

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)**

He does not anywhere among the five aggregates
Seize on the existence of a "self" or on any sign of a "life."
Neither does he regard the body as belonging to some self.
Just so should one comprehend how well he has realized patience.
If one does not apprehend in any "self"
Or possessions of a self any sort of inherent existence,
One gains then realization of the unproduced-dharmas patience,
And becomes, among the Buddha's sons, the most serenely secure.

THE PERFECTION OF VIGOR

Question: Having already explained the pāramitā of patience, one should now explain the pāramitā of vigor (*vīrya*).

Response: This refers to heroically energetic strength in the substance and manifest aspects [of one's resolve] and to heroically energetic strength in the performance of karmic deeds and such. This is what is meant by "vigor."

In this connection, all bodhisattvas, from the time they generate the resolve on forward to when they arrive at the site of their ultimate enlightenment, establish every manner of good physical, verbal and mental karma, doing so in alignment with the factors conducive to enlightenment. It is this which qualifies as the pāramitā of vigor.

Also it is those instances of vigor not held in common with common folk, *śrāvaka*-disciples in or beyond training, or pratyekabuddhas which define what qualifies as the pāramitā of vigor.

THE THREE TYPES OF VIGOR

Vigor is of three types: physical, verbal, and mental. In the case of physical and verbal vigor, they rely on the prior initiation of mental vigor.

Briefly stated, there are three kinds of endeavors productive of karmic blessings. There is that in which the body is devoted to endeavors conducive to karmic blessings. There is that in which the mouth is devoted to such conducive endeavors. And there is that in which the mind is devoted to such conducive endeavors.

Also, where the body possesses energetic strength in its practice of whatever is beneficial to self and other, this qualifies as physical vigor. Where verbal actions demonstrate energetic strength in such endeavors, this is verbal vigor. Where the mind exhibits energetic strength in such endeavors, this is mental vigor.

THE BODHISATTVAS' THIRTY-TWO TYPES OF VIGOR

Then again, there are thirty-two kinds of bodhisattva vigor, as below:

- 1 – Vigor in preventing severance of the Three Jewels lineage.
- 2 – Vigor in ripening countless beings.
- 3 – Vigor in drawing in and adopting countless beings entrapped in cyclic existence.
- 4 – Vigor in making countless offerings to support and serve [the Three Jewels].
- 5 – Vigor in accumulating an immeasurable stock of roots of goodness.
- 6 – Vigor in generating an immeasurable reserve of vigor.
- 7 – Vigor in presenting skillful explanations [of Dharma] delightful to beings.
- 8 – Vigor in establishing all beings in serenely secure circumstances.
- 9 – Vigor in adapting to the various endeavors pursued by beings.
- 10 – Vigor in coursing in equanimity in the midst of beings.
- 11 – Vigor in taking on all aspects of the training in moral virtue.
- 12 – Vigor in developing one's power of patience to the point of abiding in mental pliancy.
- 13 – Vigor in acquisition of the dhyānas, samādhis, and *samāpattis*.
- 14 – Vigor in perfecting wisdom free of attachment.
- 15 – Vigor in perfecting “the four types of *brahmacarya*” [otherwise known as “the four immeasurable minds”].²⁴
- 16 – Vigor in generating the five spiritual powers.
- 17 – Vigor in creating one's own buddhaland based on the qualities present in all other buddhalands.²⁵
- 18 – Vigor in subduing all demons.
- 19 – Vigor in subduing in accordance with Dharma all non-Buddhist dialecticians.
- 20 – Vigor in perfecting the ten powers, the fearlessnesses, and the other dharmas exclusive to buddhas.
- 21 – Vigor in enhancing the quality of one's physical, verbal, and mental karma.
- 22 – Vigor in completing all endeavors one has begun.
- 23 – Vigor in wreaking destruction on all of one's afflictions.

- 24 – Vigor in escorting beyond [the sea of suffering] all who have not yet gone beyond it.
 25 – Vigor in causing those not liberated to gain liberation.
 26 – Vigor in reviving those not yet revived.²⁶
 27 – Vigor in bringing to nirvāṇa all who have not yet reached nirvāṇa.
 28 – Vigor in accumulating the provisions generating the [buddha body's] hundred-fold signs of meritorious qualities (*śata-puṇya-lakṣaṇa*).
 29 – Vigor in gathering in and integrating all buddha dharmas.
 30 – Vigor in roaming to the boundlessly many buddhalands.
 31 – Vigor in becoming able to see all of the immeasurably many buddhas.
 32 – Vigor in making all such types of vigor issue forth from the great compassion.

[The ability to carry forward with such vigor] derives from transcendent body, mouth, and mind karma, from abiding in a state in which one grasps at nothing and forsakes no one, from becoming invulnerable to being either elated or downcast, and from developing the inward realization [that all dharmas] are not produced and do not arise at all.

Perfection of these thirty-two dharmas is the basis for total development of purity in the pāramitā of vigor.

We also present here verses composed by an ārya [Nāgārjuna?—TRANS.]:

VERSES ON THE PERFECTION OF VIGOR

All those pāramitās of giving and the rest
 Are brought to their perfection by resorting to the power of vigor.
 Therefore it is vigor that composes the very root
 Of every bodhisattva's acquisition of a buddha's body.

Vigor is the means required in pursuing the quest for bodhi.
 I remain mindful that vigor is supreme among skillful means,
 For once a person abandons reliance on maintaining vigor,
 Then skillful means are unable to accomplish anything at all.

Were one only able to have some other skillful means,
 One would still have no goad spurring diligence in karmic deeds.
 Everything one does is accomplished through reliance on vigor.
 Therefore it is vigor that is supreme among skillful means.

When the mind by ingenuity's power begets some skillful means
Such thoughts are in fact born forth from reliance upon vigor.
Therefore no matter what endeavor one performs,
In every case, it is vigor that forms its very basis.

All treatises as well as all works of artful skill,
Reach perfection's "other shore" by resort to the aid of vigor.
Therefore in all endeavors one seeks to carry through,
Vigor is most pivotal in bringing consummation.

