coincidence of the Buddha's immeasurable aspirations in conjunction with the personal virtue, merit, and aspirations of deluded beings. If beings lack the substantial causal factor of merit resulting from virtuous karma, they will be unable to perceive the Buddha under any circumstances. Since the Buddha always appears in a manner precisely corresponding to the individual capacities and latent tendencies of each being, all beings will therefore have a different perception of the Buddha, unique to themselves. A bodhisattva on the second bodhisattva level will experience an entirely different impression of the Buddha than will a bodhisattva on the first bodhisattva level.

Nevertheless, all practitioners of the Buddha Dharma are said to be able to perceive the Dharmakaya of the Buddha: "Even after a Buddha has entered into nirvana, whoever studies, contemplates, and meditates on the sublime Dharma will perceive the Dharmakaya of the Buddha." In this statement the term 'Dharmakaya' connotes 'Dharma', the teachings of the Buddha.

When the Buddha taught at a certain time, in a certain place, to a particular audience, although many disciples were present at the same teaching, some received and understood a teaching of the Hinayana vehicle, while others heard a Mahayana teaching, and some even a Vajrayana teaching. This clearly illustrates how the Buddha, through the inconceivable qualities of his body, speech, and mind, is able to turn all three wheels of the Dharma simultaneously.

One should never think that the Buddha is in any way comparable to ordinary human beings. From the Mahayana point of view, the most important thing to understand when considering the Buddha is that the Buddha is wisdom. The Buddha is entirely wisdom with a wisdom body, a wisdom voice, and a wisdom mind. Buddha is synonymous with wisdom, and there is no true wisdom other than the Buddha. The fully enlightened Buddha has completely transcended fixating on a self and is consequently free from all afflictions. Afflictions arise only out of clinging to and grasping at a 'self'.

The Buddha teaches that six principal afflictions affect the mind-streams of sentient

beings. Whichever of these emotions predominates at a given time determines in which of the six realms of samsara a being will be reborn. Human beings mainly fixate upon desire. Celestial beings fixate on pride; asuras fixate on jealousy; pretas on stinginess; animals on dull stupidity; and beings of the hell realms on anger.

As mentioned, the Buddha's qualities appear in the form of specific marks and signs, due to his vast accumulation of merit during three incalculable aeons of endeavoring in the six transcendental perfections. The details of the marks and signs can be quite useful for a practitioner to know. For example, in the tradition of Mipham Rinpoche, when practicing a sadhana of Buddha Shakyamuni, one meditates specifically on the individual marks and signs in order to give rise to special qualities of samadhi, meditative absorption. For more details see 'The White Lotus', Mipham Rinpoche's commentary on his Buddha Shakyamuni sadhana.

The thirty-two excellent marks of a perfectly enlightened Buddha are:

1. Buddha's palms and soles are marked with a thousand-spoked wheel.
2. Buddha's soles are flat and even.
3. Buddha has webbing in the spaces between his fingers and toes.
4. Buddha's hands and feet are soft and tender.
5. Buddha's body has raised surfaces at seven places: the backs of the hands and feet, on both shoulders, and the back of his head.
6. Buddha's fingers and toes are fine and long.
7. Buddha's heels are wide and round.
8. Buddha's body is tall and upright.
9. Buddha's ankle bones and kneecaps do not protrude.
10. Buddha's body hair grows upwards.
11. Buddha's lower legs are round and full.
12. Buddha's arms are long and beautiful, reaching to his knees.
13. Buddha's penis is completely recessed.
14. Buddha's skin is like the color of gold, pure, fair, and shining attractively.
15. Buddha's skin is thin and soft.
16. Buddha's body hairs are fine and soft, and they curl clockwise.
17. Buddha has one curled hair between his eyebrows which is white, soft, tender, and which curls clockwise.
18. Buddha's upper body is broad like that of a lion.
19. Buddha's shoulders are rounded.
20. Buddha's back is smooth, with no indentation between the shoulder blades.
21. Buddha's tongue has the quality of being able to experience whatever he tastes as sublimely flavored.

22. Buddha's body is symmetrical like a banyan tree; the height of his body is equal to the span of his outstretched arms.
23. Buddha has a protuberance on his head, the ushnisha, which is round, black, and curled clockwise. It radiates such intense light that it cannot be gazed upon.
24. Buddha's tongue is long and beautiful and can reach every part of his face.
25. Buddha's voice has the sixty aspects of the melodious speech of Brahma.
26. Buddha's two jaws are beautiful, round, and full like the jaws of a lion.
27. Buddha's teeth are completely white.
28. Buddha's teeth are of equal length and width.
29. Buddha's rows of teeth are beautiful, with no space in between (the teeth).
30. Buddha has forty teeth, twenty above and twenty below.
31. Buddha's eyes are beautifully blue like a jewel and have the following properties:
1) his pupils are black, 2) his eyeballs are white, 3) the corners of his eyes have a red hue, 4) his irises are blue on the periphery and yellow at the center.
32. Buddha's upper and lower eyelashes are individually distinct.

The eighty minor signs are: The three signs of his nails, hands, and feet are:

1. Buddha's nails are reddish like the color of copper.
2. Buddha's nails are shiny.
3. Buddha's nails are raised in the center, being neither flat nor indented.

The three signs of his fingers are:

4. Buddha's fingers are round.
5. Buddha's fingers are wide.
6. Buddha's fingers are tapered.

The two signs of his veins are:

7. Buddha's veins are not visible.
8. Buddha's veins are not knotted.

The three signs of his feet are:

9. Buddha's ankle bones are not visible.
10. Buddha's feet are equal in size.
11. Buddha's stride is equidistant.

The seven signs of his manner of walking are:

12. Buddha walks like a lion, outshining all human beings.
13. Buddha walks like an elephant, outshining all naga beings.
14. Buddha walks like a flying swan.
15. Buddha walks like a leader who conducts his entourage wherever he desires.
16. Buddha walks naturally to the right when circumambulating and he always keeps others to his right.
17. Buddha's walk is beautiful and appealing.

18. Buddha walks upright, not bent over.

The three signs of his head are:

19. Buddha's head is round and wide like an umbrella.

20. Buddha's hairline is well-distinguished.

21. Buddha's forehead is large and wide.

The six signs of his hair are:

22. Buddha's hair is black.

23. Buddha's hair is beautiful.

24. Buddha's hair is soft.

25. Buddha's hair does not hang down in a disheveled fashion.

26. Buddha's hair is neither Shaggy nor coarse.

27. Buddha's hair is fragrant.

The five signs of his eyes are:

28. Buddha's eyes are elongated and open.

29. Buddha's eyes are beautiful, the white and black parts being clearly distinct from one another.

30. Buddha's eyes are flawless, without any defect or irregular lines.

31. Buddha's eyes are utterly clear, giving no impairment to his vision.

32. Buddha's eyes are attractive, with beautiful eyelashes.

The four signs of his eyebrows are:

33. Buddha's eyebrows are long.

34. Buddha's eyebrows have soft hairs.

35. Buddha's eyebrows have a sheen.

36. Buddha's eyebrows have hairs of uniform length.

The two signs of his ears are:

37. Buddha's ears are of equal length and size.

38. Buddha's hearing capacity never declines.

The two signs of his nose are:

39. Buddha's nose is prominent.

40. Buddha's nose is perfectly clean.

The two signs of his face are:

41. Buddha's face is well-proportioned.

42. Buddha's lips are red and clear.

The three signs of his tongue are:

43. Buddha's tongue is flexible.

44. Buddha's tongue is thin.

45. Buddha's tongue is red.

The five signs of his teeth are:

46. Buddha's corner teeth are round.

47. Buddha's teeth are Sharp.

48. Buddha's teeth are white.

49. Buddha's teeth are of equal size.

50. Buddha's teeth are tapered.

The two signs of his voice are:

51. Buddha's voice is charismatic.

52. Buddha's voice is gentle and soft, without any stuttering.

The two signs of his hands are:

53. Buddha's hands are long and wide.

54. Buddha's hands are soft.

The three signs of lines on his palms are:

55. Buddha's palm lines are clear and radiant.

56. Buddha's palm lines are deeply engraved.

57. Buddha's palm lines are long and unbroken.

The ten general signs of his physical qualities are:

58. Buddha's body moves with the right measure of flexibility and grace.

59. Buddha's body is well-proportioned, being neither too tall nor too short, neither too fat nor too thin.

60. Buddha's body possesses all the thirty-two marks clearly and perfectly.

61. Buddha's body possesses long and beautiful limbs, as he is tall.

62. Buddha's body is very youthful.

63. Buddha's body is soft, without the faintest blemishes.

64. Buddha's body is not impaired by defects such as thinness.

65. Buddha's body is fully-fleshed.

66. Buddha's body is not slack, but composed.

67. Buddha's body has clear distinctions, because his physical components are wellproportioned.

The four signs that indicate the qualities of his flawless body are:

- 68. Buddha's body has no moles or blackheads.
- 69. Buddha's body is utterly pure, without any trace of unattractiveness.
- 70. Buddha's body is free of stains such as eye secretions, tooth plaque, and the like.
- 71. Buddha's body is naturally clean, even without bathing.

The four signs of his lower body are:

- 72. Buddha's waist is round, including his buttocks and hips.
- 73. Buddha's small waist accentuates his body.
- 74. Buddha's waist is not elongated.
- 75. Buddha's belly is even, without any distinction of upper and lower.

The two signs of his belly are:

- 76. Buddha's navel is deeply recessed.
- 77. Buddha's navel coils clockwise.

The three signs that indicate the qualities of his general conduct are:

- 78. Buddha's conduct in body, speech, and mind is pure.
- 79. Buddha's behavior is always pleasant to see.
- 80. Buddha attracts every person who merely sees the eighty signs or auspicious designs on his body.

In addition to the thirty-two major marks and the eighty minor signs are also the 'eighty auspicious designs' that are displayed upon the Buddha's body. These include the knot of infinity, the curling swastika, the square, the vajra, the lotus, the conch shell, the horse, the streamers, and so forth.

Through the course of his previous lifetimes, Shakyamuni Buddha totally abandoned the four non-virtuous actions of speech: lying, sowing discord, harsh speech, and worthless chatter. Throughout his path as a bodhisattva, Shakyamuni always spoke the truth, never failed to sow seeds of harmony rather than discord, was soft and gentle in speech and never harsh or hostile, and always spoke meaningful words rather than frivolous, idle chatter. As a result of his ceaseless practice of virtuous speech, the Buddha attained the 'melodious speech endowed with sixty aspects'. These sixty qualities of the Buddha's speech far transcend and outshine even the speech of the supreme god, Brahma, whose speech is also said to be endowed with sixty aspects.

The sixty aspects of the Buddha's speech:

1. Buddha's speech is inspiring, instigating roots of virtue in all sentient beings who hear him.
2. Buddha's speech is soft, causing bliss when heard.
3. Buddha's speech is appealing, teaching what to adopt and what to avoid.
4. Buddha's speech is attractive, as his pronunciation is perfect.
5. Buddha's speech is pure, as his motivation is virtuous.
6. Buddha's speech is flawless, as his motivation is free from afflictions.
7. Buddha's speech is articulate, as his words and syllables are clearly enunciated.
8. Buddha's speech is captivating, dispelling wrong views.
9. Buddha's speech is worthy, showing the method of renunciation.
10. Buddha's speech is indomitable, dispelling improper talk.
11. Buddha's speech is pleasant, generating a joyous state of mind in the listener.
12. Buddha's speech is calming, showing the remedy for attachment.
13. Buddha's speech is refined, being neither exhausting nor tiresome.
14. Buddha's speech is not coarse, pleasantly teaching how to avoid mistakes.
15. Buddha's speech is extremely taming, as he teaches the three vehicles.
16. Buddha's speech is appropriate, as it dispels obstacles and distraction.
17. Buddha's speech brings satisfaction to the body due to his pure Shamatha and vipashyana.
18. Buddha's speech brings satisfaction to the mind due to his pure Shamatha and vipashyana.
19. Buddha's speech is delightful, dispelling doubts.
20. Buddha's speech creates happiness, dispelling wrong views and uncertainty.
21. Buddha's speech is without sorrow, freeing from regrets.
22. Buddha's speech facilitates insight, generating perfect knowledge when heard.
23. Buddha's speech is comprehensible, supporting perfect knowledge through reflection.
24. Buddha's speech is illuminating, as he teaches without being secretive.
25. Buddha's speech generates joy, as it amplifies the qualities one has already attained.
26. Buddha's speech is utterly enjoyable, as it generates qualities one has not previously attained.
27. Buddha's speech brings comprehension, as he teaches in a profound manner.
28. Buddha's speech leads to full understanding, as he teaches extensively.
29. Buddha's speech is reasonable, as he speaks logically.
30. Buddha's speech is relevant, as he connects to the minds of beings when he teaches.
31. Buddha's speech is not repetitive, as it is free from the flaw of repeating something in the same way.
32. Buddha's speech is like the roar of a lion, as it brings fear to those who come to

argue with him.

33. Buddha's speech is like the sound of an elephant, as it reaches his entire entourage.
34. Buddha's speech is like the sound of a dragon, as it possesses a deep resonance.
35. Buddha's speech is like the voice of the naga king, as it is not contentious and it is worth remembering.
36. Buddha's speech is like the voice of the gandharvas , as it is pleasant and captivating.
37. Buddha's speech is like the song of the kalapinga bird, as it is fluent, understandable, devastating and undefeatable in debate.
38. Buddha's speech is like the melodious voice of Brahma, resounding far into the distance.
39. Buddha's speech is like the auspicious song of the Shang Shang bird, transforming every undertaking into an auspicious omen.
40. Buddha's speech is like the voice of Devendra, as his words are noble.
41. Buddha's speech is like the sound of celestial drum, as it is victorious over all maras.
42. Buddha's speech is not boastful, as he is without afflictions even when praised.
43. Buddha's speech is not crushed when he is slandered.
44. Buddha's speech is correct in all expressions, as nothing he says needs correction and everything he says accords with grammar.
45. Buddha's speech is such that all his words are uncorrupted, as his mindfulness never decreases.
46. Buddha's speech never lacks anything, as at all times and circumstances his actions benefit beings, and he accomplishes the wishes of beings.
47. Buddha's speech is without flattery, as he has no craving for gain, honor, or the like.
48. Buddha's speech is not timid, as he is free from the fear of embarrassment before his entourage.
49. Buddha's speech is supremely joyful, as he expounds the Dharma without becoming tired or weary.
50. Buddha's speech encompasses all topics, as he is learned in all fields of knowledge.
51. Buddha's speech is free from rigidity, as he brings understanding to all beings out of his great kindness, caring even for those with no roots of virtue.
52. Buddha's speech is uninterrupted, as he teaches constantly and continuously.
53. Buddha's speech is rich and majestic, as he brings understanding regarding many subjects.
54. Buddha's speech has perfected all languages, as each of his words manifests in the respective language of each member of his audience, human and non-human.
55. Buddha's speech satisfies the senses, as he elucidates every topic each person wants to know.
56. Buddha's speech is not inferior, as whatever he says is blameless.
57. Buddha's speech is unchanging, as he teaches for the benefit of others, never at the wrong moment but always at the appropriate time.

58. Buddha's speech is not rushed, as he never speaks in a hurry nor does he omit words by talking too fast.
59. Buddha's speech fully resounds through the entire assembly, as everyone hears him with equal clarity, regardless of being near to him or far from him.
60. Buddha's speech is endowed with the supreme of all aspects, as he can perfectly communicate any point through analogy drawn from the physical world.

Text section 52-55

Having surveyed the qualities displayed by a Buddha teacher when he teaches, as well as having considered how the minds of those in the Buddha's audience respond to the Buddha's qualities, we come next to how an arhat teacher expounds the Dharma. Most importantly, an arhat teacher adheres to a special *three-fold purity* when expounding the Dharma. This three-fold purity depends on the *pure capacity of the listener*, the *pure speech of the teacher*, and the *pure topic of the discourse*. What does the pure capacity of the listener refer to? If the student is not suitable, an arhat teacher will not teach the Dharma. The phrase *if the mind-stream (of the listener) is a suitable vessel* means that the student is an appropriate vessel for the teachings, that he has the capacity to understand them. The arhat teacher knows exactly what sort of teachings will best benefit a qualified student.

Initially, an arhat teacher examines the students to discover whether or not they may be proper vessels for receiving teachings. An arhat is able to directly perceive the minds of others through supernatural perception. This clairvoyant knowing of others' minds is the supreme manner of examination. For one lacking such higher capacities, the next best way of examining students is to observe their conduct. The third and least effective way is to examine people by questioning them. In these ways the arhat teacher can see for himself directly whether or not the mind of the student is suitable to receive the Dharma.

Nevertheless, the limitless wisdom-knowledge of a Buddha teacher far surpasses the arhat teacher's supernatural perception of the minds of others. For example, an arhat must first enter into meditative samadhi; only then can he discern the minds of others. The limitless wisdom-knowledge of a Buddha teacher knows everything simultaneously at all times.

What is meant by the pure speech of an arhat teacher? An arhat is 'someone who has defeated the (inner) foes of afflictions through realizing the selflessness of personal identity. Having overcome the obscurations of afflictions, an arhat has been freed from the gross levels of ignorance, attachment, aversion, pride, and jealousy. An arhat's

speech and words are utterly pure, never mingled with afflictions, since his mind has been freed from the subjective bias of afflictions. The arhat can speak of nothing other than the Dharma; even if requested, he would not engage in mundane conversation about worldly matters. An arhat has not, however, fully extinguished ignorance. Since he has not yet realized the selflessness of phenomena, he still retains a subtle ignorance.

Concerning the pure topic of his discourse, the third aspect of the three-fold purity observed by an arhat teacher, since an arhat has the *dharani of perfect recollection*—the capacity to remember perfectly the Dharma teachings he has heard—he can repeat verbatim the teachings spoken by the Buddha. An arhat neither adds any element of his own nor omits anything from the teachings he has heard; further, he is never mistaken or confused about the meaning of the teachings. Hearing the Dharma from an arhat teacher is to hear authentic words that the arhat himself heard in the presence of the Buddha. This authenticity has always been safeguarded because the Buddha's teachings have been handed down from arhat to arhat, through the generations of the heirs to the doctrine.

The arhats are also called 'listeners' or *shravakas*, because they 'hear' and 'listen' to the Buddha's teachings. As they have first listened to and then proclaimed the teachings to others, they are also called 'listeners' and 'proclaimers'. Arhats repeat only the words of the Buddha. In this way, we can see that when an arhat teaches, all three purities are fully present. Traditionally, arhats recite the Buddha's words repeatedly to themselves, contemplating the meaning again and again. Internalizing teachings in this way through pondering their meaning, the content of the teachings remains with them at all times. This is what is meant by their thoroughly 'familiarizing' themselves with the teachings.

This sequence of absorbing the teachings is generally known as listening, contemplating, and gaining familiarity; also commonly called study, contemplation, and meditation. The word 'meditation' denotes 'familiarization'. Through this sequential approach arhats gain realization and can accurately pass the teachings on to their students. This rigorous standard of training has led to Buddhism's great scholastic tradition, which has been retained to the present day.

Even in these times, teachers of Buddhism ought to follow the example of the arhat as a model for their own teaching. This is the most respectful way to present the teachings of the Buddha. The authenticity and integrity of the Buddha's teaching are definitely preserved; neither is anything added nor is a single detail of the Buddha's complete teaching omitted.

The term 'turning of the wheel of Dharma' refers both to the Buddha's original transmission of the Dharma and to the ancient method of passing on the genuine content of the Buddha's teachings. At the time of the Buddha, the teachings were not written down but were transmitted from mouth to ear and committed to memory by those who had heard them. The Buddha taught the entire three pitakas,¹³⁶⁸ and his arhat students retained everything in their minds. This they faithfully passed on to their students, who in turn preserved them intact in their minds, passing them on to their students. This precious oral transmission of the authentic teachings of the Buddha passed from master to student in an unbroken lineage can rightly be called the 'turning of the wheel of Dharma'.

Text section 56-61:

Now Khenpo Kunpal explains four reasons why the teaching capacity of an arhat teacher is inferior to that of a Buddha teacher, since arhats cannot teach in the three miraculous ways, which are possible only for the Buddha himself:

1. In text section 57 Khenpo Kunpal explains that arhats do not know what is occurring in very *distant places*. An arhat's limited supernatural perception only pervades 'the second order of thousand world systems', meaning one thousand world systems to the power of two, within a trichiliocosm. A pratyekaBuddha can reportedly perceive the events within an entire trichiliocosm, meaning one thousand world systems to the power of three. The Buddha, however, can perceive in actuality every detail within countless trichiliocosms throughout the three times.

When the mother of Buddha's main student *Maudgalyayana* passed away, Maudgalyayana tried to locate her place of rebirth through supernatural insight. Unable to see where she had been reborn, he went to the Buddha, who told him that his mother had been reborn in a very distant Buddha field called Marici.

2. The second reason that an arhat's teaching capacity is inferior to that of the Buddha is that arhats are ignorant about *distant times*. The noble *Shariputra* could not see any merit, any seed for liberation, in the mind of the old *householder Shrija*; yet the Buddha was able to explain to Shariputra that Shrija had accumulated some merit many aeons previously. Shariputra's supernatural perception was simply not powerful enough to see so far back into Shrija's past lives.

3. The third reason arhats lack the teaching abilities of the Buddha is that arhats are ignorant regarding the virtually unfathomable nature of cause and effect. Thus, they are unable to precisely determine the causes and conditions of something as minor as each

individual particle of a single body hair. They cannot fathom the endless sequence of causes leading to the existence of that single hair. Nor do arhats know what will happen to this hair in the future, not to mention the future of each particle of that hair, such as what will become of each particle after the hair itself has decomposed.

This is what the statement: *unfathomable results that come from unfathomable causes* means. The true nature of both causes and results is unfathomable for arhats. Only the Buddha is able to see the subtle causes that lead to a *single spot of color* on a peacock's feather. The Buddha can clearly see every detail that has contributed to the unique Shape and color of the spot on the peacock's feather. On one occasion, some people brought the Buddha the ashes of various pieces of brocade that had been burned, asking him to identify their origins. Based on the ashes alone, the Buddha recounted every detail of the brocade and its owners. On another occasion, some householders brought the Buddha different types of rice, and he told them exactly where each variety had come from and to whom it belonged.

4. Finally, the fourth reason is that arhats actually lack most of the Buddha's qualities, such as the *ten powers*, the *four kinds of fearlessness*, the *eighteen non-associated qualities*, and so forth. All of these are wisdom qualities, not physical powers, and they are among the Buddha's special qualities, distinguishing him from an arhat. Not even a tenth level bodhisattva possesses the eighteen non-associated qualities.

To further detail some of these qualities of the Buddha, the Dharmakaya of the Buddha is said to possess twenty-one categories of non-defiling qualities. These are enumerations of the Buddha's wisdom qualities. Among them are the *ten powers of the Tathagata*:

1. The power of knowing what is accurate and what is inaccurate. A Buddha knows the specific cause of a specific result, thus knowing for himself the truth that virtue leads to happiness and not to suffering. A Buddha knows exactly which cause brings which result. Whatever there is to know, everywhere and at all times, a Buddha knows in one instant, clearly and without impediment.
2. The power of knowing the ripening of karma.
A Buddha knows the individual karmas of all beings, be they virtuous or nonvirtuous, defiling or non-defiling, and he further knows how all of these karmas will ripen.
3. The power of knowing the different kinds of dispositions and characters of beings.

4. The power of knowing the different inclinations of beings. A Buddha knows the individual likes and dislikes of all beings.
5. The power of knowing the various Sharp and dull capacities of beings. A Buddha knows perfectly the individual capacities of beings.
6. The power of knowing where all the different paths lead. A Buddha knows the paths that lead to the higher forms of rebirth and the paths that lead to liberation and omniscience. He knows the necessary causes as well as the methods that enable beings to traverse all the different paths.
7. The power of knowing all the different forms of concentration. A Buddha knows all forms of concentration, those which are still entangled in the afflictions as well as those that are free from afflictions. He knows the reasons, the methods, and the results of all possible forms of concentration.
8. The power of remembering the former existences of himself and others. A Buddha knows the previous births of all sentient beings.
9. The power of knowing all the births and deaths of beings in the past and where they will take birth in the future. A Buddha knows through the divine eye when and where each being has died and taken rebirth throughout their past, present, and future lives.
10. The power of knowing the exhaustion of all defilements and the path to reach such exhaustion. Only a Buddha has realized the ultimate fruition, the exhaustion of all obscurations, afflictive as well as cognitive. A Buddha also knows how to guide others on the path that leads to the exhaustion of all defilements.

The twenty-one categories of the non-defiling qualities of the Buddha's Dharmakaya also include the *four kinds of fearlessness*. After Buddha attained enlightenment, Mara, the evil one, raised doubts in the face of the Buddha's enlightenment. Buddha touched the earth with the fingertips of his right hand in the mudra of fearlessness and called upon the Earth Deity as his witness, proclaiming the lion's roar: "I have gained perfect enlightenment!" The Earth Deity bore witness to the truth of this statement of the Buddha.

The four kinds of fearlessness are:

1. A Buddha is fearless in proclaiming the perfect realization which benefits himself , saying, "I have perfectly realized all there is to know."
2. A Buddha is fearless in proclaiming the perfect overcoming which benefits himself, saying, "I have overcome all there is to overcome, such as the two obscurations together with their habitual tendencies." These two proclamations truthfully state how a Buddha has benefited himself.
3. A Buddha is fearless in showing the path of renunciation and liberation which benefits others, saying, "Through the paths of realizing egolessness and so forth, my students can reach the level of liberation."
4. A Buddha is fearless in showing the obstacles on the path in order to benefit others, saying, "The afflictions such as attachment and so forth are the obstacles on the path." These two proclamations truthfully state how a Buddha benefits others. No one of great stature in this world, be it a god, a mara, the knowledgeable Brahma, a brahmin, or anyone else can say in accordance with the Dharma concerning these proclamations, "It is not like this." Because the Buddha is beyond dispute, he proclaimed to his entourage, like a lion, without fear or inhibition, the lion's roar.

Thus, in accordance with the truth, the Buddha has stated: 1) "I have gained omniscience"; 2) "I am free of all defects"; 3) "The path that I teach leads to liberation"; and 4) "Afflictions are the obstacles that prevent liberation." Since the Buddha has gained utter certainty, he has no hesitation or fear to speak the truth and teach the Dharma accordingly.

The twenty-one categories of the non-defiling qualities of the Buddha's Dharmakaya also include the *eighteen non-associated qualities*:

The six non-associated qualities concerning his conduct:

1. The Tathagata's physical conduct is without delusion.
2. The Tathagata's speech is without unnecessary sounds.
3. The Tathagata's memory is without failure.
4. The Tathagata's mind never leaves equanimity.
5. The Tathagata is without various concepts.
6. The Tathagata is without an undiscerning equanimity.

The six non-associated qualities concerning his realization

7. The Tathagata's aspiration is without degeneration. His aspirations for the lineage holders of the Dharma and the benefit of all sentient beings never degenerate.
8. The Tathagata's diligence is without degeneration. His diligence is joyful for the benefit of others.
9. The Tathagata's awareness is without degeneration. His awareness never loses the vision of all phenomena exactly as they are.
10. The Tathagata's wisdom-knowledge is without degeneration. He never loses his wisdom-knowledge of clear discernment.
11. The Tathagata's samadhi is without degeneration.
12. The Tathagata's perfect liberation is without degeneration. His wisdom is utterly freed from all obscurations.

The three non-associated qualities concerning his activity:

13. All the activities of the Tathagata's body are preceded by wisdom and followed by wisdom.
14. All the activities of the Tathagata's speech are preceded by wisdom and followed by wisdom
15. All the activities of the Tathagata's mind are preceded by wisdom and followed by wisdom. Thus, all activities of his body, speech, and mind are in all circumstances and at all times meaningful.

The three non-associated qualities concerning time:

16. The Tathagata has entered into the unobscured and unhindered wisdom perception in regard to the past.
17. The Tathagata has entered into the unobscured and unhindered wisdom perception in regard to the future.
18. The Tathagata has entered into the unobscured and unhindered wisdom perception in regard to the present.

Thus, he knows everything throughout all times.

As can be seen from the description of the qualities of a Buddha quoted above, the Buddha's sublime qualities of overcoming and realization vastly transcend the qualities of arhats. A Buddha has perfected every possible quality that needs to be perfected, has overcome every fault that needs to be overcome, and has realized the totality of

everything that can possibly be realized. A Buddha has fully perfected every aspect of body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities. He has reached the end, as for a Buddha there is nothing left to accomplish or perfect. A Buddha is like a vase perfectly filled with nectar. These examples show the degree to which a Buddha's realizations and qualities surpass those of the shravakas, pratyekaBuddhas, and bodhisattvas. Although these latter have reached extremely worthy states of attainment, nevertheless, they still have not perfected all there is to realize, nor have they overcome all there is to overcome.

Text sections 62-63:

Having surveyed how a Buddha teacher and an arhat teacher expound the Dharma, Khenpo Kunpal goes on to address the manner of exposition of a learned pandita teacher. In traditional Buddhist India, panditas were the product of the great classical institutions of Buddhist learning, the two most renowned being the Buddhist universities of Nalanda and Vikramashila. The tradition of the Early Translation School traces itself back to the university of Nalanda, which produced such illustrious scholars as the incomparable Nagarjuna. Among the masters who brought Buddhism to Tibet, many of them, such as Shantarakshita and Guru Rinpoche, were panditas who had graduated from Nalanda.

Panditas from Nalanda had a particular style of explication of the direct and authentic words of the Buddha, which was known as the *five-fold excellence*. Furthermore, they possessed a unique method of analysis that they applied to the treatises written about the Buddha's teachings, which was known as the 'five types of preliminary assessment'.

The first of these, the *five-fold excellence*, refers to the following: (1) the excellent teaching, (2) the excellent teacher, (3) the excellent place, (4) the excellent entourage, and (5) the excellent time. Teaching the Dharma according to these five excellences ensures the teaching's authenticity.

Text section 64-65:

Just as the panditas from Nalanda were famous for their unique style of exposition, the panditas from Vikramashila were also famous for their method of explaining the Buddha's words. The first step in their teaching method was *transforming the listeners into proper vessels*. At the beginning, they would give teachings and instructions that served to prepare the minds of their listeners to receive the teachings in the proper manner.

The panditas of Vikramashila would next present the *classification of the doctrine* by means of the *twofold certainty*: establishing the certainty that what was being taught had actually been spoken by the Buddha; and establishing the certainty that what was being taught was the genuine and sublime Dharma. In this way, they established the authenticity of both the teacher and the teaching. While the tradition of the teaching style of Nalanda has been maintained down to the present day, the teaching style of Vikramashila no longer exists within Tibetan Buddhism.

Text section 66:

Khenpo Kunpal here applies the second method of analysis that developed at Nalanda to the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. As the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is not the direct words of the Buddha but a treatise on the Buddha's teachings, Khenpo Kunpal's commentary on it has to follow the 'five types of preliminary assessment' according to the Nalanda tradition. When someone composed or taught a treatise at Nalanda on the words of the Buddha, his composition was subjected to five questions:

1. Which author composed it (the treatise)?
2. Upon which scriptures does it draw?
3. Under which category is it classified?
4. What is the brief meaning (of the treatise) from beginning to end?
5. For whose benefit and for what purpose was it composed?

Text section 67:

In answer to the first question, regarding who composed the treatise, the author's qualification must be established. *Three criteria for composing a treatise* are required. At best, the author needs to have realized the view of the natural state. Next best, he should have had a vision of his personal meditation deity. At the very least, the author must be learned in the five or ten sciences.

The most eminently qualified, the superior type, are masters who have realized the view of the natural state, masters such as Nagarjuna and Asanga. The intermediate degree of authority belongs to masters who received permission to write treatises directly from their meditation deities, masters like Dignaga and Candragomin. The lesser category includes masters learned in the five sciences and possessing the instructions of the lineage masters, masters such as Shrigupta and Shakyamati. What are commonly known as the ten sciences are the five greater sciences and the five lesser sciences. The five greater sciences are: 1) the science of arts, 2) medical science, 3) the science of linguistics, 4) the science of logic, and 5) the science of inner meaning,

which is Buddhist philosophy as taught in the tripitaka. The first four of these sciences are also called the 'four common sciences'.

The five lesser sciences are: 1) poetics, 2) synonymics, 3) prosody, 4) drama, and 5) astrology. To be learned in the inner sciences means that an author of a Buddhist treatise should be learned in both sutra and tantra. The purpose of knowing all the sciences is to be able to help all sentient beings through all fields of knowledge. Every educated person in India, right up to princes and princesses, aspired to learn the five greater sciences.¹³⁷⁸ Knowledge of the sciences enables one to benefit one's own body, speech, and mind as well as those of others.

Shantideva fulfills all of the above three criteria and is thus supremely qualified to expound the Dharma. Shantideva was a noble being dwelling on the exalted levels of the bodhisattvas. He had realized the view of the natural state. He had repeatedly met face to face his meditation deity, Bodhisattva Manjushri, also called Manjughosha or Manjushrighosha, and had received teachings on the tripitaka and the five sciences directly from Manjushri himself. If any author of a Buddhist text fails to fulfill at least one of these three criteria, whatever he writes about the Dharma is considered to be poisonous and will harm other beings instead of benefiting them.

Therefore, when you meet someone who writes about Buddhism, ask them, "Have you studied the five sciences, the sutras and tantras?" If the answer is yes, continue asking, "Have you had the vision of your yidam?" If the answer is again yes, you know he has practiced meditation intensely. If, in addition to that, he has realized the view of the natural state, he is both a true master and a great scholar. To have realized the view of the natural state means that one has at the very least reached the first bodhisattva level. Everyone who has reached the exalted state of a noble being, who has reached the first bodhisattva level or even higher states, is authorized to write treatises and commentaries on the words of the Buddha. If the author of a treatise fulfills all three criteria for composing texts, his writing will truly benefit beings. If an author fulfills only one or two of the criteria, his writing will still be beneficial, but its impact and effect on sentient beings' behavior will be less.

What is it, then, that allows one to benefit beings through Buddhist writings? The main force behind a truly beneficial treatise or commentary is the blessing power of the natural state; this is the source of the blessings of the Buddha which benefit sentient beings. Intellectually constructed treatises are merely the fabrications of dry scholasticism and so cannot benefit beings significantly.

In these times, it seems that a flood of Buddhist writings is coming out of the West, unfortunately stemming from authors who do not fulfill even a single one of the three criteria. Books of this nature do not serve the Dharma but chiefly contribute only to the fame or notoriety of the author.

Even at a great institution of authentic Buddhist learning such as Nalanda University, which housed so many scholars, not every scholar would write treatises on Buddhism, or even on one of the sciences. But if a treatise were to be written, the author was required to present and defend his treatise before all the scholars of the university. If he passed the critical examination, his treatise would be placed on the back of a decorated elephant and conducted about in a solemn procession. If the author failed the examination, the treatise would be labeled as “worthy to be tied to the tail of a dog and set on fire.” That means: “This treatise is as valuable as dog poop. Better burn it quickly!”

Moving to the scriptural sources of the teaching, the second preliminary assessment, it must be established that the treatise accords with the teachings of the Buddha. Concerning the category of the treatise, the third preliminary assessment, the treatise must be classified as belonging to either the Hinayana or Mahayana teachings. The fourth point of preliminary assessment requires a summary of the overall meaning; the author must state the meaning and import of the treatise in brief. In response to the fifth preliminary assessment, the author must indicate both whom the text is to benefit and must state the purpose of the treatise. If the treatise is found to have no benefit and no real purpose, it is established that there was no reason to have written it in the first place.

Text section 68:

Khenpo Kunpal now recounts Shantideva’s life story in *seven amazing episodes*, which are also mentioned in Buton’s history.¹³⁷⁹ These are:

1. Pleasing his supreme meditation deity.
2. His perfect display of activity at Nalanda.
3. Preventing a war.
4. Taming those who held strange views.
5. Taming the beggars.
6. Taming the king.
7. Taming the tirthikas.

Text section 69:

The first episode in Shantideva's exemplary life describes how he came to please his *supreme meditation deity*. Shantideva was born as the son of King Kalyanavarnam and was named Shantivarnam. From his earliest youth he had a natural *inclination toward the Mahayana family*. Those fortunate ones who are inclined toward the Mahayana family are blessed with vast minds and vast aspirations. Also, those with such an inclination are by nature not fearful of the meaning of profound emptiness. They labor joyfully for the benefit of others, motivated by great compassion, being compassionate by nature. In this context, the term 'affinity' or 'inclination' connotes the character of the individual. People with a natural inclination toward the Hinayana family are people who by nature are, for the most part, interested in their own happiness, without particularly rejoicing in benefiting others. In this sense, their minds and their aspirations are limited.

Even if they are instructed in profound emptiness, they will be unable to understand what is being spoken of. In contrast, those inclined toward the Mahayana family are filled with interest and delight the moment they so much as hear the term 'profound emptiness'. People's natural affinity with or inclination toward the Dharma can be toward either the Hinayana or the Mahayana. When the virtuous karma of such beings has sufficiently ripened, they will 'awaken to their own affinity' and have the opportunity to perceive the Buddha and receive his teachings.

The phrase to 'awaken to one's Mahayana affinity' means to awaken into the Mahayana family, progressing from first entering into the primary stages of the path of accumulation up to the primary stages of the path of seeing. Practitioners on these stages are those who have genuinely developed relative bodhicitta in their minds. The phrase to 'attain the fruition of the Mahayana' refers to those who actually dwell on the first to the tenth bodhisattva levels.

The first episode of Shantideva's biography mentions that he first studied *science* and *art*. As mentioned before, 'science' here refers to the ten sciences, which are the five greater sciences and the five lesser sciences. 'Art' refers to the sixty-four arts: the thirty skills, the eighteen arts of musical instruments, the seven harmonious tones, and the nine expressions of dance.

As part of the background to this episode of how Shantideva came to please his supreme meditation deity, we are told that Shantideva received the initiation, reading transmission, and meditation instructions on a Manjushri practice called *tikshna-Manjushri-sadhana* from a kusulu, a *beggar yogin*. Shantideva practiced this sadhana in secret with great diligence and endeavor, and he beheld many direct visions of

Bodhisattva Manjushri. For further details about Shantideva's studies with this beggar yogin, see Vibhutipandita's version of the biography below in the commentary to text section 93.

In Mahayana Buddhism, one's personal meditation deity is called a 'special deity'; this is identical in meaning with the Vajrayana Buddhist term 'yidam deity'. Among the countless forms of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities, practitioners will generally commit themselves to one special deity with whom they share a personal connection. Regardless of whether one practices Mahayana, Vajrayana, or Dzogchen, a practitioner must rely on a special deity, on a yidam.

This is necessary since practitioners need an object of devotion in order to develop their faith. One would not expect beginners to be able to develop devotion without an object of faith toward which to focus their prayers. In Mahayana Buddhism, one need not necessarily practice a formal sadhana. Simply visualizing one's special deity and supplicating that deity is sufficient. Through the student's devotion, the deity's blessing will descend, filling the student's heart. Relying on blessing is a special and highly valued skillful means through which genuine bodhicitta and authentic realization will dawn in the student's mind.

We are told that in ancient India practitioners had a single yidam which they practiced throughout their entire lives. They would guard the secrecy of their yidam to the utmost. Traditionally, it is said that if you tell others the name of your yidam, your spiritual accomplishments will vanish. On the other hand, if you refuse to tell anyone about your practice, you will gain the accomplishments very quickly. Following this example from the old masters is most beneficial. Following their example, do not even disclose the name of your root guru. Ideally, your yidam, your mantra, and your root guru should be kept secret. If possible, they should not be revealed, even to your spouse or your friends.

Some people seem to think that receiving the transmission of more yidam practices means they can acquire more and more blessings. When the Indian master Ati Sha came to Tibet, he said that the Tibetans had missed the point due to practicing too many deities. Ati Sha believed that Tibetans in general had not accomplished any of their many yidams, since he was unable to find signs of accomplishment in them. Thus, the expression, "One person, one deity."

Text sections 70-72:

The first episode of Shantideva's biography says that after his father had passed away, Shantideva was to ascend to the throne through the traditional enthronement ritual. Such a ritual formally 'empowers the heir to the throne to assume control over the kingdom'. In ancient India, this ritual was generally performed by the brahmins of the royal court.

According to Vibhutipandita's version of Shantideva's life, the night before his enthronement, Shantideva's mother gave him a ritual bath and poured very hot water over his head, causing the young prince to cry out in pain. His mother said, "If you were to become a king during this time of degeneration, you would (only) bring suffering to beings, due to the power of your afflictions. Then, when you die, you will endure sufferings in the hell realms far worse than this (hot water)." Shantideva thus came to understand that holding worldly power entails committing a great many negative actions and that these unwholesome deeds inevitably lead to rebirth in the hell realms. This teaches us that the fruits of worldly power and influence are not what we imagine them to be.

Text section 73:

Regarding the second episode of Shantideva's life, concerning his activities at Nalanda University, the text literally says 'the perfect design of Nalanda'. 'Design' refers to the 'sequence of his life story', meaning the *display of his activity*. Ideally, a translator should strive to find a term that covers both the literal translation of the word as well as the translation of the meaning. If an expression that perfectly matches both word and meaning cannot be found, then one should give preference to the meaning over the literal translation. Regarding his *internal conduct*, Shantideva studied the tripitaka in private with the noble Jayadeva.

This particular passage in Khenpo Kunpal's text is ambiguous because the phrase, "He studied the tripitaka with the Noble One," could refer either to the noble Manjushri or to the noble Jayadeva. In our opinion, the term 'noble' or 'Noble One' in this context refers to Jayadeva and not to Bodhisattva Manjushri. Buton, 1380 in his biography of Shantideva, is equally ambiguous saying, "As concerns his internal conduct, he heard the doctrine from the Noble One." Taranatha, 1381 in his biography of Shantideva, states: "...though inwardly he was always meditating and listening to the doctrine from Arya Manjushri..." Another biographer, Tsechok Ling, renders it as, "Relying on the preceptor (Jayadeva), he studied the tripitaka and so became an outstanding scholar. Studying the Dharma for a long time with the noble Manjushri, he internalized all the teachings and instructions of sutra and tantra."

On the basis of all the teachings he received, Shantideva composed three treatises: the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, the Shiksha-samuccaya, and the Sutra-samuccaya. These treatises summarize all that he learned over the course of his studies of the sutra teachings. While Shantideva certainly had visions of Bodhisattva Manjushri, gaining many insights and ultimately great realization from him, it is also likely that he thoroughly studied the tripitaka with the Nalanda preceptor, Jayadeva.

Text section 74:

In his external conduct, Shantideva acted like someone who was chiefly interested in eating, sleeping, and strolling around. For this reason he came to be called *Bhusuku*, 'one who just eats, sleeps, and strolls around'. This description, meant to ridicule Shantideva, became his nickname. In contrast to the Tibetan interpretation of this name, Vibhutipandita's version of Shantideva's life story indicates that the name 'Bhusuku' was meant to praise Shantideva's ability to remain in the meditative state of luminosity during all activities, such as eating, sleeping, and strolling around. Possibly, the Tibetan scholars may have misinterpreted this name as having a negative connotation. Vibhutipandita's commentary on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara says,¹³⁸⁴ "Regardless of whether he was eating, sleeping, or strolling around, he constantly meditated on luminosity. Since he was (actually) dwelling in a samadhi called Bhusuku, he became widely known as Bhusuku".

The corresponding Sanskrit version of Vibhutipandita's commentary reads:

"bhunjano 'pi prabhasvaram supto 'pi kutim gato 'pi tad eveti
bhasukusamadhisamapannatvat bhasukunamakhyatam."

The name Bhusuku is constructed from the first syllables of the Sanskrit words *bhunjano*, *supto* and *kutim* *gata*. Khenpo Kunpal gives *bhukta* for skr. *bhunjano*, *susta* for skr. *supto* and *kucchiva* for skr. *kutim* *gata*.

Text section 75:

While at Nalanda University, Shantideva did not perform any of the required duties of a monk, such as the *three wheels (of conduct)*. This refers to the three types of activities performed by Sangha members: the wheel of reading and studying; the wheel of renunciation and meditation; and the wheel of work and activities. A monk should either study, meditate, or work for the monastery. If a monk performs none of these three types of activities yet still lives on the offerings given by devotees to the monks, he accumulates considerable negative karma. He is undeservedly living off

monastic property, 'undeserved consumption of monastic property', an action that has dire karmic consequences.

The 'wheel of reading and studying' means to read and study the direct teachings of the Buddha and the treatises collected in the tripitaka under the guidance of a spiritual friend. Students might study in a large shedra or in a small study group. In any case, they need the guidance of a qualified tutor. In the tradition of the Shri Simha Shedra, students studied the 'thirteen philosophical textbooks of Indian origin' for nine years. During this time, they would carefully read the Kangyur and Tangyur at least twice. When reading and studying a given text many times, students contemplate the text's essential meaning in order to cut through all their questions and doubts. This process is called 'contemplation'.

The 'wheel of renunciation and meditation' refers to a period of time, even up to an entire lifetime, spent in retreat, either in a retreat center or in a secluded place such as a cave or a hermitage. 'Renunciation' here means abandoning all worldly activities, having recognized them to be meaningless. 'Meditation' connotes structuring one's life around practice. For example, most of the scholars who graduated from the Shri Simha Shedra spent many years in the caves of the surrounding mountain range known as Rudam Gang-Gyi-Rawa.

The 'wheel of work and activities' designates all activities that benefit other beings, such as building monasteries, organizing great ritual ceremonies, making medicines, printing books, and the like. More broadly, all the daily monastic activities of the monks living in a monastery belong to the wheel of work and activities. Every Buddhist monk must practice the wheel of reading, study, and contemplation, as well as the wheel of renunciation and meditation. Furthermore, study and meditation must be practiced together as a unity to be effective. Whether or not a monk would also engage in the wheel of work and activities depended upon many factors, including his skills, inclinations, and wishes of his teacher.

Text section 76:

Since a prominent monastery such as Nalanda required that its monks adhere to a strict discipline, Shantideva's fellow monks concluded that he should be expelled for his inappropriate behavior. They devised a plan that they hoped would cause him to leave the monastery of his own accord. Since they all incorrectly assumed that he was completely devoid of learning, they cleverly requested that he publicly recite the sutras. They were certain that he would rather leave the monastery than embarrass himself in front of all the monks and sponsors. After Shantideva many times refused their

requests for a recital, the abbot, Jayadeva, finally ordered him to recite the sutras. To everyone's surprise, he agreed to do so.

Text section 77:

In a great monastic community such as Nalanda, the midday meal was the only meal served since strictly observant monks do not eat in the evening. When the whole community of Nalanda monks gathered for lunch, they numbered about ten thousand. People living in the surrounding area personally came and sponsored meals for the monks. Thus, including the monks, sponsors, and guests, the assembly could be as large as eleven or twelve thousand people.

After the meal, as an offering of gratitude to the lay community, one of the monks would give a public lecture on the Dharma, or would perhaps recite some of the Buddhist sutras. The common practice was to recite a sutra spoken by the Buddha or to lecture on a particular sutra. Delivering one's own commentary or composition to the assembly of lay persons and monks was highly unusual. On this occasion, however, since the monks had conspired to drive Shantideva from the monastery, they had arranged extensive offerings outside the monastery and had invited a crowd of outsiders to attend. They had even erected a throne so high that no one could possibly climb up and sit upon it. When they called for Shantideva to come and teach, they were startled to find him already seated on the throne, although no one had seen him ascend it.

Text section 78:

Thus, from the throne, Shantideva asked the monks, "Should I recite something well known, such as a sutra previously spoken by the R̥shi, by the Buddha, or should I recite something that you have never heard before, my own treatise, a composition I myself wrote?" No one suggested reciting his own treatise on such an occasion, so the monks were more than ever certain that if they requested him to do this, he would bring exceedingly great Shame upon himself.

Text section 79:

While Shantideva was reciting the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, Bodhisattva Manjushri appeared in the sky before him. When Shantideva came to stanza 34 in the ninth chapter, the chapter on transcendental knowledge, both he and Manjushri began floating up into the sky, until they gradually disappeared. After he had disappeared,

Shantideva's voice continued to echo from the sky, completing the entire text through the end of the tenth chapter.

Stanza 34 from the ninth chapter, reads as follows:

When neither an 'entity' nor a 'non-entity'
Remains before the mind,
At that point, since there is no other position,
It rests in utter peace, without any conceptualizing.

*gang tshe dngos dang dngos med dag
blo yi mdun na mi gnas pa
de tshe rnam pa gzhan med pas
dmigs pa med par rab tu zhi*

This stanza describes the wisdom of equanimity of noble beings, which is achieved from the first bodhisattva level, the path of seeing onward. When a bodhisattva has reached this level of realization, mind's tendency of conceptualizing and fixating on everything has come to an end.

When one has genuinely recognized the Buddha nature, the essence of one's mind, one is free from the view of a truly existing 'entity', believing that things truly exist as well as free from the view of a truly existing 'nonentity', thinking that emptiness is something that truly exists. At that time, one is also free from any other type of position, such as the view of 'both existence and non-existence' and of 'neither existence nor non-existence'.

Once all positions of fixation have collapsed, all reference points to conceptualize, "It is empty" or "It is not empty" have collapsed. Thus, the wisdom of equanimity of noble beings rests in utter peace, without any conceptualizing. In this context the terms 'to fixate upon something', 'to have a view of something' or 'to conceptualize something' and 'to think' have the same meaning.

Text section 80:

A few of the learned panditas in attendance later wrote down what they had heard, arriving at different versions of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. The Kashmiri panditas are said to have compiled a version with seven hundred stanzas in nine chapters, while the panditas from the Central Land produced a version of one thousand stanzas in ten chapters. These significant differences led to many doubts among the scholars.

Text sections 82-83:

In order to definitively resolve these doubts, as well as to question Shantideva about the Shiksha-samuccaya and the Sutra-samuccaya, two panditas from Nalanda journeyed to meet him. Shantideva told them that the version of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara held by the panditas from the Central Land, composed of ten chapters and one thousand stanzas, was in fact the correct one. In response to their questions about the Shikhasamuccaya and the Sutra-samuccaya, Shantideva said they would find both texts hidden between the rafters in his old room at Nalanda. Then he gave them the reading transmission and the instructions for these texts. This concludes the second of the seven amazing episodes of Shantideva's life story.

The central message of this episode is that Dharma practice is not intended to impress other people but to develop one's own realization. Spiritual practice is a very private affair, something engaged in for one's own development, and not something intended for public display. Therefore, Shantideva appeared as Bhusuku, remaining low key, harboring neither hopes nor fears about other people's opinions of him.

Text sections 84-90:

The third through sixth episodes in Shantideva's biography are more or less self explanatory. However, a few comments can be added. In the fourth episode, Shantideva tames *those who hold strange views*, alluding to various groups of spiritual seekers of that time. People held certain odd beliefs. Some thought it virtuous to live a life free from wearing clothes; others believed it virtuous to consort with dogs. Some considered that committing suicide would somehow lead to liberation from suffering, and so on.

In the sixth episode, describing how Shantideva tamed the king, the phrase *harm from Macala* could refer to a country that was threatening the king, or it could refer to a person named 'Macala'.

Text section 91:

The seventh and final episode of Shantideva's biography recounts how he tamed the tirthikas, those who follow non-Buddhist paths. Shantideva journeyed to the South, to *Shripurvata* where he practiced the 'Uccushma conduct', a special mode of 'yogic conduct' or 'conduct of discipline' requiring one to abstain from normal food and live instead on *leavings*, that which have been *thrown out* with the *dishwater*. While living this

way, Shantideva went about naked like a beggar who could not even afford rags as clothing. Although ordinary people would quickly die if they tried to live in such a fashion, Shantideva followed this special yogic conduct as a skillful means designed to destroy fixation on and attachment to concepts such as 'clean' and 'dirty'.

Text section 92:

In this section, the term *Buddhist representations* means any Buddhist statue, book, or stupa. Statues are considered to be the representation of Buddha's body; the Buddhist scriptures are considered to be the representation of Buddha's speech; and all stupas are considered to be the representation of Buddha's mind.

Text section 93:

In some of these stories, we notice that Shantideva displays the miraculous conduct that characterizes the mahasiddhas. To destroy fierce and tenacious fixations in the minds of some evildoers, he displays wrathful activities. Mahasiddhas are able to display any of the four activities—pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and subjugating (wrathful)—while their minds remain completely rooted in peace and bodhicitta. The *two lengths of cloth* refers to two uncut pieces of cloth that still have fringe at either end, which can be used as a skirt.

All of these aspects of Shantideva's life story answer the scholars' first preliminary assessment: 'Which author composed (the treatise)?' Whatever teaching you are studying and practicing, you should first establish the reputation and integrity of the author. You need to know whether he was an enlightened person who intended to benefit beings, or whether he was an inferior person, harboring negative or self-serving intentions.

The earliest extant Tibetan account of Shantideva's legendary life story, written by the Indian scholar Vibhūticandra, who came in the year 1204 to Tibet as part of the entourage of the Kashmiri mahapandita, Shakyashribhadra (1127-1225), provides excellent background material concerning Shantideva: Thus have I heard from the lineage! In the South, in Shrinagara, (Shantideva) was born as the son of the King Manjushrivarma. He paid respect to the Buddhas of the past and practiced roots of virtue that were conducive to liberation. He had a pure inclination toward the Mahayana and was learned in all arts.

At the time he was to be empowered as successor to the throne, his mother, the king's principal queen, who was an emanation of Vajrayogini,

made him bathe in hot water. Seeing that he could not bear the heat, his mother spoke the following words, "If you were to become a king during this time of degeneration, you would (only) bring suffering to beings, due to the power of your afflictions. Then, when you die, you will endure suffering in the hell realms far worse than this (hot water). There is no need (to rule) the kingdom. Son, go to the country of Bhamgala. There you will receive the blessing of Manjughosha!"

Holding the command of his mother above his head, he mounted his best dapple gray horse and left. He rode day and night for many days without thinking of food, drink, and the like and continued on, thinking only of the command of his (mother). At the border of the country of Bhamgala he saw in a forest a most exquisite girl. After she had caught hold of his horse, he dismounted it.

Since he was quite thirsty and saw water before him, he was ready to drink (the water). The girl said, "This is poisonous water. Don't drink it!" Having thus prevented him from (drinking) it, she allowed him to drink nectar-like water and let him have fried meat to eat. When he was thus satisfied, he asked the girl, "Where do you come from?" She replied, "In the center of this forest lives my master, someone who is ornamented with the accumulation of sublime qualities, a compassionate one, who practices the samadhi of the Shrimanjuvajra. That is where I come from."

Upon merely hearing this (name), he (Shantideva) felt a joyous relief, just like a poor person who has found a jewel. He said, "Wonderful, show him to me!" The girl invited him and led his horse as they went. When they arrived there, he saw the supreme master who, like a golden mountain, was pacified in body and speech and endowed with a very profound mind. He offered himself and his best horse and prostrated with devotion to this master. He requested (the master), "Please instruct me in the samadhi of Manjughosha, accepting me (as your student)." The master instructed him in the stages of complete maturation, (giving him the empowerments). (Shantideva) stayed for twelve years, and through his samadhi he met Manjughosha in actuality. Then, since the master commanded him to go to Madhyade Sha, he went.

He lived with only the Dharma in mind, as someone who was respected by the king. He attended the king of Magadha while holding a wooden sword in its scabbard after the manner of a body guard, and thus he was named Acalasena.

