

The Principle and Practice of Mahayana Buddhism

Primary Points of The Awakening of Faith

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Study Outline

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the of this work is:

- To explain the principle and practice of Mahayana Buddhism
- To rid practitioners of adherence to false doctrines
- To unfold and explain the true path
- To awaken faith and wipe out wrong habits of greed, anger, and delusion
- To encourage the orthodox practice of *Dhyana* (concentration)
- To promote the opportunity common people may mentally benefit by the study of meditation

CHAPTER 2

IGNORANCE AS THE SOURCE OF PERSONALITY¹

Personal within the Universal – Recognizing the reality of the Universal Mind²

Ignorance

- Ignorance is the first step of the Twelve Links of the Chain of Causation
- From Ignorance all mental processes arise

¹ Personality is a synonym for Personal Mind, Mind-essence for Universal Mind

² Although the text does not state it explicitly, Chapters 2 – 6 are descriptions of the Five Ranks

- Ignorance keeps people in bondage by its constant succession of confused subjective states
- Ignorance is used in two senses: mental process arises from within **I**gnorance; **i**gnorance originates in the physical organism
- On account of unenlightenment habits are fixed, karma accumulated, and the distinction is created between that which apprehends and that which is apprehended

Enlightenment

- Enlightenment is realization of one's own Mind-essence
- Enlightenment can not be accumulated but only discovered because it is Mind-essence itself
- Mind-essence is universal and eternal... forever calm and tranquil. Ignorance... in its blindness is oblivious of pure enlightenment
- People hold three things in fear and dread: Ignorance, personality, and suffering. Against those three Buddhism arrays Wisdom, Buddhahood, and Nirvana. They are the ultimate principles of Tathagata.

CHAPTER 3

MIND-ESSENCE AS MANIFESTING PERSONALITY

Universal within the Personal – Establishing an intuitive engagement with the Universal Mind

To nonthinking minds, personality appears as a conscious entity emerging... and having relations with the external world that is considered real. This will now be shown to be an illusion of the mind itself.

Ālayavijñāna Storehouse Consciousness, also known as the Universal Mind, in its Essential Nature is pure and immaculate, but never loses nor suffers the destruction of karma.

The three domains of thought:

- External world of sensual experience: when the mind is quieted, the multiplicities of things disappear.
- The mind world of thought and consciousness builds up and clings to the products of its own mental activities.
- The inner world of egoism (selfness): The truth of the ego-self is that it is wholly mind-made and arises from ignorance and unenlightenment.

In personality we may distinguish two aspects of Mind:

- Mind as the manifested in the changing world of appearances
- Mind in its ultimate nature as Essence and Emptiness

CHAPTER 4

MIND-ESSENCE AS EMANCIPATION OF PERSONALITY

Arriving in the Personal – Attaining an open and intimate relationship with the Universal Mind

Mind-essence in its aspect of Enlightenment manifests in two kinds of emancipating activities: Wisdom and Compassion

Activities pertaining to Wisdom:

- Employment of skillful means that awakens faith
- False imaginations are avoided or dissipated
- True knowledge is sought after
- Aspiration for Enlightenment is quickened
- Discipline of the True Path is undertaken

Activities pertaining to Compassion:

- Spiritual states of Bodhisattva-hood manifest for the sake of sentient beings
- Mind-essence as Tathagata-womb is the source of immeasurable manifestations of Love
- Spiritual benefits are accomplished in all beings

Annihilation does not mean ending of all mentation but the ending of the discriminating function.

It is only when both reason and cause are present that Enlightenment can be realized.

The six progressive stages of emancipation:

- Getting rid of defilement caused by attachment to agreeable things
- Getting rid of defilement caused by discriminations and comparisons
- Getting rid of defilement caused by dependence on the thinking mind
- Getting rid of defilement caused by dependence on material things and conditions
- Getting rid of defilement caused by dependence on mental notions

- Getting rid of defilement caused by dependence on the “will to live.”

All beings since the dawning of their first aspiration till the final attainment of Buddhahood are sheltered and protected by the guardianship of all of the Buddhas.