In every form of freedom and in every sort of wealth,
It is the vigorous person who succeeds in gaining them.
Therefore every circumstance involving happiness
In every case takes vigor as the cause by which it is won.

It is through his especially supreme practice of vigor
That the Buddha became leader of all the Śrāvaka-disciples.
Therefore this power residing in the practice of vigor
Reigns as the supreme cause, unmatched by any other practice.

The valiantly strong, supreme in the practice of vigor,
On each and every ground, though at the same station as others,
Always succeed in becoming the most supreme among them all.
Therefore one should always raise forth the practice of vigor.

When the Buddha resided at the foot of the Bodhi Tree,
It was on account of vigor that he awakened then to bodhi.
Therefore it is vigor that forms the very basis.
The causes for winning a buddha's body are as described above.

THE PERFECTION OF DHYĀNA MEDITATION

Question: Having already presented a summary explanation of the pāramitā of vigor, one should now explain the pāramitā of dhyāna, [the perfection of meditative discipline].

Response: As for "dhyāna," there are four dhyānas, namely:

THE FOUR DHYĀNAS OF THE BODHISATTVAS

[1] Possessed of primary ideation (*vitarka*), possessed of mental discursion (*vicāra*), and possessed of that joy (*prīti*) and that bliss (*sukha*) that are generated through abandonment, one courses in the first dhyāna.²⁷

[2] Having become free of primary ideation and free of mental discursion, and having become possessed of that joy (*prīti*) and that bliss (*sukha*) generated through concentration, one courses in the second dhyāna.²⁸

[3] Having abandoned joy, possessed of equanimity with respect to karmic formative factors (*saṃskāra-upekṣā*), possessed of mindfulness (*smṛti*), possessed of wise awareness (*saṃprajanya*), and experiencing blissful sensation (*sukha-vedanā*), one courses in the third dhyāna.²⁹

[4] Having extinguished both suffering and bliss, abiding in equanimity, possessed of purified mindfulness, and experiencing sensations as neither suffering nor blissful, one courses in the fourth dhyāna.

When with respect to these four dhyānas, one has abandoned [the goal of using them as means to gain] realization of the grounds of the Śrāvaka-disciples and the Pratyekabuddhas and has instead dedicated one's efforts in them toward the ground of buddhahood, this qualifies as [practice directed toward] dhyāna pāramitā.

THE BODHISATTVAS' SIXTEEN TYPES OF DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ

The Bodhisattvas possess sixteen types of dhyāna pāramitā which are absent among the Śrāvaka-disciples and the Pratyekabuddhas. What are the sixteen? They are:

- 1 – The dhyāna of not seizing on anything as real.
- 2 – The dhyāna of refraining from any attachment to delectably blissful meditation states.
- 3 – The dhyāna wherein the great compassion initiates changes in objective circumstances.
- 4 – The dhyāna wherein samādhi turns back [its focus].
- 5 – The dhyāna of generating spiritual powers.
- 6 – The dhyāna of the mind's capacities.
- 7 – The dhyāna of all *samāpattis*.
- 8 – The dhyāna of quiescent stillness within quiescent stillness.
- 9 – The dhyāna of immovability.
- 10 – The dhyāna of employing antidotes to abandon evil.
- 11 – The dhyāna of entry into wisdom.
- 12 – The dhyāna of adaptation to beings' mental actions.
- 13 – The dhyāna preventing severance of the Three Jewels lineage.
- 14 – The dhyāna of invulnerability to retreating or falling.
- 15 – The dhyāna of sovereign mastery in all dharmas.
- 16 – The dhyāna of analytic deconstruction [of entities falsely imputed to possess intrinsic existence].

EXPLANATION OF THE SIXTEEN TYPES OF DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ

[Meditative discipline] of the sort exemplified by these sixteen varieties comprise what is meant by “the pāramitā of dhyāna.”

“The dhyāna of not seizing on anything as real,” is cultivated to perfect the dhyāna of the Tathāgatas.

“The dhyāna of refraining from any attachment to delectably blissful meditation states” is cultivated to avoid attachment to one’s own bliss.

“The dhyāna wherein the great compassion initiates changes in objective circumstances” is cultivated to manifest skillful means capable of halting beings’ afflictions.

“The dhyāna wherein samādhi turns back [the direction of its focus]” takes changing objective circumstances in the desire realm as its object.

“The dhyāna of generating spiritual powers,” is cultivated to maintain awareness of the mental activity of all beings.

“The dhyāna of the mind’s capacities,” is cultivated to perfect the mind’s sovereign mastery of wisdom.

“The dhyāna of all *samāpattis*,” is cultivated to achieve supreme transcendence of the form and formless realms.

“The dhyāna of quiescent stillness within quiescent stillness,” is cultivated to achieve supreme transcendence going beyond the *samāpattis* of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*.

“The dhyāna of immovability,” is cultivated to reach the most ultimate limit.

“The dhyāna of employing antidotes to abandon evil,” is cultivated to destroy the ability of habitual karmic propensities to continue on into the future.

“The dhyāna of entry into wisdom,” is cultivated to transcend all mundane realms.

“The dhyāna of adaptation to beings’ mental actions,” is cultivated to facilitate the liberation of beings.

“The dhyāna preventing severance of the Three Jewels lineage,” is cultivated to ensure the never-ending continuance of the dhyānas originating with the Tathāgatas.

“The dhyāna of invulnerability to retreating or falling,” is cultivated through constant immersion in samādhi.