Once, the other guards, unable to bear his success, complained to the king, "Since this Acalasena is attending you with a sword of wood, how might he strike at the enemy in case of a battle? Therefore, please examine his sword." As a result, and since (the king) could not speak directly to (Acalasena), he issued the command, "I will inspect the swords of all the guards!" After he had examined the swords of a few (guards, the king) commanded, "I will also inspect the sword of Acalasena!" (Acalasena) spoke, "It is not proper for you to examine my sword." Since the king insisted repeatedly, Acalasena said, "If you really want to examine it, then, alone in a remote location, cover one eye with your hand. Then look at it."

When (the king) gazed upon it, due to the sword's radiance, the king's uncovered eye fell out onto the ground. Knowing that the king had become very devoted from seeing his power, he (Acalasena) re-inserted the eye into the eye-socket, relieving all his pain, and set out for the great monastery of Nalanda.

Acalasena took monastic ordination and received the name Shantideva because he was so peaceful. Having contemplated at this (place) the tripitaka, he meditated continuously on luminosity, regardless of whether he was eating, sleeping, or strolling around. Therefore, as he dwelt in the samadhi known as 'Bhusuku' he became widely known as Bhusuku.

Then, at one time, evil-minded ones in the Sangha, conspired thus: "This (Shantideva) just acts like he meditates, but he is not performing any activities in the Sangha. We must investigate what he (actually) knows."

They thought, "Since at the time of the first (month, when Buddha performed the) miracles, the Dharma (scriptures) are to be recited, as (is done) every year, we must appoint him (to this task)." When they asked him, he replied, "I don't know anything." Although he refused them repeatedly, they kept requesting him. Outside the monastery in the northeastern direction on a vast plain, they had arranged a variety of offerings. They summoned many people, set up a very high lion throne, and invited him.

Having taken his place there, (Shantideva) pondered, "I have the three texts that I have composed, the Sutra-samuccaya, the Shiksha-samuccaya, and the Bodhisattvacaryavatara. It is suitable to recite the Bodhisattvacaryavatara to them." He said,

“Should I recite something taught (arsha = gsungs pa) by the Ṛshi (the Buddha) or something that has arisen based on him (artharsha = rjes las byung ba = bstan bcos)? The Ṛshi is someone who has realized the ultimate truth. His teachings are the scriptures. Based on these (scriptures), but constructed by others, are the treatises.”

As the Noble Maitreya said:

That which is endowed with meaning, endowed with the words of Dharma,
Words that purify the afflictions of the three realms And teach the benefits of peace,
(Are Shastras that have) arisen from the Ṛshi. What contradicts these are the (writings)
of others (tirthikas). This is also explained in the tenth chapter (in stanza 51):
Until I reach the (first bodhisattva) level of supreme joy, Through the kindness of
Manjughosha, May I always remember my former lives And become a renunciate.
Thus, one should understand this.

They were (all) amazed and spoke up, “Please recite (something composed by) another.
Then (Shantideva) began (to recite) the Bodhisattvacaryavatara. The Noble Manjushri
appeared in the sky in front of him, so that all (present) could actually see him just
when (Shantideva) recited:

When neither an ‘entity’ nor a ‘non-entity’
Remains before the mind,
At that point, since there is no other position,
It rests in utter peace, without any conceptualizing.

Then, (Shantideva) together with (Manjushri) became invisible (to the)
people. People who regretted that they no longer could see him examined
his room and found the three (texts), the Sutra-samuccaya and (the two)
others. Through these (three texts), the scholars made him famous
throughout the world.

Text section 97:

Following the accounts of Shantideva’s biography, Khenpo Kunpal turns to a series of praises paying homage to Shantideva’s bodhisattva qualities. The first master quoted, *Jetari*, was a great Indian scholar of Madhyamaka as well as a logician. *Prajnakaramati* was a scholar from the Buddhist university Vikramashila and belongs to the famous grouping of the six panditas of the gates. According to Taranatha’s History of Buddhism, Prajnakaramati was the keeper of the southern gate; according to the Blue Annals, he was the keeper of the western gate.

Prajnakaramati was a great scholar in Madhyamaka philosophy and the Prajnaparamita scriptures, and he wrote a famous commentary on the Bodhicaryavatara. This is the only commentary still extant in the Sanskrit language on the Bodhicaryavatara. In the preface to his commentary, Prajnakaramati refers to Shantideva as 'This noble Shantideva'.

Another master who extols Shantideva's qualities is the Indian scholar *Vibhutipandita*. The quote comes from the metrical preface to his commentary on the Bodhicaryavatara:

In the (history of) the Victor's doctrine
Many great beings and persons have appeared,
But I have found none whose
Experience and realization compare with Shantideva's.

The *master Kṛṣṇapada* wrote in the metrical preface to his commentary on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara the following:

He who for a long time has utterly dedicated himself to meditation with the power of
faith and diligence,
And who has also touched the supreme crown of his head to the lotus at Manjughosha's
feet,
Who has been praised by the scholars to be the second Manjughosha on earth, the
author of this treatise,
In order to praise him, I will scatter with my mind a handful of the flowers of devotion.

It is very beneficial to recite praises such as these as part of one's study of the
Bodhisattva-caryavatara in order to immerse one's mind in the stream of Shantideva's
blessings and bodhisattva qualities.

Text section 99:

The second preliminary assessment through which scholars in the tradition of Nalanda University examine a Buddhist treatise is to ask, "*Upon which scriptures does it draw?*" Shantideva based his treatise on the tripitaka in general and in particular on the Mahayana sutra pitaka. All Buddhist treatises must be in accord with the Buddha's teachings, because only the Buddha is utterly free from any egoclinging. A treatise that fails to prove its reliance on the Buddha's teachings is considered as being 'without

source, without basis' and is not considered beneficial for the path to liberation and omniscience. As one great scholar said, "All that is true and beneficial is the teaching of the Buddha".

The Buddha's teachings bestow both temporary and ultimate benefits. They are true both on the level of relative truth and on the level of absolute truth. The teaching of the Buddha is that which expounds the genuine path to liberation and omniscience. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara belongs to the Mahayana sutra teachings.

Text section 100:

The soles of Manjushrighosha's feet are marked with the design of a lotus. The phrase means that Shantideva constantly meditates on Manjushrighosha above his head. The third preliminary assessment asks, "*Under which category is it classified?*" The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is classified as a Mahayana treatise. The Mahayana teachings include both sutra and mantra. *Mantra* or Mantrayana is identical with the vehicle of tantra or Vajrayana.

The Nyingma School structures the Buddha's entire teaching in an ascending sequence of nine vehicles: 1) shravakayana, 2) pratyekaBuddhayana, 3) bodhisattvayana, 4) kriyatantra, 5) ubhayatantra, 6) yogatantra, 7) mahayoga, 8) anuyoga, and 9) atiyoga, also known as the Great Perfection. These nine vehicles are distinguished according to their unique teachings on view, meditation, conduct, and fruition.

A practitioner of Secret Mantra Vajrayana and particularly of the Great Perfection will study and practice the Bodhisattva-caryavatara as an enhancement for his practice and also as a method for clearing away obstacles that arise in the course of his practice. Thus, the gradual path of sutra and the instantaneous path of Secret Mantra can be practiced as a perfect unity, seamlessly integrated with one another. The teachings of the Great Perfection train you in the perfect view while at the same time the Bodhisattva-caryavatara educates you in the perfect conduct of the six transcendental perfections. Sutra or Sutrayana is also called the 'causal vehicle of (the six) transcendental perfections', while tantra is called the 'resultant vehicle of mantra'. The Buddhist tradition actually speaks of 'three causal vehicles'. These refer to the shravakayana, the pratyekaBuddhayana, and the bodhisattvayana. The followers of the causal vehicles practice as their path the causes (for enlightenment), which are the six transcendental perfections. The followers of the resultant vehicle, also called the 'vehicle of secret mantra', practice the fruition as the path. As Dujom Rinpoche explained:

Therefore, in the vehicle of attributes, mind nature is merely perceived as the causal basis for Buddhahood. Since it is held that Buddhahood is obtained through the condition that the two accumulations increasingly multiply, and since the purifying teachings which form the causal basis of nirvana are made into the path, it is called the causal vehicle. Therein, a sequence in which cause precedes result is admitted.

According to the vehicle of mantra, on the other hand, mind nature abides primordially and intrinsically as the essence of the result, endowed with kayas and wisdom.

Since the aim, (mind nature), thereby exists within oneself from the very present moment, it is the ground. By recognizing it, temporary and momentary stains are removed. Thus, the recognition is the path. When this ground is actualized, it is the fruition. Since the sequence in which cause precedes result is not really distinguished therein, it is called the resultant vehicle.

The causal vehicle of the six transcendental perfections is an unimaginably long path to enlightenment. The Mahayana path to complete enlightenment is generally said to require three countless aeons to complete. The resultant vehicle of mantra is in comparison an infinitely swifter path to complete enlightenment. It is said that a person of highest capacity can reach perfect enlightenment in this very lifetime. A person of average capacity is said to be able to reach enlightenment at the time of the intermediate state, and a person of lowest capacity within thirteen or sixteen lifetimes. Thus, considering the timespan necessary to attain enlightenment, the Sutrayana path can be classified as the gradual approach, and the Secret Mantra Vajrayana as the instantaneous approach. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is a text of the gradual path to enlightenment. Study and practice of the sutra teachings of the Buddha follow a gradual sequence, and so the practitioner must know which stage of study and practice he has reached. The distinction between Hinayana and Mahayana can also be made in terms of the vastness of the scope of one's motivation. While the Hinayana practitioner strives to liberate only himself, the Mahayana practitioner strives to establish all sentient beings at the level of complete enlightenment.

A follower of the Hinayana path has a limited motivation and a limited aspiration. Such a person understands the defects of samsara and the qualities of nirvana. He has become disgusted with samsara yet is not undertaking the benefit of others and instead is striving to achieve the level of peace and cessation for himself alone. Thus, his character, motivation, and aspiration are quite limited.

In contrast to this narrow scope of mind, a follower of the Mahayana path is someone endowed with a vast motivation and a vast aspiration. This type of person generates the noble thought to reach unexcelled and perfect enlightenment for the sake of all sentient

beings. Such persons are happy to engage, even for countless aeons, in the boundless trainings of perfecting, ripening, and purifying.

A Mahayana practitioner wishes to entirely perfect the two accumulations, the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom. He wishes to ripen his being, to let his ordinary body, speech, and mind ripen into the qualities of the Buddha's three kayas. Furthermore, he trains to purify the two obscurations, obscurations of affliction and obscurations of cognition.

The practice path of a Mahayana practitioner is understood through two fundamental classifications: the profound and the vast. The 'profound' is the complete realization of both types of egolessness. The 'vast' means that one has embarked upon the boundless trainings of the ten bodhisattva levels, of the five paths, and of the six perfections. Thus, one is practicing the unity of 'profound knowledge' and 'vast skillful means'.

A true follower of the Mahayana path is not intimidated by the defects of worldly existence, the three realms of samsara. Nor does he aspire to attain the qualities of the peace of nirvana, the truth of cessation. Rather, he aspires to attain a state of equanimity beyond hope and fear, beyond rejection and expectation, beyond aversion and attachment; in other words, to achieve actual and perfect Buddhahood, the fruition of nirvana beyond abiding.

'Nirvana beyond abiding' means that one neither abides in the extreme of samsaric existence nor in the extreme of peaceful nirvana. The extreme of peaceful nirvana is the attainment of Hinayana. The nirvana of Mahayana, however, is beyond extremes of any kind.

Mahayana is further said to surpass Hinayana through a seven-fold superiority:

1) The superiority of its scope or focus: Mahayana surpasses Hinayana through the scope of its teachings and the scope of its topics. The scope of its teachings encompasses the complete teachings of the Buddha, including the immeasurable bodhisattva pitaka. The scope of its topic covers boundless profound and vast meanings. Mahayana is profound since both types of egolessness are realized. Mahayana is vast since it encompasses all the trainings of the ten bodhisattva levels, the five paths, and the six perfections.

2) The superiority in practice: Mahayana surpasses Hinayana since one practices in order to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings, one's own welfare as well as the welfare of others. While Hinayana teaches how to accomplish liberation for oneself,

Mahayana teaches how to accomplish the temporary and ultimate happiness of all sentient beings.

- 3) The superiority in wisdom: Mahayana surpasses Hinayana since, completely realizing the two types of egolessness, one reaches a personal and non-conceptual realization in which emptiness and compassion are a unity.
- 4) The superiority in diligence: Mahayana surpasses Hinayana, ¹⁴⁰⁴ since (in Mahayana) one embarks for three countless aeons and more ¹⁴⁰⁵ on perfecting, ripening, and purifying.
- 5) The superiority in skillful means: Mahayana surpasses Hinayana since, training in the path that neither abides in worldly existence nor in nirvanic peace, one perfects one's own path without forsaking even a single being. Journeying through these five points of superiority is called 'the vehicle of the path'.
- 6) The superiority in perfect achievement: Mahayana surpasses Hinayana since one accomplishes the immeasurable qualities of the Buddha such as the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, the eighteen non-associated qualities, and so forth. 'The superiority in perfect achievement' connotes perfect Buddhahood, endowed with boundless qualities.
- 7) The superiority in enlightened activity: Mahayana surpasses Hinayana since, for as long as samsara exists, one embarks on unceasing activities to benefit all sentient beings. The 'superiority in enlightened activity' refers to the unceasing activities of Buddhas. Having journeyed to these two (final) points of superiority is called 'the fruitional vehicle'.

Text section 101:

The fourth preliminary assessment asks, *"What is the brief meaning of it from beginning to end?"* The 'brief meaning from beginning to end' refers to the entire Bodhisattvacaryavatara, beginning with 'In the Indian language...' up through '...thus completed'. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara explains in great detail how to train one's mind in the motivation of bodhicitta and how to practice the actual application of the six transcendental perfections. The development of bodhicitta refers to the bodhicitta of aspiration and to the bodhicitta of application. The text teaches the methods necessary to expand one's mind, to make it vast; this expansion of mind is central to developing bodhicitta.

through the Mahayana path, those of mediocre capacity need seven countless aeons and those of lowest capacities need thirty-three countless aeons.

The untrained mind of an ordinary being is limited, while the mind of a bodhisattva is vast and open. In general, ordinary beings tend to think and act in terms of their personal benefit. In marked contrast, a bodhisattva is concerned exclusively with the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is an unfailing guide to the process of expanding one's mind from self-absorbed preoccupation with one's personal benefit into a state of vast, selfless mind principally concerned with benefiting others. If one really understands its true depth, the Bodhisattva-caryavatara clearly shows how one's mind can ultimately become as vast as the sky.

In short, one might summarize simply by saying that the Bodhisattva-caryavatara concerns only bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is given such central importance since it is indispensable for attaining enlightenment. This, in brief, is the meaning of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara shows in a very practical way how to develop and implement or apply bodhicitta. It clearly shows us how to actually practice the six transcendental perfections, the six paramitas. Whoever follows the practice of first developing bodhicitta, second, the process of knowing how to protect against its degeneration, and third, the process of allowing it to develop further and further is truly following the path of the bodhisattvas.

Text section 102:

The fifth and final preliminary assessment asks, *"For whose benefit and for what purpose was it composed?"* This assessment is intended to reveal the true intention of the author and asks why he wrote the treatise. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara addresses in general all sentient beings and in particular the five hundred scholars of Nalanda University. Its purpose is to guarantee that the path of the precious bodhicitta is practiced in a complete and unmistakable way.

People may compose books and treatises for various reasons and with considerably different motivations. This book was written out of great love for everyone and intends to benefit all beings in the best of all possible ways. When the methods outlined in this book are integrated with one's own experience and practice, all one's actions become both meaningful and beneficial, whether drinking a cup of tea, speaking with someone, or anything else one may do. Once a person is infused with the spirit of bodhicitta, life

is meaningful and beneficial in every respect. In a deeper sense, this text is actually preparing the student to recognize profound emptiness, the immutable meaning of the natural state. A genuine scholar must be learned and accomplished in the meaning of profound emptiness, not merely well-versed in the superficial use of the words. As it is said:

Knowledge of words does not make one a scholar.

Knowing the immutable meaning makes one a true scholar.

Once all the five preliminary assessments have been properly established, the student will have certainly gained confidence in the teaching to be given and will have thus been transformed into a proper vessel for receiving the teachings.

Text sections 103-104:

Khenpo Kunpal now explains how a student should listen to the Dharma with proper motivation and conduct. A student of the Dharma should know how to listen to the teachings properly. This includes a particular motivation and a particular conduct when receiving teachings. If you do not know the correct way of listening to the teachings, even if you receive one hundred teachings from one hundred great masters, they will not benefit you.

The teachings are designed to benefit your mind, to cause a transformation in your being. A single teaching might have such an effect on you, if you receive it with the proper motivation and the proper conduct. Motivation is the reason or the purpose for doing something. Try to be clear about why you are listening to the teachings of the Buddha, why you are studying and practicing the Dharma. Look into your mind and examine your motives and reasons. Are you listening to the teachings because you want to become a scholar of high repute? Are you practicing and studying because you want to become a teacher and want to make a living from the Dharma? Do you want to make a university career by studying the Dharma? Are you sitting in the teachings because it is a social event that is enjoyable to join? If such motives as these are your reasons for practicing and studying the Dharma, then all your efforts will be useless from the onset. Virtue and noble intention are the essence of the Dharma. Bodhicitta is the most noble intention of all. If your motivation for listening to the teachings is egocentric and less than noble, you are contravening the essence of the Dharma and the teachings will therefore never transform your being. The teachings of the Buddha will then be reduced to a mere academic lecture. If, on the other hand, bodhicitta—a mindset of compassion and wisdom knowledge—is your motivation to listen to the teachings, to study and practice the Dharma, your mind is virtuous and open to the

effects of the Dharma. Generate the attitude: "I will listen to this teaching in order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering and to establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment."

With compassion, focus on benefiting others through the steadfast resolve: "I will listen to the Dharma in order to free all beings from suffering." This is the compassion aspect of the bodhicitta motivation. With knowledge, focus on perfect enlightenment through the similar resolve: "I will listen to the Dharma in order to establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment." Bodhicitta must always incorporate these two aspects of compassion and wisdom-knowledge.

If even a single stanza of the Dharma has truly penetrated your heart, this teaching will never leave your mind and will stay with you throughout this entire lifetime and all future lives to come. Listening wholeheartedly to a single teaching is much more beneficial than sitting for weeks and months absent-mindedly in retreat.

Furthermore, generate a joyous mindset whenever you have the chance to listen, study or practice the Dharma. Think, "I have attained the precious human body endowed with eight freedoms and ten advantages. I have now met a qualified teacher. Now I have the opportunity to receive teachings from him. I am truly blessed." The motivation of a great person always embraces the bodhicitta intent to liberate all sentient beings. Bodhicitta is both the *entrance way* to the accumulation of immeasurable merit as well as the source of such merit. Here one must remember that throughout infinite past lifetimes, all sentient beings have at one time or another been one's parents.

The Buddha said that no single being exists who has not at one time been your father and your mother. In order to start to bring all these intimate relationships from former lifetimes to mind, first reflect upon the great kindness shown to you by your present parents, especially your mother. She carried you in her womb for nine months. She gave birth to you and fed you at her breast. She taught you how to speak, how to walk, and how to interact with others. She always guarded you against any possible danger. She nursed you when you were ill. During countless nights she did not sleep in order to care for you. For years, when you were small and helpless, your parents carried you around and looked after you. They held your life to be more precious than their own. They fed and clothed you, protected you against heat and cold. They educated you and taught you how to survive in this world. When they were old or when they died, they left whatever they had as an inheritance, enabling you to live more comfortably. All of this they did out of great love and kindness for you.

It is important to know that all beings have at one time been your parents and have cared for you with exactly the same affection as your present parents. Therefore, you should extend your gratitude to all sentient beings. We are not exalted beings with supernatural perception, so we cannot really see what a close connection we have with all other sentient beings. At this point, we simply must come to trust in the word of the Buddha, who told us very clearly that all beings have been our parents. Since we remain unaware of these intimate past ties, we continue to behave unkindly toward other beings. Although all beings aspire to happiness, they continue to create the causes for further suffering by engaging in the ten non-virtuous actions. They do not know that the real cause for happiness is to follow the Dharma. 'Dharma' means behaving in a way that accords with the ten virtuous actions. Bringing to mind the causes of suffering and miserable conditions which all mother-like sentient beings bring upon themselves, and developing compassion for them, is called 'focusing with compassion on the welfare of others'.

Text section 105:

Being ignorant about what actually causes our own states of happiness, we need to rely on a spiritual friend who educates us in the initial stages of the path, telling us what actions we should undertake and what we should avoid. Without a spiritual friend, we are like blind people lost in the desert. A blind person needs a guide to reach his destination, and likewise we need a spiritual friend to show us the path to happiness, liberation, and omniscience.

Text section 106:

We have achieved a favorable rebirth, met with the Dharma, and with qualified teachers. Having met with such good fortune, our intention should be to strive to free all our former mothers, all sentient beings, from their suffering, and to establish them on the level of omniscient and perfect Buddhahood.

All sentient beings are completely caught up in their *individual karmic perceptions within the six realms*. Beings in each of the six realms share a common karmic perception, while at the same time each has his own individual experience, his own particular hopes and fears, happiness and sorrow. The six afflictions are the direct causes that propel beings into birth in one of the six realms. According to which of the six afflictions predominates in the mind-streams of beings, they take rebirth in one of the six realms.

The three lower realms are the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, and the animal realm. Anger is the main cause for taking rebirth in the hell realm; stinginess leads to rebirth in

the realm of the hungry ghosts, the preta realm; and ignorance or delusion results in rebirth in the animal realm. The three higher realms include the human realm, the asura or demi-god realm, and the celestial realm of the gods. Desire is the major cause for rebirth in the human realm; jealousy is the force that hurls us into birth among the asura demi-gods; and when pride dominates it leads to rebirth in the realm of the gods.

These are the 'six karmic perceptions', the six varieties of karmic perception experienced by sentient beings, and each realm possesses its own unique types of suffering.

Beings in hell are tormented by the suffering of heat and cold. Pretas suffer from hunger and thirst; animals are afflicted by delusion and ignorance; human beings must endure birth, aging, disease, and death; demi-gods are tormented by incessant quarreling and fighting; and even the gods experience tremendous sorrow at the approach of death and during the process of dying.

Another result of beings experiencing their *individual karmic perceptions within the six realms* is that different beings perceive the same setting and situation in different ways. Where a human being sees a bowl of water, a hell being will perceive molten bronze. Pretas would see the water as blood and pus, and beings of the god realms would see a vessel filled with the nectar of immortality. Some beings in the animal realm experience water as the environment in which they live.

A bodhisattva has the confidence and the commitment to state, "I will free all beings, my mothers, from their individual karmic perceptions, suffering, and habitual tendencies for each of the six realms, and I will establish them on the level of omniscient and perfect Buddhahood." That commitment succinctly summarizes the bodhicitta of aspiration.

Without having truly recognized one's own mind essence, non-dual wisdom, profound emptiness, one will be unable to truly generate such confidence and commitment. Until mind essence is genuinely recognized and this unshakeable confidence gained, developing bodhicitta remains more of an aspiration than a commitment. As noted above, bodhicitta has two inseparable aspects, compassion and knowledge. 'Compassion' here means focusing on the benefit of others through the commitment: "I will free all beings from their suffering." 'Knowledge' means focusing on perfect enlightenment through the commitment: "I will establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment."

The Dharma should be practiced while being endowed with four links: (1) Link your mind to the earnest wish, thinking, "May all sentient beings be free from both the causes and the fruition of suffering." (2) Then link your mind to the aspiration, thinking, "Wouldn't it be nice if all sentient beings were free of suffering." (3) Then link your mind to the resolve, thinking, "I will free all sentient beings from suffering." Having made these three links, (4) link your mind to the supplication, supplicating the three jewels, the undeluded refuge, which are free from both the causes and fruition of suffering, thinking, "Please free my own mothers, all sentient beings, from their suffering, its causes and fruitions. Free them right now, as I am sitting at this very place, at this very spot."

A beginner who attempts to develop bodhicitta might be intimidated by the magnitude of the thought: "I will establish all beings on the level of complete enlightenment," thinking, "How could someone like me ever do that? I'm not enlightened in any way. I don't have the knowledge and power it takes to free beings from their suffering and lead them to enlightenment. I cannot even give temporary happiness to a few people. How could I ever bestow ultimate happiness on all sentient beings?"

An honest beginner knows his shortcomings and so can only practice bodhicitta as an aspiration. Rather than state the commitment to free all beings, he should make the aspiration, "May I free all beings from suffering and establish them on the level of complete enlightenment." This crucial distinction is also a key point in knowing how to approach the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. At first, one should study and practice the entire text as an aspiration and a supplication. As part of this process, one begins to apply the various methods for generating merit taught in the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. In addition, seeking out qualified masters and receiving instructions on how to recognize one's Buddha nature, the non-conceptual wisdom is most important. After genuinely recognizing the essence of one's own mind, practicing the commitment of bodhicitta becomes a reality. Growing increasingly confident in one's bodhicitta commitment also greatly enhances one's practice of the Buddha nature. One's bodhicitta commitment and the recognition of Buddha nature mutually enhance one another.

Genuine recognition of Buddha nature is the practice of knowledge or wisdom and gives rise to a natural compassion. Knowledge and compassion inspire and enhance one another. This mutually enhancing quality of knowledge and compassion sets in motion the natural turning of the wheel of Dharma. Great compassion allows knowledge to dawn; great knowledge allows genuine compassion to dawn. This illustrates very clearly the interdependent nature of knowledge and compassion.

The teachings of the Buddha all point to emptiness, and emptiness is recognized by wisdom. Yet within this recognition of emptiness, there is no distinguishing or focus upon any subject or any object. It is a non-dual wisdom, a wisdom unconditioned by perceptual constraints of a subject-object dichotomy. As long as a perceptual dichotomy of a subject and an object exists, emptiness has not been recognized. Those who have attained the states of shravakas and pratyekaBuddhas are genuinely endowed with great compassion. Both shravakas and pratyekaBuddhas have realized the egolessness of personal identity; the pratyekaBuddhas have also partially realized the egolessness of phenomena. A practitioner who has realized egolessness will naturally feel compassion for all beings who, due to grasping at a non-existent 'self', still dwell in confusion. Both shravakas and pratyekaBuddhas understand that the root of suffering is our involvement with afflictions and that afflictions spring from ego-clinging.

Since they clearly understand beings' confusion, they cannot help but feel compassion for them. Nevertheless, they lack bodhicitta. Seeing clearly the defects of samsara and the qualities of nirvana, they aspire only to become shravaka-arhats or pratyekaBuddha-arhats. As they do not aspire to perfect enlightenment even for themselves, they definitely do not aspire to establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment.

The Dharma places great importance on finding *a qualified master*. No sutra, Shastra, or tantra speaks of any being ever attaining perfect Buddhahood without having followed a spiritual teacher. However, before requesting Dharma from a teacher it is extremely important to examine his qualities. This is especially true at present, when many have become disillusioned with spiritual teachers. Such disillusionment results from beginning students not knowing how to examine their teachers.

Students must read and reflect on the manuals that describe the qualities of a perfect teacher. These books also provide guidelines on how to detect a false spiritual teacher. Following such advice, students can discover a teacher's qualities before placing their trust in the teacher. Thus, the negative karma of disillusionment and resentment can be avoided. Faith without discrimination is dangerous. A qualified teacher of sutra and tantra must be endowed with many qualities, particularly perfect kindness, compassion, and wisdom. He should be well-versed in the teachings and practices of the tripitaka, as well as in the four sections of tantra. He should have actualized all extraordinary qualities of realization in himself by having experienced the meaning of the teachings.

Briefly, a genuine teacher should be generous; his speech and language should be pleasant; he should teach each individual according to that person's needs; and especially, he should act in conformity with what he teaches. He should be able to

impart the true meaning of profound emptiness to his students. At the same time, he must be free from the pursuit of the eight worldly concerns and live a life of simplicity.

At the very least, anyone who claims to teach Mahayana Buddhism must have studied, practiced, and developed bodhicitta. The eight worldly concerns are: gain and loss; fame and disrepute; praise and blame; and pleasure and pain. These eight points describe the egocentric goals and fears of a worldly person. If a person pursues egocentric aims in thought and deed, he is not following the Buddha's teachings. If one is motivated in thought and deed by personal gain, fame, and so on, one is inwardly an ordinary worldly person, however one may appear outwardly. Being motivated by the eight worldly concerns takes one far from the practice of the Mahayana path, and farther still from the Vajrayana path.

Dharma students who join a shedra, an institute for Buddhist studies, must understand that it is not a worldly institution. This has to do with the teacher-student relationship. A qualified Buddhist teacher is someone who has transformed his own character and mind. A qualified student of Buddhism is someone who aspires to this same transformation of character. A qualified teacher must accept responsibility for the spiritual development of his student. A qualified student must respectfully acknowledge the teacher as someone who shows the path to enlightenment. The teacher and the sublime Dharma he teaches must be treated with the utmost respect. Such a teacher-student relationship endures for many lifetimes.

Thus, the situation in a traditional institution of Buddhist learning is entirely different than when Buddhism is taught in an ordinary university. In the latter case, neither the teacher nor the student need be Buddhist. In an ordinary university neither the teachers nor the students necessarily regard the Dharma as sublime and sacred. The sublime Dharma instead becomes 'an interesting field of study'. In ordinary universities, students pay their tuition fees and study under teachers in order to receive an academic degree that may serve their own personal advancement. The ordinary university professor assumes the responsibility to turn his students into skilled scholars. He lacks the inner knowledge as well as the capacity to take responsibility for the student's ethical and spiritual development. Such a teacherstudent relationship is limited and very short-term. Newcomers to shedras first need to learn to become suitable vessels for the Dharma. They need to understand the nuances of receiving sacred knowledge and of how to behave toward sublime spiritual teachers.

When Khenpo Kunpal mentions the *genuine Dharma*, he is referring to teachings like 'Entering the Conduct of the Bodhisattvas'. When a qualified master teaches the genuine Dharma to a qualified student, realization should be born in the student's mind.

Therefore, the sublime Dharma, the genuine teachings of the Buddha, are the most precious treasure in the entire universe; even the wishfulfilling jewel cannot produce realization in the mind of a student.

The quintessence of all Dharma teachings is *wisdom*. Whoever imparts to you the gift of wisdom, through the teachings of sutra or tantra, has become your spiritual teacher and is thus worthy of respect. If you ignore this and treat a genuine wisdom teacher as an ordinary being, you have adopted an improper attitude, a wrong view, having failed to acknowledge the wisdom teacher for what he is.

Beginning students find it very difficult to know for themselves whether or not a teacher is genuine. Therefore, the Buddhist teachings provide ample guidelines enabling students to evaluate prospective teachers. In general, a student can always check to see if the master's teachings are helpful to his state of mind. When you put the teachings into practice, notice whether your afflictions decrease, or whether your positive attitude and virtuous mind become stronger. If the latter is the case, you must acknowledge the teacher's kindness. A genuine teacher is a conduit for the genuine Dharma.

A general positive attitude is to think, "Whoever gives rise to any positive quality in my mind is my superior." Our parents are our superiors because they have given us life, clothing, and nourishment.

Titles such as 'master', 'guru', 'teacher', 'tutor', 'elder', 'superior', and 'spiritual friend' all refer to those from whom we acquire knowledge and qualities. Once a teacher has imparted knowledge, or influenced us so that spiritual qualities arise, we should regard him as 'a superior of ours'.

For example, if a teacher has caused a student to arouse bodhicitta, then the student should immediately acknowledge this, thinking, "Based on the teacher's kindness, bodhicitta has arisen in my mind." Further, the student should think, "Since it obviously benefits my mind greatly, I can place my trust in the Dharma of the Buddha and in the teacher who has imparted the Dharma to me." First, acknowledge the cause or catalyst of your newly-born qualities; through this you

become able to place your trust in the teacher, the cause for these qualities to arise. This understanding, this recognition of the situation, is the very basis of faith and devotion. The Dharma is not merely information gathered from others without a bond of deep respect and gratitude toward the source of that sacred knowledge.

When receiving the Dharma, a student should distinguish between the teacher's personality on the one hand and the teacher's capacity to impart the genuine Dharma on the other. These considerations must also be measured against the student's subjective responses to the teacher and to the teachings. The 'perfect teacher', a teacher who is perfect as an individual and whose capacity to teach the genuine Dharma is equally perfect, is very difficult to find. To meet a Buddha-like teacher requires incredible merit and aspirations on the part of the student.

The teacher-student relationship is based on their mutual merit and their mutual aspirations. Students of inferior merit and aspirations will meet only inferior teachers. Even were such students to meet a genuine teacher, they would not be able to place their trust in such a teacher. Their insufficient merit and force of aspiration means that they will at best form links with inferior teachers. If your teacher is not 'perfect', both as an individual and as a teacher, do not focus your mind on the person of the teacher, but instead focus only on the Dharma teachings he imparts. You should ignore the flaws in the teacher's personality while continuing to acknowledge whatever qualities he has in presenting the genuine Dharma. If, however, you discover that your teacher is presenting a corrupted version of the Dharma, you should by all means abandon such a teacher and continue making heartfelt aspirations to find a genuine master.

Text sections 107-112:

Khenpo Kunpal now turns to the proper conduct for listening to the Dharma. The Buddhist teachers often discuss 'the three defects of a listener'. Certain faults students may have when listening to the teachings are described through the metaphor of a pot. The student is compared to a pot; the Dharma is compared to nectar poured into the pot; the teacher is the one who pours the nectar.

The first two of the *three defects* are those of the upside-down pot and the pot with a hole in it. These are relatively easy to avoid. If the student concentrates he can focus on what is being said, and he can remember the teachings. The third defect is exemplified by a pot containing poison. Ordinary beings find it very difficult to listen to the teachings without any 'poison', in other words without any afflictions. Our minds are generally engrossed in afflictions. One can, however, at least attempt to avoid the more obvious and gross afflictions such as listening to the teachings with the desire for greatness, the desire for fame, or the desire for gain and recognition.

If you study the Dharma because you want to become a famous scholar, this very motivation turns your Dharma practice into something no longer dharmic.

Listening to the Dharma accumulates merit, but if your motivation to study the Dharma is rooted in desire, aversion, or ignorance, your practice is actually nondharmic. Therefore, consciously generating the proper motivation every time you are about to receive teachings, every time you are about to study, and every time you are about to engage in practice is extremely important. When a qualified teacher expounds the Dharma in a quiet place, free from any distractions, the afflictions present in the minds of the audience will naturally be reduced.

Text section 113:

Khenpo Kunpal now quotes the Buddha from the *Yum-Bar-Ma*, the Prajnaparamita in twenty-five thousand lines: *"Listen closely, in the proper manner, and retain it in your mind! I will explain it!"*. *Listen closely* means to listen with open ears and not like a pot turned upside down; the mind should be focused on nothing else. *Retain it in your mind* means to remember the teaching and not to resemble a pot with a hole in it. *In the proper manner* means to listen without your mind being contaminated with afflictions so that you are not like a poison-laden pot.

The *Yum-Bar-Ma* or 'Medium-length Mother' is a text of the Prajnaparamita literature. The Prajnaparamita literature is structured in the following way: first is the Extensive-length Mother, then the Mediumlength Mother, and finally the Short-length Mother. The Extensive-length Mother is also called 'the Hundred Thousand', referring to the Prajnaparamita in one hundred thousand lines, the extensive collection in twelve volumes. The Medium-length Mother refers to the Prajnaparamita in twenty-five thousand lines, the mid-sized collection in four volumes. The Short-length Mother refers to the Prajnaparamita in eight thousand lines, this being the short collection in one single volume.

Transcendental wisdom is the mother of all Buddhas. The quintessence of Prajnaparamita is summed up in the following quote:

The inexpressible and inconceivable transcendent intelligence Is unborn and unobstructed like the essence of space.
Each individual has the capacity to experience his own awareness wisdom.
To the mother of all Buddhas, I pay homage.
The great master Gampopa, the physican from Dakpo,*said*,

"Unless you practice the Dharma according to the Dharma, the Dharma itself becomes the cause for going to the lower realms".

Merely attempting to practice the Dharma is not at all sufficient. Clearly understanding the proper way to practice the Dharma is most important. If you practice improperly, without correct understanding of the meaning and intent of the Dharma, your Dharma practice can actually become the cause for taking rebirth in the three lower realms. In particular you must avoid mingling the study and practice of Dharma with ignorance, anger, desire, arrogance and so forth. Studying and practicing the Dharma with these mind poisons will only create negative karma. Your so-called Dharma practice will become nothing but an accumulation of negative karma. When studying and practicing, generate a pure motivation, the motivation of bodhicitta.

Text sections 114-115:

Khenpo Kunpal's explanation of the *six stains* further acquaints us with the potential defects of a listener, according to the explanation tradition of Paltrul Rinpoche. If your mind is not free from the *six stains*, then in this life you will experience many difficulties in your attempts to practice meditative *concentration*, to gain *knowledge*, and to attain *complete liberation* because of not understanding the perfect nature of the words and their meaning. The *perfect nature of the words and meaning* refers to 'the perfect nature of the words and meaning of the teachings of the Buddhas and the treatises' written about them. The 'perfect words' refers to the Dharma, conveyed without any additions or omissions. The 'perfect meaning' refers to the noble topic, which is free from any error or faults.

If your mind is not free from the six stains, you will be unable to meditate on the perfect nature of Buddha's words and their meaning and will fail to gain knowledge and wisdom. Nor will you gain liberation from afflictions through the acquisition of knowledge and the practice of meditation. Furthermore, these defects will keep you from having the opportunity to meet the Dharma in your next lifetime but will instead keep you circling endlessly in samsara. Therefore, listening to the Dharma properly is of the utmost importance.

Text section 117:

A teacher of sutra must know the distinction between the *provisional meaning* and the *definitive meaning*. Dujom Rinpoche provides a very clear definition of these two levels of teachings:

The reality of all phenomena, the expanse of just what is, the luminous realization of mind-nature—naturally pure and unchanging, beyond birth, arising, ceasing, and

abiding—this space-like essence is the definitive meaning. All the teachings and treatises which reveal it are subsumed within the definitive meaning.

All apparitions of reality that appear dream-like and manifesting as diverse, successive forms such as those of arising and ceasing, coming and going, purity and impurity, aggregates, elements, and sense fields, which are all appraised and exaggeratedly indicated by a succession of words, thoughts and expressions are called the provisional meaning. All the teachings and treatises which reveal them are subsumed within relative truth. For example, those which boast in words, expressions, and thoughts that mind-nature is space-like are relative truth, whereas the fundamental nature of ultimate reality, the definitive meaning, is genuine.

If one asks what are the sutras of definitive meaning and what are the sutras of provisional meaning? Then those sutras which are taught in order that one might enter the path are called the provisional meaning, and those sutras which are taught in order that one might enter the result are called the definitive meaning.

Those sutras which teach of self, sentient beings, life itself, creatures, individuals, personalities, personal selves, doers, feelers of sensations, explanations according to diverse terms, and of that which has no owner as an owner are called the provisional meaning.

The sutras which teach of emptiness, of that which is signless, aspirationless, not manifestly conditioned, uncreated, unoriginated, insubstantial, without a self, without sentient beings, without life itself, without individuals, without an owner and without any properties even as far as the approach to liberation are called the definitive meaning.

In short, the fundamental natural state and the sutras which reveal it are said to be the definitive meaning and the sutras of this (definitive meaning), while all those teachings which guide the intellect of sentient beings by many methods to the means of entering that fundamental nature, revealing the impure bewilderment, its classifications and so on, are called the provisional meaning and the teachings of the provisional meaning.

Furthermore, a teacher should know the 'four kinds of intention' with which the Buddhas deliver their teachings: 1) the intention directed toward sameness; 2) the intention directed toward other meanings; 3) the intention directed toward other times; and 4) the intention directed toward the thoughts of individuals.

Dujom Rinpoche defines these as follows:

The intention applies to those teachings which are included within slightly exaggerated explanations and reveal indirect methods and purposes.

(1) Accordingly, the (Buddha's) intention is directed toward sameness, as is exemplified in the following words spoken with an intention directed toward the sameness of the Dharmakaya: "At that time, I became the Tathagata Vipashyin."

(2) When this intention is directed toward other meanings it is exemplified by the following words which were spoken with an intention directed toward the three essenceless natures: "All phenomena are without essence." Now, the imaginary is without essence in respect of attributes because in truth it definitely does not exist. The dependent is without essence in respect of creation, because creation from the four extremes does not exist: Things are not created from themselves because both that which was created and creation itself consist of instantaneous time moments, which renders them mutually exclusive substances. Nor are things created from something else, because the specific characteristics of that something else do not, on analysis, exist. Then, things are not created from both (themselves and other causes), because they are mutually exclusive substances; and, (finally) without a cause, creation is impossible. The creation of whatever is apparitional and so forth instantly appears inasmuch as it is dependently originated in the manner of a mere dream or illusion.

The absolute is without essence in respect of ultimate reality because therein (the view that) ultimate reality exists, or that the self is impure, and other such conceptual elaborations are essenceless.

(3) The (Buddha's) intention is then directed toward other times, as exemplified in the words: "By merely grasping (remembering) the name of the Tathagata Vimalacandraprabha, you will attain Buddhahood." Although Buddhahood is not attained by that alone, (the intention is that) someone who has accumulated many accumulations in the past will at some time become a Buddha.

(4) The intention directed toward the thoughts of individuals is exemplified by (the Buddhas') downgrading of moral discipline and praise of liberality in the presence of certain individuals who are conceited with respect to their own moral discipline

Furthermore, a teacher of sutra must know the *four kinds of covert intentions* with which the Buddhas deliver the teachings. The 'four kinds of covert intentions' are:

(1) the covert intentions with respect to entering into the teachings;

- (2) the covert intentions with respect to attributes;
- (3) the covert intentions with respect to antidotes; and
- (4) the covert intentions with respect to interpretation.

Dujom Rinpoche defines the term as follows: Secondly, concerning the covert intention: It is explained that in order to induce another party, who delights in any view whatsoever, to enter into the correct path or meaning, (the Buddhas) adopt a style conforming to the needs of that person by relying somewhat on that person's vocabulary and mannerism, but their meaning does not conform.

Thus, because of *covert intention*, when teaching, the Buddhas may conform or adjust their style and presentation. However, they will never conform in meaning, indicating that they will in no way compromise the content of the Dharma in an attempt to adapt to their audience and circumstances.

Dujom Rinpoche continues: (1) The covert intention with respect to entering is illustrated as follows. In order that certain members of those inclined to the shravaka, who have not entered the greater vehicle out of fear of emptiness, may so 'enter', (the Buddhas) would say that form exists, and thereby the listeners would enter assuming that (form) really exists, while the teachers (the Buddhas) would 'intend' that all appearance is like a dream. The shravakas are able to realize the egolessness of personal identity but not the egolessness of phenomena. They feel uncomfortable with the teachings on profound emptiness. Therefore, the Buddhas teach those shravakas that form exists, and in that way they enable the shravakas to begin to follow the Mahayana teachings on emptiness. This method does not, however, alter the intention of the Buddhas which is to have the shravakas eventually realize that all appearance is no more real than a dream. In that way the Buddhas are skilled in the means of leading the students step by step to a deeper understanding of profound emptiness.

Dujom Rinpoche further elaborates: (2) The covert intention with respect to attributes is exemplified as follows. In order that the natural state devoid of any essence can be known, (the Buddhas) reveal that all phenomena are devoid of an essence. The three essenceless natures are the imaginary, the dependent, and the absolute.

(3) The covert intention with respect to antidotes is exemplified by the following words which were spoken with an intention directed toward those beings who would think that, "Shakyamuni is inferior to other teachers (Buddhas) because he is smaller in body, shorter in lifespan and so on." (Therefore, Buddha Shakyamuni said), "At that time I became the Tathagata Vairocana."

In this way, the listeners understand (all) the (Buddhas) to be the same in their rupakaya, while the teacher (Shakyamuni) intends (to teach) that their accumulations are equally perfected, that their attainments of the Dharmakaya are equal, and that their deeds on behalf of living beings are equal. As it is said in the AbhiDharma-kosha-karika:

All the Buddhas are identical in their accumulations,
Their Dharmakaya and their conduct
On behalf of sentient beings,
But not so in their lifespan,
Caste and physical size.
End of quote.

When students had doubts about Buddha Shakyamuni, thinking that he must be inferior to Buddhas that had appeared in other eras due to their lifespan and physical size being greater, Buddha Shakyamuni said, “At that time I became the Tathagata Vairocana.” This refers to the sambhogakaya Buddha Vairocana called ‘Great Glacial Ocean Vairocana’.

This statement by the Buddha tells us that Buddha Shakyamuni is manifest on the sambhogakaya level as Buddha Vairocana, named ‘Great Glacial Ocean’. This sambhogakaya Buddha is moreover indivisible from all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Within each pore of his body infinite world systems appear, and within each atom of these world systems is an infinity of other worlds with infinite forms of Vairocana. Each form of Vairocana contains infinite Buddhas and Buddha fields. Vairocana encompasses the entirety of all world systems, and the entirety of all world systems constitutes Vairocana.

Our world system, called ‘world system of endurance’, is an infinitely tiny segment within these oceanic world systems. On Vairocana’s palm alone are twenty-five lotuses, each containing billions of ‘third order of thousand world systems’. On the thirteenth lotus tier, at exactly the middle level The term ‘third order of thousand (world systems)’, often translated as ‘three thousand-fold world systems’, means 1.000 to the power of three, which equals one billion single world systems. One single world system includes Mount Sumeru, sun and moon, the four continents, the worlds of the gods of desire and the world of Brahma. The sum of ‘a thousand single world systems’ is called ‘the first order of a thousand world systems’ or ‘the lesser order of a thousand world systems’, which means 1.000 to the power of one.

One thousand 'lesser order of a thousand world systems' constitute 'the middle order of a thousand world systems' or 'the second order of a thousand world systems', which means a thousand to the power of two or one million separate world systems.

One thousand 'middle order of a thousand world systems' make 'the large order of a thousand world systems' or 'the third order of a thousand world systems', also called 'the third order, the larger order of one of the twenty-five lotuses, our 'third order of thousand world systems' is found; however, our 'third order of thousand world systems' is merely one among billions. One 'third order of thousand world systems' is the field of influence of one nirmanakaya—in our case, of Buddha Shakyamuni.

When Buddha Shakyamuni stated that he had become 'Great Glacial Ocean Vairocana', he eradicated all doubts concerning his possible inferiority due to the difference in his lifespan and physical size when compared with that of other Buddhas. All Buddhas are equal with regard to the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. Their realization of the Dharmakaya, moreover, is also equal. Furthermore, they equally benefit sentient beings. Nevertheless, they differ in lifespan, caste, and physical size. Dujom Rinpoche next states:

(4) The covert intention with respect to interpretation refers to teachings given in a form which is extremely difficult to understand in order to pacify the faults of those who think, "This doctrine is inferior to others because it is easy to understand." For example, it is said in the Udanavarga:

He should kill his father and mother,
And if he destroys the king and the two purities,
The country and its surroundings,
This man will become pure in nature."

Now, the father and mother are craving and grasping because they compound samsara. The king is the all-ground because this becomes the support or ground of various habitual patterns.

The two purities are the Brahmana view of mundane aggregates (eternalistic view) and the view of those who are conceited with respect to their virtuous moral discipline and yogic discipline. The country and its surroundings are the eight aggregates of consciousness along with the subject-object grasping of the inner sense fields. If all these are destroyed and purified, one becomes a Buddha.

Without a teacher to explain all these different levels of interpretation, one will never truly understand the Dharma. Just by reading the Buddhist texts, one will not gain

genuine understanding. One needs to have the correct perspective for interpreting the scriptures. Since the texts possess many words, meanings, intentions, and purposes, it is crucial to know in what manner they are to be expounded.

Text section 119:

The first of the *four concepts* teaches that you should consider yourself as a person afflicted with sickness of afflictions. Among the four noble truths, the truth of cessation and the truth of the path are the Dharma. The truth of suffering and the truth of origination are what must be overcome and rejected. Concerning the Four Noble Truths it is said:

You must understand the truth of suffering,
Overcome the truth of origination,
Aim for the truth of cessation,
And apply the path to your mind.

Many people do not know how to identify suffering. At first, one must understand that one is afflicted by the illnesses represented by the truth of suffering. There are three fundamental types of suffering: suffering of change, suffering upon suffering, and omnipresent suffering in the making. What is referred to as the 'suffering of change' is the suffering we experience when a state of happiness suddenly changes into suffering. One moment we are happy and the next moment we are overcome by sickness, we lose our house and property, or are otherwise plunged into suffering.

We experience 'suffering upon suffering' when, before one suffering has passed, we are subjected to another. We get leprosy, and then we break out in boils. Our father dies and then our mother dies soon afterwards. We are pursued by enemies and, on top of that, a loved one dies. In this way, one misery is heaped upon another. The 'omnipresent suffering in the making' refers to the suffering omnipresent throughout all the three realms of samsara. Although we might not experience this suffering right now, nonetheless, we are constantly preoccupied with preparing, fabricating, and attracting the causes for inevitable future suffering. Our very food and clothing, our homes, celebrations, life-style and the adornments, all of which give us pleasure, are actually all the result of harmful actions. Whatever we do for ourselves is at the expense of other beings. As everything we do is nothing more than a concoction of negative actions, it can lead only to suffering.

We also undergo three further kinds of suffering: at the moment of death we have the

suffering of being cut off from life. Next, we will experience the suffering of the intermediate state. Later, we will be forced to take rebirth and experience the suffering of the three lower realms.

Furthermore, there is the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death. There is the suffering of losing loved ones, the suffering of meeting enemies, the suffering of not getting what one wants, and the suffering of encountering what one does not wish to. In addition to these there is also the particular suffering experienced by the beings of the six realms: beings in hell are tormented by the suffering of heat and cold; pretas suffer from hunger and thirst; animals are afflicted with stupidity and ignorance; human beings must endure birth, aging, disease, and death; demi-gods struggle with quarreling and fighting; and even the gods experience the suffering of death and transition.

The causes of all these types of suffering are karma and afflictions. The cause of karma is afflictions. The root of afflictions is egoclinging. To identify the causes of suffering is the intent of the truth of origination. The method of overcoming the origination of suffering is known as the truth of the path, while the result of having overcome the origination of suffering brings one to the truth of cessation.

If one takes refuge in the Dharma, one is taking refuge in the truth of cessation and the truth of the path, and not in the truth of suffering and the truth of origination. The truths of suffering and its origination are part of the Dharma, but they are what must be overcome or transcended and, therefore, are not themselves objects of refuge. Suffering and the origination of suffering by themselves are not the Dharma. They become the Dharma only when overcome.

At first, it is imperative to consider your mind to be ill since it bears the causes of suffering. Once your mind is free from ego-clinging and afflictions, no cause for suffering remains in your mind, and you no longer need to regard yourself as a sick person.

The second of the 'four concepts' means that one must consider the Dharma as medicine. A simple definition of the Dharma can be that the Dharma is a 'positive mindset', a 'noble motivation'. Dharma is positive motivation and positive thinking. A negative mindset, negative motivation, and negative thinking are not the way of the Dharma. Many so-called Buddhist practitioners focus too much on external activities like hanging prayer flags, reciting the scriptures, and performing rituals, without understanding that these activities all depend on positive motivation, on positive thinking.

Consider the Dharma as the cure for the causes of suffering. The method that frees the practitioner from suffering and the causes of suffering is included in the truth of the path. Therefore it is said, "Apply the truth of the path to your mind." The third among the 'four concepts' speaks of developing the attitude that intensive practice is the best cure for the illness of your being. Just knowing the Dharma is not sufficient. You need to apply the teachings to your being day and night. Only if you dedicate yourself entirely to the path of enlightenment will there be a chance for you to actually make some progress in this very lifetime. Do not waste this precious opportunity of having found the genuine Dharma, a genuine teacher, and the ideal conditions to practice the Dharma.

Finally, the fourth concept is that you regard your spiritual master as a learned physician. The spiritual friend should be considered to be similar to the Buddha. It is most important to place one's trust in one's spiritual guide. If you do not trust in the physician, you will not trust in his medicine, and there will be no chance to cure your illnesses.

Text sections 120-121:

Khenpo Kunpal here discusses a particular meditation used as preparation for listening to the teachings. At first, before the teaching begins, the listener must develop bodhicitta. Whatever teaching you receive, whatever practice you do, if you lack bodhicitta you are not engaged in the Mahayana path. Having given rise to bodhicitta, the listener now meditates upon himself as the female bodhisattva *Tara*, imagining a white lotus appearing at the level of his right ear. Meditate that your teacher is the Bodhisattva *Manjushri*, the manifestation of the wisdom aspect of all the Buddhas, sitting in the sky before you on a throne which is supported by eight lions and upon which are lotus, sun, and moon discs. Manjushri holds the sword of wisdom in his right hand, and in his left hand he holds the Prajnaparamita scripture.

On the basis of this meditation, continue the visualization by imagining that as you hear the master's teachings, light rays emanate from the master's mouth and dissolve into the lotus by your ear. Furthermore, visualize all beings as female deities. While receiving teachings, always meditate upon your teacher as a male deity and on all the students, including yourself, as female deities. At the end of the teaching, rest a few moments in the recognition of non-conceptual emptiness. This is the yoga for the beginning, the main part, and the end of a teaching session. This teaching instruction guides students in the practice of pure perception, thus transforming them into proper

vessels for receiving the teachings. This practice, which is known as 'the six sections of Tara', is the method of visualizing oneself as Tara while receiving teachings.

The reason for visualizing the teacher as Manjushri and yourself and all fellow students as female deities is to purify the ordinary subject-object dichotomy. The purified object is Dharmadhatu, the expanse of absolute truth, and the purified subject is wisdom. In this practice, wisdom is symbolized through a male deity, here Manjushri, while the expanse, or Dharmadhatu, is symbolized through a female deity, here Tara. This is a training in pure perception ; the teacher is considered to be the personification of wisdom, while the students regard themselves as female deities, as the personification of discriminating knowledge. On the ultimate level, the terms wisdom and discriminating knowledge are synonymous; however, on the relative level, it is discriminating knowledge that recognizes non-conceptual wisdom.

Text sections 122-123:

When listening to the Dharma, students should practice the six transcendental perfections. As the practice of generosity, set up a throne for the master and offer him flowers. In this case, the flower offering represents the entire man@ala offering. At best, when requesting teachings, a student should offer a man@ala made out of precious metals such as gold, silver and so forth. The student should at least perform the man@ala mudra and chant the 'seven point man@ala offering'. This famous offering prayer was composed by king Trisong Detsen, when he offered his entire kingdom to Guru Rinpoche:

The earth is sprinkled with scented water and strewn with flowers,
Adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun, and the moon.
Imagining this as a Buddha realm, I offer it
So that all beings may enjoy the pure realms.

As a practice of discipline, prior to the teachings, the students should thoroughly clean the venue where the teachings are to take place. The students should beautify the entire setting and perfume the air with incense. The students themselves should be clean and properly dressed, and their conduct during the teachings should be well composed and disciplined.

As a practice of patience during the teachings, the students should endure insect bites and always abstain from killing any insects. They should sit calmly and should not fight or quarrel with their fellow students.

The practice of diligence means the students should again and again request the master to teach the Dharma. Sometimes students must make many requests before the master agrees to give the teachings. Also, privately, the students should make prayers and supplications to the master to teach the Dharma. Once the teacher has begun to teach, students should listen, study, and practice what they have learned diligently. It is said that while imbibing the nectar of the teachings, one should always look at the face of the teacher.

