

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)**

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INTRODUCTORY SECTION

001 – The Homage to All Buddhas and the Declaration of Intent

Now, in the presence of all the Buddhas,
With palms pressed together, I bow down my head in reverence.
I shall explain here in accordance with the teachings
The provisions essential for the bodhi of the Buddhas.

COMMENTARY:

ON "BUDDHA," "AWAKENING," "REVERENCE," AND "BODHI"

"Buddhas," are those who have awakened to all which should be known. This is the meaning of "buddha." A "buddha" is so-called because his awareness accords with the manner in which things should be known and also because he has awakened from the sleep of ignorance.

"Awakening," has the meaning of coming into a state of awareness from the condition of sleep. Its application here is based on their abandonment of the slumber of ignorance. Moreover, it is in contrast to Śakra, Brahmā, and the others who have not succeeded in waking to this awakening. It is an awakening such as only those whose fame has spread universally throughout the three realms² have been able to awaken to.

It is only all of the Buddhas then who have qualified to awaken to this awakening. This is because the universal knowledge inhering in the knowledge of all modes is known only to the Buddhas. This is not the domain of the Śrāvaka-disciples, the Pratyekabuddhas, or the Bodhisattvas, this because it requires that one be equipped with the dharmas exclusive to a buddha.

“All” [buddhas] indicates that there are none left out. This refers then to those of the past, the future, and the present.

“Head” refers to the most elevated part. As for “with palms pressed together,” it is through placing the palms together that one signifies respect. This is done during the formal expression of reverence.

“I shall explain” makes the clarifying distinction that it is oneself [who is the original author of these explanations].

“In accordance with the teachings” indicates that this has already been explained in all sorts of ways in one after another of the sutras and that now too, this shall be explained in accordance with those very teachings.

As for [last line’s mention of] “the Buddhas,” it indicates those who have abandoned ignorance.

“Bodhi” refers here to the wisdom of all-knowledge.

DEFINITIONS AND CONNOTATIONS OF “PROVISIONS”

“Provisions” refers to that by which one becomes able to bring the dharma of bodhi to fulfillment. By way of analogy, it is just as when things such as a jugs or measuring vessels are filled up. “Filled up” here simply means “filled to capacity.” In this context, we are referring to fulfilling the dharmas required for realization of bodhi. It is on this basis that we speak of “provisions for bodhi.”

“Provisions” also has the meaning of “to preserve” (lit. “to hold”). This is comparable to the case obtaining with those common worldly phenomena wherein the sun is held to be responsible for “maintaining” the heat and the moon is held to be responsible for “maintaining” the coolness. “Maintaining” here connotes “preservation.” In this same way, it is based on their ability to preserve the dharmas of bodhi that these are “provisions” for bodhi. So when one speaks of “provisions,” this is essentially a reference to “preservation.”

Additionally, [“provisions”] also take “to raise and nurture” as the basis of their meaning. This is analogous to the situation in the world where there are those who are able to fulfill the needs of a thousand others, or perhaps a hundred, or perhaps ten, or perhaps only themselves, or perhaps the needs of themselves are even difficult to fulfill. The provisions essential to bodhi are themselves comparable in regard to this function. Thus their meaning derives from their ability to raise and nurture bodhi.

Then again, the meaning [of “provisions”] relies on “causation” as the basis of its meaning. This is just as with a building, a city wall, a cart, or other such things wherein, while [their construction is still only] in the causal phase, one speaks of the “provisions” (i.e. “supplies,” or “materials”) for [constructing] a building, the “provisions” for [constructing] a city wall, or the “provisions” for making a cart. In this same way, one speaks of the “provisions” for bodhi in reference to the dharmas serving as the causes and conditions for producing bodhi.

Furthermore, the meaning of “provisions” is based on the complete adequacy of the many essential parts. This is comparable to the essential parts required for performing ceremonial offerings wherein it is based on the complete adequacy of such things as a serving ladle, the cooking fire, and so forth that makes it possible to refer to performing a ceremonial offering. It is not the case that one can fail to have a complete adequacy of such things.

It is also just like when one relies on the complete presence of bodily parts such as the head, hands, feet, and so forth in referring to the existence of a body. It is not the case that one can fail to have complete adequacy in such things.

This is also the case in carrying out an act of giving wherein one has the benefactor, the gift, the recipient, and the transference [of merit]. When these sorts of things are perfectly adequate, one is then able to refer to the “provisions” for performing an act of giving. One cannot fail to have complete adequacy in such things. So too it is in the case of such things as the provisions essential to the moral precepts. And so it is that “complete adequacy of the many component parts” forms a basis for the meaning of “provisions.”

Thus it is that in my explanation of the “provisions” for bodhi, this refers to: that which is able to bring about fulfillment; that which preserves; that which raises and nurtures; that which forms the causal basis for bodhi; and that which represents the complete adequacy of the component parts of bodhi. All of these concepts are inherent components of the meaning [of the term “provisions”].

002 – The Impossibility of Completely Describing the Provisions

How would one be able to describe without omission

All of the provisions for the realization of bodhi?

This could only be accomplished by the Buddhas themselves,

For they, exclusively, have realized the boundless enlightenment.

COMMENTARY:

As for the phrase “How would one be able...?,” this means to say: “How would one possess the power?” [This is brought up] because, in the case of the Śrāvaka-disciples and in the case of the Bodhisattvas, they possess only a lesser degree of awakening and knowing and so do not possess the requisite power or ability [to carry out this description]. If one wishes to describe the provisions for bodhi without allowing any omissions and with no factor remaining undescribed, it is only the Buddhas, exclusively, who could do this, for they are the ones who have realized the boundless enlightenment.

As for the reference to “boundless enlightenment,” this is a statement indicating it is not the case that this involves a lesser degree of awakening. It is because the Buddhas, the Bhagavāns, have awakened to and know unimpededly the boundlessly many meanings which should be known that the Buddhas are therefore referred to here as those who have gained realization of the “boundless enlightenment.”

