

**PART TWO:**

**THE BODHISAṂBHĀRA TREATISE  
COMMENTARY**

**The Early Indian Commentary On**

**Ārya Nāgārjuna's  
*Treatise on the Provisions for Enlightenment*  
(*Bodhisambhāra Śāstra*)**

**Composed by Bhikshu Vaṣitva  
(circa 300–500 CE)**



COMMENTARY:

For those such as the Śrāvaka-Vehicle Āryas, nirvāṇa serves as their very nature, for it is through pursuing nirvāṇa that they succeed in gaining “the fruits of the śramaṇa” (i.e. arhatship).

The Buddhas, on the other hand, do not take nirvāṇa as the very nature [of their path]. For the Buddhas, it is instead the afflictions which correspond to the nature [of their path]. This is because the mind resolved on bodhi arises from these [afflictions].

The Śrāvaka-disciples and the Pratyekabuddhas burn up the afflictions and so do not create that seed comprising the bodhi mind, for the seed generated by the resolve of the Two-Vehicles practitioner is free of any capacity to course on in cyclic existence.

It is for these reasons that the afflictions [can be said to] correspond to the very nature of the Tathāgatas’ [path]. It is by virtue of their possessing afflictions that beings generate the resolve to gain bodhi. It is in order to succeed in developing the body of a buddha that [the Mahāyāna practitioner] refrains from entirely abandoning the afflictions.

**Question:** If by burning up the afflictions, one cannot subsequently generate the resolve to gain the bodhi [of a buddha], why were predictions bestowed on Śrāvaka-Vehicle disciples in the *Lotus Sutra*?

**Response:** (As below...)

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**THE UNTENABILITY OF THE BUDDHA PATH AFTER TWO-VEHICLES IRREVERSIBILITY**

**080 – Predictions Such as in the Lotus Sutra Were Situation-Specific Expedients**

As for the predictions bestowed on those other beings,  
These predictions involved specific causal circumstances.  
They were solely a function of the Buddha’s artfulness  
In taking the perfection of skillful means “to the far shore.”<sup>80</sup>

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COMMENTARY:

One does not know which particular beings were being assisted in their development by those predictions.<sup>81</sup> The causes and conditions associated with those events are known only by the Buddha because:

1) They represent the “farthest shore” (i.e. “the most extreme expression”) of his training methods.

2) They represent circumstances dissimilar to those of any other beings.

3) They involve beings who do not generate the resolve to achieve buddhahood, this due to having already entered [the irreversible] “right and definite position” [utterly wedded to] the unconditioned.

This circumstance is the same as that described in the Sūtras [as summed up in the following *śloka*].

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081 – Analogies for Incompatibility of Two-Vehicles Irreversibility and Buddhahood

Similes for their plight reference “empty space,” “lotus flowers,” “Precipitous cliffs,” and “a deep abyss.”

Their realms bar it. Analogies cite “non-virility” and “kācamaṇi,” With an additional comparison made to “burnt seeds.”<sup>82</sup>

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COMMENTARY:

Just as one cannot grow seeds in empty space, so too one has never been able to generate growth in the dharmas of buddhahood in the sphere of the unconditioned, nor would one ever be able to succeed in producing their growth therein. In just the same way as one cannot grow lotus blossoms in the vast wilderness of the high plains, so too the Śrāvaka-disciples and the Pratyekabuddhas who have entered the unconditioned’s “right and definite position” (*samyaktva niyāma*) cannot produce the dharmas of buddhahood.

As for the comparison to “precipitous cliffs,” there are two precipitous cliffs along the path to the city of the wisdom of all-knowledge. Specifically, they are the precipitous cliff overhanging the ground of the Śrāvaka-disciples and the precipitous cliff overhanging the ground of the Pratyekabuddhas. If *śrāvaka*-disciples and pratyekabuddhas possessed all-knowledge, [their grounds] would not constitute two precipitous cliffs for the bodhisattva.

Now, as for the comparison to “a deep abyss,” a well-trained mountain climber (lit. “a man trained in jumping and leaping”), even when descending into a deep abyss could still abide safely therein. However, when one not well trained in this stumbles down into a deep abyss, he dies down inside that abyss.

In this same way, because the bodhisattva has cultivated the practice of abiding in the unconditioned in a skillful manner, even though he cultivates the unconditioned, he does not plummet on down into the unconditioned. However, the Śrāvaka-disciples and others do not train with comparable skillfulness as they practice immersion in the unconditioned. This being the case, they consequently plummet on down into the unconditioned.

As for the statement: "Their realms [bar it]," the Śrāvaka-disciples are so tied up within the realm of the unconditioned that they have no facility to course about within the sphere of the conditioned. Therefore those in their midst do not generate the mind resolved on bodhi.

As for the comparison to "non-virility," just as an impotent man no longer finds any satisfaction in the advantages available in the sphere of the five desires, so too, those *śrāvaka*-disciples who have equipped themselves with the dharma of the unconditioned find no further satisfaction in the advantages associated with the dharmas of buddhahood.

As for the comparison to "*kācamaṇi*" (common quartz crystals), in the same way that no one in the heavens or in the world, though skilled in the gem-finishing arts, is ever able to transform *kācamaṇi* crystals into *vaiḍūrya* gems, so too, even though these *śrāvaka*-disciples continue to be equipped with all such meritorious qualities as inhere in the moral-precept training and the *dhūta* [ascetic] practices, including also the samādhis and such, they will still never succeed in being able to sit at the site of the enlightenment and bring about realization of the unsurpassed right enlightenment.

As for the statement: "An additional comparison is made to burnt seeds," just as a burnt seed never becomes able to sprout even though planted in the soil, watered, and warmed by the sun, so too it is with the Śrāvaka-disciples. After they have burned up the seeds of the afflictions, there is no longer any conceptual possibility that they might ever be able to be born again into the three realms.

