



Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Tibetan Manuscript

Tibetan Buddhism

Śāntideva's Bodhisattva Vow

[*Śāntideva was an 8th century Indian Mahāyāna philosopher of the Mādhyamika school (in the line from Nāgārjuna). His text, the Bodhicaryāvatāra (Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life) still exists in Sanskrit and its Tibetan translation is universally used in the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama regards this text to be of paramount importance. In the film Kundun, about the life of the Dalai Lama, we hear these opening verses as the young Dalai Lama is given his first instruction.*]

8. May I be the doctor and the medicine
And may I be the nurse
For all sick beings in the world
Until everyone is healed.
9. May a rain of food and drink descend
To clear away the pain of thirst and hunger
And during the eon of famine
May I myself turn into food and drink.
10. May I become an inexhaustible treasure
For those who are poor and destitute;
May I turn into all things they could need
And may these be placed close beside them.
11. Without any sense of loss
I shall give up my body and enjoyments
As well as all my virtues of the three times
For the sake of benefitting all.
12. By giving up all, sorrow is transcended
And my mind will realize the sorrowless state.
It is best that I now give all to all beings
In the same way as I shall at death.
13. Having given this body up
For the pleasure of all living beings,
By killing, abusing, and beating it
May they always do as they please.
14. Although they may play with my body
And make it a thing of ridicule,
Because I have given it up to them
What is the use of holding it dear?
15. Therefore I shall let them do anything to it
That does not cause them any harm,
And when anyone encounters me
May it never be meaningless for him.
16. If in those who encounter me
A faithful or an angry thought arises,
May that eternally become the source
For fulfilling all their wishes.
17. May all who say bad things to me
Or caus me any other harm,
And those who mock and insult me,
Have the fortune to fully awaken.

18. May I be a protector for those without one,
A guide for all travelers on the way;
May I be a bridge, a boat, and a ship
For all who wish to cross (the water).
19. May I be an island for those who seek one
And a lamp for those desiring light;
May I be a bed for all who wish to rest
And a slave for all who want a slave.
20. May I be a wishing jewel, a magic vase,
Powerful mantras, and great medicine;
May I become a wish-fulfilling tree
And a cow of plenty for the world.
21. Just like space
And all the great elements such as earth,
May I always support the life
Of all the boundless creatures.
22. And until they pass away from pain
May I also be the source of life
For all the realms of varied beings
That reach unto the ends of space.
23. Just as the previous Lords of Bliss
Conceived the enlightenment spirit,
And just as they successively lived
By the Bodhisattva practices,
24. Likewise for the sake of all that lives
Do I conceive the spirit of enlightenment,
And likewise shall I too
Successively follow the practices.
25. In order to further increase it from now on,
The intelligent who have vividly taken
The spirit of enlightenment in this way
Should extol it in the following manner:
26. "Today my life has borne fruit;
Having well obtained this human existence,
I've been born in the family of Buddha
And now am one of Buddha's children.
27. Thus whatever actions I do from now on
Must be in accord with the family tradition.
Never shall I do anything to disgrace
This holy, faultless family!
28. Just like a blind man
Discovering a jewel in a heap of trash,
Likewise by some coincidence
I have found the enlightenment spirit within
me.
29. It is the supreme elixir
That overcomes the lord of death;
It is the inexhaustible treasure
That eliminates all poverty in the world.
30. It is the supreme medicine
That cures the world's disease.
It is the evergreen tree that shelters all beings
Wandering tired on the roads of life.
31. It is the universal bridge
That frees beings from wretched lives,
It is the rising moon of the mind
That dispels the torment of addictions.
32. It is the great sun that burns away
The misty ignorance of the world;
It is the quintessential butter
From the churning of the milk of Dharma.
33. For all guests traveling the path of life
Who wish to experience the true happiness,
This spirit will satisfy them with joy
And exalt them in the highest bliss.
34. Today in the presence of all the saviors
I invite the world to be my guests
At the feast of temporal and ultimate bliss.
May gods, titans, and all be joyful!

This selection taken from Robert A.F. Thurman,
Essential Tibetan Buddhism (San Francisco:
HarperCollins, 1995).

I. Mādhyamika Philosophy

Atīśa's Pith Saying

When Atīśa arrived in Tibet, his three disciples, Ku, Ngog, and Brom, asked him, "To attain the high state of liberation and omniscience, which is more important to follow, the precept of the lama, or the scriptures and commentaries?"

Atīśa replied, "The precept of the lama is more important than the scriptures and commentaries."

"Why?" they asked.

"If you know that emptiness is the prime characteristic of all things, and even if you can recite the entire canon by heart, if, at the time of practice you do not apply to yourself the precept of the lama, you and the Dharma will go your separate ways."

They asked, "Please define the practice of the precept of the lama. Is it simply striving to practice mental, verbal, and physical virtuous deeds, acting in accordance with the three vows of individual liberation, Bodhisattvahood, and Tantra?"

"Both of these will be insufficient," replied Atīśa.

"Why?"

"Although you keep the three vows, if you do not renounce the three realms of cyclic life (*samsāra*), your deeds will only increase your worldliness. Although you strive day and night to commit physical, verbal, and mental virtuous acts, if you do not dedicate your efforts to universal enlightenment, you will end up with numerous wrong attitudes. Even though you meditate and come to be considered holy and a wise teacher, if you do not abandon your interest in the eight worldly concerns, whatever you do will only be for the purpose of this life, and in the future you will miss the right path."

Again they asked, "What is the highest teaching of the path?"

Atīśa replied, "The highest skill lies in the realization of selflessness. The highest nobility lies in taming your own mind. The highest excellence lies in having the attitude that seeks to help others. The highest precept is continual mindfulness. The highest remedy lies in understanding the intrinsic transcendence of everything. The highest activity lies in not conforming with worldly concerns. The highest mystic realization lies in lessening and transmuting the passions. The highest charity lies in non-attachment. The highest morality lies in having a



Portrait of Atīśa, c.a. 1100

peaceful mind. The highest tolerance lies in humility. The highest effort lies in abandoning attachment to works. The highest meditation lies in the mind without claims. The highest wisdom lies in not grasping anything as being what it appears to be."

