THE LARGE SUTRA
ON
PERFECT WISDOM
with the divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra

Translated by
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Contents

Abbreviations vii
Preface ix
Chapter Headings of the Perfection of Wisdom in 18,000 Lines xiii
Divisions of the Abhisamayālāṅkāra xvii
Introduction to Chapters 1-21 1
Outline of Chapters 1-21 31
Translation of the Sutra 35
Appendix I 653
Appendix II 657
Numerical Lists 667
Index 672
CHAPTER 83

THE MANIFESTATION OF A BODHISATTVA'S TRAINING

(1. Problems of Training.)

Thereupon the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the great being, said this to the Lord: If, O Lord, all dharmas have nonexistence for own-being, how then should the Bodhisattva, who courses in the perfection of wisdom and who wants to train in the training of a Bodhisattva, train in the five skandhas, the twelve sense fields, the eighteen elements; in the sense fields of eye contact, etc. to: mind contact; in ignorance, etc. to: decay and earth; in the truths of suffering, origination, stopping, and the path? How should he train in dharmas which are with or without form, definable or undefinable, resisting or nonresisting, conditioned or unconditioned, with or without outflows, with or without blemish, mean of exalted, inward or outward, seen, heard, known, or discerned, past, future, or present, wholesome or unwholesome, determined or undetermined, associated with the world of sense desire, the world of form or the formless world, belonging to those in training, to the adepts or those who are neither in training nor adepts? How should he train in greed, aversion, pride, ignorance, wrong view, or doubt? How should he train in stinginess or giving, immorality or morality, ill will or patience, indolence or vigour, distraction or concentration, stupidity or wisdom? How should he train in discrimination or emptiness, in the sign or the signless, in wrong wishes or right wishes, in lovely or repulsive dharmas? How should he train in the defilements or their forsaking, in defiling or purification, in birth-and-death or the realm of Nirvana? How should he train in the Buddhaharmas?

(II. All things are mere words)

The Lord: A Bodhisattva, Maitreya, a great being who courses in perfect wisdom, and who wants to train in the training of a Bodhisattva, should train in that ‘form’, etc. to: the Buddhaharmas are mere names’. 1

1 Or: “The distinctive features” (rab-tu phye (dbye)-ba, prabhava-stha) of a Bodhisattva’s training”. In the Tibetan tradition this is known as “The chapter preached at the request of Maitreya” (Byams shus-kyi le’u). For a discussion of the significance of this chapter see my edition of the Sanskrit text in Mélanges d’Indiamisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou, 1968, on pages 230-233.

Maitreya: If, O Lord, this designation, i.e. ‘this is form’, etc. were apprehended as though it were an entity, on account of its being taken for the sign of something conditioned, how, then, could a Bodhisattva train in that ‘form’, etc. are mere names’? But since it is without a corresponding entity, is it not improper to say of this name even that it is a mere name, or to say of ‘this is form, etc.’ that it is a mere name?

The Lord: As something adventitious has that designation been added on? 2 to that entity which is the sign of something conditioned, i.e. when one says that ‘this is form’, etc. And since through that entity which is the sign of something conditioned that name, i.e. ‘form’, etc. is followed by the conviction, the assignment, the recognition 3 that ‘it is form’, therefore one should know also by this method that as adventitious has that designation been added on to that entity which is the sign of something conditioned, i.e. ‘this is form’, etc. What do you think, Maitreya, does someone perhaps have with regard to this entity which is the sign of something conditioned a notion, concept, name, conventional expression, or (false) belief?

Maitreya: So it is.

The Lord: By this method also, Maitreya, you should know that as adventitious has that designation been added on to this entity which is the sign of something conditioned, i.e. ‘this is form’, etc.

(III. The actual reality of named things)

Maitreya: If this is so, is then form, etc. actually apprehended by way of own-being (as a result of taking hold of) that entity which is the sign of something conditioned and on account of which there takes place the name, notion, concept and conventional expression, ‘this is form’, etc.