Based on such citations from sutras, one should realize that, once a śrāvaka-disciple gains the dharmas of the unconditioned, he will no longer have any ability to generate the mind resolved on bodhi.

**Question:** How should the bodhisattva who has gained the powers go about carrying out his cultivation in the midst of beings?

**Response:** (As below...)

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#### HOW THE BODHISATTVA WITH POWERS SHOULD CULTIVATE AMONG BEINGS

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o82 – To Benefit the World, Bring Forth and Treatises, Skills, Sciences, Trades

All of the treatises as well as the specialized skills,  
The occult and mundane sciences, and the various trades—  
Because they bring benefit to the world,  
One brings them forth and establishes them.

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## COMMENTARY:

This refers to treatises on book printing, mathematics, metallurgy, medical treatises, to treatises on exorcism for ghost-possession and rescuing victims of poisoning, and to treatises on the establishment of towns and cities, gardens, rivers and springs, lakes and ponds, flowers and fruit, medicinal herbs, forests, and so forth.

This also refers to gemological treatises revealing the nature of such things as gold, silver, pearls, *vaiḍūrya* (beryl), alabaster, and coral, to treatises which record and describe such things as the movements of the sun, moon, stars, sunlight, and the earth, and also to those treatises devoted to signs occurring in dreams.

It is also referencing treatises on the physiognomy of all parts of the body and the limbs. All of the countless sorts of treatises such as these comprise what is intended here.

All of those things which are able to be of benefit to the world are entirely destroyed during the deterioration of the kalpa. As the kalpa develops again, these things are brought forth and established again among people. The specialized skills of importance include creating things from wood, iron, clay, and copper and are not of a single sort.

This includes all of the different sorts of occult and mundane sciences including the ability to perform exorcisms in cases of ghost-possession, the ability to do away with insane behavior, the ability to cure cases of poisoning, cases of acute digestive afflictions and indigestion, and cases involving all of the other different sorts of pressing afflictions.

Also, making things which involve carving, painting, embroidery, weaving, and such, including all of the different sorts of livelihoods. Whatsoever is able to bring benefit and happiness to the world—one brings forth and establishes all of these things.

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**083 – Adapting to Various Beings, Per One’s Vows, One Takes Birth Among Them**

Adapting to beings amenable to instruction,  
 To their worlds, rebirth destinies, and birth circumstances,  
 As befits one’s reflections, one goes directly to them,  
 And, through power of vows, takes birth among them.

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## COMMENTARY:

Wherever there are beings amenable to instruction, *mahāsattoas* adapt to whichever world those beings inhabit, adapt to whichever

rebirth destiny they abide in, be it as a god, a man, or a being in another destiny, and adapt to whichever birth circumstance they are born into, whether as a brahman, as a *kṣatriya*, as a *vaiśya*, or as in another birth circumstance. Then, focusing on those places in which such beings dwell, they contemplate them in accordance with the immeasurable minds, this out of a wish to teach such beings.

When [those mahāsattvas] observe that circumstances conducive to instruction have developed, they adapt to the physical forms of those beings, including their height, build, voice, and karmic retribution circumstances. Consequently they then generate a resolve through which they take on just such physical form, height, build, voice, and karmic-retribution circumstance, all of this for the sake of causing those beings to swiftly accept instruction.

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084 – In the Midst of Evil, Don the Armor and Don't Yield to Either Loathing or Fear

In the midst of all sorts of circumstances rife with evil,  
 And when among beings prone to guileful flattery and deceit,  
 One should don one's sturdy armor.  
 One must not yield to either loathing or fear.

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COMMENTARY:

When subjected to scolding or cursing, terror, hatefulness, whippings or beatings, bondage or imprisonment, castigation or vilification, or to other such awful circumstances—where, due to beings' countless forms of guileful flattery and deceit, one verges on the conviction that they are not amenable to instruction—one should not be slow to don one's armor. Additionally, one must not be overcome by loathing for cyclic existence or by fearfulness at the prospect of continuing the quest for bodhi.

Additionally, one should reflect, "It is not for beings disinclined to guileful flattery and deception that I must strap on this armor. It is precisely for just such beings as these that I strap on this armor. I should indeed proceed with the work and raise forth vigor as I do so." It is to cause beings to become swiftly established in circumstances free of guileful flattery and deception that one should don one's sturdy armor.<sup>83</sup>

**Question:** The cultivation of bodhisattvas with powers has now already been described. How then should the bodhisattva not endowed with the powers proceed with cultivation?

**Response:** (As below...)

**ESSENTIAL MATTERS REGARDING HONESTY AND PURE INTENTIONALITY****085 – Maintain Pure Intentions, Eschew Guile, Confess Wrongs, Conceal Good Deeds**

One equips oneself with supremely pure intentions,  
 Does not resort to guileful flattery or deception,  
 Reveals the wrongs of his karmic offenses,  
 And conceals his many good deeds.

**COMMENTARY:**

As for “equipping oneself with supremely pure intentions,” this is a reference to developing a superior class of motivation and also is an indication of an enhanced degree of goodness. As for “intentions,” this is a reference to one’s mind. This is just to say that it is one’s very mind which is “completely equipped” in these respects. This is what is intended by “one equips oneself with supremely pure intentions.”

As for “one does not resort to guileful flattery or deception,” “guileful flattery” is a reference to harboring different intentions. “Harboring different intentions” is a reference to a mind which is not straight in its character. Additionally, “guileful flattery” is a reference to a crooked mind. As for “deception,” this is a reference to deceitfulness. If the mind is not crooked and is not deceitful, then one does not resort to guileful flattery and does not engage in deception.

As for “one reveals all of the wrongs of his karmic offenses,” this means that whenever one has evils which have arisen through the creation of karmic offenses, one confesses them and thus reveals them. That is what is meant by “one reveals all of the wrongs of his karmic offenses.”