As the practice of meditation, the students listen to the teachings while avoiding all distractions of body, speech, or mind. The students' minds should stay focused on whatever the teacher says. There should be no gossip nor even any talk among the students during the teachings, and those listening should keep their bodies still and poised. Students should not even recite mantras or use their malas (rosaries) while receiving teachings. They should be utterly, single-mindedly concentrated on the teachings.

The practice of knowledge means that students should listen, contemplate, and meditate on the teachings they receive from their master. They should ask questions to clarify what is not understood, thus eliminating any doubts they may have about what is being said. This is how students should practice the six transcendental perfections while receiving teachings.

Text section 124:

Just as students listening to the Dharma must align their motivation and behavior with the conduct of the bodhisattvas, the master as well should practice the six transcendental perfections while teaching the Dharma. If all six transcendental perfections are not completely present, the teacher's bodhisattva activity is not fully manifest.

The first transcendental perfection, that of generosity, is fulfilled through the act of giving teachings. Among all forms of generosity, the gift of Dharma is supreme. The perfection of discipline is fulfilled by the teacher remaining free from afflictions. Among all afflictions, at the very least, the teacher must remain free from aggression, ill will or jealousy, and pride. This instructs us that a teacher is to observe the discipline of abstaining from harming others.

Third, a teacher must also practice patience, bearing any kind of fatigue, whether mental fatigue or physical hardship; and he must teach the Dharma tirelessly. He should bear any harm his students might inflict upon him due to incorrect

understanding and practice. When the mind of a teacher remains composed through his practice of patience, his Dharma discourse will not be disturbed. A true master must be patient with his students and should never get angry with them.

Since the master expounds the Dharma with joy when teaching, he is practicing the fourth transcendental perfection of diligence. Fifth, by remaining undistracted while teaching the Dharma, he is practicing the transcendental perfection of meditation or concentration. Since a qualified master is able to discern both the words and their meanings, the transcendental perfection of knowledge is also functioning within him. In this way, a proper master imparting the teachings is endowed with all six transcendental perfections.

In general, a sutra teacher must be learned regarding the Dharma and must be imbued with bodhicitta. He must know the scriptures of the Mahayana tripitaka and must be fully endowed with all the oral instructions of his gurus.

Text section 125:

To further elucidate the guidelines for one who teaches the Dharma, Khenpo Kunpal quotes Shantideva from stanza 88 of the fifth chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, which specifically states that one should not teach the Dharma to those who do not respect the Buddha's teachings:

Do not explain the Dharma to those who are disrespectful,
Nor to those who, while not being sick, wrap their heads,
Nor to those who carry parasols, staffs, or weapons,
Nor to those who cover their heads.

Echoing Shantideva's advice, a Tibetan proverb comments:
Never teach the Dharma to people without faith.
Whoever teaches the Dharma to people without faith.
Will not be liberated (from the lower realms) for a thousand aeons.

By teaching Dharma to people who lack faith, the greatness of the Dharma will vanish. The Dharma is the path to the highest of all attainments, the path to enlightenment, and should not be treated like ordinary information, or like an interesting story that can be spoken of in a casual setting. Those who, through their motivation and conduct, disrespect the Dharma and the teacher in any way should not receive any instructions. If Dharma is taught to disrespectful persons, the greatness of the Dharma will deteriorate, and the listeners will receive no benefit from hearing the teachings. The

teachings will lose their transformative power. The purpose of the teachings, is, after all, to transform the being of the listener.

Hence, a qualified teacher is one worthy of respect, an individual who has transformed and is transforming his own being through the teachings. Moreover, a qualified teacher will never knowingly teach the Dharma to people who lack respect for the teachings, because such people could accumulate negative karma for themselves if they develop wrong views about the Dharma or reject the Dharma. A qualified teacher will never put anyone in the situation of developing wrong views, since the negative karma that comes from this could cause the listeners to take rebirth in the three lower realms. For reasons such as these a teacher should not teach the Dharma to those without respect or faith. This is an essential rule for one who teaches the Dharma.

The rule for students is to respect each Dharma teacher, even a teacher who has taught them only a single stanza of the Dharma. In Dharma study there is no place for the sort of disrespect one often finds in present day school rooms.

When listening to the Dharma one should bare one's head as a sign of respect. Thus, the scriptures state that the Dharma should not be taught to people who are wearing hats, carrying parasols, staffs, or weapons. Only if the heat of the sun is unbearable or if it is raining can the audience cover their heads with Shawls or protect them with parasols or umbrellas. People who are sick or old are allowed to use canes or walking sticks, but only those who are ill should cover their heads with hats or Shawls. Weapons are never permitted in a teaching situation.

Likewise, students sitting on seats higher than the teacher should not be taught the Dharma. If the teacher is standing, the students are not allowed to remain seated. If the teacher is standing and the student remain sitting, the teacher should not expound the Dharma. If students walk together with their teacher and he expounds the Dharma to them while walking, they should walk on the teacher's left side, with their right side facing the teacher. Also, a translator should sit on the teacher's left. Moreover, pointing one's feet toward the Dharma teacher or turning one's back to the teacher while he is teaching is utterly improper.

In a traditional teaching setting, students first offer three prostrations to the teacher. Then the students and teacher recite together the short praise to the Bodhisattva Manjughosha called 'Gangi Lodro' in order to open the wisdom eye: "I bow to Manjughosha whose intellect, free from the clouds of the two obscurations, is brilliantly illuminating and totally pure like the sun, Perceiving all things just as they are, you hold a volume of scripture to your heart.

Your speech endowed with sixty melodious aspects, you care, as for an only child, For those hosts of beings tormented by suffering and engulfed in the darkness of ignorance in the prison of existence.

Thundering mightily like a dragon, you Shatter the sleep of afflictions and sunder the chains of karma.

Dispelling the darkness of ignorance, you wield the sword that severs the seedlings of suffering.

Primordially pure, your body is the foremost among the children of the victorious ones, those who have reached the pinnacle of the ten levels and perfected all qualities.

Adorned with one hundred and twelve ornaments, you dispel the darkness of my mind.
Om A Ra Pa Tsa Na Dhi"

The students next present an offering, while reciting the 'seven point manala offering':
The earth is sprinkled with scented water and strewn with flowers,
Adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun, and the moon.
Imagining this as a Buddha realm, I offer it
So that all beings may enjoy the pure realms.

Finally, with joined palms, the students request the teacher to turn the wheel of Dharma:
According to sentient beings' thoughts
And specific mental capacities,
Please turn the wheel of Dharma
Of the greater, lesser or common vehicle.

Now the teacher will begin to expound the Dharma and the students should listen attentively to the teachings. At the end of the teaching session, the teacher and the students dedicate the merit and make the following aspiration:
Through this merit may I attain omniscience and
Defeating the foe of misdeeds,
May I free all beings from the ocean of samsara
With its stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death.

May the precious and supreme bodhicitta
Arise in those in whom it has not yet arisen;
And where it has arisen may it not decrease

But ever increase more and more.

At the end of the teachings the students may again present an offering to the teacher as a thanksgiving.

Text section 127:

Khenpo Kunpal also gives the five great key points from the Vyakhya-yukti. The great Indian panditas such as Vasubhandu and others based their teaching style on these five points, as did the teachers at Shri Simha Shedra, such as Paltrul Rinpoche, On Urgyen Tendzin Norbu, and Khenpo Zhenga. My personal teacher Khenpo Pentse also always explained all sutras and treatises according to these five great points:

1. The purpose
2. The condensed meaning
3. The meaning of the words
4. The outline
5. The responses to objections.

1. The first point is the teaching's *purpose*. The teacher should first explain the general purpose and the benefits of listening to the Dharma, and then he should explain the specific purpose, the subject matter to be taught. The general and particular purpose has also been explained earlier under the fifth of the five preliminary assessments: 'How a learned pandita teacher expounds the Dharma'.

See text-section 102 in this commentary:

(The Bodhisattva-caryavatara) was composed to benefit all sentient beings in general, and in particular, so that the five hundred panditas of glorious Nalanda could understand how to practice the way of the bodhisattvas in a complete and unmistakable fashion.

In this context, the teacher may outline what are known as 'the four related aspects, such as the purpose and so on': (a) the topic, (b) the purpose, (c) the ultimate purpose, and (d) the relation between these. These points must be explained at the beginning of a teaching on a treatise.

The first of these, the topic that is taught in the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, is the precious bodhicitta, the entrance into the precepts of the bodhisattvas. The second related aspect, the purpose for studying the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, is that studying the

teachings of the Buddha is meaningful. Third, the ultimate purpose of studying the teachings is to attain the level of perfect enlightenment. Finally, the relation between these points is such that one cannot understand the latter points without having first studied the former. Without practicing bodhicitta and the precepts of the bodhisattvas, one will not understand the teachings of the Buddha and will never reach perfect enlightenment.

2. The second of the five points through which the scholars explain the scriptures and treatises is the *condensed meaning* or summary of the whole treatise. Here, the teacher should give a general overview as well as an overview of each individual topic. The brief meaning of the treatise from beginning to end has already been stated under the fourth of the five preliminary assessments through which the Indian panditas evaluate Buddhist treatises in text section 101, called 'How a learned pandita teacher expounds the Dharma':

(The Bodhisattva-caryavatara) explains in great detail how to train in the motivation of supreme bodhicitta and in the application of the six transcendental perfections. The teacher should summarize the text in an accessible and easily remembered way. Next, he should give an overview of each topic and present the text as a whole from beginning to end. The teacher should delineate the major sections of the text and their subdivisions. Here, the teacher should use Paltrul Rinpoche's specific style of structuring the entire text in an easy manner, which follows the framework provided by the following four famous lines:

May the precious and supreme bodhicitta
Arise in those in whom it has not yet arisen;
And where it has arisen may it not decrease
But ever increase more and more."

This aspiration summarizes the entire Bodhisattva-caryavatara. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara has ten chapters in 913 stanzas.

The ten chapters are structured by categorizing them into four principal sections: The first principal section, which includes the first three chapters, is titled 'Three chapters that give rise to the precious bodhicitta in those in whom it has not yet arisen' (chap. 1, 2, 3). These are:

1. Explaining the benefits of bodhicitta
2. Confessing negative deeds
3. Thorough adoption of bodhicitta.

The second principal section, which includes the second three chapters, is titled 'Three chapters that prevent the decrease (of the precious bodhicitta) where it has arisen' (chap. 4,5,6).

These are:

4. Heedfulness
5. Introspection
6. Patience.

The third principal section, which includes the third three chapters, is titled 'Three chapters that not only prevent the decrease (of the precious bodhicitta) but cause it to ever increase more and more' (chap. 7,8,9). These are:

7. Diligence
8. Meditation
9. Transcendental knowledge.

The final principal section is a single chapter concerning dedication and is titled 'A single chapter concerning the dedication of the results that have thus been developed for the benefit of others' (chap. 10). This is:

10. Dedication.

Following this format of structuring the whole Bodhisattva-caryavatara, the first three chapters deal with arousing bodhicitta. The second three chapters deal with how to sustain bodhicitta and prevent it from being lost or diminished. The third three chapters deal with methods for increasing bodhicitta. The tenth chapter deals with the subject of dedication. You dedicate the benefits of bodhicitta, which you have aroused, sustained, and increased through the teachings of the previous nine chapters.

3. The third of the five points, the *meaning of the words*, teaches that the teacher should first give an analysis of the individual words and then an analysis of their meaning. The teacher first explains each word of the text. The textual meaning must be discerned through an examination of the words and terms. Once the teacher has provided a detailed and unambiguous explanation of the terms, then he should explain the meaning of the text without any additions, omissions, or errors.

4. The fourth point, the *distinctions*, refers to the distinctions between terms and also to the distinctions between related ideas. The teacher must clarify when words seem unrelated, when their relationship is ambiguous, or when their relationship is clear but contextually obscure. Concerning the relationship between ideas, the teacher begins the explanation by saying, for example, "That brief presentation can be elaborated upon in this way." In this manner the teacher gives clear distinctions of various aspects of the text and distinguishes the former sections from the latter.

5. The fifth point, the *responses to objections*, means that the teacher quotes various doubting opinions voiced in regard to each subject and then refutes them. Alternatively, the student may raise questions or objections, such as: "Are this point and that point not contradictory?" or, "How can this be so?" The teacher should then resolve such doubts and delineate the meaning of the text through arguments consistent with logic and supported by scriptural references.

If one wishes to apply these points in depth, the five great points can be applied not only to the treatise as a whole but also to each stanza of the treatise. A teacher must know the distinctions described above between the different (levels of) teachings, such as those of the provisional meaning, the definitive meaning, the four kinds of intention, and the four covert intentions.

In addition to the five great points required for teaching the sutras, a teacher of the tantras must be able to explain the tantras according to 'the six parameters' and 'the four styles'. These points are the unique keys for appraising the scriptures of secret mantra, through which one may unlock their meaning. Without these specific keys it is utterly impossible to uncover and explain the meaning contained in any tantra of the Buddha.

The six parameters are: 1. the provisional meaning, 2. the definitive meaning, 3. the implied meaning, 4. the meaning that is not implied, 5. the literal expression, and 6. the figurative or non-literal expression.

The four styles, also known as the four styles of appraisal of the scriptures, are: the lexical meaning, the general meaning, the concealed meaning, and the ultimate meaning.

Text section 128:

The *three key points* are a condensation of the five great points. The first of the three points, *dividing the text into chronological sections, like the leaping of a tigress*, means that the teacher breaks the texts down into sections and sub-sections.

Paltrul Rinpoche structures the whole Bodhisattva-caryavatara according to three sections: 1. virtuous at the beginning, the meaning of the prefatory part refers to the introductory sections of the text; 2. virtuous in the middle, the meaning of the actual text refers to the actual text of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara; 3. virtuous at the end, the meaning of the conclusion refers to the concluding sections of the text.

This first key point also includes the first two of the five great points: 'the purpose' and 'the condensed meaning' of the text.

The second of the three key points, *covering each syllable of the words like the sliding walk of a turtle*, refers to 'the meaning of the words'. When a turtle walks, its belly always touches the ground. In the same way, the teacher explains all the words and their meanings, leaving nothing unexplained, without any omission or addition.

The third of the three key points, the *occasional condensation of the meaning, like the graceful movement of a lion*, refers to 'the outline' and 'the responses to objections'. The metaphor of the graceful movement of the lion refers to a lion's noble manner. When a lion has jumped over an abyss, he gracefully looks back. Just as a lion looks gracefully back, the teacher condenses the meaning of what was previously explained.

Text sections 130-131:

Paltrul Rinpoche, Khenpo Kunpal's teacher, had studied and realized all the teachings of the Old and New Translation Schools. For him all Buddhist *texts* were instruction manuals which always benefited his mind. It is a special feature of Buddhist texts that, if you know how to read them properly, they are all instructions that transform your mind.

Paltrul Rinpoche used to give commentaries on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara based on the main commentaries of the different schools and also on the root text itself. In the latter part of his life, he based his explanations primarily on the commentary by Ngulchu Thogme Zangpo.

Text section 132:

Khenpo Kunpal was present and took notes when Paltrul Rinpoche was teaching the Bodhisattva-caryavatara based on Ngulchu Thogme Zangpo's commentary to the great treasure revealer Chokgyur Dechen Zhikpo Lingpa and his sublime lineage children. These chronological notes, recently published by Tarthang Tulku, later became the main basis for Khenpo Kunpal's own commentary on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara called 'Drops of Nectar'.

The colophon to this commentary indicates that Khenpo Kunpal also included teachings on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara that he received later from other sublime students of Paltrul Rinpoche such as Ontrul Urgyen Tendzin Norbu. From Ontrul on two occasions he received teachings on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara for a period of forty days. Other students of Paltrul Rinpoche also gave Khenpo Kunpal their notes on Paltrul Rinpoche's teachings.

Thus, Khenpo Kunpal truly preserved Paltrul Rinpoche's oral explanations. Khenpo Kunpal wrote his commentary in a style that is easy for beginners to understand and beneficial for practice, avoiding scholastic elaborations. In the context of Paltrul Rinpoche's oral explanations, the commentary written by Khenpo Thubten Chokyi Drakpa, also known as Minyag Kunzang Sonam, should be mentioned as well. Minyag Kunzang studied for many years under Paltrul Rinpoche and wrote a very extensive commentary on the first eight chapters of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara and two commentaries on the ninth chapter. Khenpo Kunpal says that Paltrul Rinpoche taught the Bodhisattva-caryavatara for a period of six months at Dzogchen Monastery. Chokgyur Lingpa and members of his family were the most important guests at the teachings.

Chokgyur Lingpa is mentioned in predictions given by Guru Rinpoche in the Padma Katang. Therefore the phrase, *who is mentioned in the prophecies*, or *who has received the vajra-prophecies* is used. The phrase 'sublime son' or 'lineage-holding son' refers to Chokgyur Lingpa's son Tsewang Trakpa, also known as Wangchuk Dorje, who was present when Paltrul Rinpoche gave the teachings. Also Chokgyur Lingpa's daughter Konchok Paldron and Chokgyur Lingpa's wife, Dega, were present, but Chokgyur Lingpa's other son, Tsewang Norbu, did not attend the teachings.

Chokgyur Lingpa's biographies mention that he visited Dzogchen Monastery and headed a 'drupchen' at Urgyen Samtan Choling when he was 39 years old. He met the fourth Dzogchen Rinpoche, Mingyur Namkhai Dorje, to whom he gave empowerments. He then met Paltrul Rinpoche and received from him the complete commentary on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. They also gave empowerments and teachings to each other and had a mutual relationship of student and teacher to one

another. Furthermore, the biography reports that after Chokgyur Lingpa had received the Bodhisattva-caryavatara from Paltrul, both masters completed the teaching with a non-conceptual dedication and made vast aspirations for the doctrine and beings. According to Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, Chokgyur Lingpa and his family stayed for only seven days of the teachings.

Prior to the teachings, Chokgyur Lingpa had conferred empowerments of some of his own treasures upon Paltrul Rinpoche. Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche stated that the teachings took place at Rudam Orgyen Samten Choling. Dzogchen Khenpo Choga and Dzogchen Khenpo Rigdzin Tharchin speculate that some of the teachings might have taken place at Orgyen Samten Choling and some at Shri Simha Shedra.

While staying at Dzogchen Monastery, Chokgyur Lingpa wrote down a terma of Cakrasamvara as a revelation treasure text. He gave the empowerments to Paltrul Rinpoche and authorized him to be the Dharma heir to this terma. Rudam Orgyen Samten Choling, the very first monastery at Dzogchen, was founded in by the first Dzogchen Rinpoche Pema Rigdzin, when he was 61 years of age, based on a prediction given by the fifth Dalai Lama. At the time of its establishment this monastery focused primarily on meditation and was considered a meditation center.

The third Dzogchen Rinpoche Ngedon Tendzin Zangpo built a retreat center Called 'Sangchen Ngedon Ling', also known as 'Ogmin Dechen Ling' next to Dzogchen Monastery. The third Dzogchen Rinpoche put thirteen people in that retreat center and all thirteen attained the rainbow body. They all received and practiced the instruction manual called 'White Path to Liberation', which was written by the first Dzogchen Rinpoche.

Shri Simha Shedra was named after the early master of the Dzogchen lineage, Shri Simha, who had appeared in former times through his magical powers at that particular place in East Tibet, leaving the imprint of his back in a rock. Later, the three great masters, the fourth Dzogchen Rinpoche named Mingyur Namkhai Dorje, Gyalse Shenphen Thaye, and Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje conducted 'the earth-claiming ritual' at the very spot where Shri Simha had appeared and left his imprint.

At that time Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje subdued all spirits and demons in the area. With his sword he traced the border within which the shedra was to be constructed. He also prophesied that in the future no obstructors or demons would be able to enter these premises or cause any harm within them. Then Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje, Mingyur Namkhai Dorje, Gyalse Zhenphen Thaye and Khenchen Sengtruk Pema Tashi founded Shri Simha Shedra.

Khenchen Sengtruk Pema Tashi was the teacher of Gyalse Zhenphen Thaye. Khenchen Pema Dorje, a student of Gyalse Zhenphen Thaye and classmate of Paltrul Rinpoche, became the first main khenpo, the Khenchen Tripa, at Shri Simha Shedra. After Khenchen Pema Dorje, Paltrul Rinpoche (1808-1887) became Khenchen Tripa at Shri Simha. Ju Mipham Rinpoche (1846-1912) also taught at Shri Simha Shedra in the early days. Paltrul Rinpoche taught extensively on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara among other texts. These great masters started a lineage of the finest khenpos in East Tibet, thus greatly benefiting the Buddha Dharma.

In this way, Dzogchen Monastery maintains the three traditions of monastic activities, meditation and study. The tradition of monastic activities is maintained at Rudam Orgyen Samten Choling Monastery. The tradition of solitary meditation practice is maintained at the Sangchen Ngedon Ling retreat. The tradition of reading, studying and reflecting on the teachings is maintained at Shri Simha Shedra.

Text section 136:

The general belief is that ancient India had 340 different languages. Among them were *four great and special canonical languages*: Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsa and Pisaci. Sutras and treatises were written in all of these languages. Sanskrit is considered the most important among them and is known as the *divine language*, the language that all Buddhas of the three times spoke in the past, are speaking in the present and will speak in the future. The Tibetan translators have translated the term *Sanskrit* with *well composed*.

Text section 138:

A treatise can be titled in different ways. The topic of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is the conduct of the bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is, therefore, a treatise that is titled according to its *topic* or *subject matter*. A text can also be titled according to the range of its topic, such as in the 'Eight Thousand Verses', or according to its functions, meaning its power or benefit, such as the 'Diamond Cutter'.

A text might be named according to a location, like the 'Sutra of the Journey to Lanka'. It might be named according to a period of time, such as the 'Sutra of the Fortunate Aeon'. It could be named after the person who requested a teaching, like the 'Sutra Requested by Sagarmati'. Likewise, a text could be named according to a metaphor, such as 'Jewel Cluster'. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is named after its topic, how to enter the conduct of the bodhisattvas.

Text sections 139-140:

Khenpo Kunpal explains the title *Bodhisattva-caryavatara* by citing various quotes from the scriptures. First, he explains the word *bodhi* in 'bodhisattva'. *Bodhi* has a twofold meaning: 'purified' and 'inclusive'. If the Buddha nature is 'purified' of the two momentary obscurations, obscurations of affliction and obscurations of cognition, and of all habitual tendencies, then all inherent qualities of the Buddha nature are naturally 'included' or 'perfected'. That is the meaning of the quote from the *ye shes drva ba*.

The word *bodhi* has the same connotation as the word 'Buddha'. 'Buddha' means that all afflictive and cognitive obscurations have been 'purified' or 'removed' and all wisdom qualities 'unfolded'. One aspect of the term *bodhi* denotes absence, the absence of all that should be overcome. Another aspect of the term *bodhi* denotes presence, the presence of all that should be achieved and realized. 'Bodhi' and 'Buddha' are both names for the final goal, the ultimate fruition, the aim we wish to achieve, the state of a completely enlightened Buddha.

If you wish to speak of a person's condition in terms of what is present, you may say that a person is, for example, healthy. Describing a person's condition in terms of what is absent you can say that a person is not sick. The terms 'Buddha' or 'bodhi' indicate both presence and absence. The aspect of presence denotes that all possible wisdom qualities are present in the Buddha nature. The aspect of absence denotes that all possible flaws have vanished. This is the usual dualistic approach through ideas and words that attempts to describe the utterly inconceivable, such as 'Buddha' or 'bodhi'.

Text section 141:

Satva means 'hero', 'mind of courage' or 'courageous mind'. In order to make one's mind courageous or heroic, one needs to gather merit for many aeons. Buddha Shakyamuni, when he was still a bodhisattva, gathered the accumulation of merit for one countless aeon. Then, gaining the realization of Buddha nature, he traversed, over the course of another countless aeon, from the first through the seventh bodhisattva levels. During the third countless aeon, he traversed from the eighth bodhisattva level to the level of a perfectly enlightened Buddha. A bodhisattva is not afraid to journey for such a long time toward enlightenment.

The ultimate courage is not to fear profound emptiness, the realization of Buddha nature. Once one has gained unshakeable confidence in the realization of profound

emptiness, one has reached the first bodhisattva level and from that moment onward will not be afraid to sacrifice one's life to attain 'bodhi' or 'Buddhahood'.

Attaining confidence in the view of emptiness, one becomes an 'inner hero'. Based on this confidence, one has the courage to meet any given challenge and could even sacrifice one's body. For this reason the Buddha, while still a bodhisattva on the path to enlightenment, had the courage to undergo tremendous hardships simply to receive a single stanza of the Dharma.

A bodhisattva, from the first bodhisattva level onward, has gained the 'heroic samadhi', the realization of the view of emptiness. Only due to holding such confidence in his heart does he possess the courage to endure every possible hardship over the course of countless aeons. When Buddha Shakyamuni was still a bodhisattva, he held his body, health, and personal welfare to be completely insignificant and utterly meaningless in the face of the realization of emptiness, the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

Bodhisattvas know they have already taken innumerable bodies in former lifetimes; thus, they have no attachment to this present body. Their only aspiration is to attain complete realization of emptiness, the accomplishment of supreme enlightenment. Bodhisattvas express their internal courage and confidence in the view of emptiness through their conduct.

A practitioner who has the true courage of aspiring to enlightenment, of aspiring to the view of profound emptiness, is a true bodhisattva. This is the definition of a bodhisattva. Every practitioner needs to develop courage or certainty in the view in order to meet any challenge in life without losing the view of emptiness.

A bodhisattva does not shy away from the commitment to liberate all beings and is not frightened by the infinite number of beings. Neither is he afraid to traverse the path to complete enlightenment for three countless aeons; this infinitely long time-span does not intimidate him. While on this path, he never avoids any hardship or sacrifice that will benefit beings.

To be able to develop true bodhicitta in actuality, you must, to some degree, realize profound emptiness. Without the realization of emptiness you will lack the courage and confidence to truly commit yourself to the liberation of all sentient beings. A bodhisattva is stable in his mind; his mind is immutable.

Neither do bodhisattvas fear *suffering*. They can bear any suffering, including sacrificing their body and possessions, and they are utterly stable in their bodhisattva conduct. *Negative-minded friends* will be unable to change their minds in any way. Hearing the

teachings on *profound* emptiness they neither become fearful nor succumb to the influence of doubt. They are utterly *unshaken*. Thus, the bodhisattvas are described in the Sutralamkara.

The Avatamsaka-sutra provides an interesting example to illustrate the difference between the shravakas and bodhisattvas. When people witness a child falling into a cesspool, they are very concerned yet lack the courage to plunge into the filthy mire to rescue the child. The child's parents, however, would not hesitate for even a second before leaping into the pool without pausing to consider their own wellbeing. They simply have more love, compassion and affection for their child than the others present. A bodhisattva naturally experiences just such love and compassion for every sentient being.

The shravakas are similar to those others who would not hurl themselves into the cesspool to rescue the child. They do feel compassion and concern for the child but lack the bodhisattva's courage. Due to this lack of courage shravakas lack the power to express their compassion in action. They lack this courage because they have only realized that their individual ego has no identity, no self-nature. They have not realized that all phenomena are equally empty of self-nature. Thus, they have realized only half of the equation of profound emptiness.

Pratyekabuddhas have not only realized that their individual egos have no self-nature, but to a certain extent have also realized that all phenomena are similarly devoid of any self-nature.

Bodhisattvas have realized profound emptiness, the realization that their own personalities as well as all phenomena are actually empty of any self-nature. This realization is called non-dual wisdom and endows them with greater compassion for all sentient beings. Having no doubts, they do not hesitate to directly enter into any situation that could benefit beings. Such courage and compassion can only spring from absolute bodhicitta.

This complete realization of bodhicitta clearly distinguishes followers of the Hinayana vehicle from followers of the Mahayana. Bodhisattvas are heroes who pursue the benefit of other beings without the slightest hesitation. The word bodhisattva means 'a courageous being determined to gain enlightenment'. Shravakas have compassion but are not endowed with bodhicitta, neither relative nor absolute bodhicitta. The courage of the bodhisattvas stems from their realization of non-dual wisdom, the realization of absolute bodhicitta.

If a practitioner has truly realized the primordial emptiness of all phenomena, great compassion toward all sentient beings will inevitably and naturally arise in his mind. When such a practitioner experiences a heartfelt wave of compassion, his realization of emptiness will greatly improve. Emptiness and compassion mutually enhance each other's development. The realization of emptiness and compassion is what transforms a practitioner into a bodhisattva, a courageous hero.

Absolute bodhicitta is the realization of the natural unity of unborn emptiness and non-conceptual compassion toward all beings. The more that compassion can arise, the more profound will one's realization of emptiness be. The deeper one's realization of emptiness, the greater will be the spontaneous manifestation of the power and depth of non-conceptual compassion. Emptiness and compassion inspire one another and accelerate progress along the path to complete enlightenment. This mutual inspiration is 'the perpetual motion of the wheel of Dharma'.

Text section 142:

Concerning the word *carya*, 'conduct', the great master Longchenpa said that the bodhisattvas must study and train in all fields of knowledge, such as the five sciences as well as in the sublime Dharma. They must especially train in the six transcendental perfections.

Text section 143:

Carya means 'practice', 'conduct', or 'action'. *Avatara* means 'to enter', 'entering' or 'entrance'. The title of this text, 'Entering the Conduct of the Bodhisattvas', indicates that the Bodhisattva-caryavatara contains all necessary trainings and methods and is intended to enable a complete beginner to follow the conduct of the bodhisattvas. Through this text anyone can learn how to genuinely follow the bodhisattva example.

Text sections 144-145:

Both general and particular reasons are found for giving a title to a text. The general purpose comes from the simple fact that without titles, names, labels, terms and words, one will not be able to understand anything. For instance, in order to understand what is meant by the term 'emptiness', one must first have a word that denotes 'emptiness'.

The Buddha was forced to use words and terms in order to make his students understand a particular meaning. He named and labeled all his teachings with terms

such as generosity, discipline, diligence, patience, meditation, wisdom-knowledge, and so forth. Had he not done so, no one would have understood him, and the whole world would have continued to languish in abject ignorance.

In particular, the title Bodhisattva-caryavatara was given to demonstrate the topic of this text. Those of highest capacity would be able to understand the entire meaning of the text from beginning to end upon simply hearing or reading the title. Those of average capacity would have a general understanding of what the text is about, and those of lowest capacity could easily locate the book based on its title, just as one easily finds a particular medicine based on the label.

Text section 146:

A Buddhist treatise like this text always begins in the same way: “In the Sanskrit language, the title is *Bodhisattva-caryavatara*.” Then, the text goes on: “In the Tibetan language, the title is *byang chub sems dpa’i spyod pa la ’jug pa*.” In this way the Tibetan translators of Buddhist texts always preserved the original Sanskrit title by leaving the title untranslated. They reproduced the Sanskrit title in Tibetan characters so that the Tibetan readers could reproduce the sounds of the Sanskrit syllables. There are four reasons for this.

Text section 147:

(1) The Sanskrit title shows that the text is of authentic origin and inspires trust and faith in the treatise within the reader’s mind. Since all the Buddhist treatises came to Tibet from India, the Sanskrit title written in Tibetan characters authenticates the text. If a canonical Tibetan treatise could not convincingly prove its Indian origin, Tibetan scholars would not accept it.

India is considered to be the *genuine source of Dharma*. A famous text called the Guhyagarbhatantra, one of the most important tantras of the Old Translation School, was belittled by scholars from other schools as a fabrication by Old Translation School scholars. Fortunately, an Indian manuscript of this tantra was eventually recovered, and the credibility of the text was finally established beyond any doubt.

Text section 148:

(2) Tibetan people believe that all Buddhas of the three times have previously taught, presently teach and in the future will continue to teach in Sanskrit. As the language of all the Buddhas, *Sanskrit* is considered to be the *divine language* and to carry tremendous blessings. When the reader recites the title in Sanskrit, therefore, the stream of blessing of all the Buddhas will enter into his mind.

Buddhas teach the Dharma through the miraculous display of their corresponding speech. This means that each member of the audience hears the teachings in his own language. Nagas, for instance, will perceive the teachings in naga language; gods in god language; and humans in their personal language or dialect.

The Buddhas, therefore, do not need interpreters because they can communicate directly with each being according to his culture, language, capacities and needs. One should not limit the Buddha's language to Sanskrit alone, but since the Dharma was translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit texts, Tibetan people consider Sanskrit to be the language of all the Buddhas.

Text section 149:

(3) Reciting the title in Sanskrit will plant the seeds of habitual tendencies in the minds of the readers. Once they have attained Buddhahood in the future, they will be able to teach the Dharma in Sanskrit themselves.

Text section 150:

(4) The Sanskrit title, which Tibetans find very difficult to read and to pronounce, reminds the reader of the immense kindness of the translators, who underwent great difficulties by traveling to India, learning Sanskrit, and translating treatises into Tibetan. The reader becomes aware that if the entire text were left untranslated, one would neither be able to understand or to explain the text at all.

Text section 151-153:

The translator always inserts an homage after the title and before the actual translation of the text. Here, in the case of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, the homage goes: *Homage to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas!* This refers to all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three times as well as to all bodhisattvas.

The *forefather Dharma kings* are Songtsen Gampo and Trisong Detsen. During their reign no rules were made concerning the translator's homage at the beginning of a translation.

Later however, King Ralpachen decreed that all translators had to start their translations with an invocation which identified the category of the text. He ordered that all vinaya translations start with the phrase: *Homage to the Omniscient One*, all sutra translations with: *Homage to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas*, and all abhidharma translations with: *Homage to the noble Manjushrikumarabhata*.

As the Bodhisattva-caryavatara belongs to the sutra teachings, it begins with the sutra homage: *Homage to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas*. Many Mahayana sutras were requested by bodhisattvas from other world systems. By paying homage the translator ensures that no obstacles will arise for his translation of the text and that he will succeed in completing the entire translation.

Under King Ralpachen's rule a new Dharma language was also established. Earlier, each translator had coined his own personal translation terminology; no common agreement about terminology existed. King Ralpachen gathered all the major translators and had them establish a uniform terminology on which everyone could agree. The king also ordered a reformation of the old orthography.

Dudjom Rinpoche writes:

He invited Surendrabodhi, Silendrabodhi, Danashila and many other panditas from India. He commanded them, along with the Tibetan preceptor Ratnarakshita and Dharmatashila, and the translator Jnanasena, as follows:

"Formerly, when the doctrine was translated by panditas and translators in the time of my parental ancestors, many terms were used which were unknown to the Tibetan language. Replace those terms among them which contradict the texts of the Dharma and the system of grammar, as well as those which are hard to understand, by searching (for alternatives) among the best terms of the colloquial language. Thus, you should improve the translations according to the texts of the greater and lesser vehicles."

In order to establish the country in the Dharma, King Ralpachen studied all scriptures and saw that some teachings were based on Chinese texts, some on Indian texts and others on Nepalese or Oddiyana texts. Some texts even began with homage to ancestral deities and had an inconsistent Dharma terminology.

He decreed:

"Since the Buddha lived in India, and since the Dharma was first taught in India, all teachings must be unified based on the Indian language." He ordered the correction of

all incorrect translations that had been done previously and the completion of all unfinished translations.

Furthermore, he ordered the translation of boundless sutras and tantras that had not been translated previously. All translations were corrected based on original texts from India. If a text did not begin with the phrase “In the Indian language” King Ralpachen did not accept the translation. He considered that since India was the place of origin of all teachings, translations based on Indian texts were of ‘genuine origin’. The translators under King Ralpachen had to be excellently trained in grammar, both Sanskrit and Tibetan.

King Ralpachen’s activity included the establishment of three types of great spiritual institutions: universities, monasteries and retreat centers. He established twelve institutions for training in study and contemplation; six institutions for scholastic and monastic activities; and six institutions for silent retreat.

Crucial information about the translation history of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara can be gathered as well from the colophon of the text. The colophon identifies the main translators and their translation team, as well as the Indian scholars who assisted the translators in their work. The colophon removes all doubts about the text’s authenticity, proving it to be a genuine teaching that came from India. This tradition of opening with the Sanskrit title and concluding with a detailed colophon guards against any fabrication of teachings.

The great translator Kawa Paltsek (8th-9th century), assisted by the Indian scholar Sarvajnadeva, translated the Bodhisattva-caryavatara from Sanskrit into Tibetan for the first time. Kawa Paltsek for the most part used Sanskrit editions and manuscripts from the region of Kashmir in western India.

About a hundred years later, the Indian scholar Dharmashribhadra and the two Tibetan translators, Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) and Sakya Lodro, corrected and re-translated the text by using Sanskrit editions and commentaries from the Central Land. The term ‘Central Land’ refers to the heartland of India, all the ancient kingdoms in the area of the Ganges river.

Subsequently, about one hundred years later, the Indian scholar Sumatikirti and the translator Ngok Lochen Loden Sherab (1059-1109) corrected, re-translated, and finalized the text. The Tibetans regard this last version as the definitive edition. It thus required three Indian scholars and many Tibetan translators to produce a definitive version over a period of more than two hundred years.

A translation of Khenpo Kunpal's commentary on this colophon, which is entitled 'the Explanation of the Translator's Colophon', follows:

Fourth, what is meant by the 'Early Translation (Period)' and the 'Later Translation (Period)' in regard to the teachings? The 'Early Translation (Period)' refers to all the sutras and tantras including their commentaries which were translated during the time of the incarnations of the noble lords of the three families, the kings who sponsored the Dharma: Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Detsen and Ruler Tri Ralpachen; (translated) from the time of the Indian panditas, the native-language-speaking Indian scholars, such as Devavitsingha onward until the great pandita Smirtijnana, and from the time of the translator Thumi Sambhota onward until the omniscient Dharmabhadra from Rongzom (1012-1088). The tantras, commentaries and few minor sutras that were later translated by Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) and others are considered to belong to the 'Later Translation (Period)'.

In fact, all these (teachings of the Early and Later Translation Periods) constitute the precious doctrine of our compassionate master, the Buddha, the Bhagavan, the victorious Shakyamuni. Moreover, the sublime beings who uphold this (doctrine) are themselves endowed with the view of the four seals of his teachings. Therefore, since all their activities of body, speech and mind are on the sky-like level of absolute truth, by nature utterly indivisible, one finds no sectarianism or bias whatsoever.

This text (of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara) was composed in Sanskrit. At the time of the Early Translation (Period), when (the explanation lineage of this text) still existed in the noble land of India, the great Indian scholar Sarvajnadeva, which means the 'Omniscient Deity', and the translator and chief editor *(annotation), the monk Kawa Paltsek, translated (the Bodhisattva-caryavatara) into the Tibetan language based on editions from Kashmir. They edited (the text), meaning they corrected it, and then finalized it by having it explained (again by the pandita) and studied (as a teaching for the translator). Having done so, they generated great benefit for all fortunate ones.

*Annotation: as the great translator Ngok (Loden Sherab) said:

Vairocana was equal to the limits of space. The three—Ka, Chok, and Zhang—were like the sun, the moon and their unity. Rinchen Zangpo was like the great morning star. I am just a mere firefly.

Later, the Indian scholar Dharmashribhadra, which means 'Noble and Glorious Dharma', the monk Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055), translator and chief editor, and Sakya

Lodro corrected, re-translated, and finalized (the text) in accordance with editions and commentaries from the Central Land.

Again, at a later time, the Indian scholar Sumatikirti, which means the 'Scholar, the One renowned for his Excellent Intelligence', and the monk Ngok Lochen Loden Sherab (1059-1109), translator and chief editor, corrected, re-translated and finalized it in an excellent manner.

In the commentary by Sazang it says: 'Sumatikirti, the Nepalese Pandita'. It also says that the three later translators 'have improved (the translation) by correcting and editing, which means they finalized it'. And furthermore it says, 'I corrected all the minor mistakes which (have appeared since) by examining Indian editions and commentaries'.

Khenpo Choga comments that the great Tibetan scholar Rongzompa Dharmabhadra said that the Early Translation Period was superior to the Later Translation Period in six ways.

Dudjom Rinpoche quotes Rongzompa Dharmabhadra:

(1) The greatness of the benefactors: Since the benefactors of the Early Translation Period were the three ancestral Dharma kings who were the emanations of the lords of the three families, they are unlike the benefactors of the Later Translation Period.

The three ancestral Dharma kings were Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Detsen, and King Tri Ralpachen. King Songtsen Gampo was considered to be an emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara; King Trisong Detsen was considered to be an emanation of the bodhisattva Manjushri; and King Tri Ralpachen was regarded as an emanation of the bodhisattva Vajrapani. These three bodhisattvas are called 'the lords of the three families'.

Manjushri is the embodiment of the wisdom of all the Buddhas, Avalokiteshvara the embodiment of the compassion of all the Buddhas, and Vajrapani the embodiment of the activities of all the Buddhas. The body manifestation of all the Buddhas is Manjushri; the speech manifestation of all the Buddhas is Avalokiteshvara; and the mind manifestation of all the Buddhas is Vajrapani.

Dudjom Rinpoche's quotation of Rongzompa Dharmabhadra continues:

(2) The greatness of the location where the teachings were translated and finalized: Since the locations in which the teachings were translated and finalized were the emanated temples such as Samye and others, the high and low centers of the doctrine, they are unlike those translated in the monastic enclaves of today.

At the time of King Songtsen Gampo, the texts were translated in his palace. At the time of King Trisong Detsen, the translations were done in the temple of Samye. At the time of King Tri Ralpachen, the translators and panditas worked in the temple of Ushang Doyi Lhakhang and in the temple of Phang-Thang Kame.

Dudjom Rinpoche's quotation of Rongzompa Dharmabhadra continues:

(3) The distinction of the greatness of the translators: These teachings were translated by emanated translators, by the translators of the past such as Vairocana, Kawa Paltsek, Cokro Lui Gyaltzen, Zhang Yeshe De, Ma Rinchen Chok, Jnanakumara and others. Thus, they are unlike the translations made by the translators of today, who pass the summer in Mangyul and travel to India and Nepal for a short time during the winter.

All the translators from Thumi Sambhota onward until the great scholar Rongzom Mahapandita Dharmabhadra are called the translators of the Early Translation Period. These translators always worked on their translations with a great scholar from India, in that way ensuring proper translation of the texts. A translation made by a Tibetan translator who did not consult an Indian scholar was not regarded as a proper translation.

Dudjom Rinpoche's quotation of Rongzompa Dharmabhadra continues:

(4) The distinction of the greatness of the panditas: Those teachings were brought (to Tibet) by Buddhas and sublime bodhisattvas abiding on the great (bodhisattva) levels, (namely) the panditas of the past, such as the preceptor Shantarakshita, Buddhaguhya, the great master Padmasambhava, the great pandita Vimalamitra, and others. Thus, they were unlike the panditas of today, who wander about in search of gold.

During the time of the three ancestral Dharma kings, more than one hundred panditas were invited from India. Among them were great masters and scholars such as the master Padmasambhava, the preceptor Shantarakshita, Buddhaguhya, the great pandita Vimalamitra, Devavitsingha, Sarvajnadeva, and so forth up to the time of the great Indian scholar Smirtijnanakirti.

The masters and scholars whom the Tibetan kings and translators invited to Tibet all possessed higher perceptions and magical powers and had a true realization of the Buddha Dharma. These masters were all great bodhisattvas. Therefore, the Early Translation Period had the greatness of the panditas.

Dudjom Rinpoche's quotation of Rongzompa Dharmabhadra continues:

(5) The distinction of the greatness of the offerings for requesting (the teachings): In the past the teachings were requested with offerings of gold weighed in deerskin pouches or by volume measures. Thus, they were unlike the requests (by the students) of the present day made with one or two old pieces drawn from under their arms.

The three ancestral kings would offer as much gold as fits in a deerskin pouch to each Indian pandita when they requested them to help the Tibetan translators in their endeavors to translate texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan.

Dudjom Rinpoche's quotation of Rongzompa Dharmabhadra continues:

(6) The distinction of the greatness of the teachings: The translations of the past were completed at a time when the doctrine of the Buddha had reached its zenith in India. Furthermore, certain tantras did not even exist in the Central Land but were retained by bodhisattvas, accomplished masters, knowledge-holders and dakinis who had obtained their empowerments. These were taken from pure lands and from regions of Jambudvīpa such as Singhala and Oddiyana in the West, through the miraculous deeds of the great masters Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra and others, and then they were translated (in Tibet). Thus, many teachings which were completely unknown to the scholars and accomplished masters of India arrived to become the meritorious fortune of Tibet (at a later time)."

Furthermore, concerning the translations themselves: Since the translators of the past were emanations, they established the meaning correctly. Therefore, their works are easy to understand and, on plumbing their depths, the blessings are great. Translators of the later period, however, failed to render the meaning but made literal translations (merely) by following the arrangement of the Sanskrit texts. Consequently, their stilted terminology is hard to understand, and on plumbing the depths, the blessing is slight. Therefore, they are dissimilar.

Dudjom Rinpoche's quotation of Rongzompa Dharmabhadra continues:

When the doctrine of the Buddha was at its zenith, the emanated translators finalized (the texts of) the teachings without error. They determined the actual condition of knowledge and adorned the teachings in many ways which served to complete them. But the charlatan translators of the present day made various reforms in the ancient translations, saying, "I am a better translator. My sources are more venerable!"

And so, misrepresenting the transmitted precepts of the Buddha and the teachings of their gurus, they all compose their own doctrines. They heap abuse upon one another for their own faults. Their doctrines are such that those of the father do not suit the son. (In all of this) they are unlike (the Early Translation Period).

The majority of the sutras contained in the Kangyur were already translated at the time of the Early Translation Period. The tantras, commentaries, and a few minor sutras that were translated later on by Rinchen Zangpo and others are known as translations of the Later Translation Period.

Any teaching that does not accord with the *four seals of the teachings* does not accord with the teachings of the Buddha. These four seals are:

Everything compounded is impermanent.

Everything defiling is suffering.

Nirvana is peace.

All phenomena are empty and without a self.

The term *translator and chief editor* refers to the main translator and editor among a team of translators. Within the team, he was the most skilled translator, working closely on the texts with the Indian pandita. He was also in charge of final editing as he had the decision-making power.

Longchenpa said:

The translator and chief editor was in those days an accomplished scholar who was in charge of editing, someone who could be trusted. But (a translation) had to accord with (Sanskrit) poetry and grammar when changed from the Indian text into the Tibetan language or (back again) from the Tibetan text into the Indian language. This was an extremely difficult task.

Thus, each translation had to be retranslated into Sanskrit and had to read perfectly. Each text was translated cooperatively by the Tibetan translator and the Indian scholar. Then the translation was revised and edited until it was flawless. After all the work had been completed, the text was finalized as an authoritative translation by expounding

and studying it. For these reasons the translations of the earlier translation period are truly trustworthy.

At that point in the colophon, Khenpo Kunpal inserts a quote from Ngok Loden Sherab, as a footnote or annotation, explaining to whom the term 'translator and chief editor' refers. Ngok Loden Sherab here evaluates the great Tibetan translators: Vairocana as the best; Kawa Paltsek, Cokro Lui Gyaltsan and Zhang Yeshe De as second best; Rinchen Zangpo as third best; and himself as the very least. Ngok Loden Sherab composed this praise to the former translators when he was reworking the translation of the *Sutralamkara*, originally done by Kawa Paltsek.

In the writings of Zhechen Gyaltshab we find the following reference, which differs slightly from Khenpo Kunpal's quotation of Ngok's praise:

When the great translator Ngok, supreme among the later translators, was confronted in the *Sutralamkara* with the words "ra ga ra ga" alone, he did not know how to translate them. Looking up the old translations he was amazed by the translation 'neither attached nor clinging' and so forth. He then composed this great praise to the translators of the Old School:

Vairocana was equal to the limits of space;
The two, Ka and Cok, were like the unity of sun and moon;
Rinchen Zangpo was like the great morning star;
I am just a mere firefly.

The profound points of the sutra and tantra sections cannot be translated into the Tibetan language without a perfect understanding of the etymology of the words. Since there was previously no terminology in Tibetan for translating the scriptures, a new system had to be established. As one single Sanskrit term has various synonyms and meanings, it proved impossible to cover all implications of a term with a superficial translation. In particular, the words of the tantras are in most cases sealed with the six modes; unless one has higher perceptions they cannot be translated.

The translators of the Old School translated all the teachings of the sutras and tantras according to their meaning without the slightest error. Thus, these teachings and translations are not an object for intellectuals to meddle with. The words of these old translations are magnificent, easy to understand, poetic and correct. When the scholar-translators of the Later Translation Period compared all the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, they gained genuine trust in these translations as they could find nothing to correct. All the later translators followed the rules and terminology laid down in the Mahavyutpatti

and the *sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*, two texts which became the standard dictionary for all Tibetan translators.

Based on editions from Kashmir means texts from Kashmir, the northwestern part of India. First, the translators, under the supervision of Kawa Paltsek, *translated* the text with the help of the Indian scholar, Sarvajnadeva. Then they *edited* the translation. This *means they corrected it* by having the Indian scholar once again *explain* the text to them. In this way they could *finalize* the text. The term 'finalize' means that the translators came up with a translation they considered definitive.

BCA Ch. 1 Stanza 1, Text Sections 156-181

BCA 1-1, Text section 158:

These four steps of approaching the text: (1) declaring respect, (2) pledging to compose (the text), (3) casting away pride, and (4) generating joy can be applied to any work or activity one undertakes. You especially need these four steps when you study, contemplate or meditate on the teachings.

'Declaring respect' in Dharma and worldly situations means that in order to transform your mind, you at first supplicate, make aspirations, utter praises and go for refuge in the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and lineage masters. Through supplication you bring energy to your mind.

Next, you need to make a pledge or firm resolve to study, contemplate and meditate on the Dharma. Pledging to carry out such a task stabilizes your mind.

Then you should humble yourself and not allow yourself to become proud. On the other hand you should not be too timid either. You should study, contemplate and meditate on the Dharma with joy in your heart.

The Buddha teaches us to avoid the two extremes. Concerning the view, one must avoid the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. In regard to meditation, one needs to be on guard against falling into the extremes of drowsiness or agitation. Finally, regarding the conduct, avoid the extreme of sense gratification as well as the extreme of hardship and penance.

When you start your meditation in the morning, first pay respect to the Buddhas and your lineage masters by supplicating them in order to bring down their blessing to

transform your mind. You pray to them, “May the precious bodhicitta be born in my mind.” Then you make the firm resolve to meditate on bodhicitta, without any distraction, for the duration of your entire meditation session. You must further cultivate a motivation which is both modest and humble. You should not meditate motivated by arrogance and pride. Neither should you meditate in a timid frame of mind. Do not think, “This is all too difficult. How could someone like me ever develop the precious bodhicitta?” You must establish in yourself the confidence that you are perfectly able to meditate on bodhicitta. Practice then with a heart overflowing with joy and inspiration.

BCA 1-1, Text section 159:

This section, called *declaration of respect*, deals with the first two lines of the first stanza. Traditionally, the author of a treatise would express his respectful praise to the deity of his choice right in the beginning, before starting his actual composition. Here, Shantideva shows his devotion by praising the three jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

The purpose of ‘declaring respect’ is to open your mind. Recollecting the qualities of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and the lineage masters, you declare respect. The phrase ‘declaration of respect’ primarily connotes ‘paying respect’ or ‘paying homage’ or ‘offering prostration’, as well as ‘supplicating’ and ‘expressing respectful praises’.

Declaring respect allows the blessings to enter into your mind-stream. Unless the blessings of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and lineage masters enter into your mind-stream, your mind will not be transformed.

The *path of bliss* is identical with the path or *vehicle of the bodhisattvas*. It is the path of the precious bodhicitta motivation and the application of the six transcendental perfections. The bodhisattvas utterly rejoice in benefiting others. Their sole motivation is to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment. To accomplish this benefit for others is the highest bliss for a bodhisattva.

Once a bodhisattva has reached the first bodhisattva level, which corresponds to the path of seeing, the realization of the natural state, he has overcome all obscurations of affliction and hence is free from gross manifestations of suffering. Through the supreme path, the bodhisattvas themselves reach the level of perfect enlightenment, *the fruition of bliss*. The attainment of perfect enlightenment is the highest bliss possible.

The Sanskrit term *Sugata* is a synonym for the Buddha and means 'bliss-gone' or 'the one gone to bliss'. *Bliss*, in this context, connotes 'liberation' or 'Nirvana' and *gone* connotes 'having arrived at'. A Buddha is someone who has reached the highest level of bliss, Nirvana, liberation, enlightenment or Buddhahood.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 160-161:

Khenpo Kunpal lists three interpretations of the term 'Sugata': (1) *excellently or beautifully gone*, (2) *gone without returning*, and (3) *perfectly or completely gone*.

This three-fold interpretation of the term 'Sugata' can also be explained by the terms *overcoming* and *realization*, both individually and in conjunction with one another. Such a scholastic explanation of the Indian and Tibetan scholars follows in the next text sections:

BCA 1-1, Text section 162:

(1) The individual explanation of *overcoming*, as included in the first interpretation of the term 'Sugata', is, as the text says: '*Excellently or beautifully gone*,' meaning that (the Buddha) has gone excellently or beautifully, as he is untainted by the defects of (the truth of) suffering and (the truth of) its origination, (both of) which point at afflictions.

Buddha is not tainted by the defects of the truth of suffering and the truth of origination, which both concern samsara, the realm of afflictions. Afflictions are understood to be 'totally polluted' or 'utterly defiled'. The truth of origination refers to karma and afflictions. Karma is enacted by body, speech and mind. The term *afflictions* refers to the six main afflictions, the twenty secondary afflictions as well as the three or five mind poisons.

The six main afflictions are: 1) ignorance, 2) desire, 3) aggression or anger, 4) pride, 5) doubt, and 6) wrong views or wrong believes.

The twenty secondary or subsidiary afflictions are: 1) anger, 2) holding a grudge, 3) concealment, 4) spiteful anger, 5) jealousy, 6) miserliness, 7) hypocrisy, 8) pretense, 9) haughtiness, 10) resentment, 11) lack of a sense of shame, 12) lack of a sense of embarrassment, 13) dullness, 14) agitation, 15) lack of faith, 16) laziness, 17) heedlessness, 18) forgetfulness, 19) distraction, and 20) lack of introspection.

The three mind poisons or the three afflictions are: 1) desire, 2) aversion and 3) ignorance. The five mind poisons are: 1) desire, 2) aversion, 3) ignorance, 4) arrogance, and 5) jealousy.

Because the Buddha has 'overcome' the obscurations of afflictions as well as all obscurations of cognition, he has thus excellently or beautifully gone. Buddha is not tainted any longer by karma and afflictions because he gathered the accumulations of merit and wisdom for three countless aeons. He overcame all there is to overcome.

The example for being untainted by afflictions is that of a person with a beautiful body. As the Buddha is free from all suffering and the origination of suffering, he can be compared to a beautiful person washed utterly clean. The Buddha has surpassed samsara, the truths of suffering and the origination of suffering. Therefore, he has excellently or beautifully gone. Worldly beings have not transcended suffering, its causes and their fruition. 'Worldly beings' are all beings within the three realms of samsara.

The cause for suffering is the truth of origination. The truth of origination refers to karma and afflictions. Karma and afflictions arise from holding on to ego. Ego-clinging results from ignorance. As sentient beings have not realized the wisdom of egolessness, they are constantly involved in afflictions and thus create karma. They create the causes for suffering and experience the fruition of suffering.

BCA 1-1, Text section 163:

(2) The individual explanation of *realization*, as included in the second interpretation of the term 'Sugata', is that since the Buddha has 'realized' the natural state as it is, he has *gone without returning*.