Additionally, [the Buddhas] have awakened to and yet remain unattached to the views characterizing the [two] extreme bounds, views such as those which cling to the pleasures of desire or self-wearying asceticism, annihilationism or eternalism, existence or nonexistence, and so forth. Thus it is also because that to which they have awakened is free of extreme bounds that the Buddhas are referred to as having realized the boundless enlightenment.

Question: Why is it that it is only the Buddhas who are able to explain the provisions while other persons are not able to do so?

Response: (As below...)³

003 – Since a Buddha’s Qualities are Boundless, So Too Are the Provisions

The boundless meritorious qualities of a buddha’s body
Are rooted in the provisions essential to enlightenment.
Therefore the provisions for enlightenment
Themselves have no bounds.

COMMENTARY:

As for “a buddha’s body,” it refers here to a buddha’s physical body.⁴ It is because the body of a buddha is replete with a boundless number of meritorious qualities that it speaks here of “boundless meritorious qualities associated with a buddha’s body.”

DEFINITION AND CONNOTATIONS OF "MERITORIOUS QUALITIES"

As for "meritorious qualities," it means "that which is praiseworthy." If something is praiseworthy, then it may be described as "a meritorious quality."

["Meritorious quality"] also connotes repetition of the associated [meritorious] action. This is comparable to when someone takes up the practice of repeated recitation of a sutra. Such a person is then appropriately described as one engaged in the creation of meritorious qualities.

["Meritorious quality"] also connotes "durability." This is comparable to when one makes a rope. In some cases one braids it by uniting two cords and deems it to be of appropriate "quality" and in some cases one braids it from three cords and deems it to be of appropriate "quality."

["Meritorious quality"] also connotes a relationship of "dependence" [upon noble bases]. This is comparable to things in general which are deemed to possess their meritorious quality based on that upon which they secondarily depend. In this same way, it is because the body of a buddha depends in turn upon the meritorious qualities inhering in the moral precepts, meditative concentration, and the other boundlessly many distinctly different meritorious qualities that one describes the body of a buddha as possessed of "boundless meritorious qualities."

ON "PROVISIONS" AS THE "ROOT" OF A BUDDHA'S "QUALITIES"

As for their being "rooted in the provisions essential to enlightenment," this is because the provisions involved in the acquisition of bodhi comprise the very root of the boundlessly many meritorious qualities associated with a buddha's body.

As for "root," it connotes "the ability to establish." As for "bodhi," that is a reference to wisdom. The root is just the provisions themselves, for the provisions have the ability to establish the wisdom founded on all-knowledge. Therefore the provisions serve as the very root of the body of a buddha.

It is especially on account of the fact that the body of a buddha is possessed of boundlessly many meritorious qualities that it is essential to employ boundlessly many meritorious qualities in perfecting that buddha body [for one's own future buddhahood]. Thus it is that the provisions themselves have no delimiting boundaries at all.

004 – Reverence to Buddhas and to Bodhisattvas, Those Also Worthy of Offerings

I shall then explain but a lesser portion of them.

I render reverence to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.

It is all such bodhisattvas as these

To whom one should next make offerings, after the Buddhas.

COMMENTARY:

All of those provisions are boundless and yet one's own wisdom is bounded. Therefore, when embarking on the explanation of those provisions it is impossible to remain free of omissions. Therefore it states: "I shall then explain but a lesser portion of them. I render reverence to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas."

Question: One should pay reverence to the Buddhas, for it is they among all beings who are most superior. But what is the meaning here of claiming one should also revere bodhisattvas?

Response: This statement is made because all such bodhisattvas as these should be those to whom one makes offerings next after the Buddhas. All such bodhisattvas, from the time of their initial generation of the resolve [to gain bodhi] on forward until they arrive at the site of enlightenment—these are those to whom one should in every case make offerings.

THE SEVEN TYPES OF BODHISATTVAS

There are seven types of bodhisattvas:

- 1 – Those who have generated the initial resolve.
- 2 – Those who have taken up right cultivation.
- 3 – Those realizing the unproduced-dharmas patience.
- 4 – Those at the level of "anointing of the crown."
- 5 – Those abiding at the level of "one remaining life."
- 6 – Those at the level of their very last birth;
- 7 – Those who have approached the site of enlightenment.

The bodhisattvas of these sorts are those to whom one should make offerings next in sequence after having made offerings to the Buddhas. One uses body, mouth, mind together with outward things in making offerings to them.

"Those who have generated the initial resolve" have not yet reached any of the [bodhisattva] grounds. "Those who have taken up right cultivation" consists of those bodhisattvas who abide on all grounds up to and including the seventh ground. "Those who

have realized the unproduced-dharmas patience" abide on the eighth ground [and above]. "Those at the level of 'anointment of the crown'" abide on the tenth ground. "Those at the level of 'one remaining life'" proceed then to enter the Tuṣita Heaven. "Those at the level of their very last birth" abide in the Tuṣita Heaven. "Those who have approached the site of enlightenment" are on the verge of putting to use the wisdom rooted in all-knowledge.

Among these seven types of bodhisattvas, even all those bodhisattvas who are at that level where they have generated the initial resolve are those to whom all beings should render reverence. How much the more so should this be true in the case of the remaining [six types of bodhisattvas]. Why is this the case? It is because they possess profound minds vast in the scope of their greatness. And it is because they possess the capacity to implement the teachings of the Tathāgatas.

When the bodhisattva at the level of initial generation of the resolve generates that resolve to realize bodhi, he becomes free of any deficiency in [his ability to course throughout] the ten directions, free of any deficiency in [his ability to visit] the buddhalands, and free of any deficiency in [his ability to interact with] all beings, this because, when he generates the bodhi-focused resolve, his kindness becomes universal in its extensiveness.

[Thus it is that he reflects], "In the case of those beings who have not yet gone across [to bodhi], I shall see that they are brought across. As for those beings who have not yet gained liberation, I shall see to their liberation. In those instances where beings have not yet been revived, I shall see to their being revived. In the case of those beings who have not yet realized cessation, I shall see that they realize cessation. Those who ought to become *śrāvaka*-disciples, I shall influence to enter the Śrāvaka-disciple Vehicle. Those who ought to become pratyekabuddhas, I shall influence to enter the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle. And as for those who ought to avail themselves of the Great Vehicle, I shall influence them to enter the Great Vehicle."

