

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:

'Acoaghosha - Forgotten Buddhist Mystic of the Mahayana Path'

Issue Twenty

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org



(To have your Questions, Articles, Poetry or Art included in future editions, submit to: MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org!)

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For information, write to:

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org

MarilynnHughes@aol.com

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Having worked primarily in radio broadcasting, Marilynn Hughes spent several years as a news reporter, producer and anchor before deciding to stay at home with her three children. She's experienced, researched, written, and taught about out-of-body travel since 1987.

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The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:

'Açvaghosha - Forgotten Buddhist Mystic of the Mahayana Path'

Issue Twenty

By Marilyn Hughes

This issue's forgotten mystic, Açvaghosha, will take your mind to some very fascinating places, the heart of Buddhist teaching and thinking. We begin with an accounting of his life of unknown origin.

NATIVITY AND PEREGRINATIONS

There is not so much discordance in the traditions about the wanderings of Açvaghosha as about his date, though indeed we do not have as yet any means of ascertaining his birth-place, other than the statements of discordant authorities. According to Târanâtha, he was a son of a rich Brahman called Samghaguhya who married the tenth and youngest daughter of a merchant in Khorta. As a youth, when thoroughly familiar with every department of knowledge, he went to Odiviça, Gaura, Tîrahuti, Kâmarûpa, and some other places, defeating everywhere his Buddhist opponents by his ingenious logic.

All these places are situated in Eastern India, and among the Chinese traditions the *Record of the Triratna* (*Li tai san pao chi*) as well as the *Accounts of Buddha and the Patriarchs* (*Fo tsu tung chi*) agree with Târanâtha in placing Açvaghosha's native land in the East; but the *Life of Vasubandhu* makes Açvaghosha a native of Bhâshita in Çrâvastî, while in Nâgârjuna's work, the *Mahâyânaçâstravyâkhyâ*

釋摩訶衍論

(*Shih mo ho yen lun*), he is mentioned as having been born in Western India, Loka being the father and Ghonâ the mother. The *Record of Buddha and the Patriarchs Under Successive Dynasties* (*Fo tsu li tai t'ung tsai*) agrees with neither of the above statements, for it says (*fasciculus* 5): "The twelfth patriarch, Açvaghosha Mahâsattva was a native of Vârâṇasî." A further contradicting tradition is pointed out by Prof. S. Murakami in one of his articles on the history of Buddhism, quoting the *Shittanzô*

悉曇藏

(*fas.* 1), which makes Açvaghosha a man of South India.

A majority of the traditions place his native country in East India; but there is no means of confirming these. One thing, however, seems to be certain, namely, that Açvaghosha was not born in the northern part of India, which place is supposed by most Western Buddhist scholars to be the cradle of the Mahâyâna school.

Wherever the native country of Açvaghosha may have been, both the Chinese and Tibetan records agree that he made a journey to Central India, or Magadha. it seems that every intellectual man in India, the people of which, living in affluence, were not occupied with the cares of making a living, sought to gain renown by dialectics and subtle reasonings, and Açvaghosha, as a Brahman whose "intellectual acquirements were wonderfully deep," and whose "penetrating insight was matchless," could not resist the temptation. Not satisfied with his intellectual

campaign against commonplace Buddhists in his neighborhood, who were crushed down as "rotten wood before a raging hurricane," he went, according to a Chinese tradition, to Pâtaliputra, and according to the Tibetan, to Nâlanda. The *Life of Aṣvaghosha* evidently refers to this fact when it states that Parçva, the eleventh patriarch and eventual teacher of Aṣvaghosha, on being informed of the paramount influence of the Brahmantîrthaka (i.e., Aṣvaghosha) in Central India and of the fact that his conquest over Buddhists had silenced the bell (*ghanta*) in some monastery (*vihâra*), journeyed from Northern India to convert the bitterest opponent into a faithful follower of Buddha. He adds that Aṣvaghosha left his home and lived henceforth in Central India. But according to the *Transmission of the Dharmapitaka* (*Fu fa tsang ch'uan, fas. 5*) we find Aṣvaghosha even after his conversion still in Pâtaliputra, from which he was taken by King Kanishka to the latter's own capital, Gandhâra, in the Northwest of India.

Thus all that we can say about the birth-place and wanderings of Aṣvaghosha is: (1) he was a Brahman by birth either of South, or of West, or of East, but not of North India; (2) he acquired in Central India his highest reputation as a Brahman disputant, and, after his conversion, as the greatest Buddha follower of the time, intellectually as well as morally; (3) his later life was spent according to the Chinese authority in the North where he wrote probably the *Mahâlamkâra-sûtraçâstra* (*Book of Great Glory*) which describes matters mostly relating to Western India.

APPELLATIONS.

The author of the *Mahâyânaçraddhotpâdaçâstra* (*Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahâyâna*) is most commonly known in the Chinese Buddhist literature by the name of Açvaghosha. But according to his *Life* he was also called Kung-tê-jih

功德日

(i.e., merit-sun; in Sanskrit, *Puṇyaditya*?). For he was not only a philosopher, but a preacher and an organizer, for "while in North India he widely propagated the doctrine of Buddha, led and benefited the masses, and through good and excellent [missionary] methods perfected the merits of the people." *The Record of Buddha and the Patriarchs* (*Fo tsou t'ung tsai*), where it is stated that his other name was Kung-chang

功勝

(*Puṇyaçrîka*?), can be said almost to agree with the above. While thus no other name or appellation of his is known in China, *Târanâtha* mentions nine more names: *Kâla* (Time), *Durdarsha* (Hard-to-be-seen), *Durdarshakâla* (Hard-to-be-seen-time), *Mâtṛceta* (Mother-child), *Pitṛceta* (Father-child), *Çûra* (Hero), *Dharmika-Subhûti* (Virtuous-mighty), and *Maticitra* (Intelligence-bright).

In I-tsing's *Correspondence from the South Sea* (*Nan hai chi kuei ch'uan*, Chap. 32, "On chanting"), the name *Mâtṛceta* is mentioned, but I-tsing does not identify him with

Açvaghosha, though the legend attached to the former closely resembles that of the latter told in Târanâtha. Târanâtha states that when Açvaghosha became a sthavira and advocate of the Tripitaka, he had a dream one night in which the venerable Tara gave him the instruction to write hymns on Buddha for the expiation of his former sinful deeds; that according to this admonition he wrote many hymns praising the virtues of Buddha, amongst which one containing one hundred and fifty çlokas is the best of all; that the hymns composed by him are full of benediction like the very words of Buddha, because he was predicted by the Blessed One to be a hymnist.

Compare the above with this from I-tsing:

"The venerable Mâtṛceta (Mother-child) was a man of great intellect, of excellent virtue, eminently standing above all sages in India. A tradition says that when Buddha was taking a walk one time with his kinsmen, disciples, and many other people, a nightingale (?), observing his personal feature as elegant and majestic as a gold mountain, uttered in the wood some pleasant, harmonious notes that sounded like praising the virtues of Buddha. Buddha then turning towards the disciples said: 'The bird overcome by the joy of seeing me utters a pitiful cry. By this merit it will after my death obtain a human form, Mâtṛceta

摩陁哩制吒

by name, and praise and adore my intrinsic virtues with a number of hymns.' This man first followed the doctrine of a tīrthaka worshipping Maheçvara and composed many hymns to adore him. But in the meantime he came across

his own name recorded [in a Buddhist writing]; inspired by this, he took refuge in Buddha, changed his garb, abandoned his laymanship, and in many ways praised, honored and adored Buddha. Regretting his misbehavior in the past and desiring to perform good deeds in the future and also lamenting the unfortunate fate that prevented him from having a personal interview with the Great Teacher rather than bowing before his bequeathed image, he at last decided with all his rhetorical talent and in solemn fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy, to praise his virtues and merits [in hymns]. He first composed four hundred çlokas and then one hundred and fifty çlokas; all of which describe the six Pâramitâs [Perfections] and state the excellent virtues possessed by the World-Honored-One," etc.

At the end of the same Chapter (i.e., Chap. 32) in I-tsing's *Correspondence* he refers to Açvaghosha and Nâgârjuna both of whom composed some beautiful and popular hymns that were sung by Buddhists throughout India at the time of his pilgrimage. But if the Tibetan statement is reliable, I-tsing may have been mistaken in recording Açvaghosha and Mâtṛceṭa as different characters. The Tibetan and Chinese version of the one hundred and fifty çloka hymn being still existent, the comparison of which, however, I have not yet been able to make, will furnish an interesting testimony for the identification.

Many legendary explanations have been invented about the name of Açvaghosha, as might be expected of the imaginative Indian mind, but not being worth while quoting from the materials at my command, no reference will be made to them here.

Açvaghosha has an equally fascinating tale of his conversion from Brahmanism to Mahayana Buddhism.

CONVERSIONS

A consensus of traditions both Tibetan and Chinese maintains that Açvaghosha was in his earlier life a most powerful adherent of Brahmanism, though we are tempted to discredit it on the ground that later Buddhist writers may have wished to exaggerate the superiority of Buddhism to all other Indian philosophical and religious doctrines, by chronicling the conversion of one of its strongest opponents to their side. Whatever the origin of the legend may be, how did his conversion take place? By whom was he converted? About these points the Tibetan and the Chinese tradition by no means agree, the one standing in a direct contradiction to the other. While the Tibetan account is full of mystery and irrationality, the Chinese is natural enough to convince us of its probable occurrence.

According to Tāranātha Âryadeva, the most eminent disciple of Nâgârjuna, defeated and proselyted Açvaghosha, not by his usual subtlety in dialectics, but by the superiority of his magical arts. Açvaghosha made use of every tantric formula he could command, in order to free himself from the enchantment in which he was held by his enemy, but all to no purpose whatever. Thus when he was in an utterly desperate condition, he happened to read the Buddhist Sûtra which was kept in his place of confinement and in which he found his destiny prophesied by Buddha, he was seized with deep regret for his former hostile attitude toward the Dharma, and immediately

renouncing his tîrthakism, professed the doctrine of Çâkyamuni.

The Tibetan tradition presents some unmistakable indications of a later invention: the use of tantric formulæ, the so-called prophecy of the Tathâgata, and the anachronism of Âryadeva. On the other hand, the Chinese records are worth crediting, though they are not unanimous as to how the conversion took place and who was the proselytist.

According to the *Life of Açvaghosha*, Parçva was the man who converted him. They agreed at their first meeting that on the seventh day thence they should have the king, ministers, çrâmanas, tîrthakas and all great teachers of the Dharma gathered in the Vihâra and have their discussion there before all those people. "In the sixth night the sthavira entered into a samâdhi and meditated on what he had to do [in the morning]. When the seventh day dawned, a great crowd was gathered like clouds. The Sthavira Parçva arrived first and ascended a high platform with an unusually pleasant countenance. The tîrthaka [i.e., Açvaghosha] came later and took a seat opposite him. When he observed the çrâmana with a pleasant countenance and in good spirits, and when he also observed his whole attitude showing the manner of an able opponent, he thought: 'May he not be Bhikshu Chin? His mind is calm and pleasant, and besides he bears the manner of an able antagonist. We shall indeed have an excellent discussion to-day.'

"They then proposed the question how the defeated one should be punished. The tîrthaka [Açvaghosha] said: 'The defeated one shall have his tongue cut out.' The sthavira replied: 'No, he shall become a disciple [of the winner] as

the acknowledgement of defeat.' The tīrthaka then replied: 'Let it be so,' and asked, 'Who will begin the discussion?' The Sthavira Parçva said: I am more advanced in age; I came from afar for the purpose [of challenging you]; and moreover I was here this morning earlier than you. So it will be most natural for me to speak first.' The tīrthaka said: 'Let it be so. Following the subject of your argument, I shall completely baffle you.'

"The Sthavira Parçva then said: 'What shall we have to do, in order to keep the kingdom in perfect peace, to have the king live long, to let the people enjoy abundance and prosperity, all free from evils and catastrophes?' The tīrthaka was silent, not knowing what to reply. As now according to the rule of discussion one who could not make a response is defeated, Açvaghosha was obliged to bow [before the opponent] as a disciple of his. He had his head shaved, was converted to a çrâmana, and instructed in the perfection-precepts.

"When he [Açvaghosha] was alone in his room, he was absorbed in gloomy, unpleasant reflexion as to why he, possessing a bright intellect and far-sighted discretion, and having his reputation widely spread all over the world, could be defeated with a single question and be made a disciple of another. Parçva well knew his mind and ordered him to come to his room where the master manifested himself in several supernatural transformations. Açvaghosha now fully recognized that his master was not a man of ordinary type, and thus feeling happy and contented, thought it his duty to become one of his disciples.

"The master told him: 'Your intellect is bright enough, hard to find its equal; but it wants a final touch. If you study the

doctrine I have mastered, attend to my capability and insight into the Bodhi, and if you become thoroughly versed in the method of discussion and clearly understand the principle of things, there will be no one who can match you in the whole world.'

