
Ornament for Clear Realisation

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2 July 2021

Last week we discussed the nature of (the Buddha's) words, and the nature of treatises and also raised some questions about the differences between the two.

I am now going to explain the Buddha's words a bit more about, along with the characteristics of treatises. Hopefully, this will clarify any questions or doubts you may have.

As part of the process of learning, it's very important to find and analyse the reasons you come across in the topics you are studying. You need to think and always ask yourself whether these reasons are valid and make sense to you or not. In that way, you are utilising your own intelligence and that's how you will develop your knowledge or open your eye of wisdom to looking at things from a wider perspective and also makes your knowledge more stabilised.

The meaning of a treatise

The person who composes or authors a text can be either an ordinary person or a buddha. Regardless of who the author is, the composed work is described as either a treatise or the (Buddha's)word. We also can determine from the content of the word or a treatise whether it is a Buddhist treatise or a non-Buddhist treatise or concerned with grammar and so forth. The nature of a treatise is that it is a verbalised sound that comes from someone's mouth. Here the type of treatise we are talking about is a Buddhist treatise, or *tenchoe* in Tibetan, which must be qualified by the two attributes of elimination and protection - to eliminate the mental afflictions or delusions that bind sentient beings to cyclic existence and to protect them from the fear of the lower realms and samsara.

Specifically, we are discussing *Ornament for Clear Realisation* as a treatise, which is indicated in the title of *Ornament*. Since the Lord Maitreya is the author of the *Ornament*, we have to say that *Ornament* is a treatise within the continuum of Maitreya.

If it is not within our continuum, the question is how can we say we can teach and study this text? However, it is obvious that we can access this treatise as Asanga received it from Maitreya and then brought it down to the earth, and many other masters wrote commentaries to it. Moreover, we can also memorise and study it by relying on these commentaries. To illustrate this, take for an example of the songs of a famous singer. The songs they sing produce a unique tune and quality, so nobody can really replicate them. But although others can learn the lyrics and the tune and sing it, the actual song belongs to or exists within the continuum of the original artist.

This is just a brief explanation of what constitutes a treatise.

The meaning of the term *ka* or the (Buddha's) words

Next, we look into the meaning of the Buddha's words or *ka* in Tibetan.¹ Here we learn that there can be three different

types of 'word' or *ka*. - the spoken words of the Buddha, words by subsequent permission, and words that are blessed.

The spoken words of the Buddha arose from the movement of his tongue and palate and so forth.

We can understand the meaning of words by subsequent permission from *The Heart Sutra* which begins with, 'Thus I have heard. At one time the Lord was staying at Rajagriha on Vulture's Peak Mountain together with a great host of monks and a great host of bodhisattvas.' That introduction of the setting of the transmission of the sutra is not classified as either spoken words or blessed words. They are words by subsequent permission, because before the compilation of the sutra the Buddha advised his followers, 'When you compile my teachings you should include an introduction to indicate where and when and to whom my teaching was addressed.' These are the Buddha's words by subsequent permission.

The example of the blessed word of the Buddha in *The Heart Sutra* is the section on the dialogue between Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra where it says, 'Through the inspiration of the Buddha, the venerable Shariputra spoke to the noble Lord Avalokiteshvara.' This happens due to the blessing of the Buddha's concentration. Therefore they are called are blessed words or the word by blessing.

There are different types of blessed words emanating from the blessing of the Buddha's holy body, speech and mind. There are also a lot more other things about the words and treatises that we can talk about, but I am afraid we may get more confused. So, we will stop here except to make a few more points.

The one thing that is common to the words of the Buddha and treatises is that both are derived from sounds or speech. You might have given some thought to the difference between the Buddha's words and treatises. For example, we have said that all the words of the Buddha are also treatises. Whether a (Buddha's) word is a treatise or not depends upon whether it fulfils the definition of a treatise.