"And what is the ultimate goal of the teaching?"

"The ultimate goal of the teaching is that emptiness (*śūnyatā*) whose essence is compassion."

* * *

From *The Quintessence: The Mentor Worship*
by Panchen Lama I
Losang Chokyi Gyaltzen

Bless me to perfect the wisdom transcendence,
Through the yoga of ultimate-reality-spacelike
equipoise,
Connected with the intense bliss of the special fluency
Derived from wisdom of discrimination of reality!

Bless me to complete the magical *samādhi*,
Understanding the procedure of truthless appearance
Of outer and inner things, like illusions, dreams,
Or the reflection of the moon in water!

Bless me to understand Nāgārjuna's intended
meaning,
Where life (*samsāra*) and liberation (*nirvāṇa*) have no
iota of intrinsic reality,
Cause and effect and relativity are still inexorable,
And these two do not contradict but mutually
complement!

* * *

From *“Three Principles of the Path”*
by Tsong Khapa

Who sees the inexorable causality of things,
Of both cyclic life (*samsāra*) and liberation (*nirvāṇa*)
And destroys any objectivity conviction
Thus finds the path that pleases Victors.

Appearance inevitably relative
And voidness (*śūnyatā*) free from all assertions—
As long as these are understood apart,
The Victor's intent is not yet known.

But when they coincide not alternating,
Mere sight of inevitable relativity
Secures knowledge beyond objectivisms,
And investigation of the view is perfect.

More, as experience dispels absolutism
And voidness clears away nihilism,
You know voidness dawn as cause and effect—
No more will you be deprived by extremist views.

And bless me to cease attraction to false objects,



The Buddha with the five Tathāgatas, Central Tibet; early 13th century.

And through precise analysis of ultimate reality,
Swiftly to produce within my spiritual process
The integrated path of quiescence (*śamatha*) and
transcending insight (*vipaśyanā*)!

* * *

*Praise of Buddha Shakyamuni for His Teaching of
Relativity: The Short Essence of Eloquence*
by Tsong Khapa

Reverence to the Guru, Manjughosha!
I bow to that perfect Buddha, Supreme Philosopher,
Who taught us relativity, free of destruction, creation,
Nihilism, absolutism, coming, going, unity, and
plurality;
The calm beyond all fabrications, the bliss supreme!

I bow down to Him whose insight and speech
Make Him unexcelled as Sage and Teacher;
The Victor, who realized ultimate truth,
Then taught us it as relativity!

Misknowledge itself is the very root
Of all the troubles in this fleeting world;
Who understood that and then reversed it
Taught universal relativity.

Thus how could it be possible
That the geniuses would not understand
This very path of relativity
As the vital essence of Your teaching?

Such being the case, who could discover
Anything even still more wonderful,
To sing Your praises for, O Savior,
Than Your teaching of relativity?

"Whatever depends upon conditions
Is empty of intrinsic reality!"
What excellent instruction could there be
More marvelous than this discovery?

Though the naive can seize upon it
As just confirming their extremist bonds,
The wise use that same (relativity)
To cut open fabrication's net.

This teaching is not seen elsewhere,
So You alone are titled Teacher,
Mere flattery for fundamentalists,
As when you call a fox a lion!

Wondrous Teacher! Wondrous Refuge!
Wondrous Philosopher Supreme!
Wondrous Savior of the world!
I pay full homage to that Teacher
Who proclaimed universal relativity!

O benefactor! To heal all beings
You proclaimed (profound relativity),
The unrivaled reason to ascertain
Voidness (*śūnyatā*), the essence of the teaching.

How can one who understands
The process of relativity
As contradictory, or unestablished,
Ever understand Your art?

Your position is that when one perceives
Voidness as the fact of relativity,
Such voidness of reality does not preclude
The viability of activity;

Whereas when one perceives the opposite,
Activity is impossible in voidness,
Voidness is lost during activity;
One falls into anxiety's abyss.

Thus experience of relativity
Is most recommended in Your teaching,
Neither that of utter nothingness
Nor that of intrinsically real existence.

The nonrelative is like a sky-flower,
So there is nothing nonrelational.
Things' existence with objective status
Precludes dependence on cause and condition.

Thus You said that just because no thing
Exists beyond relational occurrence,
So nothing can really exist beyond
Voidness of intrinsic reality.

You said if things had any self-reality,
Since such could never be reversed,
Nirvana would become impossible,
Since fabrications could not be reversed.

Dauntless in the assemblies of the wise,
You clearly uttered Your lion's roar,
"Let there be freedom from identity!"
Who would presume to challenge it?

All systems are completely viable,
Since the lack of intrinsic reality
And relativity do not conflict;
Never mind they complement each other.

"By the reason of relativity,
There are no grounds to hold extremist views!"
For this excellent statement, You, Savior,
Are unexcelled among philosophers!

"All this objectively is voidness!"
And "From this cause comes this effect!"
These facts are mutually nonexclusive;
Certainties, they reinforce each other.

Than this, what could be more wondrous?
Than this, what miracle could more awe?
For this one principle, if You are praised,
It is real praise; and otherwise not so.

Those held in the thrall of delusions
Rise angrily to challenge You;
No wonder they should find unbearable
Your declaration of identitylessness!

But those who formally accept relativity,
The precious treasury of Your speech,
When they cannot bear the roar of voidness,
That really does amaze me!

The unexcelled relativity,
Doorway to identitylessness,
They hold it as a nominal identity;
How they deceive themselves!

These should be led by whatever art
Into that good path which pleases You,
The matchless haven well frequented
By all the supreme Holy Ones.

Intrinsic reality, uncreated and nonrelative,
And relativities, created and relational;
How can these two facts coincide
In a single instance without contradiction?

