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Summary

At the 1000th Birth Anniversary of Atisa Dipamkara Srijnan – Dhaka, Bangladesh 1983 Conference in Bangladesh The Buddhist Association of China, Peking, presented John Hughes with a copy of the Bodhi-pathapradipa, 1st Edition, 1978. This edition has the Bodhi-pathapradipa

in Tibetan, Chinese and English and is reprinted below.

There is a Translator's note which read as follows: After arriving in the Tibetan region in 1038 at the invitation of Yeses hod, ruler of the Mnahris area of Tibet the Ven. Atisa Dipamkara Srijnana wrote a number of treatises on Buddhism, of which the one that had a comparatively great influence and is well-known, in this concise Bodhipathapradipa. It was composed at the request of Byan-chub hod, the then ruler of Mnahris, when the author first reached Tibet, and in co-operation with Dge-bahi blo-gros, a Tibetan Buddhist scholar, he produced a Tibetan version of this work, which has been handed down to the present.

Although this treatise is concise in structure, it is ample in meaning dealing with the three Vidyas of Sila, Samadhi and Prajna, as well as the grades of progress in the practice of both exoteric and esoteric teachings of Buddhism, and pointing out the way leading to the attainment of Bodhi. It not only played an important role in the Buddhism then prevalent in Tibet, but also exerted a great influence upon the later development of Buddhism in that region of China. The Bkah gdams-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism was founded by Tson-kha-pa by the end of the 14th century in accordance with the theories expounded by the Ven. Atisa. Tson-kha-pa's "Ryan-chub-lam gyi rim-pa (The Order of the Bodhi Way) is actually an extension and exposition of this treatise.

In memory of the superior event of a portion of the Ven. Atisa's ashes returning to his homeland Bangladesh, the Buddhist Association of China prepared an English translation of this treatise to be published for the convenience of the Buddhist scholars of Bangladesh and other countries in the study of this treatise. It is hoped that through such Buddhist cultural exchange we may promote mutual understanding and friendly relations between the Buddhists of China and the Buddhist and cultural circles of Bangladesh and other countries.

BODHIPATHAPRADIPA

by ATISA DIPAMKARA SRIJNANA - Translated into English by Li Jung-hsi

Homage to Manjusri Kumara Bodhisattva.

Homage to all the Buddhas, the Dharmas and the Sanghas with a mind of Great respect.

At the request of my good disciple Byan-chu hod,
I compose this treatise of A Lamp of the Bodhi Way.

As there are inferior, medium and superior qualities, there are three grades of Persons, which must be differentiated to show their distinct aspects.

If a person, by some expedient method, aims at acquiring pleasures in the round of rebirth only for his own benefit, such a person is one of inferior quality.

If a person, being disgusted with the pleasures of the three realms, refrains from committing evils and seeks only his own Nirvana, such a person is one of medium quality.

If a person, taking his own suffering as an example, wishes to terminate other people's sufferings, such a person is one of superior quality.

For those unusual persons who desire to gain supreme Bodhi, I reiterate the expedient methods as taught by various teachers. Painted images of various Buddhas and relic containers should be

arranged, and flowers, incense etc., be offered to them. The seven kinds of oblations, such as mentioned in the Samantabhadra pranidhana may also be offered them. These persons should deeply believe in the Triple-Gem with a firm intention that they will never regress until realising Mahabodhi, and kneeling on the ground with their hands palm to palm, they should first repeat thrice the Tri-sarana. They should then cherish the mind of compassion towards all living beings and contemplate the three evils of existence, such as the sufferings of birth, death, etc., and on the living beings who are oppressed and troubled by the sufferings, and vow to save them from the various sufferings and the causes of sufferings, so as to cultivate the mind of Bodhi without regression.

In the Avatamsaka-sutra Maitreya Bodhisattva has extensively expounded the merits of cherishing the mind of such great vows. Either by reading that sutra or by hearing from a teacher, one may know the boundless merits of the mind of Mahabodhi, on account of this, one should foster the mind of Bodhi repeatedly from time to time. In the Sresthinpradhanasura-paripriccha-sutra the merits of cherishing the mind of Bodhi are also extensively explained. The following are three stanzas extracted from this sutra:

The merits of Bodhi-mind are greater than material substances that may fill up the whole universe.