"The master returned to his own country [North India]; the disciple remained in Central India, making an extensive study of the Sûtras, seeking a clear comprehension of the doctrine, Buddhistic as well as non-Buddhistic. His oratorical genius swept everything before him, and he was reverentially honored by the four classes of the people, including the king of [Central] India who treated him as a man of distinction."

According to the *Transmission of the Dharmapitaka (Fu fa tsang chuan)*, however, Açvaghosha was not converted by Parçva, but by his disciple and patriarchal successor, Puṇyayaças. Though the two works, *Life of Açvaghosha* and the book just mentioned, differ in some other points, they are evidently two different versions of the one original legend. As the book is not as yet accessible to English readers, I here produce the whole matter translated from the Chinese version. The comparison will prove interesting.

"Full of a proud and arrogant spirit that speedily grew like a wild plant, he [Açvaghosha] firmly believed in the existence of an ego-entity and cherished the ultra-egotistic idea. Being informed that Âcarya called Puṇyayaças, who, deep in knowledge and wide in learning, proclaimed that all things are relative [= *çûnya*, lit. empty], there is no *âtman*, no *pudgala*; Açvaghosha's arrogant spirit asserted itself, and presenting himself to Puṇyayaças challenged him saying: "confute all [false] opinions and doctrines in

the world, as hailstones strike tender grass. If my declaration prove false and not true' I will have my own tongue cut out in acknowledgment of defeat.' Thereupon Puṇyayaças as explained to him that Buddhism distinguishes two kinds of truth, that while 'Practical truth' hypothetically admits the existence of an *âtman*, there is nothing conditional in 'pure [or absolute] truth,' all being calm and tranquil, and that therefore we cannot prove the ego as an absolute entity.

"Açvaghosha would not yet surrender himself, because being over-confident of his own intellectual power he considered himself to have gained the point. Puṇyayaças said: 'Carefully think of yourself; tell not a lie. We will see which of us has really won.'

"Açvaghosha meanwhile came to think that while 'practical truth' being only conditional has no reality at all, 'pure truth' is calm and tranquil in its nature, and that therefore these two forms of truth are all unobtainable, and that if they have thus no actuality [or existence], how could they be refuted [as false]? So feeling now the superiority of his opponent, he tried to cut out his tongue in acknowledgement of the defeat. But Puṇyayaças stopped him, saying: 'We teach a doctrine of love and compassion, and do not demand that you cut out your tongue. Have your head shaved instead and be my disciple.' Açvaghosha thus converted was made a çrâmana by Puṇyayaças.

"But Açvaghosha who felt extremely ashamed of his [former] self-assumption was thinking of attempting his own life. Puṇyayaças, however, attaining arhatship, entered into a samâdhi and divined what was going on in the mind of Açvaghosha. He ordered him to go and bring some books out of the library. Açvaghosha said to the

Âcarya: The room is perfectly dark; how can I get in there?' To this Puṇyayaças answered: 'Just go in, and I shall let you have light.' Then the Âcarya through his supernatural power stretched far into the room his right hand whose five fingers each radiating with light illuminated everything inside of the walls. Açvaghosha thought it a mental hallucination, and knowing the fact that a hallucination as a rule disappears when one is conscious of it, he was surprised to see the light glowing more and more. He tried his magical arts to extinguish it till he felt utterly exhausted, for the mysterious light suffered no change whatever. Finally coming to realize that it was the work of no other person than his teacher, his spirit was filled with remorse, and he thenceforth applied himself diligently to religious discipline and never relapsed."

The *Record of Buddha and the Patriarchs (Fo tsou lung tsai)* agrees with the *Transmission of the Dharma-pitaka (Fu fa tsang chuan)* in making Puṇyayaças, instead of Parçva, the master of the conversion. But the former does not state how Açvaghosha was converted.

Though so far it remains an open question who was the real master of Açvaghosha, we can be sure of this, that he had intimate spiritual communication with both Parçva and Puṇyayaças. Parçva, who was an older contemporary of Puṇyayaças, was probably already advanced in age when Açvaghosha came to be personally acquainted with him, and so he did not have time enough to lead the young promising disciple to a consummate understanding of the doctrine of Buddha. After the demise of this venerable old patriarch, Açvaghosha therefore had to go to Puṇyayaças for a further study of his religion, till he was capable of forming his own original thoughts, which are set forth in his principal work, the Discourse of the Awakening of

Faith (*Çraddhotpâda-çâstra*). This assumption is justified when we notice that Açvaghosha in the *Book of Great Glory* pays his homage to Parçva as well as to Punyayaças.

Now by way of a supplementary note to the above, let us say a word about Wassiljew's observation, which states that while Hînayânists or Çrâvakas ascribe the conversion of Açvaghosha to Parçva, the Mahâyânistic record says that Âryadeva converted him. This assertion is evidently incorrect, for the *Life of Açvaghosha* as well as the *Transmission of the Dharmapitaka* (*Fu fa tsang chuan*) in which the honor of his conversion is given to the successor of Parçva as aforesaid, do not certainly belong to the work of the Hînayâna school. It is the Tibetan tradition only, and not the general Mahâyânist statement, that Âryadeva converted Açvaghosha, and there is no ground at all for the assertion of Wassiljew, which practically leads us to take everything Tibetan for Mahâyânistic and everything Chinese for Hînayânistic.

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This issue's 'Question and Answer' section contains an inquiry from Davi Thiago in Brazil about the Safety of the Out-of-Body Experience and I will answer the question, as well as, allow our featured forgotten mystic, Acvagosha, to give the Buddhist perspective. And in 'Different Voices' we will delve into the depths of Mahayana Buddhism with some excerpts from the writings of Acvagosha.

MarilynnHughes@outofbodytravel.org
www.outofbodytravel.org

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:
Question and Answer Forum!

Please Send Your Questions to:

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For Future Inclusion in this Section!

Question from Davi Thiago, Brazil: Is Out of Body Travel Safe? Can I be taken over by another spirit in an Out-of-Body Experience?

Marilynn: Very important question! I encourage readers to download 'The Mysteries of the Redemption: A Treatise on Out-of-Body Travel and Mysticism' at www.outofbodytravel.org for FREE, and read the Alteration and Absolution pathway for great detail on the subject.

Generally, the practice of out-of-body travel is safe if done under certain parameters. First of all, those who experience such things through no instigation of their own will need to learn how to protect themselves in the experiences and from other spirits because it happens without their intent. Those who try to induce the experience will find that they need to understand these methods of self-protection even more because when a mystical experience is directed of God, He will also direct that soul. If the mystical experience is directed by that person, that person has no direction outside of themselves. If the mystical experience is directed by a lower entity, that lower entity will also direct that soul.

Discernment is the first and foremost path that everyone must follow who is taken down this road.

There are dangers in the astral and lower worlds, as well as, with wandering spirits, lost souls, dark souls and demonic spirits. Many travels are contained within the higher worlds and with higher beings, but eventually every mystic is taught of that which is below.

Please read 'The Mysteries of the Redemption' to prepare yourself for the dangers and to learn how to navigate them.

Our forgotten mystic, Acvagosha, has a unique perspective on how we protect ourselves from the Buddhist standpoint that I think is excellent to share.

“And again when the practiser by virtue of his samâdhi attains an immediate insight into the nature of the universe (*dharmadhâtu*), he will recognize that the Dharmakâya of all Tathâgatas and the body of all beings are one and the same (*samatâ*), are consubstantial (*ekalakshana*). On that account it is also called the samâdhi of oneness (*ekalakshanasamâdhi*). By disciplining oneself in this samâdhi, one can obtain infinite samâdhis, because suchness is the source of all samâdhis.

Some people scantily supplied with the root of merit (*kuçalamûla*) may yield to the temptation of Mâras, tîrthakas, or evil spirits. [For instance] those evil ones sometimes assuming horrible forms may frighten the practiser; sometimes manifesting themselves in beautiful figures, they may fascinate him; sometimes appearing in form of a deva, or of a Boddhisattva, or even of a Buddha with all his excellent and magnified features, they may speak about *dhârani* or the pârâmitâ, or may give instructions about various means of emancipation (*mukti*), declaring that there is no hatred, no friendship, no causation, no retribution, or declaring that all things in the

world are absolute nothingness (*atyantaçûnyatâ*), that they are in their essence Nirvâna itself. Or they may reveal to the practiser his own past and future states of existence, they may teach him to read the thoughts of others, may grant him incomparable power of eloquence, may induce him to crave covetously for worldly fame and advantages.

Further, through the influence of those evil ones the practiser may sometimes be inordinately susceptible to dissatisfaction or delight; he may sometimes be too misanthropic or too philanthropic; he may sometimes be inclined to enjoy drowsiness; he may sometimes not sleep for a long time; he may sometimes be affected by diseases; he may sometimes remain discouraged and indolent; he may sometimes rise all on a sudden with full energy, but only to sink down again into languor; he may sometimes, being over-skeptical, not believe in anything; he may sometimes, abandoning the excellent religious observance, enjoy himself in frivolous occupations, indulge in worldly affairs, gratify his desires and inclinations; he may sometimes attain to the samâdhi of heretics [i.e., *tîrthaka*] and, remaining in a state of trance a day or two, or even seven, and being supplied imaginarily with some palatable food and drink, and feeling very comfortable mentally and physically, he may have no sensation of hunger or thirst; he may sometimes be induced to enjoy female fascinations; he may sometimes be very irregular in taking meals, either too much or too little; he may sometimes look either very handsome or very ugly in appearance.

If the practiser get enraptured by those visions and prejudices (*kleça*), he will lose his root of merit (*kuçalamûla*) accumulated in his previous existences. Therefore he should exercise a deep and thorough contemplation, thinking that all those [heretical states of samâdhi] are the

temptations of Mâras or evil spirits that take advantage of his deficiency in merits and his intensity of karma-hindrances (*karmâvarana*).

After this thought he should make another thought, viz., that all these are nothing but mental hallucinations. When he makes these thoughts, the visions and imaginations will instantly disappear, and, becoming free from all attributes [of limitation], he will enter into the true samâdhi. He has then not only liberated himself from all modes of subjectivity, he has also effaced the idea of suchness. Even when he rises up from a deep meditation, no visionary images, no prejudices will take possession of in his mind, since he has destroyed the root of illusion through the power of the samâdhi. On the contrary, all the excellent and virtuous deeds which are in conformity with suchness will be constantly performed by him, while all hindrances without exception will be removed by him, who now exhibiting great spiritual energy will never become exhausted.

Those who do not practice this kind of samâdhi will not be able to enter into the essence of the Tathâgata, for all other samâdhis practiced in common with the tîrthakas have invariably some attributes [of imperfection] and do not enable one to come into the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Therefore let Bodhisattvas [who aspire to the highest knowledge] assiduously apply themselves to the discipline and attain to the perfection of this samâdhi.

Those who practice this samâdhi will procure in their present life ten beneficial results:

1. They will always be remembered and guarded by all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in all quarters.

2. They will not be molested by Mâras or evil spirits.
3. They will not be led astray by false doctrines.
4. They will be free from disparaging the deepest Doctrine (*gambhîradharma*). Their serious misdemeanors as well as their karma-hindrances will be attenuated.
- 5 . They will destroy all doubts, sinful recollections, and contemplations.
6. They will be strengthened in their belief in the spiritual state of Tathâgata.
7. They will be liberated from gloomy remorse; they will be courageous and unflinching in the face of birth and death.
8. Being free from arrogance and presumptuousness, they will be meek and patient and will be revered by all the world.
9. If not practicing deep meditation, those prejudices (*âçrava*) which are now getting weaker, will not assert themselves in them.
10. While practicing meditation, they will not be disturbed by any external objects, such as voices, sounds, etc.

But mind: when the practiser is trained only in cessation (*çamatha*), his mind will sink down into stupidity, and acquiring a habit of indolence, cannot rejoice in doing good acts, as he will estrange himself from deep compassion (*mahâkaruna*). Accordingly he should discipline himself in intellectual insight (*vidarçana*) as well.

Acvaghosha

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THANK YOU ALL, whether you agree or disagree with our work, FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO SEEK THE TRUTH IN WHATEVER WAY THAT TRUTH MAY COME TO SEEK YOU!

Excerpts from ‘The Revelation of the True Doctrine’

By Acvaghosha

1. The Revelation of the True Doctrine.

In the one soul we may distinguish two aspects.

The one is the Soul as suchness (*bhûtatathatâ*), the other is the soul as birth-and-death (*samsâra*). Each in itself constitutes all things, and both are so closely interrelated that one cannot be separated from the other.

A. The Soul as Suchness.

What is meant by the soul as suchness (*bhûtatathatâ*), is the oneness of the totality of things (*dharmadhâtu*), the great all-including whole, the quintessence of the Doctrine. For the essential nature of the soul is uncreated and eternal.