[These bodhisattvas] desire to influence all beings to realize cessation. It is not the case that they are motivated by the desire to bring but a lesser fraction of beings to the realization of cessation. Because this profound mind is so vast in the scope of its greatness, all beings should in every case be moved to offer them reverential respect.

SUPPORTING CITATIONS FROM SCRIPTURE

What do we mean here by “[revering them because] they possess the capacity to implement the teachings of the Tathāgatas”? This is as expressed by the Bhagavān to Kāśyapa: “Just as one performs rites of ritual reverence on the new moon and not on the full moon, so too, Kāśyapa, should those having faith in me pay reverence to the bodhisattvas and not [exclusively] to the Tathāgatas themselves. And why? This is because it is from among the bodhisattvas that the Tathāgatas emerge.”

This idea is also spoken of in [the teachings of] the Śrāvaka-disciple Vehicle:

As regards those knowledgeable about Dharma,
Whether they be old or young in years,
One should make offerings to them and pay reverence to them
In the manner of brahmacarins devoted to ritually serving fire.

It is for these sorts of reasons that one should make offerings to all bodhisattvas next in sequence after the Buddhas. This is as expressed in the following verses:

VERSES IN PRAISE OF BODHISATTVAS

Those who carry on the lineage of the Buddhas
Are superior to those cultivating lesser levels of conduct.
Thus it is that all of the Bodhisattvas,
Next after the Buddhas, are the recipients of offerings.

Their kindness is equal in scope to empty space
And extends universally to all of the beings.
Thus it is that those most supreme among their sons,
Next after the Buddhas, are the recipients of offerings.

In their relations with all types of beings,
Their great compassion is like that felt for one’s son.
Thus it is that these sons of the Buddha,
Next after the Buddhas, are the recipients of offerings.

They benefit beings with the mind of compassion,
While, in [realization of] non-duality, they are like empty space.
Thus it is that these fearless ones,
Next after the Buddhas, are the recipients of offerings.

They are at all times like fathers
Striving to raise up all beings.
Thus it is that all bodhisattvas,
Next after the Buddhas, are the recipients of offerings.

They are comparable to earth, to water, and to fire,
 In that beings constantly put them to use.
 Thus it is that those fond of giving,
 Next after the Buddhas, present them with offerings.

Solely for the sake of benefiting beings,
 They abandon the causes of personal happiness.
 Thus it is that all of them,
 Next after the Buddhas, are the recipients of offerings.

All Buddhas and all those following on the Buddhas,
 Emerge from the generation of the initial resolve.
 Thus it is that all of the Bodhisattvas,
 Next after the Buddhas, are the recipients of offerings.

Question: The Venerable One has already rightly explained the causal bases for the arising of teachings on the provisions. Now he should explain what constitutes the substance of the provisions.

Response: (As below...)

MAIN DOCTRINAL SECTION: THE PROVISIONS

THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM AS SUBSUMING ALL PROVISIONS

005 – The Primary Provision: Prajñāpāramitā, Mother of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Since it is the mother of the Bodhisattvas,
 It is also the mother of the Buddhas:
 The prajñāpāramitā
 Is the foremost among the provisions for enlightenment.

COMMENTARY:

ON THE SUPREMACY OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

It is because the prajñāpāramitā is the mother of all bodhisattvas that it is foremost among the provisions for the acquisition of bodhi. How is this so? It is on account of its being the most supreme. In this sense, it is analogous to the eye, supreme among the body's sense faculties and is also analogous to the head, supreme among the parts of the body. Just so, the prajñāpāramitā abides in paramount supremacy among all of the pāramitās. Thus, it is on account of the prajñāpāramitā's supremacy that it is foremost among the provisions.

Additionally, [the prajñāpāramitā is supreme] because it is that which one must practice first. This is comparable to the case of faith which itself is that dharma among all dharmas which must be implemented first. Prajñāpāramitā's primacy in the practice of

all of the pāramitās is just so. [Its stature as supreme therein] is due to the fact that, [when practicing *dāna*], if one does not transfer [the associated merit by dedicating it to the acquisition of bodhi], then it fails to qualify as *dāna* pāramitā (the perfection of giving). In this same manner, if one fails to transfer [the associated merit] from the practice of *śīla* and the other [pāramitās by dedicating it to the acquisition of bodhi], then that practice cannot qualify as *śīla* pāramitā (the perfection of moral virtue). So too it is with the other pāramitās as well.

The act of transferring [merit by dedicating it to the acquisition of bodhi] is itself just *prajñā*. It is because *prajñā* is the first among them which one practices that one thereby possesses the ability to carry out the transference [of merit through dedicating it to the acquisition of bodhi]. Thus it is on account of *prajñāpāramitā*'s being the foremost practice among all of the pāramitās that it qualifies as foremost among the provisions for bodhi.

Also, it is because, in the practice of these pāramitās, [the *prajñāpāramitā*] is the very essence of the cause of purity in [one's understanding of] the three factors. It is because the *prajñāpāramitā* constitutes the very essence of the cause of purity in [one's understanding of] the three factors involved in all of the pāramitās that the *prajñāpāramitā* qualifies as the foremost among the provisions for bodhi.

Now, as for this "purity in [one's understanding of] the three factors," when the bodhisattva coursing in the *prajñāpāramitā* engages in the practice of giving, he does not hold in mind his own person, for he has abandoned any grasping at [even the concept of] his own person. Nor does he hold in mind any distinctions existing in the recipient [of that act of giving]. This is because he has severed all discriminations in all places. Nor does he hold in mind the karmic fruits of that act of giving, this because [he realizes that] all dhar-mas are characterized by neither coming nor going.

It is in this manner that the bodhisattva brings about the practice of giving wherein [his understanding of] the three factors has become purified. As it is with purity in giving, so too it is with purity in moral-virtue and with purity in the other [perfections]. It is because this *prajñāpāramitā* constitutes the very essence of the cause of purity in the three factors associated with all of the pāramitās that it therefore qualifies as the foremost among the provisions for bodhi.

