
Ornament for Clear Realisation

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We have been discussing the 'expression of homage' section of the *Ornament for Clear Realization*, with a particular focus on the nature and qualities of the three knowers.

This section mentions the three knowers' natures, their qualities, and the capacity or power of each. The reason they are mentioned here is to induce faith in the mind of students studying the *Ornament* text. Why is it important for students studying *Ornament* to develop faith in the three knowers? So that they will be motivated to follow, study and contemplate the main body or presentation of *Ornament*.

Ornament students of sharp mental faculties

As we noted previously, the students of *Ornament* who show faith and interest in the text are of two types, based on their level of mental capacity. One type has sharp mental faculties and are called the followers of reason; the other type has dull mental faculties and are called followers of faith.

These two types of students follow *Ornament* in different ways. The faith and interest of the student with dull mental faculties completely depend on the word of the author, Maitreya. They simply follow the teaching based on Maitreya's explanation of the three knowers, their qualities, benefits and the actions one can achieve through attaining these three knowers. They don't tend to utilise their reasoning to gain a valid cognition of the three knowers' natures and qualities prior to embarking on studying *Ornament*.

On the other hand, the students of sharp mental faculties or followers of reason generate faith and aspiration in the three knowers' natures, qualities and powers based on their own reasoning and proven knowledge, and then follow the *Ornament*. So, their faith is not simply based on what Maitreya has said in the text. Though approaching the text differently, both types of students generate pure and strong faith and aspiration in the three knowers, understanding that through cultivating them, they will have the capacity to achieve liberation and an omniscient mind. Therefore, they are inspired or motivated to follow the *Ornament*.

The students of sharp faculties will analyse and gain an understanding of the nature or reality of the three knowers, as well as the nature or reality of a person and of all other phenomena. They realise that all things are dependent upon other phenomena, as nothing exists truly or ultimately. If something did exist truly or ultimately, it would not depend on causes and conditions – rather it would exist from its own side. If this were how things existed (from their own side), then there would be no point in making an effort to cultivate the three knowers, because the three knowers would not be dependent on causes and conditions.

Using analysis, the students with sharp faculties will reason that, if things existed truly, they would have to exist as either one or many. When they check whether it is possible for things to exist truly as one, they will understand through reasoning that it is not possible for things to exist like this,

because they know that things have parts. If things did not have parts, they would not depend on any other factors, like causes and conditions. Therefore, on the basis of reasoning that things have parts, these students can infer that things cannot exist truly as one.

Since they have understood that things cannot truly exist as one, these students then analyse whether it is feasible for things to truly exist as many. Conventionally, we know that there must be a few in order to say that there are many. So, there must be at least one; without the one, there can't be many.

Using the same logic, the students can understand that the three knowers do not exist truly as one, nor do they exist as many. By understanding things' lack of true existence as either one or many, these students can infer the absence of true existence.

For a detailed study of Buddhist logic and valid cognition or epistemology, we must study Dharmakirti's *Commentary on Valid Cognition*. But to give you some basic idea of Buddhist logic, I introduced the formal logical statement or syllogism, which consists of three components: the subject, the predicate, and the pervasion. The pervasion refers to the forward-pervasion and the counter-pervasion.

What is the Dharma wheel?

To continue the teaching on expressing homage, with reference to the line paying homage to the omniscient mind or exalted knower of aspects, the buddhas are able to turn the wheel of Dharma according to the precise needs of each learner. This line leads us to another topic for discussion: in the context of turning the wheel of Dharma, what does 'Dharma wheel' mean?

We will discuss the Dharma wheel under *six main headings* as outlined, and in accordance with Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen's writing on the *Perfection of Wisdom's* general meaning, which is called *Clarifying the Difficult Points of the Two Thorough Explanations*:

The nature of the Dharma wheel, the divisions, the meaning of interpretive and definitive, the measurement of the heap of Dharma (*cho.phung* in Tibetan), the manner of turning the wheel of Dharma, and the etymology of the term 'Dharma wheel'.

1. The nature of the Dharma wheel (in Sanskrit *dharmachakra* and in Tibetan *chokhor*)

We will begin by positing the views of some critics on this. One Vaibhashika scholar proposed that only the path of seeing is the wheel of Dharma – the reason being that when the Lord Buddha turned the first wheel of Dharma, at that point when one of the five disciples called Kaundinya entered the path of seeing, the gods or celestial beings joyfully pronounced that the Buddha had turned the wheel of Dharma in the world. That's why this scholar relates the Dharma wheel to the path of seeing.

Another Vaibhashika scholar also proposed the path of seeing as the Dharma wheel, based on the reasoning that only the path of seeing fulfils the meaning of the metaphor 'Dharma wheel'. The Dharma wheel is one of the eight auspicious symbols, and in a number of ways the path of seeing is similar to it. The path of seeing directly realising the truth is like the fast turning of a precious wheel. The path of seeing observing the truth of the higher and lower levels and eliminating what is to be eliminated in those realms, respectively, is like a wheel that takes the rider to higher and

lower places. The uninterrupted stage of the path of seeing which, through directly counteracting its obstruction from the root, is like the wheel conquering the unconquered. Likewise, the stage of release of the path of seeing that holds the state of cessation is like the wheel securing what is being conquered. Because of these parallels with the precious wheel, this scholar posited that only the path of seeing is the Dharma wheel.