As for “one conceals his many good deeds,” this means that whenever one has done good works, no matter how grand those good works might be, one nonetheless keeps these matters private from others. That is what is meant by “one conceals his many good deeds.”

In an instance where a bodhisattva wishes to swiftly gain the realization of bodhi, he should equip himself with pure intentions, should not engage in guileful flattery, should not engage in deception, and should reveal the wrongs of his karmic offenses while also keeping his good works hidden. Thus it was that the Bhagavān stated, “Guileful flattery is incompatible with bodhi and deception is incompatible with bodhi.”



**ESSENTIAL PRIORITIES ESPECIALLY CRUCIAL TO MEDITATION PRACTICE****o86 – Purify Three Karmas, Observe Moral Codes, Allow No Omissions or Slackening**

One purifies the karma of body and mouth  
 And also purifies the karma of the mind.  
 Cultivating observance of all passages in the moral-code training.  
 One must not allow any omissions or diminishment in this.

**COMMENTARY:**

Because these bodhisattvas wish to accord with the standards for cultivation and mindfulness, they should first make the karma of the body, mouth, and mind pure. Thus one should observe purity as regards restraint from killing, taking what is not given, impure conduct (sexual misconduct), and other such actions corresponding to the three bad karmic actions of the body. Hence one should accept the three wholesome actions which stand in opposition to these.

One should observe purity as regards lying, speaking in a way ruinous of others, harsh speech, the various sorts of frivolous speech, and other speech corresponding to the four bad karmic actions of the mouth. Hence one should accept the four wholesome actions which stand in opposition to these.

One should observe purity as regards covetousness, hateful-ness, wrong views, and other such mental actions corresponding to the three bad karmic behaviors of the mind. Hence one should accept the three good mental behaviors which stand in opposition to these.

One should also accept, accord with, and turn into corresponding actions all of the statements contained within the *pratimokṣa* training discipline. There must not be any instances of being aware of the statements contained in the training and yet deliberately breaking them. If there are deficits in cultivation of the moral precepts, in one's cultivation and mindfulness, the mind will be unable to develop concentration (*samādhi*).

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION****o87 – Focus on the Object, Still Thoughts in Solitude, Eliminate Obstructive Thoughts**

One establishes himself in right mindfulness,  
 Focuses on the object condition, and stills his thought in solitude.  
 Having put mindfulness to use as a guard,<sup>84</sup>  
 The mind becomes free of any obstructive thoughts.

**COMMENTARY:**

Having achieved such purity through observance of moral precepts, one proceeds to cut off the five hindrances,<sup>85</sup> carrying on one's cultivation in an unpopulated, pure location at a distance from the multitude. There should be a minimum of noise, disturbance, mosquitoes, snakes, tigers, thieves, and so forth. It should not be too cold or too hot. One does not set up a sleeping cot, but may stand, may engage in meditative walking, or may sit in the lotus posture.

One may keep returning one's focus of mindful attention to the tip of the nose or to the forehead, establishing it there. After one has skillfully focused on whichever is the single chosen objective condition, if it occurs that there is agitated movement in the mind, one then employs mindfulness to guard the door [of the mind]. When one has established this as a means of protection, one abandons insurgent thoughts which might otherwise obstruct the mind.

Thus it is that one cultivates the practice of contemplative meditation in solitude, [focusing the mind] on a single place, and becoming thereby free of any scattering of the mind.

**o88 – When Discriminating Thoughts Arise, Abandon the Bad, Cultivate the Good**

When discriminating thoughts arise,  
One should realize which are good and which are unwholesome,  
Should forsake any which are not good,  
And extensively cultivate those which are good.

**COMMENTARY:**

When involved in meditation, if one brings up discriminations, one becomes aware of such discriminations immediately upon their generation. If they are not good, one should immediately abandon them and must not allow their increase. As for those which are good, one should course exclusively in those, with repeated and increased emphasis on those. One should not allow any scatteredness of thought. This is analogous to taking care not to obstruct a lantern's air source when lighting it and illuminating a room.

**o89 – When Scattered, Reestablish Focus, Return to the Object, Enforce Stillness**

If the mind trained on the object becomes scattered,  
One should focus one's mindful awareness,  
Return it to that object,  
And, whenever movement occurs, immediately cause it to halt.

**COMMENTARY:**

When the bhikshu cultivating meditative concentration is carrying on contemplative practice, he keeps the mind focused. He must not allow it to become scattered. If the mind departs from the chosen object of focus, he should immediately become aware of it, doing so with whatever intensity is required to prevent it from straying away from the object. He keeps returning the mind to its focus, establishing it directly on the object.

In this, it is like using a rope to tie a monkey so securely to a post that it can only wind itself more closely to the post and cannot wander off elsewhere. In this same manner, one should use the rope of mindfulness to tie the monkey of the mind securely to the post of the object of meditation, doing so in a way that it can only wind itself ever more closely to that post of the meditation object, thus becoming unable to stray off somewhere else.

**090 – Refrain from Laxity and Wrong Attachment as They Prevent Concentration**

One should refrain from laxity and from wrong attachment  
Cultivated with intensity,  
For they make it impossible to maintain concentration.  
One should therefore remain constant in one's cultivation.<sup>86</sup>

**COMMENTARY:**

As for "laxity," this refers to desisting from goading oneself to maintain diligence. As for "wrong attachment," this refers to a type of grasping which is unwholesome.<sup>87</sup> If one wishes to succeed in developing samādhi, then one should refrain from any relaxation in the stringency of one's endeavors and any wrong attachments pursued with vigor (i.e. with "avid intensity"). This is because relaxation of stringency in one's endeavors and wrong attachments pursued with vigor [are conditions] making it impossible to abide in samādhi. It is for this reason that one cultivating meditative concentration should always accord with what is correct in cultivation.