All things, simply on account of our confused subjectivity (*smrti*), appear under the forms of individuation. If we could overcome our confused subjectivity, the signs of individuation would disappear, and there would be no trace of a world of [individual and isolated] objects.

Therefore all things in their fundamental nature are not namable or explicable. They cannot be adequately expressed in any form of language. They are without the range of apperception. [They are universals.] They [things in their fundamental nature] have no signs of distinction.

[They are not particulars.] They possess absolute sameness (*samatâ*). [They are universals.] They are subject neither to transformation, nor to destruction. They are nothing but the one soul, for which suchness is another designation. Therefore they cannot be [fully] explained by words or exhausted by reasoning.

While all words and expressions are nothing but representations and not realities, and their existence depends simply on our confused subjectivity, suchness has no attribute [of particularity] to speak of.

But the term suchness is all that can be expressed in language, and through this term all other terms may be disposed of.

In the essence of suchness, there is neither anything which has to be excluded, nor anything which has to be added.

Now the question arises: If that be so, how can all beings conform to and have an insight into [suchness]?

The answer is: As soon as you understand that when the totality of existence is spoken of, or thought of, there is neither that which speaks nor that which is spoken of, there is neither that which thinks nor that which is thought of; then you conform to suchness; and when your subjectivity is thus completely obliterated, it is said to have the insight.

Again there is a twofold aspect in suchness if viewed from the point of its explicability. The first is trueness as negation (*çûnyatâ*), in the sense that it is completely set apart from the attributes of all things unreal, that it is the real reality. The second is trueness as affirmation

(*açûnyatâ*), in the sense that it contains infinite merits, that it is self-existent.

And again by trueness as negation we mean that in its [metaphysical] origin it has nothing to do with things defiled [i.e., conditional], that it is free from all signs of distinction existing among phenomenal objects, that it is independent of unreal, particularising consciousness.

Thus we understand that suchness (*bhûtatathatâ*) is neither that which is existence, nor that which is non-existence, nor that which is at once existence and non-existence, nor that which is not at once existence and non-existence; that it is neither that which is unity, nor that which is plurality, nor that which is at once unity and plurality, nor that which is not at once unity and plurality.

In a word, as suchness cannot be comprehended by the particularising consciousness of all beings, we call it the negation [or nothingness, *çûnyatâ*].

The truth is that subjectivity does not exist by itself, that the negation (*çûnyatâ*) is also void (*çûnya*) in its nature, that neither that which is negated [viz., the external world] nor that which negates [viz., the mind] is an independent entity.

By the so-called trueness as affirmation, we mean that [as soon as we understand] subjectivity is empty and unreal, we perceive the pure soul manifesting itself as eternal, permanent, immutable and completely comprising all things that are pure. On that account we call it affirmation [or reality, or nonemptiness, *açûnyatâ*]. Nevertheless, there is no trace of affirmation in it, because it is not the product

of a confused subjectivity, because only by transcending subjectivity (*smṛti*) can it be grasped.

b. The Soul as Birth-and-Death.

The soul as birth-and-death (*samsâra*) comes forth [as the law of causation] from the Tathâgata's womb (*Tathâgatagarbha*). But the immortal [i.e., such-ness] and the mortal [i.e., birth-and-death] coincide with each other. [1](#) Though they are not identical, they are not a duality. [Thus when the absolute soul assumes a relative aspect by its self-affirmation] it is called the all-conserving mind (*âlaya-vijñâna*).

The same mind has a twofold significance as the organizer and the producer of all things.

Again it embraces two principles: (1) Enlightenment; (2) Non-enlightenment.

Enlightenment is the highest quality of the mind; it is free from all [the limiting] attributes of subjectivity (*smṛti*). As it is free from all [limiting] attributes of subjectivity, it is like unto space (*âkâṣa*), penetrating everywhere, as the unity of all (*dharmadhâtu*). That is to say, it is the universal Dharmakâya of all Tathâgatas.

On account of this Dharmakâya, all Tathâgatas are spoken of as abiding in enlightenment *a priori*.

Enlightenment *a priori* is contrasted with enlightenment *a posteriori*. Through enlightenment *a posteriori* is gained no more than enlightenment *a priori*.

Now we speak of enlightenment *a posteriori*; because there is enlightenment *a priori*, there is non-enlightenment, and because there is non-enlightenment we can speak of enlightenment *a posteriori*.

Again, when the mind is enlightened as to its own ultimate nature, it is called perfect enlightenment; when it is not enlightened as to its ultimate nature, it is not perfect enlightenment.

Common people (*prthagjana*), who, becoming conscious of errors that occur in a succession of their mental states, abstain from making conclusions, may be spoken of as enlightened; but in reality theirs is non-enlightenment.

Çrâvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and those Bodhisattvas who have just entered their course, recognizing the difference between subjectivity and the transcending of subjectivity both in essence and attributes, have become emancipated from the coarse form of particularisation. This is called enlightenment in appearance.

Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakâya, having recognized that subjectivity and the transcending of subjectivity have no reality of their own [i.e., are relative], have become emancipated from the intermediate form of particularisation. This is called approximate enlightenment.

Those who have transcended the stage of Bodhisattvahood and attained the ultimate goal, possess a consciousness which is consistent and harmonious; they have recognized the origin from which consciousness [or mentation] starts. This will truly be called enlightenment.

Having transcended the attributes of enlightenment and the subtlest form of particularisation, they [i.e., Buddhas] have gained a perfect and eternal insight into the very nature of the soul [i.e., suchness], because the latter now presents itself to them in its absolute and immutable form. Therefore they are called Tathâgatas, and theirs is perfect enlightenment; and therefore it is said in the Sûtra that those who have an insight into the non-reality of all subjectivity, attain to the wisdom of the Tathâgata.

In the preceding statement we referred to the origin from which consciousness [or mentation] starts according to the popular expression. In truth there is no such thing as the origin of consciousness [or mentation]; for consciousness [being purely subjective] has no absolute [but only a phenomenal] existence. How can we then speak of its origin?

The multitude of people (*bahujana*) are said to be lacking in enlightenment, because ignorance (*avidya*) prevails there from all eternity, because there is a constant succession of confused subjective states (*smṛti*) from which they have never been emancipated.

But when they transcend their subjectivity, they can then recognize that all states of mentation, viz., their appearance, presence, change, and disappearance [in the field of consciousness] have no [genuine] reality. They are neither in a temporal nor in a spatial relation with the one soul, for they are not self-existent.

When you understand this, you also understand that enlightenment *a posteriori* cannot be manufactured, for it is no other thing than enlightenment *a priori* [which is uncreate and must be discovered].

And again enlightenment *a priori*, when implicated in the domain of defilement [i.e., relativity], is differentiated into two kinds of attributes:

(1) Pure wisdom (*prajñâ?*); (2) Incomprehensible activity (*karma?*).

By pure wisdom we understand that when one, by virtue of the perfuming power of the Dharma, disciplines himself truthfully [i.e., according to the Dharma], and accomplishes meritorious deeds, the mind [i.e., *âlaya-vijñâna*] which implicates itself with birth-and-death will be broken down, and the modes of the evolving-consciousness will be annulled; while the pure and genuine wisdom of the Dharmakâya manifests itself.

Though all modes of consciousness and mentation are mere products of ignorance, ignorance in its ultimate nature is identical and not-identical with enlightenment *a priori*; and therefore ignorance in one sense is destructible, while in the other sense it is indestructible.

This may be illustrated by [the simile of] the water and the waves which are stirred up in the ocean. Here the water can be said to be identical [in one sense] and not-identical [in the other sense] with the waves. The waves are stirred up by the wind, but the water remains the same. When the wind ceases, the motion of the waves subsides; but the water remains the same.

Likewise, when the mind of all creatures which in, its own nature is pure and clean, is stirred up by the wind of ignorance (*avidya*), the waves of mentality (*vijñâna*) make their appearance. These three [i.e., the mind, ignorance,

and mentality], however, have no [absolute] existence, and they are neither unity nor plurality.

But the mind though pure in its essence is the source of the awakened [or disturbed] mentality. When ignorance is annihilated, the awakened mentality is tranquilized, whilst the essence of the wisdom remains unmolested.

Incomprehensible activity which we know proceeds from pure wisdom, uninterruptedly produces all excellent spiritual states. That is to say, the personality (*kâya*) of the Tathâgata, which in exuberance contains immeasurable and ever-growing merits, reveals itself to all beings according to their various predispositions [or characters], and accomplishes for them innumerable [spiritual] benefits.

Further there is a fourfold significance in the nature of enlightenment whose purity may be likened unto space or a bright mirror.

The first great significance which may be likened unto space and a bright mirror, is trueness as negation (*çûnyatâ*), in the sense that enlightenment is absolutely unobtainable by any modes of relativity or by any outward signs of enlightenment.

The second great significance which may be likened unto space and a bright mirror, is trueness as affirmation (*açûnyatâ*), in the sense that all things [in their ultimate nature] are perfect and complete, and not subject to destruction; in the sense that all events in the phenomenal world are reflected in enlightenment, so that they neither pass out of it, nor enter into it, and that they neither disappear nor are destroyed; that they are in one eternal

and immutable soul which by none of the defiled things can be defiled and whose wisdom-essence enveloping immeasurable and innumerable merits, becomes the cause of perfuming the minds of all beings.

The third great significance which may be likened unto space and a bright mirror, is the affirmation as free from the hindrances (*âvarana*), in the sense that enlightenment is forever cut off from the hindrances both affectional (*kleçâvarana*) and intellectual (*jñeyâ-varana*), as well as from the mind [i.e., *âlâya-vijñâna*] which implicates itself with birth-and-death, since it is in its true nature clean, pure, eternal, calm, and immutable.

The fourth great significance which may be likened unto space and a bright mirror, is the affirmation as unfolding itself, in the sense that on account of a liberation from the hindrances, it transforms and unfolds itself, wherever conditions are favorable, in the form of a Tathâgata or in some other forms' in order that all beings might be induced thereby to bring their root of merit (*kuçalamûla*) to maturity.

By the so-called non-enlightenment, we mean that as the true Dharma [i.e., suchness] is from all eternity not truthfully recognized in its oneness, there issues forth an unenlightened mind and then subjectivity (*smrti*). But this subjectivity has no self-existence independent of enlightenment *a priori*.

To illustrate: a man who is lost goes astray because he is bent on pursuing a certain direction; and his confusion has no valid foundation other than that he is bent on a certain direction.

It is even the same with all beings. They become unenlightened, foster their subjectivity and go astray, because they are bent on enlightenment. But non-enlightenment has no existence of its own, aside from its relation with enlightenment *a priori*. And as enlightenment *a priori* is spoken of only in contrast to non-enlightenment, and as non-enlightenment is a non-entity, true enlightenment in turn loses its significance too. [That is to say, they are simply relative.]

In blindness there arose non-enlightenment of which three aspects are to be noted. These three are not independent.

The first aspect is ignorant action (*avidyakarma?*). A disturbance of the mind [i.e., *âlāya-vijñāna*] caused by non-enlightenment characterizes the beginning of karma. When enlightened, the mind is no more disturbed.

But by its disturbance misery (*duhkha*) is produced according to the law of causation.

The second aspect is that which perceives [i.e., the ego or subject]. In consequence of the disturbance of the mind there originates that which perceives an external world. When the mind is not disturbed, perception does not take place.

The third aspect is the external world. Through perception an unreal external world originates. Independent of that which perceives [i.e., the ego or subject], there is no surrounding world [or the object].

Conditioned by the unreal external world, six kinds of phenomena arise in succession.

The first phenomenon is intelligence [i.e., sensation]. Being affected by the external world the mind becomes conscious of the difference between the agreeable and the disagreeable.

The second phenomenon is succession [i.e., memory]. Following upon intelligence, memory retains the sensations agreeable as well as disagreeable in a continuous succession of subjective states.

The third phenomenon is clinging. Through the retention and succession of sensations agreeable as well as disagreeable, there arises the desire of clinging.

The fourth phenomenon is an attachment to names [or ideas, *samjñâ*], etc. By clinging the mind hypostasises all names whereby to give definitions to all things.

The fifth phenomenon is the performance of deeds (*karma*). On account of attachment to names, etc., there arise all the variations of deeds, productive of individuality.

The sixth phenomenon is the suffering due to the fetter of deeds. Through deeds suffering arises in which the mind finds itself entangled and curtailed of its freedom.

Be it therefore known that all defiled things do not exist by themselves, for all of them have arisen from ignorance.

Now there is a twofold relation between enlightenment and non-enlightenment: (1) identity; (2) nonidentity.

