

Chapter Seven. The Ending

The Manner of Composing this Treatise

B3: The Wholesome Ending

C1: The Manner of Composing this Treatise

[VERSES 100~101]

His vision is completely and utterly pure.

His great compassion has reached perfection.

The bliss-gone buddha has shown the path, and says,

“I have tasted the flavor of the nectar I have discovered,

And I wish that, by the four principles,

And the four reliances, you will taste it, too.”

The Buddha possesses two meritorious qualities: (1) he sees everything in its utmost clarity because in his wisdom, the Buddha knows the true nature of everything in the world and see it as clearly as the palm of his hand; (2) he has a great, consummate, all-encompassing compassion towards all sentient beings of this world who have not yet understood the true nature of all things. In his *Commentary on Valid Knowledge*, Dharmakirti explains the nature of the Buddha from the two aspects, wisdom and compassion.

In contrast, what we ordinary beings see lacks purity, our vision like being affected by cataracts and completely obscured by them. Our compassion is also limited, conditional and not all-encompassing. In the *Commentary on Valid Knowledge*, Dharmakirti says, “The teachings that are spoken for skillful means arise from compassion, the teachings that are spoken for truth arise from wisdom.” With his

wisdom, the Buddha perfectly explains the ultimate truth of emptiness and the conventional truth of appearance. With his compassion, the Buddha provides the means for all sentient beings to obtain liberation from the ocean of suffering.

The Buddha has thus revealed a profound and vast set of teachings and paths to all sentient beings in the form of the nectar-like Dharma. When he attained supreme enlightenment, the Buddha said, “I have obtained the nectar-like Dharma, profound, peaceful, beyond conceptual elaborations, luminous, and uncompounded.” A means by which we can obtain this nectar-like Dharma is through the four principles and the four reliances discussed above.

Let’s reflect further on this key point. Although the present work by Mipham Rinpoche amounts to only about one hundred stanzas, here he provides one specific essential instruction. That is, the very flavor of the nectar-like Dharma realized by the Buddha and the eminent masters of the past can only be obtained by relying upon the four principles and the four reliances. Without them, unless one is already very advance in one’s practice, ordinary beings like us will have difficulties experiencing the flavor of this nectar.

[VERSES 101~102]

Although this nectar has now been shared,

In such age of degeneration,

Sentient beings tend to an opposite direction to the path,

Hence they can hardly taste it.

Having seen this, with pure intention,

And a mind of supreme devotion for the teachings, I wrote this.

When the causes and conditions are finally aligned, one can begin to receive and experience the flavor of the sublime nectar-like Dharma. This is possible because each sentient being has been endowed with the essence of the tathagatas, and the Buddha

has equally shared the teachings with all sentient beings. Yet, whether or not one can actually obtain the Dharma depends on one's karmic connections. To illustrate, I have now provided an explanation of Mipham Rinpoche's teachings to all of you. Yet, will everyone equally gain from it the great benefits that are possible? Not necessarily. Those who have confidence, virtuous roots, and a sincere desire for this teaching, could greatly benefit from these teachings in this life as well as in all future lifetimes. Yet others may not only be unable to gain confidence, but may even develop a mistaken understanding from it. Likewise, although all sentient beings are fundamentally equal and have equally been exposed to the Buddha's teachings, individual results could vary greatly depending on each of their own conditions.

This is especially true in this modern age that is marked by the five types of degeneration. Although the Buddha's nectar-like sublime teachings are present, individuals may still run in the opposite direction. Because they are not seeking the nectar of the Buddhadharma by means of the four reliances and the four principles, they are unable to obtain the right result and to experience the truth of genuine Buddhadharma. Indeed, this is not a uniquely current phenomenon. It also prevailed soon after the Buddha's parinirvana. In the final part of his *Abhidharmakosa*, Vasubandhu explains that when the bright eye of the world closed, that is, when the Buddha entered nirvana and the majority of the sages who witnessed the authentic Dharma, such as Mahamaudgalyayana and Shariputra, also passed into nirvana, audacious individuals who had not really understood the truth came out to undermine the Buddha's teachings with their own incorrect views.

This was true even when Vasubandhu, who were called "second buddha", were alive, let alone in today's age of degeneration. It is just as the Buddha said in the Mahayana scripture, *The Surangama Sutra*, that in the age of final Dharma, there will be as many wicked masters spreading their doctrines as the grains of sand in the Ganges River. It is indeed so, for today, masters who give teachings that accord with

the authentic Dharma and valid reasonings are as rare as the stars seen during daytime while those who spread erroneous paths and erroneous conceptual thoughts are many. In this age, regrettably, the vast majority of people have not tasted the principles of the two truths proclaimed by the Buddha.