CHAPTER 5

THE ONENESS OF MIND-ESSENCE AND PERSONALITY

Attainment in both Universal and Personal – The Personal and Universal Minds intimately communicate.

Mind-essence, *Ālayavijñāna*, and Universal Mind are synonyms.

The all-conserving *Ālayavijñāna*'s all pure and immaculate face is defiled by the age-old accumulation of karma from which a system of minds evolves. The principle under which this system of mind has evolved is the general principle of individuation also known as Ignorance

The following three minds issue from the *Ālayavijñāna*:

- Intuitive Mind (*manas*) that is dependent on the *Ālayavijñāna* but is touch with the lower finite minds.
- The intellectual, conscious, and discriminating mind (*manovijñāna*)
- The five sense minds (*vijñānas*)

Integration

- It is on account of confused subjectivity that the mind begins to discriminate.
- The inconceivable activity of integration harmonizes, unifies, and emancipates oneness of Essence and Potentiality.
- True selflessness means that in Essence personality is undifferentiated from Essence.

Manas

- With the assistance of the intuitive mind (*manas*), the intellectual mind is free to devote itself to the attainment of true knowledge

Bodhisattvas

- Disciples and lower Bodhisattvas faintly recognize the inconceivable activity understanding the external world is only a reflected shadow of their own minds.
- Realized Bodhisattvas understand the inner world of potentiality that is boundless and inexhaustible.
- Mind-essence can manifest itself in a world of corporeal forms because the real nature of mind is the same as the real nature of matter.
- When highest Bodhisattvas come to a realization of the inconceivable Oneness, it is not personality's realization of Tathagata; it is Tathagata's contemplation of itself. As a manifestation of Mind-essence, personality is Mind-essence.

CHAPTER 6

THE PRINCIPLE OF MIND-ESSENCE IN THE UNITARY PRINCIPLE OF TATHAGATA

Attainment in both Universal and Personal – The Personal and Universal Minds act in unobstructed harmony

- The Three Bodies of Buddha
- In its significance as Essence, *Dharmakaya* is Universal, undifferentiated, and inscrutable.
- In its significance as Potentiality, *Sambhogakaya* is potential in all manner of manifestations. It is Universal Mind, *Ālayavijñāna*, and the Womb of the Tathagata.
- In its significance as *Nirmanakaya* (Balanced Activity), Mind-essence is manifested in the many transformation bodies of all the Buddhas.
- The bodies of Buddha are not independent of each other, but are only the One Vehicle Body.

The two classes of Nirmanakaya activity:

- Reaction and interaction with the phenomenal world
- The inconceivable activity appertaining to the principle of integration and compassion

The second class of Nirmanakaya activity within the seventh and eighth stages leads to an inexplicable “turning about” within deepest consciousness

The First Step along the path of awakening requires recognition of the dreamlike nature of personality

The Last Step requires perfect realization of the Oneness of the Principle of the Tathagatas.

CHAPTER 7

FALSE DOCTRINES OF PERSONALITY TO BE AVOIDED

As to the conception of a personal soul as held by common people five different views can be distinguished:

- The belief that the Tathagatas are eternal and omnipresent arises from false views of mental particularization – simply confused thinking.
- Clinging to idea that Nirvana is voidness
- Clinging to the view that there is a distinction between mind and matter
- The belief that what appears as defilements are not other than Dharmakaya
- There is no beginning nor end even though birth and death seem to occur

Words and phrases are used provisionally to lead all beings to the truth of awakening but then to abandon them and enter by intuition

CHAPTER 8

THE TRUE PATH OF BUDDHAHOOD

The true path consist of faith, self-restraint, aspiration and discipline

Faith may awakened by a chance occurrence

Aspiration is based on some clear recognition of a truth that is already within one's deepest consciousness

There are three kinds of aspiration

- Aspiration through work
- Through knowledge
- Through the self yielding to compassion

As faith becomes stronger there are three faculties of mind that must be awakened before aspiration is established:

- Rightness of comprehension by reason so as to truthfully contemplate Mind-essence
- There is decision of purpose to meet all the conditions of behavior and knowledge that such right comprehension demands
- Great compassionate acts are freely devoted to the emancipation of all beings.