Therefore the relatively occurrent,
Though ever free of self-reality,
Appears as if intrinsically real;
So You said all this is like illusion.

From this very fact one well understands
The (centrists') statement that, the way You taught,
Those who would challenge Your teaching,
Rationally can find no fallacy.

Why? Because this Your elucidation
Makes utterly remote the tendencies
To reify and repudiate things
Empirical and hypothetical.

This very path of relativity,
Proof that Your speech is matchless,
Also generates complete certitude
Of the validity of Your other statements.

You speak well from experience of reality,
And those who train themselves under You
Go far beyond every kind of trouble,
Having abandoned the root of all evil.

But those who turn their backs on Your teaching,
Though they have struggled for a long time,
Decry many faults once outside again,
Because of a firm conviction about the self.

O wonder! The wise one understands the difference
Between following and not following your teaching.
Then how could he fail to feel most deeply
Great respect for You (and Your teaching)?

What need is there to mention Your many teachings?
To find even a rough, general certainty
About the precise meaning of even a small part
Confers, even that, the supreme happiness!

Alas, my mind conquered by confusion,
Though I came from afar to seek refuge
In the profusion of Your excellence,
I could not embody its smallest part.

Yet when I stand before the lord of death,
And the stream of life is not quite ended,
I will consider myself fortunate
To have even this slightest faith in You.

Among teachers, the Teacher of relativity,
Among wisdoms, the wisdom of relativity;
These are like imperial victors in the world,
Making You world champion of wisdom, over all.

Whatever You taught is penetrated
By means of relativity itself,
And since that really becomes Nirvana,
No deed of Yours does not deliver peace.

Yea! Whoever hears Your teaching
Finds liberating peace in everything;
So who could possibly not respect
The upholders of such a teaching?

As it overcomes all oppositions,
Is free from internal contradictions,
And fulfills both goals of human beings,
My delight ever grows for this system.

For the sake of this, You gave away
Again and again during innumerable aeons
Sometimes body, other times life,
Loved ones, and great wealth of possessions.

When I see such excellence of Yours,
I see that Your great heart brings forth the teaching,
Just like the fishhook drags out the fish;
What a sorry fate not to hear it from You!

But even with the force of that sorrow,
I will not let my mind waver (from the teaching),
As the mind of the mother
Always goes after her beloved child.

And even when I think upon Your speech,
"That Teacher, full-orbed with nets of light-rays,
Blazing with glory of auspicious signs and marks,
Spoke in this way with his Brahma voice!"

Then the image of great Shakyamuni
Just dawning in mind, heals me well,
As moon-rays heal the pains of fever.

Though that good system is thus marvelous,
Inexpert persons get totally confused
In every respect, as if they were
Tangled up in jungle grasses.

Having understood this problem,
I schooled myself in writings of skilled sages,
Studying with manifold exertions,
Seeking Your intent again and again.

And I studied numerous treatises
Of the Buddhist and the non-Buddhist schools,
Yet unremittingly my intellect
Was still tormented in the trap of doubt.
So I went to the night-lily garden of Nāgārjuna's
works,
Prophesied to elucidate correctly
The art of Your final Vehicle,
Free of the extremes of being and nothing.

There I saw, by the kindness of the Mentor,
All illuminated by garlands of white light
The true eloquence of the glorious Chandra moon,
Whose expanding orb of taintless wisdom
Courses freely in the sky of Scripture,
Dispels the darkness of extremist hearts,
Eclipses constellations of false truths;
And then my mind at last obtained relief!

Of all His deeds, His speech is the supreme.
And for this very reason, true sages
Should commemorate a perfect Buddha
For this teaching of relativity. . . .

I renounced the world on the example of that
Teacher,
My study of the Victor's speech is not inferior,
I am a Buddhist monk, energetic in yoga practice;
And such is my respect for that great Seer!

By my Mentor's kindness, I was thus fortunate to
meet
The liberating teaching of the unexcelled Teacher,
And I dedicate this virtue as a cause of all beings'
Being looked after by the holy spiritual teachers.

May the teaching of that Benefactor, 'til world's end,
Be undisturbed by the winds of wrong prejudices,
And, finding faith in the Teacher by understanding
The natural way of the teaching, may it ever increase!

May I uphold the wholesome system of Shakyamuni
That illumines the principle of relativity,
Through all my lives, though I give up body and even
life!
And may I never give it up, even for an instant!

May I spend all day and night reflecting
On the methods to propagate this teaching,
Achieved by that best Leader through boundless
hardships,
By making strenuous efforts the essence (of His lives!)

As I strive in this way with pure high resolve,
May Brahma, Indra, and the world protectors,
And Mahakala and the other Dharma defenders,
Always befriend me without fail!

* * *

II. Tāntric Texts

Creation of the Mandala Universe

From *Glorious Esoteric Communion Self-Creation Yoga*
by Tsong Khapa

There being no things, there is no meditator, nothing to meditate upon, and no meditation; since things are without reality, meditation is not to be perceived.

Since all animate and inanimate things are ultimately without reality, they have the nature of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, wherein meditated, meditation, and meditator are not perceived.

From the actuality of emptiness in a split second, in the center of the complete vajra ground, replete with fence, tent, canopy, and fire mountain, there is a white triangular reality source standing upright with an expansive top and tapered base. Within its fine lower point in the center of a lotus there is HUM YAM HUM. From the blue-gray YAM comes a blue bowshaped wind mandala, and from the two HUMS come two vajras to adorn the two sides. Upon that HUM RAM HUM from the red RAM comes a red triangular fire mandala, and from two HUMS come two vajras to adorn the two sides. Upon that HUM RAM HUM from the white RAM comes a round white water mandala, and from the two HUMS come two vajras to adorn the two sides. Upon that HUM LAM HUM from the yellow LAM comes a square yellow earth mandala, and from the two HUMS come two vajras to adorn the two sides. These being in reality the four goddesses, Lochana and so on, from the merging into one of the four mandalas there arises a double vajra on which is manifest a white BHRUM radiating light-rays of clouds of Buddhas, from which arises the square four-doored divine palace.