“The dhyāna of sovereign mastery in all dharmas,” is cultivated for the sake of reaching perfect consummation of all of one’s karmic works.³⁰

THE THIRTY-TWO TYPES OF PURITY FORMING THE BASES OF DHYĀNA

In addition, we have:

- 1 – Purity in thought.
- 2 – Purity in wisdom.
- 3 – Purity in [the nature of] one's inclinations.
- 4 – Purity inhering in possessing a sense of shame.
- 5 – Purity in the aspirations sustaining the mind.
- 6 – Purity associated with dedication [of merit] to bodhi.
- 7 – Purity in one's faculties.
- 8 – Purity associated with freedom from dependencies.
- 9 – Purity associated with not seizing upon anything as real.
- 10 – Purity associated with the generation and implementation of spiritual powers.
- 11 – Purity in exercising the capacities of the mind.
- 12 – Purity associated with physical renunciation.
- 13 – Purity associated with inward stillness.
- 14 – Purity associated with refraining from external activity.
- 15 – Purity in one's views regarding perceptual apprehensibility.
- 16 – Purity through realization of the nonexistence of any being.
- 17 – Purity through realization of the nonexistence of any life.
- 18 – Purity through realization of the nonexistence of persons.
- 19 – Purity associated with having nowhere in the three realms in which one abides.
- 20 – Purity associated with the methods comprised by the factors conducive to enlightenment.
- 21 – Purity associated with the illumination through which one abandons the obscurations.
- 22 – Purity associated with entry into wisdom.
- 23 – Purity associated with having no inconsistencies regarding karmic cause-and-effect.
- 24 – Purity associated with bringing patience to one's contemplations on karma.
- 25 – Purity inherent in realizing the wisdom fathoming all aspects of the womb [from which buddhahood is born].³¹
- 26 – Purity associated with the preliminary expedient means used to attract [beings onto the Path].
- 27 – Purity associated with avoiding obstructiveness within any site dedicated to the realization of bodhi.
- 28 – Purity associated with refraining from attachment to [dharma of] the Śrāvaka-disciples and the Pratyekabuddhas.

- 29 – Purity associated with the radiance generated when peacefully abiding in dhyāna.
- 30 – Purity inhering in the freedom from mental scatteredness associated with the samādhis of the Buddha.
- 31 – Purity associated with contemplating the behavior of one’s own mind.
- 32 – Purity associated with speaking Dharma well-suited to beings based on awareness of the karmic origins of each and every one of them.³²

Those sixteen kinds of dhyāna involved in dhyāna pāramitā achieve their purification and ability to succeed in reaching the ground of the Tathāgatas based upon these thirty-two kinds of purity. In this connection we present ślokas as follows:

VERSES ON DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ

Whenever those sixteen types [of dhyāna pāramitā]
Or those thirty-two sorts of purity
Correspond in practice to the perfection of dhyāna,
This is through being cultivated for the sake of bodhi.

When reaching the “other shore” of dhyāna’s perfection,
And abiding in skillful awareness of the karmic works of dhyāna,
The wise employ the five spiritual powers
To bring about invulnerability to retreating or falling.

Though the manifestations of form are endless,
One commands a penetrating understanding of their actual nature
While also using the supremely realized heavenly eye
To universally perceive all of the characteristic features of forms.

Although one may resort to the purified heavenly ear
To hear all sounds even from a great distance,
The wise realize through their penetrating understanding
That [the true nature of] sounds is beyond the reach of words.

As for all the thoughts in the minds of beings,
One observes the features of each one of them.
[Realizing] all such thoughts are like magically-conjured illusions,
One completely comprehends the nature of their existence.

As for the previous-life abodes of beings,
One is able to remember them in accordance with reality,
[While realizing] all dharmas are devoid of any past existence
And remaining aware of the [actual] nature of their existence.

One is able to go forth and visit *koṭīs* of [pure] lands,
 Observing the complete adornment of those lands,
 [Realizing] the features of the lands as like empty space,
 And completely comprehending the nature of their existence.

All of the afflictions experienced by beings
 In every case arise due to having chaotically scattered minds.
 Therefore those possessed of supreme wisdom
 Engage in extensive cultivation of all dhyāna absorptions.

THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

Question: The summary explanation of dhyāna pāramitā has been completed. One should now, according to the sequence, explain the pāramitā of prajñā (the perfection of wisdom).

Response: As for the pāramitā of prajñā, it is as already explained earlier [in this commentary] wherein it was set forth as the foremost among the provisions [required for the acquisition of bodhi]. I now explain its marks once again. [In brief], they are just as described in that earlier verse which stated:

Giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor, and meditative discipline
 As well as that which extends beyond these five—
 All of those pāramitās
 Are subsumed within the perfection of wisdom.³³

“That which extends beyond these [five]” refers to four other pāramitās, namely: the pāramitā of skillful means, the pāramitā of vows, the pāramitā of the powers, and the pāramitā of the knowledges. These four pāramitās are all subsumed within the pāramitā of prajñā. As for the pāramitā of prajñā, it refers to that single thought-moment of comprehensive wisdom through which the Buddha, the Bhagavān, awakened to [the true nature of] all dharmas as he sat beneath the Bodhi Tree. This is what is meant by “prajñā pāramitā.”

Additionally, [the perfection of wisdom] involves the following aspects:

It is unimpeded because it is independent of the body.

It is boundless because it is as vast as empty space.

It is equal to the unequalled because, in it, no dharma is perceptually apprehensible.

It is characterized by renunciation because of the ultimate emptiness [of all phenomena].

It is unconquerable because nothing at all can be gotten at.

It is completely devoid of any sentence-based propositions because designations themselves are nonexistent entities.

It is devoid of any aggregation [of subsidiary components] because it transcends all coming hither and going thither.

It is free of any cause because it abandons [the concept of] any creative agent.

It is unproduced because production itself cannot be established as existing.

It involves no going anywhere because it has abandoned coursing in cyclic existence.

It is free of any disintegration because it transcends beginnings and endings.

It is stainless because it cannot even be grasped.

It is free of any frivolous discoursing because it has abandoned all frivolous discoursing.

It is unshakable because it is identical with the very substance of the entire Dharma realm.

It involves no arising because it does not engage in any discriminations.

It is immeasurable because it has transcended all means by which it might be measured.

It is free of any points of dependence because dependency itself does not exist.

It is free of defilement because it does not even come forth into existence.

It is unfathomable because it has no confining boundaries.