Thinking about awakening is not enough; there is need to awaken every faculty – clear thinking, earnest purpose, and a great heart of compassion for all life.

There are four classes of skillful means:

- The first and most important is the need for self-discipline in the practice concentration (*Dhyana*)
- Next is the practice of abeyance where feelings of shame and remorse help in checking growth of bad habits and deeds.
- Praising and cherishing the Three Treasures and cultivating reverential feelings
- By the means of the Great Vow bringing one's life in accord with the nature of Mind-essence

When a Bodhisattva by reason of the foregoing skillful means is able to aspire to the highest enlightenment, he/she receives a partial insight into the essence of the Buddhahood and is able to perform eight things:

- To descend from the palace in the Tushita heavens
- To enter the human womb
- To remain there
- To be born
- To utter the great Vow to attain Buddhahood
- To be able voluntarily yield up his/her personality in the effort to integrate all personality
- To fulfill the condition of Nirvana
- To attain Parinirvana

In aspiration through intuitive self-realization three different operations of mind are revealed:

- Pure consciousness free of particularization and discrimination
- Super conscious wisdom that discloses the nature of things
- Spontaneous good deeds which are of benefit to others

A Bodhisattva who attains transcendental intelligence receives an astral body that transcends time and space

Tathagatas reveal themselves and can only be seen by those who have cleared their minds of defilements.

CHAPTER 9

THE RIGHT PRACTICE OF THE TRUE PATH

Enlightenment is seen as an unfolding process that clears away hindrances and delusions. It is not a process of accumulation. It is a process of:

- Getting rid of false imaginations and attachments
- And then getting rid of particularizations and discriminations
- When these two have been accomplished there is realization of Wisdom

Four aspects of faith must be distinguished:

- Instinctive belief in the wisdom and goodness of Ultimate Reality
- A belief in Buddha as manifesting Ultimate Reality that confidently and joyfully pays homage, listens and learns his teachings, and accepts its discipline
- Having a confident belief in the truth of Dharma
- A sincere belief in the Sangha as embodying morality, allying oneself to its means and aims, and aligning oneself to its goal of universal liberation

The Six Paramitas mark the Bodhisattvas' realization of Mind-essence:

- As he knows the nature of Mind-essence, the Bodhisattva is in conformity with the ideal of charity (*dana*) If one comes and asks for goods or teachings, disciples should as far as they are able to, grant the request with an attitude of "completely given."
- As he knows the nature of Mind-essence, the Bodhisattva is in conformity with the ideal of patience (*kshanti*) Keeping their minds concentrated on the deep significance of the Dharma, practitioners should under all circumstances maintain a quiet and equitable life.
- As he knows the nature of Mind-essence, the Bodhisattva is in conformity with the ideal of earnestness. (*virya*) In the practice of good deeds and discipline, practitioners should never become indolent.
- As he knows the nature of Mind-essence, the Bodhisattva is in conformity with the ideal of behavior (*sila*) Practitioners, lay and ordained, should adhere to the guidance of the Precepts.

- As he knows the nature of Mind-essence, the Bodhisattva is in conformity with the ideal of tranquility (*dhyana*) There are two aspects of the practice of Dhyana: an effort is made that reduces idle thinking; an effort is made to realize the emptiness of Mind-essence. Therefore the aspects of cessation and activity should be practiced side by side.
- As he knows the nature of Mind-essence, the Bodhisattva is in conformity with the ideal of wisdom (*prajna*) Passing beyond discrimination, the realization arises of the intuitive understanding of the nature of the universe and its relation to the Dharmakaya.

There are four other Paramitas:

- Skillful Means (*upaya*)
- Aspiration (*pranidhana*)
- Spiritual Power (*bala*)
- Knowledge (*jnana*)

In their full spiritual potency, Bodhisattvas make their Great Vow to forego Nirvana for the sake of all beings.

CHAPTER 10

THE REWARDS OF THE TRUE PATH

With diligent study of this treatise, practitioners will attain the goal of their faith, which is self-realization of the highest principle. When one considers the ultimate end of faith – the emancipation of all beings – the measure of a true disciple is seen to be immeasurably and inconceivably great.