Its walls have five layers, from the outside in, white, yellow, red, green, and blue. Near the top of the wall is a red jewel frieze, adorned with jeweled squares and triangles. Its plate is formed by four golden colonnades. Over that protrude rafters shaped like crocodile heads, from whose mouths hang pearl nets and half nets. Outside that, jewel pendants hang from the edge of the roof. Above that is a balustrade in the shape of half lotus petals. It is beautified by eight banners and eight victory standards, which



stand in golden vases. Four royal umbrellas adorn the four outer corners. At the foot of the outer wall there is a red ledge; on which dance offering goddesses in various postures and colors, worshiping and making offerings. Vajra-decorated red gems stand on half moons in the outer portals of the gates and arches and at the inner and outer corners of the walls.

In front of each of the four doors there are gold triumphal arches, each supported by four pillars rising from vase-shaped footings, holding up the arch's facade of eleven layers, decorated with gold disks, pendants, jewels, silver horseshoes, munnam jewels, waranda stripes, pendants, jewels, hooves, and a parapet. At the peak of each arch there is a Dharma wheel flanked by a buck and a doe. On the right and left sides of the arches are wish-fulfilling gem trees growing from fine vases, bearing the seven precious necessities of a kingdom. All around are yogin Adepts. Goddesses leaning from the clouds hold garlands of flowers and beautify the mansion. On the floor of the divine palace, halfway within the mandala, is a raised circular beam with five-color lights on the outside and with three-pointed vajras on the inner side. Upon this in the east is a wheel, the south a jewel, the west a lotus, and the north a sword. There are two pillars on each side, which Support the

diamond roof beams that beautifully uphold the roof, its peak adorned with a jewel and a vajra.

On the right and left of each cardinal section of this upper stage are two jewel vessels each filled with nectar, with eight vessels in all. This supreme good palace of qualities exceeding gods and humans is clearly transparent from the outside in and clearly transparent from the inside out.

All the surfaces above and below are white in the east, yellow in the south, red in the west, green in the north, and blue in the center. Within there are thirty-one lotus seats; the central one and the ten terrible ones have sun cushions, the easterners, such as Vairochana, have moon cushions, Mamaki has a vajra seat, and the other southerners have jewel seats; westerners have red lotus seats, and northerners have crossed vajra seats. Upon these seats, in a split second by merely intense aspiration, all thirty-two deities simultaneously become perfectly manifest.

On the central seat is myself as blue Vajradhara: three faces, blue, white, and red; six arms holding vajra, wheel, and lotus in the right, and bell, jewel, and sword in the left, hair tied up in a crown ornament; adorned by the thirty-two marks and eighty signs. My consort is blue Sparshavajra with Akshobhya crown: three faces, blue, white, and red; six arms holding vajra, wheel, and lotus in the right, and bell, jewel, and sword in the left. Her hair in the half-bound coiffure, extremely graceful with a smiling face, beautiful with gestures such as sidelong glances. Her beauty is fully mature, and she playfully delights with the five objects of desire. With our first two arms, we hold each other in mutual embrace. We are adorned with the eight jeweled ornaments: jeweled crown, jeweled earrings together with a blue utpala flower beautified with ribbons, jeweled necklace, pearl sash, precious bracelets, anklets, and jeweled belt sash. Our shoulders are draped with heavenly shawls, and our waists covered with divine silk. We sit in an aura of light in the enlightened hero posture.

In the east there is white Vairochana with Akshobhya crown: three faces, white, black, and red; six arms holding wheel, vajra, and white lotus in the rights, and bell, jewel, and sword in the lefts. In the south yellow Ratnasambhava with Akshobhya crown: three faces, yellow, black, and white; six arms holding jewel, vajra, and wheel in the rights, and bell, yellow lotus, and sword in the lefts. In the west red

Amitabha with Akshobhya crown: three faces, red, black, and white; upper left hand holding bell with the stem of a red lotus, upper right hand holding a flowering lotus at the heart, other right hands a vajra and wheel, left hands a jewel and sword. In the north green Amoghasiddhi with Akshobhya crown: three faces, green, black, and white; six arms holding sword, crossed vajra, and wheel in the rights, and bell, green lotus, and jewel in the lefts. Southeast, white Lochana with Vairochana crown: three faces, white, black, and red; six arms holding wheel, vajra, and pundarika in the rights, and bell, jewel, and sword in the lefts. Southwest, blue Mamaki with Akshobhya crown: three faces, blue, white, and red; six arms holding vajra, wheel, and purple lotus in the rights, and bell, jewel, and sword in the lefts. Northwest, red Pandaravasini with Amitabha crown: three faces, red, black, and white; upper left holds bell and root stems of a red lotus, upper right opens it at her heart. Northeast, green Tara with Amoghasiddhi-crown: three faces, green, black, and white; six arms holding crossed vajra, wheel, and vajra-marked lotus in the rights, and bell, jewel, and sword in the lefts.

In the second row out, southeast, white Rupavajra with Vairochana crown: three faces, white, black, and red; two upper hands holding a red mirror, other right hands a vajra and pundarika, left hands a jewel and sword. Southwest, yellow Shabdavajra with Ratnasambhava crown: three faces, yellow, black, and white; two upper hands playing blue lute, other right hands wheel and purple lotus, left hands a jewel and sword. Northwest, red Gandhavajra with Amitabha crown: three faces, red, black, and white; two upper hands holding a conch vessel of scent, other right hands a vajra and wheel, left hands a jewel and sword. Northeast, green Rasavajra with Amoghasiddhi crown: three faces, green, black, and white; two upper hands holding vessels of flavors, other right hands a wheel and vajra-marked lily, left hands a jewel and sword. All eight of the goddesses have hair in half-bound coiffures, extremely graceful with smiling faces, beautiful with gestures such as sidelong glances. Their beauty is fully mature, and they playfully delight with the five objects of desire. They sit in vajra position in their seats in the center of a shining halo of light.