Last week we learned that a treatise has to have two main qualities - the qualities of elimination, in the sense of eliminating mental afflictions, and the quality of protection refers to protection from the fear of lower rebirth and samsara. We find these two qualities in Vasubhandu's text *Explanation of Reasoning* which says, 'Treatises are characterised by the qualities of elimination and protection for they totally eliminate the enemy of mental afflictions and protect from bad migration and samsara. The outsider's system doesn't have these two.' If these two qualities define a treatise then we can conclude that the words of the Buddha must also be treatises because they possess these two qualities. In relation to this, Asanga says in his *Collection of Determinations*, 'What is the treatise to earnestly apply to practice? Is only the Buddha's words.' This too indicates that all the Buddha's words are treatises.

One scholar defines the words of the Buddha as speech taught for the sake of abandoning mental afflictions. Can this be a definition of the Buddha's words? Are all the words of the Buddha for the sake of abandoning mental afflictions of listeners? Obviously, this is not the case, because there are Buddha's words directed at arhats, for example, the Lesser Vehicle arhats. Since these arhats have completely abandoned all mental afflictions, the Buddha's words or discourses to them are not for the purpose of abandoning

Buddha's words. But using a single word for the words of the Buddha doesn't always work well in English.

¹ Tibetan uses the single word *ka*, translated as 'word', to describe the

their mental afflictions. Nonetheless, the Buddha's words to them are classified as words so the definition above is untenable. So, the purpose of the Buddha's words to the Lesser Vehicle arhats is to guide them to complete enlightenment. After achieving self-liberation, these arhats immerse themselves in the meditative equipoise of the complete peace and bliss of liberation sometimes for aeons and aeons. So, the Buddha wakes them up by delivering speeches. These speeches are obviously the Buddha's words but are not for the purpose of abandoning mental afflictions because the arhats do not possess any afflictions to be abandoned.

We will stop the discussion on the words of the Buddha and their relation to treatises here. This discussion on the nature of treatises relates to the title of the text, the *Treatise of Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom, Ornament for the Clear Realizations*.

II. The translator's homage

The second main heading of the actual explanation of the text is the translator's homage.

The line of the translator's homage is:

Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

This line is not in the root text, but was added by the Tibetan translator for a number of reasons:

- It is to remove obstructive factors to successfully completing the composition.
- It is to conform with the decree of a Tibetan king setting the standard that the composition of treatises must include an expression of homage to a respective holy object depending on the main subject matter of the treatises in terms of the three-fold collections of the Buddha's teaching.
 - If the subject matter pertains to the collection of the sutras on meditative concentration, homage is paid to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.
 - If the subject matter belongs to the collection of the Abhidharma on wisdom-knowledge, homage is paid to Manjushri.
 - If the subject matter belongs to the collection of Vinaya on moral discipline, then homage is paid to the omniscient mind of the Buddha.
- The great purpose is that from the first line of the translator's homage, the readers can tell what the main content of the treatise will be.

In the expression of homage, we find the word 'buddha', which in Tibetan is *sang-gye*. *Sang* means 'to awaken' so the term buddha means awakening from the sleep of ignorance and dispelling the darkness of the two mental obstructions. The syllable *gye* means 'develop' which connotes developing all the excellent qualities and the full blossoming of knowledge just like the full blossom of a lotus. So, the term 'buddha' means to awaken from sleep, free of two obstructions together with their imprints and reaching the lotus petal of all the objects of knowledge.

The homage is also paid to bodhisattvas which is *jangchub sempa* in Tibetan. The *jangchub* means supreme enlightenment. The word *sem* means mind and *pa* means brave or courageous, thus *sempa* means one with a courageous mind. Hence, *jangchub sempa* means one with a courageous mind aspiring to achieve complete enlightenment. Here mind refers to the altruistic mind of enlightenment. One who possesses this mind is courageous because they are fearless in totally giving up their own

welfare and taking on the welfare of all other beings. He or she is also courageous because they have allowed themselves to be overpowered by the mind aspiring to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings.

The words 'homage to' show the manner of paying homage by body, speech and mind, which is with great respect.

This concludes the meaning of the title and the translator's homage. Now we are up to the third main part of the text, which is the actual explanation of the meaning of the titled text.

III. The actual explanation of the meaning of the titled text

This is explained under two subheadings

1. The expression of homage as a means of engaging in the composition of the treatise
2. The actual body of the composed treatise

1. The expression of homage as a means of engaging in the composition of the treatise

Relating to this the root treatise says,

Homage to the Mother of Buddhas as well as of the
groups of Hearers and Bodhisattvas
Which through knowledge of all leads Hearers
seeking pacification to thorough peace
And which through knowledge of paths causes those
helping transmigrators to achieve the welfare of the
world,
And through possession of which the Subduers set
forth these varieties endowed with all aspects.