**ON THE IMPORTANCE OF VIGOR TO THESE PRACTICES****091 – Even Two-Vehicles' Men Focused on Self-Benefit Insist on Vigor in Meditation**

Even were one to take up the vehicle of the Śrāvakas  
Or the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas,  
And hence practice solely for one's own benefit,  
One would still not relinquish the enduring practice of vigor.

**COMMENTARY:**

Even if one wished to enter the vehicles of either the Śrāvaka-disciples or the Pratyekabuddhas, those vehicles wherein one strives solely for one's own self-benefit and nirvāṇa, one would still strive both day and night, never relinquishing that enduring and solid implementation of vigor through which one is goaded into diligent cultivation [of meditation].

**092 – How Much the Less Might a Bodhisattva Fail to Generate Infinite Vigor**

How much the less could it be that a great man  
Committed to liberate both himself and all others  
Might somehow fail to generate  
A measure of vigor a thousand *koṭīs* times greater?

**COMMENTARY:**

Now, this bodhisattva should be engaged in bringing all beings across the river of cyclic existence while also bringing about his own liberation. How could it be then that he might fail to raise forth vigor a hundred thousand *koṭīs* times greater in its measure than that of the followers of the Śrāvaka-disciple and Pratyekabuddha vehicles? [That he would generate such great vigor flows from his vow to devote] as much effort to liberating everyone else from the river of cyclic existence as he devotes to liberating himself.

**ON THE NEED TO FOCUS EXCLUSIVELY ON A SINGLE MEDITATION PRACTICE****093 – Don't Pursue Other Practice Half-Time or Conjoint Practice of Other Paths**

As for cultivating some other practice half the time  
Or simultaneously practicing some other path,  
One should not do this when cultivating meditative concentration.  
One should rather focus exclusively on a single objective condition.

**COMMENTARY:**

Now, on any particular day, one should not cultivate the practice of some other type of meditative concentration half the time. Nor should one carry on the practice of some other path at other times. One should rather devote oneself solely to skillfully focusing on a single object as one practices a single type of meditative concentration. The mind then focuses on whichever single objective phenomenon one has chosen. Thus one must refrain from directing it toward any other circumstance.

**094 – Covet Neither Body nor Life as the Body is Bound for Destruction**

One must not indulge any covetousness regarding the body  
 And must not cherish even one's own life.  
 Even were one to allow any protectiveness toward this body,  
 It is but a dharma bound in the end to rot away.

**COMMENTARY:**

One should reflect thus: "This body of mine is only a collection of thin skin, thick skin, flesh, blood, sinews, bones, marrow, and so forth, and is a thing which will finally retreat into a state of desiccation. As for this life of mine, it too is bound in the end to be exhausted. Those things achieved through a man's vigor, a man's strength, and the health-filled actions engaged in by a man—I too should be able to achieve them. So long as they have not been achieved, I must not indulge any laxness in my practice of vigor."

Although one might guard this rot-prone body even for a hundred years, still, it is a dharma definitely bound for destruction.

**095 – Never Coveting Offerings, Reverence, or Fame, Strive Urgently to Fulfill Vows**

One must never develop a covetous attachment  
 To offerings, reverence from others, or fame.  
 Rather one should strive diligently to fulfill one's vows,  
 Acting with the urgency of one whose turban has caught fire.

**COMMENTARY:**

In this, one proceeds as when traveling, spending nights in the wilds, intent on progressing, cognizant one must not obsess on incidentals related to one's body or life. If under such circumstances, some offerings were contributed, some reverences demonstrated, or some reputation spread around, it would be unseemly to develop any sort of covetous attachment for those matters. Here, in the same manner, in order to complete what one has vowed to do, one should now devote oneself to swift and diligent action, acting with the same urgency as one whose turban has caught fire.

**096 – Resolutely Seize Victory, Not Waiting till Later as Survival Isn't Guaranteed**

Acting resolutely and immediately, pull forth the supreme benefit.  
 In this, one cannot wait for tomorrow.  
 Tomorrow is too distant a time,  
 For how can one ensure survival even for the blink of an eye?

**COMMENTARY:**

When engaged in diligent practice pursued with the urgency of one whose turban has caught fire, tomorrow is recognized as too distant a time. Thus one must not wait until tomorrow. If there be some endeavor which will provide for me the most supreme form of benefit, I must resolutely and immediately bring it about.

One should reflect: "On what basis would one be able to ensure that life will continue even for the space of the opening or shutting of the eyes? I shall now immediately pull forth the most supreme form of benefit. Tomorrow is too distant a time. I must not wait until tomorrow to do this."

**MORE ON CORRECT PRACTICE AND CULTIVATION OF THE MIND****097 – Established in Right Livelihood, Be Mindful and Free of Preferences in Eating**

Having established oneself in right livelihood,  
When eating, it is as if consuming the flesh of a cherished son.  
One must not indulge in either affection for or disapproval of  
Whatever food one has taken for the meal.

**COMMENTARY:**

Here we have this bhikshu, focused on cultivating meditation, having obtained his alms meal in accordance with Dharma and in a manner invulnerable to criticism. Whether that meal was obtained in the village or within the monastic precincts, he must in any case refrain from developing any craving-laden cherishing attachment for it. He must not generate any disapproval of it, either. Rather, he should establish himself in right mindfulness and, just as if he were being compelled to eat the flesh of a cherished son, he consumes it solely with the aim of allowing the body to survive and stave off deterioration, hence solely for the sake of preserving his life.

He proceeds thus in order to preserve and guard purity in his practice. This is a reference alluding to the story of the husband and wife traveling in the wilderness [forced by circumstance] to eat the flesh of their [just-deceased] son.

**098 – Review One's Monastic Deeds and Accordance with the Ten Dharmas Sutra**

For what purpose has one left the home life?  
Have I finished what is to be done or not?  
Reflect now on whether or not one is doing the work,  
Doing so as described in the *Ten Dharmas Sutra*.