The Lord: ‘Form’, etc. is a name, notion, concept, and conventional expression with regard to an entity which is the sign of something conditioned. What do you think, Maitreya, is also the own-being of that form, etc. merely conceptual?

with the Yogacaras, and of which five different versions have been printed in E. Conze, The Prajnaparamita Literature, 1960, pp. 98-100.

This refers to back to A ii 47 (=P 219a, p. 219 above): “The word ‘being’ denotes no dharma or non-dharma. It is a term that has been added on (to what is really there), as something adventitious, groundless, nothing in itself, unfounded in objective fact.” Haribhadra p. 179 comments: ‘added on’ means superimposed, merely conventional.

3This is possible meaning for the locative.

4These three terms are not very well attested in the dictionaries. Our translation of the first follows Monier Williams. But since the Mahayasastra gives sampratispati as an equivalent of yan-dag-par riogs-pa, the meaning might also be “affirmation”. For the second, Monier Williams does not fit, and since in the Lakavatara Sutra upatisabhaga renders rab-tu riogs-pa, one might also translate as “apportioning”, or “distinctive attribution”. For the third, the usual rendering “experience” seems unsuitable here, and we follow Edgerton s. v. apratisamvedan.
Maitreya: It is merely conceptual, merely conceptual.

The Lord: In that case you can surely not assume that the real own-being of form, etc. has actually been apprehended when one takes up that entity which is the sign of something conditioned on account of which there takes place the name, notion, concept, and conventional expression that ‘this is form’, etc.?

Maitreya: If form, etc. are nothing but mere names, notions, social agreements, concepts and conventional expressions, is it not so that their own-being is then actually apprehended in the sense that they are nothing but mere names, notions, social agreements, concepts, and conventional expressions?

The Lord: What do you think, Maitreya, when ‘form’, etc. are nothing but mere names, notions, social agreements, concepts, and conventional expressions, can one then conceive of their production or passing away, of their defiling or purification?

Maitreya: No, O Lord.

The Lord: In that case, Maitreya, you can surely not assume that the real own-being of form, etc. has actually been apprehended?

Maitreya: Do then form, etc. altogether not exist by way of their own-marks?

The Lord: That I do not teach!

Maitreya: How, then, do form, etc. exist?

The Lord: Form, etc. exist by way of worldly social agreements and conventional expressions, but not in ultimate reality.

Maitreya: As I, O Lord, understand of meaning of the Lord’s teaching, the inexpressible realm exists by way of ultimate reality. But if that is so, how is it that that entity which is the sign of something conditioned and to which ‘form’, etc. has been added on as an adventitious designation, does not exist by way of ultimate reality? If that does not exist by way of ultimate reality, how, then, does the inexpressible realm exist? For is it not logical to equate the entity which is the sign of something conditioned and to which is added the adventitious designation that ‘this is form’, etc.?

6upáddáya, ne-bar bzu-nas. DR: by taking up which
7i.e. the dharmadhātu (DR)
8= all dharmas (DR)
9If no dharmas exist, you cannot talk of nonexisting, and also not of a dharmadhātu (DR).

10Tu.4 have: ‘it is not it... it is not other than it’.
11This addition is, I think, required by the context.
12This statement may, or may not, be connected with what Proclus (The Elements of Theology, ed. E.R. Dodds, 1933, pp. 109-111, prop. 123) says, i.e. ‘All that is divine is itself ineffable and unknowable by any secondary being because of its supraexistential unity, but it may be apprehended and known from the existents which participate in it’.
(IV. The three aspects)

Maitreya: When the Bodhisattva who courses in the perfection of wisdom proceeds in the skill in the subdivision of dharmas,13 by which modes should he follow up the conceptual subdivisions of form, etc.? The Lord: By three modes, i.e. 'this is the imagined form', 'this is the discerned4 form', 'this is the dharmic nature of form'; etc.

Maitreya: Which are they?