Here, homage is paid to three types of knowers: the knower of bases, the knower of the path and the exalted knower of aspects. We will come back to the definitions of these three knowers later.

The order of the lines in Tibetan is different to the English version that we use. In Tibetan, the objects to whom the homage is paid is the last line whereas in English it is the first line. So, the first line of the translation pays homage to the knower of bases. Although we note only hearers are mentioned, solitary realisers are also implied because both are seeking the state of *pacification to thorough peace*. They achieve the pacification of pervasive conditioned suffering by gaining the knowledge of bases realising the selflessness of forms and so forth, which are the basis of all the objects of samsara and nirvana.

Next, homage is paid to the knower of paths. The second line, *which through knowledge of paths causes those helping transmigrators to achieve the welfare of the world*. The knowledge of paths realising the voidness of true existence and the elaboration of the three paths, enable bodhisattvas to fulfil their wish of fulfilling all the temporary and long term needs of transmigratory beings.

Thirdly homage is paid to the exalted knower of aspects, in other words, the omniscient mind of a buddha which directly perceives the aspects of all phenomena in a single moment. Because buddhas possess the knowledge of aspects and have defeated all the negative forces, they are called victors. And it is by the virtue of their omniscient mind or exalted knower of aspects that they deliver diverse teachings as a remedy to extinguishing the two obstructions.

Hence, homage is made to the knower of bases, the knower of paths and the exalted knower of aspects respectively fulfilling the aspiration of the four beings. In short, the three doors of homage are paid not only to the gathering of hearers, solitary realisers and bodhisattvas but also to the mother of a

buddha which refers to the three knowers. As the root text says, *Homage to the Mother of Buddhas as well as of the groups of Hearers and Bodhisattvas*.

Purposes of paying homage

According to Haribhadra's text *Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*, Maitreya included this homage in *Ornament* to accord with the ways of noble beings and also to imply that the author of the *Ornament* is a noble being. In relation to this, the question that arises is: does Maitreya have a self-cherishing mind? Because here he wants others to acknowledge himself as a noble being. If that is the case then he couldn't be a noble being, could he? Paying homage at the commencement of any important tasks is the custom of noble beings. So, Maitreya wrote the homage to emulate the noble beings. Another purpose that Maitreya had in mind in writing this verse of homage was to instil faith in the three knowers in the minds of students of *Ornament*.

Trainees of the *Ornament*

The next question relates to the trainees or students of *Ornament*. Normally we categorise the trainees into two types - those of sharp mental faculty and those of dull mental faculty. The question here is: who are suitable trainees for *Ornament*? How do we differentiate between trainees with sharp and dull faculties in this context?

Normally, we call those who are quick to understand whatever we say as being sharp-minded. Whereas those to whom we have to repeat ourselves because they are very slow in understanding are called dull-minded. This, however, doesn't reflect the difference between the two in this context. So, what is the main difference?

In some texts, the distinction is made on the basis that those who are quick to accept things are dull-minded, while those who don't accept things quickly are sharp-minded. Those who are dull-minded accept things quickly and can be very easily convinced. Because they don't apply their reasoning mind, they easily follow what they hear from others. Whereas the sharp-minded person accepts things only if they see reasons, so they can sometimes be pedantic and stubborn, because they have to fully understand things through their own reasoning mind, and can't be easily influenced by others.

In terms of the order of paying homage, homage is paid first to the knower of bases, then to the knower of paths, and finally to the exalted knower of aspects. However, the text presents these three knowers in reverse order to the order in the homage.

The text begins with a presentation of the exalted knower, followed by the knower of paths and finally the knower of bases. What is the reason behind this difference? Of course, both the orders have their own reasons and purposes.

I want you to think about these differences. I am trying to present the text in a succinct simple and clear manner. However, if you have any suggestions of any area or topic we need to discuss more or add any area that should be included in our discussion, please feel free to make those suggestions.

We will leave it here for tonight.

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Edited Version*

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