It is spontaneous because it is aware of the nature of all dharmas.

Additionally, prajñāpāramitā is marked by the wisdom derived from learning as well as by accessibility through right meditation. As for the aspects of wisdom derived from learning, there are eighty kinds, namely happiness, zeal, and so forth. As for [the aspects of] accessibility through right meditation, there are thirty-two kinds, namely stable abiding in *śamatha*, and so forth.

Also, prajñāpāramitā is not freighted by any of the sixteen kinds of delusion such as that originating in past lives, and so forth.

The aspects of prajñāpāramitā have been set forth here in accordance with limitations [of space]. Were one were to attempt to explain them completely, one would find they are limitless.

**THE ADDITIONAL FOUR PERFECTIONS COMPRISING THE TEN PERFECTIONS
THE PERFECTION OF SKILLFUL MEANS
THE EIGHT VARIETIES OF SKILLFUL MEANS**

This pāramitā of skillful means is subsumed within the pāramitā of prajñā and involves eight primary categories, as follows:

- 1 – Skillful means related to the aggregates.
- 2 – Skillful means related to the sense realms.
- 3 – Skillful means related to the sense bases.
- 4 – Skillful means related to the truths.
- 5 – Skillful means related to conditioned arising.
- 6 – Skillful means related to the three periods of time.
- 7 – Skillful means related to the vehicles [for liberation].
- 8 – Skillful means related to dharmas.

THE SCOPE OF WHAT SHOULD BE EXPLAINED

Within these particular spheres, the skillful means pāramitā is boundless in its applications. Additionally, as befits the circumstances associated with whichever rebirth destinies and whichever aspects of cultivation are at hand, for the sake of bodhi, one augments one's own roots of goodness while working to train beings. What precisely should be done in each and every one of those rebirth destinies, what precisely one should take up in terms of practice, and how precisely one should proceed in each of these given circumstances—the great eminences have already explained these matters in detail. I shall now set forth only a tiny drop of what is set forth on these matters in the Sūtras.

SKILLFUL MEANS AS WHATEVER INCREASES GOOD AND STEMS FROM ALTRUISM

If there has been in the past or is now in the very present even the slightest bit of goodness in a person's actions and one is able to cause it to become ever greater and then is able to cause it to become immeasurable, this is a function of skillful means. If it is not something undertaken for one's own sake but rather is something undertaken for the sake of beings, this is skillful means.

THE SIX PERFECTIONS AS SKILLFUL MEANS

If one is able only by resort to *dāna* to bring about perfection in the pāramitās, then this a skillful means. In this same manner, one may resort to *śīla* as a basis through which one draws in beings. One may employ *kṣānti* to grace one's physical, verbal, and mental

karma and facilitate acquisition of bodhi. One may focus on *vīrya* to establish oneself in vigor. One may devote oneself to the cultivation of dhyāna so as to avoid falling away from the dhyānas. Or one may resort to *prajñā* as the means by which to relinquish [any attachment to] the unconditioned.

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLE MINDS AS SKILLFUL MEANS

One may cultivate kindness so as to become one upon whom beings can rely and to become one who will afford them protection. One may devote oneself to compassion so as to avoid forsaking those entrapped in cyclic existence. One may cultivate sympathetic joy so as to endure circumstances in which one does not delight. One may train in equanimity as the means through which to develop every manner of goodness.

THE SPIRITUAL POWERS AS SKILLFUL MEANS

One uses the heavenly eye to assemble the bases for acquisition of the buddha eye. One uses the heavenly ear to perfect the buddha ear. One uses knowledge of others' thoughts to become aware of the faculties of each being. One uses recall of past lives to gain unimpeded knowledge of the three periods of time. One uses sovereign mastery of spiritual powers to gain the sovereign mastery of spiritual powers unique to the Tathāgatas. Through accessing the mental aspirations of beings, one becomes aware of all aspects of their actions.

THE PARADOXICAL SKILLFUL MEANS OF BODHISATTVAS IN CYCLIC EXISTENCE

Having already achieved liberation, one may turn around and enter [cyclic existence] yet again. Even though free of defilement, one nonetheless becomes exposed to defilement. Having already successfully thrown down all burdens, one may [voluntarily] take them up yet again. Having ascended to the limitless, one may then nonetheless manifest signs of limitation. Having ascended to the highest level of supremacy, one may nonetheless manifest as possessing inferior capacities.

As a function of skillful means, even though one's realization corresponds to realization of *nirvāṇa*, one may nonetheless drop back down into the midst of cyclic existence. Even though one courses in realization of *nirvāṇa*, one nonetheless refrains from opting for the ultimate and final cessation.

Although one may manifest practice involving the four types of demon-related influences [involving afflictions, the aggregates, death, and sixth desire heaven deities], one nonetheless transcends every form of demonic influence. Even though one has already gained a penetrating understanding of the wisdom fathoming the four truths, and even though one courses in contemplation of the unproduced, one nonetheless refrains from entering the "right and fixed position" [which would make final Śrāvaka-vehicle nirvāṇa unavoidably certain].

Even though one may take up practice in the midst of the vexing boisterousness [of cyclic existence], one still refrains from actions rooted in latent afflictions. Even though one courses in renunciation, one refrains from reliance on practices which would bring about complete cessation of body and mind. Although one does course along in the midst of the three realms, one nonetheless refrains from practice dominated by worldly truth.

Even though one's practice is rooted in emptiness, nonetheless, one constantly focuses on the quest for the dharmas of a buddha. Even though one courses in the unconditioned, one nonetheless avoids opting for realization of the unconditioned. Even though one implements the six spiritual powers, one nonetheless refrains from ending all outflow impurities. Even though one manifests the refined comportment of the Śrāvaka-disciples and Pratyekabuddhas, one nonetheless refrains from relinquishing one's delight in and zeal for the dharmas of a buddha.