The Lord: Imagined form, etc. is the false imagination which has the own-beingness of form, etc. for its object,15 and which is based on the name, notion, social agreement, concept, and conventional expression 'form', etc. with regard to that entity which is the sign of something conditioned. Discerned form, etc. is the definition16 of that entity which is the sign of something conditioned as in its dharmic nature mere discernment, as a verbal expression which is conditioned by discernment and to which refers this name, notion, social agreement, concept, and conventional expression, i.e. 'this is form', etc. The dharmic nature of form, etc. is that dharmic nature of dharmas which is established whether Tathagatas are produced or not, the established order of dharmas, the realm of Dharma, the absence of own-being which is characteristic eternally and through all eternity, constantly and through all time, of that discerned form because of that imagined form,17 the absence of self in dharmas, Suchness, the Reality limit.

Maitreya: Of these three kinds of form, etc. which one should be viewed as unsubstantial,18 which one as substantial, and which one as neither substantial nor unsubstantial, but as derived from19 ultimate reality?

The Lord: Imagined form, etc. should be seen as unsubstantial. Discerned form, etc. should, because of its substantiality,20 be viewed as substantial, although it never occurs as an independent reality. The dharmic nature of form, etc. should be viewed as neither substantial

13Into the five skandhas, eighteen elements, etc.
14This is an attempt to find a word which covers the two meanings of vikalpiita intended here, i.e. (1) discriminated, (2) examined, compared, looked through to.
15Lit. Through the own-beingness: instrumentalis: Tab.-du. DR: Because the own-beingness of form is its object, and to be an object is one of the four kinds of cause. There is difference here between 'of' and 'by'.
16A more literal translation would be 'standing' (gnas-pa), in the sense of 'established repute or position'.
17Lau. vol. II 1. p. 91 translates: Eu raison de cette matière imaginative (parikulpiitaqvi). la matière pensée (vikalpiita) est éternelle et constante: c'est la vraie nature (tathatā), etc. - We have not understood this phrase.
18For: unsubstantial.
19prabhāviita: rab-tu phy-va. Five possible meanings of this term have been enumerated in E. Conze's edition of the Vajracchedikā, 1957, pp. 98-99.
20Tab: 'because of the substantiality of the discernment'!

nor substantial, but as derived from ultimate reality.

Maitreya: The Lord has proclaimed that to speak of 'form', etc. is to make a count of what is not-two.21 but since there is22 this conceptual subdivision of form, etc., with what hidden intent has the Lord then taught that 'to speak of 'form', etc. is to make a count of what is not-two'?

The Lord: What do you think, Maitreya, is form, etc. the nonsubstantiality of form, etc. or is it not?

Maitreya: It is not, O Lord.

The Lord: Is form, etc. then the fact that 'form', etc. is mere name, notion, concept, and conventional expression?

Maitreya: It is not, O Lord.

The Lord: By this method, Maitreya, you should know that what is imagined form, that is neither form nor no-form; and what is neither form nor no-form, that is nondual. It is with this hidden intent that I have taught that to speak of 'this is form', etc. is to make a count of what is not-two. What do you think, Maitreya, is the substantiality of discerned form that form on account of which there occurs the name, notion, concept, and conventional expression 'form'?

Maitreya: It is not, O Lord.

The Lord: What do you think, Maitreya, is form the own-being as well as the own-marks of the discerned23 form which results from the sign of form being imagined?

Maitreya: It is not, O Lord.

The Lord: By this method, Maitreya, you should know that also what is discerned form is neither form nor no-form; and what is neither form nor no-form, that is nondual. It is with this hidden intent that I have taught that to speak of 'this is form', etc. is to make a count of what is not-two. What do you think, Maitreya, is form the recognition24 of form in its dharmic nature by the fact that it is devoid of a self?

Maitreya: It is not, O Lord.

The Lord: Is, then, form the dharmic nature of form as it is thus in its dharmic nature?

Maitreya: It is not, O Lord.