Gone without returning means that the Buddha has eradicated the seeds of the view of an identity, and, consequently, he does not return to samsara, just as firewood which has been burned will not again flare up.

The Sugatas have 'realized' the wisdom of egolessness. They are free from holding on to an identity. They have totally eradicated ignorance and can never fall back into samsara. The example is a person who has recovered from smallpox, because after recovering from smallpox one is then immune.

The Buddha has surpassed all the paths of the tirthikas. Even when the tirthikas reach the peak of worldly existence, they can never go beyond the confines of worldly

existence. The great masters of the tirthika systems can reach samsara's peak but never go beyond that point because they have not realized the wisdom of egolessness. Tirthika masters can temporarily overcome gross afflictions, but they never attain the wisdom of egolessness.

Tirthika meditation masters at best take rebirth in the subtle spheres of the realms of formlessness. These are the most subtle states within samsara and are reached through worldly meditation that still holds on to ego. Once the karma to remain in these states is exhausted, the tirthika meditation masters again fall into the lower realms. The Buddha has reached a state completely beyond samsaric existence and can, therefore, never fall back into any of samsara's three realms. The three realms of samsara are the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. Therefore, the Buddha is vastly superior to all tirthika teachers.

BCA 1-1, Text section 164:

(3) The combined explanation of the terms *overcoming* and *realization*, as included in the third interpretation of the term 'Sugata', is *perfectly or completely gone* and means the Buddha has attained the supreme qualities of perfect overcoming and perfect realization without the slightest degree of anything remaining to be attained. He has perfectly 'overcome' all that there is to overcome, namely the truth of suffering and the truth of origination.

The Buddha has also perfectly realized all that there is to 'realize', namely the relative truth and the absolute truth. Therefore, he has perfectly or completely gone. There is not even the slightest degree of anything remaining to be overcome or realized. Therefore, the example is that of a vase filled to the brim.

What must be overcome are the obscurations of afflictions and the obscurations of cognition. The Buddha has overcome both, including their most subtle aspects. What must be realized is the wisdom of the twofold knowledge: the wisdom of knowing the natural state as it actually is, and the wisdom of knowing all there is to know. The Buddha has realized the ultimate wisdom and has thus reached omniscience. Absolutely nothing remains to be attained.

In *his manner of having thus gone*, the Buddha has completely surpassed the shravakas and the pratyekabuddhas with his perfect qualities of overcoming and realization. Though they will not fall back into samsara, they have not completely developed all qualities of 'overcoming' and 'realization' and are therefore only *partially* realized.

A simple interpretation of the term 'Sugata' follows. As he has gone to the blissful level of Buddhahood, based on the blissful cause of the precious bodhicitta, he is called the 'Sugata', 'the one who has gone to bliss'.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 165-166:

The *Dharmakaya of realization* is the wisdom realized by the Buddha. The *Dharmakaya of the doctrine* is the expression of Buddha's wisdom, the spoken teachings of the Buddha, the Dharma. The Buddha's realization is Dharma as is also the doctrine that he teaches. The Dharma that the Buddha has in his mind is called the 'Dharmakaya of realization'; the Dharma he teaches, which he expresses verbally, is called the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine'. Therefore, the phrase 'endowed with the Dharmakaya' connotes 'Dharma' as the second jewel among the three: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It also connotes Buddha's realization from where the Dharma stems.

The 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' means that, based upon the Buddha as the cause, the words and letters of the teachings appear for those to be tamed. Therefore, the root text says in stanza one: "The Sugatas, who are endowed with the Dharmakaya,...".

In other words, the 'Dharmakaya of realization' is the wisdom of knowing the natural state as it is, and the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' is the wisdom of knowing all that can be known, which is omniscience. These wisdoms are inseparable.

'Kaya' in the term Dharmakaya means 'support for qualities'. Literally, Dharmakaya means 'body of Dharma', a term connoting 'support for the Dharma', both support for the Dharma of realization and support for the Dharma of the doctrine.

'Dharma' also refers to wisdom and 'kaya' to the perception aspect of it. 'Kaya' actually means 'body' and has also the connotation of 'appearance' and 'perception'. In other words, there is something there—a wisdom body—that can be seen or that manifests but only to the Buddha. Therefore, Dharmakaya means 'wisdom appearance' or 'wisdom perception'.

The term 'Sambhogakaya' denotes the support for the wisdom of great bliss. 'Nirmanakaya' denotes the support or basis that gives rise to inconceivable emanations.

One who is endowed with the qualities of the Dharmakaya is a Buddha. Among the three jewels this is the jewel of the Buddha. The jewel of the Dharma has the twofold meaning, the Dharmakaya of realization and the Dharmakaya of the doctrine.

Moreover, the term 'Dharmakaya', 'body of Dharma' can be interpreted at various levels. In this context, 'Dharma' refers to the natural state, to emptiness. The nature or the 'expression' of this emptiness is called 'body' or 'manifestation'. In this case 'body' and 'appearance' have the same meaning. The Buddha is thus endowed with the Dharmakaya.

The empty essence of the Dharmakaya is called the 'expanse Dharmakaya'. The cognizant nature of the Dharmakaya is called the 'wisdom Dharmakaya'. The Buddha is endowed with both the 'expanse Dharmakaya' and the 'wisdom Dharmakaya'.

The Dharmakaya of realization and the Dharmakaya of the doctrine can also be explained in other ways. The 'Dharmakaya of realization' can refer to the wisdom of the Buddha. The 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' can refer to the teachings and scriptures that are principally concerned with the truth of cessation and the truth of the path. The truth of cessation and the truth of the path are known as the 'Dharmakaya of realization', or the 'actual Dharmakaya'. The scriptures or teachings that manifest from this wisdom are called the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine'.

The Dharmakaya of realization is the realization of the truth of cessation. The truth of cessation is endowed with a nature of twofold purity, the 'nature of perfect purity' and the 'transtemporal purity'. The 'nature of perfect purity' means that the nature of one's mind is primordially pure. The nature of the mind is primordial Buddhahood and has never experienced any stain or defect.

The 'transtemporal purity' refers to the afflictions which arise temporarily. All afflictions and habitual patterns are compounded phenomena. They are neither primordial nor uncompounded and, therefore, can be completely eliminated. In the face of the realization of Dharmakaya they are entirely absent. This explains 'transtemporal purity'.

The Dharmakaya of realization, the truth of cessation, is gained through non-dual wisdom, where no distinction any longer exists between subject and object. The Dharmakaya of the doctrine refers to the teachings and scriptures that establish this realization.

The 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' also includes the teacher of the profound way and the teacher of the manifold way. These two teachers refer to the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya respectively.

Generally, a Buddha is endowed with the three kayas: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. The Dharmakaya is said to have the nature of twofold purity as described above.

The Sambhogakaya is endowed with the five certainties, which are (1) certainty of place: the Sambhogakaya Buddhas dwell only in the Akanistha realm; (2) certainty of time: they remain until samsara is emptied; (3) certainty of body: their bodies are distinctly ornamented with the major marks and minor signs; (4) certainty of entourage: they are surrounded exclusively by noble beings of the Mahayana; and (5) certainty of the teachings: to this noble entourage they exclusively teach the Mahayana Dharma.

Concerning the Nirmanakaya, different Nirmanakaya or emanations are distinguished: the 'supreme Nirmanakaya', the 'created Nirmanakaya', the 'rebirth Nirmanakaya', and the 'manifold Nirmanakaya'.

All these different distinctions of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya refer to the jewel of the Buddha, first among the three jewels.

We can, however, distinguish between different Nirmanakaya or emanations of the Buddha. Buddha Shakyamuni himself is called the 'supreme Nirmanakaya'. His body, speech and mind are beyond compare; his qualities are beyond imagination. A 'supreme Nirmanakaya' like Buddha Shakyamuni teaches sentient beings through the twelve great deeds.

The twelve deeds of the Buddha are:

1. Descending from Tushita's heavenly place.
2. Entering the womb.
3. Birth.
4. Demonstrating his physical prowess.
5. Enjoying the company of his queen.
6. Leaving home.
7. Undergoing penance.
8. Realizing the essence of enlightenment.
9. Defeating the maras.
10. Total awakening.
11. Turning the wheel of Dharma.
12. Entering into Nirvana.

A 'created Nirmanakaya' is an emanation of the Buddha that looks exactly like him and gives teachings. Examples of these are the six munis, each of which manifests as a

Buddha in one of the six realms of samsara. The term 'created Nirmanakaya' does not refer to statues or thangkas of the Buddha, which are created by human beings, and are instead called 'manifold Nirmanakaya'.

Another type of Nirmanakaya results when the minds of advanced Dharma practitioners receive the Buddha's blessings in the bardo, the intermediate state. When these practitioners are subsequently reborn, they are known as 'rebirth Nirmanakayas'. The Mahayana sutra tradition refers to such consciousnesses which have been blessed in the bardo as 'tulkus', Nirmanakayas. This occurrence is a merging of the Buddha's blessings with the mind of an advanced practitioner. Meditating at all times on the Buddha establishes the auspicious conditions for the Buddha's emanations to merge with one's mind in the bardo. When this occurs it is called a 'rebirth Nirmanakaya', a 'tulku'.

A tenth level bodhisattva becomes a fully enlightened Buddha at the very moment that the bodhisattva realizes the genuine Dharmakaya of the Buddha. That moment is called 'fully realizing the Dharmakaya'. The moment a practitioner realizes the genuine Sambhogakaya, he becomes a genuine bodhisattva. This is possible from the first bodhisattva level onward. From the first to the tenth level he will perceive and realize different levels of the Sambhogakaya.

'Manifold Nirmanakaya' refers to all representations of the Buddha's body, speech and mind. It refers also to relics of the Buddha as well as to anything which can benefit sentient beings, such as lotus flowers, jewels, medicine, food, clothing, vehicles, bridges, and so forth.

The utterly immaculate Dharmadhatu, the expanse of Dharma, connotes the Dharmakaya of realization. The Dharmadhatu is inseparable from wisdom, and it is wisdom that recognizes the Dharmadhatu. The realization of Dharmadhatu, as it is in itself, is called the Dharmakaya of realization.

Conducive to the cause of its (realization) means 'conducive to the causes of the wisdom that realizes the utterly immaculate Dharmadhatu.

The *profound* refers to profound emptiness. *Manifold* denotes the vast classifications of the teachings. In both sutra and tantra we find the distinction into what is known as 'profound teachings' and 'vast teachings'. The 'profound' and 'vast' teachings are a *manifestation* of the enlightened mind of the Buddha, similar to his own realization. The teachings only manifest 'similar to' and are *conducive to* the Buddha's realization

because the Dharmadhatu itself cannot immediately manifest in the mind-stream of a sentient being as it is in reality.

The Buddha's realization replicates in the mind-stream of beings according to the degree of realization they can achieve.

Since the Buddha is endowed with the wisdom that realizes the Dharmadhatu as it actually is in itself, the Dharmakaya of realization, his wisdom has the power to give rise to many profound and vast teachings. This is the Dharmakaya of the doctrine and is also the twofold knowledge of the Buddha. Truly realizing the natural state as it is, one also gains omniscience, the knowledge of all that can be known.

Patrul Rinpoche said:

If one knows (the natural state) as it is but cannot see all that can be known, Then even if one (appears to be) a noble being, this is still not the enlightened mind of the Victor.

BCA 1-1, Text section 167:

After completing the commentary on what is meant by 'the jewel of the Dharma', Khenpo Kunpal proceeds to explain 'the jewel of the Sangha'. The Buddha has three sons: his *physical son*, the *sons of his speech*, and the *sons of his mind*. Rahula was his physical son. The shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are the sons of his speech, and the bodhisattvas are the sons of his mind. Generally, these are collectively known as the jewel of the Sangha, the third of the three jewels. Here, 'Sangha' means 'those aspiring to virtue, whose minds will not divert from virtuous actions'.

One should be aware that, in text section 169, Khenpo Kunpal explicitly classifies the bodhisattvas as the Mahayana Sangha and counts them among the three jewels. In text section 170, he classifies the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas as being 'worthy of veneration'.

When Buddha Shakyamuni was the young prince Siddhartha, he married Yasodhara, Gopa and Mrigaja. His union with Gopa produced Rahula, his *physical son*. The shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are called the *sons of his speech* because they attained liberation by listening to and practicing the Dharma he taught them. They have arisen from his speech.

BCA 1-1, Text section 168:

The bodhisattvas are the sons of Buddha's mind because they are his true *successors*. Eventually they will attain complete enlightenment and themselves become Buddhas.

They will then lead the bodhisattvas from their own entourage to complete enlightenment. The bodhisattvas are called the 'Mahayana Sangha', while the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are called the 'Hinayana Sangha'.

With this understanding, Shantideva pays homage to the Buddha and his sons. Paying homage to the Buddha and the Sangha, the Dharma is automatically included, since the Dharma naturally dwells in the minds of the Buddha and the Sangha. The Dharma includes the wisdom of statements and the wisdom of realization, both of which abide in the minds of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. Together they constitute the jewel of the Dharma, second among the three jewels.

The 'teachings of statements' is a term referring to all the teachings the Buddha has given: the complete tripitaka, 'the three baskets' of the teachings. These are: 1) the vinaya pitaka, 'the basket of discipline'; 2) the sutra pitaka, 'the basket of discourses'; and 3) the abhidharma pitaka, 'the basket of the doctrine'.

The 'teachings of the statements' can also be divided into the twelve sections of scriptures. The wisdom of statements is the wisdom which knows all the statements of the tripitaka. The wisdom of these three baskets of teachings abides within the minds of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, those who have realized the teachings of the tripitaka.

The twelve sections of scriptures are: 1) sutra, 2) aphorisms in prose and verse, 3) prophetic declarations, 4) verses, 5) meaningful expressions, 6) narratives, 7) parables, 8) legends, 9) tales of past lives, 10) extensive teachings, 11) marvelous events, and 12) established instructions.

The 'teachings of realization' is a term referring to the three precious trainings: 1) the training in discipline, 2) the training in samadhi, and 3) the training in knowledge. The wisdom of realization is the wisdom that comes from the practice of the three trainings. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas train in discipline and samadhi and hold knowledge in their minds.

Thus, one should understand that the sublime Dharma is the wisdom of statements and the wisdom of realization, both of which abide in the minds of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. The Dharma is the mind that has realized wisdom. The Buddhist books and scriptures are mere representations or replicas of the sublime Dharma, not the actual Dharma.

In this way the Bodhisattva-caryavatara has introduced the three jewels. 'Jewel' is the English translation of the Tibetan word 'konchok', which is derived from the Sanskrit

word 'ratna'. Ratna connotes 'jewel'. In this world the three jewels are as 'rare' and as 'supreme' as a jewel.

The three jewels possess the six qualities of a jewel:

1. The three jewels are of 'rare appearance', as they do not manifest unless beings have accumulated sufficient merit. Like a jewel, they are difficult to find. The appearance of a Buddha is very rare. For three countless aeons Buddha Shakyamuni gathered the accumulations of merit and wisdom and purified afflictive and cognitive obscurations. Unless beings have accumulated sufficient merit, a Buddha does not appear. Without a Buddha, there is neither Dharma nor Sangha.

Buddha Shakyamuni is the only Buddha who ever appeared in a time when the five degenerations were widespread. He made five hundred great aspirations to particularly benefit beings of lesser merit in such a time. Had Buddha Shakyamuni not made these great aspirations, due to our insufficient merit, the three jewels would not even be mentioned. The five degenerations are the degeneration of time, the degeneration of sentient beings, the degeneration of lifespan, the degeneration of actions, and the degeneration of afflictions. Sometimes the degeneration of views is listed instead of the degeneration of actions.

2. The three jewels are 'immaculate', naturally without stains just as a jewel is free from flaws and imperfections. Buddha himself is utterly unblemished.

His body, speech and mind have not the slightest flaw. The sublime Dharma is immaculate because both the 'pronouncements of the tripitaka' and the 'teachings that lead to realization, namely the three trainings', are flawless in word and meaning. The Sangha, though not utterly unblemished, is on the path to becoming so.

3. The three jewels are 'powerful' as they benefit oneself and others. The example is a magic jewel, which enables one to accomplish whatever one wishes. The Buddha is powerful because he has attained the Dharmakaya for his own benefit and has manifested the Rupakaya for the benefit of others. The sublime Dharma is powerful because it leads to liberation and enlightenment. The Sangha is powerful as it holds the knowledge of the path to liberation and enlightenment and as it explains that knowledge to others.

4. The three jewels are the 'ornamentation of the world', causing wholesome thoughts in beings and thus beautifying the world, as a jewel beautifies the person who wears it. The Buddha beautifies the world by causing beings to generate virtuous thoughts. The Dharma beautifies the world as it is the actual method to attain enlightenment. The

Sangha beautifies the world by inspiring virtue in beings and as companions along the path.

5. The three jewels are 'supreme' since in this world nothing is superior to them. Similarly, jewels are considered supreme among worldly objects. The Buddha is supreme in this world because he has completely transcended the world. The Dharma is supreme as it is the perfect path to liberation and enlightenment; the Sangha is supreme as it has embarked on that path.

6. The three jewels are 'unchanging'; like jewels they are by nature without change. Unchanging means not falling under the power of impermanence. The Buddha has attained the unchanging wisdom. The Dharma is unchanging as it teaches the unchanging Four Noble Truths. The Sangha is unchanging since once Sangha members have reached the level of exalted persons, they will unwaveringly progress to enlightenment.

The Tibetan translators tried to capture two of these six qualities when they coined the word 'konchok', 'supreme and rare' for the Sanskrit word 'ratna'. They thought that the Tibetan word 'rinchen', meaning jewels like rubies and emeralds, did not convey the full meaning well enough.

Why did they choose these two qualities from among the six? Because the cause for enlightenment is difficult to obtain. People have many negative thoughts. Positive thoughts, emotions and actions, which form the cause to embark upon the path of enlightenment, are rare. Even rarer is the actual attainment of enlightenment. As the Buddha is free from all defects and endowed with all qualities, he is supreme in this world. These two, rare and supreme, are the most outstanding of a jewel's six qualities. Therefore, the Tibetan translators selected a word that reflects the implied meaning rather than adhering strictly to a literal translation.

The sutra teachings recognize only 'three jewels': the teacher, the teaching, and the followers. More than three are not necessary. Practicing the path to enlightenment, one need rely only on the three jewels.

When paying respect to the three jewels one must understand what they are. According to the Mahayana teachings, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are each endowed with eight qualities:

Being endowed with eight qualities of the twofold benefits is the hallmark of the jewel of the Buddha.

Being endowed with eight qualities of cessation and path is the hallmark of the sublime Dharma.

Being endowed with eight qualities of knowledge and liberation is the hallmark of the noble Sangha.

These qualities will be explained in great detail in Khenpo Kunpal's commentary to the second chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 169-171:

Shantideva furthermore pays respect to all who are worthy of veneration. This includes the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the sons of Buddha's speech. In addition, he pays homage to any person who has a single quality greater than his own. In the same way, one should pay respect to any spiritual master, teacher, fellow monk or Dharma friend who possesses a single quality in a greater degree than oneself, such as a monk who is *even one shadow cast* senior in ordination age.

At the conclusion of the ordination ceremony for monks, one monk, called 'the time measurer', has the task of measuring the time. He determines the exact time when the ordination vows are conferred upon each aspirant, the very moment the preceptor snaps his fingers. He records in the ordination certificate the minute, the hour, whether it is daytime or night-time, the date, whether it is in the first or second half of the month, the season and year of the ordination. Traditionally, the exact time was measured according to the shadow cast by a small, pyramidal wooden device called a 'shadow stick'.

A monk who was ordained on the same day, even one finger-width of a shadow cast earlier than another monk, will always be considered 'a senior monk', someone who has received the monk vows at an earlier stage and hence should be respected by all those ordained after him.

Nevertheless, seniority is not the only type of ranking within the Sangha. In addition to ranking according to seniority is ranking according to wisdom. The Buddha taught that the attainment of wisdom always supercedes seniority in ordination age when it comes to one's position in the Sangha. Even a Buddhist lay practitioner who has realized wisdom is held in higher esteem than a fully ordained monk who has not yet realized wisdom.

Those who are helpful refers to one's father and mother, spiritual friends and so forth.

There are various reasons to declare respect when beginning to compose a treatise: (1) in order to complete the composition of the treatise without any obstacles, (2) so that the author's followers truly trust in the authenticity of the treatise, develop faith, and are inspired to diligence, (3) so that the teachers and students will be able to successfully expound and study the treatise without any obstacles.

Shantideva expresses his devotion to the three jewels with the *three gates*], body, speech and mind. He respectfully offers prostrations with his body; he respectfully supplicates with his voice; and he respectfully recalls the special qualities of the three jewels in his mind.

For the blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to enter your mind, you must open your mind to these supreme fields of merit. Realization will dawn only when the blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have entered your mind. You should practice pure perception concerning your personal master and teacher, focusing only on his positive qualities.

The author's declaration of respect to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas at the very beginning of the treatise ensures that everyone who reads the book will immediately recognize it as a Buddhist text.

BCA 1-1, Text section 172:

Nagarjuna states that if an author declares respect to the Buddha when he begins to compose a treatise the composition will always yield good results. Declaring respect at the beginning of the treatise causes the readers to develop faith and devotion in the Buddha and in the treatise. If the author pays respect, the readers will naturally follow his example.

BCA 1-1, Text section 173:

The quote from the Lalita-vistara-sutra¹⁴⁶⁹ links the declaration respect to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the proclamation of the names of the Buddhas, to the generation of immeasurable merit. The blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas will enter such a meritorious person's mind-stream, and he will accomplish whatever he wishes.

Before a master teaches, he first offers three prostrations to the seat or throne from which he will teach the Dharma. This cuts through any possible pride that he might develop, and instead produces humility. There is always the danger that sitting upon a high throne and teaching the Dharma to many people might lead a teacher to become proud.

Whenever my teacher, Khenpo Pentse, entered into the Shri Singha Shedra hall to teach, right at the door he would prostrate himself three times to the throne, books and statues. Then he would ascend the throne where he remained standing while the monks offered three prostrations to him. After Khenpo Pentse had sat down, all the monks also sat. Apart from such teaching situations, Khenpo Pentse would refuse to accept prostrations from monks or lay people saying "Don't prostrate to me. I am just an ordinary sentient being. Prostrate to the Dharma books and statues."

The tradition of offering prostrations to the throne started with the Buddha when he taught the Prajnaparamita for the first time. Buddha arranged his own teaching throne and prostrated to it before sitting down. Buddha did this to acknowledge the 'greatness of the teaching'. The Prajnaparamita teachings are very profound and difficult to realize. From that time onward, teachers in the monasteries and shedras of India and Tibet began prostrating to their thrones before they started teaching. The throne itself is not a sign of the greatness of the master, but rather symbolizes the greatness of the Dharma.

Moreover, a teacher should always wash before he teaches. He should touch the scriptures only with clean hands. This is another gesture of respect to the Dharma and to the scriptures. Once the teacher has ascended to the throne, the students must present three prostrations as a gesture of respect to the teacher who is the expounder of the Dharma.

BCA 1-1, Text section 175:

Precept is defined as 'that which safeguards against non-virtuous tendencies of body, speech and mind'. The literal meaning of the term 'precept' is 'to bind', 'to close', or 'to close down all three gates of non-virtue'. Therefore, 'taking precepts' safeguards against or causes one to refrain from all misdeeds.

A bodhisattva commits himself to three disciplines: (1) the discipline of refraining from negative conduct, (2) the discipline of practicing virtuous Dharmas and (3) the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings.

- (1) *The discipline of refraining from negative conduct:* A bodhisattva avoids all ten unwholesome actions as though they were poison and practices their opposites, the ten virtuous actions. A bodhisattva safeguards his body, speech and mind, maintaining the basic training of the 'seven categories of the precepts of individual liberation'.

(2)

The seven categories of the precepts of individual liberation are those of: (1) a fully ordained monk; (2) a fully ordained nun; (3) a monk; (4) a nun; (5) a male lay practitioner; (6) a female lay practitioner and (7) a probationary nun.

A bodhisattva avoids any negative action such as the ten non-virtuous actions, the five crimes with immediate retribution, the five secondary crimes with immediate retribution, the five perverted means of sustenance, and others.

The ten non-virtuous actions are: 1) taking life, 2) taking what is not given, 3) sexual misconduct, 4) speaking lies, 5) sowing discord, 6) harsh words, 7) worthless chatter, 8) covetousness, 9) wishing harm to others, and 10) wrong views.

The five crimes with immediate retribution are: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, creating a split in the Sangha, and malevolently causing a Tathagata to bleed. Among these five creating a split in the Sangha is considered the most severe misdeed.

The five secondary crimes with immediate retribution are: acting impurely with a female arhat, killing a bodhisattva, killing a Sangha member who is on the path of learning, stealing the sustenance of the Sangha, and destroying a stupa.

The eight perverse acts are: 1. criticizing goodness, 2. praising evil, 3. interrupting the accumulation of merit of a virtuous person, 4. disturbing the mind of those who have devotion, 5. giving up one's master, 6. giving up one's deity, 7. giving up one's vajra brothers and sisters, and 8. desecrating a mandala.

The five perverted ways of sustenance are: 1) obtaining something through pretentiousness, 2) obtaining something through flattery, 3) obtaining something through hinting at it, 4) obtaining something through open theft, and 5) obtaining something through calculated generosity.

1) 'Pretentiousness' means trying to obtain food or donations from a sponsor by pretending to be something which one is not, or by pretending to have certain qualities which one does not have. 2) 'Flattery' means trying to obtain food or donations from a sponsor through speaking pleasant words that will delight the sponsor. 3) 'Hinting' means trying to obtain something that belongs to someone else by praising it. For instance, praising someone else's watch with the expectation that it will be given. 4) 'Open theft' in this context means obtaining something that belongs to someone else by saying, "I need this," and simply snatching it from its owner. 5) 'Calculated generosity'

means presenting a small gift to the sponsor in hope of obtaining a large donation in return.

(2) *The discipline of practicing virtuous Dharmas*: While maintaining discipline of gathering merit by practicing any type of virtue, a bodhisattva studies and ponders the sublime teachings and practices the teachings which lead to enlightenment, such as the six transcendental perfections.

The six transcendental perfections are: generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom-knowledge.

(3) *The discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings*: This refers to how a bodhisattva benefits sentient beings. A bodhisattva meets the needs of beings in an appropriate manner and works exclusively for the benefit of others. In general, *discipline* means maintaining a code of conduct which accords with the nature of reality.

Shantideva composed the Bodhisattva-caryavatara by consolidating the teachings and scriptures of the Buddha. He did not change or add anything to the teachings but composed this text in exact accordance with the Buddha's teachings. Hence, it says without *pretence* or *idiosyncratic fabrication*.

BCA 1-1, Text section 176:

Any treatise which is *in accordance with the scriptures* is thereby trustworthy. One knows immediately that this text is based on the scriptures and quotes the direct words of the Buddha. With these few words Shantideva has actually made a great commitment to rely only on the words of the Buddha, the highest authority for a Buddhist. The Pramanavarttika says:

The scriptures are words one can trust.
Since (the Buddha) is free from defects,
He lacks the basis for speaking lies.
Therefore, the scriptures should be understood to be (words) free of defects.

The Tibetan word 'lung' has the connotation of 'a handle', 'something the hand can grasp'. In the Buddhist context, the word 'lung' is 'a word worthy of trust'. This does not refer to ordinary words, since they might lead to disappointment. 'Lung' are words in which one can ultimately trust. We have translated the term here as *scripture*, 'scriptural authority', or 'teaching'. The direct words of the Buddha are written down in the scriptures.

There are words that have defects and words that are free from defects. However, since the Buddha himself is free from any defects, he lacks the basis for lies. Buddha's body, speech and mind have not the slightest defect. All defects have ceased to exist. Therefore, there is no basis within the Buddha for lying, for saying what is not true. For this reason one should consider the scriptures and the Buddha's teachings [lung] as words free from any defects. Since the Buddha himself is flawless, his teachings are equally flawless.

Without defects means 'without error'. Buddha is free from any ego-clinging and, therefore, free from all errors and defects; he has no basis for speaking what is not true. All words uttered within a mind frame of anger, attachment, jealousy, pride, desire and so forth are words that are imbued with defects and harm. Therefore, before one accepts the authority of any written teaching, one should carefully examine whether the teacher who wrote these words is truly free from mind poisons. In any spiritual system, check carefully the one who taught the rules, laws and regulations to live by. Analyze who is deciding what is considered to be good or bad. If a teacher is tainted by defects, his teachings cannot be flawless.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 177-178:

The Buddha is utterly free from delusion and from fear. People tell lies based on delusion and fear. If someone is free from ignorance, desire, anger, jealousy and stinginess, then that person is not able to tell lies, even if he wants to.

The 'sublime Dharma' which the Buddha held in the *endless knot* within his heart refers to the 'Dharmakaya of realization'. The endless knot in his heart is simply a poetic expression for the Buddha's mind. His throat is compared to an overflowing vase, his tongue to a lotus, and his teeth to conch shells. His spoken teachings are known as the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine'.

The sublime Dharma is comprised of the 'words' or 'pronouncements' of the Buddha and treatises composed by the Buddha's followers. One can identify different kinds of pronouncements of the Buddha.

1) 'The pronouncements given orally by the Buddha' are considered the most important and were all eloquently proclaimed by the Buddha himself. This refers to sutras such as the Prajnaparamita-sancaya-gatha, the Manjushrinama-samgiti, and others.

2) Moreover, 'the pronouncements given through blessings' are teachings not proclaimed by the Buddha in person but by his great followers like the arhats and the bodhisattvas. When these great beings teach the Dharma, the blessings of the Buddha come through in their teachings. The Dashabhumika-sutra was taught through the blessings of the Buddha's body by Vajragarbha and Vimukticandra after the Buddha had placed his hand on the crown of their heads.

The Ashta-sahasrika-prajna-paramita was taught through the blessings of the Buddha's speech by Subhuti after the Buddha had encouraged him with a statement. The Bhagavati-prajna-paramita-hrdaya was taught through the blessings of the Buddha's mind in a dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, while the Buddha remained in samadhi.

3) Furthermore, 'the pronouncements given by mandate' are teachings given by persons who have been authorized by the Buddha or by their masters to teach the Dharma to others. This refers to all teachings of the Buddha transmitted through the compilers of the teachings, such as Ananda, Mahakashyapa and others. This type of teachings begins with the phrase, "Thus have I heard, at one time..."

All pronouncements of the Buddha are included within the Kangyur, which has preserved the entire tripitaka. The Kangyur includes all sutras and tantras since they are both considered pronouncements of the Buddha. The three promulgations of the Dharma as well as the fourth promulgation, the 'promulgation of the Secret Mantra', are incorporated within the Kangyur. The Tangyur contains all treatises.

BCA 1-1, Text section 179:

The 'treatises' are 'commentaries', texts which elucidate these pronouncements. Khenpo Kunpal enumerates four types of treatises. (1) *A treatise which rectifies sequential disorder* systematizes and structures a vast text when the order and systematic treatment of the teaching are not obvious. (2) *A treatise which elucidates difficult points* explains difficult subjects, passages and words. (3) *A treatise which gathers what has been dispersed* compiles knowledge of a particular subject from many scriptures, consolidating it into one book. (4) *A treatise for the practice of meditation* is written for practitioners.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is a treatise which gathers what has been dispersed as well as a treatise meant for the practice of meditation.

Actually, the Bodhisattva-caryavatara combines the three kinds of genuine treatises in one text. It is a treatise which is meaningful, a treatise that leads to the overcoming of suffering, and a treatise concerned with the application of practice.

The word *treatise* translates the Sanskrit word 'shastra', which is derived from 'shasti', meaning to overcome or to transform, and from 'trayate', meaning to protect. A true Buddhist treatise must possess the two qualities of 'overcoming' and 'protecting'. Thus, a treatise teaches how to overcome the five afflictions of attachment, aversion, ignorance, arrogance and jealousy, and thus protects one from the causes for taking rebirth in the three lower realms. Therefore, the Vyakhya-yukti says:

That which overcomes the enemy of afflictions without exception
And affords protection from rebirth in the (three) lower realms
Is a treatise, for it has the qualities of overcoming and protecting.
Treatises that have both these (qualities) do not exist in other traditions.

Only treatises which are exclusively based on the direct words of the Buddha are 'ultimate' treatises. Only they are endowed with the qualities of overcoming and protecting. Therefore, studying and practicing them diligently is very meaningful.

By studying a treatise such as the Bodhisattva-caryavatara one can reach a level of knowledge about the Dharma that will remedy blind faith. A practitioner of the Dharma should eventually gain the faith of conviction, an unshakeable certainty in the Dharma. A Buddhist practitioner should know what Buddha, Dharma and Sangha really are. Such a practitioner should really understand how to practice bodhicitta and the six transcendental perfections. Intellectual understanding of the teachings must lead to direct experience of the teachings. Finally, the experience must lead to the realization of the teachings. As one reads, studies and practices the Dharma more, one's wrong views, misunderstandings and doubts should to that extent be dispelled, and certainty about the Dharma should dawn in one's mind.

BCA 1-1, Text section 181:

Nagarjuna's quote from the Prajna-danda is made to show the nature of Shantideva's pledge to compose this treatise. Sublime beings never waver in their promises. Such a promise or pledge is like taking on a precept. Through fulfilling the pledge of composing a treatise, the author gathers tremendous merit, much more than if he had simply written the text without making any pledge. A pledge, precept, or discipline, when taken on, immeasurably increases the merit in any virtuous action.

BCA Ch. 1 Stanza 2, Text Sections 182-186

BCA 1-2, Text section 182:

The author of a treatise must cast away his pride because if one writes out of a prideful motivation, such a book will bring no benefit to sentient beings. Shantideva, although highly realized and learned, casts away pride by stating that in the Bodhisattva-caryavatara he teaches nothing that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas did not teach before. He also states that he is not learned in prosody and poetry.

Again Khenpo Kunpal quotes the Indian scholar *Vibhuticandra's* metrical prologue to his commentary on the Bodhicaryavatara:

In the (history of) the Victor's doctrine
Many great beings and persons have appeared,
But I have found none
Whose experience and realization compare with Shantideva's.

Thus, Vibhuticandra states that many *great masters* and *great persons* appeared in the history of Indian Buddhism, but none could compare with Shantideva in meditation experience and realization. Shantideva was indeed a very great master, but he, nonetheless, assumes a position of humility, casting away his pride at the beginning of composing this treatise. While he states that he has no skills in poetry, in fact, the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is an outstanding poetic masterpiece.

BCA 1-2, Text section 183:

Prosody is one of the five lesser sciences. These are: poetics, synonymics, prosody, drama and astrology. The most famous treatise on prosody, the Chando-ratnakara, was written by the Indian master Shantipa.

The Indian master of poetry *Ksemendra* composed the famous Kalpalata, containing one hundred and eight stories on Buddha's previous lives written in a lovely poetical style.

The Indian master *Shura*, a disciple of Aryadeva, composed a text on Buddha's previous life stories called Jatakamala in 34 Sections.

BCA 1-2, Text sections 184-185:

Since Shantideva states he has neither skill in meaning nor in words, one might object, “If you possess so little skill, why did you compose this treatise?” Anticipating this objection, Shantideva says he only wrote the Bodhisattva-caryavatara to cultivate the motivation of bodhicitta and the application of the six transcendental perfections. Teaching the Dharma to others benefits not only the listeners but also one’s own mind. In addition, debating the Dharma and composing a treatise is extremely beneficial for one’s own mind as well as for the minds of others.

Scholars actually have three occupations: to teach, to debate with other scholars, and to write treatises and commentaries. Of these, writing is considered the most important. The Indian master Candragomin wrote:

Therefore, among the three activities of scholars,
Teaching and debating may be uncertain (in nature),
However, there can be no delusion (permitted) in composition.

Teaching and debating about the Dharma might still allow for uncertainties, since even scholars are sometimes mistaken or deluded. However, when teaching or debating, they have the opportunity to correct their mistakes. When composing a treatise or commentary on the other hand, there is no room for uncertainty or delusion regarding the meaning. The author either produces an accurate or an inaccurate commentary; he either understands or he does not. Moreover, writing treatises and compositions is considered a far greater contribution to furthering the spread of the Dharma than is teaching or debating.

BCA 1-2, Text section 186:

One may then wonder, “Why cast away pride?” A treatise written out of arrogance and pride will not benefit beings at all. Candrakirti is said to have felt proud about a treatise he wrote on grammar; because of his pride in his writing skills, this particular treatise benefited only a few people. Therefore, even if one is very learned and knowledgeable, one should always assume a humble position and thus cast away pride. Shantideva’s humility sets an example for future scholars.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 3, Text Sections 187-199

BCA 1-3, Text section 187:

Again one might object, “Since you have written this text for your own benefit, you should be content just to know it for yourself. You seem to have written this treatise for no reason.”

BCA 1-3, Text sections 188-189:

Anticipating these doubts, Shantideva sets forth his reasons for composing this text. He hopes the composition will increase both his faith and cultivation of virtue and inspire others as well. *Virtue* or ‘that which is wholesome’ is defined here as the motivation of bodhicitta and the conduct of the six transcendental perfections. Khenpo Kunpal notes three types of faith: 1) the faith of amazement, 2) the faith of inspiration, and 3) the faith of conviction.

1) The *faith of amazement* consists of being amazed by the qualities of the three jewels. This faith means to be delighted about the qualities of the three jewels.

2) The *faith of inspiration* is a faith inspired to pursue the qualities that can be attained. It is the wish to pursue and to acquire their qualities.

3) The *faith of conviction* is a faith that is confident and convinced about the law of cause and effect. This faith means to have gained confidence and certainty in the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This faith is also called ‘the faith of knowing the reasons’.

In another listing, four kinds of faith are mentioned: 1) the faith of amazement, 2) the faith of inspiration, 3) the faith of certainty, and 4) irreversible faith. Irreversible faith only comes about through the practice of meditation.

The term *to cultivate* can also be translated as ‘to meditate’, or ‘to contemplate’. In Khenpo Kunpal’s commentary, it means ‘to familiarize oneself with’ or ‘to grow accustomed to’.

To cultivate suggests meanings such as becoming ‘accustomed to’, ‘familiar with’, or ‘acquainted with’ the continuous maintenance of concentration, having the mind repeatedly focus on virtuous thoughts. This term is used in phrases like ‘cultivating faith’ or ‘cultivating compassion’.

Since ‘to cultivate’, ‘to meditate’, and ‘to become familiar with’ have the same basic meaning, Tibetan translators use ‘path of meditation’, ‘path of cultivation’, or ‘path of habituation’ to translate the Sanskrit term ‘bhavanamarga’.

You might ask why you should familiarize or accustom your mind to virtuous thoughts. The answer is that our minds have not been masters of themselves since time without beginning. Rather, they are always dwelling in a state of dependency. Our minds are constantly chasing after afflictions, which lead to the development of all sorts of defects and mistakes. 'Cultivation' or 'meditation' means bringing such a mind under your own power of mastery and directing it toward whatever virtuous thoughts you wish.

Writing a treatise such as the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, or expounding the text to others, leads to an increase in the three kinds of faith because you are then focusing your attention on the buddhadharma, which is virtuous. On the other hand, if you place your attention on something negative, your unwholesome tendencies, such as aggression, will increase.

A mere intellectual understanding of the words of this treatise will not bring forth genuine bodhicitta and thus will not lead to a decrease in afflictions. Superficial study is not enough. Without intensive study, whatever a student learns will be easily forgotten. Topics like the preciousness of human existence and the benefits of bodhicitta must be repeatedly and constantly kept in mind until heartfelt conviction arises. Only through constant familiarization with the Dharma will faith and virtue increase. When familiarization is perfected, the true meaning of bodhicitta will clearly manifest.

Mingle your mind with this treatise. Faith and devotion are mental acts, while respect refers more to body and speech. Faith and devotion purify your mind. Faith in itself is a pure thought. A mind infused with faith and devotion is a pure mind. Faith, devotion and a virtuous mindset are the roots of all healing powers.

A virtuous mind is the source of all happiness. Virtue refers to positive action in body, speech and mind. If you live your life according to the Buddhist teachings on virtue, you will always feel bliss in your mind and physical body. Virtue is also the key to social harmony. What follows are the most basic instructions on virtue and how to develop a virtuous mind.

Study the scriptures of the Buddha, rely on a spiritual friend, and associate yourself with noble friends. Do not inflict any harm on others, and practice the ten virtuous actions.

Avoid engaging in any of the ten non-virtuous actions: taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, speaking lies, sowing discord, harsh words, worthless chatter, covetousness, wishing harm to others, and wrong views.

Avoiding taking life means not to kill any sentient being. Avoiding taking what is not given means not to steal. Avoiding sexual misconduct means not to take a partner who is in a relationship with someone else. Avoiding speaking lies means not to twist people's minds through untruthful statements.

Avoiding sowing discord means not to drive people apart through vicious talk. Instead, bring people together through harmonious and friendly ways of talking. Avoiding speaking harsh words means not to speak in an unkind way to others. Always use soft and gentle language. Avoiding worthless chatter means to not waste your time talking nonsense.

Avoiding covetousness means taming the desire to obtain and possess everything you see. Learn to be content with whatever material goods you have. Avoiding wishing harm to others is a most important point. You should always wish good things for other people. Wish everyone well, even people who have caused you harm. Finally, avoid wrong views. Do not hold the wrong view that everything will come to an end with your death.

Trust in karma, the law of cause and effect. Know that all your thoughts and emotions, words and actions have consequences. Understand that good actions lead to good results and bad actions to bad results. Know that your mind will take rebirth repeatedly until you achieve enlightenment. The correct universal view means to believe in karma and to avoid the ten negative actions.

Tulku Urgyen taught that practitioners should tame their harmful intentions by applying the sutra teaching on 'training in goodness in four ways':

- Although accused, do not respond with accusation.
- Although attacked, do not respond with aggression.
- Although beaten, do not strike back.
- Although exposed, do not respond by exposing others.

You might be falsely blamed for something terrible. You might be accused of something bad you did not do or say. A yogin does not respond to accusation by saying, "I didn't do it." He does not retaliate by accusing others. When anger or aggression comes at him, he never answers with aggression. However harsh the words may be, however bold the aggressor, the yogin does not become upset. Even if physically attacked and beaten, a yogin will never hit back; he will sit where he is, taking the beating silently. As long as the yogin is on the path, he is not free from defects. So, when someone exposes his

faults, he does not become upset or defensive. He might say, "What you observe is true. I am at fault."

If you apply these points, you will have no enemies; you will not be a target for aggression. Whatever bad things might be said or done to you will cause no harm. As you do not respond to negativity, people will tire of trying to pick fights with you. Train yourself and try to accomplish this much patience. If you stick to these points, you may be called a practitioner. Give the gain to others and keep the loss. Allow others to be right, even if it makes you wrong. This is how Tulku Urgyen advised his students.

Living according to these principles will make your entire being content and happy. It does not matter whether you are rich or poor, famous or unknown. The very basis of a happy life is to live according to the discipline of avoiding negative actions. It does not matter whether or not you are a Buddhist. This is the very basis for happiness.

Students of Buddhism need to know one very important point. If you want to acquire knowledge and wisdom, you must first become a proper vessel, capable of holding and absorbing this kind of knowledge. The vessel is discipline. The minimum discipline required is the discipline of avoiding the ten negative actions. Such a vessel of discipline will be able to hold knowledge and wisdom, leading to samadhi.

Discipline means making a commitment or pledge. You must pledge to live by the ten virtuous actions. Only then are you practicing discipline. The thought, "I will live by the ten virtuous actions and avoid the ten non-virtuous actions even at the cost of my life" generates inconceivable merit. Remind yourself of this pledge a few times every day. Your Dharma study will then be successful. What you actually aspire to is a complete transformation of your entire being.

BCA 1-3, Text section 190:

To live straightforward in the conduct of the bodhisattvas means 'to live honestly'.

BCA 1-3, Text sections 191-192:

Some people who are overly timid may think, "I cannot do this. It's all too difficult for me. I simply don't have the confidence necessary to practice like that." Such a timid attitude will prevent you from practicing the Dharma, and, therefore, virtuous qualities will never arise. An overly timid mind is a real obstacle for practicing the Dharma.

Dharma students must develop an uplifted and joyous state of mind, a mind that is enthusiastic and inspired. When two countries are on the brink of war, the generals like to fire up their soldiers with speeches, music and marches. Through that the soldiers develop courage. That is what is meant by 'uplifting one's mind'.

The Pitaputra-samagamana-sutra recounts the story of how the Buddha established his father, King Suddhodana, in the Dharma. Khenpo Choga recounted this story in the following way: Because Suddhodana was a king and also the Buddha's father; he was a very proud person. He thought, "Gautama is my son. I will not prostrate to him." As he was so swollen with pride, he could never receive teachings from the Buddha.

One day, while the Buddha was teaching at a certain place, King Suddhodana went to see what was going on. As he approached, he saw the 'four great guardian kings' protecting the area. The four great guardian kings told King Suddhodana, "Today, the Buddha will teach the Dharma to the 'thirty-three gods' as well as to us four great guardian kings. Human beings are not allowed to join the teachings."

King Suddhodana thought, "I, the king, pay respect to the 'the thirty-three gods'. Now the gods are receiving teachings from my son, the Buddha." He began to see how very arrogant his attitude had been. Humbled in this way, he finally was able to prostrate to the Buddha, and so the Buddha established him in the Dharma.

BCA 1-3, Text section 193:

The four prerequisites of declaring respect, pledging to compose, casting away pride, and generating joy are not only needed for composing treatises but are also required for whatever task one may undertake, be it teaching, studying, meditating, building a temple and so forth.

Before you set out on any undertaking, you should first offer prostrations and supplicate the Buddhas and lineage masters in order to receive their blessings. This will remove all obstacles for your project and is especially important when practicing meditation. Without supplicating the masters, you will not receive their blessings, and your meditation will not lead to realization. This is a crucial point. Without heartfelt devotion, the blessings of the lineage will not descend, and realization will not dawn without the blessings of the lineage.

The second step for any undertaking is to give rise to the firm resolve to see your project through to completion. Such resolve is also indispensable for meditation. At the

beginning of each session one should generate the resolution to be non-distracted for the entire session.

Next, you must overcome pride and arrogance without overcompensating by becoming timid. As long as you consider yourself superior to others, you cannot appreciate other people's qualities, and, therefore, you cannot learn from them.

Meditators who think their practice is really fantastic have already fallen under the influence of Mara. A practitioner should have confidence in his practice but without a trace of arrogance and haughtiness. True confidence leads to the assurance of charisma.

A practitioner needs to respect him or herself. Someone who rejoices in his own qualities and in the work he does will naturally develop respect toward himself. A practitioner who has respect toward his own innate goodness and in the goodness of his Dharma practice will naturally gain the respect of others.

It is a sign of a genuine practitioner to be peaceful, tame, and relaxed. Such a practitioner is in accord with the true nature of his mind. Being proud and arrogant means not being in accord with one's true nature. A genuine practitioner is humble as he has nothing to defend. Being humble does not mean to be meek or fearful. Being meek and frightened is based on fear. To trust and rejoice in one's own qualities and innate goodness is called confidence or certainty. This should never be confused with pride or arrogance.

A practitioner should always rejoice in his Buddha nature, the fact that he is primordially endowed with all the infinite qualities of the Buddha. This is called to 'generate joy in one's basis', in one's Buddha nature. When practicing the path of Dharma, the practitioner should generate joy in his own Dharma practice. He should practice with a joyous mind, knowing that he is doing the right thing. That is called to 'generate joy in the path'.

These four prerequisites of 1) declaring respect, 2) pledging to compose, 3) casting away pride, and 4) generating joy can be applied to any project or work but should be practiced particularly when studying, contemplating and meditating.

BCA 1-3, Text section 194:

The four interrelated aspects such as the purpose and so forth are also called 'the fourfold interrelated purposes'. When these four interrelated aspects are present, one will enter into the study of a treatise, since the treatise promises to be meaningful.

The aspects are: 1) the topic, 2) the purpose, 3) the ultimate purpose, and 4) the relation between them. The first stanza of the first chapter demonstrates these four aspects:

To the Sugatas, who are endowed with the Dharmakaya,
together with their sons, and to all who are worthy of veneration,
I respectfully pay homage. That done, in accordance with the scriptures, I will
briefly explain entering into the precepts of the sons of the Sugatas.

1) The third line in the first stanza in Tibetan indicates the topic of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara: "Entering into the precepts of the sons of the Sugatas". This line belongs to the section known as 'pledging to compose' the text, the second of the four prerequisites. By stating the topic of the treatise, the author tells the reader what the text is about.

2) The overall purpose of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is laid out in the following line from the first stanza: "In accordance with the scriptures, I will briefly explain" This line also belongs to the section on 'pledging to compose' the text.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is a treatise which gathers what has been dispersed as well as being a treatise for the practice of meditation. Therefore, it will be meaningful and beneficial to anyone who reads it. This is the Bodhisattva-caryavatara's real purpose, to condense all the teachings of the Buddha into one single treatise.

3) The ultimate purpose of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is spelled out by this line from the first stanza: "The Sugatas, who are endowed with the Dharmakaya, together with their sons..." The ultimate purpose is to achieve the level of the Sugata, 'the one gone to bliss', who is endowed with the Dharmakaya. This line belongs to the section called 'declaration of respect', the first of the four prerequisites. Through the practice of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara one will be able to achieve the level of the Sugatas, endowed with the Dharmakaya. This ultimate purpose reveals the goal to which the Bodhisattva-caryavatara leads.

4) The relation between these: The latter aspects cannot exist without the former. First, you state the topic of the text; next, you state its purpose. Finally, you indicate where it is leading, the ultimate purpose. Lacking a topic, whatever you produce will not be meaningful to read. Without something meaningful to study and learn, you cannot reach the ultimate fruition, the Dharmakaya. The interdependent relation of the three previous aspects is only implied in the root text. It is not explicitly stated as the relationship is obvious.

In this way, the latter aspects are dependent on the former. If you do not understand the conduct of the bodhisattvas, you cannot understand the vast teachings of the Buddha, and without the Buddha's teachings you cannot reach enlightenment.

BCA 1-3, Text section 195:

These four aspects enable the reader to approach the treatise with trust and, moreover, with an *inquisitiveness that searches for meaning*.

One can approach a treatise fearing that it might be insignificant or with an inquisitiveness into its possible significance. The first is fear concerning its insignificance, when one thinks, "This treatise probably lacks a topic, a purpose, an ultimate purpose and a relation between these." The latter is the inquisitiveness concerning its significance, when one thinks, "This treatise probably has a topic, a purpose, an ultimate purpose and a relation between these."

In other words, you could think, "I wonder if reading this text might really be meaningful and beneficial for me. Maybe I will find some answers to my personal questions in this text." You should have an open and critical frame of mind, one searching for meaning. Inquisitiveness that searches for meaning cuts through doubts leads to a state free from any doubts. The Buddha always invited everyone to scrutinize his teachings. Only through addressing one's problems and analyzing them will one gain insight. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara teaches the methods for doing exactly that.

In this way, the four aspects prevent people from entertaining wrong ideas, such as thinking, "The Bodhisattva-caryavatara might be just a useless treatise, like some treatise on the dentistry of crows." And finally, these four aspects enhance the beauty of the text.

An intelligent person will immediately know if a treatise is endowed with these four aspects. If a treatise should lack them, the reader will recognize it as useless and not even bother to continue reading.

BCA 1-3, Text sections 196-197:

This aspiration summarizes the entire Bodhisattva-caryavatara. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara has ten chapters in 913 stanzas.

The ten chapters are structured according to four main classifications:

Three chapters that give rise to the precious bodhicitta in those in whom it has not yet arisen (chap. 1, 2, 3):

1. Chapter one, explaining the benefits of bodhicitta (36 stanzas)
2. Chapter two, confessing negativities (65 stanzas)
3. Chapter three, thorough adoption of bodhicitta (33.5 stanzas)

Three chapters that prevent the decrease (of the precious bodhicitta) where it has arisen (chap. 4, 5, 6):

4. Chapter four, heedfulness (48 stanzas)
5. Chapter five, introspection (109 stanzas)
6. Chapter six, patience (134 stanzas)

Three chapters that not only prevent the decrease (of the precious bodhicitta) but cause it to ever increase more and more (chap. 7, 8, 9):

7. Chapter seven, diligence (76 stanzas)
8. Chapter eight, meditation (187 stanzas)
9. Chapter nine, transcendental knowledge (167 stanzas)

A single chapter concerning the dedication of the results that have thus been developed for the benefit of others (chap. 10):

10. Chapter ten, Dedication (57.5 stanzas).

Following this format of structuring the whole Bodhisattva-caryavatara, the first three chapters deal with arousing bodhicitta. The second three chapters deal with how to sustain bodhicitta and prevent it from being lost or diminished. The third three chapters deal with methods for increasing bodhicitta. The tenth chapter deals with the subject of dedication. You dedicate the benefits of bodhicitta which you have aroused, sustained and increased through the teachings of the previous nine chapters.

Looking carefully at Khenpo Kunpal's table of contents you will find all the major sections and sub-sections of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. If you apply these various headings to the root text, you will have already gained a great deal of insight into the meaning and interpretation of the text.

The first chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara explains the *benefits* or qualities of bodhicitta. The word *benefits* suggest 'helpful qualities'. This chapter is a wonderful advertisement for bodhicitta, just as these days television commercials advertise the qualities of a product. If people do not hear about the qualities and benefits of bodhicitta, they will never aspire to generate it in their minds.

As soon as one understands bodhicitta's inconceivable qualities, however, one will certainly think, "I need these teachings on how to develop bodhicitta." Generally, treatises list the qualities of the topic under discussion at the end of the text. Shantideva

is here more intelligent, keen as he is to advertise the qualities of bodhicitta right at the text's beginning. If someone is sick and hears about appropriate medicine which will cure him, he will certainly follow his physician's advice and take the medicine at once.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 4, Text Sections 200-210

BCA 1-4, Text section 200:

First, Shantideva explains the support for bodhicitta, the basis upon which bodhicitta can arise. This basis is the precious human body, which itself is the support for the mind. The mind is the support for the precious bodhicitta. A human existence endowed with the eight freedoms and ten advantages is very difficult to attain, and, therefore, Shantideva says in stanza 4: *These freedoms and advantages are extremely difficult to obtain.*"

BCA 1-4, Text section 201:

Looking at the human body and considering what it is free from, one can enumerate *eight freedoms*. In general, *freedom* means having the opportunity to practice Dharma. *Lack of freedom* refers to eight unfortunate conditions that lack such an opportunity. *The eight freedoms* are not being born in any of the eight states without freedom, which are:

(1) Being born in a hell realm, (2) as a hungry ghost, (3) As an animal, (4) as a long-living god, or (5) as a barbarian, (6) Having wrong views, (7) being born (at a time) when there is no Buddha, Or (8) being born as a retarded person; these are the eight states without freedom.

These eight unfortunate conditions include four unfortunate conditions of nonhumans and four unfortunate conditions of humans. The four unfortunate conditions of non-humans are (1) being born in a hell realm, (2) as a hungry ghost, (3) as an animal, and (4) as a long-living god.

The four unfortunate conditions of humans are being born (5) as a barbarian, (6) in a land of those with wrong views, (7) in a land when a Buddha has not come, and (8) as a retarded person.

1. Being born in a *hell realm*, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma because one is constantly tormented by intense suffering in one of the eighteen hell realms. These are the eight hot hells, the eight cold hells, the temporary hells, and the neighboring hells, which are also called the sixteen additional neighboring hells.