The relation of identity may be illustrated by the simile of all kinds of pottery which though different are all made of the same clay. Likewise the undefiled (*anâçrava*) and

ignorance (*avidya*) and their various transient forms come all from one and the same entity. Therefore Buddha teaches that all beings are from all eternity ever abiding in Nirvâna. In truth enlightenment cannot be manufactured, nor can it be created; it is absolutely intangible; it is no material existence that is an object of sensation.

The reason why enlightenment nevertheless assumes tangible material form is that it suffers defilement which is the source of all transient forms of manifestation. Wisdom itself has nothing to do with material phenomena whose characteristic feature is extension in space, and there are no attributes there by which wisdom can become tangible. This is the meaning of Buddha's brief statement just referred to.

The relation of non-identity may be illustrated by the difference that obtains among the various kinds of pottery. The relation among the undefiled and ignorance and their various transient forms of manifestation is similar to it.

And again, by the law of causation (*hetupratyaya*) in the domain of birth-and-death (*samsâra*) we mean that depending on the mind [i.e., *âlâya-vijñâna*] an evolution of the ego (*manas*) and consciousness (*vijñâna*) takes place in all beings.

What is meant by this?

In the all-conserving mind (*âlâya-vijñâna*) ignorance obtains; and from the non-enlightenment starts that which sees, that which represents, that which apprehends an objective world, and that which constantly particularises. This is called the ego (*manas*).

Five different names are given to the ego [according to its different modes of operation].

The first name is activity-consciousness (*Karma-vijñâna*?) in the sense that through the agency of ignorance an unenlightened mind begins to be disturbed [or awakened].

The second name is evolving-consciousness [*pravṛtti-vijñâna*, i.e., the subject], in the sense that when the mind is disturbed, there evolves that which sees an external world.

The third name is representation-consciousness, in the sense that the ego (*manas*) represents [or reflects] an external world. As a clean mirror reflects the images of all description, it is even so with the representation-consciousness. When it is confronted, for instance, with the five objects of sense, it represents them at once, instantaneously, and without any effort.

The fourth name is particularisation-consciousness, in the sense that it discriminates between different things defiled as well as pure.

The fifth name is succession-consciousness [i.e., memory], in the sense that continuously directed by the awakening consciousness [or attention, *manaskara*] it [*manas*] retains and never loses or suffers the destruction of any karma, good as well as evil, which had been sown in the past, and whose retribution, painful as well as agreeable, it never fails to mature, be it in the present or in the future; and also in the sense that it unconsciously recollects things gone by, and in imagination anticipates things to come.

Therefore the three domains (*triloka*) are nothing but the self-manifestation of the mind [i.e., *âlaya-vijñâna* which is

practically identical with suchness, *bhûtatathatâ*]. Separated from the mind, there would be no such things as the six objects of sense.

Why?

Since all things, owing the principle of their existence to the mind (*âlâya-vijñâna*), are produced by subjectivity (*smṛti*), all the modes of particularisation are the self-particularisation of the mind. The mind in itself [or the soul] being, however, free from all attributes, is not differentiated. Therefore we come to the conclusion that all things and conditions in the phenomenal world, hypostasized and established only through ignorance (*avidya*) and subjectivity (*smṛti*) on the part of all beings, have no more reality than the images in a mirror. They evolve simply from the ideality of a particularising mind. When the mind is disturbed, the multiplicity of things is produced; but when the mind is quieted, the multiplicity of things disappears.

By ego-consciousness (*manovijñâna*) we mean that all ignorant minds through their succession-consciousness cling to the conception of I and not-I [i.e., a separate objective world] and misapprehend the nature of the six objects of sense. The ego-consciousness is also called separation-consciousness, or phenomena-particularising-consciousness, because it is nourished by the perfuming influence of the prejudices (*âçrava*), intellectual as well as affectional.

The mind [or consciousness, *vijñâna*] that starts from the perfuming influence of ignorance which has no beginning cannot be comprehended by the intellect of common people (*prthagjana*), Çrâvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

It is partially comprehended by those Bodhisattvas at the stage of knowledge-and-practice, who discipline themselves., practice contemplation and become the Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakâya; while even those who have reached the highest stage of Bodhisattvahood cannot thoroughly comprehend it.

The only one who can have a clear and consummate knowledge of it is the Tathâgata.

Why?

While the essence of the mind is eternally clean and pure, the influence of ignorance makes possible the existence of a defiled mind. But in spite of the defiled mind, the mind [itself] is eternal, clear, pure, and not subject to transformation.

Further as its original nature is free from particularisation, it knows in itself no change whatever, though it produces everywhere the various modes of existence.

When the oneness of the totality of things (*dharmadhâtu*) is not recognized, then ignorance as well as particularisation arises, and all phases of the defiled mind are thus developed. But the significance of this doctrine is so extremely deep and unfathomable that it can be fully comprehended by Buddhas and by no others. Now there are six different phases of the defiled mind thus developed:

1. Interrelated [or secondary] defilement by attachment, from which Çrâvakas, Pratyekabuddhas and those Bodhisattvas at the stage of faith-adaptation can be freed.

2. Interrelated [or secondary] defilement by succession, from which Bodhisattvas with strenuous efforts at the stage of faith, can partially be freed, and at the stage of pure-heartedness, completely.
3. Interrelated [or secondary] defilement by the particularising intelligence, from which Bodhisattvas are gradually freed during their advancement from the stage of morality to the stage of wisdom, while upon reaching the stage of spirituality, they are eternally freed from it.
4. Non-interrelated [or primary] defilement by belief in an external world, which can be exterminated at the stage of matter-emancipation.
5. Non-interrelated [or primary] defilement by belief in a perceiving mind, which can be exterminated at the stage of mind-emancipation.
6. Non-interrelated [or primary] defilement by the fundamental activity, which can be exterminated in entering upon the stage of Tathâgatahood, passing through the highest stage of Bodhisattvahood.

From not recognizing the oneness of the totality of things (*dharmadhâtu*), Bodhisattvas can partially be liberated by passing first from the stage of faith and the stage of contemplation to the stage of pure-heartedness; while when they enter upon the stage of Tathâgatahood, they can once for all put an end [to the illusion].

By "interrelated" we mean that there is [in this case] a distinction [or consciousness of a duality] between the mind in itself and particularisation, that there is [here] a distinction [or consciousness of a duality] between the

defiled and the pure, [and therefore] that there is [here] an interrelation between that which perceives and that which determines.

By "non-interrelated" we mean that the mind [in this case] is perfectly identified with non-enlightenment, so that there is no distinction [or consciousness of a duality] between these two, [and therefore] that there is no consciousness of interrelation between that which perceives and that which determines.

The defiled mind is called affectional hindrance (*kleṣāvarana*), because it obscures the fundamental wisdom of suchness (*bhūtatahatā*). Ignorance is called intellectual hindrance (*jñeyāvarana*), because it obscures the spontaneous exercise of wisdom from which evolve all modes of activity in the world.

What is meant by this?

On account of the defiled mind attachment affirms itself in innumerable ways; and there arises a distinction [or consciousness] between that which apprehends and that which is apprehended. Thus believing in the external world produced by subjectivity, the mind becomes oblivious of the principle of sameness (*samatā*) that underlies all things.

The essence of all things is one and the same, perfectly calm and tranquil, and shows no sign of becoming; ignorance, however, is in its blindness and delusion oblivious of enlightenment, and, on that account, cannot recognize truthfully all those conditions, differences, and activities which characterize the phenomena of the universe.

Further we distinguish two phases of the self-manifestation of the mind [i.e., *âlaya-vijñâna*, under the law of causation] as birth-and-death (*samsâra*). The first is the cruder phase, being the state of an interrelated mind; the second is the more refined phase, being the state of a non-interrelated mind. The crudest phase is the subjective condition of common people (*prthagjana*); the more refined of the crude or the cruder of the refined is the subjective state of a Bodhisattva. These two phases [of the *âlaya-vijñâna* as the principle of birth-and-death] originate through the perfuming power of ignorance.

The birth-and-death (*samsâra*) has its *raison d'être* (*hetu*) and its cause [or condition, *pratyaya*]. Non-enlightenment is the *raison d'être*, and the external world as produced by subjectivity is the condition. When the *raison d'être* is annihilated, the condition is annihilated [i.e., loses its conditioning power]. When the condition is annihilated, the state of an interrelated mind is annihilated. When the *raison d'être* is annihilated, the state of a non-interrelated mind [too] is annihilated.

It may be asked: If the mind be annihilated, how can there be mentation? If mentation really occurs, how can there be annihilation?

In reply we say that while the objection is well founded, we understand by the annihilation, not that of the mind itself, but of its modes [only].

To illustrate: the water shows the symptoms of disturbance when stirred up by the wind. Have the wind annihilated, and the symptoms of disturbance on the water will also be annihilated, the water itself remaining the same. Let the water itself, however, be annihilated, the

symptoms of disturbance would no more be perceptible; because there is nothing there through which it can show itself. Only so long as the water is not annihilated, the symptoms of disturbance may continue.

It is even the same with all beings. Through ignorance their minds become disturbed. Let ignorance be annihilated, and the symptom of disturbance will also be annihilated, while the essence of the mind [i.e., suchness] remains the same. Only if the mind itself were annihilated, then all beings would cease to exist, because there would be nothing there by which they could manifest themselves. But so long as the mind be not annihilated, its disturbance may continue.

A constant production of things defiled and pure is taking place on account of the inter-perfuming of the four different powers which are as follows: the first is the pure dharma, that is, suchness (*bhûatathatâ*); the second is the principle of defilement, that is, ignorance (*avidya*); the third is the subjective mind, that is, activity-consciousness (*karmavijñâna?*); the fourth is the external world (*vishaya*) of subjectivity, that is, the six objects of sense.

By "perfuming" we mean that while our worldly clothes [viz., those which we wear] have no odor of their own, neither offensive nor agreeable, they acquire one or the other according to the nature of the substance with which they are perfumed.

Now suchness is a pure dharma free from defilement. It acquires, however, a quality of defilement owing to the perfuming power of ignorance. On the other hand, ignorance has nothing to do with purity. Nevertheless, we

speak of its being able to do the work of purity, because it in its turn is perfumed by suchness.

How are defiled things continually produced by perfuming?

Determined by suchness [in its relative aspect], ignorance becomes the *raison d'être* of all forms of defilement. And this ignorance perfumes suchness, and, by perfuming suchness, it produces subjectivity (*smṛti*). This subjectivity in its turn perfumes ignorance. On account of this [reciprocal] perfuming, the truth is misunderstood. On account of its being misunderstood, an external world of subjectivity appears [viz., a conception of particulars as particulars]. Further, on account of the perfuming power of subjectivity, various modes of individuation are produced. And by clinging to them, various deeds are done, and we suffer as the result miseries, mentally as well as bodily.

There are two senses in what we call the perfuming power of the external world of subjectivity": (1) that which strengthens particularisation; (2) that which strengthens attachment.

There are again two senses in what we call-the perfuming power of the subjective mind": (1) that which strengthens the fundamental activity-consciousness, whereby Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas are subject to the miseries of birth and death; (2) that which strengthens the phenomena-particularising-consciousness, whereby all common people (*prthagjana*) are subject to the miseries of being fettered by prior deeds (*karma*).

There are also two senses in what we call "the perfuming power of ignorance": (1) a fundamental perfuming, in the sense that the activity-consciousness is thereby actualized; (2) a perfuming of intellect and affection, in the sense that the phenomena-particularising-consciousness is thereby actualized.

How are pure things constantly produced by perfuming?

Suchness perfumes ignorance, and in consequence of this perfuming the mind involved in subjectivity is caused to loathe the misery of birth and death and to seek after the blessing of Nirvâna. This longing and loathing on the part of the subjective mind in turn perfumes suchness. On account of this perfuming influence we are enabled to believe that we are in possession within ourselves of suchness whose essential nature is pure and immaculate; and we also recognize that all phenomena in the world are nothing but the illusory manifestation of the mind (*âlaya-vijñâna*) and have no reality of their own. Since we thus rightly understand the truth, we can practice the means of liberation, can perform those actions which are in accordance [with the Dharma]. Neither do we particularize, nor cling to. By virtue of this discipline and habituation during the lapse of innumerable *asamkhyeyakalpas*, we have ignorance annihilated.

As ignorance is thus annihilated, the mind [i.e., *âlaya-vijñâna*] is no more disturbed so as to be subject to individuation. As the mind is no more disturbed, the particularisation of the surrounding world is annihilated. When in this wise the principle and the condition of defilement, their products, and the mental disturbances are all annihilated, it is said that we attain to Nirvâna and that

various spontaneous displays of activity are accomplished.

There are two senses in what we call "the perfuming of the subjective mind": (1) the perfuming of the phenomena-particularising-consciousness, whereby all common people (*prthagjana*), Çrâvakas, and Pratyekabuddhas are induced to loathe the misery of birth and death, and, each according to his own capacity, to step towards the most excellent knowledge (*bodhiparinishpatti*); (2) the perfuming of the ego (*manas*), whereby courageously making up their minds, Bodhisattvas unhesitatingly step towards and enter into Nirvâna, that has no fixed abode.