## COMMENTARY:

One should carry out an analytic contemplation in the following manner:

1) "For what purpose did I take up the practice of the monastic? Was it only out of a fear of not surviving? Or was it to seek [the fruits of] the śramaṇa?"

2) If it was for the sake of seeking [the fruits of] the śramaṇa, one should reflect in this manner: "As for my relationship with the endeavors of the śramaṇa, have I already accomplished them, not yet begun to accomplish them, or am I right now in the very process of accomplishing them?"

3) "If one has not yet begun to accomplish them or is rather right in the very process of accomplishing them, then one should initiate energetic diligence to perfect the associated causes and conditions for accomplishing them."

4) "Given that I have departed from the householder's life, then I should qualify as not being of that sort." One should repeatedly contemplate this matter, thinking, "I depend for my survival on their [contributions]. Hence I should in fact be duly carrying out this different form [of life]."

5) "Have I succeeded or not succeeded in adhering to the moral precepts in a manner beyond reproach? Were there someone well-versed in the same pure practices, would he approve or disapprove my implementation of the moral precepts?"

6) "I have already taken up a different appearance from those toward whom I have had affectionate relationships and do not any longer share what one takes as the basis of one's life. I am, however, one who still does belong to my own karmic actions. Whatever is produced through karma is undergone and utilized in karmic [retribution]. Karma is that with which one is in fact still abiding in an intimate relationship. One depends upon karma as the very basis of one's practice. This karma which I actually engage in—whether it is good or whether it is bad—it is I myself who is bound to undergo it myself."

7) "How do I pass my days and nights? Do I or do I not delight in [cultivating realization of] emptiness and quiescence?"

8) "Have I or have I not come into the possession of the dharmas of a superior man?"

9) "Have I or have I not been able to succeed in gaining the superior knowledge and vision of the Āryas?"

10) “When in the future I am interviewed by another man who has taken up the same pure practices, will I or will I not have reason to be ashamed?”

One should repeatedly reflect on the ten dharmas. This is a matter which should be repeatedly contemplated by the herein-referenced bhikshu who is cultivating meditative concentration.<sup>88</sup>

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**099 – Contemplate Impermanence and Non-self, Abandoning Demonic Karma**

Contemplate conditioned phenomena as impermanent,  
As devoid of self, and as devoid of anything belonging to a self.  
One must become aware of and withdraw from  
All forms of demonic karmic activity.<sup>89</sup>

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**COMMENTARY:**

“Conditioned phenomena” is a reference to whatever is produced through the coming together of causes and conditions. Because they exist through the coming together of causes and conditions, they are devoid of anything belonging to a self. Because they are conditioned, they are impermanent. If they are impermanent, then they are forced along by other factors and hence are marked by suffering. If they are characterized by suffering and are not independent in their own transformation, then they are devoid of a self. One should contemplate conditioned dharmas in this manner.

As for “One must become aware of and depart from all forms of demonic karmic actions,” this refers to the development of circumstances involving displeasure, scatteredness, confusion, laxity, or obstacles in relation to the resolve to realize bodhi or in relation to the sutras teaching the six perfections.

Whether these circumstances are generated by oneself or generated by some other source, one must become aware of them all. Having become aware of all of these forms of evil demonic karmic activity, one must then withdraw from any involvement in them. Once one has done so, one must not permit those circumstances to carry on independently.

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**100 – Generate Vigor in the Thirty-Seven Wings of Enlightenment**

Generate energetic diligence in order to cultivate  
The roots, powers, limbs of enlightenment,  
Bases of spiritual powers, right severances, the Path,  
And the four stations of mindfulness.

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**COMMENTARY:**

Faith, vigor, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom comprise the five roots. [Once developed], faith, vigor, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom also comprise the five powers.

The seven limbs of enlightenment consist of: mindfulness, dharma-selectivity, vigor, joy, light easefulness, concentration, and equanimity.

The four bases of spiritual power consist of: zeal in meditative concentration, vigor in meditative concentration, [single-] mindedness in meditative concentration, and contemplative thoughtfulness in meditative concentration.

The four bases of right severance involve: not allowing not-yet-arisen evil and unwholesome dharmas to come into existence, cutting off already-arisen evil and unwholesome dharmas, causing not-yet-arisen good dharmas to arise, causing already-arisen good dharmas to continue abiding, developing zeal, generating diligence, focusing the mind, and bringing forth vows.

The eight-fold path of the Āryas consists of: right views, right mental discriminations, right speech, right karmic action, right livelihood, right effort in one's actions, right mindfulness, and right meditative concentration.

The four stations of mindfulness are: the body, the feelings, the thoughts, and dharmas.

One should generate intensely energetic diligence in the cultivation and practice of these thirty-seven factors assisting the realization of bodhi.<sup>90</sup>

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**101 – Focus Analytic Contemplation on the Mind as Source of Good and Root of Evil**

The mind may serve as a source for the repeated generation  
Of good deeds bestowing benefit and happiness  
Or it may instead serve as the root of all sorts of evil and turbidity.  
One should make it the focus of skillful analytic contemplation.

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**COMMENTARY:**

If it is subdued, guarded, and restrained, the mind becomes the cause for the continuous creation of all manner of good endeavors which produce benefit and happiness for others. If, however, one fails to subdue it, fails to guard it, fails to cultivate it, and fails to restrain it, it then becomes the root of all manner of evil and turbid actions which benefit no one.

Once one realizes this, one should then make [the mind] the focus of the most ultimate sorts of analytic contemplation, contemplations which are undertaken to fathom that [manifestations of mind] are characterized by production, abiding, and change [culminating in destruction], to fathom that the mind does not actually abide inwardly, outwardly or between the two, to fathom that the mind does not reside in the past, the future, or the present, to fathom that the mind has no place from which it comes and no place to which it goes, to fathom that it does not continue to abide even for a *kṣaṇa-lava-muhūrta* (an infinitesimally short period of time), and to fathom that it is like a magically-conjured illusion.