2. Being born as a *hungry ghost*, a preta, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma because of the suffering one experiences from hunger and thirst. There are two types of pretas: those who live collectively and those who move through space. Pretas who live collectively suffer from external obscurations, internal obscurations, and specific obscurations.

3. Being born as *an animal*, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma because one is enslaved and suffers from harming each other. Animals are classified into two categories: those living in the depths and those scattered in different places.

4. Being born as a *long-living god*, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma because one spends one's time in a stupor. The environment of a long-living god is experienced as one of the four dhyana states. Their bodies manifest as a samadhi-body. They lack the ability to distinguish between happiness and suffering, virtue and negative deeds, and live in a state similar to deep sleep. They have neither physical nor mental sensation and are in a state of cessation. As they are free of concepts, they may live for eight great aeons, but they are totally separated from the sublime Dharma, so they never have the chance to practice the Dharma. Imagine that you have taken rebirth in such a state and consider whether or not you have the opportunity to practice the Dharma.

5. Being born as a *barbarian*, in a border country, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma because the Buddhist doctrine is unknown in such places. Barbarians are primitive or savage human beings who have no knowledge of how to distinguish between virtue and negative deeds. Such people make offerings to spirits and demons with the blood of animals, and they believe that taking life is something good.

6. Being born among tirthikas or among those with similar *wrong views*, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma since one's mind is influenced by those mistaken views. This refers to human beings born in a land where the general world view is either eternalism or nihilism. Eternalists believe that the entire universe is created by an almighty god. Nihilists do not believe in the law of karma, in past and future lives, in enlightenment, and so forth. Such views prevent beings from meeting the genuine Dharma.

7. Being in a dark aeon, at a time *when there is no Buddha*, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma because one has never even heard of the three jewels and cannot distinguish between virtuous and non-virtuous actions.

8. Being born as a *retarded person*, one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma since one's faculties are impaired. A retarded person is someone with a speech dysfunction, someone who is not able to talk. A retarded person is also someone with a mental disability, an imbecile. A person who is born in such a condition is someone whose mind is not functioning properly and, therefore, cannot properly listen, contemplate or teach the Dharma. A person born with a mental disability cannot properly comprehend the Dharma.

BCA 1-4, Text section 202:

Considering the positive aspects of a human existence, the *ten advantages* are enumerated. These include the five individual advantages and the five circumstantial advantages. Nagarjuna enumerates the individual advantages:

(1) To be born as a human being, (2) in a central land, (3) with all one's sense faculties intact, (4) Not in an extreme karmic predicament, and (5) with faith in the Dharma.

1. *To be born as a human being*: Without a human life, one cannot even encounter the Dharma. It is only the human realm that is truly conducive to Dharma practice. Thus, the human body is the advantage of the support.

2. *To be born in a central land*: If one is born in a remote place where Dharma is unheard of, there is no opportunity to come across it. You, however, were born in a region that is central as far as Dharma is concerned and thus have the advantage of the place.

As to what is meant by a Central Land, one should distinguish between a geographically central land and a central land in terms of the Dharma. Geographically speaking, the central land is said to be the Vajra Seat of Bodhgaya, India, at the center of Jambudvīpa, the Southern Continent, where the thousand Buddhas of this Fortunate Aeon all attained enlightenment. In terms of Dharma, a central land is any land where the Dharma has spread. All other countries and regions are considered to be peripheral countries and border regions.

3. *To be born with all one's sense faculties intact*: Not to have all sense faculties intact is a hindrance to the practice of Dharma. For instance, if you have no eyesight, you cannot see the representations of the body, speech, and mind, such as statues, scriptures, and stupas. If your mental faculties are impaired, you may be in a state of confusion that does not allow you to understand and practice the Dharma. Being free of such disabilities, you have the advantage of possessing the sense faculties.

4. *To not be born in an extreme karmic predicament:* Perverted lifestyle refers to a lifestyle of people born in communities of hunters, butchers, mercenaries and so forth, who are immersed in non-virtuous actions from their early youth onward. This also includes anyone who's every thought, word and deed is contrary to the Dharma. Since you now wish to engage in positive actions, this is the advantage of an exalted particular intention.

5. *To be born having faith in the Dharma:* Lacking faith in the Buddha's teachings you would not feel any inclination toward the Dharma. Being able to turn your mind to the Dharma, as you are doing right now, constitutes the advantage of faith.

Because these five advantages depend on the individual, they are called the five individual advantages, or the five advantages of the individual. According to Nagarjuna, the five circumstantial advantages are:

(1) A Buddha has appeared and (2) has taught the Dharma;
(3) His teachings still exist and (4) are practiced; And (5) there are those who are kind-hearted toward others.

1. *A Buddha has appeared:* Those not born in a bright aeon, one in which a Buddha has appeared, have never even heard of the Dharma. We are now in an aeon in which a Buddha has appeared, however, so we possess the advantage of the presence of the exalted teacher.

2. *He has taught the Dharma:* Although a Buddha has come, had he not taught, no one would have benefited. Since the Buddha did turn the wheel of Dharma in three successive stages, however, we have the advantage of the teaching of the sublime Dharma.

3. *His teachings still exist:* Although the Buddha has taught, had his doctrine died out, it would no longer be there to help us. However, the period during which the doctrine will remain in existence has not yet ended, and so we have the advantage of the time.

4. *The teachings are practiced:* Although the teachings still exist, unless we follow them they can be of no benefit to us. Since we have taken up the Dharma, however, we possess the advantage of our own good fortune.

5. *There are those who are kind-hearted toward others:* Although we have taken up the Dharma, without the favorable circumstance of being accepted by a spiritual friend we

could never learn what the Dharma is really about. Since a spiritual friend has accepted us, we possess the advantage of his extraordinary compassion.

Because these five factors depend on circumstances other than one's own and need to be complete, they are called the five circumstantial advantages, or the five advantages of the circumstances.

There are two kinds of benefit for people: temporary benefit and ultimate benefit. With this human rebirth we have now attained the opportunity to accomplish this twofold benefit. Not taking advantage of this present opportunity would be very foolish, as we will have great difficulty attaining such a perfect situation again in future lifetimes.

BCA 1-4, Text section 203:

What is known as the *precious human body* requires that the eight freedoms and all ten advantages be complete. If any of these eighteen components are missing, your existence is not considered to be a precious human body. We should reflect on the difficulty of attaining such a perfect situation again by contemplating the causes, considering the difficulty through metaphor and through numerical comparison.

BCA 1-4, Text section 204:

What is the cause for this human body endowed with the eight freedoms and ten advantages? Our present body results from our good karma. Karma refers to positive or negative actions that create positive or negative results; it is created by our mind. To attain a human body one must carry through three kinds of virtuous karma: 1) keeping discipline, 2) gathering merit, and 3) making aspirations.

Many people find these three positive activities difficult to develop and very difficult to practice. Therefore, beings have a hard time attaining a human body. Their negative tendencies are so strong that they have no capacity to accumulate positive thoughts and feelings.

If we create the karma of perfect discipline, we gather the karma for attaining a human body. The minimum discipline required to attain a human body in the next life is the 'discipline of giving up harming others'. Thus, one should not harm others but should practice patience. If you lead a peaceful life without anger, you will gain a beautiful body in your next life. Moreover, if your mind is truly at ease and peaceful, in this life as well people will see the goodness in your face, even though you are not a particularly handsome person.

Discipline must be aided by the practice of the six transcendental perfections. Among these, the practice of generosity is indispensable for attaining a favorable human condition. People who

have practiced sufficient discipline to attain a human body but who have not practiced any generosity will be reborn in very miserable human conditions without the opportunity to practice the Dharma. The other five transcendental perfections must also be practiced to some extent.

The second condition for attaining a human body is gathering merit. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara teaches the perfect methods for gathering merit in the second and third chapters. The gathering of merit through the practices of the 'seven branches' is explained in great detail in those chapters.

The third condition for attaining a human body is aspiration. Only through aspirations will one meet the Dharma in one's next life. Aspirations are of utmost importance. Even if you have attained rebirth as a very rich and healthy person, you will not be able to practice the Dharma unless you have made many aspirations in former lifetimes. Many people have gathered merit in former lifetimes but have failed to make aspirations. Therefore, you should repeat this famous aspiration by Longchenpa everyday at the end of your practice session:

*Throughout all lifetimes, wherever I may be born,
May I obtain the seven qualities of the higher realms.
May I meet the Dharma immediately after taking birth
And have the freedom to practice it properly.*

*May I please my sublime masters
And practice the Dharma day and night.
Having received the Dharma, may I accomplish its innermost essence And traverse the ocean of worldly
existence in that very life.*

*Within the world may I perfectly teach the sublime doctrine And never become weary and tired of
accomplishing the welfare of others.
May all beings simultaneously attain Buddhahood
Through my vast and impartial service to others.*

Even if you do not know how to practice the Dharma, at least you should know how to make aspirations. Through an aspiration such as this, you guarantee that you will meet the Dharma again in your next life and that you will be endowed with the seven qualities of the higher realms. According to Mipham Rinpoche these are: longevity, absence of disease, a beautiful body, good fortune, high caste, great wealth, and great intelligence.

The higher realms refer to the three higher realms of humans, gods and asuras. If you abstain from taking life, you will have a long life. Abstaining from beating and abusing beings, you will be free from illness. Always maintaining patience, you will have a beautiful body.

Having good fortune means that you will succeed at whatever you plan to do. You will not encounter obstacles or unfavorable conditions in your life and will be able to easily accomplish your wishes. In particular, you will be successful in your Dharma practice. All this covers the meaning of 'having good fortune'. If you have intensely practiced meditation in past lifetimes and have always paid respect to your teachers, you will experience good fortune in this life.

'High caste' means that you come from a well-educated family, who imparted to you proper values. A high caste does not refer to royalty or celebrity. It means that your family is of noble mind and does not follow a perverted occupation such as being a mercenary, a butcher, a thief, and so on. If one happens to be born into a family that practices improper livelihood, one will naturally be affected by the negative environment. Diligence in former lifetimes leads to rebirth in a high caste. Great generosity in former lifetimes leads to great wealth in this life. If you have practiced the Dharma in former lifetimes, you will be endowed with great intelligence.

Make aspirations to meet the Dharma immediately on taking rebirth. Once you have met the Dharma, please your master. At best make the offering of practice; second best, serve your master with your body and speech; at the very least, you should please your master with material offerings. Dedicate yourself to Dharma practice day and night.

Having received the Dharma, strive to practice the quintessential teachings and transcend the ocean of samsara in this very lifetime. Pray that once you have gone beyond samsara you will be able to teach the Dharma and work tirelessly for the welfare of others. Pray that through your impartial service to others, all beings may be simultaneously established on the level of perfect Buddhahood. You should recite this perfect aspiration again and again. Aspiration is a very powerful volitional action and has great karmic force.

BCA 1-4, Text section 205:

The famous *example* or *metaphor* of the unlikeliness of attaining a human rebirth is that of a blind turtle dwelling at the bottom of the ocean and swimming up to the surface only once every hundred years. The likelihood of this turtle ever accidentally sticking its neck through a single yoke floating on the vast ocean's surface is very slim.

Concerning this example of the turtle, understand the ocean to be a metaphor for the endless suffering of the three lower realms, which are as vast and deep as the ocean. The blind turtle is a metaphor for the beings of the three lower realms who lack the vision to distinguish between what must be accepted and rejected. Also, while the turtle's rising to the ocean's surface only once every 100 years is very rare, liberation is even rarer than this. Just as the hole in the yoke is very small, so is the chance to achieve rebirth in the body of a god or a human being. That the yoke is tossed hither and thither by the wind is analogous to our karmic dependency on virtuous and negative deeds.

Reflect on the difficulty of attaining a human body through this example as well as through numerical comparisons. If you compare the number of insects in the world to the number of human beings, you realize how many more beings are reborn as insects than as humans. Furthermore, the number of beings living in the ocean far exceeds the number of humans. Among all human beings in the world, moreover, only a few follow the Dharma, and among those who do follow the Buddhist teachings, only a small number are actually practitioners.

BCA 1-4, Text section 206:

Considering the relative numbers of the different kinds of beings, you come to appreciate that being born a human is hardly possible at all. The largest number of beings dwell in the hell realms. It is said that as many beings dwell in hell *as there are specks of dust in the whole world*, that there are as many pretas *as particles of sand in the Ganges*, as many animals *as ferment particles in a beer barrel*, and as many asuras *as snowflakes in a blizzard*. The Buddha also said that gods and humans are as few *as the particles of dust you can heap on your fingernail*.

BCA 1-4, Text section 207:

Using a *metaphor*, the inhabitants of the hells are said to be as numerous as the stars in the night sky and the pretas no more numerous than the stars visible in the daytime. This means that there are very few pretas (hungry ghosts) compared to the number of inhabitants of the hell realms.

If there were as many pretas as stars at night, the number of animals would be like stars in the daytime, which means there are far more pretas than there are animals. And if there were as many animals as stars in the night sky, the number of gods and humans would be only as many as stars in the daytime, meaning there are far more animals than there are gods and humans.

The tradition of Jigme Lingpa's preliminary practices of the 'Longchen Nying Thig' holds that one should recite the lines about the difficulty of attaining a human rebirth at least three times every day. Most people take their human body for granted and do not consider it a privilege. You must be aware that you do have at this time an extraordinary opportunity and a very special physical support. You must realize the value of your human body. This human body is the perfect vehicle; it provides us with the best possible chance to develop the precious bodhicitta. Although all beings are equally endowed with the perfect Buddha nature, the human body alone constitutes the perfect condition for developing bodhicitta. Even an ant has Buddha nature, but no ant can develop bodhicitta and progress on the path to enlightenment.

In general, the Buddha's teachings are vast and profound. While our human mind is of very limited scope, the mind of the Buddha is unlimited, and his knowledge is equally boundless. The Buddha knows everything throughout space and time; his knowledge penetrates the past,

present and future. His mind pervades the infinity of space, and he knows everything at once. He knows, sees, hears, smells, and so forth in an unlimited way.

There seems to be a vast difference between the unlimited perspective of the Buddha and our narrow perspective. His topic of teaching might be too vast and our minds too narrow. We could have great difficulty in truly understanding the Buddha's realization and what his teachings are talking about. This difficulty is only due to our own limitations and not because the Buddha's teaching is flawed. Really understanding a Buddhist text is not at all easy. The pith instruction, therefore, is: "Expand your mind!" Open your mind beyond its habitual limits; contemplate on infinite space and expand your scope as much as possible. Only with a vast mind can you understand the scriptures of the Buddha's teachings.

When you contemplate the difficulty of obtaining this human body, you are reflecting on the noble truth of suffering, the first of the four noble. This body is considered to be defiling and is subject to the truth of suffering. Meditate on the truth of suffering by reflecting on the difficulty of obtaining a human body, and you will become a good practitioner.

For a practitioner of Vajrayana, reflecting on the difficulty of obtaining this human body is indispensable. A Vajrayana practitioner understands that this mind in this human body is endowed with Buddha nature, that this human body provides the best circumstances for developing the precious bodhicitta.

A Vajrayana practitioner also understands the reasons for visualizing this body as a deity and why pure perception must be practiced. The practitioner understands that all beings are primordially male and female deities, that visualization practices are a conceptual imitation of enlightened perspective. The practice of pure perception means to view yourself and the entire universe as a display of deity, mantra and awareness. Through this practice you conceptually imitate the Buddha's pure perfection, acknowledging primordial purity for what it is. Failing to understand that the perspective of the Buddha nature is infinite purity, you do not understand Vajrayana. Pure perception is the key to Vajrayāna.

Many practitioners visualize their body as a deity but feel in their hearts that they are doing something strange. They practice the visualization because they are told to do so, not understanding that such visualization is a skillful method to jump to the Buddha's enlightened perspective. They do not know how to mingle the practices of skillful means and wisdom. The visualizations of pure perception are practices of skillful means and must always be mingled with the recognition of Buddha nature, which is the practice of wisdom. Only when practicing the unity of skillful means and wisdom will one swiftly progress toward enlightenment. Truly appreciating the difficulty of obtaining a human body will gradually lead to pure perception.

Therefore, do not belittle this contemplation and regard it as unimportant. Contemplating the difficulty of obtaining the human body is part of the contemplation of the truth of suffering and has great implications. If you look at the life stories of the great masters of old, you realize that

they had only very few disciples who became great masters themselves and reached high levels of attainment such as the rainbow body. This is because most Dharma students are not truly able to disconnect from worldly activities. Most spend their lives in a mixture of Dharma practice and worldly involvement.

BCA 1-4, Text section 208:

The term *person* literally means 'child born from the force of karma'. You can be a person born from bad karma or from good karma. The past karma is like the mother, and the person is like the child.

The term person refers to a 'person who has potential to practice the Dharma', someone who can understand what to accept and what to reject, someone who is ready to practice the Dharma. An insect is a sentient being, but not a person since it lacks the capacity to practice the Dharma.

The three kinds of persons are: the person of minor mental capacity, the person of average mental capacity, and the person of highest mental capacity. The person of minor mental capacity aspires only to practice 'virtue that concords with worldly merit'. This refers to an ordinary worldly person who practices virtue in order to attain rebirth in the three higher realms of samsara. The person of average capacity aspires to practice 'virtue that concords with liberation of the lesser vehicle'. Such a person follows the path of Hinayana and aspires to reach the level of a sravaka arhat or of a pratyekabuddha. The person of highest mental capacity aspires to accomplish 'perfect enlightenment for the welfare of others'. Such a person accumulates 'virtue that concords with the liberation of the greater vehicle'. It is the *virtue of directing the mind to supreme*. This refers to a person who follows the path of Mahāyāna, the path of the bodhisattvas, and who aspires to become a perfectly enlightened Buddha. The true purpose of human life is to accomplish one of these three levels according to one's mental capacities.

BCA 1-4, Text section 209:

A qualified master refers to a master who is endowed with genuine bodhicitta, who has received the empowerments and keeps the samayas; who has mastered view, meditation and conduct; who has gained the signs of recitation and freed his mind through realization. A qualified master is peaceful and compassionate. From such a qualified master one should receive the *profound instructions*, the teachings on how to realize profound emptiness, the essence of one's mind. The profound instructions on how to realize the view of emptiness are taught in sutra as well as in tantra.

This human body is difficult to gain but easy to lose through disease, famine and weapons. Therefore, one should give up all worldly activities. As practitioners we must give up the *major jobs* in life and drop the *minor duties*, simply leaving them unfinished.

BCA 1-4, Text section 210:

The phrase *spend your time with Dharma practice* means ‘as long as the sun is shining on one’s head, spend your time with the Dharma’. Atisa said that life is short and the fields of knowledge so many that one cannot possibly know them all. Therefore, as we do not know how much lifespan remains to us, we should not even try to study everything but rather should use our time well. Atisa advises that we should be like the swan, said to be able to separate milk from water. Just as swans extract milk from water, practitioners should be able to extract the most essential points of practice from the vast teachings of the Dharma.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 5, Text Sections 211-217

BCA 1-5, Text section 211 / stanza 5:

This part of the text illustrates the difficulty of generating a virtuous thought, the difficulty of generating the mindset of wishing to practice. Such a mindset is *the mental basis* conducive to developing bodhicitta. Lacking such a mindset, developing bodhicitta is impossible.

Such a mindset is as brief and rare as a flash of lightning that illuminates the darkness of the night. Imagine a pitch black night with neither moon nor stars, the sky covered by cloudbanks from which rain pours down. You cannot see a thing. Only when lightning flashes can you for a split second see the *shapes* around you.

In this way, we spend our entire lives controlled by the darkness of the five mind poisons: desire, aversion, ignorance, arrogance, and jealousy. On rare occasions, however, through the blessing power of the Buddhas, a virtuous or meritorious thought arises in our minds. When such a thought arises, sustaining and nurturing it is crucial.

Night-time means that the sun is absent. *Pitch black darkness* indicates a night without even the moon’s light . When the stars are covered, it is due to *cloudbanks*. On such a night nothing can be seen. This pitch black darkness of the night exemplifies our ignorance . If a *flash of lightning* brightly illuminates the darkness, one will be able to see the houses, trees, and flowers very clearly *for just a brief moment*.

The example of the night, without any sun, actually means that the wisdom sun of the Buddha has not arisen. When the Buddha does not cause the wisdom sun to arise by teaching the Dharma, people cannot distinguish between virtue and non-virtue. Sentient beings are, therefore, living in darkness. The cloudbanks indicate that beings’ minds are captivated by the five mind poisons. When bodhicitta and the Buddhas’ aspirations join forces with the merit that beings have accumulated in former lifetimes, a virtuous thought may occasionally arise in the minds of sentient beings. Such virtuous thoughts seem to arise for no apparent reason; in fact, they are triggered by the combined power of the blessings of the Buddhas and the good actions beings accumulated in former lifetimes. However, these virtuous thoughts and intentions do

not last very long for most people. Both night and darkness are images of ignorance and delusion.

The wisdom of the Buddha is compared to the sun, and the knowledge to distinguish between what to do and what to avoid is compared to the moon. The cloudbanks that obscure the sky are images of the mind poisons. The term *briefly* means 'momentarily' and refers to time, as in one moment among a hundred or two among a thousand. But the same term also means 'rarely', suggesting one thought out of a hundred or two out of a thousand. A virtuous thought like, "I will practice the Dharma" almost never arises. When it does arise, it does not arise repeatedly, nor does it last long, because sentient beings have not built up a habitual pattern of such virtuous thoughts.

BCA 1-5, Text section 212:

Since time without beginning beings have mainly familiarized themselves with nonvirtue and afflictions. When a virtuous thought such as, "I will practice the Dharma; I want to reach enlightenment" does arise in one's mind, it is like the tail of a cow, which must be grasped by a blind person who has been lost in a vast desert for a long time.

One might wonder if bodhicitta can arise only if one is born as a human being. Generally speaking, bodhicitta is easier to develop from a human rebirth. Some exceptional beings have developed bodhicitta from rebirth in other realms, however. Buddha Śākyamuni, for example, is said to have first developed a mind of loving kindness, not bodhicitta, when born in the hell realm.

Longchenpa recounts this story in his History of the Dharma: In a previous life, before Buddha Śākyamuni had become a bodhisattva, he was born in a hell where the inhabitants were forced to pull wagons. Harnessed to a wagon with his companion, the two of them were too weak to move their vehicle. The guards goaded them on, beating them with red-hot weapons, causing incredible suffering.

The future Buddha thought, "Even two of us together cannot get the wagon to move, and each of us is suffering as much as the other. I will pull it and suffer alone, so that my companion can be relieved." He said to the guards, "Put his harness over my back, I will pull the cart on my own." The guards became furious, yelling, "Who can prevent others from experiencing the effects of their own actions?" and beating him about the head with their clubs. This good thought, however, immediately released our teacher from that life in hell, and he was reborn in a celestial realm of the 'thirty-three gods', where he attained the perfect body of a celestial child and was born into a perfect caste.

It is taught that this was how he first began to benefit others. Furthermore, it is said that he purified his negative karma through this, marking the beginning of his positive karma. After

the future Buddha left the celestial realm, he took rebirth among humans as the son of a poor potter with the name Prabhāsa. The story of this rebirth is as follows:

Three countless aeons ago, in an aeon called 'Beautiful Appearance' , a Buddha with the name 'The Great Sakyamuni' lived in a city called Varuna. He looked exactly like our Buddha Sakyamuni, and at that time he was teaching the Dharma in the center of the city. Because it was a time of the five decadences, where beings had a lifespan of a hundred years and were small in physical size, this Buddha had appeared accordingly, with equal lifespan and size.

The first person among his entourage was a monk called 'King of Dharma Teachers', who had the power of samadhi and later became Bodhisattva Manjusri. While he was dwelling in samadhi, he viewed with his clairvoyance which being was developing, which declining, which had the potential to become a Buddha, and which would go to the hell realms. He saw that the son of a potter with the name Prabhāsa, someone of low caste, who lived at the periphery of the city, had the potential to become a Buddha. To tame him, this monk went to the city to beg for alms, taking his begging bowl filled with rice gruel. He went to the potter's house, but both father and mother had gone out to work. He met the child, who was playing. The boy Prabhāsa walked straight up to the monk and asked, "Monk, what do you hold in your hand?" 'King of Dharma Teachers' replied, "This is food that is endowed with a hundred flavors." "If that is so, then give it to me!" answered the boy. The monk blessed the food and gave the begging bowl to the boy, who became attached to the flavor. As the boy was very hungry, he followed the monk.

Due to the great power of the monk 'King of Dharma Teachers' and the pure karma of the child Prabhāsa, they arrived at the palace of 'The Great Sakyamuni' as quickly as a man can bend his stretched arm. Through the monk's magical power they went to the center of the city. When the boy saw the Buddha he was amazed and asked the monk, "Who is this?" The old monk replied, "This monk is the Buddha." The boy asked, "How did he become like this?" "He became like this," the monk explained, "because he developed bodhicitta and gathered the accumulations." "Can I become like this?" inquired the boy. "If you develop bodhicitta you can become like this." At that moment the child developed faith, offered the whole begging bowl filled with rice gruel to the Buddha and developed bodhicitta.

The potters, husband and wife, were looking for their lost son and could not find him anywhere. Finally they found him in the center of the city. Prabhāsa begged his parents to let him become a monk, and they granted his wish. He asked the Buddha, "I beg you to make me a monk." Requested like this, the Buddha consented and said, "Come forth, monk!"

The child's hair and facial hair were miraculously shaved, and he turned into a monk dressed in the saffron robes. Thus, he had developed bodhicitta based on a begging bowl filled with rice gruel. Prabhāsa offered five cowrie shells, a pair of shoes, an umbrella made of fine Benares cloth and a pot of fired clay filled with water. According to the Bhadrakalpika-sutra he generated bodhicitta and made the following famous aspiration:

Lord Buddha, just like your body,
Lifespan, size, realm of activities,
Just like your noble and supreme marks,
May I and all beings become exactly like you.

Khenpo Choga adds to the story: Prabhasa made this aspiration with great devotion, expressing his desire to become exactly like the Buddha with the same body, the same entourage, the same lifespan, the same size, taking rebirth in the same world, having the same qualities of body, voice and mind. After he made the aspiration, the Great Buddha Sakyamuni took the end of his shawl between the fingers of his right hand, forming two horns, and placed his right hand on the boy's head, saying, "May you attain enlightenment as the perfectly enlightened Buddha, as the glorious Sakyamuni," thus making a prediction.

That aspiration was the first aspiration our teacher Buddha Sakyamuni ever made. Based on this aspiration and based on the blessings and prediction of the Buddha called the 'Great Sakyamuni', our Buddha actually became exactly like him and is also called Buddha Sakyamuni. This story marks the beginning of Buddha Sakyamuni's bodhisattva activity.

BCA 1-5, Text section 213:

To be resolute means to be resolved and certain that you want to practice the Dharma. You need to hold on to that idea without wavering. You should not discuss this decision with your father nor with your mother as they will only dissuade you from practicing the Dharma.

The phrase: "Not handing over the power of decision to other people, I will maintain my own independence", literally means "Not handing my nose-rope over to others but fastening it around my own head". This phrase means, 'I will not hand over the power of decision to practice the Dharma to other people, but I will maintain my own decision-making power. The example comes from Tibetan yaks, who have rings through their noses with pieces of rope attached. The yak must follow wherever the rope is pulled. When the nose-rope is wrapped around the yak's own head, it can go wherever it wishes. In the same way, those who truly want to practice the Dharma should make up their own minds and not hand the power of decision to other people. The resolve to practice must come from oneself and should not be discussed with relatives and friends.

I will leave my enemies to themselves means, 'May they do whatever they want to do, it is not my business any longer'. Literally it means, 'I will place my enemies high and far'. *I will let my fields dry up* means giving up one's fields, since maintaining them requires work.

Make the following resolution: "Giving up my ordinary life, I will commit myself to practicing the genuine Dharma, such as the ten ultimate jewels of the old Kadampas and the three wrathful mantras of master Tsang pa Gyare."

BCA 1-5, Text section 214:

Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche taught about the ten jewels of the Kadampa masters. The Kadampa masters of old gave instructions on how to leave behind all concerns for this life when practicing genuine Dharma, instructions called the ten ultimate jewels. They are: 'discarding, joining and achieving', the four pointers, and the three vajras. These ten ultimate jewels of the Kadampa masters set the standards for genuine practitioners who aspire to attain enlightenment in one lifetime. Those practitioners are called 'those who have given up all worldly activities'. The Indian master Atīśa brought these instructions to Tibet.

Discarding, joining and attaining:
Discard the company of humans.
Join the company of dogs.
Attain the company of the gods.

Discard the company of humans: A yogin like this is no longer counted as an ordinary human. Milarepa said, "When I look at people, I think they are crazy; when people look at me, they think I am crazy." By not maintaining ordinary relationships, the yogin chooses to leave the community of human beings. A true yogin does not follow the social conventions of human beings. Ordinary human beings commit many wicked deeds trying to protect their families and fighting with their enemies.

A yogin who maintains social ties with ordinary worldly beings must adjust to their thoughts and behavior. Ordinary beings are completely in the thrall of the five afflictions, the five mind poisons, such as desire, aversion, ignorance, arrogance, and jealousy. Following social patterns based on these five poisons would lead the yogin to forsake genuine Dharma practice, preventing the attainment of complete enlightenment in this lifetime.

Normally we rely on others, reasoning in this way: "Oh, if I do not visit him, he will be angry; if I do not give her something, she will be upset." We believe that maintaining relationships is a good thing. The great masters like Milarepa, Longchenpa, Jigme Lingpa and Paltrül Rinpoche, however, did not consider friendships, clothing, riches and food to be important. They had no dinner parties to attend, no friends to please with gifts, no worries about whether or not they were respected within the community. Not relying on others, they were not pulled away from their practice. They relied upon awareness practice alone and had no interest other than attaining enlightenment in this very lifetime.

Externally, avoid the distraction of samsaric activities. Internally, do not let your mind stray from your practice. If you can give up outer and inner distractions, your mind will be very clear. In this clear state of mind, meditation, renunciation, compassion, devotion and so forth will come very easily. To achieve this, you should stay in seclusion. Once you have truly recognized Buddha nature, have confidence in the instructions of your root guru and do not run after every teacher or teaching. Stay by yourself and practice.

Join the company of dogs: A true yogin has abandoned all concepts of pure and impure. He would eat with dogs. Not becoming happier if treated nicely, a yogin also does not become depressed if he is ignored. Like a stray street dog, he is an object for neither praise nor blame. He keeps a low profile, wears ragged clothes, begs for food and has no interest in being well thought of. Worldly success, fine clothes, sumptuous food and good repute he would consider as defects. He is beyond hope and fear, having attained the view of equanimity. He stays hidden from people. If praised, he is not elated, and if blamed he is not depressed. Such a yogin knows that fame and honor are stains of Mara. Other people do not even notice his existence. Nobody would expect anything from such a yogin, nor would he expect anything from anybody else. He remains a hidden yogin.

Attain the company of the gods: Such a yogin has given up all attachment to the eight worldly concerns. Despite a human body, his mind is enlightened, and thus, he has reached the company of the gods. Ordinary beings are involved in the eight worldly concerns, and by virtue of this involvement they have joined the company of demons. A yogin has only one aim in life—to attain perfect enlightenment. To realize this aim he practices tirelessly day and night. Only practicing the divine Dharma, he has reached the seat of practice. The phrase 'having attained the company of the gods' means that the yogin is totally immersed in Dharma practice.

The four pointers:

Direct your mind to the Dharma.

Conduct your Dharma practice in poverty.

Stay poor until you die.

Die in a lonely cave.

Direct your mind to the Dharma: As you have achieved a precious human body, put all your interest and energy into the teachings. Do not waste your energy and time with other things. Decide to practice for your entire life and never abandon Dharma practice, no matter what happens. Concentrate all your energy on alone. Do not waste any time with worldly activities of ordinary relationships, creating a family, making a career and so forth. These activities are all based on the eight worldly concerns.

Practicing the Dharma is not a far distant aim, only accessible to high yogins. Dharma practice happens in one's mind. The genuine yogin practices the instruction of 'knowing one—freeing all'. He has received the instructions of the Great Perfection, the essence of all the eighty-four thousand teachings of the Buddha. These instructions enable the yogin to practice the genuine recognition of mind essence, the Buddha nature, the one point that frees all.

Conduct your Dharma practice in poverty: Do not become rich. Do not waste time accumulating, maintaining and increasing wealth. Do not become a servant of your wealth. If you serve money and wealth, you will never succeed in accomplishing the teachings. That is the reason for a life of poverty, a life without distractions. Poverty means you have a place for retreat,

clothes to wear and enough to eat and drink; no more, no less. A true practitioner does not aspire to riches nor does he strive for fame. He does not follow any worldly aims. Such a yogin knows that these basic requirements are enough for living a lifetime dedicated to practice. As long as one limits oneself to these basic requirements, one will be able to practice genuine Dharma. The moment you begin looking for more, Māra has entered your mind.

Stay poor until you die: Remain a poor practitioner all your life. Do not in your later years become a business person. Do not revert to a life of distractions. Remain a simple and humble practitioner until the end. Many practitioners stay in retreat in the mountains for a few years and then become famous, have many students and become rich. A true practitioner should stay poor all his life.

Paltrul Rinpoche said that a true practitioner of the Longchen Nyingtig tradition never aims to reach high positions. Thus, a practitioner does not seek the approval and praise of other people nor does he get upset by unjust criticism from others. He remains low key all his life.

Never lose the thought, “I might die tonight.” Although we know that we must die, we still expect longevity. Be aware that the time of death is uncertain. People die while walking, talking, sitting, eating or sleeping. You as well could die at any moment. Really take that to heart. There is no time to waste. Every minute could be your last.

Think, “Death comes now; my time is up. There is nothing left to do but practice.”

With this attitude you will accomplish the teachings. Otherwise, you will not. Wherever you are, you are subject to separation from loved ones. You might meet with enemies. You might get sick. In any case you must die eventually. Whatever is born must die. Whatever is hoarded must be dispersed. Whatever is joined must be separated. Whatever is built will be destroyed.

If you want deeply felt renunciation to arise, reflect on the pointlessness of samsaric existence. Think like this, “Worldly life is pointless; having friends is pointless; having enemies is pointless; wealth and riches are pointless; fame and fortune are pointless. Wherever I look I see only the pointlessness of samsara.”

Seeing the pointlessness of samsara a vivid suffering arises in one’s mind. This suffering is called ‘weariness’ or ‘sadness’. If one gives rise to the wish to be liberated from this weariness, then that is called ‘renunciation’. Delusion is taking what is pointless to be meaningful.

If you have little weariness toward samsara, contemplate the defects of the three realms of samsara and generate a mindset of renunciation. When you clearly see the sufferings of the beings in the six realms, weariness or sadness will naturally arise in your mind, and you will naturally develop the wish to become free from the sufferings of samsara. The wish to be free from suffering is called ‘renunciation’. Renunciation also includes the wish to enter into the practice of the Dharma.

Die in a lonely cave: Die alone in a cave, a ravine, on a mountain ridge, or other places where a genuine yogin would die. The place where a yogin dies has not been built upon; it does not require maintenance or ownership. A yogin is free from worries like, “What will happen to my body when I die? What will happen to my wealth when I die? To whom should I give my property?” No one gives anything to the yogin, and no one takes anything from him. He is completely free and independent.

The time of death is the most important moment of life, and at that time independence is crucial; any attachment or worry could spoil it. If you die surrounded by your friends and family, they will only cause distraction at the moment of death. Alone in a little retreat hut or cave, you will easily remember the instructions of your kind root guru about what to do at the moment of death. No one will be there to cause any distractions, such as doctors or relatives who fuss over your body.

Even though a yogin cannot totally leave everything behind and go to the mountains, he should still try to cut all his attachments to this life. The main point is to cut through all attachment and clinging.

When Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo visited Lhasa, he uttered an unusual aspiration before the Jowo statue, “Without any master above me, any servants below me, without friends or enemies, may I die in a remote hermitage”. Consider this the king among all aspirations.

The three vajras:

Start out with the vajra of no discouragement.

End with the vajra of no need to be ashamed (of faults).

Live with the vajra of pure wisdom.

Start out with the vajra of no discouragement: Not being discouraged means ignoring even your father, mother, relatives or friends if they try to prevent you from practicing Dharma. Even though they pressure you into worldly activities, even if they threaten your life, never lose heart. A practitioner entering into Dharma practice needs that resolve and strength of mind. If your guru tries to impede your practice, that is the only occasion when you should ignore his command. Be as unchanging as a vajra in your resolve to practice Dharma. Know that genuine practice will attract many obstacles, but never be discouraged. Let nothing keep you away from your practice.

Every practitioner will have moments when his mood is down, and he is not inspired to practice. Recognize these moods as a blessing of your guru. Be happy and invite them. Do not try to repress them but look at them and try to see their essence. Uninspired states will quickly vanish if you welcome them as part of your practice. Do not be discouraged by your moods. Apply the supreme techniques for enhancement and for removal of obstacles: genuine devotion

to your root guru, heartfelt compassion to all sentient beings, and the recognition of Buddha nature.

End with the vajra of no need to be ashamed of faults: Do not end up as many practitioners do, very diligent at the outset and becoming diligent business people later in their lives. They cultivate close ties with their friends and relatives and fight with their enemies, behaving worse than ordinary worldly people. They put all their effort into making money, hoarding riches and becoming famous and will die full of regret and shame.

A proverb states: "The new practitioner does not put his trust in gold. The old practitioner picks up scraps from the road." The new practitioner is very enthusiastic about the Dharma, thinking, "Everything is impermanent. I might die soon. What is the use of gold, money or riches? I will give it all away." After a couple of years of practice, however, he realizes that he has not developed genuine renunciation. Feeling that his practice has not progressed, he decides to return to worldly activities. Since he has had a lot of time to think, he is more clever and more single-minded about making money than previously. He has become a so-called 'old practitioner', who thinks, "This piece of leather by the roadside can still be used for something. I will pick it up, mend it and sell it for profit." Thus practitioners collect what even dogs would not touch.

Sadly, this happens to many practitioners. They do not progress on the path because they have not developed heartfelt renunciation. They do not feel revulsion toward samsara; they do not take impermanence to heart. From the very beginning of Dharma practice, a real practitioner needs the strong and unchanging resolve not to end up like this, a resolve unchanging as a vajra. A true practitioner does develop renunciation and revulsion, does take impermanence to heart.

Live with the vajra of pure wisdom: The vajra of pure wisdom is nothing other than awareness wisdom, the natural state of mind. Awareness wisdom has not the slightest impurity; it is unchanging like a vajra. A genuine practitioner dedicated to recognizing awareness all the time would waste not even a moment on something else. A genuine practitioner simply sits down to practice, utterly unshakeable in his determination to attain enlightenment in this very life through the practice of recognizing awareness wisdom. Such a practitioner has no other interest. He has gained confidence in the recognition of awareness. This ends Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche's teachings on the ten jewels of the Kadampa masters

BCA 1-5, Text section 215:

The great master Tsangpa Gyare recited and practiced the *three wrathful mantras* whenever he had a virtuous thought.

Come what may.
Wherever it leads me it is fine.
I do not need anything but that.

Come what may: Whatever happens to me or whatever may come my way does not matter. I have decided that I will practice the Dharma. Everything else is no longer my concern. I cannot be dissuaded from practice by my father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, girlfriend, children, friends or anyone else. My mind is made up. It does not matter if I become sick or even if I die. It does not matter whether or not everything in my life goes well. I will practice the Dharma regardless. I will follow up on this virtuous thought that I am having now and will carry it through until I reach perfection.

Many people expect their worldly aims to manifest perfectly in their lives. At the same time they fear that something negative might occur. At no moment in their lives are they free from harboring expectations or fears about what the future might bring. However, the Dharma can never be successfully practiced if one clings to hopes and fears. A true practitioner casts away all hopes and fears and keeps on practicing, not concerned with what happens in his life. He is not elated by positive circumstances nor depressed by negative circumstances. He accepts whatever happens.

Wherever it leads me it is fine: I have given up all ties to samsara and no longer care what happens to me. It doesn't matter where I live or whether the circumstances for practicing are perfect or not. I will just follow the Dharma, wherever it leads. I don't care if I get sick while practicing. I don't even care if I die. *I don't need anything whatsoever (other than Dharma):* Besides the precious Dharma, I don't need anything whatsoever. A true practitioner has no plans for his life. He has no needs except for the precious teachings. Once he has received these teachings, he devotes himself to practice alone. Such confidence comes about only when one has realized the vajra of wisdom, one's own awareness wisdom. These teachings arise from confidence in the view. They are words of highest diligence from someone who has truly understood the preciousness of the Dharma. A yogin knows that the Dharma will lead to complete enlightenment and therefore does not waste time with anything else. These teachings explain the proper commitment to have when practicing the Dharma. Whenever you have a wholesome thought, such as the wish to practice virtue, remember these lines and practice them. You can even recite these three lines as a mantra while you hold on to your intention to practice and carry this resolve to its conclusion.

You should read the Bodhisattva-caryavatara and its commentary again and again. Every time you read it and ponder its meaning, you will gain new understanding. It is not like a magazine to be read only once. This text needs to be studied repeatedly. The more you study it, the more profound and vast will your understanding become. At best, a practitioner should study this text one or two hundred times. You need to reach a state of penetration where the text and its meaning are indelibly imprinted on your mind.

From my own experience, I know that after reading this text and Khenpo Kunpal's commentary at least one hundred times, each time a new insight as sweet as molasses arises. You inevitably come to places that you do not understand or are not sure about. They will stay with you and

an understanding or insight might pop up when you least expect it, maybe while eating, while taking a walk or while talking to another person. This is the only way to become a true scholar. If you have some kind of understanding on your first reading of the text and think that your initial insight is sufficient, you are really deluding yourself. One hundred times is the absolute minimum. Only then will your understanding deepen.

BCA 1-5, Text section 217:

The last subdivision dealt with the physical and mental basis for developing bodhicitta. The term 'basis' or 'support' means prerequisite or necessary condition but also has the connotation of 'dwelling place'. The mental basis for generating bodhicitta is the mind that wishes to practice virtue, the Dharma. Everyone who has heard or read about the teachings of the Buddha and who thinks, "Wouldn't it be nice if I could also attain enlightenment; I should make some effort and practice the precious Dharma," has the mental basis for developing bodhicitta.

Now Santideva explains bodhicitta, that which is based upon the physical and mental support. The text teaches the superiority of bodhicitta over other ordinary virtues, bodhicitta's special features and qualities.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 6, Text Section 218

BCA 1-6, Text section 218

In the case of sentient beings like ourselves, virtuous intentions to practice the Dharma are rare, short-lived and feeble, as short and weak as a flash of lightning that illuminates the darkness of the night only briefly. We might think about practicing Dharma, but a second later we remember to phone a friend. The virtuous thought disappears, and we are involved in a long conversation. Once again we think about practicing the Dharma, but another friend comes by and persuades us to go see a movie. In this way our feeble intention to practice the Dharma is easily overpowered by our mundane inclinations.

Only rarely, when the right circumstances come together can we follow up on a virtuous thought and actually begin to practice. In most cases, whenever the intention to practice Dharma arises in our mind, either we ourselves or other people, like our friends, relatives and acquaintances, destroy it. From the viewpoint of bodhicitta, such friends and situations that destroy bodhicitta are considered to be bad friends and negative circumstances. The moment a so-called friend comes by and invites us to have a good time, our intention to practice is destroyed. True and sincere Dharma practice does not spring from an ordinary mind but from a positive frame of mind bent on virtue.

When the intention to practice is very feeble, our involvement in non-virtuous thoughts and negative deeds of body, speech and mind are very strong. We constantly engage in the ten non-

virtuous actions: taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, speaking lies, sowing discord, harsh words, worthless chatter, covetousness, wishing harm to others, and wrong views.

Constant involvement in non-virtuous thoughts, speech and actions builds up a tremendous power of negativity. This unwholesome force throws us into the three lower realms and is very difficult to reverse. Only the precious and perfect bodhicitta has the power to overcome all this negativity and its consequences. No other ordinary virtues have the power to truly eliminate the great mass of negativity. Only the sun that illuminates the whole world system can overcome the darkness of the night.

Ordinary virtue refers to the ten virtuous actions, to a positive attitude, or to any kind of virtuous action not embraced by bodhicitta. Other forms of ordinary virtue and merit can be worldly virtues or the virtues of the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas. Ordinary virtuous thoughts can easily become negative thoughts. If the mind of a practitioner is infused with bodhicitta, however, he cannot commit negative deeds. A non-virtuous thought cannot co-exist with bodhicitta. Non-virtuous thoughts cannot even enter into the mind of a practitioner who has generated bodhicitta. On the other hand, ordinary virtuous actions, such as generosity not embraced by bodhicitta, can very well be performed when one is angry.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 7, Text Section 219-220

BCA 1-7, Text sections 219 & 220

All the Buddhas have seen that sentient beings are overwhelmed by afflictions and non-virtuous thoughts. Each Buddha contemplated and searched for many countless aeons to find the perfect antidote against this negativity. None of the Buddhas of the three times, however, found any method superior to bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is the perfect remedy against all non-virtuous actions, afflictions and suffering. Even if all the omniscient Buddhas of the three times had a conference to discuss the most perfect method of removing the suffering of all beings, the most perfect method to carry all beings to temporary and ultimate happiness, to perfect Buddhahood, they could come up with nothing superior to bodhicitta.

An *aeon* is a time-span of inconceivable length, so long that it cannot be expressed or measured in years. The term 'countless' is the number one followed by sixty zeros. For three countless aeons Buddha Sakyamuni sought the perfect method to overcome suffering and reach enlightenment. He saw that bodhicitta was the only method that could bring temporary and ultimate benefit and bliss to all beings. *Temporary benefit* means that the practice of bodhicitta will bring about rebirth in the higher realms of samsara, in the human and god realms. *Ultimate benefit* refers to the attainment of complete enlightenment.

Bodhicitta is the supreme method for overcoming suffering for the following five reasons:

1. *It purifies negative deeds committed previously.*
2. *It disrupts the continuity of negative deeds in the future.*
3. *It overcomes all afflictions in one's mind.*
4. *It develops even the most subtle roots of virtue.*
5. *Ultimately it causes (practitioners) to reach great.*

1. *It purifies negative deeds committed previously:* The negative deeds that one has committed in former lifetimes persist as mental patterns, mental habits within one's mind. These negative actions and habits all derive from ego-clinging. The thought, "I will free all beings from their suffering and establish them on the level of perfect Buddhahood" is the opposite of all such negative mental patterns. This thought is not based on ego-clinging. The more one progresses in the realization of egolessness, the more these former negative patterns will fall apart.

The moment genuine bodhicitta is born, inconceivable amounts of former karma are purified. One no longer need suffer the consequences of all of one's own karma. This is the incredible power of bodhicitta. Absolute bodhicitta or genuine bodhicitta is realized from the first bodhisattva level onward. This realization is identical with the genuine recognition of mind nature.

2. *It disrupts the continuity of negative deeds in the future:* Once bodhicitta has taken birth, the practitioner will no longer commit negative deeds. For as long as bodhicitta is present in the practitioner's mind, the continuity of negative deeds is disrupted. If one has experienced a state of extreme anger, the waves of this anger linger in one's being. Even if you make friends with your former enemy, the previously generated negative energy will continue to carry through in all your actions. Once a powerful lion has roamed through an area, his strong scent lingers even long after he is gone.

Since time without beginning, for countless lifetimes, we have generated an inconceivable force of negativity. This is what the term 'continuity of negativity' means. Only bodhicitta can disrupt this habitual pattern of negativity. Even the gods that dwell on the peak of worldly existence remain subject to the continuity of their own negative deeds. Even the most virtuous god still carries the seed of negativity in his mind. For us ordinary beings, the ten non-virtuous actions are always ready to flare up when the situation permits it. This negative force has been built up by our own negative deeds committed in former lifetimes. This force carries over into our future lifetimes. Only bodhicitta can cut through this flow of negativity.

3. *It outshines all afflictions in one's mind .* A mind infused with bodhicitta does not give rise to aggression, jealousy, pride and so forth. The more one becomes accustomed to relative bodhicitta, the more afflictions are overcome. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara teaches the methods to deal with each of the five afflictions. In the face of absolute bodhicitta, afflictions cannot survive at all. When the sun has risen, darkness is dispersed.

One might say that relative bodhicitta has the power to eradicate 75% of previously accumulated negative karma. It can cut through 75% of the continuity of negativity that lingers on into the future, and it can overcome 75% of all afflictions. Only absolute bodhicitta, however, has the power to utterly eradicate even the tiniest trace of past negative karma, to cut through the most subtle continuity of negativity, and to overcome the most subtle levels of afflictions. It is crucial that practitioners never underestimate the power of relative bodhicitta. Relying on relative bodhicitta, practitioners will eradicate most of their previously accumulated negative karma, and they will never go astray into the peaceful nirvana of the sravakas. Relying on absolute bodhicitta, a practitioner can utterly cut through all afflictions and thoroughly overcome samsara.

4. *It develops even the most subtle roots of virtue:* Whoever practices any of the six perfections, such as generosity and so forth, with the intention to liberate all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of complete enlightenment will gain inconceivable merit. The blessing of this motivation is so strong that even the slightest virtuous action that is embraced by this wish will bring inconceivable results. Every deed embraced by bodhicitta is a virtue that never ceases, one that never is exhausted.

If you embrace the activity of washing your dishes with the bodhicitta motivation, you gather boundless merit. Think, "In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering and establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment, I will clean these dishes. In the same way, I will purify the obscurations of body, speech and mind of all sentient beings." Embracing such a simple activity with bodhicitta generates the same amount of merit as sponsoring the construction of an entire Buddhist monastery if the donation is not embraced with bodhicitta. Such is the difference between merit embraced or not embraced with bodhicitta.

In Buddha's time, many people would come to the temple where he was staying to present offerings. The rich often presented golden butter lamps. One day, a very poor old lady brought some butter in a goat's hoof into which she had placed a wick and offered it as a butter lamp. While offering it she thought, "May this lamp dispel the darkness of ignorance of all sentient beings and may they all be illuminated through the light of wisdom." Next to her a rich man offered a big golden butter lamp with the thought, "May I have a long life and fame." Others offered golden lamps and prayed, "May I become a world monarch in my future lives."

In the evening, Maudgalyayana, one of Buddha's main students, came to extinguish the lamps. With a flick of his hand he extinguished them one by one. When he came to the goat hoof, however, he could not put the flame out. He tried to blow the flame out but still it burned. He gathered all his breath to blow it out but still did not succeed. He thought, "This is strange. Someone is playing a magical trick on me. I will use my own magical power to extinguish that flame." Through his magical powers, he conjured up a big wind but still could not manage to extinguish the flame. Instead the flame grew larger. Maudgalyayana reported the incident to the Buddha and asked for an explanation. The Buddha replied, "Though the material of this

lamp is not special, the thought behind this offering is very special. This lamp offering carries more merit than the merit of all you sravakas combined.”

All students of Mahayana Buddhism should visualize the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the sky in front of them and repeatedly develop bodhicitta. Having developed bodhicitta, they should practice the six transcendental perfections. Among these, the most important is the transcendental perfection of wisdom. This transcendental wisdom is the view of the Great Perfection, and this view must embrace the practice of all the other five perfections. Only then are they called ‘transcendental perfections’. For transcendental wisdom to arise, one needs to practice a transcendental meditation. Meditation is based on diligence, which requires an undisturbed mind of patience. Patience requires discipline. In order to open up one’s mind to all of these, one needs to practice generosity. In this manner, the six perfections permeate and support each other. In each perfection, all six must be present. They are actually six aspects of one single point.

5. *Ultimately it causes (practitioners) to reach great enlightenment:* The practice of relative and absolute bodhicitta is the direct path to enlightenment. A practitioner should generate this confidence and trust in bodhicitta practice. Throughout the three times of past, present and future, countless numbers of beings have reached, are reaching, and will reach the level of unexcelled enlightenment in a swift way, without any hardship, through the practice of bodhicitta. Bodhicitta will cause every action of body, speech and mind to lead to the attainment of enlightenment.

Following the Mahayana alone, one might reach enlightenment after three, seven, or thirty-seven incalculable aeons. If one applies the practice of bodhicitta to the methods of Vajrayana, one might attain enlightenment in one single life or at the very most within sixteen lifetimes. The ultimate aim or focus of bodhicitta is always the attainment of complete enlightenment. If you lack bodhicitta, regardless of what Dharma you practice, you will never reach complete enlightenment, Buddhahood. You might reach high stages of rebirth within samsara; you might even reach liberation from samsara, but you will not reach Buddhahood.

For these five great reasons, the Buddhas saw that bodhicitta is the supreme method. Through bodhicitta, the Buddhas of the past attained perfect enlightenment. The Buddhas of the present are reaching perfect enlightenment right now through the practice of the precious bodhicitta. Moreover, the Buddhas of the future will reach enlightenment only through bodhicitta.

You must understand that virtue and merit depend entirely on motivation. An action might seem to be negative, but if done with a true bodhicitta motivation, it becomes virtuous. An action might seem to be meritorious, but if done with a negative mindset, it becomes non-virtuous or non-meritorious. As it is said:

The distinction between virtue and non-virtue must be made in regard to the motivation, Not in regard to the magnitude of a virtuous or negative form.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 8, Text Section 221

BCA 1-8, Text section 221

Some people wish to eliminate the suffering of all the realms of existence. Some wish to relieve all beings of their unhappiness. Some have the wish to establish themselves and all beings on the level of bliss. People who have such wishes must never forsake bodhicitta but must keep it constantly in their minds. A practitioner who keeps bodhicitta in mind will be able to alleviate the suffering of many people and will establish countless beings on the level of temporary and ultimate happiness. These are the benefits of keeping bodhicitta permanently in mind. Therefore, never forsake it.

The term *suffering* refers to the three kinds of suffering: the suffering of change, suffering upon suffering and omnipresent suffering in the making. The suffering of change is the suffering we feel when a happy state suddenly changes into suffering. We experience suffering upon suffering when, before one suffering has ended, we are subjected to another. Omnipresent suffering in the making means that although we think things are going quite well for us at the moment, and we are not suffering much, in fact, we are totally immersed in the causes of suffering. Since everything we do is simply a concoction of negative actions, it can lead only to further rebirth and suffering.

Today's happiness is actually future suffering in the making. Specifically, human beings experience the suffering of *birth*, the suffering of *aging*, the suffering of *sickness*, the suffering of *death*, the suffering of separation from loved ones, the suffering of encountering what one does not want, and the suffering of not getting what one does want.

Each of the six realms in the realm of desire has its particular suffering. Hell beings experience the suffering of heat and cold; pretas experience the suffering of hunger and thirst; animals the suffering of stupidity and preying upon each other; asuras experience the suffering of fighting and quarreling; humans experience the suffering of birth, aging, sickness and dying; and the gods experience the suffering of death and transmigration.

The causes of suffering are the various forms of grasping or fixation. Grasping means holding on to a personal identity and holding on to phenomenal reality as well as the subtle levels of dualistic fixation.

The five poisonous afflictions result from clinging to a personal identity. These afflictions are: ignorance, desire, anger, arrogance, and jealousy. When we experience these emotions arising in our minds, we identify with them and act them out in words and deeds. In fact, they have a hold over us only as long as we are holding on to or identifying ourselves with them. Grasping at these emotions is the cause for karma. Karma means 'the capacity of the mind to bring forth a

result'. In other words, understanding karma is recognizing that mind has the power to set in motion something positive, negative or neutral.