Additionally, it is on account of its great fruits. The great fruits brought about by the prajñāpāramitā are supreme over those deriving from any of the other pāramitās. This is as described in a sutra where it says:

The merit associated with the mind resolved on bodhi
And the dharmas employed for drawing in beings,
Compared with that from faith in or understanding of emptiness,
Is sixteen times greater in its value.

[Ideally], one should discuss at this point the causal factors associated with the great fruition as related in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*. It is on account of its great fruits that the prajñāpāramitā is foremost among the provisions for the acquisition of bodhi.

THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM AS "MOTHER OF THE BODHISATTVAS"

Question: How is it that the prajñāpāramitā qualifies as "the mother of the Bodhisattvas"?

Response: It is on account of its ability to give birth to them. It is prajñā mediated by skillful means which brings about the birth of the bodhisattva. It causes him to seek the unsurpassed bodhi and to refrain from seeking the bodhi of the Śrāvaka-disciples and the Pratyekabuddhas. It is on account of its causing the birth of a buddha body that the prajñāpāramitā qualifies as "the mother of the Bodhisattvas."

Additionally, it is because of its "placement" within the [other] five pāramitās. [The etymology for the Sanskrit term for "mother" supports this "placement" interpretation.]⁵ This is analogous to when a mother gives birth to a child. At such time, she may do so in a way which places it on the cushions of a bed or else may do so in a way which places it on the ground. The prajñāpāramitā is comparable to this. When it gives birth to that bodhisattva who seeks bodhi, it does so in a way whereby [that bodhisattva] is placed in the midst of giving and the other five pāramitās. It is because it is able to effect such placement of the bodhisattva who seeks bodhi that the prajñāpāramitā qualifies as "the mother of the Bodhisattvas."

Additionally, it is on account of its serving as a means of "calculation." [The etymology for the Sanskrit term for "mother" also supports this "calculation" interpretation.]⁶

By way of analogy, after a mother gives birth to a child, as befits the season, she calculates that, "If I proceed in this way, my child's body will grow through this approach to nutrition. If I proceed in

this other way, then it is likely to go into decline.” So too it is with a bodhisattva. One uses the *prajñāpāramitā* to take the measure of one’s own person, thinking, “I should go about the practice of giving in this way. I should go about the practice of upholding the moral precepts in this way.” And so one continues along in this particular fashion. Thus it is on account of the causal circumstances involved in this sort of calculation that one speaks of the *prajñāpāramitā* as being “the mother of the Bodhisattvas.”

Additionally, it is on account of its being the basis of “measuring out.” This is comparable to having the various units of measure [such units as pints, quarts, gallons, and bushels]⁷ by which one makes measurements. So, too, it is with the Bodhisattvas [who “measure out” aspects of cultivation] in this same way, thinking, “This is the initial generation of the mind resolved on bodhi. This is the cultivation of the practices. This is the realization of the patiences.” And so forth. Thus it is also on account of this causal basis associated with “measuring out” that one speaks of the *prajñāpāramitā* as being “the mother of the Bodhisattvas.”

Additionally, it is because [the *prajñāpāramitā*] is inherent in one’s recitation of the Sutras. This is a reference to the fact that, in the Sutras, “serving as a mother” [is etymologically implicit] in the term for “recitation.” In those sutras, there is a famous bodhisattva named Vimalakīrti who travels to the lands of all buddhas. He uttered a gātha, saying:

The *prajñāpāramitā*
Is the mother of the Bodhisattvas, the humane ones.
Skillful means serves as their father,
And kindness and compassion are their daughters.

There are also other sutras in which this “recitation [as motherhood]” relationship is implicit]. Hence it is also because the Sutras serve this function of “measuring out” [the *prajñāpāramitā*-infused concepts] that the *prajñāpāramitā* is said to serve as “the mother of the Bodhisattvas.”

THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM AS “MOTHER OF THE BUDDHAS”

Question: How is it that the *prajñāpāramitā* is also “the mother of the Buddhas”?

Response: It is because it gives birth to and reveals unimpeded wisdom. All buddhas of the past, future and present come forth⁸ on account of the *prajñāpāramitā*. It is on account of it that they have

extinguished the afflictions in the past, will do so in the future, and now do so in the present. Because they are born forth from this, the *prajñāpāramitā* is therefore the mother of the Buddhas.

As for “revealing unimpeded wisdom,” because the Buddhas, the Bhagavāns, of the past, future, and present manifest unimpeded wisdom, in every case, they are all born from within the *prajñāpāramitā*. It is on account of it that the Buddhas become able to manifest unimpeded wisdom. Hence the Buddhas too take the *prajñāpāramitā* as their mother. In this connection, we have *ślokas* as follows:

It is on account of that *prajñāpāramitā*
Which accords with the great compassion that,
Confronted with the perilous chasm of the unconditioned,
The sons of the Buddha are able to leap entirely beyond it.
They succeed in reaching the unequaled enlightenment
And in benefiting and drawing in all beings.
It is because the perfection of wisdom serves as their mother
That the great men are able to be thus.

It is through realization of the perfection of wisdom
That they are then able to perfect the body of a buddha.
Therefore it serves as the mother of the Buddhas.
So declared he who is supreme among all rishis.

Why is this referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*”?

It is because it is [a level of wisdom] not held in common with the Śrāvaka-disciples or the Pratyekabuddhas that it is referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*.”

It is because there is nothing beyond it worth knowing that it is referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*.”

It is because this wisdom reaches to the “other shore” of every matter that it is referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*.”

It is because there is nothing anywhere else capable of vanquishing this *prajñāpāramitā* that it is referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*.”

It is because it is uniformly equal in all of the three periods of time that it is referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*.”

It is because it is uniformly equal throughout boundless space that it is referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*.”

Such supreme causes and conditions as these are spoken of in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sutra*. It is on account of them that it is referred to as the “*prajñāpāramitā*.”

