

Mountain Dharma: The Ocean of Definitive Meaning

The Uncommon Pith Instructions on the Ultimate

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This text is an explanation of the extraordinary, quintessential instructions that include the essence of all the profound scriptures of the ultimate definitive meaning.

oṃ namo guru buddha bodhisattvabhyoḥ namo namaḥ

I prostrate to glorious Vajrasattva.

I prostrate to the ground to be purified of incidental defilements, Buddha Nature.

I prostrate to the path that purifies from incidental defilements, Vajra Yoga.

I prostrate to the fruition of separation, the ground that was purified of incidental defilements, Primordial Buddha.

First, I bow to all the supreme, exalted gurus.

Though that of which I speak, the aspect of light, is subtle, cleansing thick and measureless darkness from the essence, they make the appearances of total purity blossom.

I bow to that which, isolated from all phenomena, is yet the kāya of countless, undefiled phenomena; though separate from the selfhood of dharmas and individuals, transcending the extremes of existence and non-existence, it abides as the swastika of eternal stability.

Reality does not have any natures of incidental things. I bow to it as natural luminosity. It is also known as the ground that is a great treasure; the path to be practiced with great effort, the means to attain it; and the fruition to be attained that establishes all goals.

Taught according to the completely correct scriptures, as if revealed by a being with the divine eye, manifestation of luminosity is born from the accumulation of merit, the good relative seeds of a Victorious One. These awaken the blossoming of the enlightened family, with all the qualities of the completely ripened fruition.

I also prostrate to the form kāyas, growing like a great tree that bears the abundant fruit of supremacy. These are the Great Sages' kāyas of symbolic indication.

I shall write, as told in the scriptures, how realization grows from that cause of merit. For these teachings, keep in mind, on all occasions, the profound oral instructions that distinguish the scope of final dissolution and non-dissolution of existence, non-existence, eternity, nothingness, and so forth.

When there is attainment of supreme liberation, naturally luminous Dharmakaya, self-arisen pristine wisdom, the pure, blissful, eternal true being, the ultimate that abides forever, pervading space; here is what should first be known by those who aspire to benefit all beings through the two form kāyas.

In the ground under the house of a poor man, a great treasure might exist; but, obscured by earth and rocks to the height of seven men, it is not seen, realized, or attained; and so, that poor man remains in suffering.

Similarly, though the great treasure that is the qualities of Dharmakaya always exists, like all-pervading space, within oneself and all others; it is obscured by incidental obscurations, so that we do not see, realize, or attain it. Thus, all sentient beings always remain in suffering.

I. The Ground: From immaculate scriptures and reasoning, through possessing the special practice instructions of the holy gurus, we can understand how it is possible to attain this essence of the way things are, and how defilements, the ordinary way of confusion, can be purified from it.

This is like knowing, from the treasure is well and truly shown by beings with the divine eye, that there is a great treasure that can be attained, and just how the earth and rocks that cover it can be removed. If the covering that obscures the treasure is not removed, the treasure will not be attained; while, by simply clearing away the obscuring covering, it will be.

II. The Path: When we have understood that, what we should practice to clear away all incidental defilements is the accumulation of completely pure pristine wisdom, with its retinue of intrinsic enlightened qualities. Accomplishing that is like clearing away the covering earth and rocks, with the height of seven men.

III. The Fruition: What is attained by practicing that is the fruition of separating all defilements from the great treasure: undefiled Dharmakaya, with all the inseparable, absolute qualities that are co-essential with it. That fruition is like well and truly attaining the precious treasure.

How do we know that these points are like that? These things are known from brilliantly lucid teachings by the Buddha and Bodhisattvas of the tenth level. The Buddha says in the *Tathagatagarbha Sūtra*:

Children of noble family, it is like this: For example, in the ground under the storeroom in the house of a poor man, a great treasure the size of that storeroom might exist, replete with wealth and gold, but covered by earth to a depth of seven men's height. That great treasure would not say to that poor man, "O man! I am a great treasure covered in the earth;" because that great treasure is not a sentient being with the nature of mind, and so it does not know how to speak. That poor man who is the owner of the house lives in a poverty mentality. Though he walks right over the treasure, he has never heard of it. He neither knows nor sees the great treasure that is under the earth, in his own house.

Children of noble family, sentient beings' attached mental activity is like the poor man's house. Under it exists Sugatagarbha, the great treasury containing the treasure of the powers and fearlessnesses of the absolute nature of phenomena. That dharmatā of dharmas has the unshared qualities of a Buddha and all the further absolute qualities of Buddhahood, transcending in number of grains of sand of the river Ganges.