Engaging in positive, neutral or negative thoughts, emotions, speech and actions develops patterns in our minds which will arise again and again and lead to the formation of new patterns. These patterns become so powerful and strong that they come to dictate our thoughts, emotions, speech and actions. The mind is what generates thoughts and emotions. Speech and body only act according to what the mind makes them do. Developing positive patterns by living in accord with the ten virtuous actions will lead to a happy state of mind in this life and to rebirth in happy states in future lives. This law of cause and effect is called karma. Any actions of body, speech and mind that lead to a result are called karma. Actions like casually hitting a table with no emotional involvement do not lead to results and therefore are not karma. If you hit a table in anger, however, that anger will build up a pattern in your mind, and karma will be accumulated.

In this life you have inherited patterns that you yourself built up in former lifetimes. This is called 'the obscuration of karmic ripening due to former actions'. In this life your mind is constantly creating and accumulating more karma. If you seriously want to change the formation of habitual patterns, you must learn how to loosen and cut your involvement in afflictions. This is done by realizing egolessness.

The moment you identify yourself with your body, you think, "This is my body. I am this body." You are identifying yourself with your emotions and feelings when you think, "This is my feeling. I am this feeling." Likewise, you are identifying with your thoughts when you think, "This thought is my viewpoint. I am this thought." Moreover, you identify yourself with objects by thinking, "This object is mine." All these fixations are created by your mind. The mind creates the illusion of an 'ego', of an 'identity', and of 'ownership,' perpetuating from moment to moment thoughts of 'I' and 'mine'. This basic delusion is called ignorance. The deluded ego-mind reacts with like and dislike, attachment and aversion. It needs to defend and protect itself constantly. This is the Buddhist definition of 'ego.'

The Dharma teaches us to understand the illusory nature of body, feelings, thoughts and phenomena, and shows us how to let go of these strong fixations. The Dharma teaches us how to recognize the enlightened essence of our own minds, which is beyond all afflictions and fixations. As long as the mind is involved in afflictions, it creates karma that always makes us fall back into samsara. This is called 'defiling karma' or 'karma that makes one fall back (into samsara)'. The bodhisattvas, who have realized egolessness and engage constantly in the six transcendental actions, still experience the ripening of former karma and build up new positive karma. That karma, however, is called 'non-defiling karma' or 'karma that does not make one fall back', since the bodhisattvas will never fall back into samsara. The moment the bodhisattvas realize egolessness, they are free from gross afflictions. From the first to the seventh bodhisattva levels, however, they still retain subtle afflictive obscurations.

Only the bodhisattvas on the eighth, ninth and tenth levels have truly overcome all obscurations of afflictions. Even these exalted beings have not yet overcome the subtle levels of obscurations of cognition, however. Only the completely enlightened Buddha is utterly free from all obscurations of afflictions and cognition. He no longer experiences the ripening of former karma, nor does he create any further karma. He manifests immeasurable benefit for beings through his enlightened activities, which are constant, all-pervading and spontaneously manifesting.

Grasping afflictions and identifying yourself with them pollutes and agitates your mind and causes immense difficulties and hardships. The more you learn to let go of grasping, the closer you come to your true nature, the Buddha nature. This Buddha nature is free from all grasping and is not tainted by obscurations of afflictions or cognition. It is free from self-centered ego-clinging. The Buddha nature is endowed with all the infinite qualities of the completely enlightened Buddha. The Buddha nature is wisdom, peaceful and beyond any suffering.

If you really want to learn how to let go of grasping at ego, you need direct oral instructions from your teacher in a one-on-one teaching situation. First, you should understand what is meant by 'ego' and by 'grasping'. If you ask a beginner the following question, "Is a person the ego or the grasping?", most of them answer, "The ego is the person." Most people truly think that a person and the ego are identical and that the mind creates the grasping. This is a view that from the outset believes in the existence of an 'ego' or an 'I'. This is totally opposed to the Buddhist view, in which 'ego' or 'I' are just labels, mere names. 'Ego', 'I', and 'mine' are mere ideas or labels that the mind fixates upon and grasps.

Ego and ego-grasping is like believing in an enormous lie. For example, if someone makes other people believe that he is holding a diamond in his hand, this belief might cause someone to try to steal the non-existing diamond. Someone might even try to kill the person who created the illusion in order to obtain the diamond. In fact, there was never any basis for stealing or killing in the first place; the conflict was about something totally non-existent.

'Ego' is grasping at something as being real. Grasping an 'other' is called 'object grasping', literally 'grasping at the self of phenomena'. 'Grasping a self' is called 'subject grasping', literally 'grasping at the personal self or identity'. When the focus of attention is directed away from oneself to the outside, toward objects and persons, it is called 'object grasping'. Focusing on one's own body, one's feelings and emotions, one's own ideas and thoughts, and assuming a position of identity and ownership is called 'subject grasping', grasping at the personal self or identity. The mere thought 'I' is subject grasping.

Thoughts like 'my concept, my thoughts, my mind, my body' operate on the assumption of an ego or self that owns or identifies with a thought or idea. No one ever examines to see whether those objects with which we constantly identify ourselves really exist. If you focus on your body, then you build up an object fixation. If you identify yourself with your body, considering it 'my body,' you have created a subject fixation. The number of objects which can be focused on and

turned into objects of fixation are infinite. As soon as thoughts like 'I', 'mine', or 'that is I' arise, this becomes subject fixation.

Everything that you label to be like this or like that, real or unreal, is called object fixation. If you identify yourself with something, however, it is called subject fixation. This identification gives rise to all afflictions. If you do not identify yourself with something, if you do not think, "that is I," then attachment and aversion, pride and jealousy cannot arise. You develop likes and dislikes only when you hold on to the idea of an 'I'. The ego always gives priority to itself and always holds others as second. The ego reacts with attachment to likes, with aversion to dislikes, and with ignorance to things and situations it cannot understand or is not aware of. When the position of an 'I' is built up, the 'other' is defined automatically. When the duality of self and others is created, likes and dislikes, attachment and aversion are also created. This is the basis from which all afflictions arise. Strong fixation on these afflictions leads to the accumulation of karma.

Fixation is samsara, and fixation is what makes you a sentient being. Without fixations, samsara does not exist. If you know how to sever or liberate your fixations, how to free yourself from them, then you are liberated from samsara. Once you are utterly free from fixations, you are no longer a sentient being—you have become a Buddha. Fixation means 'holding tight' and is the opposite of being relaxed. When you believe in an 'identity' and hold on to it, dualistic mind is created. On the ultimate level, your mind is by nature free from fixations, primordially free. Since your mind is by nature free from fixations, any fixation that is built up does not accord with the natural state of the mind and is, therefore, untrue.

Ego-grasping is rooted in ignorance and arises from not knowing the natural state. All sentient beings suffer from this ignorance and grasp an identity which does not, in fact, exist. Holding on to something that does not exist is delusion. Based on the ignorance of not realizing the natural state of your mind, the belief in an 'I' and in an 'identity' is possible. Not being aware of the natural state of your mind because you do not recognize awareness wisdom, from moment to moment you create and perpetuate the illusion of an ego, of subject and object. Living in this illusion, both ego and a dichotomy of subject and object appear to be real.

Once you have truly established that ego and identity do not exist, you will fully understand that ego-grasping is a delusion, a mistaken state of mind, a state of ignorance. Holding on to the idea that the ego is real when it does not even exist is a complete delusion. This delusion is temporary, however, not primordial. It is not the natural state of your mind. The natural state of the mind is primordially free from any fixation.

As a beginner you must first search for the ego. Since you believe in the existence of an ego, you should be able to find it. However, when you minutely examine every part in your body, you will discover no place where your ego resides. Search your feelings and emotions in the same way. In which feeling does your ego or identity exist? Where does the ego stay? Next, search

for the ego in your thoughts, concepts and ideas. Finally, search for the ego in the mind itself. Is the ego your momentary mind? If yes, where is it? What does it look like? Through this examination you will understand that there is no ego to be found in your present mind, nor in your past or future mind. When you look at your own mind's grasping, you discover that there is actually no subject grasping and no object to be grasped.

As you begin the meditations of the first of the five paths, the path of accumulation, you will practice the four applications of mindfulness, analyzing with mindfulness your body, your feelings, your mind, and all phenomena. Through that practice you will establish the absence of self in phenomena as well as the absence of an individual or personal self. You will understand that the belief in an ego or an identity is only a very strong delusion.

Some people's ego-grasping is so strong that they never will doubt its reality. They experience their identity and the reality of their ordinary perception so concretely that they would never doubt it. This indicates a person with very little merit. As the Indian Master Aryadeva said, "Those of minor merit will not even be able to have any doubts about it."

Grasping ego leads to the rise of afflictions. If you feel threatened in your position or hurt in your feelings, you will react with aggression. The feeling of anger flares up, and you identify yourself with this anger, directing it toward another person. When that happens, turn your attention away from the object of your anger and look toward your mind. Look into your anger, into your feeling of hurt, and search for the ego that has caused this emotional turmoil to arise. Ask yourself, "Who am I?" Search for your ego at that time. Look for your identity. Find your 'I' and your 'identity'. Look at the one who is taking up this defensive or aggressive posture. Through this practice of searching for the ego you will soundly establish the knowledge of the non-existence of a personal identity.

Later you will learn how to look into the mind itself, how to look at the one who experiences the emotions, the one who thinks the thoughts. Through that kind of introspection you will establish the knowledge of the non-existence of a self in all phenomena. For this you should seek a qualified master of the Great Perfection and request the teaching called the 'pointing-out instruction'.

The sravakas believe that objects have a real basis as very tiny indivisible particles or atoms. The pratyekabuddhas believe that the mind consists in moments of consciousness. These beliefs hold on to the idea that mind exists as very subtle moments of grasping, and that objects exist as very subtle atoms. With such views, both the sravakas and the pratyekabuddhas have established the non-existence of a personal self. For them, afflictions can no longer arise. However, neither has overcome cognitive obscurations at all. They believe that the moments of consciousness are needed, since without them no one would exist who could attain the level of an arhat or a pratyekabuddha. What the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas call wisdom is the knowledge of the present moment. They believe that wisdom is impermanent because it only exists from moment to moment. They think that is the final truth of the path.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 9, Text Section 222-224

BCA 1-9, Text sections 222-224

This stanza shows how bodhicitta brings about a change in the individual. The very moment bodhicitta is born in your mind, you become a bodhisattva, a child of the sugatas. It does not matter if you have a male or female body, if you are old or young, or whether you come from a good or bad family. Family refers here to the four great castes: the royal caste, the brahmin caste, the minister caste, and the menial caste.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara was written in the 8th century at the Buddhist university of Nalanda by the Indian master and monk Santideva. The audience at Nalanda consisted exclusively of male scholars and monks. Male lay people were allowed to study at the university. Female visitors were only allowed to speak to monks and students in the monastery corridor, after which they would have to leave. Nuns were also not allowed into the monastery. Thus, the language of the Bodhisattvacaryavatara particularly addresses a male audience. This situation was exacerbated in Tibet, since the lineage of the bhikuni vows was never brought into the country. This meant that Buddhist scholasticism in Tibet took place exclusively among male scholars and monks, and the Tibetan commentaries on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara were, therefore, clearly written for a male audience. That is why Khenpo Kunpal's commentary often uses the specific phrase 'the sons of the sugatas', which cannot correctly be translated as 'children of the sugatas'.

Nevertheless, bodhicitta is absolutely not gender biased. No difference exists between a male and a female bodhisattva, between the sons and the daughters of the sugatas. Once bodhicitta is born, then that person is a child of the sugatas. Paltrul Rinpoche greatly contributed to the explanation lineage of the Bodhisattvacaryavatara not only by spreading its teaching to monastic and scholastic circles in Tibet, but also by bringing the text and its practice to large audiences of lay people.

A bodhisattva is a 'hero of mind', not a 'hero in body'. The terms 'coward' and 'hero' always refer to a person's mind. The heroic mind of a bodhisattva aspires to free all sentient beings from their suffering and to establish them on the level of complete enlightenment. Relative bodhicitta, bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application, may be born naturally in a person's mind due to extraordinary merit from former lifetimes. It may also be born the moment one receives the bodhisattva precepts. This does not depend on family background or on gender. The belief that spiritual qualities derive from a person's birth or caste is not found in Buddhist teachings but derives from the religion of the Brahmins.

A distinction exists between an 'ordinary being bodhisattva' and an 'exalted being bodhisattva'. *The very instant* relative bodhicitta is born in the mind of an ordinary person, that person is called an 'ordinary being bodhisattva', having become a bodhisattva, a child of the sugatas.

Since bodhicitta has taken birth in his mind, his name or title is transformed, and that person is henceforth called a bodhisattva. While previously his mind was exclusively engaged with ordinary thoughts, the precious bodhicitta has now been newly born in his mind. Previously, the person might have been completely imprisoned in samsaa, controlled by karma and afflictions, and tormented by the three kinds of suffering.

The very instant bodhicitta is born in someone's mind, however, he becomes a child of the sugatas. That is the transformation in name. As a bodhisattva, the person has become an object worthy of the respect and veneration of all gods such as Brahma, Indra and so on, and also of all human beings like kings, dignitaries, ministers and so forth. Generally, people are worthy of veneration and respect if they have special qualities. Paying respect merely out of fear is not true respect. We should pay respect to those who have good qualities in body, speech or mind. The most eminent and noble quality in a person's mind is the precious bodhicitta. Therefore, everyone whose mind is imbued with relative bodhicitta is worthy of respect and veneration. Even the Buddhas will honor a bodhisattva in whose mind bodhicitta has been born, because bodhicitta is itself the teacher of all Buddhas. That is the transformation in meaning. The birth of relative bodhicitta, endowed with compassion and knowledge, in itself is enough to bring about a transformation in name and meaning.

Without bodhicitta, enlightenment is impossible. The path to enlightenment, the path to becoming a Buddha, begins with the birth of bodhicitta in a person's mind. Only then will that person be able to traverse the five paths and ten levels. The spiritual history of Buddha Sakyamuni began the very instant he developed bodhicitta for the first time. From that time onward he continued gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom for three incalculable aeons until finally attaining supreme enlightenment in Bodhgaya.

The distinction between an 'ordinary being bodhisattva' and a 'noble being bodhisattva' is similar to the distinction between ordinary beings and noble beings; it depends on one's progress along the five paths. These are the path of accumulation, the path of application, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning. The first four are subsumed as the path of learning.

In the Hinayana tradition, someone who has attained the path of no more learning has become either an arhat or a pratyekabuddha. A completely enlightened Buddha is also someone who has attained the path of no more learning but to a higher degree. Arhats, pratyekabuddhas and Buddhas are the 'true owners of gifts', monastic property and donations, and worthy objects of offerings. Those who have attained the path of seeing and the path of meditation, such as stream-enterers, once-returners, and non-returners, are also considered noble beings.

In the Mahayana tradition, the path of no more learning refers only to the Buddha, while the path of learning refers to the bodhisattvas from the first to the tenth bodhisattva level. From the path of seeing onward, a bodhisattva is considered a noble being. Once absolute bodhicitta is born in the mind of a bodhisattva, the path of seeing, the first bodhisattva level, is attained.

All beings who have attained one of the levels mentioned above are considered to be noble beings or exalted persons. These beings form the 'noble Dharma', the realized community of Buddha's followers. Sangha is a term for a person whose mind at all times joyfully focuses on the Dharma. Someone whose mind is separated from virtue is not a member of the Sangha. A minimum of four fully ordained monks or nuns constitute the Sangha, the community of the fully ordained. As long as they have not reached the path of seeing, however, they are still considered to be the ordinary Sangha.

All those who are still on the path of accumulation and the path of application are considered ordinary beings. These include those who follow the tradition of reading, studying and reflecting on the teachings, those who follow the tradition of practicing meditation in solitude, and those who follow the tradition of working for the Dharma.

A beginner is able to develop relative bodhicitta. The qualities of relative bodhicitta are explained in the first chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra. Once relative bodhicitta is born in your mind, you will clearly know it for yourself. The nature of bodhicitta is knowledge, and, therefore, you can be aware of whether or not you have bodhicitta. You know very well whether or not you can read. In the same way, you will know whether or not you have relative bodhicitta in your mind.

The instant relative bodhicitta is born in your mind, you become an 'ordinary being bodhisattva'. Only when you realize the wisdom of egolessness, ultimate bodhicitta, will you become a 'noble being bodhisattva'. Whoever has bodhicitta is called a bodhisattva. But you are only a bodhisattva as long as bodhicitta is present in your mind. When you forget about bodhicitta and become involved with the five mind poisons, you are no longer a bodhisattva. As a beginner, you might remember and practice bodhicitta only for five minutes. For exactly that period of practice when bodhicitta is in your mind are you a bodhisattva in meaning and name. For as long as the thought, "May I free all beings from their suffering and establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment" is in your mind, for just that period of time, do you have bodhicitta of aspiration.

Bodhicitta of aspiration lasts only as long as you keep it in your mind. Bodhicitta of application, however, lasts from the beginning of a task you have undertaken until it is completed. This is called 'the time-span it takes to complete an action'. The task of a bodhisattva is to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of complete enlightenment. The period of time from the moment a bodhisattva undertakes this task until it is completed is also referred to as 'the time-span it takes to complete an action'. Understand that since there is no end to the suffering of beings, and since all sentient beings will never attain enlightenment, this time-span is never ending. Thus, the task of a bodhisattva is an unending task.

By definition, bodhicitta of application requires that you imagine or think of a task and commit yourself to its completion. All daily tasks that you, as an ordinary being bodhisattva, engage in must be undertaken for the purpose of freeing all beings from suffering and establishing them on the level of complete enlightenment. The moment you begin any ordinary activity, immediately join it with the commitment that you will undertake this specific task in order to free all beings from their suffering and to establish them on the level of complete enlightenment. From that very moment onward, until all sentient beings have actually reached enlightenment, the virtuous force of bodhicitta of application will remain.

You embrace ordinary activities, such as giving food to a beggar, with the commitment to the unending task of freeing all sentient beings from suffering and establishing them on the level of complete enlightenment. Since you are joining a relatively small virtue with the unending virtue of freeing all beings and establishing them on the level of enlightenment, the virtue of your giving food to the beggar will never be exhausted. If you embrace all daily activities with bodhicitta in this way, then the stream of merit of bodhicitta of application will not be interrupted, even when you are asleep or temporarily distracted.

Even the most mundane of all activities, such as washing dishes, can be consciously embraced with bodhicitta. While washing dishes generate the motivation, "Just as I am cleaning these dishes, so will I purify the obscurations of all sentient beings in order that they may be freed from suffering and established on the level of complete enlightenment." In this manner, bodhicitta is the magical twist that renders virtuous every activity you undertake.

For beginners, directly generating bodhicitta of application is difficult because they might lack the courage to make such a vast commitment. The mere fact that a beginner has the good fortune to generate bodhicitta of aspiration, thereby transforming himself from an ordinary being into an 'ordinary being bodhisattva', is in itself utterly marvelous and amazing.

Khenpo Kunpal defines the term bodhisattva in text section 144 as: "In order to attain this (bodhi), the (bodhisattva) is courageous, since his mind does not shy away from conduct that is difficult to do, such as sacrificing his head and limbs to others.

Therefore, he is a satva, a 'hero'. Furthermore, he defines the term in text section 158: "Bodhisattva means a hero whose mind does not shy away from accomplishing enlightenment through developing supreme bodhicitta as the motivation and through endeavoring in the practice of the six transcendental perfections as the application."

A bodhisattva does not shy away from the enormity of the task he has undertaken nor from the immeasurable time-span of aeons throughout which his commitment will continue. He is not intimidated by the commitment to continuously benefit beings for endless times to come. Nor does he fear the infinite number of sentient beings. Moreover, he also does not avoid tasks difficult to carry out, such as sacrificing his body many times over. As he is committed to

infinite time, infinite beings, and infinite hardships, the virtues that he accumulates will also last infinitely.

As a beginner you need to apply mindfulness with effort and constantly remind yourself to infuse all your activities with bodhicitta. Until bodhicitta is constantly present in your mind, you must make conscious efforts to generate it over and over again. Since time without beginning until this present moment your mind has been constantly involved with egotistic motivations, aims and reactions. Egotistic responses to any given situation come naturally to you. From now on, you must constantly train yourself until your entire attitude and motivation is infused with bodhicitta, until all your natural responses aim to benefit others. Eventually, you will gain effortless mindfulness in your bodhicitta practice. Practice both bodhicitta of aspiration and application without interruption. Then the stream of merit of bodhicitta of application will not be interrupted, even when you are asleep or temporarily distracted.

If you want to become a meditator in the practice lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, then you should first generate the bodhicitta motivation. A beginner in the practice lineage does not need to know and study many texts and rituals. He should not waste any time before beginning the practice of constant mindfulness with regard to bodhicitta. Once bodhicitta is implanted in a practitioner's mind, whatever meditation he embarks upon will be successful.

A bodhisattva who has reached the first bodhisattva level, one who has realization of egolessness, can actually or directly help sentient beings. On that level the bodhisattva knows through his higher perceptions the capacity and disposition of other beings to some extent. Therefore, he knows exactly what and how to teach. Bodhisattvas who have not reached the first bodhisattva level have only a limited range of benefiting other beings directly.

Without having higher perceptions it is difficult to give the exact teachings a particular person requires, because a bodhisattva who lacks such perceptions cannot know the minds, capacities and latent tendencies of even one single person. When such a bodhisattva teaches the Dharma, he assumes the role of a general physician. He can benefit to some extent, but for accurate diagnosis and treatment he must refer the patients to a specialist. An ordinary being bodhisattva might teach one hundred people but actually benefit only one.

A great Dzogchen master from East Tibet, Adzom Drugpa Rinpoche, had great realization but taught only one person at a time. He knew that each person needs a different teaching. Therefore, he never gave public teachings. Adzom Drugpa's son, Se Angyur Rinpoche, also followed that tradition. Spending all of his time in retreat, he allocated two hours every afternoon for his students to meet him. He would have his retreat pole, called the 'standard of the kings', lowered as a sign that he was available. His students lined up outside his door, and each had the opportunity to receive personal meditation instructions from Se Angyur Rinpoche.

Since bodhicitta is very feeble in a beginner's mind, a beginner should always rely on spiritual guides and masters who instruct how to develop relative and absolute bodhicitta. A beginner

needs to learn how to practice the six transcendental perfections. As we do damage our bodhisattva precepts, we should take the precepts every day and make heartfelt confessions. For this purpose, some masters from the Longchen Nyingthig lineage, following Paltrul Rinpoche's tradition, arranged a 'liturgy for taking the bodhisattva precepts'. This small text contains the necessary liturgy for daily practice to keep one's bodhisattva precepts intact. Only when the first bodhisattva level has been attained will bodhicitta remain permanently.

If you want to quickly attain the first bodhisattva level, rely on a qualified teacher and practice bodhicitta. Study the Bodhisattva-caryavatara and learn the bodhisattva path. Learn how to meditate on a personal meditation deity, such as Buddha Sakyamuni, Manjusri or any deity to whom you feel devotion. Receive the oral instructions of how to recognize your mind nature from a master of the Dzogchen lineage.

The term capacity refers to the possession of five capacities: the capacity of faith, the capacity of diligence, the capacity of recollection, the capacity of meditation, and the capacity of knowledge. A practitioner of high capacity has developed all of these five capacities. If you want to increase your capacities, you must generate considerable virtue and merit. That is why even bodhisattvas who have reached the first level continue to generate merit through the practice of the seven branches, which includes confession. Once the first level is reached, bodhisattvas are never separated from bodhicitta but still must continue to increase their capacities. Some people who practiced the bodhisattva path in former lifetimes might develop bodhicitta naturally as a 'residual karma' from their former lives. Another cause for the birth of bodhicitta is reliance on a spiritual teacher.

Bodhicitta can also arise through the intensive study of Buddhist texts. Some practitioners are able to give rise to bodhicitta through their practice of gathering merit. For others, practicing loving kindness and compassion can lead to the birth of bodhicitta, loving kindness and compassion being like the parents of bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta is a very powerful thought. If you can truly maintain this thought from the bottom of your heart when someone is angry and shouting at you, he will very quickly cool down and become peaceful. Angry people and vicious demons cannot maintain their anger toward someone who truly practices bodhicitta. This is bodhicitta's power. Because bodhicitta is the best of all wishes, it can overcome any evil thought. A practitioner who has truly committed to bodhicitta has the power to pacify anger in other people's minds. Bodhicitta renders powerless other people's anger.

In order to truly transform one's character, one needs to know that all sentient beings are endowed with 'primordial Buddhahood'. The essence of all beings is the perfect Buddha nature, endowed with wisdom, kindness and compassion. Due to that primordial condition, all beings have the possibility to attain enlightenment. Whoever practices the Dharma has the opportunity to become a Buddha. A beginner must remember this and receive strength from that primordial goodness. The beginner should think, "I am endowed with the Buddha nature. I am able to actualize this enlightened potential through Dharma practice. I can do it." Generate this

confidence repeatedly. You can only generate bodhicitta if you are confident that you can reach enlightenment.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 10, Text sections 225-226

BCA 1-10, Text sections 225 & 226

In ancient India the science of alchemy apparently actually succeeded in transforming ordinary metal into gold by applying various chemical substances called 'alchemic elixirs'. Śāntideva uses the example of the 'elixir of alchemy' to illustrate bodhicitta. The function of bodhicitta is to transform something negative, or 'base' in alchemical terminology, into something noble. This example shows that bodhicitta has the unique capacity and power to transform ordinary sentient beings into bodhisattvas and Buddhas. Bodhicitta can make us enlightened.

Mipham Rinpoche himself is said to have once manufactured an alchemical elixir that could transform iron into gold. This elixir is said to have existed in low, medium and high potencies. The text here mentions the most potent kind of alchemical elixir, one so strong that a single ounce could transform a thousand ounces of iron into gold. Śāntideva compares bodhicitta with this most potent alchemical elixir.

Our body contains all sorts of impure substances such as urine, excrement, blood, pus and so forth. The śravakas in the Hinayana system, therefore, strive to abandon attachment to this impure body. They meditate dispassionately on the thirty-six *impure substances* that the human body contains in order to overcome their attachment to the physical body: 1) hair, 2) facial hair, 3) teeth, 4) (finger and toe) nails, 5) excrement, 6) urine, 7) sweat, 8) nasal mucus, 9) tears, 10) saliva, 11) discharge (from eyes, ears and teeth such as tooth plaque), 12) skin, 13) flesh, 14) blood, 15) bones, 16) body fat, 17) marrow, 18) nerves, 19) tendons, 20) lungs, 21) heart, 22) liver, 23) spleen, 24) kidneys, 25) stomach, 26) small intestine, 27) large intestine, 28) colon, 29) urinary bladder, 30) body oil, 31) lymph, 32) pus, 33) phlegm, 34) bile, 35) brain, and 36) brain fluid.

Śravakas consider the physical body to be the fruition of the truth of suffering and strive to disrupt the cycle of rebirth. They believe that once they have discarded this body and have freed themselves from the chain of rebirth, they have attained the state of happiness. They regard the body as dangerous as a poisonous snake because of the attachment it leads to.

Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana system consider the physical body, once the mindstream has been imbued with bodhicitta, to be precious and priceless. They vow to utilize the human body throughout many lifetimes to benefit others. For three countless aeons they will continue gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom, meditating on bodhicitta and training in bodhisattva conduct.

Bodhisattvas aspire to transform their impure bodies into Buddha bodies, endowed

with the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor signs of an enlightened being. You should understand that attaining a Buddha's body means you attain a Buddha's enlightened speech and mind as well, since Buddha's body, speech and mind are inseparable. As Buddha is one single wisdom, absolutely no distinction can be made between a Buddha's body, speech, and mind. A Buddha's body can perceive everything that exists and occurs throughout the three times. This perception of the Buddha is a special feature of Mahayana doctrine.

Beginners may find it very difficult to understand that the Buddha is only wisdom, and they may not know how to practice and realize that wisdom. To make it easy for sentient beings, Buddha manifested the nirmanakaya. People could meet him, talk to him, receive teachings and begin to practice the path. This level of interacting with the Buddha is called the 'preliminary meaning', which gradually leads a beginner to the 'ultimate meaning', the realization of Buddha nature. All the relative teachings have a single goal: to teach practitioners how to let go of fixations and thereby realize Buddha nature.

In actuality, Buddha is a wisdom body, beyond time and distance. The wisdom body of the Buddha is constant, since immeasurable time has no self-nature; his wisdom body is all-pervasive, since immeasurable dimensions have no self-nature. Since his wisdom body is beyond atoms and instants, beyond matter and time, it is possible for all atoms of all world systems to fit into a single atom and for all aeons to fit into a single second.

The activities of the Buddha's three kayas manifest unceasingly through the Buddha's blessings. Therefore, a practitioner should generate irreversible faith in the qualities of the Buddha. The ultimate refuge is to understand that the equanimity and timelessness of all phenomenal manifestations throughout the ten directions and three times are inseparable from the wisdom body of all the Buddhas.

In other words, the Buddha's timeless wisdom body is the ultimate object of refuge. The Buddha's wisdom body is beyond the reach of thoughts and concepts. The wisdom body can never be realized through an analytical approach. Moreover, Buddha's wisdom body is identical with the Buddha nature of each sentient being. By recognizing your own Buddha nature, you are realizing the wisdom body of the Buddha. That recognition is called recognizing the Dharmakaya of the Buddha. Recognizing the Dharmakāya wisdom of the Buddha is the same as recognizing the essence of your own mind. The Buddha himself is the Dharmakāya, and the Dharmakāya is the Buddha. The genuine yogin and yogini, who want to see the real Buddha, must recognize the natural state, the essence of their own minds.

The followers of the Hinayana path state that Buddha's body was simply that of an ordinary person, the son of king Suddodana, and that only his mind was enlightened. Mahayana tradition understands the Buddha to be one single wisdom, the inseparability of body, speech and mind.

This unity of enlightened body, speech and mind can be achieved if you train in bodhicitta in each future lifetime until attaining enlightenment. To accomplish this aim, you must firmly maintain bodhicitta at all times. Following your teacher's instructions on bodhicitta, you must learn what to do and what to avoid. You learn how to develop, protect and increase bodhicitta as well as how to apply it in daily life.

The precious bodhicitta is what enables us to reach enlightenment. Therefore, we pay homage to any being who has developed bodhicitta. The true reason why Buddhists prostrate to the Buddha is because the Buddha fully unfolded bodhicitta. They do not prostrate to the famous son of a king who lived long ago in India. If the Buddha had lacked bodhicitta, we would have absolutely no reason to offer respect and prostrations to him.

When Milarepa was an ordinary person, no one would have dreamed of prostrating to him. But after he attained realization, he could transmit his blessings to other people. This transformation of Milarepa from an ordinary being into a great saint was solely accomplished by precious bodhicitta combined with the oral instructions of his guru. This tenth stanza of the first chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara teaches bodhicitta's transformative quality through the metaphor of alchemical elixir. The base metal of the impure physical body is transformed into the pure gold of the Buddha's enlightened body.

Bodhicitta has the power to transform even ordinary things like clothing into sacred objects. When a great master wears his robes, they are infused with the blessings of bodhicitta and thus become sacred objects worthy of veneration. In this way bodhicitta renders everything that comes in contact with it into something sacred.

If someone owns the alchemical elixir that transforms iron into gold he will naturally guard it well. Bodhicitta has the power to transform us ordinary beings into perfectly enlightened Buddhas endowed with the enlightened body, speech and mind. Although it does not seem greatly impressive when you start to practice it, bodhicitta is the actual Buddha and, therefore, must be guarded and practiced well. Bodhicitta transforms this impure body into a Buddha's body, endowed with the thirty-two major marks and the eighty minor signs. It transforms our deluded speech into a Buddha's speech, endowed with sixty aspects. It transforms our deluded mind into a Buddha's wisdom mind, endowed with inconceivable qualities. Bodhicitta is precious because it makes us attain Buddhahood. Since Buddhahood is the most precious attainment of all, bodhicitta is equally precious. Therefore, keep it always in your mind.

The term *impediments of worldly existence and peace* refers to defilements or impediments of both samsara and nirvana. Bodhicitta transforms our ordinary body into the body of the Buddha, which is beyond the impediments of samsara, the three realms of existence. The defilements or impediments of samsara are the three types of suffering. This is the state of us ordinary sentient beings.

The body of the Buddha is also free from the defilements or impediments of peace and

nirvana. Impediments of peace and nirvana is the inability to benefit others. This is the state of the sravaka arhats and pratyekabuddha arhats. They have achieved peace from samsara's suffering, but from their state of nirvana they cannot benefit other beings. This impediment of peace means that they have fallen into the extreme of abiding in cessation. Sravaka arhats and pratyekaBuddha arhats are impeded in their own benefit, since they could not reach Buddhahood. They are also impeded in benefiting others, since they cannot help other beings.

The state of cessation for a śrāvaka arhat and a pratyekabuddha arhat has a time-span. They might stay for one hundred aeons in such a state of cessation. The time-span of cessation depends on the power of their samadhi. When they wake up from such a state, they have the power to directly re-enter the same state, but they still have these two impediments or defilements. They have not reached enlightenment yet, and they cannot help others in that state of cessation. They will never fall back into samsara, but even if they stay forever in that state, they will never reach enlightenment through it. Eventually, they must embark upon the Mahayana path and journey to complete enlightenment.

Therefore, as a beginner, avoid the Hinayana approach, and from the very start of your Dharma practice generate the bodhicitta motivation. Make the firm promise to yourself that you will always keep the precious bodhicitta, the very core of the Mahayana path. Reflect again and again about the great benefits of bodhicitta until you can no longer live without it. Read this first chapter of Khenpo Kunpal's commentary over and over until the earnest wish to adopt bodhicitta arises in your mind.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 11, Text sections 227

BCA 1-11, Text section 227

In ancient times, merchants traveled to remote islands to search for precious jewels under the skillful leadership of a knowledgeable guide, who led them to the right places and knew how to examine the stones. Jewels examined by such a guide were considered the finest jewels.

Following this example, the most skillful of all guides is the Buddha, who throughout countless aeons has examined teachings to discover which will lead beings from suffering to liberation and to the level of Buddhahood. Buddha is the Sole Guide of beings because only a single Buddha appears in this world at one time. Buddha is the only one who can teach the path to complete enlightenment. Even the supreme bodhisattvas need to rely on the Buddha as their teacher. Among all teachers who show the path to enlightenment, Buddha is supreme, and only he can reveal the complete path to enlightenment in its entirety.

With a *mind* endowed with *immeasurable wisdom* and immeasurable compassion Buddha has, for countless aeons, examined every possible path, every possible method, every possible meditation technique, searching for the path to enlightenment. In that way he discovered that

bodhicitta is the only path to overcome suffering and achieve enlightenment. Examining bodhicitta closely, he discovered that there is nothing in this world superior to it. He discovered that the relative and the absolute bodhicitta include all Dharmas and that consequently, all who wish to be free from samsaric states should firmly hold on to this precious bodhicitta.

From among all sublime teachings means from all the teachings of the Buddha, including those that do not teach bodhicitta. Among all of these, the Buddha found bodhicitta to be the only true path to achieve liberation and perfect enlightenment. Therefore, we should trust in the Buddha and firmly take hold of bodhicitta, just like merchants trust in the jewels identified by a skillful guide.

The beginning, main part and conclusion are called the 'three-fold excellence': the excellent beginning, bodhicitta; the excellent main part, non-conceptual practice ; and the excellent conclusion, dedication. The excellent beginning of every practice should be the precious bodhicitta. Take the bodhisattva precepts every day, and then do all your practices while maintaining bodhicitta. For instance, if you offer prostrations, do this with the motivation to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of complete enlightenment. That motivation is the excellent beginning, bodhicitta.

While offering prostrations, maintain the view free from the three factors. Offer prostrations with the understanding that ultimately there is no object to prostrate to, no prostration being offered, and no one offering prostrations. Maintain an understanding that everything is as real as an illusion or a dream. This requires insight into profound emptiness. While recognizing profound emptiness, offer the prostrations. Combine the relative practice of prostrations with the absolute practice of realizing emptiness. That is called the excellent main part, non-conceptual practice.

Profound emptiness is a very subtle subject, so beginners should be taught through examples and analogies. Thus, one is taught that all phenomena are as real as an illusion, a reflection of the moon in water, an optical distortion, a mirage, a dream, an echo, a city of gandharvas, a magical trick, a rainbow, a water bubble, a reflection in a mirror, and so forth. Eventually, beginners should receive instructions on how to recognize profound emptiness from a qualified master.

At the end of a practice session, dedicate the merit and virtue accumulated during the session to all sentient beings. That is the excellent conclusion, dedication of merit. In this manner embrace all practices with the three-fold excellence. Once bodhicitta has taken birth in your mind, protect it through mindfulness, keeping it in focus all the time, as if you were tied to it with a rope. Next, protect it through introspection, examining, analyzing and searching your mind. Finally, protect it by being attentive to it. With these qualities in mind, you will protect and nurture bodhicitta correctly.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara has dedicated one chapter each to heedfulness and introspection. Mindfulness in this context means not forgetting the key points of what to avoid and what to accept. A practitioner must always remember what to avoid, the ten nonvirtuous actions, and what to accept, the ten virtuous actions. He should always remember the benefits of bodhicitta and the disadvantages of not having bodhicitta. Heedfulness means to be aware of any action of body, speech and mind. A bodhisattva must be at all times careful not to engage in non-virtue. Heedfulness is directed outward.

Introspection means to be constantly observing whether one should reject or accept any given situation. The Bodhisattva checks whether his actions of body, speech and mind are at any moment in accordance with bodhicitta or not. Introspection is directed inward. It is an introspective analysis that adjusts one's reactions in order to safeguard bodhicitta in all situations, mentally, verbally and physically.

The excellent beginning can also be the aspiration: "May the precious and supreme bodhicitta take birth in those in whom it has not yet taken birth." The excellent main part can be the aspiration: "And where it has taken birth may it not decrease, but ever increase more and more." The excellent conclusion is the dedication of the virtue that has been developed through these aspirations. Practicing like this, bodhicitta will not decrease but will always be stable in your mind.

With the alchemical metaphor, Santideva shows us that bodhicitta can transform our ordinary body, speech and mind into the enlightened body, speech and mind of the Buddha. With the metaphor of the jewel, Santideva teaches us to rely on bodhicitta, since the Buddha thoroughly examined it for countless aeons and saw its great value in bringing us to enlightenment. We need not doubt its value. The Buddha decided that bodhicitta is the most valuable method, so we should resolve in our minds to practice it.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 12, Text sections 228-230

BCA 1-12, Text sections 228-230:

Using a metaphor of a fruit-bearing, wish-fulfilling tree, Santideva teaches that the virtues of bodhicitta do not come to an end but increase unceasingly. Whatever deed, virtuous or non-virtuous, we have committed, we must experience the karmic ripening of that deed. Once the karmic ripening is experienced, however, this particular karma has ended, perished or exhausted itself. Each individual karma is impermanent and comes to a conclusion.

Virtuous deeds can be 'defiling virtue' or 'non-defiling virtue'. Defiling virtue is an ordinary wholesome deed, performed by ordinary people within the normal dualistic framework of their minds. Non-defiling virtues are wholesome deeds performed by an individual who has realized the absolute bodhicitta. *All other virtues* means any kind of virtue not embraced by bodhicitta,

any kind of 'defiling virtue', such as refraining from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, taking intoxicants and so forth, that is carried out without being motivated by bodhicitta. Such ordinary virtues, which *concord with ordinary merit* but are not embraced by bodhicitta, merely lead to rebirth in one of the higher realms. Once that merit is exhausted, the individual will revert from these states and again take rebirth in the lower realms. This limited virtue is exemplified by the fruit of the *plantain tree* (banana tree), a tree which bears fruit only once and then perishes.

Three types of persons can be identified according to the different kinds of virtue they accumulate. The three types of persons are: the lower type, referring to the ordinary worldly beings; the more advanced type, sravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the followers of the Hinayana; and the highest kind of person, the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, the followers of the Mahayana.

Each of these three types of persons accumulates a different kind of virtue: 1) the lower type of person gathers virtue that concords with worldly merit, 2) the more advanced type gathers virtue that concords with the attainment of liberation, and 3) the highest kind of person gathers the virtue that concords with the liberation of the greater vehicle.

Virtue is always practiced with a mental aim in mind. If one's motivation to practice virtue is worldly success and happiness or the achievement of a rebirth in the good realms, then that kind of virtue concords with ordinary worldly merit. Such virtue ends as soon as the merit has ripened into the fruition.

Even virtue that concords with liberation, like the virtue of the sravakas and pratyekaBuddhas, perishes once they have reached the state called *nirvana without remainder*. Sravakas and pratyekaBuddhas have no fixations concerning the five aggregates. They do not retain the slightest residual of any aggregate that remains under the power of the truth of suffering and the truth of the origin of suffering.

The skandhas develop as a result of ego-clinging. Since Sravakas and pratyekaBuddhas have completely overcome clinging to a personal identity, without the slightest remainder, they have gained the fruition. Thus, they no longer retain any fixations on any aggregates subject to the truth of suffering and the truth of the origination of suffering. The moment they reach the level of an arhat, they are freed from the suffering of change and from suffering upon suffering. The arhats even have the power to dissolve their bodies. Sometimes they rise up into the sky and dissolve like a rainbow; sometimes their bodies burst into fire and are completely consumed. Arhats pass away by demonstrating various magical powers, but since they retain subtle fixations in their minds, they cannot achieve the 'rainbow body' or the 'fading out of atoms' as can great Dzogchen and Mahamudra masters.

When the arhats became aware that the Buddha was about to pass into nirvana, hundreds of thousands of them chose to die before the Buddha. Since many died showing amazing signs

and magical powers and did not leave a body behind, their realization is called 'nirvana without remainder'. Once the virtues of the sravakas and pratyekaBuddhas that enable them to remain in this state are exhausted, they wake up and must enter into the path of the bodhisattvas. Sometimes they may remain for an aeon or even for a hundred aeons in this state of cessation. When their merit comes to an end, they are awakened from their state by light rays emitted from the Buddha's body. The Buddha then instructs them to enter into the path of the bodhisattvas.

The meditation and virtuous lives of the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas lead them only as far as the nirvana without remainder. The limits of their path preclude them from reaching a state beyond this. To progress further and eventually reach the level of perfect Buddhahood, they must enter into the bodhisattva path. Merit that concords with liberation simply does not lead to the attainment of Buddhahood. Sravakas and bodhisattvas differ greatly in their respective aims. The sravakas aspire to peace from samsaric suffering while the bodhisattvas aspire to complete and perfect enlightenment.

The term 'sravaka', literally 'listener', refers to the followers of the Hinayana tradition, who proceed through four levels of spiritual attainments and reach the level of an arhat. A pratyekabuddha, literally 'self-arisen Buddha', is someone who has accumulated sufficient merit and wisdom in former lifetimes to attain nirvana without the teachings of a Buddha. A pratyekabuddha stays totally private and will never teach others.

Compared to the unlimited nirvana of the Buddha, which is like infinite space, the nirvana of the sravakas and the pratyekaBuddhas is said to be the size of a mustard seed. Nevertheless, the nirvana of the sravaka-arhats and the pratyekabuddha-arhats is beyond the three realms of samsara. They will never fall back into samsara.

They dwell for many aeons in a limited nirvana until a beam of light emanated by the Buddha awakens them. Then the Buddha will teach them, "You have not yet achieved the unlimited nirvana. Among the three kinds of suffering you have not transcended the omnipresent suffering in the making. You have overcome the obscurations of affliction but not the obscurations of cognition. You must now proceed on the path of the bodhisattvas to the level of complete enlightenment."

Only a Buddha is beyond omnipresent suffering in the making, the subtle form of impermanence. The wisdom of a Buddha is utterly beyond impermanence. But the wisdom of the arhats, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas is still subject to subtle levels of impermanence, the omnipresent suffering in the making. Their wisdom still changes from moment to moment. Their wisdom is still compounded. The wisdom of cessation is compounded. Only the wisdom of the Buddha is uncompounded and indestructible. Only the Buddha has truly transcended the five skandhas.

Sravakas and pratyekabuddhas have yet to develop the all-encompassing compassion of the bodhisattvas, who aim to guide all sentient beings to the level of complete enlightenment. Sravakas and pratyekabuddhas do have compassion, but they do not practice with the motivation to guide all sentient beings to the level of complete enlightenment, one of the main features of the bodhisattva path. Bodhicitta, whether it is relative or absolute bodhicitta, is like a wish-fulfilling tree and perpetually grants fruition. Any ordinary deed embraced with relative bodhicitta will have the *karmic ripening* of abundant rebirth in the higher realms. The results that concord with such a wholesome cause embraced by bodhicitta will always increase. Virtuous actions embraced by bodhicitta will never perish but will remain until the attainment of complete enlightenment and thus lead to attaining enlightenment by contributing to the accumulation of merit. Even if the virtue is relative and compounded, bodhicitta transforms it into a noncompounded virtue that will remain until all sentient beings have attained enlightenment.

Conceptual merit is compounded. Nonconceptual merit has two aspects. The first aspect is nonconceptual wisdom while on the path, which is for the most part compounded. The second aspect is the non-conceptual wisdom of having reached the fruition, which is truly un compounded. Among the five paths, the first four are compounded. Only the last, the path of no more learning, is un compounded.

Merit is that which has the power to smooth out all disharmonious circumstances. Once one has truly recognized the un compounded nature of mind, inconceivable masses of merit are gained, and inconceivable masses of negativity are purified in a very short period of time. Virtue and merit can continuously grow through bodhicitta and through dedication. If one practices virtue but neither embraces it by bodhicitta nor dedicates it for the sake of all beings, this virtue will be very short-lived and not of ultimate benefit. That is why the three-fold excellence, as explained before, is so important. Since bodhicitta makes any kind of virtue grow continuously and remain forever, it is compared to the never-ending fruit of the *wish-fulfilling tree*.

When sravakas attain arhatship, they reach a state in which the skandhas of karma and of afflictions are exhausted without remainder, or they reach a state in which some residual skandhas of karma and afflictions remain. In general, virtuous and non-virtuous actions are the cause that can lead to three types of results: 1) Fully ripened results, 2) results similar to the cause, 3) environmental results.

What does it mean that virtuous and non-virtuous actions form the karmic causes? A virtuous or non-virtuous action is karmically powerful if five factors are complete: 1) the object, 2) the motivation or intention, 3) the actual act, 4) the afflictions, and 5) the completion. For instance, the non-virtuous action of killing a human being requires (1) a human being as the object, (2) the intention to kill that person, (3) the actual act of killing, (4) the affliction of anger accompanying this action, and (5) the action brought to completion resulting in the death of that person.

1) Fully ripened results: If these five factors are complete in a virtuous or non-virtuous action, one has created a powerful karmic cause that leads to a fully ripened result. However, it is very difficult to determine exactly the relationship between cause and result. A tiny cause might ripen into a great result just as a tiny seed can grow into a big tree. The most powerful force among the five factors that determine the magnitude of a karmic ripening is the motivation behind an action. For instance, if one's motivation to harm sentient beings is extremely strong, one will surely take rebirth in the hell realms. If one's harmful motivations are less powerful, one will take rebirth in the preta realms. And if one's harmful motivations are even less strong, one will take rebirth as an animal.

2) Results similar to the cause: This means that a cause and its fruition share a certain similarity. There are two kinds of results similar to the cause: a) results similar to the cause with regard to conduct and b) results similar to the cause with regard to experience.

a) Results similar to the cause with regard to conduct: This means the conduct of one's previous lives determines the conduct of one's present life. Due to one's deeds in previous lives, one has the similar inclination and tendency in this life. For instance, people who have been hunters in former lifetimes will have a strong inclination to hunt and hurt sentient beings from early childhood onward. Others who have been kind and helpful to people in former lifetimes will naturally have the tendency to be kind-hearted to others in this life. Due to one's previous actions, one enjoys performing similar actions again in this lifetime in a similar situation. Even in dreams one enjoys and dreams in accordance with patterns of one's previous lives.

b) Results similar to the cause with regard to experience: Whatever one has done in previous lifetimes will be experienced in accordance with the causes accumulated in former lifetimes. For example, one who has killed beings in previous lifetimes will experience the suffering of having a short life afflicted with many diseases. Those who have abandoned killing in previous lives will have a long lifespan without diseases in this life. Those who stole the property and riches of others will suffer from poverty in this life, while those who have been generous in previous lifetimes will be rich and prosperous in this life.

3) Environmental result: This means that, for instance, due to the power of the negative acts of killing committed in one's previous life, one will be born in an environment that is unpleasant, devoid of medicinal trees and having poor harvests. One will lack food and water. Or, due to the power of abstaining from killing in the previous life, one will be reborn in an environment that is pleasant, filled with medicinal trees and rich in harvest. One will have abundance of food and drinks.

All three types of karmic results are connected. Based on one's powerful negative acts of killing sentient beings, complete with all five factors, one certainly takes rebirth in the hell realms. This is called a fully ripened result. Even after such a person has been liberated from the hell realms and takes again a human rebirth, he will have the urge to hunt and kill again. And in addition, he will have only a short life afflicted with diseases. This is a result similar to the cause with regard to conduct and to experience. Due to his former negative conduct he will be reborn in an unpleasant area. This is called an environmental result.

Buddha's body is a *mass of merit*. Each of his thirty-two major marks and eighty minor signs springs from a particular virtue that he performed as a bodhisattva for three countless aeons. Because the Buddha, when he was still a bodhisattva, had abandoned lying in order to attain perfect enlightenment for the sake of all beings, he finally acquired the tongue of a Buddha. Simply abiding by the precept of abstaining from lying, without embracing this precept with bodhicitta, will never bring about that kind of fruition. All the qualities of the Buddha's body can be similarly traced back to a specific virtue that he trained in. Taken together, all these virtues result in the mass of merit that constitutes the Buddha's wisdom body. Buddha Sakyamuni's body, speech and mind are a wisdom continuum called 'wisdom body'. His wisdom body is not subject to the confines of time and space but permeates all dimensions and the three times of past, present and future. The Buddha's wisdom body extends as far as space extends and is not subject to birth and death. With his great compassion, Buddha constantly cares for all sentient beings with no partiality. His compassion for a tiny insect is neither less nor more than for a tenth level bodhisattva.

For not a single instant does Buddha's wisdom forget or forsake any of the infinite sentient beings. A completely enlightened Buddha knows everything that happens throughout the three times. His wisdom body is immediately present the moment you think of him. Wherever there is water, the reflection of the sun will instantly manifest. In the same way, wherever someone generates faith in the Buddha, his wisdom and compassion will be present. The extent to which one receives Buddha's blessing depends on one's faith. The moment you think of him, his blessing is with you. The moment you think of him, you open up to the stream of blessings that he constantly showers on all beings, regardless of whether or not they remember him.

The sutra tradition teaches that whoever practices the path of accumulation and the path of application will have the good fortune to meet the nirmanakaya of the Buddha. Whoever has reached one of the ten bodhisattva levels will have the good fortune to see the sambhogakaya of the Buddha. On the eleventh level, the level of Buddhahood, one will have the good fortune to see the Dharmakāya of the Buddha. The wisdom body itself is the basis upon which one can meet the different aspects of Buddha according to one's realization and perception. The wisdom body itself is beyond matter and time. It manifests in the perception of sentient beings in accordance with their capacities and karma. The Buddha nature, present in the mind of every sentient being, and the wisdom body of the Buddha are identical in essence. If we develop faith in the Buddha with a pure and open mind, the wisdom body of the Buddha is instantly present. The Buddha never forgets about sentient beings or neglects them. The moment you think of him he is with you.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 13, Text sections 231-232

BCA 1-13, Text sections 231-232:

There are four types of karma which lead to the experience of its fruition: 1) karma experienced within this life, 2) karma experienced in the very next lifetime, 3) karma experienced in subsequent lives, and 4) karma leading to the uncertain experience of its fruition. The first three types of karma are karma that leads to the certain experience of its fruition.

Similarly, negativity is of two kinds: 'a negativity leading to the certain or definite experience of its fruition' and 'a negativity leading to the uncertain experience of its fruition'. When all five factors that constitute a non-virtuous action or a negative deed are completed, one has created a 'negativity that leads to the definite experience of its fruition'. When a negative deed is intentionally committed and carried through to the end, one has accumulated a negativity where all five factors of a non-virtuous action are complete.

For example, the five factors in the act of killing are: 1) The object or basis, identifying a sentient being other than oneself; 2) the motivation, having the concept that a sentient being is there while one's mind is not undeluded about the fact that one intends to kill that sentient being; 3) the application, engaging in the act of killing, either oneself or inciting another to do so, through poison, weapons, mantra and so forth; 4) the afflictions, the three mind poisons, in general, and in particular, anger during the completion of the act; and 5) the completion, accomplishing the death of a sentient being before oneself comes to die.

This accumulated karma is also called 'karma which leads to the experience of its fruition', which means a 'karma the fruition of which one will definitely experience' in the future. A 'negativity leading to the certain experience of its fruition' refers to negative actions committed while one is fully aware and which one can later recall. If you kill your father, you will know you have committed a severe and serious crime, and you will always remember this horrible deed. It will remain in your mind. Such a deed is a negativity for which one would definitely experience a karmic fruition.

Nevertheless, bodhicitta is so strong that it has the power to purify even that degree of severe intentional negativity. Any unintentionally committed negativity is called a 'negativity leading to the uncertain experience of its fruition'. Thus, a negative deed is committed, but all five factors are not complete. For instance: 1) The object or basis: One might have caused the death of a sentient being without having identified it as a sentient being. One walks on gravel but steps unintentionally on a sentient being. 2) Motivation: One has caused the death of a sentient being without having had the motivation to cause its death, because one's mind was deluded through the influence of alcohol and so forth. 3) Application: One has caused the death of a sentient being by unintentionally stepping on it or by carelessly throwing a stone in the dark. 4) Afflictions: The unintentional act of killing was done in a mental state of ignorance or indifference. 5) The completion: The death of a sentient being was caused.

We have also committed countless negative deeds throughout many lifetimes of which we are not aware and which we cannot recount. Such unintentional negativity has an uncertain karmic ripening, uncertain as to when and how it will ripen. When we take a walk, for example, we

unintentionally and accidentally kill many tiny insects. We do not know whether or how many sentient beings we have killed or harmed, neither do we experience the bad feeling of having done something wrong. When we experience the ripening of an intentional negativity, however, all of these countless unintentional deeds also ripen together with it. We might have one serious illness and at the same time feel slightly irritated or experience that things are not working out well for us. This minor accompanying suffering is said to be the ripening of unintentional negativity.

Harm against the three jewels can be the negative karma of abandoning the Dharma. Some people fail to scrutinize a teacher before requesting teachings, and likewise some teachers do not scrutinize their students before giving teachings. In such cases the student may become unhappy after a time with the teachings or the conduct of the teacher. The teacher may become unsatisfied with the student's performance. These feelings can lead to a split between them, so that the student develops wrong views about the Dharma and even gives up the Dharma. In this way the student accumulates the negative karma of abandoning the Dharma. Abandoning the Dharma comes under the category of wrong views and is an extremely serious misdeed among the ten non-virtuous actions. Furthermore, destroying statues of the Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, or stūpas, slandering Sangha members, negative talk about one's teachers and the like are all considered harm against the three jewels. Whatever great evil one has committed, including killing one's father, breaking bodhisattva training, or violating tantric samāyas, all can be purified by entrusting oneself to bodhicitta.