If a man offers as many jewels and gems as sands in the Ganges to all Buddhas in all Buddha-worlds, his merits are not as great as the merits of one who joins his hands palm to palm to pay respect to Mahabodhi.

This last offering is the best, of which the merits are boundless.

Having thus fostered the mind of Bodhi, they should make efforts to increase it. In order to remember this mind of in future lives, they should also study the points of learning as taught in the Catur-dharma-sutra.

If they do not observe the Vinaya rules which have the mind of Bodhi as their substantial nature, they cannot increase their mind of vows. In order to increase the perfect Bodhi vows, they must try to observe with effort the Bodhisattva Vinaya rules.

Those who constantly observe the seven classes of Pratimoksa-samvara are competent observers of the Bodhisattva Vinaya rules and not otherwise. In the seven classes of Pratimoksa-samvara, emphasis is laid on Brahmacharya, and thus they are Bhiksu Vinaya rules.

These should be received from a good teacher possessing virtues according to the rituals as described in the Chapter on the Sila of Bodhisattva-bhumi. A good teacher is one who has received the rules in the proper way, observes them in a strict manner and is competent to transmit them to others with a mind of compassion.

If one tries hard to find a good teacher, but fails to do so, there are other rituals for receiving the Vinaya rules. For instance, in the Manjusri-alamkara-buddhaksetra-sutra, it is said, "I shall now explain the method of cherishing the mind of Bodhi, adopted by Manjusri when he was King Sunya in a former birth. In the presence of various Buddhas in his visualisation, he fostered the perfect mind of Bodhi, wishing to save all living beings from the round of rebirth.

From now on till the moment of gaining Bodhi, they should vow to suppress such emotions as hatred, anger, stinginess and jealousy. They should practice Brahmacharya, cut off all evils and

avarice, take delight in observing the Vinaya rules, and always follow the examples of the Buddha.

Without desiring to gain their own Bodhi in haste, they should stay to the last moment in the round of rebirth to save the last living being. They should purify innumerable Buddha-lands which are beyond thought and words, and make all those who repeat their names gain benefits and always live in the ten quarters.

They should make their bodily, oral and mental deeds pure, and never do an evil deed.

The cause of the purification of one's own bodily, oral and mental deeds is the observance of the Vinaya rules, which have the Bodhi mind as their substantial nature. Thus one should study well the three kinds of Sila, to which one must pay the greatest respect.

Therefore, by observing with effort the Bodhisattva Vinaya rules in a pure manner, one may get all the necessary provisions for gaining Mahabodhi.

Perfect blessedness and wisdom are the causes of one's own provisions for gaining Mahabodhi, and all the Buddhas said that one must possess the supernatural powers. Just as a bird that is not fully fledged cannot fly in the air, one who does not possess the supernatural powers cannot do anything which is beneficial to the living beings. The blessedness accumulated in one day and night by a person who possess supernatural powers far surpasses the blessedness accumulated in a hundred lives by a person who does not possess supernatural powers.

Those who wish to gain speedily the provisions for realising Mahabodhi must be diligent so as to be able to possess supernatural powers. This cannot be done by those who are idle and lazy.

Those who have not achieved Samatha, certainly cannot achieve supernatural powers. In order to achieve Samatha one must be diligent to practise it.

If the elements of Samatha are incomplete, one cannot achieve Samadhi even though one practised it for a thousand years with effort. Therefore, one must pay good attention to the elements, such as explained in the Chapter on the Provisions of Samadhi.

Then with one chosen object, one should fix one's mind on the nature of goodness. If by practising Yoga, one could achieve Samatha, one could also thus achieve the supernatural powers.

Without Prajna-paramita-yoga, one cannot clear away the various hindrances, and in order to break the hindrance of passions and delusion and the hindrance of worldly wisdom, one should always practice Prajna-paramita-yoga and other expedient methods.

It is said in the sutras that Prajna without expedience, or expedience without Prajna, is also passion and delusion. Therefore, Prajna and expedience should not be separated.