When Mipham Rinpoche saw the lamentable circumstances in this age of degeneration, a pure intention and desire naturally arose in his heart to benefit all sentient beings. Having observed that in this age that so many are completely unable to understand that the Buddha is the one with valid knowledge and how genuine faith in Buddhism can arise through the four principles and the four reliances, he engendered an uncontainable great compassion for all sentient beings. At the same time, he had a sincere feeling of reverence, and supreme devotion for the Buddhadharma. With his pure intention and with a respectful mind, Mipham Rinpoche composed *The Sword of Wisdom for Thoroughly Ascertaining Reality*.

We should similarly adopt such an attitude in studying this work. When I saw so many people relied not on the teaching but on individuals, I felt the urgency to introduce this work to all Buddhists as soon as I can. I know it would not benefit everyone but I hope it will have an impact on many people. I also have a respectful mind toward the Buddhadharma and know how rare and how precious it is. With this in mind, I want to share the teaching on this treatise. I hope everyone would recognize that this treatise is very precious and that everyone should study this treatise with a compassionate mind towards all sentient beings. When you have understood this treatise and when you have the opportunity, I urge you to share this precious teaching with everyone. I am certain that this sublime treatise by Mipham Rinpoche will bring an endless stream of benefits to a great many people.

The Dedication of this Virtuous Deed

C2: The Dedication of this Virtuous Deed

[VERSE 103]

By the merit of this concise explanation

Of the doctrines arising from immaculate wisdom

That is born of reflection,

May all beings attain the fruition of Manjushri.

The wisdom born of reflection through the detailed observations explained above is free from any stain. Ordinary people of the world write commentaries, engage in translations, compose new works, and have published many books. However, they do so with different goals in their minds, and could have a selfish intention. For example, during the short spans of their lifetimes, some people engage in these activities for the sake of becoming famous, while others in order to earn money, and so on. But here, as Mipham Rinpoche says, the doctrines expounded in this work arise from the immaculate wisdom born of reflection, and have no such faults.

The content of this work is not very lengthy, its texts being rather condensed and having only one hundred and four stanzas. As such, it is known as a “concise explanation”. Still, it includes all of the Buddha’s teachings, and covers the vast number of scriptures in the sutrayana and tantrayana traditions. Here, the author dedicates the merit of composing this work for the benefit of all living beings so that they will eventually attain the fruition of Manjushri.

There are unimaginable merits in merely hearing the name of Manjushri, let alone in attaining his fruition. In my *History of Mount Wutai*, I provided a short explanation of the merits of hearing Manjushri’s name as well as the merits of chanting Manjushri’s

mantra.

A lay practitioner once asked me online: “You presented so many of Manjushri’s merits but what do we do if everyone only prays to Manjushri without studying other teachings?” I replied: “I don’t believe this will happen, for although Manjushri’s merits are indeed great, the predispositions of living beings are all different. As such it is unlikely that all sentient beings would only learn the teachings of Manjushri.” I then continued with a metaphor. “Take, for example, a person who does commercials for a Mitsubishi automobile. Although he or she may say that such a car possesses such and such good qualities, we should not worry that everyone will only buy a Mitsubishi. The commercial may be completely accurate and the car may indeed be a good car. Still, some people will be unwilling to buy it and opt for another brand. Similarly, all individuals have different predispositions and even if I were to praise Manjushri’s and Avalokitesvara’s merits equally, faith in Manjushri will arise in some individuals and faith in Avalokitesvara will arise in others. Therefore, even though we promote the merits of chanting a buddha’s name, we need not be worried whether other buddhas may also have sentient beings to liberate or not.” As people begin to engage in listening and reflection, some may be troubled by these aspects. There is no need to be concerned.

Mipham Rinpoche was commonly acknowledged in many works as a manifestation of Manjushri. Yet, it seems that in many of his writings, he paid homage to Manjushri as his deity. And also in his dedications, he often expressed the wish for all sentient beings to obtain the same fruition as Manjushri. Those who have read Mipham Rinpoche’s biography will know that he had an uncommon connection with Manjushri all his various lifetimes. This is also true for our guru, His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, who often paid homage to Manjushri, and who, in his dedications of merit, often expressed the wish for all sentient beings to obtain the same fruition as Manjushri.