Such practices within the skillful-means pāramitā are those used as skillful means in instructing beings. All of these skillful means are artful methods dwelt in by bodhisattvas as they carry on their teaching endeavors. This being the case, one should become aware of them. In this connection, we present *ślokas* as follows:

VERSES ON THE PERFECTION OF SKILLFUL MEANS

They course in the bitter afflictions of animal rebirth,
Doing so in hell realms and hungry ghost births as well,
Undergoing in corresponding cyclic-existence circumstances
All manner of transgressions and evil wrought by beings.

Such accumulations of sufferings still do not obstruct
Their drawing forth deeply-felt pity as they abide among beings.
Thus the Buddhas proclaimed that all those bodhisattvas
Implement unimpeded compassion in the midst of all worlds.

Wherever any manner of goodness is contained in treatises
 Describing the many karmic works undertaken by others—
 Just such skills, arts, clarities and other sorts of matters—
 They pass on all those teachings, employing pleasing words.

Morality, wealth, learning, meditation, trainings, and the rest—
 They use these meritorious qualities to attract and teach others.
 Having drawn them in, they then cause them to continue,
 Teaching words of the Supreme Rishi so they abide in good paths.

They may manifest in the body of a woman in instructing men,
 Causing them to be subdued and thus accept the teachings.
 Or they may manifest in the body of a man in instructing women,
 Causing them to be subdued and thus accept the teachings.

Where they're not yet disgusted with defiled sorts of pleasures,
 They pity their having no path and cause them to enter the Path.
 Adapting to beings' ways, they use all manner of fitting teachings,
 And even in the most tormenting places still don't forsake them.

Where some might believe and understand nonexistence of self
 And could realize dharmas have no inherently-existent nature—
 For this sort of person who hasn't yet abandoned worldly dharmas,
 They simply provide these contemplations to turn them around.

Where some could believe and accord with karma and its effects,
 And yet are oppressed by countless circumstances of suffering,
 They should [be instructed] as they endure those bitter effects,
 So they will no longer find joy in being driven along by sufferings.

When encountering *śrāvaka*-disciple monastics,
 One may provide them safe places to cultivate stillness,
 Or may establish them in the path of pratyekabuddhas,
 Or may establish them in the vehicle of the ten sublime powers.

One may cause them to gain the right-enlightenment vehicle,
 To realize quiescent stillness, or even course in celestial destinies.
 As appropriate, one contemplates presently observed effects,
 And, as befits their capabilities, correctly establishes them in that.

In this fashion, from the beginning on through to the end,
 One is able to do whatever a great man would find difficult.
 Relying on all of those different sorts of skillful means,
 One forsakes every manner of like and dislike.

This vehicle is such as all the Buddhas do praise.
 It is graced with a hundred thousand meritorious qualities.
 It is able to generate in worldlings the ultimate form of pure faith,
 This because it explains the path of supremely sublime goodness.

In the vehicles of *śrāvaka*-disciples and pratyekabuddhas
 As well as in all vehicles in both the heavens and the world—
 In all cases, one uses the ten good deeds to bring about ripening,
 Employing them too to ripen people in the vehicle of humanity.

THE PERFECTION OF VOWS

THE TEN BODHISATTVA VOWS

Having completed the explanation of the pāramitā of skillful means, I shall now explain the pāramitā of vows. All bodhisattvas establish themselves from the very outset in ten great vows, namely:

1 – The vow to make offerings to and serve the needs of all buddhas without exception. This is the first of the great vows.

2 – The vow, in the place of those buddhas, to uphold the great right Dharma, to embrace the right enlightenment, and to comprehensively protect the orthodox teaching. This is the second of the great vows.

3 – One vows that, whenever buddhas come forth into any world, starting with their dwelling in the Tuṣita Heaven palace, proceeding on through to their descent into the womb, to their dwelling in the womb, to their first taking birth, to their subsequent leaving of the home life, to their realization of the right enlightenment, to their being requested to turn the Dharma wheel, and to their finally entering the great nirvāṇa—in all those circumstances, one resolves to go wherever they are, to adopt their practices, and to make offerings to them, never departing from them during that entire time. This is the third of the great vows.

4 – The practices of the bodhisattva are vast, are beyond measure, are free of admixture [with inferior teachings], are subsumed within the pāramitās, and are such as one skillfully purifies on the stages [of the Bodhisattva Path]. As for the general and specific distinctions, the identical and differentiating aspects, and the shared and unshared practices associated with the bodhisattva practices—one vows to teach them in accordance with reality and in accordance with the path coursing through the stages, teaching [all beings] the methods for cultivating the pāramitās, remonstrating with them, and passing on the teachings to them in such a way that, having received them, they will abide in and uphold them. The generation of the resolve to act accordingly is the fourth of the great vows.

5 – One vows to enter all realms of beings without exception, including those possessed of form, those devoid of form, those possessed of thought, those devoid of thought, those which are egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, and transformationally born—one vows to enter equally into all three realms, abiding together with beings in the six destinies of rebirth, going wherever beings have taken birth. One vows to ripen without exception all types of beings included in the sphere of name-and-form, causing them to enter the Dharma of the Buddha, doing so in order to cut off all of the [worldly] paths. Thus one works to establish them in the wisdom of all-knowledge. This is the fifth of the great vows.³⁴

6 – The realm inclusive of all worlds without exception is incalculably vast. Whether refined, coarse, laterally-structured, suspended, or arranged with beings living on flat terrains—one vows to enter them all identically and abide therein. All of different sectors of existence throughout the ten directions are interconnected in the manner of the net-like canopy of Indra. One vows to enter into each and every one of those sectors, employing wisdom to which one adapts in one's practice. This is the sixth of the great vows.³⁵

7 – In order to realize all lands as being identically subsumed within any single land and any single land as being identically manifest in all other lands, one vows to equally purify all of the incalculably many worlds, universally adorning them all while abandoning all afflictions. One refines the purity of one's practice of the Path and perfects the limitlessly numerous aspects of wisdom. Beings all entirely enter the supremely sublime mind state of the Buddhas. One adapts to the minds of beings and, in doing so, manifests for them in whatever ways will bring them delight. [The resolve to proceed in this way] is the seventh of the great vows.³⁶