On the (facing center) right and left seats at the eastern door are respectively white Maitreya and

Kshitigarha with Vairochana crowns: three faces, white, black, and red; six arms holding wheel, vajra, and pundarika in the rights, and bell, jewel, and sword in the lefts. Maitreya also holds in the upper right a wheel-marked naga tree flower. On the right and left seats at the southern door are respectively yellow Vajrapani and Aksagarbha with Ratnasambhava crowns: three faces, yellow, black, and white; hand implements like Ratnasambhava. On the right and left seats at the western door are respectively red Lokeshvara and Manjushri with Amitabha crowns: three faces, red, black, and white; hand implements like Amitabha. On the right and left seats at the northern door are respectively green Sarvanivarana Viskhambhini and Samantabhadra with Amoghasiddhi crowns: three faces, green, black, and white; hand implements like Amoghasiddhi. All deities from Vairochana to Samantabhadra have hair in royal topknot wearing jeweled crowns, jeweled earrings together with a blue utpala flower beautified with ribbons, jeweled necklaces, pearl sashes, precious bracelets, anklets, and jeweled belt sashes. Upper bodies are draped with cloth of heavenly shawls and the lower bodies covered with divine silks. Adorned by the thirty-two marks and eighty signs. At peace in an orb of radiant light, each one is seated in the vajra position.

In the eastern door black Yamantaka with Vairochana crown: three faces, black, white, and red; six arms holding staff, wheel, and vajra in the rights, and noose over chest with threatening gesture, bell and ax in the lefts. In the southern door white Prajnantakrt with Ratnasambhava crown: three faces, white, black, and red; six arms holding vajra-marked white staff, and sword in the rights, and noose over chest with threatening gesture, bell and ax in the lefts. In the western door red Hayagriva with Amitabha crown: three faces, red, black, and white; six arms holding lotus, sword, and pounder in the rights, and bell on the hip, ax and noose in the lefts. In the northern door black Vighnantakrt with Amoghasiddhi crown: three faces, blue, white, and red; six arms holding double vajra, wheel, and spear in the rights, and noose over chest with threatening gesture, bell, and ax in the lefts. In the southeast black Achala with Vairochana crown, three faces, black, white, and red; six arms holding sword, vajra, and wheel in the rights, and threatening gesture over heart, ax and noose in the lefts. In southwest door

blue Takkiraja with Ratnasambhava crown: three faces, black, white, and red; first two hands held in the Humkara gesture, other two rights vajra and sword, lefts noose and iron hook. In the northwest blue Niladanda with Amitabha crown: three faces, blue, white, and red; six arms holding blue staff marked with vajra, sword and wheel in the rights, and noose over chest with threatening gesture, lotus and ax in lefts. In the northeast blue Mahabala with Amoghasiddhi crown: three faces, black, white, and red; six arms holding vajra-marked black staff, vajra and wheel in the rights, and noose over chest with threatening gesture, trident and ax in the lefts. Above blue Ushnishacakravarti with Akshobhya crown: three faces, blue, white, and red, first two hands in the *ushnisha* gesture, other two rights vajra and lotus, lefts threatening gesture and sword. Below blue Sumbharaja with Akshobhya crown, three faces, black, white, and red; six arms holding vajra, wheel, and jewel in the rights, and noose over chest with threatening gesture, lotus and sword in the lefts.

All ten of the terrible ones have yellowish-red hair flaming up; their brows and eyelashes flare intensely orange. Each face has three eyes and four sharp fangs, which grind horribly. Their fierce, loud laughs HA HA reverberate, and their faces are wrinkled with intensity of expressions. They have big bellies. Their hair is bound by blue Ananta snakes, red Takshaka snakes serve as earrings, striped Kulika snakes adorn the shoulders, white Padma snakes serve as necklaces, yellow Shankhapala snakes serve as bracelets, green Jaya snakes serve as sashes, nectar-colored Vasuki snakes serve as belts, and white Mahapadma snakes serve as anklets. Intense wisdom-fire blazes from their bodies; they stand in the center ready to punish all evil beings.

From my own heart HUM light-rays radiate. All living beings are attracted, streaming into the mandala like vajra heroes, unhindered from the four directions; abiding there, they are consecrated by the light-rays of the enlightenment spirits of the five father-mothers in union and attain the bliss and mental joy of all Transcendent Lords-becoming Vajrasattvas proceeding each to his own Buddhaland.

* * *

*The Natural Liberation Through Naked Vision,
Identifying Intelligence*
by Padma Sambhava

EMA HOH!

The one mind that pervades all life and liberation,
Though it is the primal nature, it is not recognized,
Though its bright intelligence is uninterrupted, it is
not faced,
Though it ceaselessly arises everywhere, it is not
recognized.
To make known just this objective nature,
The three-times victors proclaimed the inconceivable
Eighty-four thousand Dharma teachings,
Teaching none other than this realization.
Though Scriptures are measureless as the sky,
Their import is three words identifying intelligence.
This direct introduction to the intention of the Victors
Just this is the entry into freedom from progression.

KYAI HO!

Fortunate children! Listen here!
"Mind"—though this great word is so well known
People do not know it, know it wrongly or only
partially;
And by their not understanding its reality precisely,
They come up with inconceivable philosophical
claims.
The common, alienated individual, not realizing this,
By not understanding her own nature on her own,
Suffers roaming through six life-forms in three
realms.
Such is the fault of not realizing this reality of the
mind.

Disciples and hermit Buddhas claim realization
Of a partial selflessness but do not know this exactly.
Bound up in claims from their treatises and theories,
They do not behold clear light transparency.

Disciples and hermits are shut out by clinging to
subject and object,
Centrists are shut out by extremism about the two
realities,
Ritual and performance Tantrists, by extremism in
service and practice,
And great (Maha) and pervasive (Anu) Tantrists,
By clinging to the duality of realm and intelligence.
They err by remaining dualistic in nonduality,

By not communing nondually, they do not awaken.
All life and liberation inseparable from their own
minds,
They still roam the life-cycle on vehicles of quitting
and choosing.