The Lord: By this method, Maitreya, you should know that also form in its dharmic nature is neither form nor no-form; and what is neither form nor no-form, that is nondual. It is with this hidden intent that I have taught that to speak of 'form', etc. is to make a count of what is not-two.

21.e.g. at A i 27.
22Tab: 'is not'.
23prabhāviita: rab-tu phy-va. DR: The dharmic nature of form has the meaning of not-self. It means the state of being separate, that it is put or set apart (sur-du bshag-pa) from the other two by the fact that it is not (= that it is devoid of a self?). It is similar to (hos 'dein-pa): and one recognizes that they are separate.
(V. Comprehension, etc.)

Maitreya: In a Bodhisattva, who courses in the perfection of wisdom, who is thus skilled in the nondual mark of form, etc. who has avoided the two extremes and who progresses on the middle way, how should the mark of his comprehension be viewed, how that of his forsaking, realisation, and development?

The Lord: For the Bodhisattva who courses in the perfection of wisdom, who has avoided the two extremes and who progresses on the middle way, the noncomprehension as well as the non-non-comprehension of form, etc. that is his comprehension. The nonforsaking as well as the non-non-forsaking of form, etc. that is his forsaking. The nonrealisation of the forsaking of form, etc. as well as its non-non-realisation, that is his realisation. The nondevelopment of the path as well as its non-non-development which he carries out for the forsaking of form, etc. that is his development.

(VI. Nirvana)

Maitreya: What is the Nirvana of the Bodhisattva who courses in the perfection of wisdom and i'j thus endowed with this kind of comprehension, forsaking, realisation and development?

The Lord: Deep, Maitreya, exceedingly deep is the Nirvana of the Bodhisattvas, the great beings!

Maitreya: For what reason is it so deep, so exceedingly deep?

The Lord: It is because the Nirvana of the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, is both not Nirvana and not no-Nirvana.

Maitreya: How is that?

The Lord: The nonrenunciation of Samsara in the interest of others is not Nirvana. The nonrenunciation of Nirvana in one’s own interest is not no-Nirvana.

Maitreya: If, O Lord, the Bodhisattva in the interest of others does not renounce Samsara, how is it that through his nonrenunciation of Samsara he has not also renounced Nirvana? If the Bodhisattva has in his own interest not (completely)26 renounced Nirvana, how is it that as a result of his nonrenunciation of Nirvana he has not also27 renounced Samsara?

The Lord: Here, Maitreya, the Bodhisattva, the great being who courses in perfect wisdom, neither discriminates Samsara as Samsara, nor Nirvana as Nirvana. When he thus does not discriminate, they, i.e. Samsara and Nirvana, become exactly the same.29 And why? Because,

25 Or: 'his comprehension of the marks'?
26 So the DR.
27歧视ningly considers as: thinks, by way of discrimination, of S. as S.
28 So DR explains mhan-pas mhan-pa. The repetition makes it emphatic.—this is the Sakyapa doctrine: 'khor 'das dbye (separate) med.'
29 So the DR.

30 'Tak: 'does not fall away from Nirvana; and likewise he does not fall away from (= fall into?) Samsara'. Tc has 'does not settle down in' (na-abhinihitatt) in both cases. The Sanskrit, 'does not become alarmed' gives little sense, and seems to be a scribal error.
31 'The appropriation off'.
32 'Or lineages': dhuu = kula = gotra.
33 So T. S: 'beginnings'.
34 The three 'families' (gadh-bya rig pa) are: Mahāyāna, Hīnayāna, aniyata and therefore adaptable to either Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna.
to a lineage in which from the beginning they strive for an exalted goal, and they also reach that exalted goal. Others belong to a lineage where from the beginning they strive for a low goal, they reach just that low goal, and are quite contented with that. Others again belong to a lineage where at the beginning they strive for a low goal and reach that low goal; not contented with that, however, they further on strive for an exalted goal and reach just that exalted goal.