There are also two senses in what we call "the perfuming of suchness": (1) essence-perfuming, and (2) activity-perfuming.

The Essence-Perfuming.--Embracing in full from all eternity infinite spotless virtues (*anâçrava*) and incomprehensibly excellent spiritual states that can efficiently exercise an eternal and incessant influence upon all beings, suchness thereby perfumes the minds of all beings. [1](#)

In consequence of this perfuming power, they are caused to loathe the misery of birth and death, and to long for the blessing of Nirvâna, and believing that they are in possession within themselves of the true, valid Dharma, to call forth their aspiration (*cittotpâda*) and to discipline themselves.

Here a question arises: If all beings are uniformly in possession of suchness and are therefore equally perfumed by it, how is it that there are some who do not believe in it, while others do; and that there are such immeasurable

stages and inequalities among them, which divide the path from the first stage of aspiration up to the last stage of Nirvâna, while according to the Doctrine all these differences should be equalized?

In reply we say this: Though all beings are uniformly in possession of suchness, the intensity [of the influence] of ignorance, the principle of individuation, that works from all eternity, varies in such manifold grades as to outnumber the sands of the Ganges. And it is even so with such entangling prejudices (*kleṣa* or *âçrava*) as the ego-conception, intellectual and affectional prejudices, etc. [whose perfuming efficiency varies according to the karma previously accumulated by each individual],--all these things being comprehended only by the Tathâgata. Hence such immeasurable degrees of difference as regards belief, etc.

Further, there is made in the doctrine of all Buddhas a distinction between *raison d'être* (*hetu*) and cause (*pratyaya*). When both are fully satisfied, the final goal [of Buddhism] is attained and actualized.

To illustrate: the combustible nature of the wood is the *raison d'être* of a fire. But if a man is not acquainted with the fact, or, though acquainted with it, does not apply any method [whereby the potential principle can be actualized], how could he produce a fire and burn the wood?

It is even so with all beings. Although they are in possession of suchness as the perfuming *raison d'être*, yet how could they attain to Nirvâna, if they do not happen, as the cause, to see Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or good sages, or even if they see them, do not practice good deeds

(*caryâ*), do not exercise wisdom (*prajñâ*), do not destroy prejudices (*kleça*)?

Conversely, by the cause alone, i.e., by their mere happening to see all good sages, it is not sure for them that they will be induced to loathe the misery of birth and death and to long for the blessing of Nirvâna, unless indeed they were in possession within themselves of the intrinsic perfuming principle as the *raison d'être*. It is, therefore, only when both the *raison d'être* and the cause are fully actualized that they can do so.

How are the *raison d'être* and the cause to be fully actualized?

Now, there is an inherent perfuming principle in one's own being, which, embraced and protected by the love (*maitrî*) and compassion (*karunâ*) of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, is caused to loathe the misery of birth and death, to believe in Nirvâna, to cultivate their root of merit (*kuçalamûla*), to habituate oneself to it, and to bring it to maturity.

In consequence of this, one is enabled to see all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and, receiving instructions from them, is benefited, gladdened, induced to practice good deeds, etc., till one attain to Buddhahood and enter into Nirvâna.

The Activity-Perfuming.--By this is meant nothing else than the perfuming influence of the external cause over all beings. It asserts itself in innumerable ways. Briefly speaking we may distinguish two kinds of it: (1) individual; and (2) universal.

The Individual Cause.--All beings since their first aspiration (*cittotpâda*) till the attainment of Buddhahood are sheltered under the guardianship of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who, responding to the requirements of the occasion, transform themselves and assume the actual forms of personality.

Thus for the sake of all beings Buddhas and Bodhisattvas become sometimes their parents, sometimes their wives and children, sometimes their kinsmen, sometimes their servants, sometimes their friends, sometimes their enemies, sometimes reveal themselves as devas or in some other forms.

Again Buddhas and Bodhisattvas treat all beings sometimes with the four methods of entertainment, sometimes with the six pârâmitâs, or with some other deeds, all of which are the inducement for them to make their knowledge (*bodhi*) perfect.

Thus embracing all beings with their deep compassion (*mahâkarunâ*), with their meek and tender heart, as well as their immense treasure of blissful wisdom, Buddhas convert them in such a way as to suit their [all beings'] needs and conditions; while all beings thereby are enabled to hear or to see Buddhas, and, thinking of Tathâgatas or some other personages, to increase their root of merit (*kuçalamûla*).

This individual cause is divided into two kinds: (1) that which takes effect immediately, enabling one without delay to attain to Buddhahood; (2) that which takes effect gradually, enabling one to attain to Buddhahood only after a long interval.

Each of these two is further divided into two kinds: (1) that which increases one's root of merit; (2) that which induces one to enter into the path (*mârga*).

The Universal Cause.--With universal wisdom (*samatâjñâna?*) and universal wishes (*samatâpranidhâna?*) all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas desire to achieve a universal emancipation of all beings. This desire is eternal and spontaneous on their part. And now as this wisdom and these wishes have the perfuming power over all beings, the latter are caused to think of or to recollect all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, so that sometimes hearing them, sometimes seeing them, all beings thereby acquire [spiritual] benefits (*hitatâ*). That is, entering into the samâdhi of purity, they destroy hindrances wherever they are met with, and obtain all-penetrating insight, that enables one to become conscious of the absolute oneness (*samatâ*) of the universe (*sarvaloka*) and to see innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Again, this perfuming of the essence and the activity may be divided into two categories: (1) that which is not yet in unison [with suchness]; (2) that which is already in unison [with suchness].

By that perfuming which is not yet in unison [with suchness] we understand the religious discipline of common people (*prthagjana*), Çrâvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and novice Bodhisattvas. While their strength of faith (*çradhâbala*) perfumed by the ego (*manas*) and the ego-consciousness (*manovijñâna*) enables them to continue their religious discipline, they have not yet attained to the state of non-particularisation, because their discipline is not yet in unison with the essence of suchness; nor have they yet attained to the spontaneity of action (*svayamkarma?*),

because their discipline is not yet in unison with the activity of suchness.

By that perfuming which is already in unison [with suchness], we understand the religious discipline of Bodhisattvas of the Dharmakâya. They have attended to the state of non-particularisation, because their discipline is in unison with the self-essence of all Tathâgatas; they have attained to the spontaneity of action, because their discipline is in unison with the wisdom and activity of all Tathâgatas. Allowing themselves to be influenced only by the power of the Dharma, their discipline acquires a nature of spontaneity and thereby perfumes suchness and destroys ignorance.

Again the incessant perfuming of the defiled dharma [i.e., ignorance] from all eternity works on; but when one attains to Buddhahood, one at once puts an end to it.

The perfuming of the pure dharma [i.e., suchness] works on to eternity, and there is no interruption of it. Because by virtue of the perfuming of the Dharma, that is, suchness, subjectivity is on the one hand annihilated, and the Dharmakâya is on the other hand revealed, and the perfuming process of the activity [of suchness] thus originated forever goes on.

c. The Threefold Significance of the Mahâyâna Explained.

Again the quintessence and the attributes of suchness (*bhûtatathatâ*) know no diminution or addition, but remain the same in common people (*prthagjana*), Çrâvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. It was not created in the past, nor is it to be annihilated in the future;

it is eternal, permanent, absolute; and from all eternity it sufficingly embraces in its essence all possible merits (*punya*).

That is to say, suchness has such characteristics as follows: the effulgence of great wisdom; the universal illumination of the dharmadhātu [universe]; the true and adequate knowledge; the mind pure and clean in its self-nature; the eternal, the blessed, the self-regulating and the pure; the tranquil, the immutable, and the free. And there is no heterogeneity in all those Buddha-dharmas which, outnumbering the sands of the Ganges, can be neither identical (*ekârtha*) nor not-identical (*nânârtha*) [with the essence of suchness], and which therefore are out of the range of our comprehension. Accordingly suchness is called the Tathâgata's womb (*tathâgatagarbha*) or the Dharmakâya.

It may be questioned: While it was stated before that suchness is devoid of all characteristics (*lakshana*), how can it now be said without contradiction that it embraces in full all such merits?

In reply it would be said that though suchness in truth abundantly embraces all merits, yet it is free in its nature from all forms of distinction; because all objects in the world are of one and the same taste, are of one reality, have nothing to do with the modes of particularisation, and are not of dualistic character. Depending on the principle of birth-and-death, such as the activity-consciousness (*karmavijrâna?*), etc., however, all signs of difference and individuation appear.

How are those qualifications to be assigned to suchness?

Though all things in their [metaphysical] origin come from the soul alone and in truth free from particularisation, yet on account of non-enlightenment there originates a subjective mind [i.e., *âlâya-vijñâna*] that becomes conscious of an external world (*vishaya*). This we call ignorance (*avidya*). Nevertheless the essence of the mind [or the soul] is perfectly pure, and there is no awakening of ignorance in it. Thence we assign to suchness this quality, the effulgence of great wisdom.

If the mind being awakened perceive an external world, then there will be something that cannot be perceived by it. But the essence of the mind has nothing to do with perception [which presupposes the dual existence of a perceiving subject and an object perceived]; so there is nothing that cannot be perceived by it, [that is, the world of relativity is submerged in the oneness of suchness]. Thence we assign to suchness this quality, the universal illumination of the universe (*dharmadhâtu*).

When the mind is disturbed, it fails to be a true and adequate knowledge; it fails to be a pure, clean essence; it fails to be eternal, blissful, self-regulating, and pure; it fails to be tranquil, etc. On the contrary, it will become transient, changeable, unfree, and therefore the source of falsity and defilement, while its modifications outnumber the sands of the Ganges. But when there is no disturbance in the essence of the mind, we speak of suchness as being the true, adequate knowledge, etc., and as possessing pure and clean merits that outnumber the sands of the Ganges.

When the mind is disturbed it will strive to become conscious of the existence of an external world and will thus betray the imperfection of its inner condition. But as all infinite merits in fact constitute the one mind which,

perfect in itself, has no need of seeking after any external things other than itself, so suchness never fails to actualize all those Buddha-dharmas, that, outnumbering the sands of the Ganges, can be said to be neither identical nor non-identical with the essence of the mind, and that therefore are utterly out of the range of our comprehension. On that account suchness is designated the Tathâgata's womb (*tathâgatagarbha*) or the Tathâgata's Dharmakâya.

What is meant by the activity of suchness is this: all Buddhas, while at the stage of discipline, feel a deep compassion (*mahâkarunâ*) [for all beings], practice all pârâmitâs, the four methods of entertainment (*catvâri-sangrahavastûni*), and many other meritorious deeds-treat others as their own self, wish to work out a universal salvation of mankind in ages to come, through limitless numbers of kalpas; recognize truthfully and adequately the principle of equality (*samatâ*) among people; and do not cling to the individual existence of a sentient being.

By virtue of such a great wisdom that works means of emancipation (*upâyâjñâ?*), they annihilate ignorance that knows no beginning; recognize the Dharmakâya in its original purity; spontaneously perform incomprehensible karma as well as various unfettered moral activities; manifest themselves throughout the universe (*dharmadhâtu*), identify themselves with suchness, and leave no traces of compulsion.

And how is this?

Because all Tathâgatas are the Dharmakâya itself, are the highest truth (*paramârthasatya*) itself, and have nothing to do with conditionality (*samvrittisatya*) and compulsory actions; whereas the seeing, hearing, etc. [i.e., the

particularising senses] of the sentient being diversify [on its own account] the activity of Tathâgatas.

Now this activity [in another word, the Dharmakâya] has a twofold aspect. The first one depends on the phenomena-particularising-consciousness, by means of which the activity is conceived by the minds of common people (*prthagjana*), Çrâvakas, and Pratyekabuddhas. This aspect is called the Body of Transformation (*nirmânakâya*).

But as the beings of this class do not know that the Body of Transformation is merely the shadow [or reflection] of their own evolving-consciousness (*pravrtti-vijñâna*), they imagine that it comes from some external sources, and so they give it a corporeal limitation. But the Body of Transformation [or what amounts to the same thing, the Dharmakâya] has nothing to do with limitation and measurement.

The second aspect [of the Dharmakâya] depends on the activity-consciousness (*karmavijñâna*) by means of which the activity is conceived by the minds of Bodhisattvas while passing from their first aspiration (*cittotpâda*) stage up to the height of Bodhisattvahood. This is called the Body of Bliss (*sambhogakâya*).

The body has infinite forms. The form has infinite attributes. The attribute has infinite excellencies. And the accompanying rewards of Bodhisattvas, that is, the region where they are predestined to be born [by their previous karma], also has infinite merits and ornamentations. Manifesting itself everywhere, the Body of Bliss is infinite, boundless, limitless, unintermittent [in its action], directly coming forth from the mind.