Suppose you have committed the crime of killing someone's father. You will always fear that his children may take revenge on you. If you entrust yourself to a great hero and make him your ally, however, you are under his protection, so that the family of the father that you killed cannot retaliate. That is the example of the helpful hero who grants protection. Just like entrusting yourself to a good friend or a good physician, entrust yourself to bodhicitta. Make friends with bodhicitta, rely on bodhicitta, and live your life according to bodhicitta.

Contact bodhicitta through constant remembering, through aspiration and contemplation. At first, bodhicitta is like an aspiration. Slowly, it will develop into a commitment. Once the wisdom of egolessness is realized, you will never be separated from bodhicitta. Only when you have realized wisdom will you be able to have true commitment. That is called 'wisdom commitment'.

Similarly, if you totally entrust yourself to bodhicitta, despite having committed severe and negative deeds that should lead to certain rebirth in the hell realms, you will, nevertheless, be instantaneously liberated from the consequences of your negative actions. But even in the unlikely event of taking rebirth in the hell realms, you will stay there only briefly, being liberated from hell as swiftly as a *silken ball* thrown on the ground bounces back.

The Tibetan term 'bag-chen nam' connotes 'deluded ones', 'those with habitual patterns' or 'those who are fearful'. It should not be confused with the term 'bag-yö-chen nam', meaning 'those who are heedful', 'those who are conscientious'. The Indian commentary by Prajnakaramatīl uses the term 'bag-chen nam' to ask: "Why do all those ignorant beings, those foolish ones who lack wisdom, not devote themselves to it or rely on it?"

Meditation on bodhicitta is very powerful and effective. The Indian master Asanga meditated for twelve years on his meditation deity, Maitreya, without having any vision. The moment he developed bodhicitta, however, all his negative deeds were purified, and he encountered Maitreya. Through the purifying effect of bodhicitta, he was able to make that instant leap of progress in his practice. For all these reasons, bodhicitta is the supreme method for purifying negative deeds.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 14, Text sections 233-239

BCA 1-14, Text section 233:

As in this example of the fire at the end of an aeon, all the unintentional negativities, which are even more than the intentional negativities that we can remember, will be purified in one moment by bodhicitta's great power. If one practices the meditation of relative bodhicitta, these unintentional negativities will gradually decrease. If one can practice absolute bodhicitta, all unintentional negativity will be totally eradicated. Therefore, one should definitely meditate on bodhicitta.

Meditating on bodhicitta is much more powerful than simply meditating on compassion. The power of bodhicitta exceeds the power of compassion hundreds of thousands of times. Ordinary beings and sravakas do have compassion, but genuine bodhicitta is found only in a few exceptional people. Everybody who has true bodhicitta is endowed with compassion, but not every person who has compassion is endowed with bodhicitta.

Compassion is the wish to free beings from suffering. A mother has compassion and love for her children, but she lacks bodhicitta. Bodhicitta has two aspects, 'compassion' and 'knowledge'. With compassion the bodhisattva focuses on benefiting others by making the commitment: "I will free all beings from their suffering." With knowledge the bodhisattva focuses on perfect enlightenment by making the commitment: "I will establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment." Thus, compassion and loving kindness by themselves are not called bodhicitta, although they are the basis for bodhicitta.

The qualities of bodhicitta are as inconceivable as the qualities of the Buddha. Whoever has bodhicitta can attain Buddhahood, while whoever lacks bodhicitta can never reach Buddhahood. Bodhicitta is the unfailing seed that leads to the accomplishment of Buddhahood. In order to gain trust and faith in bodhicitta, however, one must have

accumulated considerable merit in this and former lifetimes. First, one needs some understanding of the Buddha's inconceivable qualities to gain trust in the Buddha. Then one needs the wish to accomplish Buddhahood. Even having the wish to attain Buddhahood, however, one must have the merit to develop bodhicitta in order to truly embark on the path to enlightenment.

BCA 1-14, Text sections 234-239:

References to other textbook means 'to encourage to look somewhere else'. Since the benefits and qualities of bodhicitta are inconceivable, they cannot all be explained exhaustively here in the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. Therefore, Santideva recommends reading the Gandha-vyuha-sutra for further details which recount the story of Sudhana.

Sudhana was a student of Manjusri and received from him a *directive* to study the conduct of a bodhisattva with the monk Meghasri. Beginning with Meghasri, he studied with one hundred and ten teachers, each of whom taught him one quality of bodhicitta, a single aspect of the bodhisattva conduct. Finally, he met Lord Maitreya, who told him to examine his palace. Sudhana saw one aspect of the conduct of a bodhisattva displayed in each palace window. For instance, he saw the act of sacrificing one's head and the benefits of performing that act. In this way, through two hundred and thirty examples, the Gandha-vyuha-sutra teaches all the benefits of bodhicitta.

BCA Ch. 1, Verse 15, Text Sections 242-249

BCA 1-15, Text section 242:

Relative bodhicitta is obtained the moment the bodhisattva commitments take root in one's mind. This happens during a ceremony where the master recites passages from the third chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, and the students repeat after him. The master indicates the birth of bodhicitta by snapping his fingers. At that moment the commitments are born in the students' minds.

Thus, relative bodhicitta arises through these *tangible indicators*. Generally, body and speech are 'tangible', while mind is 'subtle'. Body is gross, tangible and visible. Speech is less tangible, less gross, since it is only audible. Mind is subtle since it is not tangible, visible or audible. In the ritual of receiving the bodhisattva precepts, bodhicitta takes root through a physical gesture at the moment when the teacher snaps his fingers. It takes root through speech, when the teacher utters the appropriate words. It is supported by setting up a shrine with a statue of the Buddha. These tangible circumstances bring about the birth of relative bodhicitta.

In Asanga's tradition, the students receive the precepts for bodhicitta of aspiration and

for bodhicitta of application separately. In Nagarjuna's tradition, however, the tradition that Paltrül Rinpoche follows, students receive both aspects of relative bodhicitta together.

The students must think that the bodhicitta precepts are born in their minds at the very moment when the preceptor snaps his fingers. They should think, "Now the bodhicitta is born in my mind. Now the bodhisattva precepts have taken birth in my mind. From today onward, I am a bodhisattva." That is called developing relative bodhicitta that 'arises through tangible indicators'. The tradition of passing on the bodhisattva precepts from master to student has been uninterrupted from the time of the Buddha up until the masters of the present day. The great Indian scholar and preceptor Santaraksita brought the bodhisattva precept lineage to Tibet. The Nyingma School is still maintaining this lineage unimpaired.

It is highly recommended that students begin their spiritual practice with the Sakyamuni liturgy written by Mipham Rinpoche called 'Treasury of Blessings'. Through this practice students will gather the necessary merit to generate bodhicitta. At the same time students should study the Bodhisattvacaryavatara, particularly the first three chapters. They should learn about all the bodhisattva precepts and decide whether or not they can keep the precepts. Then they should receive the precepts in a ceremony from a qualified teacher who possesses the blessings of the lineage. On this basis they can develop relative bodhicitta in the proper way. As they continue to study the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, they should receive teachings on absolute bodhicitta.

At Sri Simha Shedra, the bodhisattva precepts are given during the first year of study after completion of the entire teachings on the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. Whoever participates in the annual three month Bodhisattva-caryavatara practice seminar will receive the precepts at the very beginning and will then take them every day during the three month ritual. For as long as we have not realized absolute bodhicitta, we should take the bodhisattva precepts every day.

Absolute bodhicitta is achieved through subtle Dharmata, the recognition of the natural state. This means one can realize absolute bodhicitta only when recognizing Dharmata, the natural state. Absolute bodhicitta comes about through *subtle Dharmata*. This happens when mind itself recognizes its own essence, the Buddha nature. This is a most subtle process, which can only be truly realized through the blessings of a great master. Mere intellectual understanding will not suffice. If the student is fortunate, he might receive the pointing-out instruction from a master of the Essence Mahamudra lineage or the Dzogchen lineage. For as long as one has only an intellectual understanding of emptiness, without yet having realized it directly, bodhicitta is conceived through tangible indicators. However, once emptiness has been realized, bodhicitta must be understood to be ultimate bodhicitta.

In Asanga's Sutralankara, Maitreya taught five causes or reasons through which relative bodhicitta arises: (1) Through the power of a friend, (2) the power of the cause, (3) the power of the root, (4) The power of studying, and (5) (the power of) familiarization with virtue, (Relative

bodhicitta) arises (first) unstable and (later) stable. Thus, I explain the development of (relative) bodhicitta, which is (primarily) revealed by others.

BCA 1-15, Text section 243:

According to this statement by Asanga, there is one cause for the rise of unstable bodhicitta, the power of a friend, and there are four causes that lead to a stable bodhicitta.

(1) The first power through which relative bodhicitta arises is *the power* (or influence) *of a friend*, as in meeting a spiritual friend or a good Dharma friend who inspires you to follow his example and make an aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings. This is illustrated by the following story:

“In former times, three children made aspirations in front of the Buddha and his two chief disciples. One prayed to become a Buddha and the other two prayed to become his supreme sravaka-arhat disciples. Through the power of their aspirations, one actually became Buddha Sakyamuni, and the other two became his two chief disciples, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana.” This is the power of aspirations inspired by a friend. Bodhicitta can also be born directly through the influence of a spiritual friend who tells stories and inspires one.

BCA 1-15, Text section 244:

(2) The second power is *the power of the cause*, which makes one awaken to the Mahayana family. This means one awakens to a natural affinity for the Mahayana qualities. Someone who accumulated great merit in former lifetimes will in this life, from early childhood onward, feel great compassion and kindness for all sentient beings. Through the power of the cause of merit accumulated in former lifetimes, one awakens to the Mahayana family. Some people have meditated on bodhicitta in previous lifetimes, and thus, a seemingly insignificant circumstance can cause them to spontaneously develop bodhicitta. In this way they awaken through the power of the cause of residual karma from former lifetimes to the Mahayana affinity. This is the second power that brings about the relative bodhicitta. This power is considered stable.

(3) The third power bringing about relative bodhicitta is *the power of the root*. The root of bodhicitta is compassion, and without compassion bodhicitta cannot take birth. Bodhicitta is always endowed with compassion, but compassion is not necessarily endowed with bodhicitta. Keeping strong and heartfelt compassion constantly in mind can, however, lead to the natural arising of bodhicitta. Again, this power is considered to lead to a stable bodhicitta.

(4) The fourth power is *the power of studying*. Through the power of studying many profound Mahayana teachings, stable bodhicitta may arise firmly in one's mind.

(5) The fifth power is *the power of familiarization with virtue*. If one constantly practices the ten wholesome actions and gathers the accumulation of merit through offerings, generosity, and so forth, the precious bodhicitta may arise firmly and stably in one's mind.

The first of these five powers, the power of the friend, is not considered to be stable in the long run. If the friend's attitude deteriorates, one might follow his negative example and destroy one's own bodhicitta. The other four powers are considered stable conditions for the birth of bodhicitta because they will not be easily damaged in adverse circumstances. Bodhicitta that arises from another person's efforts, like the efforts of a friend, is unstable. The other four causes arise from one's own efforts and are, therefore, considered stable.

Kongtrul Lodro Thaye elaborates on the phrase *revealed by others*, saying, "Relative bodhicitta primarily comes about due to causes that are revealed by others". Relative bodhicitta arises through the abovementioned five causes. It does not depend on receiving the bodhisattva precepts.

All these five causes for relative bodhicitta are tangible indicators. Relative bodhicitta always maintains the concept that distinguishes between the three factors: object, subject and the action. Absolute bodhicitta, the recognition of wisdom, no longer discriminates among the three factors. The word *development* in the phrase *development of bodhicitta* connotes 'expansion'. At first bodhicitta is limited, feeble and unstable. Through practice it slowly grows, becoming stronger and more stable. Bodhicitta continues expanding until finally coming to include all sentient beings.

Relative bodhicitta may take birth naturally in someone's mind, or an individual may develop it through a teacher's instructions. Even when bodhicitta is developed, it must still truly be born in one's mind. The natural birth of bodhicitta is, therefore, considered more valuable than artificially developing it.

BCA 1-15, Text sections 245-246:

The question raised in the text is: "On what basis is bodhicitta developed?" Another way to put this question is: "What actually is being developed? Is bodhicitta a *mental pattern* or is it the *dominant mind*?" Asanga and his brother Vasubandhu stated that developing bodhicitta by making the pledge to liberate all sentient beings is developing a 'mental pattern'. On the other hand, Arya Vimuktasena and Haribhadra stated that developing bodhicitta is developing the 'dominant mind'. They did not accept the position of Asanga and Vasubandhu. Unifying both positions, the omniscient Longchen Rabjam stated that when one develops the 'dominant mind', the 'mental pattern' is developed along with it.

When you look at a vase and think "vase" that mental label is called 'dominant mind'. When you begin to distinguish different attributes of the vase such as size, height, value, beauty and so forth, these mental labels are called 'mental patterns' or 'secondary mind'.

BCA 1-15, Text section 247:

What is bodhicitta? At the very beginning one must be introduced to bodhicitta. Bodhicitta literally means 'mind of the Enlightened One' or 'mind of the Buddha'. *Bodhi* is identical with enlightenment or Buddhahood. Bodhicitta has two special features: focusing with compassion on benefiting others, and focusing with wisdom on perfect enlightenment.

Both of these aspects of bodhicitta are combined in the thought: "I will free all beings from suffering" and the thought: "I will establish all beings on the level of perfect enlightenment." A Mahayana practitioner must commit to these two aspects; bodhicitta requires that both features be complete. Merely having compassion for sentient beings is not bodhicitta, although it is meritorious and wholesome. Compassion is only one of the causes of bodhicitta or one aspect of bodhicitta but not bodhicitta itself.

The second special feature, the thought, "I will establish all beings on the level of perfect enlightenment," requires the wisdom of identifying enlightenment or the level of Buddhahood. Enlightenment, Buddhahood, liberation, bliss and so on are all terms describing the same goal. One must have considerable wisdom to really aspire to such a goal.

BCA 1-15, Text sections 248-249:

The text sections 248 and 249 discuss absolute bodhicitta. 'Absolute bodhicitta' or 'transcendental bodhicitta' cannot be realized through ceremonies but comes about through meditation. As Maitreya said in Asanga's *Sutralamkara*:

When the perfect Buddha is pleased,
When the accumulations of merit and wisdom are well-gathered,
When non-conceptual wisdom concerning all phenomena has been born,
That is understood to be the absolute (bodhicitta).

The first step to let absolute bodhicitta arise is to please the Buddha or your master through the three delights. The supreme way to delight your master is through practicing meditation. This indicates that nonconceptual wisdom only arises when a practitioner relies on a master. The second best way to delight your master is by serving him with body and speech; and last, to delight him through material offering. By pleasing your master in these ways, the blessings will be granted. The blessing of the glorious root guru is indispensable for the realization of absolute bodhicitta.

The second step is to gather the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. The accumulation of merit is gathered through practicing the seven branches or through any other kind of physical, verbal or mental merit. The accumulation of wisdom is gathered by practicing the recognition of mind essence. As it is said: As far as the ultimate, the co-emergent wisdom, is concerned,

know that it is foolish to rely upon any methods other than practices for gathering the accumulations and purifying obscurations, As well as the blessing of the glorious root guru.

The Buddha was the direct master of the bodhisattvas. While Buddha was still present as the supreme nirmanakaya, the bodhisattvas served him with great devotion. Even Buddha Sakyamuni himself, our *sublime teacher*, served and pleased hundreds of Buddhas and received meditation instructions from them in former aeons. After gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom for one incalculable aeon, he recognized *non-conceptual wisdom*, the *absolute bodhicitta*, and thus reached the first bodhisattva level. Having gained the realization of Buddha nature, Buddha Sakyamuni traversed, over the course of another countless aeon, from the first through the seventh bodhisattva levels. During the third countless aeon, he traversed from the eighth bodhisattva level to the level of a perfectly enlightened Buddha. The absolute bodhicitta is realized only from the first bodhisattva level onward, from the path of seeing onward. On the paths of accumulation and of application, absolute bodhicitta is not yet realized. The sravakas have not realized absolute bodhicitta at all.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 16, Text sections 250-262

BCA 1-16, Text section 250

Text sections 250-262 discuss the various distinctions of bodhicitta. Bodhicitta can be differentiated in many ways: by the six transcendental perfections, by the *twenty-two similes*, by the different stages of qualities, or by the *eighty unceasing factors*.

In Asanga's Abhisamayalamkāra, Maitreya explains twenty-two similes for bodhicitta: 1) earth, 2) gold, 3) moon, 4) fire, 5) treasure, 6) jewel mine, 7) ocean, 8) diamond, 9) mountain, 10) medicine, 11) spiritual friend, 12) wish-fulfilling jewel, 13) sun, 14) song, 15) king, 16) storehouse, 17) highway, 18) conveyance, 19) spring, 20) melodious sound, 21) river and 22) cloud

These twenty-two similes stand for the following qualities accompanying bodhicitta at different *stages* of development: 1) earth and earnest desire; 2) gold and intention; 3) moon and superior determination; 4) fire and application; 5) treasure and generosity; 6) jewel mine and discipline; 7) ocean and patience; 8) diamond and diligence; 9) mountain and meditation; 10) medicine and wisdom-knowledge; 11) spiritual friend and skillful means; 12) wish-fulfilling jewel and aspiration; 13) sun and strength; 14) song and wisdom; 15) king and clairvoyance; 16) storehouse and the two accumulations; 17) highway and the factors conducive to enlightenment; 18) conveyance and śamathā and vipaśyanā; 19) spring and perfect recall and charisma; 20) melodious sound and feast of dharma; 21) river and sole path; 22) cloud and dharmakāya.

The eighty unceasing factors are: 1) development of bodhicitta 2) motivation, 3) application, 4) superior determination, 5-10) the six transcendental perfections , 11-14) the four immeasurables, 14-19) the five supernatural perceptions, 20-23) the four means of attraction, 23-27) the types of correct discrimination, 28-31) the four reliances, 32-33) the two accumulations, 34-70) the thirty-seven factors conducive for enlightenment, 71-72) śamathaa and vipaśyanaa, 73-74) perfect recall and brilliance, 75-78) the four summaries of dharma, 79) one single path to be traversed, and 80) skill in means.

The six transcendental perfections are 1) generosity, 2) discipline, 3) patience, 4) diligence, 5) concentration, and 6) knowledge.

The four immeasurables are 1) immeasurable loving kindness, 2) immeasurable compassion, 3) immeasurable sympathetic joy, and 4) immeasurable equanimity.

The five supernatural perceptions are 1) the supernatural perception of the divine eye, 2) the supernatural perception of the divine ear, 3) the supernatural perception of knowing the minds of others, 4) the supernatural perception of recollecting former rebirths , and 5) the supernatural perception of miracles.

The four means of attraction are 1) generosity, 2) speaking in a pleasant manner, 3) purposeful activity and 4) consistency (between words and actions).¹⁵²⁸ The types of correct discrimination are 1) the correct discrimination of meaning, 2) the correct discrimination of the teaching, 3) the correct discrimination of definitive words, and 4) the correct discrimination of eloquent courage.

The four reliances are 1) rely not on the words, but on the meaning, 2) rely not on consciousness but on wisdom , 3) rely not on the expedient meaning but on the definitive meaning and 4) rely not on the person, but on the teaching.

The two accumulations are the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom.

The thirty-seven factors conducive for enlightenment are: (1-4) the four applications of mindfulness, (5-8) the four right endeavors, (9-12) the four legs of miracles, (13-17) the five pure faculties, (18-22) the five pure powers, (23-29) the seven factors of enlightenment , and (30-37) the noble eightfold path.

The four applications of mindfulness are 1) application of mindfulness to the body, 2) application of mindfulness to sensation, 3) application of mindfulness to mind, and 4) application of mindfulness to phenomena.

The four right endeavors are 1) not to give rise to non-virtuous qualities that have not arisen, 2) to abandon those that have arisen, 3) to give rise to the virtuous qualities that have not arisen, and 4) not to degenerate those that have arisen.

The four legs of miracles are 1) the miracle-leg of intention, 2) the miracle-leg of diligence, 3) the miracle-leg of attention, and 4) the miracle-leg of discernment.

The five pure faculties are 1) trust / faith, 2) diligence, 3) mindfulness/recollection, 4) concentration, and 5) wisdom-knowledge / discriminating knowledge.

The five pure powers are identical with the five pure faculties as mentioned above: 1) the power of trust / faith, 2) power of diligence, 3) power of mindfulness / recollection, 4) power of concentration.

The seven factors of enlightenment are 1) the enlightened factor of correct mindfulness, 2) the enlightened factor of correct investigation of phenomena, 3) the enlightened factor of correct diligence, 4) the enlightened factor of correct joy, 5) the enlightened factor of correct pliancy, 6) the enlightened factor of correct concentration, and 7) the enlightened factor of correct equanimity.

The noble eightfold path are 1) correct view, 2) correct thought, 3) correct speech, 4) correct action, 5) correct livelihood, 6) correct effort, 7) correct mindfulness / recollection and 8) correct concentration.

The four summaries of dharma are 1) all composite things are impermanent, 2) all composite and defiling states are suffering, 3) all phenomena are empty and devoid a self-entity and 4) nirvana is peace.

All these multifarious distinctions of bodhicitta can be condensed into two: the bodhicitta of aspiration and the bodhicitta of application.

A śraavaka arhat who has entered into cessation remains in this state for many aeons until being awakened from it by light rays emitted by the Buddha. This is called 'the empowerment of great light'. The Buddha then teaches the arhats that they have not reached enlightenment and encourages them to enter into the Mahaayaana path. They progressively embark upon the paths of accumulation and of application; having once reached the path of seeing, they will realize absolute bodhicitta. Thus, according to the Mahaayaana tradition, even a śraavaka arhat must begin over again on the paths of accumulation and of application.

No ordinary beings, śraavakas, or pratyekabuddhas have realized absolute bodhicitta. This is realized only from the first bodhisattva level onward and is the special quality of a 'noble being'. Anyone who has realized absolute bodhicitta is a noble being. Absolute bodhicitta is achieved through the power of subtle dharmataa, the nature of reality, while relative bodhicitta comes about through the power of *tangible indicators*.

BCA 1-16, Text section 251:

Relative bodhicitta has two aspects: bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application. Both are ways of thinking. Many people are confused about this. Both types of bodhicitta are motivation and are not action or conduct. First, you form the motivation, and only then can you enter with that motivation into whatever conduct you wish.

Bodhicitta of aspiration is said to be like the wish to go to Lhasa while bodhicitta of application is like setting out on the road to Lhasa. Bodhicitta of aspiration is the thought: "I will liberate all sentient beings from suffering and establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment."

Bodhicitta of application is the thought: "In order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation and wisdom." These two aspects of bodhicitta are both motivation.

The actual engaging in the six transcendental perfections is called 'application' or 'practice'. Motivation and application are two different things. Bodhicitta is motivation alone. Actually carrying out the conduct of the bodhisattvas, such as the six transcendental perfections and so forth, is application. All activities of the bodhisattvas are embraced by bodhicitta, but bodhicitta by itself does not involve action.

The term 'bodhicitta' means literally 'mind of awakening' or 'thought of awakening'. The term is not 'action of awakening' or 'conduct of awakening'. While maintaining the motivation of bodhicitta, you can enact the conduct of the bodhisattva.

When you lose the motivation of bodhicitta, then your action is no longer bodhisattva conduct. Without the motivation of bodhicitta, your action is no longer the cause for attaining perfect enlightenment. Your meritorious actions might still concord with ordinary merit or even with the virtue that concords with liberation, but, nevertheless, your striving will not lead to complete enlightenment.

To commit to the fruition, to enlightenment, is the bodhicitta of aspiration. The thought, “I will liberate all sentient beings from suffering, its causes and results, and establish them on the level of the omniscient Buddha,” is bodhicitta of aspiration.

To commit to the cause, that which brings about enlightenment, is the bodhicitta of application. Actually entering into the conduct of any of the six perfections with the thought, “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and establish them on the level of the omniscient Buddha, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation and wisdom, any of the six perfections,” is bodhicitta of application. For example, if you resolve, “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and establish them on the level of the omniscient Buddha, I will study this text,” this is the bodhicitta of application. The bodhicitta of application requires the intention to actually do something, to engage in any of the six transcendental actions and so forth, with a very specific and particular motivation.

BCA 1-16, Text section 252:

The collection of canonical commentaries, the Tangyur, includes many different interpretations and opinions about the distinction between bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application. The Buddhist masters of India and of Tibet did not all hold the same opinion.

For instance, *Master Jnanapaada* states that the development of bodhicitta by ordinary people is bodhicitta of aspiration and that the development of bodhicitta by noble people, those who have reached the first bodhisattva level and beyond, is bodhicitta of application. Master Jnanapaada probably considered that the bodhicitta developed by ordinary people was not really effective and that an individual can truly help other beings only after reaching the first bodhisattva level of realization.

BCA 1-16, Text section 253:

Indian scholars such as *Abhaya*, *Jnanakiirti* and others taught that the development of bodhicitta by those who have reached the path of accumulation is bodhicitta of aspiration and that bodhicitta of application applies to those who have reached the path of application and more. These teachings derive from the practical experience of these masters and are not mere philosophical hairsplitting.

BCA 1-16, Text section 254:

The Indian masters Shaantipa, Ratnakara, Saagaramegha, and others stated that without having received the bodhisattva precepts in a ceremony from a qualified master, the mindset of wishing to attain enlightenment is

bodhicitta of aspiration. Once the bodhisattva precepts are received, the same mindset is bodhicitta of application. Thus, they made the distinction between bodhicitta of aspiration and of application mainly based on the absence or presence of the precepts.

BCA 1-16, Text section 255:

Prajnaakaramati taught that simply holding bodhicitta in one's mind without actually engaging with one's body and speech in the bodhisattva conduct is bodhicitta of aspiration; actually engaging in the bodhisattva conduct with body and speech is bodhicitta of application. Many Western Buddhists seem to hold this view.

BCA 1-16, Text section 257:

Lord Atiśa and *Longchenpa* both held the same opinion about how to distinguish between the two types of bodhicitta. Committing to or focusing on the fruition, the level of buddhahood, is bodhicitta of aspiration, and committing to or focusing on the cause, the path, is bodhicitta of application. We, as students of the Old School, follow this interpretation of Atiśa and Longchenpa. For details on the 22 *similes* and the *supporting factors* see text section 250.

BCA 1-16, Text sections 258-260:

Bodhicitta has two aspects, compassion and wisdom-knowledge. With compassion you focus on the benefit of others by committing yourself, "I will free all mother-like sentient beings, equal to the reaches of space, from all suffering of existence and peace."

'Suffering of peace' refers to the static and finite peace state of the śraavakas. A śraavakaarhat is free from ego-clinging, subject fixation, and has attained the peace of nirvana, but he still retains subtle fixations on phenomena, object fixations, which cause subtle fear and suffering. Bodhisattvas also have this subtle fixation. Therefore, the Mahaayaana practitioner aspires to free all beings from even the most subtle fixations.

With wisdom-knowledge you focus on perfect enlightenment by committing yourself, "I will establish them on the level of complete and perfect enlightenment."

BCA 1-16, Text section 261-262:

Generally, the thought or wish to establish all sentient beings in the fruition, the level of buddhahood, is called bodhicitta of aspiration. Committing to the practice of the six perfections in order to establish all sentient beings on the level of buddhahood, the fruition, is called bodhicitta of application. These two kinds of bodhicitta are identical with the bodhisattva precepts and also with the three disciplines of the bodhisattvas.

The three disciplines of the bodhisattvas are: (1) The discipline of refraining from negative conduct, (2) the discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas and (3) the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings.

(1) The discipline of refraining from negative conduct: A bodhisattva avoids all ten non-virtuous actions like poison and keeps the basic training of at least one of the seven precepts of individual liberation, which are the precepts of (1) a fully ordained monk; (2) a fully ordained nun; (3) a monk; (4) a nun; (5) a male lay practitioner; (6) a female lay practitioner and (7) a probationary nun.

(2) The discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas: While maintaining discipline of gathering merit by practicing any type of virtue, a bodhisattva studies and contemplates the sublime teachings and practices the teachings that lead to enlightenment, such as the six transcendental perfections.

(3) The discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings: This is how a bodhisattva benefits sentient beings by appropriately meeting their expectations and needs.

Why are the two types of bodhicitta identical with the three disciplines? (1) The first discipline is refraining from negative conduct. The essence of this discipline is giving up harming others, including the basis for such harm, and accomplishing the benefits for others, including the basis for such benefit. These two aspects are also present in the bodhicitta of aspiration and of application. Bodhicitta of application and the discipline of refraining from negative conduct are identical when you make the following commitment: "I will free all mother-like sentient beings, equal to the reaches of space, from all suffering of existence and peace and establish them on the level of complete and perfect buddhahood. For this purpose I will give up the ten non-virtuous actions."

(2) The second discipline is the discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas. The bodhicitta of application and this second discipline are identical, being the thought: "In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish

them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation or wisdom, any of the six perfections.”

(3) The third discipline is the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings and again is identical with the bodhicitta of application.

Bodhicitta and the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings are identical when you make the following commitment: “In order to free all mother-like sentient beings, equal to the reaches of space, from all suffering of existence and peace and establish them on the level of complete and perfect buddhahood, I will tirelessly work to fulfill the benefit of beings.”

Discipline refers mainly to disciplining your mind. The *precepts* are also nothing other than the mental resolve to safeguard one’s body, speech and mind from non-virtuous actions. Precepts and bodhicitta are identical in the commitment: “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of the omniscient buddhahood, I will safeguard my conduct of body, speech and mind from non-virtuous actions.” The term *precept* simply means making the resolution: “I will abstain from the ten non-virtuous actions.”

Even after taking the precepts to abstain from the ten non-virtuous actions, we still unintentionally slip into them from time to time. Without meaning to hurt others, due to our habitual patterns we still say words that are painful and cause harm. What is crucial then is to repeatedly re-evoke the intention to abstain from harming others. If one intentionally commits any of the ten non-virtuous actions, however, this is in total contradiction of bodhicitta.

In this manner the two types of bodhicitta, that of aspiration and that of application, are the very precepts of the bodhisattvas. With body, speech and mind, one inflicts not the slightest harm on other beings but benefits other beings with body, speech and mind as much as one is able.

Bodhicitta as such is endowed with different aspects, as in the example of the precious wish-fulfilling jewel. This jewel can cure small pox, grant all wishes and needs, and dispel darkness. Just as the wish-fulfilling jewel eradicates infectious diseases, bodhicitta dispels all negativity. Just as the wish-fulfilling jewel grants all wishes, bodhicitta gives rise to all virtuous qualities. Just as the wish-fulfilling jewel dispels darkness, bodhicitta naturally enacts benefit for others.

Bodhicitta thus includes the three disciplines. As the wish-fulfilling jewel eradicates infectious diseases, bodhicitta is the discipline that safeguards against negative conduct. As the wish-fulfilling jewel grants all wishes, bodhicitta is the discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas. As the wish-fulfilling jewel dispels darkness, bodhicitta is the discipline that benefits sentient beings. Furthermore, the six perfections are included in the bodhicitta of aspiration and of application.

Generally, the six perfections require that you actually do something. These perfections, however, are also included in the attitude of bodhicitta, which is the motivation. The characteristic of generosity, for instance, is to have a generous mind. It is the thought: “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will donate rice to this beggar.”

In the same way, discipline is a mind bent on renunciation; patience is a mind unruffled by upset; diligence is a mind that enjoys virtue; meditation is a mind that does not stray from its focus; and wisdom is the mind’s capacity to distinguish all phenomena, to understand all distinctions clearly. In this fashion the bodhicitta of aspiration and of application includes all six perfections.

Bodhicitta of aspiration and of application is the basis of all paths. Endowed with bodhicitta, one can achieve buddhahood. Without bodhicitta, there is no chance to attain buddhahood. Bodhicitta is the unfailing seed for achieving buddhahood. It is compassion as it focuses on all sentient beings. It is wisdom as it focuses on buddhahood.

As explained above, bodhicitta of application requires the intention to actually do something, to engage in certain conduct with a particular motivation. Bodhicitta of application is the thought: “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will make this donation.” Even if you cannot actually complete the act of generosity, it is still sufficient. The most important factor is having the sincere motivation and mindset to do so.

Bodhicitta differs from conduct. Bodhicitta mainly depends on motivation. Mind is the primary factor; conduct is secondary. Conduct always refers to an act of body or speech. Mind is that which puts body and speech into action. Even if the actual conduct is not engaged in, as long as your mind has made a decision, bodhicitta of application is already in place. When you act on this intention, you are carrying out the actual conduct of a bodhisattva. If your mind has the true motivation of bodhicitta, even if

your physical and verbal conduct seem non-virtuous from a traditional point of view, you are still accumulating virtue. If your mind is not imbued with the motivation of bodhicitta, even if your physical and verbal conduct are virtuous, your virtuous conduct does not lead to the attainment of enlightenment.

Arousing bodhicitta is entirely a mental event. So far we have been discussing relative bodhicitta, but it is important to note that the difference between relative and absolute bodhicitta is marked by the absence or presence of the 'three factors'. If these three factors are present, bodhicitta is relative; if the three factors are absent, it is absolute bodhicitta. The three factors are fixations: holding on to subject, to object and to the action. For example, holding on to oneself as a donor, the subject, someone who donates a gift; holding on to a recipient, the object, someone who receives the gift; and holding on to the act of giving, the action. Absolute bodhicitta is free from these three fixations. The bodhisattva performs generous actions without holding on to these three fixations. The actions of a bodhisattva who is truly beyond these fixations are called 'transcendental perfections'.

If you want to become a bodhisattva, you should receive the bodhisattva commitments from a qualified preceptor during a proper ceremony. In that ceremony you request the Buddha, the bodhisattvas and the vajra master to consider you with kindness. You visualize the Buddha and bodhisattvas in the sky in front of you, and you repeat the words of the bodhisattva precepts after the preceptor three times. Following the third repetition, the preceptor snaps his fingers; at that moment you should imagine that the precepts have taken birth in your mind. By receiving the precepts in this way you take upon yourself the commitment to keep the three disciplines of a bodhisattva. The main point is to never forsake sentient beings. Always maintain the wish that you want to free all sentient beings from suffering and that you want to establish them on the level of perfect buddhahood. Through our habitual patterns, our mind is not greatly concerned with the welfare of others most of the time. This is normal for a beginner and does not mean that you have lost your bodhisattva commitment.

Only if you consciously make up your mind not to help others, particularly when you have an opportunity to benefit them, have you truly lost the bodhisattva precepts. Having occasional negative thoughts about others or sometimes speaking in an improper manner about others comes from the force of your former bad habits and will definitely impair your bodhisattva precepts. This level of negativity will not destroy the precepts. However, you should re-take your bodhisattva precepts on a daily basis. The tremendous positive momentum of bodhicitta will gradually change the negative patterns of your mind and increase your positive tendencies.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 17, Text Section 263

BCA 1-17, Text section 263:

In this stanza Shantideva explains the difference in the benefits concerning bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application. Bodhicitta of aspiration is endowed with immeasurable benefit and merit. Even while dwelling in samsara, it will lead to great results and fruits. By merely developing bodhicitta of aspiration, one will gain high states within samsara. In the celestial realms one will reach the states of Brahma and Indra, and in the human realms one will become a universal sovereign.

Bodhicitta of aspiration, however, does not have the same stream of unceasing merit as does bodhicitta of application. Between bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application, the latter is of greater power and benefit. Bodhicitta of application results in an uninterrupted stream of meritorious actions such as generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation and wisdom.

Although both types of bodhicitta are motivation only, bodhicitta of aspiration is less powerful since it 'aspires to the fruition' only, while bodhicitta of application 'engages in the causes'. The latter wishes to engage in an action to ease suffering, while the former merely wishes beings to be free from suffering. Without bodhicitta of aspiration, bodhicitta of application cannot arise. Bodhicitta of application is the wish to engage in an action.

Bodhicitta of aspiration wishes to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of buddhahood. Here, the practitioner must understand the preciousness of buddhahood. A Buddha has actualized bodhicitta. Buddhahood is the culmination point of bodhicitta. Buddhahood can be described in eight aspects: immeasurable wisdom, compassion, capacity, activity, merit, qualities, blessings, and aspirations. These eight aspects are personified within the eight great bodhisattvas. Bodhicitta of application is the commitment: "In order to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of buddhahood, I will engage in such and such perfection, the cause for buddhahood."

When one actually applies relative bodhicitta motivation to the six perfections, the stream of merit is even greater than just practicing bodhicitta motivation alone. While carrying out any of the six perfections, one maintains bodhicitta of application, the commitment to do so. Practicing the six perfections or any kind of virtue without bodhicitta is definitely meritorious but does not bring you closer to enlightenment.

If all actions are embraced by absolute bodhicitta, boundless merit arises. Only then are you practicing the six transcendental perfections. At that point you are truly practicing the unity of the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom. Through the unified practice of merit and wisdom, the two kaayas, the dharmakaaya and the rūpakaaya, will be revealed. Absolute bodhicitta is no longer mingled with the poison of ego-clinging.

Practicing the perfections as the causes for enlightenment without any stains of afflictive and cognitive obscurations means that the cause for enlightenment and the fruition, enlightenment itself, come very close together.

Relative bodhicitta is like making fire with wet wood. The cause and the fruition are distant. The wet wood is not the perfect fuel for the fire. Absolute bodhicitta is like making fire with dry wood. Cause and fruition are very close. The dry wood is the perfect fuel.

Relative bodhicitta generates conceptual merit. Absolute bodhicitta generates non-conceptual merit. The mind that generates relative bodhicitta is impermanent, although the effect of the virtue that has been generated will never be lost. This is because the mental focus is perfect enlightenment for all sentient beings. Since all sentient beings will never reach enlightenment, this task will never be completed. So from the beginning of any virtuous action until its completion, the merit of this action will never be lost. Relative merit embraced by relative bodhicitta is, therefore, almost like the non-conceptual merit of absolute bodhicitta, since it will never be exhausted.

Bodhicitta causes an 'unceasing stream of merit' or an 'uninterrupted stream of virtue'. Just as fire is naturally hot, so bodhicitta is naturally virtuous and meritorious. As a beginner you need to contrive relative bodhicitta; you must create it artificially. Once you are more accustomed to relative bodhicitta, it will arise naturally and uncontrived. Absolute bodhicitta cannot be contrived but can only be recognized. Once you have become accustomed to the recognition of absolute bodhicitta, it will arise naturally.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 18, Text Section 264

BCA 1-18, Text section 264

From the point in time when one has genuinely adopted bodhicitta of application means from the moment one has firmly resolved, "In order to liberate all sentient

beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation or wisdom, any of the six perfections.” The main point here is that one makes a firm resolution, a stable commitment. One develops the innate certainty: “I will enact the six transcendental perfections for the sake of beings.” That resolve is bodhicitta of application. One should receive the bodhicitta vows in a genuine fashion in front of one’s master, spiritual guide, or in front of a statue of the Buddha. Actually, a practitioner should take the bodhisattva vow every day.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 19, Text Section 265-266

BCA 1-19, Text sections 265-266

Once the precepts have been received, bodhisattvas protect the precepts through their practice of the six transcendental perfections. They strive to the best of their ability to practice the transcendental perfections. The actual practice of the perfections is called ‘application’. While maintaining the bodhicitta motivation, the practitioners actually carry out the ‘application’ of the six transcendental perfections. *From that moment on* means that from the moment one has made the firm resolution to enact the six transcendental perfections for the benefit of others, one will have an uninterrupted stream of virtue naturally manifesting in one’s life. Once that firm resolution of bodhicitta of application has been made, even if one is not actively practicing virtue with one’s body or speech but is just lying down asleep or playing around inattentively, the power of merit will uninterruptedly continue to increase.

Bodhicitta of aspiration leads to inconceivable merit but only if you actively meditate on it. Once you have forgotten it, no further merit is generated. But having developed the bodhicitta of application, the irrevocable resolution, “I will enact the six transcendental perfections to my best ability for the benefit of others,” that mere motivation will unceasingly generate virtue and merit. After you make such a firm resolution, you will occasionally forget your bodhicitta commitment. Despite forgetting your resolution, however, the power of having made such a resolution will still generate immeasurable merit. Once you have forcefully turned a wheel, even if you do not continue turning it, the wheel will keep on turning for some time.

A beginner who has given up the ten non-virtuous actions, who observes his practice sessions of the Buddha Shaakyamuni liturgy in the morning and evening, who does not indulge in too much food, and who meditates on and practices bodhicitta and the six transcendental perfections to the best of his ability has, according to the Bodhisattva-

caryaavataara, embarked on the minor path of accumulations, the first of the five paths. Structure your life according to these simple key points, and you have already become a practitioner. It is really not difficult.

When you progress to the path of application, the second of the five paths, your bodhisattva resolve will become stronger and stronger. Once you have attained the first bodhisattva level, the path of seeing, the third path, your bodhicitta resolve will be utterly irrevocable. On this level your bodhisattva resolve is truly genuine. While you are still on the first two paths, the path of accumulation and the path of application, your bodhisattva resolve is a replica . But that is the way to get started.

Again, this continued stream of virtue occurs only if you have genuinely resolved to enact the six transcendental perfections. If that resolution is the underlying intention in your mind, you will continue to gain infinite virtue and merit even while sleeping, being inattentive, or having temporarily forgotten about it. If you fail to act upon the six transcendental perfections when the chance to do so arises, however, and instead, with a negative frame of mind, close your heart, then you have committed a serious misdeed and have destroyed your bodhisattva vow.

For as long as you try to enact the six transcendental perfections to the best of your ability, you are on the right path. If, however, you purposely ignore every chance to practice the perfections for the welfare of others and constantly act negatively toward others, having lost the intention to help sentient beings, you have destroyed your bodhisattva precepts.

Always maintain the willingness and the intention to help others. Virtue and merit come from your mind. If your mind is imbued with positive and helpful intentions, then you will develop and will naturally accumulate virtue and merit. Use every opportunity you have to practice the six transcendental perfections. If you refuse to apply them when you have the opportunity, you are breaking your promise. First, promising to be generous and then acting in a stingy way is dishonest and deceitful. Nevertheless, keep in mind that you should not practice physical self-sacrifice unless you have reached the first bodhisattva level.

Whenever you have the chance and the means to help or the capacity to abstain from harming others, you, as a bodhisattva, must do so. If you do not have the skill or capacity to carry out a particular perfection, this does not constitute a root downfall. A bodhisattva is also aware that different activities carry different impacts.

He would never stop a great beneficial activity for many beings merely to help a single being with an insignificant activity. Thus, he would never interrupt his practice of samaadhi, the practice of absolute bodhicitta, to render a minor service to someone.

As practical advice for a beginning bodhisattva, always carry a few coins in your pocket. Whenever you see some beggars or people in need, give them a little money. In your daily life try to encourage others to practice and study the dharma. Always support the dharma practice and activities of others. Never discourage anyone from practicing virtue and goodness. Have a kind word for everyone. Buddha said that it is much more meritorious to keep strict discipline for a single day in this degenerate age than it was to keep discipline for a long period of time in an era when Buddha was still alive. He said that it is more meritorious to spread the dharma in a country where Buddhism has never been heard of than in a country where Buddhism is well established.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 20, Text Section 268-273

BCA 1-20, Text section 268

Of course the question arises: “How can someone accumulate merit while sleeping?” “Where does such inconceivable merit come from?” In order to answer these questions, Shantideva quotes from the scriptures, in particular from the Subaahuparipṛcchā-sūtra, the sūtra requested by Bodhisattva Subaahu, in which the Buddha explains the benefits and qualities of bodhicitta and gives *reasons*. The phrase *not only for the mere purpose of guiding* means that this statement regarding the immeasurable benefits of bodhicitta of application is not a statement belonging to the level of ‘provisional meaning’, such as statements the Buddha made to guide the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, but that it is a statement of the ‘definitive meaning’. ‘Provisional meaning’ refers to statements made by the Buddha in order to lead beings onto the path but which actually have another meaning, as they do not accord with the actual nature of things. The Buddha uses words like ‘I’ and ‘mine’ although ‘I’ and ‘mine’ do not exist. He speaks this way in order to communicate on the relative level.

In the Subaahu-paripṛcchā-sūtra the Buddha explained the real qualities of bodhicitta to enable practitioners to gain certainty and true understanding of what these qualities actually are. The Subaahu-paripṛcchā-sūtra is classified as a sūtra concerning the ‘ultimate meaning’, not a sūtra of the ‘provisional meaning’.

Most Hīnayaana sūtras deal the provisional meaning because they do not teach the actual nature of things. In the Tibetan tradition, these sūtras are

considered to be meant for beginners in order to lead them onto the path. Sūtras which mainly establish the relative truth and give teachings on karma, the law of cause and effect, and the like are classified as belonging to the 'provisional meaning'.

Sūtras which mainly establish the absolute truth, teachings on egolessness and emptiness, are classified as belonging to the 'ultimate meaning'. The purpose of the provisional meaning is to lead the minds of beginners to the ultimate meaning. The sūtras make many statements about the infinite merit of virtues, although these virtues actually do not have such infinite merit. For instance, in some places it says that if one recites the mantra 'Om Mani Peme Hung' seven times one will gain enlightenment. This kind of statement is meant to guide a beginner into dharma practice. Such statements belong to the 'provisional meaning'. This statement actually means that by reciting the mantra 'Om Mani Peme Hung' seven times, at another time in the far distant future one will gain enlightenment. Reciting this mantra seven times plants the seed for enlightenment but does not lead to enlightenment right on the spot.

Generally, bodhisattvas train in the six perfections for three countless aeons in order to manifest all the qualities of Buddha's body, speech and mind. Some of Buddha's students became discouraged and frightened by such an enormous duration of time and felt inclined toward the lesser vehicles of the śraavakas and pratyekabuddhas. The śraavakas and pratyekabuddhas aspire not to complete enlightenment but rather to the state of an arhat, a state beyond the suffering of samsara. In order to motivate such individuals, Buddha taught the Subaahu-paripṛcchā-sūtra in which he explained the unceasing merit and inexhaustible qualities of bodhicitta. Buddha gave four reasons for its being unceasing and inexhaustible: 1) the unfathomable number of sentient beings, 2) the unfathomable amount of suffering, 3) the unfathomable qualities of buddhahood, and 4) the unfathomable duration of three countless aeons. A bodhisattva's focus is not restricted to a few friends, relatives, countrymen or even only to human beings. A bodhisattva's focus extends to all infinite sentient beings, not excluding even one.

Bodhisattvas reach out to all beings within the totality of space. Bodhisattvas do not aspire only to cure a few people from diseases or to help only their followers. They aspire to relieve all infinite sentient beings of their unfathomable amount of suffering. Bodhisattvas are not interested only in improving beings' living conditions, making them comfortable temporarily and bringing them short-lived happiness. They want to establish all sentient beings on the level of complete enlightenment. They want all beings to reach perfect buddhahood, a state endowed with inconceivable qualities, devoid of all defects, a level of permanent bliss. Bodhisattvas are not active for others for limited periods of time only.

They help sentient beings until all beings have been established on the level of omniscience. For three countless aeons they train in the six transcendental perfections, and when they themselves reach complete enlightenment, their Buddhaactivity becomes unceasing. Dignaaga and Dharmakiirti established the benefits of bodhicitta through the following logical equations relating to the same four points:

1. The infinite *number of beings who are the objects of focus*: “Bodhicitta of application is endowed with immeasurable benefits because it focuses on immeasurable beings”.

The objects of the bodhisattva’s focus are the immeasurable number of sentient beings without even one being excluded. The bodhisattva’s motivation is: “In order to establish the immeasurable number of sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment, I will practice the six transcendental perfections.” Therefore, the Indian philosophers concluded that because the bodhisattva focuses on the immeasurable number of beings, immeasurable beings are helped and benefited. Therefore, the benefits of the bodhicitta of application are equally immeasurable.

2. The infinite *amount of suffering, that which is to be dispelled*: “Bodhicitta of application is endowed with immeasurable benefits because it constantly maintains the motivation to dispel all suffering”. The amount of suffering is immeasurable, and the bodhisattva constantly generates the motivation to dispel all of the suffering of all sentient beings. Therefore, the benefits of the bodhicitta of application are equally immeasurable.

3. The infinite *qualities of buddhahood, those which are to be obtained*: “Bodhicitta of application is endowed with immeasurable benefits because it aspires to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of buddhhood”. Buddhahood is endowed with immeasurable qualities. The bodhisattva has the aspiration that all beings should attain these immeasurable qualities. Therefore, the benefits of the bodhicitta of application are equally immeasurable.

Inasmuch as buddhahood, the goal of all achievements, is endowed with immeasurable qualities, the cause for its attainment, the bodhicitta of application, must also be endowed with immeasurable merit.

4. The infinity of the *time-span*: The bodhisattva has the wish: “I will free all sentient beings from suffering and establish them forever on the level of complete enlightenment.” The bodhicitta of application is endowed with immeasurable power because it frees all sentient beings from the suffering of infinite past lifetimes and establishes all beings permanently on the level of complete enlightenment and ultimate bliss.

The magnitude of these considerations—infinite number of beings, infinite amount of suffering, infinite qualities of the Buddha, infinite time-span—expands the mind beyond its conceptual limits. This is one way to approach the non-conceptual state.

Bodhisattvas who constantly work for the benefit of others will always enjoy the unceasing benefits of bodhicitta. Their virtue and merit increase constantly, even while they sleep or are inattentive. The benefits of bodhicitta are present right from the very beginning, immediately on taking the bodhisattva precepts. One does not have to wait for a long time for the benefits to manifest. Once bodhicitta of application has truly taken root in the minds of practitioners, they will always accumulate merit.

This statement does not imply that someone who has taken the bodhisattva precepts, but who does not do any good at all, will accumulate merit while sleeping or being inattentive. Bodhicitta really must take root in the heart. Practicing virtue for a certain period of time, then leaning back and saying, “Now I have done enough. I can take it easy and relax,” is not the bodhisattva’s way of practice. You cannot take a job, sit around all day in the office doing nothing, and still expect to get paid at the end of the month. The bodhisattva attitude implies the earnest wish to practice as much virtue as possible. In that way, the momentum of merit will always carry through. However, receiving the bodhisattva precepts and not practicing virtue at all is a major downfall for a bodhisattva and will create negative karma.

BCA 1-20, Text section 269:

The phrase *if I don the armor* means ‘if I put on the harness of courage’ and connotes ‘commitment’.

BCA 1-20, Text section 270:

There are four principles of reasoning: 1) the principle of reality; 2) the principle of efficacy; 3) the principle of dependency ; and 4) the principle of valid proof. These four principles of reasoning constitute a very extensive subject which cannot be exhaustively considered at this point. Therefore, we will give only a short definition:

1. The principle of reality: This reasoning considers the reasoning of natural conditions of things. For example, the natural condition of fire is to be hot. Nobody can deny that fire is hot.

2. The principle of efficacy: This reasoning considers the causes their consequences. This reasoning is based on the fact that ‘if something exists, it will lead to something else’;

and 'if this exists, then that must arise'. A cause inevitably leads to a result. For example, when the sun rises, darkness is dispelled.

3. The principle of dependency: This reasoning considers dependent production, the result. A result or fruition must always rely on a cause. For example, when there is no mother, there will be no child. A child can only come about by having a mother. This reasoning is based on the fact that 'if something does not exist, it cannot lead to something else'. 'If this does not exist, that cannot arise'.

4. The principle of valid proof: This reasoning uses the three former types of reasoning to refute wrong statements. For instance, if someone states, 'Fire is cold', the first principle of reasoning refutes this since such a statement contradicts the reasoning of reality or of natural conditions. By means of 'valid proof' one checks whether or not a statement is correct. This principle of valid proof uses 'the three means of valid cognition': 1) the validity of direct perception, 2) the validity of deduction or inference and 3) the valid cognition of scriptural authority.

BCA 1-20, Text section 271:

The real working of karma, the law of cause and effect, can be seen only by a fully enlightened Buddha and is therefore called *a most hidden field of knowledge*. Regarding the law of karma, for the most part we must simply trust in the words of the Buddha. Although establishing the law of karma through reasoning is difficult, it is not impossible. However, considerable study and wisdom knowledge are required.

The benefits of bodhicitta can be established by reasoning, since the Buddha taught extensively on its benefits and qualities. Numerous jataka tales, stories of Buddha's previous lives as a bodhisattva, teach about the benefits and qualities of bodhicitta with regard to the law of karma. Reasoning in this context refers to the irrefutable wisdom of the Buddha as preserved in the scriptures. When the Buddha relates a story from one of his former lifetimes, the logical implications of that story are considered 'reasoning' by Tibetan scholars because the Buddhist scriptures can always be subject to a three-fold analysis: 1) the analysis through the validity of direct perception, 2) the analysis through the validity of inference, and 3) the analysis through.

BCA 1-20, Text sections 272-273:

This is the Maitrakanyakaavanaana, 'the Story of Maitra's Daughter', found in *Kalpalataa* written by Kshemendra 1542 The four means of valid cognition include 'the valid cognition demonstrated through examples'.

Fields of knowledge can be 'directly perceptible', 'imperceptible' or 'hidden' and 'radically inaccessible', 'radically imperceptible' or 'most hidden'. as story 92. In former times, in the city of Vaaraanasii, there lived a wealthy leader of the sea-going merchant caste named Maitra, 'Friend'. It was his profession to undertake dangerous journeys by sea in order to fetch precious gems. His wife gave birth to a son. To prevent their son from following his father's dangerous occupation, Maitra and his wife named him Kanyaka, 'Daughter'. Thus, he became known as Maitrakanyaka, 'Daughter of Maitra'. Soon after his son was born, Maitra died at sea.

Maitrakanyaka's mother did everything she could to keep her son from becoming captain of a ship but to no avail. When finally Maitrakanyaka was about to go to sea, his mother tried to physically hold him back, and he kicked her in the head. The karmic ripening for this deed was an iron wheel that came spinning down on his head, cutting into it and causing him unbearable pain. Due to the merit of his previous lifetimes, he developed compassion and thought, "In the realms of samsara many other beings are suffering like me for kicking their mothers in the head. May all their suffering ripen on me and may I alone bear it for all of them. May none of the others ever again experience such pain in any of their lifetimes." Due to the power of his compassion and this benefiting intention, the wheel flew into the air, his agony ceased, and he was reborn in the realms of the gods.

When Maitrakanyaka thought, "May all the suffering of those who experience the fruition of kicking their mothers in the head ripen on me, and may none of them experience such suffering again," he had developed compassion, not bodhicitta.

BCA Chapter 1, Verses 21 & 22, Text Sections 274-275

BCA 1-21, Text section 274-275

Both stanzas twenty-one and twenty-two allude to this story. If the mere intention to benefit a few people, such as the intention of Maitrakanyaka, is endowed with boundless merit, even without actually doing anything to relieve their pain, then how much greater will be the boundless merit of the bodhisattvas, who wish to free all sentient beings from their suffering and to establish them on the level of perfect buddhahood?

By simply having the beneficial intention to relieve the suffering of a few people, you already gain enough merit to achieve rebirth in the god realms. The wish of the

bodhisattvas, however, who strive to relieve all sentient beings of their individual and personal suffering, and who strive to establish all sentient beings, without excluding a single one, on the level of perfect enlightenment, is endowed with boundless qualities. Such a boundless wish brings equally boundless merit.

The Tibetan term *mdza' bo* can also be translated with 'Vallabha', a Sanskrit synonym for 'Maitra'. But in the context of the *Maitrakanyakaavanaana*, the proper translation of *mdza' bo* is Maitra or Mitra.