One should carry out these sorts of analytic contemplations of one's mind, doing this as a means to enhance the quality of one's practice.

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**102 – Contemplate With Great Concern Daily Increase and Decrease of Good Dharmas**

“From one day to the next, what increase has occurred  
In my cultivation of good dharmas?”  
“Also, what diminishment has occurred in this?”  
Those should be the contemplations of utmost concern.

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**COMMENTARY:**

In accordance with the Buddha's instruction, one should contemplate in this manner: “Regarding those good dharmas able to give birth to bodhi including giving and the rest [of the perfections], how much increase has occurred and how much decrease?” One should constantly focus detailed analytic contemplation on concerns such as these, bringing them up time and time again in each succeeding day.

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**103 – Never Indulge Thoughts of Stinginess or Jealousy over Others' Good Fortune**

Whenever one observes someone else experiencing an increase  
In offerings, reverences, or reputation,  
Even the most subtle thoughts of stinginess and jealously  
Should never be indulged.

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**COMMENTARY:**

Whenever one observes someone else engaged in the same practice of pure conduct experiencing an increase in offerings, reverence, or reputation, whether they be a śramaṇa or a brahman, one

should refrain from even the most subtle [thoughts of] stinginess or jealousy. Moreover, one should contemplate the matter thus: "I too could tend to delight in receiving from beings offerings, robes, food-and-drink, bedding, medicines, and various other things. I too could tend to delight in expressions of reverence by laity and monastics. And I too could tend to delight in having perfected dharmas which others find praiseworthy."

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**104 – Ignore Sense Realms as if Dull, Blind, Deaf, and Mute, Yet Roar the Lion's Roar**

One should not cherish any aspect of the objective realms,  
But rather should act as if dull-witted, blind, mute, and deaf.  
Still, when timely, respond by roaring the lion's roar,  
Frightening off the non-Buddhist deer.

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**COMMENTARY:**

When one observes others receiving an increase in offerings, reverence, and reputation, one should not hope for or cherish any aspect of the associated objective realms of forms [sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or dharmas as objects of mind]. Even though one is not in fact dull-witted, blind, mute, or deaf, still, with respect to both desirable and undesirable forms, sounds, smells, and tastes, one carries on a type of practice wherein one acts as if dull-witted, blind, mute, and deaf.

Where one possesses the ability, one must not always abide in a state of muteness, but rather should employ right Dharma to dispel delusions [cherished by others]. When the time comes to break someone's [delusion-based] attachments, for the sake of frightening off the "deer of the non-Buddhist traditions," and for the sake of authoritatively upholding correct teachings, one should thunder forth the lion's roar.

I have now completed the explanation of one's cultivation of the mind. Now, we should explain the cultivation of the marks [of a buddha's body], as described below. [See next eight *ślokas*.—Trans.]

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**BODHISATTVA PRACTICES AS CAUSES FOR ACQUIRING A BUDDHA'S 32 MARKS**

**105 – Welcome, Escort, and Revere the Venerable, Assisting All Dharma Endeavors**

In welcoming them on arrival and escorting them off as they go,  
One should be reverential toward those worthy of veneration.  
In all endeavors associated with the Dharma,  
One should follow along, participate, and contribute assistance.

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## COMMENTARY:

One welcomes and sends off those whom one should rightfully revere. It is through acting respectfully by making offerings of flowers or garlands when hearing explanations of Dharma, by repairing *caityas*, and by engaging in other such Dharma endeavors that one is bound in the future to gain a buddha-body's mark of the wheel on the hands and on the feet. That is a sign foretelling that one will gain a large retinue.

## 106 – Liberate Beings and Cultivate Special Skills, Training Self and Teaching Others

One rescues and liberates beings bound to be killed.

One's goodness increases and never decreases.<sup>91</sup>

One well cultivates karmic works involving the sciences and skills, Training in them oneself while also teaching them to others.

## COMMENTARY:

Where there are those bound to be killed, one rescues them, causing them to be liberated. As for the causes and conditions of protecting life and the abandoning of killing beings, it is on account of adopting these sorts of karmic actions and growing close to them in practice throughout the long night of time that one becomes bound to gain the buddha body's mark of having long fingers, its mark of having heels which are level and upright, and its mark of having an erect body. Those are signs foretelling future enjoyment of a long lifespan.

When with respect to good dharmas which one has adopted, one thereafter sees to their subsequent increase and prevents them from decreasing, one becomes bound in the future to gain the buddha-body's mark of having high ankle bones shaped like shells, that together with its mark of having body hairs directed in the superior direction. Both of those are signs foretelling the future possession of undiminishing Dharma.

Well cultivating the treatises treating [both the esoteric and the mundane] sciences while also devoting oneself to karmic deeds involving the skills of the consummate craftsman, one not only studies such subjects oneself, but also passes these teachings on to others. One thereby becomes bound to gain a buddha-body's mark of having calves like those of an *aiṇeya*, the black antelope. That is a sign foretelling the future ability to swiftly attract others to the Dharma.

**107 – Firmly Adopt Good Dharmas and Cultivate the Four Means of Attraction**

Adopt all of the supremely good dharmas,  
 Through persistent and solid practice.  
 Cultivate the four means of attraction,<sup>92</sup>  
 Making gifts of robes and food and drink.

**COMMENTARY:**

One adopts all of the most supreme sorts of good dharmas through persistent and solid practice. By becoming devoted to them and doing them many times, one becomes bound to gain a buddha-body's mark of solidly planted feet, a sign foretelling the future ability to carry out one's chosen work.

One cultivates the four means of attraction: giving, pleasing speech, beneficial actions, and joint endeavors. Through constant devotion to them, one becomes bound to gain a buddha-body's mark of having webbed junctions at the roots of the fingers and toes, another sign foretelling the future ability to swiftly attract others [to the Dharma].