All these merits being actualized through the perfuming of such spotless deeds as the pârâmitâs, etc., as well as through the incomprehensible perfuming power [of enlightenment *a priori*], the Sambhogakâya embraces infinite attributes of bliss and merit. Therefore it is also called the Body of Reward.

What is recognized by common people (*prthagjana*), etc., is the coarsest form of the activity of the Dharmakâya. There is a variety of it according to the six different states of creation. It has no attributes of infinite merits and blessings.

What is recognized by Bodhisattvas at the first stage is a finer form of the activity of the Dharmakâya. As they firmly believe in suchness, they can have a partial insight into it, and understand that the Body of the Tathâgata is not departing, is not coming, is free from arrest [i.e., the Tathâgata's work is eternal and constant], that every thing is but a reflected shadow of the mind, not independent of suchness. But these Bodhisattvas have not yet freed themselves from the finest form of particularisation, because they have not yet entered into the order of the Dharmakâya.

Bodhisattvas at the stage of pure-heartedness are able to recognize the finer form of the activity [of the Dharmakâya]. Their insight is more penetrating than the former. When they reach the height of Bodhisattvahood their insight becomes perfect.

By the finer form of the activity we understand the Body of Bliss (*sambhogakâya*). As long as they are possessed by the activity-consciousness, they would conceive the Body of Bliss. 1 But when they are liberated from it, all traces of

individuation would become obliterated. Because all Tathâgatas come from [one and the same] Dharmakâya, have no distinction of this-ness and that-ness, have no corporeal forms that are characterized by reciprocal limitation.

A question arises here: If the Dharmakâya of Buddhas is devoid of variously differentiated corporeal forms, how is it that it can manifest itself in various corporeal forms at all?

In reply we say: The Dharmakâya can manifest itself in various corporeal forms just because it is the real essence of them. Matter (*rûpa*) and mind (*citta*) from the very beginning are not a duality. So we speak of [the universe as] a system of rationality (*prajñakâya*), seeing that the real nature of matter just constitutes the norm of mind. Again we speak of [the universe as] a system of materiality (*dharmakâya*), seeing that the true nature of mind just constitutes the norm of matter.

Now depending on the Dharmakâya, all Tathâgatas manifest themselves in bodily forms and are incessantly present at all points of space. And Bodhisattvas in the ten quarters, according to their capabilities and wishes, are able to manifest infinite Bodies of Bliss and infinite lands of ornamentation, each one of which, though stamped with the marks of individuality, does not hinder the others from being fused into it, and this [mutual fusion] has no interruption.

But the manifestation of the Dharmakâya in [infinite] bodily forms is not comprehensible to the thought and understanding of common-people; because it is the free and subtlest activity of suchness.

Again, in order that all beings might be induced to step forward from the gate of birth-and-death to that of suchness, we endeavor to let them understand that those modes of existence such as matter (*rûpa*), etc. [i.e., the five skandhas] are imperfect.

Why are they imperfect?

When we divide some gross [or composite] matter, we can reduce it to atoms (*anu*). But as the atom will also be subject to further division, all forms of material existence, whether gross or fine, are nothing but the shadow of particularisation produced by a subjective mind, and we cannot ascribe any degree of [absolute, or independent] reality to them.

Let us next go over to and examine the other skandhas [that have temporal existence]. We find there too that we can gradually reduce them to kshanas [i.e., infinitesimal divisions of time], whose nature, however closely scrutinized, does not give any sign of [indivisible] oneness.

It is even the same with the objects of non-aggregate (*asamskrta-dharma*). They cannot have their own existence independent of the universe (*dharmadhâtu*). Be it therefore understood that the same may be said in regard to all objects without exception in the ten quarters of space.

As a lost man who takes the east for the west, while the quarter is not changed on account of his confusion, so all beings, because of their misleading ignorance, imagine that the mind is being disturbed, while in reality it is not.

But when they understand that the disturbance of the mind [i.e., birth-and-death] is [at the same time]

immortality [viz., suchness], they would then enter into the gate of suchness.

2. The Refutation of False Doctrines.

All false doctrines invariably come out of the âtman-conception. If we were liberated from it, the existence of false doctrines would be impossible.

There are two kinds of the âtman-conception: (1) Belief in the existence of a personal atman [or ego-soul]; (2) Belief in the existence of âtman in thing[or things-in-themselves].

a. Five False Views Held by Those Who Believe in a Personal Atman.

There are five different views springing from it [belief in the ego], which are held by common people (*prthagjana*).

First, hearing that it is said in the Sûtra that the Dharmakâya of the Tathâgata is perfectly tranquil and may be likened unto space (*âkâsa*), yet not understanding its purport, ignorant people cling to the view that the nature of the Tathâgata is eternal and omnipresent in the same sense as space is.

In order that this clinging to the false doctrine may be eliminated, be it clearly understood that space is nothing but a mode of particularisation and that it has no real existence of its own. Where there is a perception of space, there is side by side a perception of a variety of things, in contradistinction to which space is spoken of as if existing independently. Space therefore exists only in relation to our particularising consciousness.

Further since matter (*rûpa*) as stated before, is merely a particularisation of the confused mind, it is clear enough that space cannot have any independent existence. In a word all modes of relative existence, our phenomenal world as a whole, are created simply by the particularisation of the confused mind. If we become dissociated from the latter, then all modes of relative existence vanish away by themselves; while the soul alone, in its truth and suchness, pervades the whole universe. The soul, therefore, that constitutes the essential nature of the Tathâgata, cannot be compared with space, though the latter may be said to be in a certain limited sense eternal and real.

Secondly, hearing that it is said in the Sûtras that all things in the world without exception are perfect emptiness (*atyantaçûnyatâ*), that even Nirvâna or suchness is also perfect emptiness, is devoid in its true nature of all characteristics (*lakshanâ*), yet not understanding its purport, ignorant people cling to the view that Nirvâna or suchness is a nothing, devoid of contents.

In order that this clinging may be eliminated, be it clearly understood that suchness or Dharmakâya in its self-nature (*svabhâva*) is not a nothing (*çûnyatâ*) but envelopes in full immeasurable merits (*guna*) which make up its true nature.

Thirdly, hearing that it is said in the Sûtras that the Tathâgata's womb (*tathâgatagarbha*) envelopes in full all kinds of merits which constituting its true nature do neither suffer augmentation nor diminution, yet not understanding its purport, ignorant people cling to the view that there is in the Tathâgata's womb itself an inherent and fundamental distinction between the two objects, matter (*rûpa*) and mind (*citta*).

In order that this clinging may be eliminated, be it clearly understood that suchness (*bhûtatathatâ*) has nothing to do with any form of distinction produced by defilement, and that even in case we speak of its possessing innumerable meritorious characteristics, they are free from the traces of defilement.

Fourthly, hearing that it is said in the Sûtras that even all impure and defiled things in the world are produced through the Tathâgata's womb (*tathâgatagarbha*), and that all things in the world are not at variance with suchness, yet not understanding its purport, ignorant people imagine that the Tathâgata's womb all-containingly envelopes all objects of defilement in the world.

In order that this clinging may be eliminated, be it clearly understood that the Tathâgata's womb all-containingly envelopes pure and spotless merits (*guna*) which, outnumbering the sands of the Ganges, are not at variance with suchness; that the prejudices (*âçrava* or *kleça*) and defiled objects, which also outnumber the sands of the Ganges are nothing but non-entity, have from the first no self-existence (*svabhâva*), have never been in correspondence with the Tathâgata's womb; that there is no reason to suppose that the Tathâgata's womb had been corresponding with defiled objects, but has now by virtue of intellectual intuition been freed from falsity and defilement.

Fifthly, hearing that it is said in the Sûtras [1](#) that depending on the Tathâgata's womb, there is birth-and-death (*samsâra*) as well as the attainment of Nirvâna, yet not understanding its purport, ignorant people imagine that depending on the Tathâgata's womb there is a

beginning for birth-and-death, and that since there is the beginning, Nirvâna is in turn subject to extinction.

In order that this clinging may be eliminated, be it clearly understood that as the Tathâgata's womb has no beginning, ignorance and birth-and-death depending on it have also no beginning; that it is a view held by the tîrthaka [i.e., the followers of the Vaiçesika] and not taught by the Buddha, to say that there are outside of the three worlds (*triloka*) some other beings coming into existence; that the Tathâgata's womb has no future [i.e., time of extinction]; and that those who have an insight into it, will eternally destroy the seeds of birth-and-death and attain to Nirvâna which has also no future [i.e., time of extinction].

These four erroneous views have thus arisen from the conception of a personal âtman, and so we have laid down the four refutations as above mentioned.

b. Belief in the Existence of Atman in Things.

As the World-honored One (*Bhagavat*), considering the inferior intellectual calibre of Çrâvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, taught them only the doctrine of non-personal âtman, [and did not make any further demonstration of the doctrine], the people have in the meantime formed a fixed idea on the transitoriness of the five skandhas, and, being terrified at the thought of birth and death, have fanatically craved for Nirvâna.

In order that this clinging may be eliminated, be it clearly understood that the essence of the five skandhas is uncreate, there is no annihilation of them; that since there is no annihilation of them, they are in their [metaphysical] origin Nirvâna itself; that if one be absolutely freed from

particularisation and attachment, one will understand that all things both pure and defiled have only relative existence.

Be it therefore known that all things in the world from the beginning are neither matter (*rûpa*), nor mind (*citta*), nor intelligence (*prajñâ*), nor consciousness (*vijñâna*), nor non-being (*abhâva*), nor being (*bhâva*); they are after all inexplicable. The reason why the Tathâgata nevertheless endeavors to instruct by means of words and definitions is through his good and excellent skillfulness [or expediency, *upâya-kauçalya*]. He only provisionally makes use of words and definitions to lead all beings, while his real object is to make them abandon symbolism and directly enter into the real reality (*tattva*). Because if they indulge themselves in reasoning's, attach themselves to sophistry, and thus foster their subjective particularisation, how could they have the true wisdom (*tattvajñâna*) and attain to Nirvâna?

3. Ways of Practising the Right Path.

By this we mean that all Bodhisattvas, by their aspiration (*cittotpâda*) and discipline (*caryâcarana*), will be able to attain to the reason that made all Tathâgatas perceive the path (*mârگا*).

Briefly stated, there are three kinds of aspiration: (1) Aspiration through the perfection of faith; (2) Aspiration through knowledge and practice; (3) Aspiration through intellectual intuition.

By whom, and by which deeds, can faith (*çraddhâ*) be perfected and can the aspiration be awakened?

Now the people who belong to the group of inconstancy (*aniyatarâçi*), by virtue of their root of merit (*kuçalamûla*), which has a perfuming power, firmly believe in the retribution of karma, practice the ten virtues (*daçakuçalâni*), loathe the sufferings of birth and death, seek after the most excellent enlightenment (*Samyaksambodhi*), and seeing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas they wait on them, make offerings to them, discipline themselves in many [meritorious] deeds; and after the lapse of ten thousand kalpas (eons), their faith will finally be perfected.

Since then either by virtue of the instruction received from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or on account of their deep compassion (*mahâkarunâ*), or from their desire to preserve the right doctrine (*saddharma*) against its corruption, their aspiration [to the highest truth] will be awakened.

After having awakened the aspiration they will enter into the group of constant truth (*samyaktvaniyata-râçi*) and never relapse, always abiding in the essence of the Buddha-seed and identifying themselves with its excellent principle.

There is, however, a certain class of people whose root of merit (*kuçalamûla*) from time immemorial is poor, and whose prejudices (*kleça* or *âçrava*) are intense, deeply veiling their minds. Such people, even if they see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, wait on them, and make offerings to them, will sow merely the seeds of men (*manushya*) and gods (*deva*) [i.e., they will be born in the future as men or gods], or the seeds of the enlightenment of Çrâvakas and Pratyekabuddhas [i.e., their attainment would not be higher than that of Çrâvakas or Pratyekabuddhas].

Some of them may even aspire to seek after the Mahâbodhi, but owing to the instability of their character, they will ever oscillate between progress and retrogression.

Some of them, happening to see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, may make offerings to them, wait on them, practice many [meritorious] deeds, and, while ten thousand mahâkalpas (æons) are not yet elapsed, may meantime come into some favorable circumstances and thereby awake aspiration. What are those favorable circumstances? For instance, they may witness the personal figure of a Buddha, or may make some offerings to the congregation of priests (*samgha*), or may be instructed by Çrâvakas or Pratyekabuddhas, or may be moved by seeing others aspire [to the highest truth].

But this kind of aspiration as a rule is not constant. In case they come into unfavorable circumstances, they may happen to fall down to the stage of Çrâvakahood or Pratyekabuddhahood.