Question: The foremost among the provisions for the acquisition of bodhi has now been explained in brief. Hence one should now proceed with explaining the second-tier provisions.

[Response: As below...]

SPECIFIC FORMULATIONS OF THE PROVISIONS

006 – Prajñā Includes the Remaining Five Perfections and Their Retinue

Because giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor, meditation,
And the others following from these five
All arise from the perfection of wisdom,
They are included within the pāramitās.

COMMENTARY:

THE SIX PERFECTIONS

THE PERFECTION OF GIVING

We are treating *dāna* pāramitā (the perfection of giving) herein as the second of the bodhi provisions because it is prajñā that takes primary priority in practice. The bodhisattva practices giving to realize bodhi. Hence giving is taken as the second of the provisions.

Through this practice, one facilitates both physical and mental happiness in other beings. That is why it is referred to as “giving.” It is not that this is done to inflict suffering on others.

Giving is of two kinds: the giving of material wealth and the giving of Dharma. The giving of material wealth is itself of two types, namely that which is sentient and that which is insentient.

Sentient giving is also of two types, namely that which is “inward” (i.e. “personal”) and that which is “outward” (i.e. “extra-personal”). If one gives the limbs of one’s own body or if one gives one’s entire body, this is what is meant by “inward” giving. If one were to give sons, daughters, wives, consorts, or any other of the two-legged or four-legged beings, this would be a case of “outward” giving.

“Insentient” is also of two types: consumable and inconsumable. In this there is much variety. Anything which when given may be used internally such as food and drink is “consumable.”

When one gives things used outside the body such as anything in the category of fragrances and garlands, or such things as gold, silver, precious jewels, clothing, lands, wealth, gardens, ponds, places to stroll about and enjoy oneself, and so forth—these fall within the category of “inconsumable.”

Now, useful Dharma giving is itself of two kinds, mundane and supramundane. If it occurs that, on account of a given act of Dharma giving, a person comes to take rebirths in cyclic existence in a likeable body surrounded by enjoyable objective circumstances, this is an instance of “mundane” Dharma giving.

If the fruits of an act of Dharma giving conduce to transcendence of cyclic existence, that is an instance of “supramundane” Dharma giving.

The giving of material wealth and the giving of Dharma each involve two subtypes: “involving attachment” and “free of attachment.” Where one gives either wealth or Dharma for one’s own sake, for the sake of enhancing one’s present situation, for the sake of some superior karmic result, or in order to ensure current karmic circumstances will continue on into the future, this is what is meant by giving “involving attachment.”

Where giving is done for the sake of bringing benefit and happiness to all beings or is done for the sake of realizing unimpeded wisdom—these instances of giving are “free of attachment.”

Additional sorts of giving include “the giving of fearlessness” and other types subsumed under “the giving of material wealth.”⁹ The karmic rewards and secondary effects of those two types of giving (material wealth and Dharma) are comprehensively explained in the Great Vehicle scriptures. We should describe them here briefly in verse:

Food and drink and clothing as well—
Adapting to circumstances, one gives these to all,
While also giving flowers, garlands, lamps,
Powdered fragrances and music.

One may give all manner of exquisite flavors,
Medicines, and fine pillows,
Whatever is needed by those recovering from illnesses,
Together with the services of physicians.

Sons and daughters, wives and consorts,
Servants and storehouses,
And well-adorned maidens—
As befits the circumstances, may all be given.¹⁰

All manner of precious things,
All sorts of articles of adornment,
Elephants and horses, carriages and such—
Such marvelous things may all be given.

Gardens, groves, places to cultivate the Path,
Ponds, wells, meeting halls,
Lands and fields with their various enhancements,
Guest houses and such—these may all be given.

Whether two-legged or four-legged beings,
Or perhaps even islands,
Villages, the capital of a country,
Or even the domain of a king—all may be given.

Giving things used in play,
Benefiting and pleasing those who wish for or need them,
One becomes one on whom beings can rely.
And for the frightened, one provides them fearlessness.

One may give what others find difficult to relinquish:
One's hands, feet, eyes, ear, or nose—
One may also give even one's heart or head—
One is able to give even one's entire body.

When one cultivates the practice of giving,
In reflecting on the recipients, one always
Should generate the thought of them as fields of merit
And also as belonging to one's own retinue of the good.

The karmic rewards resulting from giving,
Bring to completion the accumulation of goodness.
One dedicates it all for the sake of self and others,
That all may achieve buddhahood and reach the purelands.

That giving practiced by the bodhisattva
Is rightly dedicated to the gaining of a buddha's body.
This *dāna* of the bodhisattva
Is that worthy to be known as "*pāramitā*."

Whether it be that done "on the near shore" or "the far shore,"
Still, it is indescribable in the nature of its qualities.
Where the fruition of giving extends to perfection's "far shore,"
This is what qualifies as "the perfection of giving."¹¹

THE VARIOUS TYPES OF BENEFACTORS

Now, we shall describe the distinctions among the various types of benefactors:

One does not covet any pleasing karmic result.
It is done from compassion and with the three factors purified.¹²
The Rightly Enlightened One said: "Such giving
Is that which is done for the sake of seeking bodhi."

Where one reflects, "I have performed such endeavors in the past,
Perform them now, and shall also perform them in the future"—

If one's relinquishing of possessions is done in this way,
It is as if done for hire and so does not qualify as "giving."

If, due to coveting some result beyond the act of giving,
A person becomes able to give because it suits his own needs,
He is said to be "one seeking to earn interest."

The wise are aware such persons do not qualify as benefactors.

When one doesn't covet some form of enhanced karmic result,
But rather gives with a mind imbued with compassion,
This person qualifies as a genuine benefactor.
The others are just businessmen engaged in buying and selling.

Where one is like those great clouds bringing rain to all places,
Giving with a mind of equal regard in all circumstances—
This is one who qualifies as a great benefactor.
The rest reach only a fraction of his stature.

In giving and the karmic result from giving,
One acts with heartfelt sympathy for those in need.
In relating to all the many people, the benefactor
Regards them all as if they were his own fathers and mothers.

