



Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Tibetan Manuscript.

Tibetan Buddhism

Śāntideva's Bodhisattva Vow

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

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| <p>8. May I be the doctor and the medicine
And may I be the nurse
For all sick beings in the world
Until everyone is healed.</p> <p>9. May a rain of food and drink descend
To clear away the pain of thirst and hunger
And during the eon of famine
May I myself turn into food and drink.</p> <p>10. May I become an inexhaustible treasure
For those who are poor and destitute;
May I turn into all things they could need
And may these be placed close beside them.</p> <p>11. Without any sense of loss
I shall give up my body and enjoyments
As well as all my virtues of the three times
For the sake of benefitting all.</p> <p>12. By giving up all, sorrow is transcended</p> | <p>13. Having given this body up
For the pleasure of all living beings,
By killing, abusing, and beating it
May they always do as they please.</p> <p>14. Although they may play with my body
And make it a thing of ridicule,
Because I have given it up to them
What is the use of holding it dear?</p> <p>15. Therefore I shall let them do anything to it
That does not cause them any harm,
And when anyone encounters me
May it never be meaningless for him.</p> <p>16. If in those who encounter me
A faithful or an angry thought arises,
May that eternally become the source
For fulfilling all their wishes.</p> <p>17. May all who say bad things to me
Or caus me any other harm,
And those who mock and insult me,
Have the fortune to fully awaken.</p> <p>18. May I be a protector for those without one,</p> | <p>And my mind will realize the sorrowless state.
It is best that I now give all to all beings
In the same way as I shall at death.</p> |
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- A guide for all travelers on the way;
May I be a bridge, a boat, and a ship
For all who wish to cross (the water).
19. May I be an island for those who seek one
And a lamp for those desiring light;
May I be a bed for all who wish to rest
And a slave for all who want a slave.
20. May I be a wishing jewel, a magic vase,
Powerful mantras, and great medicine;
May I become a wish-fulfilling tree
And a cow of plenty for the world.
21. Just like space
And all the great elements such as earth,
May I always support the life
Of all the boundless creatures.
22. And until they pass away from pain
May I also be the source of life
For all the realms of varied beings
That reach unto the ends of space.
23. Just as the previous Lords of Bliss
Conceived the enlightenment spirit,
And just as they successively lived
By the Bodhisattva practices,
24. Likewise for the sake of all that lives
Do I conceive the spirit of enlightenment,
And likewise shall I too
Successively follow the practices.
25. In order to further increase it from now on,
The intelligent who have vividly taken
The spirit of enlightenment in this way
Should extol it in the following manner:
26. "Today my life has borne fruit;
Having well obtained this human existence,
I've been born in the family of Buddha
And now am one of Buddha's children.
27. Thus whatever actions I do from now on
Must be in accord with the family tradition.
Never shall I do anything to disgrace
This holy, faultless family!
28. Just like a blind man
Discovering a jewel in a heap of trash,
Likewise by some coincidence
I have found the enlightenment spirit within
me.
29. It is the supreme elixir
That overcomes the lord of death;
It is the inexhaustible treasure
That eliminates all poverty in the world.
30. It is the supreme medicine
That cures the world's disease.
It is the evergreen tree that shelters all beings
Wandering tired on the roads of life.
31. It is the universal bridge
That frees beings from wretched lives,
It is the rising moon of the mind
That dispels the torment of addictions.
32. It is the great sun that burns away
The misty ignorance of the world;
It is the quintessential butter
From the churning of the milk of Dharma.
33. For all guests traveling the path of life
Who wish to experience the true happiness,
This spirit will satisfy them with joy
And exalt them in the highest bliss.
34. Today in the presence of all the saviors
I invite the world to be my guests
At the feast of temporal and ultimate bliss.
May gods, titans, and all be joyful!

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

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Atīśa's Pith Saying

[Atīśa (982-1054) was an Indian Buddhist from Bengal who was responsible for the second major transmission of Buddhism into Tibet. He was sixty years of age by the time he arrived in Tibet. He had a profound impact upon Tibet and was regarded by the Tibetans as a living Buddha. This famous pith saying shows the emphasis of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras and the doctrine of emptiness (śūnyatā).]

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

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

"Why?" they asked.

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

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

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

"Why?"

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

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



Portrait of Atīśa

Atīśa replied, "The highest skill lies in the realization of selflessness. The highest nobility lies in taming your own mind. The highest excellence lies in having the attitude that seeks to help others. The highest precept is continual mindfulness. The highest remedy lies in understanding the intrinsic transcendence of everything. The highest activity lies in not conforming with worldly concerns. The highest mystic realization lies in lessening and transmuting the passions. The highest charity lies in non-attachment. The highest morality lies in having a peaceful mind. The highest tolerance lies in humility. The highest effort lies in abandoning attachment to works. The highest meditation lies in the mind without claims. The highest wisdom lies in not grasping anything as being what it appears to be."

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

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

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

Creation of the Mandala Universe

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

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

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

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

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



is a red ledge; on which dance offering goddesses in various postures and colors, worshiping and making offerings. Vajra-decorated red gems stand on half moons in the outer portals of the gates and arches and at the inner and outer corners of the walls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



OM MANI PADME HUM

Hail the jewel in the lotus

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

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

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

The two syllables, *padme*, meaning lotus, symbolize wisdom. Just as a lotus grows forth from mud but is not sullied by the faults of mud, so wisdom is capable of putting you in a situation of non-contradiction whereas there would be contradiction if you did not have wisdom. There is wisdom realizing

impermanence, wisdom realizing that persons are empty, of being self-sufficient or substantially existent, wisdom that realizes the emptiness of duality—that is to say, of difference of entity between subject and object—and wisdom that realizes the emptiness of inherent existence. Though there are many different types of wisdom, the main of all these is the wisdom realizing emptiness.

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

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

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

KEY TERMS

<i>Vajrayana</i>	The “Diamond Vehicle”, path of Buddhism based on Tantric practice
<i>sadhana</i>	esoteric or Tantric practice
<i>mandala</i>	diagram or picture, often circular, used in Tantric meditative practice
<i>bardo</i>	transitional state of experience, especially the intermediate state between death and rebirth
<i>lama</i>	the Tibetan term for a guru or teacher; the spiritual “value” of the <i>lama</i> is indicated by the honorific title <i>rinpoche</i> (“precious jewel”)
<i>tulku</i>	“transformation body”, the Tibetan term for a person who is recognized as the reincarnation of a particular person.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is Tibetan Buddhism known as *Vajrayana* Buddhism?
2. Why is Nagarjuna’s thought considered the philosophical foundation of *Vajrayana* Buddhism?
3. What are the three principle influences which shape the distinctive character of Tibetan Buddhism?
4. What is the Yab-Yum image and what does it symbolize?