What is Prajna and what is expedience? In order to answer these questions, I shall now explain the differences between expedience and Prajna.

Besides the Prajna-paramita, the Dana-paramita and all other good provisions, the Buddhas have said, are expediencies.

It is by practising Prajna with the force gained by expedience, and not by practicing non-ego alone,

that one can realise Bodhi in a speedy way.

The wisdom of understanding that the Dharmas of Skandha, Dhatu and Ayatana are non-existing and devoid of an intrinsic nature, the Buddhas said, is Prajna.

To say that they were produced from existence, is illogical. To say that they were produced from non-existence, they would be like illusory flowers in the sky. To say that they were produced from both existence and non-existence, it then commits both the two faulty fallacies. To say that they were produced neither from existence nor from non-existence, then they could not be produced at all.

All things are not born by themselves, nor by other things, nor by both themselves and other things, and they are not born without a cause. Therefore, they do not have a self-nature of extrinsic substance.

If one observes all Dharmas, one will see that their substance and nature are neither one nor separate. Therefore, we know decidedly that they are entirely devoid of a self-nature.

In the Sunyata-saptati-karika and the Madhyamaka-sastra, there are many correct arguments for the establishment of the voidness of self nature of all Dharmas. As the expositions are detailed and complicated, I am not going to reiterate them here, and have only briefly stated the above points to facilitate the studies and practises of my school.

To practise the theory of non-ego from the insight that all Dharmas are devoid of a self-nature is to practise Prajna.

From the viewpoint of Prajna, one sees no self-nature in all Dharma, and, from the same correct observation, one sees no self-nature in Prajna too. One should practise this theory without differentiation.

We should know that the three Dhatus were produced from differentiation and have differentiation as their substance and nature. Therefore, to cut off all differentiations for ever is to gain supreme Nirvana. The Blessed One has said, "Differentiation is a great ignorance which causes one to fall into the sea of rebirth. Stay in the Samadhi of non-differentiation, which is like space and voidness". In the Aprabhedavatara-dharani, it is also said, "If the sons of the Buddha in practising the right Dharma, meditate on non-differentiation, they will be able to surpass the hindrances of differentiation and gradually gain the fruit of non-differentiation." After having understand according to the right theory of the holy teaching, that all Dharmas have no birth and have no self-nature, they should then practise the Samadhi of non-differentiation. By practising such Samadhi, one could gradually gain the Stage of Warmth up to the Stage of Extreme Happiness, and even the Bodhi of Buddhahood is not far beyond one's reach.

If one wishes to perform such functions as the elimination of disaster or the increment of happiness by the power of dharanis or to achieve the supernatural powers of the eight great Siddhis of the Talismanic Vase, etc., so as to complete the provisions for Bodhi with the Way of Ease and Joy, or to practise the dharanis as mentioned in the Tantra, one must perform manual and oral services to an Acarya in order to get his baptism, and offer him money and valuables and other offerings, as well as act according to his instructions, so as to make him pleased. As the Teacher is pleased, he will give the baptism of a perfect Acarya, which can purify all sins and make one a competent person to practice Siddhi.

As it was prohibited in the Sakkra-tantra at the time of the Buddha, the Brahmacarins should not receive the esoteric baptism and the wisdom baptism. If a Brahmacin receives such baptisms, he violates the Brahmacaraya Vinaya rules, as it is against the Buddhas prohibitio, and breaks the rule of the class of excommunication. He will certainly fall into the evil ways of existence and will not gain any achievement.

Those who have received baptism from an Acarya and have been initiated into the truth, may listen to and preach on the various Tantras, perform fire-oblation or make a sacrifice without committing any fault.

At the request of Ban-chub hod, the Ven. Dipamkara has briefly stated the Path of Bodhi, according to the teachings recorded in the Sutras and Tantras.

The Bodhipathapradipa is composed by the Ven. Dipamkara Srijnana and translated into Tibetan by him in collaboration with Dge-bahi blo-gros. This treatise is written at the Mtho-Idin Monastery in the Shan-Shun area.