The Dharma wheel is defined as a virtuous quality included within either of the two: the (Buddha's) Word or the inner realisations on the path.

The 'word' refers to the Buddha's Word, such as Buddha's spoken or blessed or subsequent permission words. 'On the path' means one who has entered the path through having generated pure renunciation.

In this definition of the Dharma wheel, what is the point of specifying the words 'included within either the Buddha's Word or the inner realisations on the path'? It's important that we take every single word mentioned in the definition into account. What is wrong with the definition if we delete the word 'either'?

2. Divisions of the Dharma wheel

The Dharma wheel is of two types, namely the *oral* or *spoken* Dharma wheel, and the *realised* Dharma wheel.

The oral Dharma wheel is defined as the virtuous quality that is included within the Buddha's Word. The oral Dharma wheel can be categorised into two: the threefold baskets of the Buddha's Word, and the twelve branches of the noble teachings. The oral Dharma wheel can also be classified into three, in terms of the three wheels of Dharma of the Lord Buddha: the first Dharma wheel of the four noble truths; the second Dharma wheel of non-characteristics; and the third Dharma wheel of perfect distinction.

The first Dharma wheel of the four noble truths is defined as an uncommon Hinayana sutra that explicitly presents the four noble truths as the main subject matter – for example, the *Great Discourse on the wheel of Dharma (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta)*.

The second Dharma wheel of non-characteristics is defined as an uncommon Mahayana sutra that explicitly presents emptiness as the main subject matter – for example, the *Heart Sutra*, and the extensive, middling and condensed Mother Perfection of Wisdom sutras.

The third Dharma wheel of perfect distinction is defined as an uncommon Cittamatra sutra that clearly distinguishes and presents what truly exists and what doesn't truly exist, with respect to the three natures according to the Cittamatra view – for example, the *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* or *Samdhinirmocana sutra*. The Cittamatran school categorises all phenomena into three natures: imagined or imputed phenomena; thoroughly established or consummate phenomena; and other dependent phenomena.

The first discourse that Lord Buddha gave in Varanasi on the four noble truths is called the first turning of the wheel of Dharma. The second turning of the wheel of Dharma was the Buddha's teaching on the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra at Vulture's Peak. The first and second turnings of the wheel of Dharma are named after the main themes of each discourse. However, that doesn't mean the Buddha didn't teach the same topics, such as the four noble truths or the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra, anywhere else, or at any other time.

3. Meaning of interpretive and definitive

Another popular way of classifying the sutras into two is interpretive or provisional sutras and definitive sutras.

A *definitive sutra* is defined as a sutra that is literally acceptable and explicitly presents emptiness as the main subject matter.

An *interpretive sutra* is defined as a sutra that is either a sutra explicitly presenting conventional truth as the main subject matter or a sutra that is literally unacceptable.

Based on these definitions of interpretive and definitive, the first turning of the wheel of Dharma on the four noble truths is an interpretive sutra, because its main subject – the four noble truths – is a conventional truth. As to the second wheel of Dharma, there are examples of both interpretive and definitive sutras. For example, the extensive, middling and condensed Mother Perfection of Wisdom sutras are definitive sutras, because their explicit subject matter is emptiness and they are literally acceptable; whereas the *Heart Sutra* is an interpretive sutra, because it is literally unacceptable, though its main subject matter is emptiness.

All the sutras belonging to the third wheel of Dharma are interpretive sutras, because their main subject matter is the Cittamatra view; hence conventional truth.

Questions for discussion

The definition of the first Dharma wheel refers to the uncommon Hinayana sutra. The question is, why do we need to say this? What discrepancies would arise if we didn't say that? Why can't we simply define it as 'a sutra that explicitly presents the four noble truths as the main subject matter'?

Also please discuss the wording of the definition of the wheel of Dharma, bearing in mind that every single word in a definition must be taken into account to validate that definition. I'd like you to think about and discuss with others the definition of the wheel of Dharma. The Dharma wheel is defined here as a virtuous quality included within either of the two: the (Buddha's) Word or inner realisations on the path. Why do we have to say, 'included'? What problems would arise if we omit that?

Another question for you is that when the Buddha turned the three wheels of Dharma, did these three turnings of the wheel of Dharma occur successively, or did they all occur simultaneously? Undoubtedly, if we take into account the historical chronology of the Buddha's turnings of the wheel of Dharma, after his enlightenment – the first discourse on the four noble truths in Varanasi, the second turning of the wheel of Dharma on non-characteristics on Vulture's Peak and so on – it is obvious that the wheels of Dharma were not taught simultaneously but successively.

We will leave it here tonight. Thank you.

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Edited Version*

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