8 – One vows to become of identical mind with that of the Bodhisattvas, doing so in order to assemble those roots of goodness not yet held in common with them, doing so in order to transform circumstances in ways identical to the Bodhisattvas while never abandoning the uniform equality realized by bodhisattvas, doing so in order to develop one's mind in a way that it may access the awesome spirituality of the Tathāgatas, doing so in order to gain undiminishing spiritual powers, doing so in order to become able to roam to all worlds, doing so in order to influence the discourse in the great [Dharma] assemblies, doing so in order to adaptively enter all stations of rebirth, doing so in order to perfect one's practice of

the inconceivable and ineffable Great Vehicle, and doing so in order to implement the practices of the Bodhisattvas. This is the eighth of the great vows.³⁷

9 – One vows to ascend to non-retreating implementation of the bodhisattva practices, doing so in order to cause one's karmic deeds of body, mouth, and mind to not be done in vain, doing so in order that, immediately upon being seen by them, beings will be caused to become resolved on the Dharma of buddhahood, doing so in order that, immediately upon hearing a single sound from one's voice, beings will be caused to develop wisdom, doing so in order that, immediately on generating faith, beings will be caused to have their afflictions transformed, doing so in order that he will gain a body serving beings in the manner of the great king of medicine trees, and doing so in order to implement the practices of the Bodhisattvas. This is the ninth of the great vows.

10 – One vows to achieve the right enlightenment and manifest the realization of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* in all worlds, doing so in order to manifest in every one of one's own hair pores the appearance of a buddha coming forth into the world, sitting at the site of enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma, and entering the great *parinirvāṇa*.

One does so in order to become able to utilize wisdom to access the great mind-state of the Buddhas replete with awesome spiritual powers, doing so in order to become able, in the realms of all beings, to manifest in whichever manner best adapts to their most profound aspirations, in whichever manner best adapts to whichever timing is appropriate for the appearance of a buddha to them, and in whichever manner allows them to become awakened and then achieve quiescent stillness.

One does so in order to gain that right enlightenment wherein a single dharma is realized as identical with all dharmas, and all dharmas are realized as nirvāṇa-like in character. One does so in order to become able with the creation of but a single sound to cause the minds of all beings to become delighted. One does so in order to manifest the great nirvāṇa even while still not cutting off implementation of the powers, does so in order to manifest the ground of great wisdom and to become established in all dharmas, and does so in order to become able to manifest universally in all worlds the mind-state, the Dharma, the wisdom, and the spiritual powers of a buddha. This is the tenth of the great vows.

Great vows such as these ten characterized by great zeal and great manifestations in the world comprise the foremost class of vows.³⁸ After one has fulfilled these ten great vows, one establishes *asaṃkhyeyas* of hundreds of thousands of other bodhisattva vows. Thus one comes to abide on the bodhisattva's "ground of joyfulness" (*pramudita-bhūmi*). This is what is meant by the pāramitā of VOWS.

THE PERFECTION OF POWERS

Having completed the explanation of the pāramitā of vows, we now explain the pāramitā of the powers. Generally speaking, the Bodhisattvas possess seven kinds of powers, as follows:

- 1 – The power produced through karmic reward.
- 2 – The power of the supernatural powers.
- 3 – The power of faith.
- 4 – The power of vigor.
- 5 – The power of mindfulness.
- 6 – The power of the samādhis.
- 7 – The power of prajñā.

As for "the power produced through karmic reward," [one may describe it in this way]: It requires the power of ten small elephants to equal the power of a single *mahānāga* (lit. "dragon elephant"), requires the power of ten *mahānāgas* to equal the power of a single *gandha-hastin* (lit. "fragrance elephant"), requires the power of ten such *gandha-hastins* to equal the power of a single "great *gandha-hastins*", and requires the power of ten great *gandha-hastins* to equal the power of a single "greatly powerful eminence" (*mahābalavān*).

It requires the power of ten greatly powerful eminences to equal the power of a demi-*nārāyaṇa*, requires the power of ten demi-*nārāyaṇas* to equal the power of a single *nārāyaṇa*, requires the power of ten *nārāyaṇas* to equal the power of a single great *nārāyaṇa*, requires the power of ten great *nārāyaṇas* to equal the power of a single bodhisattva who has already coursed through one hundred kalpas [on the Bodhisattva Path].

It requires the power of ten bodhisattvas who have already coursed through one hundred kalpas to equal the power of a single bodhisattva who has already coursed through one hundred thousand kalpas, requires the power of ten bodhisattvas who have already coursed through one hundred thousand kalpas to equal

the power of a bodhisattva who has already realized the patiences, and requires the power of ten bodhisattvas who have already realized the patiences to equal the power of a single bodhisattva in his last birth.

When [a bodhisattva] abides in a state endowed with this degree of power, he is able to walk the seven steps immediately on taking birth. It takes the power of ten of these bodhisattvas in their last birth to equal the power of that same bodhisattva when he has reached his youthful years. When a bodhisattva possesses this degree of power, he proceeds to the site of bodhi and gains the realization of the right enlightenment. After he has gained the right enlightenment, he utilizes power exceeding even that inhering in the hundred thousand meritorious qualities to bring about the perfection of the right and universal knowledge of the Tathāgata and but one of the powers, "the power to know what can be as what can be and what cannot be as what cannot be." When he has proceeded in this manner on through to the realization of all ten of the ten powers, it is this degree of power which constitutes that of the Buddhas, that of [some] of the Bodhisattvas, and that of but a small fraction of other beings who have gained this "power produced through karmic reward."

As for "the power of the supernatural powers," this refers to the four bases of spiritual power (*rddhi-pāda*). After those [bodhisattvas] have skillfully cultivated and implemented them time and time again, they are able to employ these supernatural powers in the training of beings. They employ the power of supernatural powers to manifest whichever forms, whichever powers, whichever sustaining capacity, and so forth as may be required to suit the occasion.