One does not retain in his mind those things which are given,
The recipients of the gifts, or the one who does the giving,
But rather finds constant happiness in the act of giving.
It is those of this sort who are worthy to be known as benefactors.

Where someone makes no distinctions regarding buddhas,
Regarding bodhi, or regarding bodhisattvas,
And yet engages in giving for the sake of reaching bodhi—
That sort of person will swiftly gain realization of buddhahood.

THE PERFECTION OF MORAL VIRTUE

Question: Having already explained the pāramitā of *dāna*, one should now explain *śīla* pāramitā (the perfection of moral virtue).

Response: The term "pāramitā" is as explained earlier.

CONNOTATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF THE WORD ŚĪLA

We shall now explain the meaning of *śīla*, referencing its various connotations as follows:

"Habituation." This refers to effects thereby produced at the level of both substance and characteristics, (i.e. "inwardly" and outwardly").

“Basic nature,” as with people in the world described as “happy by nature,” or “anguished by nature.”

“Coolness” as in the case of one who leaves behind anguishing mind-inflaming afflictions [caused by immoral actions].

“Security,” because it causes future-life happiness.

“Quiescence,” because it is able to establish one in meditative calming and contemplation (*śamatha-vipaśyanā*).

“Cessation,” because it is a cause for the bliss of nirvāṇa.

“Stateliness,” because it is able to enhance outward appearance.

“Purity,” because it is able to wash away the defilement of immoral actions.

“Primacy” because it enables abiding in the community free of any basis for timidity.

“Praiseworthiness,” because it is able to bring about a fine reputation.

MORAL VIRTUE AS DEFINED BY THE TEN GOOD KARMIC DEEDS

These moral precepts derive from good actions on the part of the body, mouth, and mind. When acting in accordance with them, one abandons the killing of beings, the taking of what is not given, sexual misconduct, and so forth. These are the three moral precepts relating to the body.

One abandons lying, slanderous speech, harsh speech, and the various sorts of frivolous speech (gratuitous lewdness, useless banter, rumor-mongering, etc.). These are the four moral precepts associated with the mouth.

One abandons covetousness, hatefulness, and wrong views. These are the three moral precepts associated with the mind.

These ten types of moral precepts deriving from good conduct in body, mouth, and mind serve to counter the ten kinds of bad conduct generated through covetousness, hatefulness, and delusion. It is on account of constant and habitual proximity to actions reflective of the lower, middling, and higher degrees of those ten bad practices that one falls down into such places as the hell realms, the animal realms, and *yamaloka* (the hungry-ghost realms).

THE KARMIC EFFECTS OF MORAL VIRTUE

Now, as for the ten types of moral precepts reflective of good actions, so long as coursing in them is disconnected from factors generating enlightenment, constant and habitual proximity to the

lower, middling, and superior grades of such practice produces karmic effects reflecting the distinctions in the merit's relative superiority. As a consequence, one becomes bound to gain rebirth in the appropriately corresponding levels among gods and men.

Where linked to enlightenment-generating factors, constant, habitual, and often-repeated coursing in the ten good karmic actions done at the superior level of moral precept practice [produces the following karmic effects]: One becomes destined to gain the grounds of the Śrāvaka-disciples or the grounds of the Bodhisattvas at ever more superior levels of acquisition [as befits the quality and number of such karmic deeds].

TYPES OF MORAL PRECEPTS

THE BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS

Additionally, as for the collections of bodhisattva precepts, there are sixty-five different kinds of inexhaustibility associated with them as related in the *Akṣayamati Sutra*. One should become knowledgeable about this matter.¹³

TWO INSTANCES OF TWO-FOLD PRECEPT CLASSIFICATION

"CONTINUOUS" VERSUS "DISCONTINUOUS" MORAL PRECEPTS

Also, there are in general two categories of moral-precepts, namely those which are "the same when transplanted" and those which are not "the same when transplanted." As for those which are "the same when transplanted," this refers for instance to where, on account of the accumulation of the good deeds of body, mouth, and mind, [that inclination toward moral behavior] is "transplanted" yet again in each succeeding life.

This concept may be applicable in relation to the realm [into which one is reborn], in relation to the karmic blessings [which one experiences in the subsequent rebirth], in relation to [one's tendency to take up] the Śrāvaka-disciple or the Pratyekabuddha [Paths], in relation to the process of mutual repayment [of karmic indebtedness], in relation to [one's association with particular] purelands, in relation to the ripening of [particular other] beings, in relation to the right and universal enlightenment, and so forth. All of these may be explained in terms of being associated with morality which is "the same when transplanted." Whatever stands in opposition to these [examples] corresponds to morality which is not "the same when transplanted."¹⁴

“EFFORTFUL” VERSUS “EFFORTLESS” MORAL PRECEPTS

There are yet another two primary categories of moral precept practice, namely “effortful” morality and “effortless” morality. If in one’s actions, one must still rely on intentional effort to adhere to moral precepts, then this is what is referred to as “effortful” morality. The contrary case qualifies as “effortless” morality.”¹⁵

A NINE-FOLD CLASSIFICATION OF MORAL PRECEPTS

There are yet another nine kinds of moral precepts, as follows:

- 1 – The moral precepts for the common person.
- 2 – The moral precepts of the non-Buddhists who have gained the five spiritual powers.
- 3 – The moral precepts of humans.
- 4 – The moral precepts of the desire-realm gods.
- 5 – The moral precepts of the form-realm gods.
- 6 – The moral precepts of the formless-realm gods.
- 7 – The moral precepts of Śrāvaka-disciples, both those still in training and those beyond training.
- 8 – The moral precepts of the Pratyekabuddhas.
- 9 – The moral precepts of the Bodhisattvas.

As for the moral precepts taken on by the common person, they cease completely to be in force upon entering the new rebirth location. In the case of the non-Buddhists who have gained the five spiritual powers, they cease completely at the time when they lose their spiritual powers. As for the precepts of humans, when the path of the ten good karmic deeds ceases to exist, then they too cease to exist. In the case of the precepts of the desire-realm gods, when their karmic blessings are exhausted, they too cease. In the case of the precepts of the form-realm gods, when their dhyāna concentration ceases, those precepts cease as well. In the case of the formless-realm gods, when their *samāpatti* (absorption) ceases, those precepts cease.