Therefore, absorbing all created things in your free
inaction,
Realize the great natural liberation of all things from
this teaching
Of natural liberation through naked seeing of your
own intelligence!
Thus in the great perfection, everything is perfect! . . .

"Mind," this bright process of intelligence,
In one way exists and in another way does not.
It is origin of the pleasure and pain of life and
liberation.
It is accepted as essential to the eleven vehicles of
liberation.

Its names are countless in various contexts.
Some call this mind "the mind-reality."
Some fundamentalists call it "self."
Some disciples call it "selflessness."
Idealists call it by name of "mind."
Some call it "Transcendent Wisdom."
Some call it "the Buddha nature."
Some call it "the Great Sea!"
Some call it "the Soul Drop."
Some call it "the Truth Realm."
Some call it "the Foundation."
Some call it "the Ordinary."

To introduce the three-point entrance to this itself—
Realize past awareness as trackless, clear, and void,
Future awareness as unproduced and new,
And present awareness as staying natural,
uncontrived.

Thus knowing time in its very ordinary way,
When you nakedly yourself regard yourself,
Your looking is transparent, nothing to be seen.
This is naked, immediate, clear intelligence.

It is clear voidness with nothing established,
Purity of clarity-voidness-nonduality;
Not permanent, free of any intrinsic status,
Not annihilated, bright and distinct,

Not a unity, multidiscerning clarity,
Without plurality, indivisible, one in taste,
Not derivative, self-aware, it is this very reality.

This objective introduction to the actuality of things
Contains complete in one the indivisible three bodies.
The Truth Body (*dharmakāya*), the voidness (*śūnyatā*)
free of intrinsic status,
The Beatific Body (*sañbhogakāya*), bright with
freedom's natural energy,
The Emanation Body (*nirmāṇakāya*), ceaselessly
arising everywhere
Its reality is these three complete in one.

To introduce the forceful method to enter this very
reality,
Your own awareness right now is just this!
It being just this uncontrived natural clarity,
Why do you say, "I don't understand the nature of the
mind"?
As here there is nothing to meditate upon,
In just this uninterrupted clarity intelligence,
Why do you say, "I don't see the actuality of the
mind"?
Since the thinker in the mind is just it,
Why do you say, "Even searching I can't find it"?
Since here there is nothing to be done,
Why do you say, "Whatever I do, it doesn't succeed"?
As it is sufficient to stay put uncontrived,
Why do you say, "I can't stay still"?
As it is all right to be content with inaction,
Why do you say, "I am not able to do it"?
Since clear, aware, and void are automatically
indivisible,
Why do you say, "Practice is not effective"?
Since it is natural, spontaneous, free of cause and
condition,
Why do you say, "Seeking, it cannot be found"?
Since thought and natural liberation are
simultaneous,
Why do you say, "Remedies are impotent"?
Since your very intelligence is just this,
Why do you say, "I do not know this"?

Be sure mind's nature is groundless voidness
(*śūnyatā*);
Your mind is insubstantial like empty space—
Like it or not, look at your own mind!
Not fastening to the view of annihilative voidness,

Be sure spontaneous wisdom has always been clear,
Spontaneous in itself like the essence of the sun—
Like it or not, look at your own mind!
Be sure that intelligent wisdom is uninterrupted,
Like a continuous current of a river—
Like it or not, look at your own mind!
Be sure it will not be known by thinking various
reasons,
Its movement insubstantial like breezes in the sky—
Like it or not, look at your own mind!
Be sure that what appears is your own perception;
Appearance is natural perception, like a reflection in
a mirror—
Like it or not, look at your own mind.
Be sure that all signs are liberated on the spot,
Self-originated, self-delivered, like clouds in sky—
Like it or not, look at your own mind! . . .

Vision-voidness natural liberation
Is brilliant void Body of Truth (*dharmakāya*).
Realizing Buddhahood is not achieved by paths—
Vajrasattva is beheld right now. . . .

Therefore, to see intuitively your own naked
intelligence,
This *Natural Liberation Through Naked Vision* is
extremely deep.
So investigate this reality of your own intelligence.

Profound! Sealed!

EMA!

* * *

III. Tibetan Book of the Dead

*Description of the Between from The Natural Liberation
Through Understanding in the Between*

"Hey, noble one! Listen well, and keep this in your
mind! In hell, heaven, and the and the between the
body is born by apparition. But when the perceptions
of the mild and fierce deities arose in the reality
between, you did not recognize them. So after five
and a half days, you fainted with terror. Upon
awakening, your awareness became clearer, and you
immediately arose in a likeness of your former body.
As it says in the Tantra: 'Having the fleshly form of

the preceding and emerging lives, senses all complete, moving unobstructed, with evolutionary magic powers, one sees similar species with pure clairvoyance.'

"Here 'preceding' means that you arise as if in a flesh-and-blood body determined by the instincts of your preceding life. If you are radiant and have traces of the auspicious bodily signs and marks of a mythic hero, it is because your imagination can transform your body; thus, that perceived in the between is called a 'mental body.'

"At that time, if you are to be born as a god, you will have visions of the heavens. If you are to be born as a titan, a human, an animal, a pretan, or a hell being, you will have visions of whichever realm you will be born in. 'Preceding' here means that for up to four and a half days you experience yourself as having a fleshly body of your previous life with its habitual instincts. 'Emerging' means that you begin to have visions of the place where you are heading for rebirth. . . .

"Therefore do not follow after every vision that happens. Don't be attached to it! Don't adhere to it! If you are stubborn and attached to all of them, you will roam in suffering through the six realms. Up until yesterday, the visions of the reality between dawned for you, but you did not recognize them. So you have had to wander here now. So now if, without wavering, you can develop recognition, the spiritual teacher's orientation can open your awareness of the clear light, the naked, pure, vibrant void. Enter into it, relax into the experience of nonholding, nondoing! Without having to enter a womb, you will be liberated.