Another story shows the power of merit of a compassionate mind. Once a daughter and her mother fell into the river Ganga. The mother, while she was drowning, thought only about saving her daughter; the daughter thought only about saving her mother. Neither thought about saving her own life, and they both drowned, but due to the merit of their benefiting intention, they were born in the god realms. To this very day, people in India jump into the river Ganga and commit suicide with the wrong view that the blessing of this holy river will take them to the god realms. They do not realize that it is not the river that causes rebirth in the god realms but the power of one's altruistic motivation alone.

Once buddhahood is achieved, one has acquired the actual power to dispel the suffering of beings. This means that a Buddha forms the 'condition to dispel misery' and the 'condition to accomplish happiness' for all beings. The causes for attaining happiness must be created by sentient beings themselves. The Buddha provides the perfect condition by showing the path to enlightenment. Though the Buddha showers all sentient beings constantly with his blessings, beings need to walk the path to enlightenment themselves. Beings are supported on the path by the Buddha, but they themselves have to overcome their obscurations and actualize their innate buddhanature. It is not the case that the blessings and powers of the Buddha relieve beings of all their suffering. Under the perfect guidance of the Buddha, beings must traverse the path to enlightenment themselves.

Even though I am the Muni, I can neither wash away deeds Nor wipe off the suffering of beings with my hand. Although I cannot transfer my realization to others, I can lead them to liberation through my teachings on the peace of the natural state. A Buddha can only reach beings with whom he has a connection through his aspirations from former lifetimes when he was still a bodhisattva. When the good karma of beings and the aspirations of a Buddharipen, beings may reach instant realization. That is reported in life stories of the Buddha and the great masters. But again, this reflects a strong connection from former lifetimes. For us, our bad karma has placed us at some distance from the Buddha.

Through our practice and aspirations, however, we can move closer quickly. The blessing of the Buddha works constantly in our minds, whether or not we are aware of it. The blessing of the Buddha creates the circumstances for the force of negative thoughts and emotions to decrease and for virtuous thoughts and emotions to increase.

The activities of Buddha's body, speech and mind enter into the mind-streams of beings. His teaching activity is described by the great Tibetan master Gorampa:
"Sounds, words and letters appear in the individual mind-streams of the audience on the basis of a Buddha as a condition".

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 23, Text Sections 276-277

BCA 1-23, Text sections 276-277:

Even parents, considered to be the most well-meaning beings in the world, as they wish their children to be well and successful, lack bodhicitta of aspiration, the benefiting intention of bodhisattvas, who wish to establish all beings on the level of perfect buddhahood. Parents wish the best for their children, but their aspirations are very limited and concern only this life.

One might say that parents, being unlearned, simply lack knowledge about bodhicitta. The great sages and gods, however, who have the five worldly supernatural perceptions, should because of this be knowledgeable about bodhicitta. Nevertheless, even the great sages learned in *the eighteen great fields of knowledge* and the gods like Brahma, who possess the five worldly supernatural perceptions, lack bodhicitta. While Brahma has compassion and love for those beings that have taken rebirth in his sphere, he does not have this compassion and love for all sentient beings.

The eighteen great fields of knowledge are: 1) musical instruments, 2) amorous dalliance, 3) family maintenance, 4) calculation, 5) Sanskrit, 6) medicine, 7) rules of behavior, 8) fine arts, 9) martial arts, 10) philosophy, 11) yoga, 12) scholasticism, 13) memorization, 14) predictions based on stars, 15) astrology, 16) yantra-yoga, 17) ancient epics, and 18) historical analysis.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 24, Text Sections 278

BCA 1-24, Text section 278

The four states of Brahma are four stages of meditative absorption upon the following: loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. These four absorptions are within the mind of the god Brahma, who dwells on the first dhyaana within the seventeen realms of form. There are countless beings within the reaches of space who have reached the first dhyaana and who have taken rebirth as a Brahma god. These Brahma gods have not the slightest idea about bodhicitta.

The god Brahma believes that all celestial beings who have taken rebirth in his realm have come into existence due to his power; consequently, he regards them all as his children. That is his motivation for considering the beings in his realm with kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Even the great gods like Brahma and Indra, however, lack bodhicitta, the wish to establish all sentient beings on the level of complete enlightenment. This is not so surprising since the śraavakas and pratyekabuddhas also lack bodhicitta.

Buddha taught the meditation on *the four immeasurables*: immeasurable kindness, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable sympathetic joy, and immeasurable equanimity.

The Hiinayaana system teaches the meditation on the *four states of Brahma*, while Mahaayaana teaches *the four immeasurables*, which are qualities of the Buddha. The four states of Brahma are measurable, since Brahma's compassion and love extend only to those beings reborn in his realm. The four immeasurable qualities of the Buddha are truly immeasurable since they include all sentient beings. The god Brahma is not endowed with the four immeasurable qualities of the Buddha.

The four states of Brahma are very limited compared to the four immeasurable qualities of the Buddha. There are four particular reasons why the four states of Brahma are not called 'immeasurable': 1) they are not embraced by the intention of renunciation, 2) they are not embraced by bodhicitta, 3) they are not embraced by the view of emptiness and 4) they are not embraced by the wisdom that has realized the absence of an ego. At the time of the path, while on the way to enlightenment, the four immeasurables belong to 'the thirty-seven factors conducive for enlightenment'. At the time of fruition, once we have reached enlightenment, the four immeasurables are four qualities of the Buddha.

The lines of the four immeasurables are:

May all beings have happiness and the causes for happiness.
May they be free from suffering and the causes for suffering.

May they never be separated from sublime happiness devoid of suffering.
May they remain in boundless equanimity, without attachment to friends
or aversion to enemies.

Making the wish, “May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes for suffering,” is to focus with compassion on benefiting others. This is the compassion aspect of the bodhicitta motivation. Making the wish, “May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness,” is to focus with knowledge on perfect enlightenment. This is the knowledge aspect of the bodhicitta motivation. ‘Happiness’ here refers to the temporary happiness of the higher realms as well as to the ultimate happiness of liberation.

The cause for the temporary happiness of the higher realms within samsara is virtue that concords with worldly merit, such as the ten virtuous actions. The cause for the happiness of the arhats and pratyekabuddhas is virtue that concords with the liberation of Hinayaana. And the cause for the ‘sublime happiness’ of the buddhas and bodhisattvas is virtue that concords with the liberation of Mahaayaana. That latter happiness refers to virtue that is embraced by bodhicitta and by the realization of profound emptiness.

Every practitioner of Buddha’s teaching should practice the four immeasurables on a daily basis. When you meditate on the four immeasurables, you should include all sentient beings, expanding your mind to all dimensions at the same time. Connect to all infinite sentient beings. Penetrate the infinity of space with your ‘wisdom eye’, also called the ‘eye of space’. View all infinite world systems. Generate sincere love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

A person who meditates on the four immeasurables can never be harmed by a spirit or a demon, and such a person accumulates inconceivable merit. Someone who presents a gift or an offering to a practitioner who is meditating on these four immeasurables will also receive inconceivable merit. The four immeasurables are a very powerful practice, which creates the conditions for quickly attaining the realization of egolessness. When you generate great devotion, love or compassion, dualistic mind naturally stops, and you have a perfect chance to recognize mind nature. But if a practitioner only develops the different stages of mental stillness based on these four immeasurables, without having embraced his practice by the abovementioned four particular qualities of the four immeasurables, he will take rebirth in one of the four dhyana states. For a practitioner of the Mahaayaana path it is crucial not to confuse the practice of the four immeasurables with the practice of the four states of Brahma.

Mental training in the four immeasurables brings bodhicitta about easily. Thus, the four immeasurables are a cause for bodhicitta. Although gods and great sages of India had higher perceptions and might have known about teachings on bodhicitta, their own ego-clinging was too strong to allow them to show any interest in bodhicitta. Actually, fathers, mothers, sages and gods—none of them even in their dreams—have the wish to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of complete buddhahood. They all lack the vastly benefiting intention of bodhicitta. Without even the goal to attain enlightenment for their own sake, how could they have the wish to establish all beings on the level of perfect buddhahood? One of the Brahma gods, together with Bodhisattva Vajrapani, assists all the one thousand buddhas of this fortunate aeon. That particular god Brahma is a bodhisattva and knows about bodhicitta. He requests each of the thousand buddhas to turn the wheel of dharma.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 25, Text Section 280

BCA 1-25, Text section 280

Bodhicitta is the exalted jewel of mind, the king among thoughts. *That it has now taken birth in my mind is an unprecedented wonder*, as miraculous as the wish-granting tree of the gods appearing in the human world. Relative bodhicitta arises through the power of a spiritual friend, through the power of the cause, through the power of the root, through the power of studying, and through the power of familiarization with virtue.

See Khenpo Choga's commentary on 'development of relative bodhicitta, achieved through tangible indicators' at text section 242-247.

The 'power of the root' refers to compassion since the development of bodhicitta is based on compassion. Compassion leads to bodhicitta. 'Nying-je', the Tibetan term for compassion, means the 'foremost quality of the heart'. Someone who has accumulated many negative deeds in former lifetimes may find it impossible to develop bodhicitta in this life. Due to former negative deeds that person will have only negative thoughts and inclinations. Therefore, training in the methods for gathering the two accumulations and for purifying the two obscurations is extremely important.

Practicing the 'seven branch service' builds up the positive conditions in the mind necessary for bodhicitta to arise. The seven branch service is: 1) the branch of presenting offerings, 2) the branch of paying respect, 3) the branch of confessing negative deeds, 4) the branch of rejoicing, 5) the branch of requesting the buddhas to turn the wheel of dharma, 6) the branch of requesting the buddhas not to enter into nirvana, and 7) the

branch of dedicating the roots of virtue for the benefit of others. The practices of the seven branch service are explained in great detail in chapters two and three of the bodhisattvacaryaavataara.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 26, Text Sections 281-283

BCA 1-26, Text sections 281-282

The merit of bodhicitta of application cannot be fathomed for the following reasons: 1) the reaches of space are immeasurable, 2) the number of sentient beings is immeasurable, 3) the suffering of sentient beings is immeasurable, 4) the qualities of the Buddha are immeasurable, and 5) time is immeasurable. By contemplating on these five immeasurable objects, you realize that the qualities of bodhicitta of application are equally immeasurable and, therefore, cannot be fathomed.

Sentient beings are said to exist as far as space extends. To the farthest reaches wherein sentient beings exist, there also do exist karma and afflictions. To the farthest reaches wherein karma and afflictions exist, there also does suffering exist. Three kinds of suffering torment sentient beings: suffering of change, suffering upon suffering, and suffering in the making.

In a logical argument one would say, “The subject under consideration, bodhicitta, has infinite benefits because it focuses on the five immeasurable qualities.” If one states that the wish to merely relieve the headaches of other beings has merit without bounds, then it is only logical that the wish to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of perfect buddhahood has much greater merit.

Buddha himself repeatedly taught about the importance of precious bodhicitta. He did so to inspire his followers to generate the bodhicitta attitude constantly. Generating bodhicitta is not at all difficult. Once you have become used to it, you should remember it as often as possible during your daily activities. Beginners as well as old practitioners should read this commentary on the Bodhisattva-caryaavataara frequently and fuse their minds with the contents of this text. The Bodhisattva-caryaavataara is not a book to be studied for a few months or years and then to be left behind when one moves on to the next book. This book should accompany you through your entire life, until the very end. Its ultimate purpose is the attainment of enlightenment.

BCA 1-26, Text section 283:

In the quote from the Samaadhi-raaja-sūtra the phrase a *loving mind* or a *mind of kindness* refers to a mind infused with immeasurable kindness that thinks, “May all beings have happiness and the causes for happiness.” The merit of generating such a kind attitude only once surpasses by far the merit gained by offering boundless myriads of offerings to boundless numbers of buddhas every day. The phrase *does not match* literally means ‘does not come close to’ and connotes ‘cannot even compete in the slightest way’.

What benefits your mind most is what bears the most merit. When you genuinely develop a mind of loving kindness, your mind will become open and peaceful. If you present great offerings, the danger still exists that you might develop pride and arrogance, thinking, “I have offered the supreme offerings. No one gathers merit like I do.”

A practitioner whose mind is absorbed in meditation on kindness is also a supreme object for receiving offerings. If you present offerings to such a yogin, the karmic fruition will ripen for you in this very life. If a mind of kindness is so powerful, there is no need to mention the much greater benefits of bodhicitta of application.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 27, Text Section 284

BCA 1-27, Text section 284

A *merely benefiting intention* is the same as a mind of kindness. The benefiting intention of wishing all beings to be endowed with happiness bears more merit than offering the seven gems to the Buddha in person. Actually, the Buddha himself needs no offerings at all. He experiences no difference whether or not he receives offerings. For the Buddha there is no difference between a mere stone and a nugget of gold. For example, were one person to anoint the Buddha with fragrant substances on one side of his body, while another peeled off his flesh on the other side, the Buddha would regard both people in exactly the same way—with compassion. If he reacted to the first person with positive feelings and to the second with aversion, he would not be a buddha.

The best offering you can present to the Buddha is to enter onto the path to enlightenment and to treat beings with kindness. That is why a mind of kindness or a mind that trains in any of the four immeasurables is superior to presenting many material offerings to the Buddha. Cultivating such a mind supercedes offering all seven gems to all the buddhas. The reason for presenting offerings to the Buddha is to open up your mind and to reduce your own clinging to material possessions.

The seven precious substances are: 1) ruby, 2) sapphire, 3) lapis lazuli / beryl, 4) emerald, 5) diamond, 6) pearl, and 7) coral.

Another listing of the seven precious substances is: 1) lapis lazuli / beryl, 2) gold, 3) silver, 4) crystal, 5) quartz, 6) red pearl, and 7) emerald.

That bodhicitta of application—striving for the happiness of all beings, practicing the six perfections so that they all may reach the level of complete buddhahood—is far superior to presenting material offerings to the Buddha goes without saying. The first two lines of stanza twenty-seven refer to the four immeasurables, the bodhicitta of aspiration, and the latter two refer to the bodhicitta of application.

Bodhicitta of application is the resolution: “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation or wisdom, any of the six perfections.” Bodhicitta of application is committing to the causes for the attainment of enlightenment and is stronger than bodhicitta of aspiration, which is committing to the fruition.

Many practitioners spend considerable time arranging offerings on their shrines, becoming greatly involved with paraphernalia. Taking the teachings of Shantideva to heart, however, true practitioners should mainly transform their minds internally.

Buddha’s teachings are about a change of heart. Material offerings, shrine arrangements, extensive ceremonial paraphernalia are secondary means, the external aspect of practices to gather merit. Becoming over-involved in the outer aspects of Buddhist practice, you can easily lose the practice of the heart.

As Milarepa said:

Do not let virtuous practices of body and voice become too many
As the non-conceptual wisdom is in danger of vanishing.

Shantideva was a yogin of utter simplicity. He owned nothing at all. He had no shrine and no ritual instruments. Nevertheless, he became an enlightened being. The average Tibetan still has difficulty believing in Shantideva’s teaching of simplicity. They would rather trust in extensive rituals and offerings. Many people find it difficult to accept that a moment of kindness extended to all sentient beings is truly superior to presenting offerings to all the buddhas. When ordinary Tibetans talk about great merit they mean building temples, stūpas and statues. They strongly believe in the ‘external dharma’.

Only very few practitioners live their lives according to the 'internal dharma'. The Buddha taught only the internal dharma, and Shantideva practiced only the internal dharma. The yogins and masters of old practiced only the internal dharma. Nowadays, Buddhists have an overly strong focus on the external dharma, and the internal dharma is in danger of becoming lost. Shantideva is not saying that it is useless to present offerings. He is merely saying that developing bodhicitta is more beneficial.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 28, Text Sections 285-286

BCA 1-28, Text sections 285-286

All beings strive for happiness. Not knowing the causes for happiness, however, they constantly run toward misery. In their ignorance they behave like butterflies diving into flames. Exclusively pursuing sense gratification, beings bring on their own suffering. Their wish for happiness and the conduct they engage in to achieve happiness are diametrically opposed to each other. By constantly carrying out the ten non-virtuous deeds, they destroy the causes for their own happiness. In that way, they annihilate their own happiness in this and future lives. Sentient beings through their conduct seem to regard their own happiness as their worst enemy. They constantly destroy the causes for their own happiness.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 29, Text Section 287

BCA 1-29, Text section 287

Beings are rich in misery and impoverished in happiness. *Destitute* means to be poor in the sense of being without happiness and the causes for happiness. The causes for happiness are roots of virtue, which beings lack. On top of that, they are endowed with suffering and the causes for suffering. The causes for suffering are negative deeds and non-virtuous actions. Of these beings have plenty. Therefore, such beings must be called *miserable ones*. These are the object of focus for the bodhisattva, since bodhicitta can bring all states of happiness to beings and cuts them loose from the stream of suffering in this and all future lifetimes. Bodhicitta grants *temporary happiness*, which refers to rebirth in the higher states of samsara, in the realms of humans and gods. It also grants *ultimate happiness*, which refers to the attainment of complete enlightenment. The ultimate happiness and bliss is an unchanging bliss, also called supreme bliss.

Thus, with *great kindness* and love bodhicitta cares for all these miserable ones, satisfying them with temporary and ultimate happiness. To *satisfy* beings with ultimate bliss means to establish them on the level of buddhahood. With *great compassion* bodhicitta cuts through the stream of suffering.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 30, Text Sections 288-290

BCA 1-30, Text sections 288-290

The reason that beings constantly dwell in misery and lack happiness is their ignorance of the law of karma, the law of cause and effect. They do not know that virtuous deeds lead to happiness and that non-virtuous deeds lead to suffering. Bodhicitta clears away this ignorance with its *great knowledge*. Therefore, *no other power of virtue* can compare to bodhicitta. There is also no spiritual *friend* comparable to bodhicitta and no merit that compares to bodhicitta.

The Tibetan term for merit is 'sonam', 'that which has the capacity to eliminate suffering and has the power of virtue'. Merit connotes something with the power of increasing happiness and virtue while eliminating suffering and negative deeds.

Stanza twenty-nine and stanza thirty teach three special qualities of the bodhicitta of application. 1) Due to its great kindness, bodhicitta brings temporary and ultimate happiness to all miserable beings. 2) Due to its great compassion, bodhicitta disrupts the stream of suffering for this and all future lifetimes. And 3) bodhicitta clears away ignorance about the law of karma, the law of cause and effect. Due to its great wisdom-knowledge, bodhicitta teaches what to adopt and what to avoid. Therefore, bodhicitta is known as the 'internal teacher'. All these qualities of bodhicitta apply to the bodhisattva whose mind is infused with bodhicitta. Because the bodhisattva's mind is endowed with bodhicitta, he can teach beings the path to happiness. He can show them the way out of suffering and instruct them what to do and what to avoid.

Once a practitioner has understood bodhicitta's great qualities, he will not be able to live without bodhicitta. To gain certainty about bodhicitta's benefits, again and again one must meditate on each individual quality of bodhicitta, explained in this first chapter. Only then will a practitioner be inspired to train in the bodhicitta motivation and its application, the six transcendental perfections. Mere scholastic and theoretical understanding will not lead to practice, to a change of heart.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 31, Text Section 291

BCA 1-31, Text section 291 / stanza 31:

From stanzas thirty-one through thirty-six, Shantideva explains the qualities and the greatness of a person endowed with a mind that has developed bodhicitta. In doing this, he distinguishes the bodhisattva from someone who is considered a good person in a worldly context.

In a worldly context, if someone has done you a favor and you return this favor, you are considered a good person since you did not forget the kindness that was done to you. It is said, “Returning a favor received delights the gods.”

Bodhisattvas help and benefit beings without having been helped by others in the first place. Their motivation to help others is based neither on gratitude nor on the duty to return a favor. If the world praises those who help others in return for favors received, it is needless to mention how much more worthy of praise are the bodhisattvas who help all sentient beings without having ever received the help of others. Bodhisattvas do not expect any reward from their actions of benefiting others, and they help without being asked. They have only one thought—to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of complete enlightenment.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 32, Text Section 292

BCA 1-32 Text section 292

In India the custom still exists of giving donations of food to a group of poor people. A benefactor, for instance, will give food to a group of maybe five hundred beggars.

Limiting one’s generosity to only one particular group is called generosity toward an *inferior object*, or toward an inferior object of focus. A sponsor might donate food continuously, *a constant food supply*, for a limited period, like a year, six months and so forth. He might also give food just once, his generosity continuing for the time-span it takes to complete the action of giving the food. To limit one’s generosity to a certain and limited period of time is called generosity with an *inferior time-span*.

What the donor gives is merely food, which is called an *inferior substance*.

This custom of feeding beggars is practiced all over the world. People merely donate food, *without donating any valuable gifts* such as money or gold, which could truly change the lives of those who are hungry. The donation of food might be made in a condescending way, shouting at the recipients or even beating them. This style of generosity is called *inferior application*. The benefit achieved is that the recipients will have a full stomach for half a day. That is called *inferior benefit*. Nevertheless, in a worldly context, such benefactors are praised by other people as having accomplished great virtue.

In the old days in India the local kings would always collect taxes from their subjects. Then, to improve their own image, they would sometimes announce a great spectacle of generosity and give food to all their subjects. That kind of generosity is really not amazing. First, the king takes money from his subjects, then he gives them a meal in return.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 33, Text Section 293

BCA 1-33, Text section 293

The bodhisattvas do not limit their generosity to a certain group of people but benefit all infinite sentient beings. They are benefactors not only for a limited period of time but indefinitely. What the bodhisattvas donate is not an inferior substance; they give the peerless bliss of the buddhas, the sugatas, to all beings. They bestow their gifts upon sentient beings in a most peaceful and respectful way. They bestow not inferior assistance, but they grant fulfillment of all the wishes of all sentient beings. Therefore, it is needless to mention how praiseworthy these bodhisattvas are. These last three stanzas, thirty-one through thirty-three, show the bodhisattvas to be exceptionally praiseworthy.

There are different levels of bliss: the bliss of an ordinary being, the bliss of an arhat, the bliss of a pratyekabuddha, the bliss of a bodhisattva, and the bliss of a buddha. An arhat has the bliss of peace. A pratyekaBuddha and a bodhisattva have higher levels of bliss, but still their experience of bliss is impermanent. Only the bliss of the Buddha is considered peerless, unmatched. There is no higher bliss than the bliss of the Buddha. This bliss is utterly unchanging and uncompounded.

The generosity of a bodhisattva differs greatly from ordinary generosity. Bodhisattvas are called great benefactors because they strive to fulfil every wish of all sentient beings. They strive to free all beings from the confines of samsara and to establish them on the

level of perfect buddhahood. The bodhisattvas' motivation is bodhicitta and compassion.

They manifest the transcendental perfection of generosity. Their generosity takes the form of giving material things, giving the dharma, and giving protection from fear.

Giving material things refers to three kinds of material giving: ordinary giving, great giving, and exceptionally great giving.

Ordinary giving means giving anything material, even if it is no more than a pinch of tea or a bowl of barley. If given with a perfectly pure intention, the amount is not important. The victors, who are skilled in means, are said to be able to help innumerable beings in the preta realms with a single drop of water or grain of barley by using the power of dhaaranis, mantras and other techniques. Many practitioners make regular offerings of burned food. These white and red offerings of burned food bring great benefit to preta beings that move through space. Spirits that otherwise feed on the lives of others can temporarily be satisfied by the smell of the burned food offering, and their minds are liberated by the additional gift of dharma. That is done by reciting the following lines:

Do not commit any negative actions;
Practice perfect goodness and
Tame your mind completely;
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

As a result of receiving these teachings, the pretas no longer harm others, and many beings are thus protected from the danger of death. This also constitutes giving protection from fear. In this way the practice of offering burned food includes all three kinds of generosity. Practitioners should try as well to be generous through such activities as making offerings to the three jewels and giving to beggars. Great giving means to give others something rare or very precious to you personally, such as your own horse, your house, or even all your wealth.

Exceptionally great giving is the giving of the bodhisattvas who dwell on one of the bodhisattva levels. They can give away their limbs, their body or their very life, as in the previous life story of the Buddha when he gave his body to a starving tigress and her cubs.

Giving the dharma is the cause that increases merit and refers to leading others to spiritual practice by giving empowerments, explaining the dharma, transmitting texts

and so forth. In order to teach the dharma to others, however, one must have reached a certain degree of experience and realization. Otherwise, one's efforts are a mere show and ego-gratification. Atisha's disciples asked him when they might be able to teach others, to work for others' benefit, or to perform the transference of consciousness for those who had just died. He replied as follows:

You may guide others once you have realized emptiness and developed
clairvoyance.

You may work for their benefit once you no longer think of your own benefit.

You may perform the transfer for the dead once you have entered the
path of seeing.

It is useless for a beginner with neither experience nor realization to try to help others with the dharma. No blessing can be obtained, just as nothing can be poured from an empty vessel. Instructions given by a beginner will be insipid and without substance, like beer made without the grains having been pressed.

Someone who is at the aspiration stage, who has signs of progress but has not yet established firm stability, cannot work for the benefit of beings. Such a person's blessings are like something poured from one vessel into another; he can only fill others by emptying himself. His instructions are like a lamp passed from hand to hand; if he gives light to others, he is left in the dark.

Someone who has attained one of the bodhisattva levels, however, is ready to work for the benefit of others. The blessings of such a person are like the power of a magic vessel; he can bring all beings to maturity without ever running dry. His instructions are like a central lamp from which others can take light without it ever dimming.

This degenerate age is, therefore, not a time for ordinary beings to help others externally, but rather it is a time for them to live in solitude and train their own minds in the love and compassion of bodhicitta. It is a time to keep away from afflictions.

Giving protection from fear means actually doing whatever you can to help others in difficulty. For instance, you can provide a refuge for those without any place of safety, give protection to those who lack a protector, and be with those who have no other companion. This refers particularly to such actions as saving beings from being killed or slaughtered, like saving the lives of dying fish, worms, flies and other creatures. It also refers to saving beings from going to the lower realms in their next lives by telling them about the benefits of virtue and the disadvantages of non-virtuous actions.

A bodhisattva is always willing to help others. As soon as someone knocks at a bodhisattva's door, three thoughts arise in his mind. 1) He understands the need to practice the dharma. 2) He understands the need to think about the next life. And 3) he understands the need to meditate on impermanence. Through these three thoughts great joy rises in the bodhisattva's heart.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 34, Text Sections 294-295

BCA 1-34 Text section 294

Someone who develops a negative attitude against a bodhisattva, a great benefactor of all beings, will take rebirth in hell for as many aeons as the duration of his negative attitude. The duration of a negative attitude is measured in ultimate split seconds. One ultimate split second is the duration of one finger snap divided by sixty-four. The person will dwell in hell for as many aeons as the number of ultimate split seconds in the duration of the negative attitude. This only concerns a negative attitude toward a bodhisattva. That the consequences of physically or verbally abusing a bodhisattva are much more severe than merely bearing ill-will in one's mind against a bodhisattva is needless to mention.

Bodhisattvas are called potentially dangerous, perilous, sensitive or formidable objects because of their great value to all sentient beings. Whoever harms a bodhisattva harms all sentient beings. To harbor anger against all sentient beings and to harbor anger against a single bodhisattva is almost equal in negative consequences. Killing the pilot of a jumbo jet is equal to killing all the passengers.

Killing a mother bird causes all her chicks to die. The bodhisattva is in the same way considered to be the leader of all beings, the mother of all beings, and the benefactor of all beings. Harming a bodhisattva is equal to harming all beings and, therefore, is a cause for taking direct rebirth in hell. Paltrül Rinpoche always emphasized training in pure perception and treating all beings with great respect since we do not know who is a bodhisattva and who is not. Since we have unknowingly accumulated considerable negative karma by bearing ill-will against other people who might be bodhisattvas, confession is imperative.

Whoever harms a bodhisattva is trying to destroy a mind imbued with the intention of freeing all sentient beings from suffering and establishing them on the level of complete enlightenment. Harming such a person is the attempt to destroy the happiness of infinite sentient beings, a severe negative action which inevitably leads to rebirth in the

hell realms. Though the bodhisattva who is harmed bears not even the slightest ill will against the person who inflicts harm upon him and instead showers him with love and compassion; nevertheless, that individual has accumulated tremendous negativity and will have to experience its karmic ripening.

When we perceive negative aspects within a person, we should carefully reflect about our perception on three levels:

- 1) Externally, a person might appear to be bad and might also be subject to negative reports from other people. Based on this information, all we can justifiably say is that we have a negative feeling about that person.
- 2) Internally, we cannot know for sure whether or not that person is actually bad. If we truthfully ask ourselves what we really know about him, we have to admit that we lack higher perception and, therefore, cannot read the minds of others. We can never say for sure, "That person is not a bodhisattva." We can only guess what his true motivation might be.
- 3) Ultimately, even a being from a hell realm is in essence a primordially pure buddha.

Regardless of what a person has done or does, he is still endowed with the buddhanature and deserves to be treated with respect and pure perception. Harming others, knowing that they are endowed with bodhicitta, is a grave misdeed. Talking negatively about a bodhisattva due to jealousy and aggression is a serious transgression. Knowing that a certain bodhisattva benefits beings greatly and yet slandering him anyway due to jealousy, or harming him out of ill-will, is the worst action one can commit. Knowingly harming a bodhisattva definitely causes tremendous negative karma. Unknowingly slandering a bodhisattva, being unaware that the person is a bodhisattva, is a less grave misdeed.

Vajrayana practitioners in particular have the spiritual commitment to train in infinite pure perception, to see the entire universe and all beings as pure manifestations of the buddhanature. Negative talk, gossip, or focusing on the mistakes of others is completely opposed to pure perception. The moment you enter into established Buddhism you must guard yourself against speaking badly about others and gossiping. A bodhisattva should only point out a mistake within another person directly or indirectly when he knows with certainty that the person will accept the criticism and will be helped by it. If a bodhisattva knows that criticism is not welcome, he must remain silent. If a bodhisattva can clearly see that a certain evildoer causes considerable harm to himself due to his negative behavior, then, motivated by great compassion, the bodhisattva may

point out to that person his own shortcomings. But a bodhisattva would never talk badly about others only for the sake of conversation.

BCA 1-34 Text section 295:

The Praśaanta-viniścaya-praatihaarya-sūtra, according to the Peking Kangyur, Vol, 32, page 51,2,1 reads: “Manjughosha! Be forewarned, since for as long as a bodhisattva develops a mind full of anger or a mind full of contempt toward (another) bodhisattva, for that many aeons will that bodhisattva dwell with the beings of the hell realms.”

The phrase *be forewarned* literally means ‘to don the armor (of courage)’ or ‘to put on the harness (of courage)’. It connotes ‘being certain’, ‘understanding clearly’, or ‘preparing oneself’. Since harboring a negative mindset toward a bodhisattva affects the happiness of all sentient beings, it creates boundless negative karma. This is the natural working of karma and not a punishment invented by Buddhist masters. Regardless of whether or not the bodhisattva is someone within the Buddhist hierarchy or someone living the life of an ordinary person, harboring ill-will toward a true bodhisattva harms all sentient beings. We cannot know who is a true bodhisattva and who is not. As Shantideva’s fellow monks did not recognize him to be a great bodhisattva, they were planning to expel him from the monastic community.

You should know the distinction between a ‘Buddhist practitioner’ and a ‘follower of the Buddhist system’. If you identify yourself with your spiritual community, your school and your philosophical system, you have already become a follower of organized religion. Next, you feel easily obligated to take a stance and defend ‘your school’ against all ‘other schools’. Without intending it, you have become involved in dharma politics. The ‘Buddhist practitioner’, on the other hand, simply strives to study and practice with his masters and stays away from group or dharma politics. He walks the path of truth. What he does and what he says accord with one another. He does not need to sweet-talk other people to achieve something, nor does he feel the need to put other people down.

He practices the dharma and minds his own business.

A follower of a religious system, however, feels the need to join a group and to take up biased positions. He identifies with hierarchical structures and rules as well as with cultural or ethnic groups. He will try to advance within the group hierarchy for his personal benefit. He does not say what he really thinks. He will praise and slander wherever he sees it benefiting himself. There is not much of a difference between a

member of a political or cultural party and a member of an institutionalized religion. All these systems are based on politics.

A beginner should from the very start train in pure perception, guarding himself against being drawn into negative views and gossip about other schools, systems, teachers, or practitioners. A beginner should understand that all beings are endowed with the buddhanature and are thus worthy of pure perception. Even if beings appear and act in a totally ordinary manner, in essence they are primordially pure buddhas. Consider all sentient beings to be future buddhas. If a beginner does not have the capacity to hold this view in his daily life, he should at least be honest with himself and think, "I don't know who is or who is not endowed with the precious bodhicitta. Therefore, I had better treat all people as if they were bodhisattvas."

Know that for ordinary beings like ourselves it is impossible to know the minds of others. We have no way to know whether or not someone else is a true practitioner. Tibet was full of examples of hidden practitioners who attained the rainbow body at the moment of death. Not even close family members realized that they had a true practitioner among them.

You should also realize that if you perceive mistakes in another person, this is often fifty percent your own mistaken perception and fifty percent the other person's mistake. People always naturally tend to see the mistakes in others but really must search for their good qualities. A practitioner searches only for the good qualities in other persons. He ignores and never tries to disclose other people's faults. Know that since we ourselves lack good qualities, we have only a very limited capacity to see the qualities in others.

From the very beginning, clearly distinguish between the precious dharma and the person involved with dharma. Only a perfectly enlightened Buddhatruly represents the dharma. All other students, teachers, lamas and masters are still on the path toward enlightenment.

A practitioner should first aspire to overcome the most dangerous mistakes in his own mind such as aggression, jealousy, pride and the like. Later he should learn how to deal with the more subtle mind poisons. Finally, he should overcome even positive fixations such as fixation on the Buddha.

It is of utmost importance to follow this sequence. The two most dangerous mind poisons are aggression and jealousy. Aggression is the direct path to the hell realms. The most dangerous aspect of jealousy is malevolence or ill will, the intention to destroy

the happiness of others. If these two kinds of mind poisons are diminished, one's mind will be happy and content. Never try to destroy a virtuous thought or intent in another person's mind. Never try to take revenge, regardless of how much harm others have inflicted upon you. Revenge is nothing other than ill will. A practitioner must look into his own mind and see if these dangerous tendencies have diminished or not.

If one's mind is governed by aggression and ill will, and if one, even after many years of practice, has not overcome these great defects, one is not a practitioner, regardless of how much one meditates or studies. The dharma has not penetrated one's being. The nature of the buddhadharma is positive thinking. The temporary purpose of the buddhadharma is to achieve a transformation of one's character. The ultimate purpose is the attainment of enlightenment. A practitioner is someone who harbors good intentions and thoughts. A beginning practitioner seeks to defeat his negative tendencies through positive thoughts.

As it is said:

The sign of true learning is a tamed and peaceful mind.
The sign of true practice is having few afflictions.

Most people who lack merit will not have the fortune to meet the dharma at all. Unless one has made aspirations in former lifetimes, it is almost impossible to come into contact with the three jewels. Only persons endowed with merit will have the good fortune to meet the right teacher early on. Some students are not benefited even when meeting genuine Buddhist masters but rather seek connections with teachers of lesser quality. This is the student's personal karma and the power of his personal aspirations. One meets only the teacher with whom one has a karmic connection.

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 35, Text Section 296-301

BCA 1-35 Text section 296

Whoever merely looks at a bodhisattva with a devoted attitude, with an attitude of admiration, and thinks, "This person is truly wonderful!" will gather incalculable merit. The positive consequences of generating devotion toward a bodhisattva are stronger than the negative consequences of generating a negative attitude against a bodhisattva. Even if one does horrible things to a bodhisattva, he will never retaliate and commit negative actions himself. Whatever happens to a bodhisattva is transformed into an

enhancement of virtue. The bodhisattva only manifests an ever increasing stream of goodness.

BCA 1-35 Text section 297:

Examples like those Khenpo Kunpal quoted from the Niyataaniyataa-mudraavataara-sūtra are called 'unlikely examples' or 'impossible examples'

.
A bodhisattva who is devoted to the great vehicle refers to a bodhisattva who is on the paths of accumulation and of application . Such a bodhisattva is a beginning bodhisattva. It is of special importance to help and support beginning bodhisattvas, whose bodhicitta is not strongly developed. Harming a beginning bodhisattva is a grave misdeed. As we cannot distinguish between beginning and advanced bodhisattvas, we should practice pure perception toward all beings.

Therefore, Buddha Shaakyamuni said, "Except for me or those like me, beings should not fathom beings".

This means that only the Buddha and tenth level bodhisattvas can truly distinguish the level of realization of other sentient beings. Only if we truly follow the conduct of a bodhisattva, do we avoid generating the negative karma of harming other bodhisattvas. Since knowing who is or who is not a bodhisattva is largely impossible, we cannot rely on our own judgement, and our only recourse is to practice pure perception.

BCA 1-35 Text section 298:

Bodhisattvas are beings *who turn bad omens into auspicious conditions, who allow bad conditions to arise as enhancements*. Bad omens connote bad signs, something inauspicious , and even obstacles. For ordinary beings all these situations and circumstances are something that must be avoided and not something that must be accepted or welcomed. Such beings seek out methods to overcome these difficult events.

When a bodhisattva yogin encounters bad omens and inauspicious events, he feels so confident and fearless that he invites them. He uses these obstacles to test his dharma practice. He perceives bad omens as auspicious circumstances, as aids. Instead of rejecting them he will joyously invite them. The yogin bodhisattva has the strength to transform obstacles into enhancements for his practice due to his bodhicitta. When the yogin dwells within bodhicitta without wavering , no circumstances can harm his practice. Everything he encounters becomes an enhancement. Even if suffering from a

mortal sickness, he takes this as an enhancement for his practice, joyously thinking, “May the suffering and sicknesses of all sentient beings ripen on my body. May all sentient beings be established on the level of ultimate happiness.” In this way he views any situation with the ‘eye of bodhicitta’. He dwells within bodhicitta unmoving like a mountain.

BCA 1-35 Text section 299:

Whatever adversities bodhisattvas may experience, however badly people might treat them, their dharma practice will not be impeded. They perceive negative conditions as *something that purifies (their former) negative deeds, as something that brings forth virtue*. Initially, everything they experience supports them, encouraging them toward virtue. Next, adversities provide the condition for letting virtue increase, eventually creating the causes for the bodhisattvas to attain complete and perfect enlightenment. Many bodhisattvas attained enlightenment based on bad friends and difficult circumstances.

The famous nun Palmo suffered from leprosy. She practiced the sadhaana of Avalokiteśvara, was cured of her disease and, in her very body, went to the celestial Buddhafields. Milarepa reached enlightenment due to the kindness of his enemies. A practitioner must know the key point of how to transform negative conditions into enhancements for practice. Only then will dharma practice flourish.

As serious as a practitioner’s difficult experiences may be, he should understand them as something that purifies his former negative deeds. People who slander him become the true object of his pity and compassion, since he knows they are accumulating bad karma. At the same time, he also knows that he is experiencing the slander due to his own bad karma. If a practitioner had no bad karma left at all, no one would ever speak negatively about him. All the gossip, slander, evil talk, jealousy and so forth are simply a sure indication that one’s own bad karma is ripening. It is virtually impossible to say anything negative about the Buddha. One might not agree with his view, but to find a fault within the Buddha is difficult even for negatively-minded people. There are neither karmic causes nor karmic conditions remaining within the Buddha.

If true bodhisattvas are slandered, their fame becomes greater. If you beat and abuse a true bodhisattva, his charisma will shine forth to an even greater extent. All negative conditions are for him an enhancement and remove obstacles.

Tulku Urgyen instructed that every practitioner should apply the sūtra teaching on training in goodness in four ways:

Although accused, do not respond with accusation.
Although attacked, do not respond with aggression.
Although beaten, do not strike back.
Although exposed, do not respond by exposing others.

Tulku Urgyen commented that you might be falsely blamed for something terrible. You might be accused of something bad you did not do or say. A yogin does not respond to accusation by saying, "I didn't do it." He does not retaliate by accusing others. When anger or aggression comes at him, he never answers with aggression. However harsh the words may be, however bold the aggressor, the yogin does not get upset. Even if attacked physically and beaten, he never hits back; he sits still, taking the beating silently. As long as the yogin is on the path, he is not free from defects. So, when someone exposes his faults, he does not become upset or defensive. He might say, "What you observe is true. I am at fault."

If you apply these points, you will have no enemies; you will not be a target for aggression. Whatever bad things might be said or done to you, they will cause no harm. As you do not respond to negativity, people will tire of picking fights with you. Train yourself and try to accomplish this much patience. If you stick to these points, you may be called a practitioner. Give the gain to others and keep the loss for yourself. Allow others to be right, even if it makes you wrong.

Behavior should always accord with the teachings.
Do not be disturbed; harmonize with every situation.
Do not waste time in pointless endeavors, such as socializing and watching movies.
Do not spend time in idle talk and gossip.
Do not be careless in your actions.
Keep the precepts and vows you have taken.
Persist in gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom.
Always generate devotion to your root guru.
Be courageous in the view; be humble in your conduct.
Do as Tilopa advised Naropa:
Child, perception arises interdependently.
Naropa, until you realize the unborn essence
Never leave the vehicle Of the two accumulations.

This is how Tulku Urgyen taught on training in goodness in four ways.

BCA 1-35 Text section 300:

Those practitioners who are meek in courage and unskilled in the techniques of the bodhisattvas are easily overwhelmed the moment a few minor inconvenient circumstances arise. In order to become courageous, a practitioner must train his mind through meditation on bodhicitta. A bodhisattva should alternate between times of retreat and seclusion on the one hand and times of engagement with ordinary beings on the other. After a period of time in retreat he should check whether he can maintain his bodhicitta in the face of negative-minded people. You should train in all methods of dispelling obstacles and applying enhancements. A meek bodhisattva is someone who has not applied the methods of mind-training and who lacks endeavor. Those 'unskilled in methods' refers to those who lack knowledge. Such practitioners are easily overwhelmed by minor inconvenient circumstances.

When they are well fed and warmed by the sun they look like real practitioners, but they cannot handle any difficult situation without losing their composure. They look like real practitioners, like models for (real) practitioners, but in fact they are just feeble imitations, poor copies of a real practitioner.

As it is said:

Well fed and warmed by the sun, he is a role model for practitioners.
When meeting difficult circumstances, he is an ordinary being.

BCA 1-35 Text section 301:

Such feeble copies of practitioners are like candles in the wind. Wind can be either an aid or a hindrance for fire. When the wind rises, a small candle is blown out. In that case the wind has become a hindrance to the fire. Even when a strong wind blows, it does not harm a forest fire but enhances it. In the same way, a feeble practitioner falls apart in the face of obstacles, while a true practitioner is stable in his bodhicitta practice and transforms every situation into an aid on the path to enlightenment. In adversities his realization is greatly enhanced. He is like a forest fire that is supported by the wind. The stronger the wind blows, the stronger does the fire blaze.

The signs of a good dharma practitioner are devotion, compassion, renunciation, wisdom-knowledge, certainty, radiant confidence, a happy frame of mind, a peaceful frame of mind, inner courage and fearlessness. He practices the ten virtuous actions to the best of his ability and avoids the ten nonvirtuous actions as much as he is able. He embraces all his actions with bodhicitta. The abovementioned qualities all stem from a mind well trained in bodhicitta. These are some guidelines for a practitioner.

There are two kinds of circumstances, positive circumstances and negative ones. A practitioner must train in bodhicitta so that he no longer becomes afraid and weak in the face of negative circumstances. Negative circumstances are easy to recognize. One should understand that positive circumstances can become a great obstacle for a practitioner. When a yogin becomes famous, gathers many students and receives great donations and offerings, he must by all means remain humble and free from attachment. He must constantly meditate on the 'four ends of impermanence':

The end of birth is death.

The end of gathering is dispersal.

The end of riches is loss.

The end of high positions is to fall.

When people treat a bodhisattva respectfully, he must respond with humility. When others treat him badly, he must generate internal courage and never lose his composure.

BCA 1-36, Text sections 302-306 / stanza 36:

Here, Shantideva offers respect and homage to all those who have developed the precious bodhicitta in their minds. Bodhicitta is the cause that brings happiness to all beings, the cause that frees all beings from suffering.

A Buddhai born from a bodhisattva. After three incalculable aeons as a bodhisattva, Shaakyamuni finally attained buddhahood. A bodhisattva is born from compassion. Therefore, you should first offer homage and respect to compassion. Candrakīrti and Shantideva said that when you pay respect to a bodhisattva, you pay respect to bodhicitta. You are honoring the compassion of that bodhisattva.

Whoever harms a bodhisattva will eventually be freed from samsara, although he must temporarily take rebirth in hell. This refers to the saying: *"In case of a good connection you will reach buddhahood in one lifetime, and in case of a bad connection you will eventually reach the end of samsara."*

An example for a bad connection with the Buddha is the monk Sunakṣatra, who served the Buddha for twenty-five years and knew the entire tripiṭaka by heart. He thought he was equal to the Buddha and could not see any superior quality in the Buddha. The consequences of that negative attitude toward the Buddha are said to be 500 rebirths as a preta and final rebirth in the Avīci hell. It is further predicted that Sunakṣatra will be liberated at the time of 'Buddha Rocana', the last Buddha of this

‘Fortunate Aeon’. This illustrates the case of someone with a bad connection to a bodhisattva or a buddha. Despite his bad connection, he will eventually be liberated from samsara.

Those who have no connection to the dharma at all but who only harm beings will stay in samsara endlessly. Anyone who has a connection to the dharma, however, will eventually reach enlightenment because the root of liberation has been implanted in their minds. It is predicted that at the end of this Fortunate Aeon in which one thousand buddhas will appear, at the time of ‘Buddha Rocana’ all beings with a connection to the dharma will take rebirth in Sukhaavatii, the Buddhafield of Amitaabha.

People who have broken their Vajrayana samaayas (spiritual pledges) with their root gurus must endure rebirth in the hell realms for a long time, but this does come to an end. That is called *reaching the end of samsara*. Root gurus cannot liberate their bad students from the consequences of their broken samaayas. Even the Buddha himself cannot save beings from their karma. The buddhas, bodhisattvas and teachers are only the external conditions enabling sentient beings to develop their internal qualities and to purify their own obscurations. In the case of bad students, since the teacher has implanted the seed for liberation in their minds, even though they must take temporary rebirth in the hell realms, their samsara will come to an end, and they will eventually reach enlightenment.

You might ask, “Who is better off? Someone with absolutely no contact with the dharma, who commits negative deeds, or someone who practices under a qualified master and breaks all the precepts, commitments and samaayas?” The answer is, “The one who breaks all his samaayas will take rebirth in the hell realms but will eventually attain enlightenment due to the blessings and aspirations of the buddhas, bodhisattvas and his root guru. People who have committed negative deeds on the other hand have no chance to meet the dharma because the seed for liberation was never implanted in their minds.

For the bad student samsara will eventually come to an end; for the bad person without any connection to the dharma, there is no end to samsara.” What the Buddha has said about this must be understood in the context of infinite time. The Buddha clearly perceives the infinity of time and can see the law of cause and effect directly. Ordinary beings only consider how to make it through the day, the week, a month, a year, or this life. Their view of time is extremely limited compared to the Buddha’s wisdom perception. From the perspective of infinite time, it is always better to have some connection with a bodhisattva, be it a good or a bad one. Seen from a limited perspective of time, a bad connection with a bodhisattva looks very frightening.

In text section 302, Khenpo Kunpal refers to the story of the sage Kshaantivaadin, whose enemies tested his patience by slowly mutilating his body. This story illustrates that any kind of mistreatment can become a cause for increasing the virtue of a bodhisattva. The poor and miserable are the cause for the bodhisattva's practice of generosity. A negative person is the cause for the bodhisattva's practice of patience. Those in great distress and suffering are the objects of the bodhisattva's practice of compassion. Everything a bodhisattva encounters enhances the power of his practice. Everything serves to remove obstacles and enhances practice. In this way, bodhisattvas can perfect their skills only by facing the world.

For example, if an evil being physically harms a bodhisattva, that being will definitely take rebirth in the lower realms and experience the ripening of his negative karma. However, as the bodhisattva himself harbors no ill will but instead includes the evil person in his aspiration prayers, the evil person will eventually embark on the path to enlightenment due to the power of the bodhisattva's aspiration. Having understood the special qualities of the buddhas and the bodhisattvas, one should actually begin to practice taking refuge, developing bodhicitta, offering confession and so forth. Mere theoretical knowledge does not help to reach enlightenment.

BCA 1-36, Text section 307:

Most people in Tibet have an affinity toward Mahaayaana. They aspire to reach enlightenment; they aspire to become buddhas. In addition, at the time of Khenpo Kunpal, most Tibetans had received empowerments and thus had taken the refuge and bodhisattva precepts. Anyone who has developed bodhicitta has become an object of respect and worthy of offerings from all beings and gods. Such people will eventually become buddhas in the future. Therefore, Khenpo Kunpal says one should treat all people with respect, confess the slander and disrespect one previously committed, and promise to abstain from similar negativities in the future. Everyone should be treated with pure perception and as an object of refuge. In the sūtra context, training in pure perception means thinking that all sentient beings are bodhisattvas and, therefore, treating them with respect and kindness.

As it is said:

Whenever I detect flaws in others
May I look at my own mistakes.
May I recognize my own mistakes and
Practice pure perception.

If you perceive flaws and mistakes in someone, check carefully where your own negative thought and judgement about that person are coming from. A pure mind cannot see flaws in others. A Buddha would never judge any being to be evil. A Buddha will perceive beings as being caught up in their own bad dreams. He perceives the beings as well as their negative dreams, and he perceives them both as non-existing illusions. At the same time, he continues to perceive beings themselves as pure.

The perception of a Buddha and the knowledge of a Buddha differ. Although a Buddha has no impure perception, he recognizes beings' impure perceptions. While knowing all perceptions of others, he himself is free from all impure perception. Thus, the purity of one's perception depends on the purity of one's own mind. A pure mind has pure perception. For example, it is said that pretas perceive water as consisting of pus and blood, gods perceive water as nectar, while human beings perceive water as water. Our impure perceptions of the world are a magical display of our ignorance. Based on this ignorance, various reactions such as likes and dislikes manifest. We are like people with an eye disease that causes them to perceive a white conch to be yellow. We should not try to change the conch but rather find the cure for the affliction. The cure is to train our minds in bodhicitta and pure perception. The basis for pure perception is the fact that all beings actually are primordially pure, primordially buddhas.

BCA 1-36, Text section 308:

In these degenerate times, however, even bodhisattvas accumulate misdeeds easily because of thinking badly about others. It is easy to think, "That person is really bad," thus accumulating a misdeed. It is better to practice pure perception and ignore the defects of others. We should be like the Indian Brahmins who consider the moon to be a god. They do not worship the full moon but only the moon on the third day, the day when it begins to wax. These Brahmins consider the third day as the day of the moon god's birth. By prostrating to the moon of the third day they acknowledge the preciousness of the moon god's birthday.

Just as a crown prince is honored because he will become king, by honoring a bodhisattva we honor someone who will eventually become a buddha. The bodhisattva's practice of bodhicitta is the cause for his becoming a buddha. A bodhisattva is a Buddha in the making. Beginning bodhisattvas are like baby buddhas. Just as one nurtures children with kindness, one should support bodhisattvas, as they are on their way to becoming buddhas. Honoring a bodhisattva is like honoring a prince, an heir to the throne. Eventually, the prince will take hold of the kingdom. Even

Buddha Shaakyamuni honors and prostrates to bodhicitta because bodhicitta is the teacher of all the buddhas. In this manner even a fully enlightened Buddhalike Buddha Shaakyamuni always honors his teacher.

BCA 1-36, Text section 309:

Though one might perceive a flaw in a bodhisattva, a flaw is just something compounded, something that will eventually cease to exist due to the power of the bodhisattva's meditation. Bodhisattvas are not perfect at the beginning. Only the Buddha is utterly perfect. Therefore, the most important advice concerning pure perception is not to dwell on other peoples' mistakes.

Bodhicitta is like a wish-fulfilling jewel. In the case of a beginning bodhisattva, this jewel is still covered with dirt. Nobody would ever consider a dirt-encrusted, wishfulfilling jewel as something bad, but it does need cleaning. While the beginning bodhisattva proceeds on the way to enlightenment, his obscurations and defilements will gradually be cleared away, and all the inherent qualities of the buddhanature will become manifest.

The aim of every bodhisattva is to attain enlightenment as quickly as possible. The more a bodhisattva progresses along the five paths and the ten levels, the more will he be able to help sentient beings. The transcendental perfection of diligence means to strive for complete enlightenment with all of one's capacity.

The Buddha is endowed with the most powerful capability to help others. He can benefit countless beings in infinite world systems. His sphere of influence includes all the Buddhafiels of the three kayas. Bodhisattvas cannot benefit beings to take rebirth in the dharmakaaya Buddhafiels nor in the sambhogakaaya Buddhafiels. They are able to establish beings only in nirmanakaaya Buddhafiels.

The nirvana of a perfectly enlightened Buddhadoes not end his activities for sentient beings. However, when an arhat enters into nirvana, he cannot continue to help beings since arhats do not make extensive aspirations to liberate sentient beings. Mainly concerned with their own liberation, they fail to create the auspicious connection to help others.

When an arhat enters into nirvana, he abides in the peaceful and happy state of wisdom. He might remain in this state for ten aeons, or even a hundred aeons, until his merit is finished and he is awakened by light beams emitted from the Buddha. In the arhat's own perception the duration of one hundred aeons does not seem to be long, since the

arhat has no sense of time in this state. A bodhisattva would never aim for his own personal liberation, the limited enlightenment of an arhat.

The Bodhisattva-caryaavataara teaches the perfect way of the bodhisattva. Read this text and its commentary over and over again. Each time you will reach a new level of understanding. The Bodhisattva-caryaavataara is a textbook as well as an instruction manual. This book is a commentary on the intent of all of the Buddha's immaculate teachings. It requires intense study mingled with practice. The teachings of this book must be applied to your mind. Even if the words of the text are easy to read, bringing the meaning of the text into one's mind and keeping it there is not at all easy.

Theoretical understanding of the Bodhisattva-caryaavataara will not change your character. Only if you devote yourself to its practice will realization eventually dawn in your mind. You must study the text and contemplate its meaning. You must practice its methods for gathering the accumulation of merit. You must implement the practice of the six transcendental perfections in your daily life. As the main point, you need to realize the wisdom of egolessness, to recognize your own buddhanature. This realization is utterly dependent on gathering the accumulations, purifying the obscurations, and receiving the blessing of your root guru.

As it is said:

As far as the ultimate, the co-emergent wisdom, is concerned,
Know that it is foolish to rely upon methods other than
Practices for gathering the accumulations and purifying obscurations
As well as the blessing of the glorious root guru.

Mind is primordially endowed with wisdom. Mind and wisdom are co-emergent or co-existent. They cannot be separated. They exist at the same time, without former or latter. Buddhahood is only attained if the co-emergent wisdom is realized.

Seen from the ultimate level, ignorance has no root and no basis. To allow this non-existent ignorance to be cleared away and to let coemergent wisdom manifest, we must gather the accumulations of merit and wisdom, purify the two obscurations, afflictive and cognitive, and receive the blessings of the guru.

If you rely on other methods to realize co-emergent wisdom, you are foolish.

Once the obscurations are purified, realization will dawn naturally. The blessing of the master only descends through the student's faith. Faith is the very root of blessing. Faith and devotion are the essence of guru yoga.

BCA 1-36, Text section 310:

The conduct of the bodhisattvas refers to the six transcendental perfections, the four means of attraction, the three trainings and so forth.

END

**BCA CH. 1 COMMENTARY
BY DZOGCHEN KHENPO CHOGA RINPOCHE**