In the case of the precepts of Śrāvaka-disciples, both those still in training and those beyond training, when they reach their final nirvāṇa, those precepts then cease. In the case of the precepts of the Pratyekabuddhas, because those beings are deficient as regards the great compassion, their precepts come to an end [on reaching their final nirvāṇa]. As for the precepts observed by the Bodhisattvas, they never end.

Because these moral precepts are able to illuminate all other moral precepts, because the [karmic] seeds [planted through adopting them] continue on endlessly, because the Bodhisattvas themselves continue on endlessly, and because the precepts of the Tathāgatas are endless—it is for these reasons that the bodhisattva precepts are described as endless. It is because the moral-precepts of the Bodhisattvas are dedicated to the realization of [the utmost, right, and perfect] bodhi (*anuttarasamyakṣambodhi*) that they are said to define the “*pāramitā*” of moral virtue. In this connection, we have these *ślokas*:¹⁶

VERSES ON THE PERFECTION OF MORAL VIRTUE

Just as a father loves an accomplished and strong son,
And just as one cherishes one's very own life—
So too regard precepts by which love for existence is abandoned.
They are loved by the heroic stalwarts possessed of great minds.

After the Muni drew close to these precepts in practice,
He became liberated from desire and abandoned love for existence.
They are such as common men, like crows, are inclined to reject.
The wise, however, should constantly cherish these precepts.

These precepts bring benefit to both oneself and others,
Causing fine appearance and freedom from worry or privation.
In this life and ensuing lives, one is supreme in one's stateliness.
These precepts are such as the wise should cherish.

These precepts do not derive from the power of others.
They are not unobtainable and need not be begged from others.
In all cases, it is through one's own power that one gains them.
Therefore the superior person cherishes these precepts.

One's wealth, country, and lands,
One's own body, flesh, and even one's own head—
One could relinquish them all, but will not relinquish the precepts,
Acting thus for the sake of purifying that supreme bodhi.

Even were one faced with falling from the heavens to the ground,
Or even if one might raise one's own ground on up to the heavens,
To perfect the stainless ground free of all defilement,
One should remain resolute and refrain from being moved.

Once one has perfected the moral-precept methods,
One then immediately gains the second [bodhisattva] ground.¹⁷
Having gained the pure ground free of all defilement,
One may then accomplish whatever one wishes.

Whether it be within the worlds of gods, men, or *asuras*,
 Or among those animals amenable to ripening,
 Having become well aware of the means used in teaching,
 As befits one's judgments, one goes there to benefit them.

Perhaps one resorts to giving in order to draw in beings.
 Or uses pleasing words which penetrate their minds.
 Or else provides them with the benefit of peaceful security,
 Or engages in joint endeavors, thus enhancing their strengths.¹⁸

Perhaps one serves as a lord among men,
 Or abides, sovereignly independent, among communities of gods.
 In each of those places one uses skillful means to lead them along.
 One should thus establish them all in adopting pristine dharmas.

By perfecting spiritual powers arising from genuine moral virtue,
 One becomes able even to dry up the great sea.¹⁹
 Thus when this world ends and the fires increase and spread,
 In but a *kṣāṇa*'s instant, one is able to extinguish them all.²⁰

One contemplates the different afflictions of beings in the world.
 Coursing in afflictions, they fall sick, and thus abandon relatives.
 The wise, possessing moral virtue, powers, and skillful means,
 Serve the world as a reliable relatives, teaching the supreme Path.

THE PERFECTION OF PATIENCE

Question: Having already explained the *pāramitā* of *śīla*, one should now explain *kṣānti* *pāramitā* (the perfection of patience).

Response: As intended herein, *kṣānti* refers to the ability of one's resolve to endure all manner of suffering and bliss, both physical and mental, without feeling either elevated or depressed, and without the mind being clouded by any defilement-induced turbidity.²¹ This is a brief description of what is meant by *kṣānti*.

THE THREE TYPES OF PATIENCE

As interpreted by *Vaśitva*,²² one may establish three categories [of patience] here: that sustained by the body, that sustained by the mind, and that sustained through Dharma.

PATIENCE SUSTAINED BY THE BODY

As for "patience sustained by the body," this refers to occasions when the body encounters painful sensations originating from without caused by disagreeable physical contacts inflicted by sentient or insentient agents. When in such instances, one remains able

to endure the physical pain without reckoning it [to be a problem], this qualifies as “patience sustained by the body.”

As for [physical suffering] “originating from without,” this may involve fear, hatred, or delusion arising in relation to obtaining sustenance, or else might involve mosquitoes, snakes, tigers, lions, bears, and other such two-legged, four-legged, or multi-legged sentient beings tormenting one’s physical body in countless ways. It might also involve someone coming along, seeking to slice away one’s hands, feet, ears, nose, head, eyes, or limbs.

When, with respect to these loathsome circumstances, one’s mind is able to remain undiscouraged, unconfused, and unshaken, this qualifies as “patience sustained by the body.”

Additionally, this may involve violent winds, blazing sun, cold, heat, rain, hail, or situations involving being physically struck. In instances where insentient phenomena torment and afflict the body so that even one’s entire body may be subjected to intense pain and yet one remains able to endure it peacefully, this is [physical] patience [associated with “outwardly-originating” phenomena].

Also, in those instances when there arise in one’s own body causal factors linked to changes in the sense realms—in instances when [internal] winds, bile, viscous disease-related fluids, or watery disease-related fluids generate the four hundred and four kinds of diseases—when in any of these circumstances the most extreme sorts of physical suffering arise and yet one remains able amidst such torment to endure it without reckoning it [to be a problem]—this too qualifies as “patience sustained by the body.”

PATIENCE SUSTAINED BY THE MIND

Among these [three types of patience], “patience sustained by the mind” refers to circumstances wherein one’s mind remains unmoving, free of turbidity, and free of confusion, this even when one is tormented and afflicted by those subjecting one to cursing, vilification, denunciation, slander, defamation, deception, or other sorts of disagreeable speech. This is what qualifies as “patience sustained by the mind.”