"If you do not recognize the light, then meditate that your spiritual teacher or archetype deity is present on the crown of your head, and devote yourself totally with a forceful faith. It is so important! Do it without wavering again and again!"

So you should say. If the deceased recognizes the light at this point, she will not wander in the six realms and will be liberated. But if the power of negative evolution still makes this recognition difficult, you should again speak as follows:

"Hey, noble one! Listen without your mind wandering! 'Senses all complete, moving unobstructed' means that even if in life you were blind, deaf, crippled, and so on, now in the between, your eyes clearly discern forms, your ears hear sounds,

and so forth. Your senses become flawlessly clear and complete. . . . Recognize this as a sign that you have died and are wandering in the between! Remember your personal instructions!

"Hey, noble one! What is 'unobstructed' is your mental body; your awareness is free from embodiment and you lack a solid body. So now you can move hither and thither everywhere through walls, houses, lands, rocks, and earth, even through Meru, the axial mountain; except through a mother's womb and the vajra throne at Bodhgaya. This is a sign that you are wandering in the existence between, so remember the instructions of your spiritual teacher! Pray to the Lord of Great Compassion!

"Hey, noble one! 'With evolutionary magic powers' means that you, who have no special abilities or meditational magic powers whatsoever, now have magic powers arising from the result of your evolution. In a split second you can circle this four-continent planet with its axial mountain. You now have the power just to think about any place you wish and you will arrive there in that very instant. You can reach anywhere and return just as a normal man stretches out and pulls back his arm. But these various magic powers are not so miraculous; if you don't specially need them, ignore them! You should not worry about whether or not you can manifest this or that, which you may think of. The fact is you have the ability to manifest anything without any obstruction. You should recognize this as a sign of the existence between! You should pray to your spiritual teacher!

"Hey, noble one! 'One sees similar species with pure clairvoyance' means that beings of the same species in the between can see each other. Thus if some beings are of the same species, all going to be reborn as gods, they will see each other. Likewise other beings of the same species; to be reborn in whichever in the six realms, will see each other. So you should not be attached to such encounters! Meditate on the Lord of Great Compassion!

"'With pure clairvoyance' refers also to the vision of those whose pure clairvoyance has been developed by practice of contemplation, as well as to vision of those whose divine power of merit has developed it. But such yogis or deities cannot always see between beings. They see them only when they will to see them, and not when they do not, or when their contemplation is distracted.

"Hey, noble one! As you have such a ghostly body, you encounter relatives and familiar places as if in a dream. When you meet these relatives, though you communicate with them, they do not answer. When you see your relatives and dear ones crying, you will think, 'Now I have died, what can I do?' You feel a searing pain, like a fish flopping in hot sand. But however greatly you suffer, tormenting yourself at this time does not help. If you have a spiritual teacher, pray to your spiritual teacher. Or else pray to the compassionate archetype deity. Don't be attached to your loved ones—it is useless. Pray to the compassionate ones, and do not suffer or be terrified!

"Hey, noble one! Driven by the swift wind of evolution, your mind is helpless and unstable, riding the horse of breath like a feather blown on the wind, spinning and fluttering. You tell the mourners, 'Don't cry! Here I am!' They take no notice, and you realize you have died, and you feel great anguish. Now, do not indulge in your pain! There is a constant twilight, gray as the predawn autumn sky, neither day nor night. That kind of between can last for one, two, three, four, five, six, or seven weeks— up to forty-nine days. Though it is said that for most people the suffering of the existence between lasts twenty-one days, this is not always certain due to people's different evolutionary histories.

"You think, 'How nice it would be to have a new body!' Then you will have visions of looking everywhere for a body. Even if you try up to nine times to enter your old corpse, due to the length of the reality between, in the winter it will have frozen, in the summer it will have rotted. Otherwise your loved ones will have burned it or buried it or given it to birds and beasts, so it affords no place to inhabit. You will feel sick at heart and will have visions of being squeezed between boulders, stones, and dirt. This kind of suffering is in the nature of the existence between. Even if you find a body, there will be nothing other than such suffering. So give up longing for a body! Focus yourself undistractedly in the experience of creative non-action!

". . . Your body is mental, so even if it is killed and cut up, you cannot die. In fact, your form is the void itself, so you have nothing to fear. The yamas are your own hallucinations and themselves are forms of the void! Your own instinctual mental body is void. Voidness cannot harm voidness. Signlessness cannot harm signlessness. You should recognize that

there is nothing other than your own hallucination. There is no external, substantially existent yama, angel, demon, or bull-headed ogre and so on. You must recognize all this as the between!

"Meditate on the samādhi of the Great Seal!

"If you don't know how to meditate, examine carefully whatever terrifies you and see the voidness (*sūnyatā*) that is its lack of objective status. That is the Natural Body of Truth (*dharmakāya*). And that voidness is not merely an annihilation. Your triumphant, distinct awareness of the terror of the void is itself the blissful mind of the Body of Beatitude (*saṃbhogakāya*). Voidness and clarity are indistinguishable; the actuality of the void is clarity, the actuality of the clarity is the voidness. Your awareness of voidness-clarity-indivisible is stripped naked, and now you abide in the unfabricated experience. That is the Wisdom Body of Truth. And that spontaneously and unobstructedly arises anywhere. And that is the Body of Compassionate Emanation (*nirmāṇakāya*).

"Hey, noble one! Behold this without wavering! Recognize it! You will definitely become a Buddha, the perfection of the four bodies. Do not be distracted! This is the borderline between a Buddha and an ordinary being. Now is the time described as 'One instant alienated, one instant perfectly enlightened.'

Until yesterday you were given to distraction, you did not recognize what arose as the between, and you were gripped by so much terror. If you surrender to distraction, the cord of compassion will be cut, and you will go into the abodes that lack all freedom; so be careful!