Now, briefly speaking, three faculties of the soul will be awakened by the perfection of faith: (1) rightness of comprehension [lit., right, straight mind], for it truthfully and intuitively contemplates suchness (*bhûtalathatâ*); (2) profundity of virtue [lit., deep, heavy mind], for it rejoices in accumulating all good deeds; (3) greatness of compassion (*mahâkarunâ*), for it desires to uproot the miseries (*duhkha*) of all beings.

It may be asked whether there is ever any need for one to discipline oneself in all good deeds and to try to save mankind, since all sentient beings (*sarvasattva*) as well as all things (*sarvadharmâ*) in the world, abiding in the

oneness of the universe (*dharmadhātu*) that has no second, will, as can be logically inferred, have nothing to do but calmly to contemplate suchness.

In reply we say, yes. Because the mind may be likened unto a precious jewel which is pure and bright in its essence but buried in a gross veinstone. Now there is no reason to suppose that one can make it clean and pure only by contemplating it, and without applying any means [of purification] or a degree of workmanship.

It is even the same with suchness. Though it is pure and bright in its essence and sufficiently envelopes all merits (*guna*), yet it is deeply buried in infinite external defilements. And there is no reason to suppose that a man can make it pure and clean only by earnest contemplation on it, and without trying any means [of emancipation] or of discipline.

It is therefore an urgent necessity that all good deeds should be accumulated, that all beings should be delivered, that those infinite external defilements and impurities should be cast off, that the true doctrine should be revealed.

With regard to "means" [or "skillfulness," *upāya*] there are, briefly stated, four kinds.

The first one is called the means of practicing the fundamental [truth, *mūla*]. That is to say, by contemplating the true essence of all dharmas, which, being uncreate and free from imagination, is not concerned with the metempsychosis of birth and death, and by contemplating the truth that all things originate from the co-operation of the principle (*hetu*) and the causes (*pratyaya*), and that the

retribution of karma is irrevocable, one will evoke deep compassion, discipline oneself in all good deeds, embrace and convert all beings, and not dwell in Nirvâna, since suchness [in its absolute aspect] has nothing to do with Nirvâna or with birth-and-death. As this attitude [towards all objects] is in accord [with the nature of suchness], it is called the means of practicing the [fundamental] truth.

The second one is called the means of abeyance. That is, by feeling shame and remorse, one may put an end to all evils and not let them grow, since suchness is free from all marks of imperfection. Thus to be in accord with suchness and to put an end to all evils is called the means of abeyance.

The third one is called the means of strengthening the root of merits (*kuçalamûla*). By raising reverential feelings toward the Triple Treasure (*triratna*), one will revere, make offerings to, pay homage to, praise, rejoice in, and beseech the Triple Treasure; and there upon one's orthodox faith being strengthened, one will at last awake a desire for the most excellent knowledge (*bodhiparinishpatti*). Through the protection of the majestic power of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sam gha, one's karma-hindrances (*karmâvarana*) will now get purified and one's root of merit firmly established; because suchness is free from all hindrances and envelopes all merits. Thus to be in accord with suchness and to practice good deeds is called the means of strengthening the root of merits.

The fourth one is called the universal means of great vows (*mahâpranidhâna*). That is, one may make the vow that in ages to come all beings should universally be delivered and take refuge at ease in the Anupadhiçesa Nirvâna, because the true nature of all objects is free from

relativity, is one and the same, making no distinction between this and that, and is absolutely calm and tranquil. Thus to be in accord with the three attributes [i.e., non-relativity, sameness, tranquility] of suchness and to make such a great vow is called the universal means of great vows.

[Now to return to the former subject], when the Bodhisattva thus aspires to the highest truth, he is able to have a partial insight into the Dharmakâya of the Buddha; and according to the power of the vow (*pranâdhânavâçâ*), he performs eight things, to wit, his descent from the palace in the Tushita heaven [to this world], his entrance into the human womb, his stay therein, his birth, his renunciation, his attainment of Buddhahood, his revolution of the Dharma-wheel (*dharmacakra*), and lastly his Parinirvâna.

He is not, however, as yet to be called absolute Dharmakâya, for he has not yet completely destroyed the impure karma that has been accumulated during his numberless existences in the past; perchance by the influence of the evil karma he may suffer a little amount of misery. But he suffers it only for a short time, and this not because of his being fettered by the evil karma, but because of his own vow-power (*pranidhânavâçâ*) [which he made for the universal emancipation of mankind].

It is sometimes said in the Sûtra that even those Bodhisattvas who aspired [to the highest truth] through the perfection of their faith might relapse and fall down to the evil creation (*apâyagati*). But this was only said to encourage those novices who are apt to give themselves up to indulgence and so may fail to enter into the right

order [i.e., *samyaktvaniyata*], though they may not really fall down [into the evil path].

Further the Bodhisattva has since his first aspiration disciplined himself in those deeds which are beneficial both to himself and others, and thereby his heart has become free from timidity, inasmuch as he would not shudder even at the thought of falling down to the stage of Çrâvakahood or Pratyekabuddhahood, any more than to the evil creation (*apâyagati*).

If he learn that he is able to attain to Buddhahood only after an assiduous observance of various rules of austerity and mortification during immeasurable asamkheyakalpas, he will never be frightened nor will he falter. How then could he ever raise such thoughts as cherished by Çrâvakas or Pratyekabuddhas? How then could he fall down to the evil creation (*apâyagati*)? He has a firm faith in the truth that all things (*sarvadharmā*) from the beginning are in their nature Nirvâna itself.

This sort of aspiration (*cittotpâda*) is more excellent than the former, because the first asamkheyakalpa of Bodhisattvas of this class is approaching to an end, because they have attained a thorough knowledge of suchness, because all their acts are performed without any stain of attachment.

As they know that the nature of the Dharma, being free from the trace of covetousness, is the perfection of pure and stainless charity (*dânapâramitâ*), they in conformity to it practice charity (*dânapâramitâ*).

As they know that the nature of the Dharma, being free from the influence of the five sensual passions, and, having nothing to do with immorality, is the perfection of pure

and stainless morality (*çilapâramitâ*), they in conformity to it practice morality (*çilapâramitâ*).

As they know that the nature of the Dharma, having nothing to do with grievance and being free from malice, is the perfection of pure and stainless patience (*kshântipâramitâ*), they in conformity to it practice patience (*kshântipâramitâ*).

As they know that the nature of the Dharma, being free from physical and mental limitations and having nothing to do with indolence, is the perfection of pure and stainless energy (*vîryapâramitâ*), they in conformity to it practice energy (*vîryapâramitâ*).

As they know that the nature of the Dharma, having nothing to do with disturbance or confusion, is the perfection of pure and stainless tranquilization (*dhyânapâramitâ*), they in conformity to it practice tranquilization (*dhyânapâramitâ*).

As they know that the nature of the Dharma, being free from the darkness of ignorance, is the perfection of pure and stainless wisdom (*prajñâpâramitâ*), they in conformity to it practice wisdom (*prajñâpâramitâ*).

What is the object of which the Bodhisattva from the stage of pure-heartedness up to the height of Bodhisattvahood has attained an intellectual intuition? The object is no less than suchness itself. We call it an object on account of the evolving-consciousness (*pravṛtti-vijñâna*). But in truth there is no object in perfect intellectual intuition, neither is there a subject in it; because the Bodhisattva by means of his wisdom of non-particularisation intuitively perceives

suchness (*bhûtatathatâ*) or Dharmakâya, which is beyond the range of demonstration and argumentation.

Thus he is able in a moment to go over all the worlds in the ten quarters and to make offerings to all Buddhas and to beseech them to revolve the Wheel of the Dharma (*darmacakrapravartana*). His sole desire being to benefit all beings, he does not care for any melodious sounds or words [which he can enjoy in his heavenly abode]. In order to encourage weak-hearted people, he shows great energy and attains to perfect enlightenment (*anuttarasamyaksambodhi*), all at once annihilating the lapse of immeasurable asamkheyakalpas. Or in order to instigate indolent people, he sometimes attains to Buddhahood only after long discipline and mortification through the period of immeasurable asamkheyakalpas. The reason why he achieves in this wise infinite methods (*upâya*) [of salvation] is that he wishes thereby to benefit all beings.

But in fact the intrinsic nature, the faculties, the aspiration, and the intellectual attainment of all Bodhisattvas are equal [in value] and there is not any scale of gradation in them. Because they will all equally and assuredly attain to the most perfect enlightenment, only after the elapsing of three asamkheyakalpas. Yet as there are differences in various states of existence regarding their objects of seeing, hearing, etc., as well as regarding their faculties, their desires, and their character; so there are correspondingly many different forms of religious discipline [destined to] them.

Three different operations of the mind are revealed in this aspiration by means of intellectual intuition: (1) Pure consciousness originating in the mind as it becomes free from particularisation; (2) moral consciousness [lit., *upâya-*

citta?] originating in the mind as it spontaneously performs those deeds which are beneficent to others; (3) unconscious activity (*karma-vijñānacitta*) originating in the mind as it achieves a most hidden mode of activity.

Again the Bodhisattva, having attained to the perfection of bliss and wisdom, which are his two marks of adornment, has in reaching the height of evolution (*akanishtha*) also obtained the most venerable and excellent body in the whole universe. By means of that knowledge which intuitively identifies itself [with enlightenment *a priori*], he has all at once uprooted ignorance; and thus obtaining omniscience (*sarvākārajñāna*), he spontaneously achieves incomprehensible [or divine] deeds (*acintyakarma*), reveals himself in immeasurable worlds in the ten quarters, and works out the universal emancipation of mankind.

A question arises here. As space is infinite, worlds are infinite. As worlds are infinite, beings are infinite. As beings are infinite, the modes of mentation are also infinitely diversified. And as all these objects and conditions (*vishaya*) have no limits, they can hardly be known or understood [in all their multitudinousness]. If, now, ignorance being destroyed, all modes of mentation are entirely annihilated as well, how can the Bodhisattva understand all things and complete his omniscience (*sarvākārajñāna*)?

In reply we say: All so-called illusory phenomena are in truth from the beginning what they are; and their essence is nothing but the one soul [or mind]. Though ignorant minds that cling to illusory objects cannot understand that all things are in their nature the highest reality (*paramārtha*), all Buddha-Tathāgatas being free from clinging [or particularising] are able to have an insight into

the true nature of things. And by virtue of their great wisdom they illuminate all distinctions between the defiled and the pure-through their immeasurable and inexhaustible sources of expediency (*upâyakauçalya*), which is good and excellent, they benefit and gladden all beings according to the latter's various necessities and capabilities. Therefore the mind that is saturated with subjectivity is annihilated, while all things are understood and omniscience (*sarvâkârajñâna*) is attained.

Another question presents itself here: If all Buddhas who are in possession of infinite expediencies (*upâya*) can spontaneously benefit all beings in the ten quarters, why is it that the latter cannot always see Buddhas in person, or witness their divine transformations, or hear their instructions in the Doctrine?

The reply is: Tathâgatas are really in possession of those expediencies, and they are only waiting to reveal themselves to all beings as soon as the latter can purify their own minds.

When a mirror is covered with dust, it cannot reflect images. It can do so only when it is free from stain. It is even the same with all beings. If their minds are not clear of stain, the Dharmakâya cannot reveal itself in them. But if they be freed from stain, then it will reveal itself.

IV. PRACTICE OF FAITH.

In what does the practice of faith (*çraddhâ*) consist?

This part of the Discourse is intended for those beings who have not yet entered into the order of constant truth (*samyaktvaniyata-râçi*).

What is meant by faith? How should one practice faith?

There are four aspects of faith. [As to faith in general]: (1) To believe in the fundamental [truth], that is, to think joyfully of suchness (*bhûtatathatâ*). [As to particular faiths:] (2) To believe in the Buddha as sufficingly enveloping infinite merits, that is, to rejoice in worshipping him, in paying homage to him, in making offerings to him, in hearing the good doctrine (*saddharma*), in disciplining oneself according to the doctrine, and in aspiring after omniscience (*sarvajñâna*). (3) To believe in the Dharma as having great benefits, that is, to rejoice always in practicing all pârâmitâs. (4) To believe in the Samgha as observing true morality, that is, to be ready to make offerings to the congregation of Bodhisattvas, and to practice truthfully all those deeds which are beneficial at once to oneself and others.

Faith will be perfected by practicing the following five deeds: (1) charity (*dâna*); (2) morality (*çîla*), (3) patience (*kshânti*); (4) energy (*vîrya*); (5) cessation [or tranquilization, *çamatha*] and intellectual insight (*vidarçana* or *vipaçyana*).

How should people practice charity (*dâna*)?

(1) If persons come and ask them for something, they should, as far as their means allow, supply it ungrudgingly and make them rejoice in it. (2) If they see people threatened with danger, they should try every means of rescuing them and impart to them a feeling of fearlessness (*vaiçâradya*). (3) If they have people who come to them desiring instruction in the Doctrine, they should, so far as they are acquainted with it, and, according to their own discretion, deliver speeches on religious discipline.