The Perfection of Composing this Treatise

A3: The Perfection of Composing this Treatise

[VERSE 104]

Thanks to the sun of Manjushri's speech,

The lotus of my mind blossoms with devotion.

As these honey drops of excellent explanation flows therefrom,

May they bring joy to the bees of good fortune.

In writing *The Sword of Wisdom for Thoroughly Ascertaining Reality*, Mipham Rinpoche received Manjushri's empowerment and described it as a radiant sun. Relying on the sun's radiance, the lotus of his mind blossomed with devotion. Just as a lotus can only blossom when it is exposed to sunlight, the lotus of one's mind can only blossom with the aid of the three kinds of faith and the blessings from buddhas and bodhisattvas.

With the opening of the lotus of his mind, valuable teachings flew out like the honey drops of the lotus. Mipham Rinpoche wishes all bees endowed with good fortune — those sentient beings who have an auspicious connection with the Mahayana in this or previous lifetimes— would naturally gather and partake of this honey with joy.

Here, Mipham Rinpoche uses this lively metaphor to illustrate that those whoever obtains Manjushri's empowerment will naturally awaken to the mystery or the nature of one's mind. This individual will in turn be able to give many excellent teachings to benefit other sentient beings, gathering swarms of disciples with karmic connections to him or her side. This is like a lotus flower which blossoms with the sun, its stamens producing the flower's pollen, attracting bees from everywhere to naturally gather there.

As followers, we must have sincere faith in Manjushri and pray to him often. When the two necessary conditions, Manjushri's blessing and our devotion, are met, wisdom will arise. As wisdom arises, one will be able to speak the Dharma eloquently and fluently. It will then no longer be necessary to strenuously memorize and chant every day. Instead, we will be like our guru His Holiness who carried out his practice every day without memorizing and reading books. But when he taught the Dharma, words of wisdom flowed naturally out of his mouth. His Holiness also mentioned this in his songs of realization, saying that without any effort and without the help of any knowledge or conceptual thoughts obtained from hard practice, the hidden treasures of wisdom manifested spontaneously in his mind. He was able to provide benefits to sentient beings without any additional preparation.

Dharma teachers are often delighted when someone approaches them and ask to be a disciple. After offering to accept them and teach them the Dharma, these teachers are sometimes very disappointed when their students abandon their studies. There is no need to feel this way. If you have truly shared your wisdom and have met the supreme conditions for teaching the Buddhadharma, disciples from all corners of the earth will naturally gather around you.

Therefore, when His Holiness was alive, he was not afraid of having no disciples at all. Quite the contrary, everyone was concerned that there were too many people around him as a result of his empowerment by Manjushri and the lineage masters. I believe that it is essential that one prays to Manjushri. Just to be clear, there is no difference when it comes to their nature regardless of one's chosen deity. Still, I believe that to improve your memory and other meritorious qualities such as your intelligence to distinguish between good and bad choices, you would need the empowerment of Manjushri, the deity of wisdom. For this reason, we should chant Manjushri's mantra "*Om a ra pa ca na dhi*" as often as we can.

I had meant to compose *The Sword of Wisdom for Thoroughly Ascertaining Reality*. Recently, upon the request made by the learned Lhagsam Tenpa Gyaltsen, I, Jamphel Gyepa (Mipham Rinpoche), wrote it in a single day on the twenty-ninth day of the third month of the Sakyong year (i.e. Wood Bird, 1885). May all be auspicious! There are one hundred and four stanzas. How excellent!

According to Mipham Rinpoche's biography, Lhagsam Tenpa Gyaltsen did not appear to be an exceptional figure among all his disciples. But since Mipham Rinpoche recognized him as a learned scholar, he must have indeed been exceptional. Following Mipham Rinpoche's instructions, he wrote *The Sun Illuminating the Buddha's Teaching: A Commentary to the Sword of Wisdom for Thoroughly Ascertaining Reality*. During my teaching, I have also used his commentary as one of the main references.

I am extremely pleased that I have now concluded the commentary on this treatise. Although the treatise only amounts to one hundred and four stanzas, Mipham Rinpoche's instructions are exceptional and would greatly benefit everyone in this life and in all future lifetimes. Mipham Rinpoche completed the present work in a single day. I wonder how long it would take us to commit it to memory. I hope that you will all read it always and refer to it in your lives.

With the merit that comes from presenting this great work, may all great masters from all ten directions have long and productive lives in this world, may the Buddhadharma prosper more and more day after day, and may all sentient beings obtain both the temporary and the ultimate benefits!