In an instance where particular beings should succeed in being trained and subdued by encountering a particular physical appearance, then they immediately employ just this particular physical appearance in manifesting where those particular beings reside, manifesting then perhaps in the form of a buddha, perhaps in the form of a pratyekabuddha, or perhaps in the form of a *śrāvaka*-disciple. Thus, in this very manner, they may manifest in the form of Śakra, Brahmā, a world-protector, a wheel-turning king, or in some other such physical form. If it be appropriate that they appear in yet another type of physical form, even to the point of manifesting in the physical form of an animal, this for the sake of training beings, then they manifest in just such a physical form.

Thus, if there be a very strong, arrogant, hateful, cruelly evil and self-important being who rightly should be trained and subdued by power of this sort, then [those bodhisattvas] immediately manifest just such power [to accomplish just this purpose], perhaps manifesting with the power possessed by a great powerful eminence (*mahābalavān*), perhaps manifesting with four increments of the power of a *nārāyaṇa*, perhaps manifesting with the power of a demi-*nārāyaṇa*, or perhaps manifesting with the power of one who is a full *nārāyaṇa*.

Employing this sort of power, they are able to pick up with just three fingers Sumeru, that king of mountains which is a hundred and sixty-eight thousand yojanas high and eighty-four thousand yojanas in breadth, doing so with the same ease that they might pick up a mango fruit. They can then toss it off into the worlds of some other region while still not disturbing any of the gods in the Heaven of the Four Heavenly Kings or any of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. In doing this, the powers of such bodhisattvas are not diminished in the slightest.

Additionally, even though this great trichiliocosm is vast in its breadth, [these bodhisattvas] are able to place in the palm of the hand everything from the water realms on up to the peak of existence, holding it there for an entire kalpa. Pursuing the path of the spiritual powers, they perfect the ability to manifest powers of just these sorts.

Thus, if there be an arrogant being of overweening pride, one who is prone to hateful rages and who is cruel, evil, and self-important, [then those bodhisattvas are able to employ their spiritual powers as the circumstance requires, thus being able to successfully] speak Dharma for them, thus training and subduing them, causing them thereby to abandon their arrogance, overweening pride, hateful rages, cruelty, evil, and such.

After they have gained the knowledge of how to invoke the bases of the spiritual powers, they freely employ this knowledge of how to invoke them. Thus, in an instance where there is that which should be invoked, they succeed in bringing about whatsoever they wish to bring about. If they wish to transform a great ocean into [the puddle formed by] the hoof print of a cow, then it immediately becomes just such a hoof-print [puddle]. If they wish to make a hoof-print [puddle] into a great sea, then they are able to immediately transform it into a great sea.

If they wish to transform the burning [up of the world which occurs at the end] of the kalpa into bodies of water, then it immediately turns into bodies of water. If they wish to transform bodies of water into a fiery conflagration, then they immediately become a fiery conflagration. If they wish to transform a fiery conflagration into a whirlwind, then it immediately becomes a whirlwind. If they wish to transform a whirlwind into a fiery conflagration, then it immediately becomes a fiery conflagration.

In this manner, if they have some [manifestation of spiritual power] which they have invoked, then no matter what they have invoked, whether it be a lesser, middling, or superior sort of dharma, having already succeeded in invoking it, it becomes such as no person is able to disturb or cause to disappear. This is to say then that even if it were Śakra, Brahmā, a demon, or someone from another world system possessed of identical dharmas, aside from a buddha, one of the Bhagavāns, there is no being whatsoever anywhere among all of the classes of other beings that would possess the ability to disturb [that manifestation of spiritual powers] or cause it to disappear.

On account of the power to invoke [such manifestations of spiritual power, these bodhisattvas] are able to speak Dharma for all of those beings brought into an attitude of reverence by observing all of those different sorts of supremely ascendant [manifestations of spiritual power which cause them] to jump up in delight [on observing them].

In their exercise of the power of spiritual powers, they invoke them with sovereign mastery at the highest level. They go beyond the afflictions produced through the influence of demons and enter into that very state of mind possessed by the Buddhas themselves. They [employ such powers] in the awakening of beings and in the accumulation of the provisions [for the acquisition of bodhi], bringing to bear the roots of goodness accumulated across the course of previous lives. [These powers are such as] the demons and the demonically-influenced celestial beings are unable to impede. This is what constitutes "the power of the supernatural powers" possessed by the Bodhisattvas.

As for "the power of faith," they possess such faith and understanding in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and the bodhisattva conduct as can never be obstructed or damaged. Even if an evil demon were to appear in the body of a buddha, it does not matter

which dharma in which he attempted to damage such faith, for the bodhisattva is possessed of such power of faith and understanding that [such a demon] remains utterly unable to shake the power of faith possessed by that bodhisattva. This is what is meant by “the power of faith.”

As for “the power of vigor,” in an instance where the bodhisattva invokes his practice of vigor, in whichever of those good dharmas to which it is applied, he succeeds in gaining in just such circumstances the power of enduring solidity of practice. No matter which practice he has undertaken, no god or person is able to shake him in that practice, damage that practice, or cause him to cease that practice. This is what is meant by “the power of vigor.”

As for “the power of mindfulness,” in whichever of those various dharmas his mind has become established, no extraneous afflictive circumstance is able to cause him to become scattered. Through the sustaining power of mindfulness, he is able to break all afflictions. Thus none of those afflictions are able to break or cause the deterioration of the bodhisattva’s mindfulness. This is what is meant by “the power of mindfulness.”

As for “the power of samādhi,” even in the midst of vexing boisterousness, he continues to course in renunciation [of worldly matters]. In any instance where there may be extraneous noise or conversations, his coursing in the first dhyāna remains unimpeded by the piercings of such noises. Involvement in wholesome ideation and mental discursion does not impede his coursing in the second dhyāna. The arising of enjoyable blissful states does not impede his coursing in the third dhyāna. His ripening of beings and accumulation of all manner of dharmas are never forsaken and do not impede his coursing in the fourth dhyāna. In this manner, he roams in the four dhyānas. In doing so, the evil opposing states encountered in the practice of the dhyānas remain unable to damage or undermine his practice. Although he does roam about within the dhyānas, still, he refrains from taking rebirth in those realms corresponding to the dhyānas. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva’s “power of samādhi.”