And when they are performing those three acts of charity, let them not cherish any desire for fame or advantages, nor covet any worldly rewards. Only thinking of those benefits and blessings that are at once for themselves and others, let them aspire to the most excellent, most perfect knowledge (*anuttarasamyaksambodhi*).

How should they practice morality (*çîla*)?

Those Bodhisattvas who have families [i.e., lay members of Buddhism] should abstain from killing, stealing, adultery, lying, duplicity, slander, frivolous talk, covetousness, malice, currying favor, and false doctrines.

In the case of Çramanas, they should, in order to vanquish all prejudices (*kleça* or *âçrava*), retire from the boisterousness of worldly life, and, abiding in solitude (*aranya*), should practice those deeds which lead to moderation and contentment as well as those of the Dhûtâgana. Even at the violation of minor rules (*çîla*) they should deeply feel fear, shame, and remorse. Strictly observing all those precepts given by the Tathâgata, they should not call forth the blame or disgust of the outsider, but they should endeavor to induce all beings to abandon the evil and to practice the good.

How should they practice patience (*kshânti*)?

If they meet with the ills of life they should not shun them. If they suffer sufferings, they should not feel afflicted. But they should always rejoice in contemplating the deepest significance of the Dharma.

How should they practice energy (*vîrya*)?

Practicing all good deeds, they should never indulge in indolence (*kausîdya*). They should think of all their great mental and physical sufferings, which they are now vainly suffering on account of their having coveted worldly objects during their existences in innumerable former ages (*kalpa*), and which do not give the least nourishment to their spiritual life. They should, therefore, in order to be emancipated from those sufferings in the future, be indefatigably energetic, and never raise the thought of indolence, but endeavor, out of deep compassion (*mahâkaruna*), to benefit all beings. Though disciplining themselves in faith, all novice Bodhisattvas, on account of the hindrances of their evil karma (*karmâvarana*) produced by the violation of many important precepts in their previous existences, may sometimes be annoyed by evil Mâras, sometimes entangled in worldly engagements, sometimes threatened by various diseases. As these things will severally disturb their religious course and make them neglect practicing good deeds, they should dauntlessly, energetically, unintermittently, all six watches, day and night, pay homage to all Buddhas, make offerings (*pûjâ*) to them, praise them, repent and confess (*kshamâ*) to them, aspire to the most excellent knowledge (*samyaksambodhi*), make great vows (*mahâpranidhâna*); and thereby annihilate the hindrances of evils and increase the root of merit (*kuçalamûla*).

How should they practice cessation [or tranquilization, *çamatha*] and intellectual insight (*vidarçana* or *vipaçyana*)?

To bring all mental states that produce frivolous sophistries to a stand is called cessation. To understand adequately the law of causality and transformation is called intellectual insight. Each of them should be practiced separately by the beginner. But when by degrees

he obtains facility and finally attains to perfection, the two will naturally become harmonized.

Those who practice cessation should dwell in solitude (*âraryaka*) and, sitting cross-legged rectify the attitude and pacify the mind. Do not fix the thoughts on the breath (*ânâpânasmṛti*); do not fix the thoughts on the forms (*samjñâ*) and colors; do not fix the thoughts on space (*âkâṣa*); 1 do not fix the thoughts on earth, water, fire, and ether; 1 do not fix the thoughts on what you see, hear, learn, or memories (*vijñânakṛtsnâyatana*). All particularizations, imaginations and recollections should be excluded from consciousness, even the idea of exclusion being excluded; because [the suchness of] all things is uncreate, eternal, and devoid of all attributes (*alakshana*).

[Now in the constant flux of thoughts,] that which precedes [i.e., a sensation] has been awakened by an external object; so the next [step to be taken by the practiser] is to abandon the idea of an external world. Then that which succeeds [in that constant flux of thoughts] is elaborated in his own mind; so he should in turn abandon reflexion [or thought]. In short, as his attention is distracted by the external world [outer *vishaya*], he is warned to turn it to inner consciousness [inner *citta*]; while as his retrospection in turn calls forth a succession of thoughts [or ideal associations], he is again warned not to attach himself to the latter; because, independent of suchness, they [thoughts] have no existence of their own.

At all times, while moving, standing, sitting, or lying, the practiser should constantly discipline himself as above stated. Gradually entering the samâdhi of suchness, he will finally vanquish all prejudices (*kleṣa* or *âçrava*), be strengthened in faith (*çradhâ*),--and immediately attain to

the state of never-returning (*avaivartikatva*). But those who are skeptical, sacrilegious, destitute of faith, encumbered with the hindrances (*âvarana*) of karma, arrogant, or indolent, are not entitled to enter therein . . .

In what does this discipline consist?

The practiser should contemplate that all things in the world are subject to a constant transformation, that since they are transient they are misery, that since they are misery they are not things-in-themselves [i.e., atman].

He should contemplate that all things in the past are like a dream, those in the present are like the lightning, those in the future are like clouds that spontaneously come into existence.

He should contemplate that all that has a body is impure, being a lodging place of obnoxious vermin and the intermixture of prejudices (*âçrava*).

Contemplate that ignorant minds, on account of their groundless imagination, take the unreal as they see it, for reality.

Contemplate that all objects which come into existence by a combination of various causes (*pratyaya*) are like a chimera, having [only a transitory existence and] no [genuine] realness at all.

Contemplate that the highest truth (*paramârthasatya*) is not a production of mind [or subjectivity], cannot be [fully] illustrated by analogy, cannot be [exhaustively] treated by reasoning.

Contemplate that on account of the perfuming power of ignorance (*avidya*) all beings from eternity suffer great mental and physical sufferings in immeasurable ways; that those immeasurable and innumerable sufferings are suffered in the present and will be suffered in the future that while it is extremely difficult to disentangle, to emancipate themselves from those sufferings, all beings always abiding in the midst of them are not conscious of the fact, and this makes them the more pitiable.

After these contemplations the practiser should awake positive knowledge [or unerring understanding], feel the highest and deepest compassion (*karunâ*) for all suffering beings, rouse dauntless energy, and make great vows (*mahâpranidhâna*) as follows:

"May my mind be freed from all contradictions; may I abandon particularisation; may I personally attend on all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, whom I shall pay homage to, make offerings to, revere and praise, and to whose instructions in the good Doctrine (*saddharma*) I shall listen; may I truthfully discipline myself according to their teachings, and to the end of the future never be negligent in self-discipline; may I with innumerable expediences (*upâya*) [of salvation] deliver all beings who are drowned in the sea of misery, and bring them to the highest bliss of Nirvâna."

After these vows the practiser should at all times, so far as his energy permits, practice those deeds which are beneficial both to himself and others. While moving, standing, sitting, or lying, he should assiduously meditate what should be done and what should be avoided. This is called the practicing of intellectual insight (*vidarçana* or *vipaçyana*).

And again when the practiser disciplines himself only in intellectual insight his mind may lack tranquilization, and becoming too susceptible to skepticism, may not be in accord with the highest truth, may not attain to the wisdom of non-particularisation. Therefore cessation and intellectual insight should be practiced side by side. He should consider that nothing is self-existent (*svabhâva*), and things [in their essence] are uncreate, eternally tranquil, and Nirvâna itself. But at the same time let him not forget to reflect that karma and its retribution, both good and evil, being produced by a co-operation of principle and conditions, will neither be lost nor destroyed. He should thus ponder on the law of causation, both in its good and evil karma and retribution, but at the same time let him not forget to perceive that all things, though in their essence uncreate, have no self-existence, etc., they are Nirvâna.

By practicing cessation, common people (*prthagjana*) will be cured of finding pleasures in worldliness, while Çrâvakas and Pratyekabuddhas will be cured of feeling intimidation at the thought of birth and death.

By practicing intellectual insight common people will be cured of not cultivating their root of merit (*kuçalamûla*), while Çrâvakas and Pratyekabuddhas will be cured of narrow-mindedness whereby they cannot raise deep compassion [for mankind].

Therefore, cessation and intellectual insight are supplementary to, not independent of, each other. If one of the two is wanting, the practiser will surely be unable to attain to the most excellent knowledge (*bodhiparinishpatti*).

And again when those novice Bodhisattvas who are living in this present life [*sahâlokadhâtu*, i.e., the enduring world

of actual existence], may sometimes suffer misfortunes that are caused by climate, weather, unforeseen famine, or what not; and when they witness those people who are immoral, fearful, infatuated with the three venomous passions (*akuçalamûla*), cling to false and self-contradictory doctrines, desert the good law and acquire evil habits; they [that is, novice Bodhisattvas], living in the midst of them, may feel so discouraged that they may come to doubt whether they can see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, whether they can actualize their pure and spotless faith (*çraddhâ*).

Therefore, it is advisable for those novices to cherish this thought: All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the ten quarters having great, unimpeded supernatural powers (*abhijñâ*), are able to emancipate all suffering beings by means of various expedencies that are good and excellent (*upâyakauçalya*).

After this reflexion, they should make great vows (*mahâpranidhâna*), and with full concentration of spiritual powers think of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When they have such a firm conviction, free from all doubts, they will assuredly be able to be born in the Buddha-country beyond (*buddha-kshetra*), when they pass away from this present life, and seeing there Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, to complete their faith and to eternally escape from all evil creations (*apâya*).

Therefore, it is said in the Sûtra that if devoted men and women would be filled with concentration of thought, think of Amitâbha Buddha in the world of highest happiness (*sukhâvatî*) in the Western region, and direct (*parinâma*) all the root of their good work toward being born there, they would assuredly be born there.

Thus always seeing Buddhas there, their faith will be strengthened, and they will never relapse therefrom. Receiving instruction in the doctrine, and recognizing the Dharmakâya of the Buddha, they will by gradual discipline be able to enter upon the state of truth [i.e., Buddhahood] (*samyaktva-râçi*).

V. BENEFITS.

In what does this part [treating] of the benefits consist?

Such as above presented is the spiritual significance of the Mahayana, and I have finished elucidating it.

Those who, desiring to produce pure and spotless faith in, and knowledge of, the deepest spiritual condition and the greatest Dharma of the Tathâgata, so that they have no hindrances in entering upon the Mahayana path (*mârğa*), will diligently pursue this brief discourse, contemplate it, discipline themselves in it, and thus they can surely and unhesitatingly attain to the knowledge of all forms and manifestations (*sarvâkârâjñâna*).

And if they do not awake a feeling of fear in hearing this Doctrine, they will surely be qualified to inherit the Buddha-seeds and immediately receive the prophecy (*vijâkarana*) from the Buddha. Even if there be a person who could convert all beings in three thousand great chiliocosms (*trisâhasramahâsâhasra*), and could induce them to observe the ten precepts of morality (*daçakuçalamârğa*), his merits will not be superior to those of the person who will truthfully comprehend this Doctrine even for a second; because the merits of the latter immeasurably and infinitely surpass those of the former.

If one practice this doctrine as it is instructed for one whole day and night, the merits thereby produced will be so immeasurable, infinite, inconceivable that all Buddhas in the ten quarters could not exhaust them, even if each of them continued to praise them for innumerable asamkheyakalpas. As the merits of suchness have no limits, so the merits of the discipline are also without limit.

Those who slander this doctrine, on the other hand, commit immeasurable faults and suffer great sufferings for asamkheyakalpas. Accordingly all beings should cherish a firm faith in the Doctrine and never slander it, for this will lead to the destruction of oneself as well as others, nay, even to the destruction of the seeds of the Triple Treasure (*triratna*).

By practicing this Doctrine all Buddhas have attained the most excellent knowledge (*anuttarajñânâ*). By practicing this Doctrine all Bodhisattvas have obtained an insight into the Dharmakâya of the Tathâgata.

By practicing this Doctrine Bodhisattvas in the past consummated, Bodhisattvas in the future will consummate, pure and spotless faith (*çradadhâ*) in the Mahâyâna. Therefore those who desire to practice those excellent virtues that are beneficial at once to themselves and others should diligently study this Discourse.

I have now finished elucidating
The deepest and greatest significance [of the
Dharma].
May its merit be distributed among all creatures,
And make them understand the Doctrine of
Suchness.

Acvaghosha

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:

'Acvaghosha - Forgotten Buddhist Mystic of the Mahayana Path'

Issue Twenty

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

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The twentieth issue of the 'The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal' we continue a series of issues covering forgotten mystics from different religious traditions, this issue following Acvaghosha - Forgotten Buddhist Mystic of the Mahayana Path.

This issue's 'Question and Answer' section contains an inquiry from Davi Thiago in Brazil about the Safety of the Out-of-Body Experience and I will answer the question, as well as, allow our featured forgotten mystic, Acvaghosha, to give the Buddhist perspective.

And in 'Different Voices' we will delve into the depths of Mahayana Buddhism with some excerpts from the writings of Acvaghosha.

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