Maitreyya: If a person who belongs to the third kind of lineage, on having attained Arhatship, wants thereafter to eagerly strive after the supreme enlightenment, how can he (possibly) attain that without ever being reborn again? The Lord has not said anything about his rebirth which would (be necessary to) enable him to make further progress.

The Lord: I do not proclaim for him the kind of rebirth which is the effect of karmic defilements, but proclaim for the Arhat an unthinkable rebirth which allows him to advance to the beyond of Nirvana.35

Maitreyya: It is wonderful, O Lord, how sublime are the intentions of the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, how magnanimous are their resolutions, in that even just now they strive from the very beginning after an exalted goal, and in that they reach just that exalted goal! What, O Lord, is the state of mind of the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, which gives them their sublime intentions and their magnanimous resolutions?

The Lord: Without caring for the position of Sakra, or Brahma, of that of a world guardian, or that of a universal monarch, or any other kind of worldly achievement the Bodhisattva, the great being, because of his nonattachment to them and his complete freedom from them, dedicates his store of merit to the supreme enlightenment (of all beings); such are the Bodhisattva’s sublime intentions. But that the Bodhisattva wishes to make that ease of nonattachment, that ease of freedom, that ease of the Blessed Rest common to all beings, and therefore dedicates his store of merit to the supreme enlightenment (of all beings), i.e. by his nonrenunciation of Samsara, that should be seen as his magnanimous resolution.

Maitreyya: Wonderful and astonishing, O Lord, are the dharmas of a Bodhisattva! Wonderful and astonishing, O Lord, is the training of a Bodhisattva! The son or daughter of good family who wants to obtain36 the wonderful and astonishing dharmas of a Bodhisattva should raise his thought to the supreme enlightenment.

35The phrase can mean, “to Nirvana which is the Beyond”, or “to the beyond of the (Hinayanistic) Nirvana”. — Whereas ordinary people take birth as a result of their klesas, Bodhisattvas appear in Samsara by virtue of their Vow. A Bodhisattva’s body emanates from his spiritual cognition, and is sometimes called jhāma-saṅkīra (e.g. Lankāvatāra Sūtra 20, 3). For some useful remarks about the rebirth of Arhats see also Ruegg, JAOS 82, 1962, 327-8.
36Tab.: ‘train in’.  

APPENDIX II

VIII. THE REUNION WITH THE DHARMA-BODY

VIII 1. The Substantial Body.

Again, Subhuti, of those all-dharmas, which are like a dream, which are nonentities, which have nonexistence for own-being, which are empty of own-marks, which are perfectly pure through the knowledge of all modes, which are without outflows, the essential original nature, which has one mark only, i.e. no mark, should be known as the Tathagata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One. It is thus that the Bodhisattva, the great being, should train in perfect wisdom.

Subhuti: What again, O Lord, are those all-dharmas without outflows?

The Lord: The 37 wings of enlightenment, the holy Unlimited, the eight emancipations, the four perfect purities, the ten perfections, the ten powers, the four grounds of self-confidence, the three ways in which (the Tathagata) has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature which is never bewildered, the knowledge of all modes, the knowledge of the paths, all-knowledge—these, Subhuti, are the all-dharmas without outflows. It is thus, Subhuti, that the Bodhisattva, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.

VIII 2. The Enjoyment Body.

Moreover, Subhuti, when he has trained in perfect wisdom, when by the full attainment of just these dharmas he has known full enlightenment, his body always and everywhere adorned with the 32 marks of the superman and his 80 accessory characteristics, the Tathagata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One, demonstrates to the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, the supreme dharma of the Mahayana which brings them unsurpassed delight and joy, happiness and ease. It is thus that the Bodhisattva, the great being, should train in perfect wisdom.

VIII 3. The Transformation Body.

Moreover, having trained in perfect wisdom, having, through the full attainment of just these dharmas, known full enlightenment, the Tathagata, etc. in the ten directions, in endless and boundless world systems, during the whole of time, works the seal of all beings by means of a multi-form cloud of transformation bodies. It is thus that the Bodhi-