As for “the power of prajñā,” this refers to wisdom which remains undamaged even in the midst of all manner of worldly and world-transcending dharmas. In life after life, he is [so able to remain wisely guided by prajñā] that he need not resort to the teachings of a guru.

All sorts of livelihoods, all of the arts and skills, all of the abilities in the higher clarities, and even the world's most supreme, most difficult to perform, and most difficult to endure abilities—the bodhisattva has them all manifest for him as abilities he is free to exercise. In the case of those world-transcending dharmas with which one rescues and liberates beings in the world, once the bodhisattva's wisdom has entered into them, they become such as no group of gods, men, or *asuras* can overturn or interfere with.

This is what is meant by "the power of prajñā." These seven bodhisattva powers have only been briefly explained. If one wished to expound on them completely, that would involve a boundlessly-long discussion. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's pāramitā of the powers.

THE PERFECTION OF KNOWLEDGES

Having finished the discussion of the pāramitā of the powers, I shall now explain the pāramitā of the knowledges, as follows:

[The bodhisattva] understands the various traditions operative in the world, including those set forth in the classics and philosophical treatises, including printing, mathematics, and so forth, including the treatises devoted to the physical elements,³⁹ including the treatises devoted to medical prescriptions,⁴⁰ including the means for treating wasting diabetes, the means for treating insanity, the means for performing exorcisms in cases of possession by ghosts, and the means for treating other such pathologies, including the means for breaking the effects of poisonings associated with black magic.

Additionally, he knows how to write humorous works and how to converse in a satirical manner, these for the sake of causing people to be delighted.⁴¹

He knows how to establish villages, cities, parks and gardens, dikes, lakes, ponds, wells, floral gardens, orchards, medicinal plant gardens, forests, groves, and other such projects.

He possesses a manifest knowledge of the nature of gems as it relates to gold, silver, *maṇi* jewels, *vaiḍūrya*, alabaster,⁴² jade, coral, and other such precious things.

His knowledge includes such phenomena as solar and lunar eclipses, the stars and their constellations, seismology, and the oddities experienced in dreams, these as well as the physiognomic signs present in the body and its limbs and appendages.

His knowledge includes the points of practice related to the moral precepts, includes the dhyānas, the spiritual powers, the [four] immeasurables, and the formless realm stations. It includes as well perfected understanding of the other aspects of right enlightenment useful in bringing benefit and happiness to beings.

He understands as well the manner in which all worlds are created and destroyed while also completely understanding the developments arising as a consequence of their creation and destruction.

He also understands that it is on account of the accumulation of karma that worlds are created and that it is on account of the exhaustion of such karma that worlds are destroyed. Thus he understands how it is that, at a particular time, a particular world comes into existence and understands as well how it is that, at a particular time, that particular world meets its destruction.

He also understands the innumerable variations in the greater and lesser manifestation of the elemental phases of earth, water, wind, and fire.⁴³

He has knowledge of the most extremely minute particles, understanding as well how all of these minute particles come together and how all of these minute particles come apart and disperse.

He knows even the number of all minute particles residing in the “earth” elemental phase comprising the physical world, and knows as well in this same manner the number of minute particles abiding in the “water,” “fire,” and “wind” elemental phases.

He knows the number of such minute particles present in the bodies of all beings, the number of such minute particles present in the bodies contained in a single country, and knows the distinctions involved in both the coarse bodies and subtle bodies of beings, this even to the point of also having knowledge of the extremely minute particles which come together to form the bodies of those residing in the hells, among the animals, among the hungry ghosts, among the *asuras*, among the gods, and among men.

He understands how it is that the desire realm, form realm, and formless realm are produced and destroyed, even to the point of knowing the immeasurable number of great and small distinctions involved therein.

His knowledge extends to knowledge of the bodies of beings, including their karmic-action creating bodies, their karmic-reward experiencing bodies, and their form bodies.

He also understands the middling, lesser, and greater degrees of defilement in the physical "bodies" of particular countries and lands, this extending even to such [worlds] as have evolved in a lateral direction, those suspended in an inverted fashion, and those which abide on level terrains. He knows as well the distinctions involved in the net-like spatial inter-relationship [of those worlds].

He knows the distinctions and designations involved in the karma-creating bodies and karmic-reward-experiencing bodies. He also knows the distinctions and designations in the bodies of the Śrāvaka-disciples, the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Buddhas.

He knows among the bodies of the Tathāgatas, the right-enlightenment body, the vow body, the transformation body, and the primary sustaining body, understanding as well the physical forms, major marks, and minor characteristics which adorn their bodies. He also understands the awesome-light body, the mind-body, the karmic-blessings body, and the Dharma body.

He also knows with respect to the wisdom body the specifics involved in the making of skillful distinctions and in the carrying on of contemplative endeavors, knowing those matters associated with fruition of karma, including the associated mundane aspects and world-transcending aspects, including the matter of the establishment of the Three Vehicles, the matter of dharmas held in common and dharmas which are not held in common, including matters associated with the world-transcending path and the paths which do not bring about transcendence of the world, including matters associated with those still in training as well as those who have gone beyond training.

He knows with respect to the Dharma body the matter of its uniformly even equality [in all places] and the matter of its remaining entirely unmoving. He knows the matters associated with the establishment of the worldly truth and its associated designations, and knows the matters associated with the establishment of dharmas associated with beings and with non-beings.

He knows the matters associated with the establishment of the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Ārya Sangha. He knows with respect to the empty-space body that immeasurable body's [acquisition of the ten] universal bases, knows that which is not real with respect to these [various types of bodies], and knows the distinctions involved in the bodies associated with the boundless-space and other formless [absorptions].