However, since sentient beings are attached to ordinary forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles, they cycle in saṃsāra, due to the resultant suffering. Because they have never heard about that great treasure of absolute qualities; they cannot obtain it, and they cannot cleanse it of incidental defilements.

Then, children of noble family, a relative Tathagata arises in the world. Among the Bodhisattvas, he fully and truly reveals this great treasury of absolute qualities that abides within oneself and all others. These Bodhisattvas too become devoted to that great treasure of qualities, and they dig it up. For that reason, they are known in the world as Tathagatas, Victors, completely perfected Buddhas. Becoming like the great treasure that they have obtained, they teach sentient beings many kinds of reasonings and examples regarding it that they did not have before. They also teach many different actions and reasonings about action that are means of attaining that great treasure of qualities. Possessing the courage of non-attachment, they become donors to others of that treasury of great treasure. They become treasuries of the powers and fearlessnesses and the many other Buddha qualities.

Children of noble family, in that way, Tathagatas, Victors, completely perfected Buddhas see with the completely pure Tathagata eye that all sentient beings possess the absolute Buddha essence. They teach the Dharma to Bodhisattvas, to completely purify incidental defilements from that treasury of the absolute Tathagatas' pristine wisdoms, powers, fearlessnesses, and unshared Buddha qualities that abide everywhere, as pervasive as space.

Also, *Maitreya's Sublime Continuum with Asaṅga's Commentary*, says:

The afflictive emotions that cover the treasure are like the depths of the earth. The Tathagata nature is like the treasury of jewels buried in it. When "dhātu" is translated as "kham," "Buddha Nature," the meaning is that the afflictions of ordinary beings exist otherwise than they do in the occasion of enlightened excellence. In the occasion of the absolute, these afflictions are transformed into excellence within the space of dharmadhātu. Later ones should remember that.

As in the house of a poor man, buried under the earth,
an inexhaustible, precious treasure might exist;
but the man does not know that, and also the treasure itself
is not able to say to that poor man, "I am here;"
so, the precious treasure that is within the mind
is immaculate dharmatā, neither established nor purified.
but as that is not realized, the sufferings of that poor man,
many and continuous, are experienced in all births.
As the precious treasure cannot say to the man,
"I, a treasure, exist," the man is ignorant of it.
Beings are like that poor man, with the treasure in their minds.
To let them attain it, authentic sages are born in the world.

In accord with that, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, as translated by Devacandra, says:

"Blessed One, do beings in the twenty-five realms of cyclic existence have selfhood, or do they not?"

The Buddha spoke saying, "Self," in this case, is the pure being of suchness. Its meaning is Sugatagarbha. That Buddha Nature exists in all sentient beings, but it is obstructed by many kinds of afflictive emotions. While sentient beings always exist within that selfhood, they cannot see it.

It is like this, for example: In a poor woman's house, in a great city, there existed an inexhaustible treasure of gold; but that poor woman who was living there did not know that a treasure existed in the ground, under her house.

Then a capable person said to that woman, "A treasure exists in your house, but even you do not know that, so how could others see or know it? Since that is so, I will try to get it for you." That poor woman supplicated that excellent one to do so. Then that excellent one dug up the treasure under the poor woman's house, and he gave it to her. Seeing the treasure, the poor woman wondered at it, and she went to that excellent one for refuge.

Likewise, child of noble family, Tathagatagarbha exists within all sentient beings; but they simply cannot see it. They are like that poor woman with the treasure.

Child of noble family, I have purely and truly taught that Tathagatagarbha exists within all sentient beings, as a great treasure of absolute qualities. I taught through example how, though the poor woman had a great treasure, she did not apprehend it in her experience, because the obscurations covering it had not been cleared away.

Likewise, though Tathagatagarbha exists in all sentient beings, it is obscured by many kinds of afflictive emotions. Therefore, sentient beings cannot know or see it. The Tathagata shows it to them; and then, rejoicing, they go to the Tathagata for refuge.

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, as translated from Chinese, the same story occurs in a very extensive version:

Child of noble family, I have said that the Buddha Nature of sentient beings is like, for example, a precious treasure under a poor woman's house; a precious jewel on a powerful champion's forehead; and a universal monarch's spring of sweet, life-giving water, in the desert of saṃsāric existence.

Also, the *Dhāraṇī of Entering into the Non-conceptual* says:

Children of noble family, it is like this, for example: Under rock that is only hard and solid, exists a great treasure. It is filled with a variety of very precious, luminous, wish-fulfilling, valuable substances, such as precious silver, precious gold, and different kinds of precious jewels.

Then some people come there wanting that great treasure. A person who knows about that great treasure through higher perception says, "Listen here. Under this rock that is only hard and solid exists a great treasure, replete with luminous, precious substances. Under them, is a further treasure of precious wish-fulfilling jewels.

Therefore, first of all, dig up everything with the nature of stones. When you have dug those out, stones that seem to be silver will appear to you. Do not perceive these as the great treasure. With full knowledge of this, dig further. As you dig, stones that seem to be gold will appear to you. Do not perceive these as the great treasure. With full knowledge of this, dig further. As you dig, stones that appear to be various jewels will appear to you. These too you should not perceive as the great treasure. With full knowledge of this too, dig further.

Listen here! When you people have made such efforts, without any further effort and activity of digging, you will see a great treasure of wish-fulfilling jewels. When this great, precious treasure of wish-fulfilling jewels is found, you will be rich. You will have great enjoyment of great wealth. You will have the power to benefit both yourselves and others.

Children of noble family, to understand the meaning of what was said there, regarding incidental defilements and Sugatagarbha, you should interpret this example of the great treasure and its coverings in the following way:

"Rock that is only hard and solid" is a verbal designation for obscurations of afflictive emotions and knowables. By these, beings abide completely under the influence of a seemingly separate grasper and grasped. The meaning for later ones is as explained.

"Great treasure of wish-fulfilling gems underneath it" is a verbal designation for the dhātu of complete non-conception.

"People who want a precious treasure of wish-fulfilling jewels" is a verbal designation for bodhisattva great beings.

“Person who knows about the great treasure through higher perception” is a verbal designation for a Tathagata, an arhat, a completely perfected Buddha.

“Rock” is a verbal designation for concretely fixated characteristics of conceptualized natures.

“Digging” is a verbal designation for abandoning attached mental engagement. This is accomplished through meditative absorption that unifies the meditations of śamatha and vipaśyanā.

“Stones that appear to be silver” is a verbal designation for conceptualized characteristics of antidotes.

“Stones that appear to be gold” is a verbal designation for conceptualized characteristics of emptiness, suchness, and similar terms.

“Stones that appear to be various jewels” is a verbal designation for conceptualized notions of attaining fruition.

“Finding the great treasure of precious wish-fulfilling jewels” is a verbal designation for truly encountering and attaining the completely non-conceptual space of the dhātu.

Children of noble family, entering the completely non-conceptual space of the dhātu should be understood by that example being presented in that way.

This is extensively taught there, and so forth. You should definitely consult the extensive presentations of these teachings that are found in those precious sūtras and profound commentaries on them, like the root verses of the *Sublime Continuum with Asaṅga’s Commentary*.

A Brief Teaching of the Ground, Path, and Fruition of the Two Kāyas

The non-conceptual nature of phenomena that is the luminous space of the dhātu of the absolute, as described above, is also called the natural enlightened family.

The developing enlightened family depends on the natural one. It consists of special virtues that are genuinely received from planting and cultivating relative seeds of liberation. That process newly produces the form kāyas of a Tathagata, which did not previously exist before. Like new creation of an auspicious, heavenly wish-fulfilling tree that did not previously exist, this is production of the relative aspect of the excellent, perfect fruition.

These two kinds of enlightened family, natural and developed, have the respective natures of the two truths, absolute and relative. Respectively existing and not existing within the way things are, they constitute the ground. From this basis, by practicing the path of the two accumulations of merit and pristine wisdom, the two-fold fruition that is revealed through separation of the two obscurations is attained. That fruition consists of:

- absolute Dharmakaya
- relative form kāyas.

The Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle says:

As being like a treasure and a fruit tree,
the two enlightened families should be known;
that abiding without beginning, as the innate nature of things,
which is the enlightened family of the absolute nature;
and the excellent one that is genuinely received,
that consists of special incidental virtues,

which is the developed enlightened family.
It is said that from these two enlightened families
the three kāyas of a Buddha are to be attained.
by the first pure family, the first kāya of the essence,
and by the second family having been completed,
the latter two kāyas, those of form, are to be attained.

Also, Maitreya's *Ornament of the Great Vehicle Sūtras*, a text of the Greater Madhyamaka, says:

As the natural and the developed enlightened families,
these are the supporting nature and supported developing from it.
The natural family, the way things are, is innately existent,
and the developed is not, in the natural way things are.

The commentary explains that the eternal cause of development exists absolutely, while the developed fruition does not. This has been a summary of them, for the time being.