Also, when one is touched by the eight worldly dharmas: gain, loss, esteem, disesteem, blame, praise, suffering, and happiness—if the mind is not elevated by them, is not cast down by them, and remains as unshaken as a mountain—this qualifies as “patience sustained by the mind.”

Then again, [mentally-sustained patience] is also operative when, having severed all latent traces of hatefulness, one remains free of murderous and injurious thoughts, enmity-ridden thoughts, contentious thoughts, and accusatory thoughts, when one takes care to protect both self and others, when one's relations with others involve a mind imbued with kindness, when one's actions are conjoined with compassion, when one's mind abides in delight, and when one courses constantly in equanimity. These instances too qualify as "patience sustained by the mind."

PATIENCE SUSTAINED THROUGH DHARMA

Among these [three types of patience], "patience sustained through Dharma" is operative through focusing reality-based analytic contemplation both inwardly and outwardly.

In cases where it is invoked outwardly, this refers to instances of being cursed, berated, slain, injured, and so forth. For example, when one [seizes on the idea that he] is being cursed or berated, the sound of a voice and a word come into simultaneous conjunction and fail to be analytically-dispersed [through reality-based perception]. However, because [continuity of these phenomena are falsely imputed on events enduring only for the micro-moment of a] *kṣaṇa*, because the words involved are devoid of any intrinsic reality, because the sound of the voice is comparable to a mere echo, and because one cannot speak of any sequence of real meaning inhering in any of this, there is in fact no [ultimately-apprehensible] scolding or berating going on at all.

But, [even though this is the reality perceived by the enlightened], everyone else, the common people, engage in false discriminations and, based on that, become filled with of rage. However, if one were to realize the inapprehensibility of any intrinsically real nature in the word, the sound, or the meaning, then the mind would simply go along with it, would not be inclined to oppose it, and would endure it patiently in a state of uniform even-mindedness. This is what is meant by "patience sustained through Dharma."

Also, regarding any individual inflicting death or injury, one should reflect thus: "It is not the case that the body itself is doing the harming since, being devoid of mind, the body is the same as grass, trees, a wall, a shadow, or other such things. Then again, it is not the case either that the mind is doing any harming, for the mind is something which, [by its very nature], is non-form and hence

is incapable of engaging in or resisting physical contact. Hence, in terms of ultimate reality, there is no entity engaging in any killing or harming."

When one performs this contemplation, one does not perceive the existence of any killing or harming and thus becomes able to patiently endure it. This is what is meant by "patience sustained through Dharma."

As for the meaning of "inwardly-focused" ["patience sustained through Dharma"], it refers to invoking this reflection in contemplating "inward" dharmas, as follows:²³

"Physical form is comparable to a mass of sea foam. It arises from [the conjunction of] conditions. [It is devoid of any reality] because, [ultimately-speaking], there is no movement or action at all, because it is not self-generated, because it is empty [of any inherent existence], and because it is [a phenomenon existing entirely] apart from a self or anything belonging to a self.

"Feelings are comparable to a bubble. Perceptions are like mirages generated by the sun. Karmic formative factors are like the plantain [in their insubstantiality]. Consciousness is like a magically-conjured illusion and is something produced [solely from the conjunction] of conditions. [It is devoid of any reality] because, [ultimately-speaking], there is no movement or action at all, because it is not self-generated, because it is newly produced and destroyed in each succeeding *kṣaṇa* (micro-moment), because it is empty [of any inherent existence], and because it is [a phenomenon existing entirely] apart from a self or anything belonging to a self.

"Thus, in this situation, it is not the case that the physical form constitutes a self, nor is it the case that any physical form constitutes a thing belonging to a self. So, too, it is with [the aggregates of] feelings, perceptions, karmic formative factors, and consciousness. All of these dharmas are the product of conditions. If they are the product of conditions, then any [supposed] intrinsic nature in them is actually devoid of any [real] production at all. If there is no production of any intrinsic nature [in these phenomena], then there does not exist any ["being"] able to inflict harm."

When one contemplates in this manner, then one becomes unable to apprehend any intrinsic existence in any dharma, whether it be "inward-related" or "outward-related." This is what is meant by "patience sustained through Dharma." When one performs the contemplation searching for an inherently-existent nature anywhere

in the body, the mind, or dharmas, one immediately acquiesces in [the level of realization characteristic of] the unproduced-dharmas patience (*anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*).

This amounts to a general explanation of *kṣānti* pāramitā. The complete explanation is such as one will find in the Sutras. We present herein verses by an ārya [Nāgārjuna?—TRANS.]:

VERSES ON THE PERFECTION OF PATIENCE

Toward adversaries, close relations, and persons in between,
One is compassionately mindful, always treating everyone equally.
As there is no existence even in the causes of hatefulness,
How could one be able to hold hatred for any being?

One skillfully cultivates constant kindness,
Regarding beings as identical in substance to oneself.
When uniformly even-minded and free of any dualities,
How could one become enraged at any being?

The mind constantly forsakes and abandons hatefulness
And, many times over, generates cherishing delight.
Since the heroic stalwarts remain free of any obstructiveness,
How could one act contrarily to those abiding in the world?

In all places where there are beings,
One constantly seeks to benefit and assist them.
How then could one free of hatefulness
Be able to visit evil on other beings?

Even when encountering the eight worldly dharmas,
His mind remains entirely unshaken.
Just as if one were to blow on a mountain [to move it],
So too should one comprehend how well he has realized patience.

With a profound mind, he has abandoned all defilement.
Hence obstructive circumstances remain unable to stain him.
Just as when one attempts to smear empty space with mud,
So too should one comprehend how well he has realized patience.

He does not cherish even his very own body.
Nor does he covet even his very own life.
All of his adversaries remain entirely unable
To shake the continuity of his resolve.

With regard to all those sounds which one might find unlikeable,
With his mind at peace, he regards them as but mere echoes.
All words too are like supernatural transformations.
Hence the mind realizing patience is controlled by his own hands.