Through constant devotion to making gifts of fine food, drink, and clothing, one becomes bound to gain a buddha-body's mark of soft hands and feet as well as its mark of the seven prominences. Both of those are signs foretelling the future inevitability that one will receive supremely fine and sweetly-flavored food and drink while also gaining clothing matching one's wishes.

**108 – Be Generous to Almsmen, Unite Kin and Clan, Give Dwellings and Possessions**

Do not turn away from those begging for alms.  
 Facilitate the uniting of close relatives.  
 Prevent estrangement between those of the same clan.  
 Make gifts of dwellings and of material possessions as well.

**COMMENTARY:**

When someone comes seeking something, one does not turn away from them but rather immediately responds by bestowing gifts befitting one's own resources. Through such actions, one becomes bound to gain a buddha-body's mark of straight and round arms and thighs, a sign foretelling the future possession of the ability to freely subdue [those who must be subdued].

Bringing together relatives, retinue, and friends so that they abide together in harmony and are prevented from becoming estranged

while also causing those already estranged to come together in harmony—these are the bases for gaining a buddha-body’s mark of genital ensheathment, a sign foretelling the future possession of many [Dharma] sons.

Through giving dwellings, material possessions, supremely fine bedding, robes, halls, temple buildings and such, one gains a buddha-body’s marks of a gold-colored appearance and smooth skin, both of which are signs foretelling future endowment with supremely fine bedding, robes, halls, temple buildings, and such.

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**109 – Provide for Parents, Relatives, and Friends Appropriately and Deferentially**

As for one’s father, mother, relatives, and friends,  
Provide them circumstances befitting their station.  
Wherever one has given them such a suitable situation,  
Treat them as supreme and independent sovereigns.

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**COMMENTARY:**

In the case of one’s *upādhyāyas*, *ācāryas*, father, mother, elder and younger brothers, and other such persons to whom one extends reverential esteem—one provides for them whichever situation suits their particular circumstances. Through treating them as supreme and independent sovereigns of their own domains, one gains a buddha-body’s mark of having a single hair in each hair pore along with the mark of having the countenance graced with the white-haired mark between the brows. Both of those are signs foretelling that one is bound in the future to be peerless.

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**110 – Servants Are Addressed with Kindness, Adopted, Esteemed, and Cared For**

Although there may be yet others who are servants,  
One speaks to them with goodness and, in effect, adopts them.  
One should accord them the highest esteem  
And provide them with medicines and treatment for all illnesses.

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**COMMENTARY:**

As for “provide them with medicines and treatment for all illnesses,” wherever the invalid abides, one gives them medicines, supplies their needs, and looks after them while also seeing that they are afforded rest as well as food and drink. Through supplying their needs, looking after them, and seeing that they are able to rest, treating them in a manner which allows the illness to quickly

let up, one gains a buddha-body's marks of having the area of the back between the shoulders even and of having the most superior sense of taste, both of which are signs foretelling a future wherein one encounters but little illness.

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**111 – Be Foremost in Good Karma, Sublime and Right in Speech, and Generous to All**

Be the first to act, taking the lead in good karmic deeds,  
 Speaking with smooth and sublime words,  
 Being skillful in discourse guided by right intention,  
 And having no one above or below to whom gifts are not given.

---

**COMMENTARY:**

As for “Being the first to act, taking the lead in good karmic deeds,” this refers to the giving of gardens, groves, and meeting halls, to the giving of wells, ponds graced by flower blossoms, food and drink, flowers, and garlands. It refers to erecting bridges where travel is difficult, to constructing buildings for the Sangha together with places where they can walk about, and to other such [acts of generosity]. One encourages others in such deeds as one personally pushes on ahead as a leader in these works.

Through giving which goes beyond the contributions of others, one gains a buddha body's marks of being round in one's girth like the *nyagrodha* tree, [the Indian fig], while also having the prominence on the crown of the head. Both of these are signs foretelling the future possession of the station of overlordship.

As for “speaking with smooth and sublime words,” it is through employing throughout the long night of time discourse which is truthful and smooth that one gains a buddha body's marks of having a broad and long tongue, while also having a voice imbued with the “brahman sound.” Both of these are signs foretelling future possession of the voice perfect in that speech which is graced by the two groups of five qualities.

As for the voice perfect in that speech which is graced by the two groups of five qualities, those qualities are that one's speech is:

- 1 – Intelligible.
- 2 – Easily understood.
- 3 – Delightful to hear.
- 4 – Non-repugnant.
- 5 – Deep in its profundity.

- 6 – Broad and far-reaching [in its import].
- 7 – Free of loathing.
- 8 – Pleasing.
- 9 – Eloquent in its correctness.
- 10 – Free of disconnected complexities.

As for “being skillful in discourse guided by right intention,” it is because, throughout the long night of time, one employs discourse which is truthful and guided by right intention that one gains a buddha body’s mark of having jaws like those of a lion, a sign foretelling the future inevitability that one will speak with pleasing words.

As for there being “no one above or below to whom gifts are not given,” this means that, although there may be those of higher or lower station, he nonetheless makes gifts to all of them and never fails to give gifts to any particular one of them.

It is through comporting oneself in accordance with the Dharma while also comporting oneself in a way which is uniformly equal in the treatment of others that one gains a buddha-body’s marks of having teeth which are uniformly even, and having teeth which are smooth, both of which are signs foretelling that in the future one will lead a following of those who are both good and pure.

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**112 – Avoid Harm or Disapproval; Regard Others with Kindness and as Good Friends**

Avoid any harm to the retinue of others.

Instead regard beings with the eye of kindness.

Neither may one course in disapproving thoughts.

Instead treat everyone as a good relative or friend.

---

**COMMENTARY:**

In relating to all other beings, one maintains a mind that holds them dear, teaches them with kindness, draws them in, and accepts them. Through regarding them with an eye free of covetousness, hatefulness, or delusion, one gains a buddha-body’s marks of possessing blue eyes and having eyelashes like the king of bulls. Both of those marks are signs foretelling one’s future inclination to regard others with the eye of kindliness.<sup>93</sup>

I’ve finished explaining the karmic deeds producing the thirty-two marks of the great man. There are, aside from these, all sorts of other practices in which bodhisattvas course. I shall now explain those.



**ADDITIONAL PRACTICES TO BE ADOPTED AND ERRORS TO BE AVOIDED****113 – Act Straightaway in Conformity with Pronouncements, Thus Inspiring Faith**

One should accord with the words he speaks,  
 Following them straightaway with concordant actions.  
 If one acts immediately in accordance with his words,  
 Others will be inclined then to develop faith.

**COMMENTARY:**

One should immediately follow up one's words with actions that correspond to them. If one immediately follows up one's words with directly concordant actions, then others will be moved to develop faith and will then consequently become inclined to immediately believe in and accept whichever teaching one thereafter chooses to bestow on them.

**114 – Be Protective of Dharma, Observant of Neglect, and Inclined to Adorn Stupas**

One should support and protect the Dharma,  
 And should discover any instances of neglect,  
 Even going so far as to build canopies graced by gold and jewels  
 Spreading over and covering the *caityas*.<sup>94</sup>

**COMMENTARY:**

One should be supportive and protective of this Dharma. Where there may be neglectful beings who have turned their backs on the Dharma, one should adopt skillful means for them as well, means whereby one might be made aware of such cases and then influence them to turn back toward the Dharma.

These [supportive and protective actions] should extend as well to those locations occupied by the *caityas* erected in honor of the Tathāgata wherein it would be appropriate to use all sorts of jewels to adorn a net-like canopy spreading out over and covering it. If one engages in such actions, then it will serve to bring about completeness and perfection in one's future buddha body's major marks and minor characteristics.

**115 – Facilitate Marriages, Present the Bride, Praise the Buddha, and Give Mālās**

For those wishing to obtain a maiden mate,  
 See to her adornment and assist in her presentation.  
 Speak to the parties about the qualities of the Buddha  
 And then give prayer beads gleaming in varying hues.

**COMMENTARY:**

If there be one who seeks a maiden mate, one may facilitate the adornment of the maiden and see to her presentation. Such maidens in all cases are completely upright and proper. Through the giving involved in this, one brings on [the future effect of] complete fulfillment of whatever one dearly seeks.

Additionally, one should draw from the countless variety of ways to describe the fine qualities of the Buddha in proclaiming them to that assembly, holding forth with an elevated voice replete with lovely and sublime phrasings pleasing to the minds of [the couple and their guests]. Through doing this, one gains [in future lives] a voice pure in all its aspects.

Also, one bestows on them prayer beads made from fine stones gleaming with varying light and pleasing the mind's eye. Through this, one brings about the future effect of having [a buddha body] in which all of the fine subsidiary physical characteristics are entirely complete.

**116 – Create Buddha Images and Cultivate the Six Dharmas of Community Harmony**

Create images of the Buddha

Sitting upright atop supremely fine lotus blossoms

And cultivate common delight and happiness

Through adherence to the six dharmas of community harmony.<sup>95</sup>

**COMMENTARY:**

One uses gold, silver, pearls, alabaster, and other such materials to create images of the Buddha sitting atop supremely fine lotus blossoms. Through this one gains the future ability to generate transformation bodies and to gain the body of a buddha.

With respect to those joined together in the same community observing the brahman conduct (celibacy), one maintains kindness in one's physical karma, verbal karma, and mental karma. One does not maintain some separate [and unequal] share of items accepted for use [by the community at large]. One is completely correct in observance of the moral prohibitions and is completely correct as regards the views one maintains.

One should maintain continual devotion in one's practice to these six dharmas promoting common delight, this for the sake of enabling future acquisition of a retinue invulnerable to ruin by non-Buddhist traditions.

**117 – Make Offerings to All and Never Slander the Buddha or Teachers of Dharma**

Of those who may be given offerings, none are not given offerings.  
 Even for the sake of preserving one's life, one still does not slander  
 The Dharma spoken by the Buddha  
 Or the person who expounds the Dharma.

**COMMENTARY:**

As for “among those who may be given offerings, there are none not given offerings,” there should be those among them to whom one may make offerings, namely the *upādhyāyas* or the *ācāryas*, the parents, the elder brothers, or others of this sort. As for “there are none not given offerings,” there are none before whom one does not feel reverence.

Even though it might be for the sake of preserving one's life, one would never slander the Dharma or this person who expounds the Buddha's Dharma. Nor should one ever slander, slight, or deceive such persons, either. This is on account of the need to preserve one's own bodhi requisites dependent on goodness.<sup>96</sup>

**118 – Donate to Teaching Masters and Their Stupas, See to Preservation of Scripture**

Gold and jewels are distributed among teaching masters  
 And also among the *caityas* of teaching masters.  
 If there are those who forget what is to be recited,  
 One assists their remembrance, enabling them to stay free of error.

**COMMENTARY:**

One should distribute gold and silver among the teaching masters and should distribute *maṇi* pearls, gold, and jewels among the bejeweled *caityas* of the teaching masters.

The bodhisattva possesses a samādhi known as “manifesting in the direct presence of the Buddhas.” When one abides in samādhis of this sort, in life after life, this “direct presence” is cultivated for the sake of being able to hear and retain [the teachings in memory]. In such a case, if there happens to be some other being who has forgotten those scriptures which he recites, those which guide the world and which bestow benefit and happiness, then [such bodhisattvas] function as refreshers of memory for those beings. Through doing this they gain [future endowment with the ability to] not forget the mind resolved on bodhi and the ability to have that power of recall allowing awareness in the present.<sup>97</sup>