"Hey, noble one! If you don't know to meditate thus, then remember and pray to the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and the compassionate lords. Contemplate all the terrors and visions as the Compassionate Lord or your own archetype deity. Remember your esoteric initiation name and the spiritual teacher who gave you the initiations you received in the human realm; proclaim them to yama, the Lord of Truth! You won't be injured even if you fall off cliffs, so abandon fear and hate!

"Hey, noble one! In short, since your present between-consciousness is highly unstable, volatile, and mobile, and virtuous or vicious perception is very powerful, don't think at all about any unvirtuous evolution, and remember your own virtuous practice. If you have no virtuous practice, then adopt

a positive perception and feel faith and reverence.
Pray to your archetype deity and to the Lord of
Compassion! With an intense willpower, perform this
prayer!

*Now that I wander alone, without my loved ones,
And all my visions are but empty images,
May the Buddhas exert the force of their compassion
And stop the fear and hate-drawn terrors of the
between!*

*Now when I suffer by the power of negative
evolution,
May my archetype deities dispel my suffering!*

*When reality crashes with a thousand thunders,
May they all become OM MANI PADME HUM!*

*When I'm pulled by evolution without recourse,
May the lords mild and fierce dispel my suffering!
When I suffer due to evolutionary instincts,
May clear light bliss samādhi arise for me!*

"Thus perform this fervent prayer! It will surely
guide you on the path. It is crucial that you decide it
is sure not to let you down! . . .

"Again, meditate long and carefully that
whoever your archetype deity, he or she appears like
a magic illusion, lacking intrinsic reality. It is called
the pure Magic Body. Then contemplate that
archetype deity as dissolving from the edges inward,
and enter the experience of not holding rigidly to the
insubstantial, the clear light of voidness. Again
contemplate that as the archetype deity! Again
contemplate it as clear light! Thus meditating deity
and clear light in alternation, then let your own
awareness dissolve from the edges; where space
pervades, let awareness pervade. Where awareness
pervades, let the Truth Body (*dharmakāya*) pervade.
Enter comfortably into the experience of the ceaseless
nonproliferation of the Truth Body."

* * *

All selections taken from Robert A.F. Thurman,
Essential Tibetan Buddhism (San Francisco:
HarperCollins, 1995).

* * *



OM MANI PADME HUM

Hail the jewel in the lotus

It is very good to recite the mantra *Om mani padme hum*, but while you are doing it, you should be thinking on its meaning, for the meaning of the six syllables is great and vast. The first, *Om* is composed of three letters, A, U, and M. These symbolize the practitioner's impure body, speech, and mind; they also symbolize the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha.

Can impure body, speech, and mind be transformed into pure body, speech, and mind, or are they entirely separate? All Buddhas are cases of beings who were like ourselves and then in dependence on the path became enlightened; Buddhism does not assert that there is anyone who from the beginning is free from faults and possesses all good qualities. The development of pure body, speech, and mind comes from gradually leaving the impure states and their being transformed into the pure.

How is this done? The path is indicated by the next four syllables. *Mani*, meaning jewel, symbolizes the factors of method—the altruistic intention to become enlightened, compassion, and love. Just as a jewel is capable of removing poverty, so the altruistic mind of enlightenment is capable of removing the poverty, or difficulties, of cyclic existence and of solitary peace. Similarly, just as a jewel fulfills the wishes of sentient beings, so the altruistic intention to become enlightened fulfills the wishes of sentient beings.

The two syllables, *padme*, meaning lotus, symbolize wisdom. Just as a lotus grows forth from mud but is

not sullied by the faults of mud, so wisdom is capable of putting you in a situation of non-contradiction whereas there would be contradiction if you did not have wisdom. There is wisdom realizing impermanence, wisdom realizing that persons are empty, of being self-sufficient or substantially existent, wisdom that realizes the emptiness of duality—that is to say, of difference of entity between subject and object—and wisdom that realizes the emptiness of inherent existence. Though there are many different types of wisdom, the main of all these is the wisdom realizing emptiness.

Purity must be achieved by an indivisible unity of method and wisdom, symbolized by the final syllable *hum*, which indicates indivisibility. According to the sutra system, this indivisibility of method and wisdom refers to wisdom affected by method and method affected by wisdom. In the mantra, or tantric, vehicle, it refers to one consciousness in which there is the full form of both wisdom and method as one undifferentiable entity. In terms of the seed syllables of the five Conqueror Buddhas, *hum* is the seed syllable of Akshobhya—the immovable, the unfluctuating, that which cannot be disturbed by anything.

Thus the six syllables, *om mani padme hum*, mean that in dependence on the practice of a path which is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha. It is said that you should not seek for Buddhahood outside of yourself; the substances for the achievement of Buddhahood are within. As Maitreya says in his *Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle (Uttaratantra)*, all beings naturally have the Buddha nature in their own continuum. We have within us the seed of purity, the essence of a One Gone Thus (*Tathagatagarbha*), that is to be transformed and fully developed into Buddhahood.

(From a lecture given by His Holiness The Dalai Lama of Tibet at the Kalmuck Mongolian Buddhist Center, New Jersey.)

KEY TERMS

Lama

Tantra

Vajrayāna

dzogchen

mahāmudrā

QUESTIONS

1. What are the distinctive characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism?
2. In the second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet how did the great Indian scholar Atīśa shape the development of Tibetan Buddhism with a synthesis of Abhidharma, Mahāyāna, and Tantric forms of Buddhism?
3. How did Tantric practice shape the unique religious experience and culture of Tibetan Buddhism? What are six preliminary practices for Tantric practice in Tibetan Buddhism? How are the uses of maṇḍalas, mantras, and mudras incorporated into Tantric practice in Tibetan Buddhism?
4. How does Deity yoga serve to attain the goal of Tantric practice in Tibetan Buddhism?
5. What are the four types of Tantric practice and how does each serve to reach the goal of Tantric practice in Tibetan Buddhism?
6. What are the principle differences between and the distinctive practices of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism?