

Chapter 5

Buddha-nature

The Last Four Vajra Points

The last four vajra points are the buddha-essence,⁴ enlightenment, the buddha qualities, and the buddha activities. Each vajra point will be divided into two parts: a general and then a more detailed description. The following introduction is a description of the last four vajra points. These points cannot be understood directly by ordinary beings.

The Nature of Each Point

*23. That those three, excellent, rare and supreme
arise from the suchness, polluted and unpolluted,
the qualities of immaculate Buddhahood and the victors'
deeds—
such is the domain of knowledge for those who perceive the
ultimate.*

The nature of *sugatagarbha* or Buddha-nature is unpolluted suchness which is the true condition of phenomena when it is not distorted by illusion or the confusion created by the mind. In the example in which a rope is mistaken for a snake, if one understands the nature of the rope, one is not afraid of it. Normally, the suchness of phenomena is distorted by the illusion of samsara, even though the actual nature of this suchness is emptiness and clarity. In this way, polluted suchness is similar to Buddha-nature. If one has a jewel covered with mud and the mud is removed, the purity of the jewel is revealed. Because the nature of the jewel is pure, one can remove the impurities and it will still retain its purity. In the same way, Buddha-

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nature is stainless when the emotional and cognitive obscurations are removed. The presence of unpolluted suchness which is Buddhahood will appear. Once all the impurities are removed, the suchness can manifest in all of its purity and is revealed as enlightenment which is the second of the last four vajra qualities. When the suchness has been purified, all the qualities inherent in this suchness can manifest. These are the buddha qualities which are the third of the last four vajra points. The buddha qualities represent total fulfillment for oneself and others. They are the fulfillment of one's own potential because all the causes of suffering, karma, have been removed. This happiness is complete and unchanging because all causes of happiness are present. From the qualities of Buddhahood spring the power to help other beings which is the fourth of the last vajra points, buddha activity. The realization of Buddhahood is the supreme way to help all beings and as long as samsara continues Buddhahood will continue to help an infinite number of beings. Buddha activity gives more than temporary relief from suffering. It permits beings to achieve ultimate happiness.

It is said that before we see the three jewels as rare and supreme, we see them as a refuge with the Buddha being the ultimate refuge. But where do these refuges come from? They arise from the above four qualities of unpolluted suchness, the qualities of Buddhahood, and the activities of Buddhahood. Through these qualities one can achieve the three refuges. It is difficult for ordinary persons to understand how these last four vajra points can bring about the realization of the three jewels because only Buddhas are capable of perceiving this directly.

*24. The potential for these three rare and supreme gems
is the domain of knowledge of the omniscient.
In respective order there are four reasons that
these four aspects are inconceivable. They are:*

The Buddha can perceive the last four vajra points and understand them fully. The three jewels are the fruition of the realization of the path. Only the Buddhas can see the causal ground because they are endowed with pure vision of both exactly what is and the variety of

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all phenomena. Therefore Buddha-nature, enlightenment, the buddha qualities, and buddha activities are inconceivable to ordinary beings.

25. Pure yet accompanied by defilement,
completely undefiled yet to be purified,
truly inseparable qualities,
total non-thought and spontaneity.

There are four reasons why the four vajra points are inconceivable to ordinary beings. First, the essence of enlightenment is inconceivable because it is pure but is also accompanied by defilements. The essence of enlightenment is perfectly and naturally pure from the very beginning having never known any stain. Yet it is accompanied by defilements. This sounds like a paradox. The thought that suchness is present with defilements is quite inconceivable to ordinary beings. If one tries to meditate on this, one cannot experience it directly; therefore it can be perceived only by the Buddhas. Second, enlightenment is inconceivable to ordinary beings because enlightenment is completely free of defilements, and yet must be purified. Buddha-nature is completely pure and at the same time only through gradual purification Buddha-nature manifest in its full purity (enlightenment). There is a logical contradiction between the original purity and the need to purify that purity through practice. Third, the buddha qualities are inconceivable because they are inseparable from Buddha-nature. From the beginning all the qualities of Buddhahood are present in Buddha-nature, yet one achieves all these qualities only when one reaches Buddhahood. Fourth, buddha activity is inconceivable because it is both spontaneous and nonconceptual. Buddha activity occurs without any effort on the part of the Buddha. This activity responds to what people need, yet the Buddha does not need to think, "I must do this for this person." However, in every instant the appropriate activity occurs exactly in the way it suits the needs of each and every being.

26. Since there is that to be realized,
the realization, the attributes of realization
and that which brings realization, then respectively,

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the first point is the prime cause, that to be purified,
and the remaining three points constitute conditions.

The reasons that these vajra points are inconceivable is they appear to be paradoxes. However, closer examination reveals no real contradiction. First, the nature or essence of Buddha-nature is perfectly pure. The impurities, the defilements, are only the fruition of a mistaken view and therefore have nothing to do with the actual essence of Buddhahood. Second, the defilements can be removed because they are not an inherent aspect of enlightenment. For this reason, they can not pollute its nature. If one examines the qualities of Buddhahood there is no real contradiction either, because from the viewpoint of the actual nature these qualities have always been present in the essence of Buddhahood. When they are covered up by impurities, these qualities manifest as activity. When impurities are removed, the qualities display their presence as enlightened action. This is similar to what happens on a cloudy day. When the sun is covered by clouds, the sunlight cannot manifest; however the light itself has not been changed. In the same way, when the qualities of enlightenment are obscured they do not manifest but they are still present. The fourth point of activity does not involve a contradiction. Either Buddha activity is spontaneous, effortless, and nonconceptual. It is the result of all the previous wishes and resolutions and prayers made by the Buddhas when they were on the path to enlightenment. From the strong impetus of previous practice all this activity can arise spontaneously and without any conceptualization.

The Realization of these Vajra Points

The essence of Buddhahood is actual realization. The attributes that spring from this realization are the qualities that enable other beings to develop realization. Buddha-nature constitutes the causal condition and the other three vajra points constitute the result which makes it possible for other beings to be purified.

What is Buddha-nature?

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27. The buddha essence is always present in everyone because the dharmakaya of perfect Buddhahood pervades everything, this suchness is undifferentiated and they have the potential.

28. It is said that all beings possess the essence of Buddhahood since the buddha jnana has always been present in them, also because the immaculate nature is non-dual and the buddha potential is named after its fruition.

The Buddha taught three turnings of the wheel of dharma. In the first turning the Buddha taught the four noble truths which are principally⁷ related to the relative level of reality. We perceive the nature of suffering which is the first noble truth. The origin of this suffering is to be found in all our previous actions and emotional obscurations. The third noble truth, that of the cessation of suffering appears when one eliminates these two causes of suffering. Finally, in order to realize the truth of cessation, one has to enter the proper path, which is the truth of the path. The Buddha then explained that one has must progress along five different levels of the path before reaching complete enlightenment. In the second turning the Buddha taught the ultimate nature of phenomena. He said that all phenomena are empty by nature. In the third turning the Buddha went further when he explained that this emptiness of phenomena does not mean simple absence of objects. When beings are in the impure phase, they still possess the essence of Buddhahood. When they reach Buddhahood, the two-fold jnana appears: the knowledge of exactly what is and the variety of phenomena. The third turning exceeds the meaning of the first two turnings.

The *Uttara Tantra* relates to the third turning because it is concerned with the presence of Buddha-nature in all beings. There are three reasons that Buddha-nature is present in all beings. First, the dharmakaya of the Buddha pervades all phenomena and can give rise to any phenomena and in this way, is present everywhere. Second, the suchness or the actual nature of nirvana and samsaric phenomena is undifferentiated. There is no “good suchness” which relates to nirvana and no “bad suchness” which relates to samsara.

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There is only one suchness of the nature of all phenomena. Third, all beings possess the foundation of Buddha-nature which and when it is purified can develop into full Buddhahood.

Ten Qualities of Buddha-nature

29. The meaning signified by “the ultimate space” should be understood through its nature, cause, result, function, endowments, approach, phases, all-pervasiveness, inalterability, and the inseparability of qualities.

There are ten different aspects by which one can approach an understanding of the essence of Buddhahood. These are nature, cause, result, influence, endowments, approach, the various phases, all-pervasiveness, inalterability, and inseparability of its qualities. These are listed in Table 2 (page xx).

1. Nature

*30. Like the purity of a jewel, space, or water
Its essence is always undefiled.
It emerges through aspiration for dharma,
highest prajna, meditation, and compassion.*

*31. Its qualities resemble those
of a valued gem because it is powerful,
of space because it is unalterable,
and of water because it moistens.*

The nature of Buddha-nature is explained by means of three examples those of a jewel, the sky, and water. The significance of these examples will be explained later. The dharmakaya is like a jewel because it is totally free of any impurities. It is like a cloudless sky because the sky is by nature free of clouds. It is like water because water is naturally very pure. The impurities found in water are not part of the nature of the water. In the same way, Buddha-nature is perfectly pure.

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There are four different ways in which Buddha-nature can be made manifest. First, one must aspire to realize the dharma because without aspiration one will not practice it. The second way is to allow the essence of Buddha-nature to shine through in all of its clarity. This is accomplished with intelligence (prajna). The third way is as through *samadhi* (meditation) and the fourth is compassion. Without study one will not reflect on Buddha-nature and without meditation one will not be able to continue the process which makes Buddha-nature manifest.

Buddha-nature is compared to a jewel because it possesses the tremendous power to achieve ultimate happiness, Buddhahood, which is of greatest value for all beings. It is extremely precious and powerful and is compared to a jewel because a jewel has the power to dispel poverty.

The essence of Buddhahood is compared to the sky because the sky never changes. The earth is constantly changing, but the sky even over periods of thousands of years, becomes anything different. In the same way, the suchness of all phenomena is unchanging. There is no alteration in its nature.

The essence of Buddhahood is compared to water because water has a wet and flowing quality which allows it to go everywhere. Its mere presence enables everything to grow. Buddha-nature also possesses the ability to moisten the lubricating quality of compassion.

Buddha-nature possess the lubrication of compassion, the unchanging quality of space, and the power of a jewel.

2. Cause

*32. Hostility towards the dharma,
the view that there is a real self,
fear of samsara's suffering
and disregard for the benefit of beings
are the four sorts of obscuration.*

In our present condition as ordinary beings the essence of Buddhahood has not manifested because we encounter the four

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obstacles to Buddhahood. The first obstacle is hostility or a natural dislike for the dharma. One may wish not to have anything to do with dharma and not want to practice. Obviously, one will never enter the dharma with this kind of attitude. Even if one does not have hostility towards the dharma, one may have no confidence in the value of the teaching and feel that that everything taught is useless.

The second obstacle is the strong belief in the reality of a self. Even if one is interested in the dharma and wishes to practice, if one has a very solid belief in the reality of self, one will encounter an obstacle to the manifestation of Buddha-nature because a belief in self contradicts the logic of the path and is also the root of all negativity. In order for the essence of Buddhahood to manifest, it is necessary to remove the two types of emotional and cognitive obscurations. If one has a very strong belief in a self, one cannot begin to remove these obscurations.

The third obstacle is the fear of the suffering of samsara because this fear will prevent one from entering the Mahayana path. We are striving to eliminate suffering, but in order to do this we must understand that suffering is not real, that its nature is empty. If one can understand that suffering is void, one will not fear this suffering and will be able to help all beings attain freedom from it.

The fourth obstacle is the lack of concern for the welfare of other beings and the associated lack of desire to help them. This occurs when one feels one's own problems are enough and for this reason one is not really interested in what happens to others. Someone who practices with this attitude is going to reach the higher states of rebirth in samsara and a form of liberation such as that of the *arhats*. However, this liberation will not be the complete realization of Buddha-nature which manifests as Buddhahood.

*33. For the desire-bound, the mistaken,
shravakas, and pratyekabuddhas
the causes of purification are the four qualities:
strong aspiration for the dharma and so on.*

Each obstacle has a type of person associated with it. The first obstacle is associated with persons hostile to the dharma. The second

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obstacle is an integral part of many religions. Some religions include a need to eliminate a belief in a self in their basic belief system, but many do not even question the reality of the self because it is considered to be a fundamental aspect of ordinary experience and as such does not need to be relinquished. The Buddhist term for people holding this belief in self is *tirthika*. Tirthikas are people who are fairly close to the dharma in that they are religious, but their religious belief is not powerful enough to manifest the essence of Buddhahood because they still believe in the reality of a self. The third obstacle limits the realization of the shravakas. They are individuals who are only interested in their own liberation because they are afraid of suffering. The fourth obstacle limits the liberation of the pratyekabuddhas.

These four obstacles can be removed by their opposite qualities. The aspiration to practice on the path will eliminate hostility towards the dharma. Great prajna will eliminate the belief in self. The best form of meditation, samadhi, will eliminate the fear of samsara. Compassion will awaken a concern for the sufferings of other beings.

In the *Uttara Tantra* the main emphasis is on view. Practice is mentioned, of course, but this text is essentially explanation of the view. The text quite clearly explains the actual nature of phenomena in terms of its two aspects, emptiness and clarity. The empty aspect is the spacious, unreal aspect. The clarity aspect is the intelligence, the vivid understanding. In this text these two aspects are shown to be the inseparable union of emptiness and clarity which is Buddha-nature.

To summarize, buddha potential can be examined in terms of its innate aspect and the aspect developed through practice. Through practice and the presence of certain qualities, Buddha-nature can manifest. But in attempting to develop this one encounters four kinds of obstacles. If these four obstacles can be overcome with the help of the four favorable conditions, one can work towards Buddhahood and gradually approach the state of the son of a Buddha—a Bodhisattva.

34. Those whose seed is aspiration for the supreme yana,

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*whose mother is prajna, originator of the Buddha's
qualities,
for whom meditative stability is a comfortable womb,
the compassionate nursemaid—these are born the sons of
the Buddhas.*

The birth of a Bodhisattva can, for example, be compared to the birth of a child. First aspiration to practice the dharma must have arisen not just dharma in general, but the highest form of dharma, the Mahayana. The aspiration to practice the dharma creates all of the qualities needed on the path and will eventually lead to Buddhahood. This is compared to the semen of the father which can give birth to a child. This seed needs a mother. Once one aspires to develop realization, one will want to practice the dharma and develop an understanding of non-self, as well as the understanding of the true nature of phenomena. This quality of prajna is compared to the mother because the semen needs a special environment in which to develop. This is the womb of the mother. The womb represents meditation. If there is some degree of understanding of non-self and the nature of phenomena, this understanding will increase. This is like the embryo of a child that needs to grow in the favorable environment of the womb until it is fully developed, possessing all of the parts of its body. Similarly, in order to reach its full development, prajna requires the favorable environment of meditation. The fourth quality that of compassion is compared to a nursemaid. When babies are born they still need a great deal of care. With proper care and attention, their bodies will grow and their intelligence will develop. Eventually the child becomes an adult. The nursemaid is compassion because compassion makes the development of the qualities of prajna and meditation possible. When compassion has arisen, one's understanding grows and one's meditation improves. This example makes it clear why it is that if one possesses the four qualities of aspiration, prajna, meditation, and compassion one can become a son of the Buddha and truly work on the path of enlightenment.

The meditation referred to here is principally tranquillity meditation (Skt. *shamatha*). It is consistently connected to both the intelligence of prajna and compassionate care for other beings.

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Without these two qualities meditation we will not be able to cut the root of samsara because it will not be based on an understanding of non-self. This form of meditation, which is not based on prajna and compassion, will create karma, which brings about rebirth in a form or formless realm.

3. Fruition

35. Its result possesses the transcendental qualities of purity, identity, happiness, and permanence. Its function is (to create) revulsion for suffering accompanied by the aspiration, the longing for peace.

The third quality is the fruition which occurs when Buddha-nature is fully manifest. The fourth quality is the influence the fruition of Buddha-nature exerts. These two points can be explained in conjunction with one another because while fruition is the ultimate goal the influence of fruition is the immediate goal.

The fruition of Buddha-nature possesses the transcendental qualities of purity, identity, happiness, and permanence. Complete purity is achieved when Buddhahood is achieved. When one has gone beyond self and non-self, one achieves the transcendental quality of identity. The qualities of transcendental happiness and permanence are also manifest at the time of fruition. The text states that the function of Buddha-nature brings about a “revulsion for suffering” and a longing for peace. Buddha-nature enables us to recognize the suffering of our existence. When we have recognized this, we develop a longing to overcome suffering. This aspiration is present in all beings, though it is hazy in some persons and very clear in others. The degree of clarity in which Buddha-nature manifests depends on our circumstances. If the right conditions occur, individuals will meet a teacher and will be able to follow the path. Those who have not encountered these external conditions but still have the wish to eliminate suffering will not know that there is a path to liberation. For this reason, Buddha-nature is said to influence

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individuals by causing them to want to eliminate suffering and find happiness.

*36. In brief the result of these (the emergence of these qualities)
represents the remedy to
both the four ways of straying from dharmakaya
and to their four antidotes.*

There are four conditions that contradict the emergence of the qualities of the dharmakaya. They are impurity, suffering, impermanence, and absence of true transcendent identity. When one dwells in samsara, one interprets things incorrectly; one believes that what is impure is pure, one believes what is selfless possesses a self, one believes something permanent is impermanent, and one believes that suffering is happiness. These are the features of samsaric illusion; we perceive everything as the opposite what it really is. In the hinayana teachings the Buddha taught that what we believe is pure is not; that the belief in self is mistaken; that phenomena are devoid of any self-entity; that what we believe is happiness is really suffering and misery; and that what we take to be permanent constantly changes. At the level of the relative samsara is impure, has not self, is the occasion for suffering and is impermanent. At the level of ultimate truth, however, these four aspects of samsara are no longer relevant. Ultimate reality transcends both these four aspects of samsara and their opposites. It transcends pure and impure, non-self and self, and every form of delusion.

*37. This is purity because its nature is pure
and all karmic impurities have been removed.
It is true identity because all of the complications of “self”
or “non-self” have been absolutely quelled.*

The quality of transcendental purity transcends pure and impure. This purity is not the purity which is a concept found in the language of ordinary beings, nor is it the freedom from the impurities shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand it to be; it is a purity that

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transcends these notions. There are two aspects of this purity: the purity of our true nature and the purity which is free of incidental impurities. The purity of Buddha-nature is extremely pure and complete; it is only masked by impurities. It is transcendental purity because when these fleeting impurities have been removed, purity is fully manifest.

The second quality is that of transcendental identity. The ordinary belief in the self includes two different aspects—innate belief in self and the habit of thinking of self as “I.” Innate belief in self is present at birth. No one needs to teach us that we are “I;” we automatically understand ourselves as “I.” This belief in a self is also found in some religions which believe in the existence of a self which must be liberated.

In contrast, the belief in non-self is developed by those who practice the hinayana and the general aspect of the Mahayana. What is important to understand is that both the belief in a self and a belief in non-self are simply mental concepts and, for this reason, have no actual reality. Transcendental identity corresponds to the complete pacification and the eventual disappearance of all such illusory fabrications as the idea of self or non-self.

*38. It is happiness through the five aggregates
which are of a mental nature and also their causes' demise.
It is permanence since the sameness of
samsara and nirvana have been realized.*

The third quality is the transcendental quality of happiness. When one is born in samsara, one is subjected to different types of suffering—all-pervasive suffering and the suffering of change. But since one is not aware of the real suffering of conditioned existence, one believes that to achieve happiness is to remain lost in samsara.

On the hinayana path one learns that the actual nature of samsara is suffering. One meditates on this idea, develops a conviction that it is true and practices abandoning the causes of suffering. However, in the special aspect of the Mahayana teachings, it is taught that the view of suffering and happiness of samsara are illusory and that the actual nature of phenomena is beyond both these concepts. One

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learns that suffering is only a mental creation of the five aggregates, being produced by the very fine mental imprints on the mind which are created by ignorance. The ultimate nature is beyond both the idea of suffering and the idea of happiness. This is transcendental happiness.

The fourth quality is transcendental permanence. When one is an ordinary person lost in samsara, one believes all things are lasting, permanent, even though all conditioned things constantly change. The belief in permanence is an illusion. In the hinayana practice the teachings reverse the idea of permanence replacing it with the concept of impermanence. However, in the ultimate sense, both of these concepts have no actual reality. The actual nature of things transcends the ideas of permanence and impermanence; Buddha-nature is transcendental permanence because the whole of samsara and nirvana is identical and the qualities inherent in nirvana are already present in samsara. This permanence should be understood as the transcendence of change because everything is identical.

There are four transcendental qualities: purity, identity, happiness, and permanence considered in the context of either the teachings of the hinayana or the general mahayana doctrines. The idea that Buddha-nature can be described by those qualities seems to contradict the teachings of the Buddha. However, these four transcendental qualities are explained in the context of a description of the ultimate nature of phenomena which is beyond the limiting extremes of suffering and happiness, of permanence and impermanence, of self and non-self, and of purity and impurity.

*39. Those of compassionate love have, with prajna,
completely cut through all self-cherishing.
They will not want to enter personal nirvana
because they dearly care for every being.
Hence by relying upon these means
to enlightenment—wisdom and compassion—
the deeply-realized abide neither in
samsara nor the personal peace of nirvana.*

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Once we have achieved these four transcendental qualities, we are free from the extremes of samsara and nirvana. We will not fall back into samsara or enter into the one-sided nirvana of individual liberation. This fruition is the achievement of liberation from the two extremes. Prajna prevents us from falling into samsara and compassion prevents us from seeking liberation for ourselves alkl. There are two aspects to a belief in a self—the personal and the phenomenal self-entity. Through prajna, the highest form of spiritual intelligence, we can cut the root of this misconception and become free of emotional and cognitive obscurations as well as all the fine mental imprints. With compassion we see beyond our own personal interest and satisfaction. In the root text it says those with compassionate love will “cut through all self-cherishing” because they cherish all beings. Cherishing means not to drop them without any concerns, but to really help them.

4. The Function of Buddha-nature

40. If there were no Buddha-nature
*there would be no discontent with suffering
nor desire, effort, and aspiration for nirvana.*
41. Perception of suffering, samsara’s fault,
*and happiness, nirvana’s quality, is due to the potential’s
presence.
Why should this be?
Without such potential it will not be present.*

The influence or function of Buddha-nature is covered in two points. The first point discusses what would happen if Buddha-nature were not present in all beings. If beings didn’t have Buddha-nature, they wouldn’t feel weariness of suffering and wouldn’t therefore want to go beyond suffering (nirvana). One can see that non-sentient objects such as trees or stones don’t have Buddha-nature; consequently they don’t have any wish to achieve Buddhahood. So this is what would be missing if Buddha-nature weren’t there.

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Secondly, samsara will inherently bring much pain and difficulties. Of course, there will be some happiness and satisfaction, but this happiness is likely to change and become pain. So when we are in samsara, we are likely to experience pain. By possessing Buddha-nature, we are able to see that worldly existence brings suffering and can conceive of nirvana. So we can aspire to go beyond the suffering of conditioned existence. If one didn't have this seed of Buddhahood, it would be impossible to perceive these aspects and strive for nirvana.

5. Endowments of Buddha-nature

42. Like a great ocean—an inexhaustible abode
containing gems of inestimable qualities.
Like a lamp flame this essence
is endowed with inseparable qualities.

The fifth point is endowments or literally possessing the qualities of Buddha-nature at the moment of fruition. Buddha-nature can be compared to the ocean because the ocean contains many precious things. In the same way, Buddha-nature has the potential for achieving Buddhahood because it already has all the various qualities of Buddhahood. These qualities are the qualities of the body of the Buddha and the qualities required on the path to Buddhahood had such as faith, courage, prajna, and so on. These various qualities are also inseparable and this is demonstrated in a comparison of a butter lamp. In more detail:

43. Because it contains the essence of dharmakaya,
the jnana of the Victors and great compassion,
then, through environment, jewels, and its waters,
it has been taught as being similar to an ocean.

Buddha-nature possesses three seeds—the seeds of the dharmakaya, the seeds of jnana, and the seeds of compassion. The completely pure dharmakaya of the Buddhas is the first seed of aspiration. Buddha-

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nature can arise only in those who have the aspiration to achieve enlightenment.

The second seed for realizing the jnana of the Victorious Ones (the Buddhas) is prajna. The ground from which prajna develops is meditation. In ordinary beings prajna is fairly weak and with cultivation it becomes greater and greater until it blossoms into the full jnana of the Buddhas. Fully developed this jnana becomes the jnana of things as they are and the jnana of variety.

The third seed is the great compassion of the Buddhas. The Buddhas have perfect compassion which is free from any conceptual reference point and the fruition of this seed leads to enlightenment. So within Buddha-nature is contained all the seeds of the future qualities of the Buddhas.

In comparing the endowments of Buddha-nature with an ocean, the vastness of the ocean is compared to the aspiration for enlightenment. The qualities of prajna and meditation are compared to the jewels in the ocean. Buddha-nature contains these two qualities which are very precious because they give rise to the twofold jnana of the Buddhas. To show that prajna and meditation are not just dry qualities, the wetness of the ocean is compared to a the “wet” quality of compassion.

44. Since direct cognition, jnana, and freedom from stain
are inseparable in the immaculate ground,
they are compared to the light, heat, and color of a flame.

In the second example, the qualities of Buddha-nature at the time of fruition are compared to a butter lamp. Buddha-nature is completely stainless, totally pure in nature even though some fleeting impurities are covering it temporarily.

The essence of Buddhahood at fruition has the qualities of clear cognition (Tib. *ngon she*), jnana, and freedom from impurities. The quality of clear cognition has five powers relating to the variety of phenomena. The first power of cognition is “divine vision” which is the ability to see extremely distant and small things. The second power is the “divine ear” which is the ability to hear very distant and very soft sounds. The third power is the “knowledge of the mind of

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others” which is clairvoyance or exactly knowing the thoughts of others. The fourth power is “knowledge of the past” which is being able to see things going back thousands of years. Fifth is the power of “miraculous transformation of one’s body.” All of these powers of clear cognition relate to Buddha’s jnana.

The second quality of jnana refers to the knowledge of things as they are. It perceives phenomena as merely manifestations, not having any actual reality; so this jnana is stainless because it isn’t polluted by any belief in reality.

The third quality is clarity. There are two aspects of knowledge: knowing the relative and knowing the ultimate. These are always present together; when one knows the variety of phenomena, one knows the true nature of phenomena and one has the third quality of clarity. The parallel between these three qualities is demonstrated with a butter lamp’s light, heat, and color. The light can dispel darkness; once darkness is gone one can see everything very clearly. So the brightness of the light is compared to the clear cognition which can see phenomena very clearly. The stainless jnana is compared with the heat of the butter lamp because the heat is inseparable from the brightness of the flame. So the stainless jnana of the Buddha is inseparable from this essence of Buddhahood. The color of the butter lamp refers to the great clarity of the knowledge of the Buddha. This example of the butter lamp shows how that these three qualities of Buddha-nature are inseparable.

6. *Manifestation or Approach*

45. Suchness is approached in different ways by ordinary beings,
the deeply realized, and the completely enlightened.
Hence the seers of the true nature have taught
that all beings have this buddha essence.
46. Ordinary beings go in a wrong direction.
Those who see the truth revert from this
and the tathagatas face it just as it is,
unerringly and without conceptual complication.

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Buddha-nature is present in all beings, its essential nature never changes or transforms into anything. Some individuals understand this, some do not, and the teachings describe three types of individuals. First there are ordinary beings who are not yet free of their emotional instability. Then there are more evolved persons, the Bodhisattvas. Third there are the perfect Buddhas which can be illustrated by the Tibetan name for “Buddha” which is formed of two syllables *sang gay*. *Sang* means “pure,” and *gay* means “perfectly blossomed.” So perfect purity represented in the first syllable of *sang gay* and perfect knowledge represented in the second syllable. When the qualifier of “perfect” is added one finds that all the qualities of purity and understanding are perfectly complete in the Buddha.

These three types of individuals have three different approaches to buddha essence. The ordinary beings will approach it in a mistaken way, the Bodhisattvas will approach it without mistake, and the Buddhas will see it directly. The difference is simply their approach to Buddha-nature, but the object of their approach, enlightenment, is the same for all of them. In more detail:

Ordinary beings approach Buddha-nature in a completely incorrect direction. This can be understood in an example of a rope in a dark place that someone mistakes for a snake. If one person sees it as a snake and another person sees it as only a rope, one of them has a mistaken perception and the other the right perception even though both are looking at the same thing. So it is with Buddha-nature: ordinary beings see it incorrectly and the Bodhisattvas see it correctly. But there is still a third way to see it, the Buddhas see Buddha-nature just as it is with their direct, clear, extensive, vast, and complete vision. The Bodhisattvas, for instance, see it clearly, but do not see it in its entirety. So it is said that the Buddhas see Buddha-nature completely, just as it is, with the complete absence of conceptual interference.

7. Phases

47. The impure, those both pure and impure
and those absolutely perfectly pure
are known respectively as

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ordinary beings, Bodhisattvas, and tathagatas.

The seventh point describes Buddha-nature in terms of phases: the impure phase, the slightly impure phase, and the totally pure phase. The impure phase is the stage of ordinary beings in which Buddha-nature is obscured by the emotional and cognitive obscurations. The mixed phase is purer than the first, but there are still some impurities left. There are two kinds of impurities—impurities from insight and impurities from cultivation of this insight.

The Bodhisattvas are in the mixed stage and have relinquished impurities of insight which are intellectually created perceptions. Usually one has many concepts about things and generally sees phenomena in a distorted way. The Bodhisattvas have eliminated the concepts that obscure the true nature of things, but they haven't dispelled the "innate obscuration" which can only be eliminated by cultivation of this insight. The Buddhas, on the other hand, are in the third stage of having purified all obscurations.

48. The Buddha-nature, summarized by
the six points on essence and so on,
is explained through three phases
and by means of three terms.

In summary, Buddha-nature is described in terms of three phases of impure, partially pure, and completely pure. These are similar to the six points of nature, cause, and so on. This impure phase corresponds to ordinary beings; partially pure to Bodhisattvas, and completely pure to *tathagatas*.

8. All-pervasiveness

49. Just as space, concept free by nature is all-embracing
so also is the immaculate space,
then nature of mind, all-pervading.

50. This, the general characteristic of all,
permeates the good, the bad, and the ultimate,

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like space permeates all forms
whether lesser, mediocre, or perfect.

All-pervasive means that Buddha-nature embraces everything with nothing left out. For example, space is all-pervasive: It is everywhere and contains everything. Of the two natures of the mind (emptiness and clarity) emptiness is compared to space. The clarity is given the name “immaculate space.” Immaculate space is the name for Buddhahood and is all-pervasive in all beings.

In logic there are general and particular characteristics of things. A general characteristic would be something like impermanence which applies to all phenomena. A particular characteristic would be like fire is hot and burning which doesn't apply to other phenomena. Buddha-nature is a general characteristic of all beings irrespective of what qualities they possess. This is compared to space which pervades all forms and objects from very precious jewels to the most inferior objects such as rubbish—all of which have different particular characteristics.

9. Unalterability

51. Since the faults are but accidental,
whereas its qualities are part of its very character,
it is the changeless reality, the same after as it was before.

One's faults are incidental to Buddha-nature and one's good qualities are an inherent part of Buddha-nature. The nature of buddha essence is that it never changes and has just temporary faults covering it up. The qualities are inherently present in Buddha-nature and manifest in enlightenment, rather than these qualities just begin to develop at the time of Buddhahood. So Buddha-nature is changeless and it is the same before and after Buddhahood.

52. Just as space pervades all but remains absolutely
unaffected; because of its extreme subtlety, similarly this,
present in all beings, remains absolutely taint-free.

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53. Just as universes always arise
and disintegrate in space,
so also do the sense arise
and disintegrate in the uncreated space.
54. Just as space has never been consumed by fire,
likewise this is never consumed
by death, sickness, and ageing's fires.
55. Earth is supported by water, water by air, air by space.
But space is supported neither by air, water, nor earth.
56. In a similar way the aggregates, the elements, and the senses
are based upon karma and defilements.
Karma and the defilements are always based
upon the mode of thought which is wrong.
57. This improper mode of thought has
its basis in the mind's purity
whereas the true nature of mind
has no basis in any of the many phenomena.

Unalterability in the phase of ordinary beings is unalterable for four reasons. First, it is like space⁵ which is void and pervades everything and there isn't one object in the universe that isn't permeated by space. Because the nature of space is extremely subtle, its nature is not altered by the objects whether it surrounds pure or polluted objects. From the beginning, Buddha-nature has been present in all beings but it was covered by the impurities of anger, jealousy, stupidity, etc. which don't affect the nature of this Buddha-nature. So buddha essence is unaffected by the impurities just as space is unaffected by the objects it contains.

Second, if the nature is unalterable, consider all the universes which are made up of the elements. When the universe first begins, it has to manifest in space and when it disintegrates, it disintegrates in space. All this occurs in space, but space itself doesn't change or

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decompose. In the same way, Buddha-nature contains the five aggregates, elements, entrances, etc. and appearances which we experience. Everything arises and disintegrates in the uncreated space of Buddha-nature.

Third, one may think the process of arising and disintegration may change the space so that it will be destroyed. But space has never been destroyed by fires. Since the beginning of time countless fires have never destroyed space. In the same way, buddha essence has never been burned out by the fires of death, sickness, and old age. On the relative level, there is the appearance of birth, sickness, and old age, but these do not affect Buddha-nature just as fire doesn't affect space.

Fourth, Buddha-nature is unalterable. At the formation of the universe, the earth element rested on water and this ocean rested on a great circle of air and the air rests on space. So all the elements rest on space while space rested on nothing. All the five aggregates, the elements of thought, and the sense faculties rest on karma. They arise because there is karma—that is good and bad actions—and karma rests on the defilements of attachment, aggression, and ignorance. These defilements rest on a false view of the true nature of things. This false view of reality rests on the purity or true nature of the mind. But this true nature of the mind (Buddha-nature) like space doesn't rest on anything. So in this example the earth is similar to the five aggregates, the water is similar to karma and the defilements, air to an improper mode of thinking, and space to Buddha-nature.

58. The aggregates, entrances, and elements
should be known as being similar to earth.
The karma and defilements of beings
are to be known as similar to water.

Earth is similar to the five aggregates, twelve entrances, and eighteen elements. The five aggregates are form, feeling, cognition, mental formations, and consciousness. The earth is very coarse or dense and is the element that is the basis for life. In the same way the aggregates, elements, and entrances are the basis of our experiences of pleasure and pain. Water spreads everywhere on the earth and

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makes it possible for plants to grow from the earth. In the same way, the positive and negative actions of our life determine the quality of our experiences and are motivated by defilements and a belief in a self. Water also is unstable because it moves and goes everywhere and in the same way the defilements also have this unstable way.

59. The improper mode of thought is similar to air
*whereas the true nature is like the element of space—
it has no base and no abiding.*

60. The improper mode of thought abides
*within the true nature of mind.
This improper mode of thought gives rise
to karma and the defilements.*

Improper thinking is rooted in the basic ignorance of not realizing the essential nature of things. Because of this, de-lusion arises and is similar to air because air is very light and subtle, but animated by the slightest movement. Similarly, ignorance is very subtle and creates a very slight movement which stirs up karma and defilements.

Improper thinking is not realizing the true nature of mind while proper thinking is to see phenomena correctly. In the example of seeing a rope in a dark place as a snake, the perception of a rope and snake have the same visual sensation. However, because of improper thinking, the rope is seen differently. So one can say this improper thinking rests on the nature of the mind and from it arises karma and the defilements. The actual nature of phenomena is peace and voidness and the absence of conceptual fabrication. Because one perceives true phenomena incorrectly, one incorrectly believes phenomena to be real. The first distortion occurs in perception of “self” and “others” and from this arises the feeling of attachment to “self” and a dislike of what is connected to others. From this distortion arises all the physical, mental, and verbal negative reactions. So the basis of this improper mode of thinking arises from karma.

61. From karma and defilements’ waters

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*arise the aggregates, entrances, and elements,
arising and disintegrating just as
everything begins and has an end.*

Karma and defilements manifest in all our experiences. Because of karma and defilements we are born in samsara and experience the various sensations based on the qualities of our karma. This is compared to the earth rising from the water element. The water contains many of particles of earth which arise to make solid earth. The solid substance will appear, but after a while it will disintegrate into the water element which gave birth to it. In the same way, the water of our karma and defilements arise from the aggregates, elements, and entrances of our experiences. Out of the water of our karma comes birth, old age, sickness, and death and we then sink into our karma to begin again.

62. The nature of mind is like the element of space;
*it has neither causes, nor conditions, nor these in
combination,
nor any arising, destruction, or abiding.*

63. This true nature of mind—clarity—is like space,
*unchanging, not becoming defiled by desire and so on,
passing impurities which from improper thinking spring.*

64. It is not produced by the waters
*of karma, defilements, and so forth
nor will it be burnt by the cruel fires
of ageing, sickness and death.*

65. One should know that the first three—
*of death, sickness and age—
are similar respectively to the fires which blaze
at the end of time, in the hells and ordinarily.*

The true nature of the mind is compared to space because space is never created or destroyed. Likewise, the actual nature of the mind is

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changeless, clear, and not polluted by impurities. Space is not created by water or destroyed by fire and similarly Buddha-nature is not created by the water of karma and defilements or destroyed by the fire of old age, sickness, and death. The fires of death and old age are compared to the fires at the end of time (hell fire) and ordinary fire respectively.

66. Free from birth ageing, sickness, and death,
they have realized the true nature, just as it is.
On account of this the wise have
awakened compassion for beings,
and even though free from the
miseries of birth and so on, they demonstrate these.

67. The suffering of aging, sickness and death—
these the deeply-realized have radically removed.
They are without them because their birth
is not brought about by karma and the defiled.

Birth is acquiring a new set of aggregates in a particular life. Sickness and old age are alterations of the aggregates and death occurs when the aggregates terminate. The Bodhisattvas are beyond old age, sickness, and death because they have realized the true nature of reality. Even though they are free from these four states, they do not try to liberate just themselves because this realization leads to a desire to free others. In more detail:

Even though Bodhisattvas give the appearance of birth, old age, sickness, and death, they do not experience suffering themselves. The realized ones, who have reached the Bodhisattva levels have eliminated the root of birth, old age, sickness, and death because they have eliminated karma. They have eliminated suffering and the experience of suffering because suffering is the fruition of the defilements. The Bodhisattvas have the direct realization of voidness and clarity, therefore have transcended birth, old age, sickness, and death. Even though they are beyond this, they can see that other beings haven't realized this and this arouses compassion so they continue to manifest these four states.

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68. Since they have seen the truth, just as it is,
their compassionate nature shows birth, aging, sickness, and death
even though they have transcended birth and the rest.

69. Those blinded by ignorance
see the sons of the victors—
the ones who have realized this changeless true nature—
as having birth and so on.
This is indeed a wonder !

Taking each Bodhisattva level, the text begins with the “sons of the victorious ones” who are all the followers of the Buddha. In this context the text refers to those who have reached the first Bodhisattva level, that is those who have gained direct realization of the true nature of phenomena and realized buddha essence without distortion so they have the “eyes of jnana.” Others who don’t have this realization are like the blind and the Bodhisattvas remain to help these blind individuals. These Bodhisattvas don’t have to return and help others, but do so out of compassion.

70. Those who have reached the domain of realization
appear within the immature’s field of experience.
Therefore the skills and compassion
of these friends for beings are truly excellent.

Those who have reached the level of the “realized ones” are in the next stage. The Tibetan word for “realized” is *pag pa* which literally means “higher.” These are beings who have reached a higher state and the term refers to the first level of the Bodhisattva. One reaches this domain when one reaches the path of insight which is the moment when phenomena are seen directly. An ordinary being may be on the path of accumulation or the path of junction. On these levels a person does not have this direct insight and therefore is called an “immature” being which in Tibetan means “infant.” Ordinary beings are compared to infants because they cannot eat or

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take care of themselves. The difference between ordinary beings and deeply realized beings rests completely on the absence of insight into the nature of reality. The realized Bodhisattvas can manifest all the suffering in the domain of ordinary beings because they possess skillful means. This shows their realization is changeless and their suffering is an appearance to help others.

71. Even though they have transcended everything worldly,
the world they do not leave.
They act within the world for the world
but unblemished by worldly impurity.

72. A lotus, born in water, by water is unblemished.
Similarly, even though they are born in the world,
by worldly things they are unblemished.

Even though Bodhisattvas in the second to seventh levels have transcended the defilements and karma, they do not depart from the world. When they work in the world, they do not become polluted by the defilements because they understand the true nature of phenomena. For example, a lotus grows in dirty water, but it is not dirty. In the same way, Bodhisattvas are immersed in our world but they are not polluted by karma, defilements, or the suffering of our world.

73. In order to accomplish their task,
their brilliant intelligence is like a fire blazing without cease.
They always rest evenly immersed
in meditative stability upon peace.

74. Due to previous impetus
and their being ideation-free,
no effort need be made
to bring beings to maturity.

75. They know precisely the ways and means
to train anyone and whichever teaching,

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*physical form, mode of conduct,
or action would be appropriate.*

76. Like this, those of unhindered intelligence
*excellently engage themselves in benefiting
beings as limitless as the sky,
continually and spontaneously.*

The main difference between Bodhisattvas of the seventh and eighth level is that seventh level Bodhisattvas have a slightly different experience between meditation and post-meditation. If you have dry wood, when lighted it catches fire automatically without effort. In the same way, Bodhisattvas have great compassion so they automatically help other beings. Bodhisattvas on the eighth and ninth levels are constantly immersed in a state of balance, meditation on peace, so when they are helping others their minds are always in a perfect state of meditation. So there is no difference between their meditation and post-meditation.

77. The way in which these Bodhisattvas act
*in the worlds to help beings
during the post-meditation phase
is the same as the tathagata's way
of truly liberating beings.*

78. Although this is true, the differences
*between these Bodhisattvas and the buddhas
are like those between the earth and an atom
or between an ox's hoof-print and the ocean.*

Bodhisattvas on the ninth level are very similar to Bodhisattvas of the eighth level. Bodhisattvas on the tenth level have all the qualities of Bodhisattvas on the eighth and ninth levels, but they are developed even further. As a result of their actions in previous lives, they have gathered a great amount of virtue and spiritual energy and knowledge and can help beings without any effort or having to conceptualize "I must help" because they don't believe in the

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substantiality of objects. When they act, it is completely spontaneous like wood being placed on a fire. Even though this action is automatic, it is extremely precise so that by sitting, coming, and going they can teach the dharma. They chose a particular style that helps beings directly, know exactly when to act, and know how to act. Some beings, for example, need miracles and clairvoyance; others need only to observe very pure conduct; still others need only to hear the dharma. Buddha activity will come when it is needed, not a few days early or a few days later.

The activity of Bodhisattvas on the tenth level goes everywhere and embraces everyone and is compared to space. There are uncountable beings everywhere and the extent of their negative karma is inconceivable. The activity of the Bodhisattvas goes on continuously and manifests spontaneously. These Bodhisattvas act without hindrances and interference of thoughts. They are in meditation all the time. The activities of these Bodhisattvas are practically the same as the Buddhas. The difference, however, between a tenth level Bodhisattvas and the Buddhas is the same as the difference between the earth and an atom or the difference between the ocean and water found in a hoofprint. There is a vast difference in the degree that they manifest.

79. Because it has inexhaustible qualities,

its nature is not to alter.

It is the refuge of beings

because it has no limits in the future, right to the very end.

It is always non-dual

because it is non-conceptual.

It is also of indestructible character

because, by nature, it is uncreated.

80. This has no birth because it is permanent,

no death because it is eternal,

no harm because it is peace, and

no aging because it is unchanging.

81. It has no birth in a mental form

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because it is permanent.
It has not death
through inconceivable death and transmigration,
because it is eternal.

One may incorrectly think that when a Bodhisattva has achieved the last stage of perfect Buddhahood, the Buddha-nature improves. But it doesn't change for four reasons. In the pure phase, Buddha-nature is the dharmakaya and all the qualities are present so it can't change and therefore is permanent. It is eternal because Buddhahood is the constant refuge of beings and buddha activity won't end. The dharmakaya or stainless dharmadhatu is nondual because within it is the sameness of samsara and nirvana and all these qualities are pacified because there are no conceptual differences. The fourth quality is indestructibility because it is not created by defilements or karma. It is present from the beginning, has not been created, and therefore is indestructible. In more detail:

Buddha-nature is unalterable because it has no birth because it has no beginning, it has no death because it has no end, it is free from sickness because it doesn't change from good to bad, and it is free from old age because it is indestructible.

When Buddhahood is achieved, there is no change in the physical body; there is also no change in the subtle body. In Buddhahood there is no body. The word "kaya" literally means "body." In the nirmanakaya it looks as if the individual is taking birth and has a real body, but in the true sense it has an appearance of physical form. The dharmakaya is beyond the four extremes and eight fabrications so it has nothing to do with a body in the ordinary sense.

Buddhahood is free from birth because it is permanent, it has no death because it is eternal. There is no death in the ordinary sense, but there is also the absence of even very subtle changes. This is why the Buddha can protect all beings and help all beings until the end of samsara.

82. It is unharmed by the disease
of the finer karmic imprint because is peace.

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*It has no aging produced by untainted karma
because it is immutable.*

83. This uncreated space has the attributes
of permanence and so forth
which should be known respectively through the first pair of
verses
and likewise the next pair and the next pair to the last.

84.⁶ “Being endowed with inexhaustible qualities
it has the attribute of permanence, the quality of not altering.
Because it equals the furthest end
its attribute is eternal, the nature of a refuge.

Because its very character is not to conceptualize,
it has the attribute of peace, the non-dual true nature.
As its qualities are not things fabricated,
its attribute is immutability, the changeless nature.

It is the dharmakaya. It is the tathagata.
It is the highest truth. It is the ultimately-true nirvana.
Like the sun and its rays, these aspects are inseparable;
so there is no nirvana apart from Buddhahood itself.

Buddhahood is not harmed by sickness because it has peace which overcomes the duality of samsara and nirvana. Since this dualistic division has ended, there is no suffering or sickness even from the fine karmic imprints that lead to a very subtle suffering. Buddhahood has no old age or degradation of the stream of existence. The Buddhas have no old age or degradation even in a subtle way from the untainted factors because Buddhahood is immutable.

In summary, uncreated space refers to the emptiness aspect, while Buddha-nature refers to the clarity aspect. The name “Buddha-nature” shows it can bring forth all the qualities of the Buddha. So uncreated space has the attributes of permanence, eternity, peace, and immutability. Each refers to a different quality: the absence of

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birth to permanence; the absence of death to eternity; the absence of sickness to nonduality; and the absence of old age to immutability. So these qualities are unalterable.

In the normal world good qualities wear out, but the qualities of Buddhahood are permanent because the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha are inexhaustible and changeless and therefore permanent. Vast numbers of beings on this earth are beset with negative karma causing an almost inexhaustible amount of impurities. For buddha activity to help purify these beings for as long as samsara lasts requires that these qualities be eternal. It also has the nature of a refuge because it is there to help beings. The third quality is nonduality. Because in Buddhahood everything isn't divided into good and bad, it is beyond this and therefore in a state of peace. The last is the quality of indestructibility because it never vanishes because the qualities of Buddhahood are not fabricated.

At the impure level of ordinary beings the aggregates and the four elements change while Buddha-nature is changeless as described in the example of space. In the mixed phase buddha essence remained changeless even though Bodhisattvas work to help all beings. In the phase of total purity the buddha essence is changeless even though the Buddhas help all beings. So buddha essence is changeless.

10. Inseparability of the Qualities

85. In brief, since the meaning of this untainted space
is divided into four aspects,
dharmakaya and so on
should be known as four synonyms for it.

86. Dharmakaya that is inseparable from the buddha qualities,
the achievement of the potential, just as it is,
the true nature, neither false nor unreliable,
and that has, from the very beginning, the very nature of
peace itself.

87. Buddhahood is every aspect of true and perfect enlightenment.

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*Nirvana is total removal of impurities,
along with their latencies.
In the true sense, these are not different.*

Liberations' characteristic is to be inseparable from its qualities—⁷

*complete, numberless, inconceivable and stainless as they
are.
Such liberation as this is the tathagata.*

Buddha-nature is given four different names: the dharmakaya, tathagata, highest truth, and supreme nirvana. It is called the “dharmakaya” because it is the true nature of all things. It is called the “tathagata” because it is the ultimate fruition of seeing what is there. It is called the truth of the realized ones or the “highest truth” because the realized ones see phenomena as-it-is. It is called the “ultimately true nirvana” because it is beyond the suffering of samsara.

The inseparability of the four qualities is similar to the sun and the sunshine because one cannot have one without the other. The dharmakaya, the tathagata, the highest truth, and the supreme nirvana are inseparable at the stage of ordinary beings, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. When Buddhahood is achieved, there is no other nirvana beyond that and no other truths. In more detail:

Untainted space is divided into the four aspects of the dharmakaya, the tathagata, the highest truth, and ultimate nirvana. The dharmakaya is the sum of all the qualities of the Buddha (the ten powers, four fearlessnesses, etc.) and these are inseparable. The term “tathagata” is used to show that from the beginning of time the buddha causal ground has been within all beings. The term “highest truth” shows that the true nature is always present and contains no falsehoods. The term “nirvana” means beyond suffering because this nature is free from all impurities so there is no pain or suffering.

In the fruition of Buddhahood all the aspects of knowledge are the Buddha. All the aspects of knowledge means achieving knowledge of things as they are and the knowledge of variety and also totally removing of all impurities and karmic imprints. The

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ultimate achievement is represented with Buddhahood being complete knowledge and nirvana being complete purity. Buddhahood and nirvana are not separate, however, in the ultimate sense.

Liberation is the direct realization of phenomena by seeing it as-they-are. Liberation has the characteristics of being inseparable, numberless, unthinkable, and stainless. All these qualities are complete in the dharmakaya.

The first example illustrates that when some of the parts are missing, the whole cannot exist. The second example shows the inseparability of different parts of a whole.

88.⁸ Suppose there were some painters
Each expert in a different sphere
so whatever skill possessed by one,
the others could not do

89 Their king and ruler gives them a canvas with the order,
“all of you must now go and paint my picture.”

90. Having this received they commence its painting as best they can
but one of them departs to some far and foreign land.

91. Since this man was missing, through going to another place,
the portrait in all its parts could not be finished.
Thus is an example made.

Imagine some artists, each skilled in painting just one part of the body so that one artist can draw, for example, the eyes; another can draw just the arms, another just the hair, etc. Now a king gathers these artists together and gives them a canvas and asks them to do his portrait. In the middle of the painting, one of the artists leaves the country so that the portrait can't be completed.

92. The “artists” are generosity, skillful conduct, patience, and so on.
Voidness, endowed with every finest aspect is like the royal picture.

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Similarly, Buddhahood is similar to the completed picture with each artist representing the different qualities necessary to achieve Buddhahood. If all the qualities of the six paramitas are present, then all the conditions for reaching Buddhahood are there and voidness can be apprehended directly. The voidness with all the aspects is like the fully completed portrait of the king. The voidness is not emptiness, but the great fullness of these qualities with the quality of clarity in which all these aspects of knowledge can flourish. For this voidness to be realized all the qualities of the paramitas have to be present just as all the artists have to be present to complete the portrait.

93. Prajna, jnana and perfect freedom are like
the sun's light, beams, and orb,
because they are respectively bright, radiant and pure, and
since they are inseparable.

94. Therefore until the achievement of Buddhahood
nirvana is never achieved,
just as without sunlight and sun rays
the sun could never be seen.

The inseparability of the qualities of prajna, jnana, and freedom is illustrated by the sun. The Tibetan word for “prajna” is *sherab* and this literally means “better knowledge” so prajna means the understanding without distortion both of the nominal and phenomenal aspect of things. Jnana (Tib. *yeshe*) is very clear cognition and is used for the cognition of the essential or nominal aspect of things. One doesn't use jnana for gaining knowledge about a river or a mountain, but reserves this for knowledge about the true nature of things. These two qualities are present as seeds in ordinary beings and are fully manifest at Buddhahood. When the impurities at the stage of ordinary beings are removed, the third quality of perfect freedom emerges. Prajna, jnana, and freedom from impurities are compared to sunlight, sun rays, and the orb of the sun and are luminous, radiant, and pure respectively.

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Nirvana is not possible without the jnana of the Buddha. The example states that without sunlight and the sun's rays the sun cannot be seen. So the qualities of the Buddha are inseparable.

Examples of Buddha-nature

95. Thus has the victor's essence been described
through a tenfold presentation.
One should understand from the following examples
its presence within the confines of the defilements.
96. Similar to a buddha in a decaying lotus,
honey amidst bees, grains in their husks,
gold in forth, a treasure in the ground,
shoots and so on piercing through fruits,
a buddha statue inside tattered rags.
97. A monarch in a poor and ugly woman's womb
or a precious image inside some clay,
this nature is within all beings present
but obscured by the impurity of passing defilement.
98. The impurities correspond to the lotus, the insects, the husks,
filth, the ground, the fruit, the tattered rags, and
the woman's strongly afflicted by burning sorrows and the
clay.
The buddha, the honey, the grains, the gold, the treasure,
the nyagrodha tree, the precious statue,
the supreme ruler of all the continents and the precious
image
correspond to this supreme, immaculate nature.

One may still have doubts about how Buddha-nature is changeless, but does not manifest because of impurities. To illustrate this nine examples of buddha essence and the impurities are given.

When the Buddha gave teachings, he didn't simply declare the truth, but he gave reasons for what he was saying. The reasons for

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his teachings were sometimes very apparent and at other times very obscure. The obvious teachings were the ones grasped by the senses. There are, however, teachings which cannot be grasped with sensory faculties because they were about things very far away, or very remote in time, or about karma. A particular karma will prevent one from living certain types of lives. Since one cannot understand these more hidden meanings directly, one has to understand them through inference. For instance, if we say there's a fire behind that hill because we can see smoke, people believe it even though they can't see the actual fire because smoke is a valid sign of a fire. For a sign to be significant it must have universal applicability i.e., whenever there is a fire, there must be smoke. The sign must also be valid, if we say there's a fire because I see a tree, it is an invalid sign. So a sign for showing the presence of something that is hidden must have universal applicability and be a valid sign. The presence of buddha essence is illustrated with signs using nine examples. Then this reasoning is applied to Buddha-nature itself.

The nine examples of beautiful things covered up by impurities are listed along with the nine impurities followed by a list of the pure things covered up. These will be elaborated below. The method for presenting each example is the same: first a verse gives the example, then a verse gives its meaning, and finally a verse presents the parallel between the example and Buddha-nature.

99. Someone endowed with pure divine vision,
*upon seeing the tathagata shining with a thousand marks
adorned
within a decaying lotus, would remove him from the prison
of those petals of that "flower of water born."*

100. Similarly the sugatas (with their buddha eyes)
*see their own true nature even in those in the worst of hells
and, their nature being compassion present until the very
end,
they bring freedom from all those veils.*

101. Once the sugata inside the closed decaying lotus had been seen

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*by someone with divine vision, the petals were sliced
asunder.*

*Likewise, when the buddhas see the essence of perfect
Buddhahood*

*in beings but obscured by an impure shell of desire, hatred
and so on,*

*through their compassion those victors destroy such
obscurations.*

Imagine an ugly, withered lotus covering a beautiful statue of the Buddha. Someone with clairvoyance could see the statue and think that this was not a good place for such a beautiful statue and would break open the lotus shell and remove the statue. Similarly, Buddha-nature is in the mind of all beings, even those in the worst hell, but it is obscured by the defilements of the three poisons. The Buddhas with divine vision and great compassion see this Buddha-essence and help beings out of the shell of defilements. Individuals with Buddha-nature need to reach Buddhahood so they do not continue to suffer in samsara; therefore they need the buddhas with their vision and their teachings to receive the tools to make this Buddha-nature manifest.

102. A clever man trying to get honey amidst swarms of bees would,
*having spotted it , employ skillful means
to separate that honey from the host of bees
and then actually obtain it.*

103. Likewise the great sages with their omniscient vision,
*upon seeing the honey-like causal ground, the essence,
cause total, radical relinquishment of the bee-like
obscurations.*

104. The man who tries to get he honey surrounded by a myriad of
bees
*disperses all the bees and procures the honey as he planned.
The untainted intelligence which is in all beings is like the
honey:*

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The buddhas, skillful victors over bee-like defilements, like the man.

Imagine some tasty honey which is surrounded by swarming bees. If an experienced person knows how to separate the honey from the bees, then people can enjoy the honey. This means the Buddhas with the omniscient eyes of twofold knowledge can see the Buddha-nature in all beings which is like the honey. The bees circling the honey can be removed because they aren't part of the honey. In the same way, the impurities of beings aren't part of their Buddha-nature and therefore can be removed allowing Buddha-nature to manifest. In this example, the man who knows about honey is like the Buddhas who are skilled in removing obscurations, which are the bees.

105. Kernels of grains, still in their husks, are unusable for man.
Whoever wants them as food must remove them from their husks.

106. Similarly, whilst Buddhahood, present in all beings
but mixed with defilement-impurities,
has not been from defilement freed
then buddha activity in the three worlds will not be accomplished.

107. Incompletely threshed kernels of rice, buckwheat, and barley
that have not been de-husked still have their husks and beards.
Just as these are not usable, tasty food for men,
likewise the "lord of all qualities" present in living beings
and whose corps has not yet been freed from defilement,
will not give the taste of the joy of dharma
to beings afflicted by defilement-hunger.

Imagine a grain of rice enclosed in its husk. Kernels of rice, buckwheat, and barley cannot be used as food when they are unhusked. Similarly, as long as Buddha-nature called "the lord of all

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qualities” is not liberated from the shell of impurities, it cannot give the taste of the joy of dharma to beings.

108. The gold of a man on a journey dropped
into a place containing filth and rot.
being of indestructible nature for many centuries
that gold remained in that same place yet quite unchanged.
109. A god with perfect divine vision noticed it there, told someone,
“There is gold here. Once you have cleansed this most
valuable thing
then do what can be done with such a precious substance.”
110. In a similar way, the Victors see the quality of beings,
which has sunken into the filth-like defilements,
and shower upon them true dharma’s rain
that they be purified of defilement’s mire.
111. Just as the gold fallen into the place rotting with garbage
was seen there by a god who then with great insistence
showed the man that most supremely-beautiful things,
so that it might be completely cleansed
so also do the victors perceive that the most precious,
perfect Buddhahood within all beings
has fallen in the defilement’s great mire and so
they teach them all the dharma in order that it may be
purified.

Imagine an individual going on a journey and on his way he loses some pure gold which falls into some rubbish. It remains unchanged for hundreds of years being quite useless. Then a god with clairvoyance sees the large lump of gold in the rubbish and tells someone where to find it so it can be put to proper use.

Similarly, the Buddhas can see the pure Buddha-nature of beings which has fallen into the filth of defilements and has been lying there for thousands of years. Even though it is there, it has not been polluted by the defilements. If there were no rubbish there is the first

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place, there would be no need to have the clairvoyant person come along. Also if there had been no gold for the clairvoyant person to point out, it would have been pointless as well. Similarly, if Buddha-nature were not obscured by defilements, there would be no need for the Buddhas to enter this world and teach about Buddha-nature. Also if beings didn't have Buddha-nature from the very beginning, there would be no need for the Buddhas to give teachings because it would be impossible for individuals to attain Buddhahood. This is why the Buddhas give teachings and point out our obscurations. They do this by producing the rain of dharma which has the ability to gradually wash away the impurities which we have accumulated.

Gold is very useful, but if it is covered by rubbish it is useless. This is why this clairvoyant person tells someone where it is and tells him to remove the rubbish and use the gold. In the same way, the Buddhas tell us about the rubbish of our instability. They see beings who have the wish-fulfilling gem in their hands, wasting it. Beings are suffering, but they have the tool to eliminate the suffering and this is why the Buddhas teach the dharma. Beings remain stuck in problems and difficulties and don't have the power to realize their own goal. They might think there is nothing they can do, but they have the knowledge of things as they are and variety, so they have everything necessary to remove the defilements. The Buddha told them that if they practice, they can reach enlightenment.

112. Were there an inexhaustible treasure
underground beneath the house of a poor man,
neither would he know of its presence
nor could the treasure tell him, "Here I am."

113. Similarly, as beings have not realized
the very precious treasure contained within their mind,
the immaculate true nature to which nothing need be added
and from which nothing need be taken,
they continually experience many kinds of suffering of
deprivation.

114. The jewel treasure contained in

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*the poor man's house would not tell him:
"I the precious treasure am here" and
the man would never know it there.
All beings, who have the dharmakaya treasure
within the mansion of their mind,
are to that poor man similar.
So the Great Sages have taken
worldly birth in the most perfect way
so that those that treasure could obtain.*

Imagine a man so poor that he doesn't have any food or clothes, living in a house built over a great treasure. If the man doesn't know about the treasure, he will continue to suffer in poverty because the treasure cannot say, "Look, I am here." Similarly, all beings have the great treasure of Buddha-nature in their minds and this treasure has always been there. They do not see the buddha essence in their mind so they endure all the sufferings of samsara. The treasure can't tell the man "I am here" even though it is very close by. Similarly, all beings have the precious treasure of the dharmakaya locked in their mind, but continue to suffer. Therefore the great sages, the Buddhas, come into our world to help beings find this treasure.

115. Just as the imperishable quality of germinating
*in the seeds of mangoes and other fruits,
in the presence of prepared soil, water, and so on,
the body of a kingly tree will gradually produce.*

116. So also within the rind-confine of beings' ignorance, etc.
*is contained the pure dharma nature.
Likewise, when by virtue it is sustained,
it will the very substance of a "king of victors" gradually
attain.*

117. Just as a tree grows from within a banana or mango fruit's skin,
*due to conditions—humidity, sunlight, air, soil, space and
time,*

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*likewise is the seed and germ of perfect Buddhahood
contained
within the skin of that fruit—sentient being’s defilements
due to virtue’s condition, this true nature will be seen and
augment.*

A very tiny seed in a fruit has the power to be an enormous tree. One cannot see the tree in the seed, but if one adds all the right conditions for growth such as water, sunlight, soil, etc. to the seed, a mighty tree will develop. Similarly, buddha essence exists in all beings but is encased in the peel of ignorance which generates our emotional and cognitive obscurations. If one practices virtue, it will generate the favorable conditions for this seed of Buddha-nature to grow. Through the accumulation of knowledge and virtue, the seed will develop into the “king of victors” or Buddhahood. The parallel is that just as a tree with the proper conditions grows from a seed enclosed by the skin of a fruit into a tree, buddha essence is enclosed in the skin of defilements and with proper conditions will manifest into Buddhahood.

118. A god, having discovered by the road a precious image of a tathagata,

*all wrapped in smelly tattered rags,
would tell someone the fact of it lying there at the roadside,
so that it might be recovered.*

119. Similarly, when the buddhas, of unhindered vision,
*see the very “substance” of the tathagatas even in animals
present*

*but wrapped within the envelope of defilement,
they also show the means by which it may be set free.*

120. A god with divine vision who had perceived the tathagata image,

*precious by nature yet wrapped in smelly rags and lying by
the road,
would point it out to folk that it might be freed.*

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*Just like that, the victors see even in animals the Buddha-nature,
lying by samsara's road, wrapped in defilements tattered
garb
and they teach the dharma in order that it might be
liberated.*

Imagine a very valuable buddha statue wrapped in tattered rags and abandoned by the side of the road. A passerby would not notice it, but if a god came along, he could see the statue. Similarly, the Buddhas with their jnana can see that Buddha-nature of beings is wrapped in the tattered rags of the defilements. They see this in persons and even in animals. As a god can see a statue with divine vision, the Buddhas can see Buddha-nature lying on the road of samsara inside the rags of defilements. They tell beings to remove the tattered rags so the Buddha-nature can manifest in its complete purity.

121. An ugly-looking woman, having no one
*to whom to turn and staying in a pauper home
may hold the glory of a king within her very womb
yet not know this ruler of men to be within her present.*

122. Worldly existence is like the pauper hostel
*and impure beings are like the pregnant woman.
Having this being within her, she has a protector
and the embryo is like the immaculate nature.*

Imagine a destitute ugly woman with no place to stay who ends up in a pauper's hostel. Also imagine that she is pregnant and holds in her womb the future king. She continues to suffer because she doesn't know anything about it. Similarly, beings hold the precious buddha essence but do not know anything about it or get any benefit from it. As the woman in the hostel has a king in her womb so beings are born in the six realms of samsara; some as humans, some as animals, some as hungry ghosts, etc. All have to suffer—animals suffer from enslavement, spirits have to suffer from thirst and hunger, humans

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have to suffer from birth, sickness, old age, and death. All are like the poor woman living in misery.

123. The woman is dressed in dirty clothes,
her form unpleasant and in the pauper home
she must endure the worst of sorrows,
even though a ruler dwells within her womb.
Similarly, even though within them they have a protector
residing,
beings believing themselves undefended
can never find their peace of mind,
being by defilement overpowered—
so in the “ground of suffering” they remain.

The poor woman with a great ruler in her womb is dressed in dirty clothes. Because she doesn't know that she bears a king, she remains in poverty and is very unhappy. In the same way, beings have a protector inside their mind, but are unaware of this so they have no peace of mind and are overpowered by defilements; thus they remain in samsara and undergo all kinds of suffering.

124. Upon seeing a complete and peaceful statue,
cast in gold yet still in its mould, externally like clay
those who know would remove the outer covering
to cleanse the gold that lies within.

125. The perfectly enlightened perfectly see that the nature of mind,
clarity, is covered by transient impurities.
Hence from these obscurations they cleanse being,
who are like mines of precious gems.

126. Just as an expert removes all the clay,
knowing the nature of the peaceful statue
in bright stainless gold which it contains,
so likewise the omniscient know
the peace of mind like the cleansed gold:
chipping away, by means of dharma explanation,

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they clean away each and every obscuration.

Imagine a very pure statue covered with a crust of clay. Someone who knew about this could remove the clay and reveal the gold statue. In the same way, the clear light nature of the mind is inside us, but covered with impurities. These impurities are not permanent and can be removed like the clay crust covering the beautiful statue. Someone knowing that the clay is covering the statue can remove the clay gradually to reveal the gold statue. In the same way, the omniscient Bodhisattvas know with their jnana that buddha essence is inside beings and through teaching the dharma they can gradually remove all the impurities covering the pure mind.

127. Inside the lotus, the bees, the husk, the filth,
the ground, the fruit skin, the tattered rags,
the woman's womb and the clay mould there are:

128. The Buddha, the honey, the kernel,
the gold, the treasure, the great tree,
the precious image, the universal monarch,
and the golden figure.

129. Similarly, it is said that the shell of defilements
covering the nature of beings is beginningless and
unconnected with it and that the stainlessness
for that nature of mind is beginningless.

130. Desire, aversion and ignorance
In their strongly active state or as latent imprints,
that to be abandoned through insight,
that to be abandoned through cultivation,
the impurities present in the impure
and the impurities present in the pure—

131. These nine have been illustrated by
the examples of the lotus shell and so on.

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The shell of subsidiary defilements divides into infinite categories.

132. Summarized briefly, the nine impurities, desire and so on, *have been well represented through nine examples—the lotus shell and so forth respectively.*

133. The pollutions respectively cause *the four impurities of ordinary beings, one of arhants, two of beings training in the dharma and two impurities of the wise.*

These nine examples show that all beings have buddha essence, but it doesn't manifest because it is covered by im-purities. The Buddhas can see the buddha essence and there-fore they teach the dharma on how to remove the impurities. Because of Buddha-nature, one can reach Buddhahood with purification.

In summary, there were nine examples of the impurities. If one had a white shell, for example, one can't separate the whiteness from the roundness of the shell. But Buddha-nature is completely separate from the impurities so these impurities can be separated when Buddha-nature manifests.

Each of the nine examples corresponds to one of the defilements and a level of the path. To summarize:

1. In the example of the lotus, the shell corresponds to attachment found in ordinary beings.
2. In the example of the bee swarm, the bees correspond to aggression found in ordinary beings.
3. In the example of withered rice, the husk corresponds to ignorance found in ordinary beings.
4. In the example of gold in rubbish, the filth corresponds to attachment, aggression, and ignorance in a very active state found in ordinary beings.
5. In the example of buried treasure, the soil corresponds to the latent karmic traces of attachment, aggression, and ignorance left behind in arhats.

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6. In the example of fruit, the skin corresponds to fabricated obscurations worked on by those on the path of insight by Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path.

7. In the example of the statue in rags, the rags correspond to the innate obscurations worked on by those on the path of cultivation by Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path.

8. In the example of the pregnant woman, her womb represents the impurities of the Bodhisattva in the first to seventh Bodhisattva levels.

9. In the example of the statue in clay, the clay represents the impurities of the Bodhisattva in the eighth to tenth Bodhisattva levels. In more detail:

134. The mind is delighted by the “mud-born”—
the lotus but later becomes dismayed.—
Such is the desire’s happiness.

135. When bees are very irritated, they sting.
Likewise, once anger has arisen,
to the heart it brings but suffering.

136. Just as kernels of rice and other grains
are covered outwardly by husks and skins,
so similarly is the vision of the very essence
obscured by the “shell” of ignorance.

137. Filth is something unpleasant—like such filth is the active state,
causing those who are involved in gratification to indulge.

138. When the wealth was covered,
they, not knowing its treasure could not obtain.
In a similar way the spontaneously-arising
is concealed by ignorance’s latent traces.

139. Just as the germ and so on split the husk
of their grain by their gradual growth,

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so insight into thatness dispels likewise
“obscurations to be abandoned through insight.”

A lotus is a beautiful flower which grows out of mud. When one sees a lotus blooming, it is very beautiful and one is happy seeing it. Later when it withers, one's pleasure disappears. In a similar way, desire comes out of the mind of samsara and when something desirable or attractive first presents itself, it might bring pleasure, but with time it loses its appeal and becomes suffering.

Bees are very attached to their honey; when the honey is touched they become very angry or irritated and give pain to others by stinging them. So when the bees are hurt, they hurt others. In the same way, when one is angry, one is very irritable and one hurts others with harsh words or actions.

Grains such as rice are covered with a husk which obscures the grain inside. In the same way, ignorance keeps one from seeing the true nature of phenomena. It is a thick covering like a shell or husk which prevents one from seeing what is there.

Filth or rubbish covering gold is very unpleasant and disagreeable. In the same way when attachment, aggression, and ignorance are very strong, they are very repulsive and also increase one's attachment to pleasures.

The soil covers the treasure so that one does not know a treasure is there. In the same way, very fine mental imprints caused by ignorance are present in the mind. This is the innate ignorance present since the beginning of time samsara which covers up the true nature of the mind so one cannot recognize its true nature.

When one is on the path to enlightenment as an ordinary being, one is on the path of accumulation and the path of junction. One practices because one has a goal of practice, but little direct realization. After a while one gets a direct insight into the nature of phenomena and becomes a Bodhisattva who sees “the rope as a rope” and all misconceptions are re-linquished. This is the path of cultivation of insight which is compared to a shoot growing from the skin of a fruit. When one has reached this path of insight, jnana starts to manifest.

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140. Those who, through following the path of the realized,
have overcome the very pith, the beliefs that the destructible
and multiple could be a self,
still have obscurations to be abandoned
through the jnana of the path of cultivation.
These have been illustrated as being like those tattered rags.

On the path of insight, the obscurations are eliminated but we don't automatically reach Buddhahood. We have been in samsara for such a long time that we have acquired very strong mental habits. The gross misconceptions have been removed, but the innate ignorance from the very beginning still remains as a trace. After we have the insight, we need to cultivate this insight until it becomes very firm. This path of cultivation is called the path of the realized ones. It is the time when the core of the belief of self (called the "multitude of fears" because it causes great fear) is removed. This is compared to tattered rags which are so rotten they are quite easy to remove. In the same way, these mental impurities are quite soft, subtle, and easy to remove.

141. In the seven deep levels the impurities which remain
are comparable to impurities in the confine of a womb.
Release from them is like freedom from that womb
whilst nonconceptual jnana is like finally maturing.

The eighth example corresponds to the impurities in the first seven Bodhisattva levels. These are compared to a baby in the womb. The baby must wait there nine months and with each day it knows it is closer to being born. Similarly, a Bodhisattva at each stage is growing more complete as impurities are removed with jnana maturing more and more.

142. The impurities related to the three deep levels
should be known as similar to the traces of clay.
These are those to be eliminated
by the vajra-like samadhi of the Great.

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143. Thus the nine impurities, desire, etc.
correspond to the lotus and the rest.
The Buddha-nature corresponds to the Buddha and so on
being the three natures' union.

The ninth example relates to the very fine impurities of the last three Bodhisattva levels which have to be eliminated. These are compared to traces of clay covering a statue. These great beings, the Bodhisattvas on the tenth level, remove these slight impurities through vajra-like samadhi. This is compared to a vajra because it is very powerful and solid; it can destroy everything else and not be destroyed itself.

144. Its three natures are the dharmakaya,
the suchness and the potential.
These should be understood respectively
through the three, one, and five examples.

There is a purity aspect of each of the nine examples. Buddha-nature is the union of three natures: dharmakaya, the suchness, and causal ground. The dharmakaya refers to the clarity aspect, the suchness to voidness, and the causal ground to the aspect of full manifestation. If one has a shell that is white and round, one can say that from the color aspect it is white, from the shape aspect it is round; however, the white-ness and roundness are inseparable. In the same way the clarity, voidness, and the causal ground which are the ability to manifest as Buddhahood are also inseparable. Of the nine examples there are three examples for the dharmakaya, one example for the suchness, and five examples for the causal ground.

145. The dharmakaya should be known as two:
the perfectly immaculate dharmadhatu
and the favorable conditions for this—
the teachings in their profound and manifold aspects.

146. As it transcends the world
there is no example for it manifest within the world,

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*therefore it has been represented
by corresponding the essence to the tathagata's form.*

147. The teachings in their aspect subtle and deep
*should be known as like honey's taste unique
whilst the teachings in their manifold aspect
as like grains within their various husks.*
148. Suchness is said to be similar
*to the substance of gold
because this essence is immutable,
perfectly pure and most noble.*
149. One should know the potential as having aspects two,
*similar to the treasure and the tree grown from the fruit:
that since beginningless time naturally present
and that perfected through proper cultivation.*
150. From this twofold potential there is
*achievement of the three kayas of the Buddha:
the first kaya through the former
and the other two through the latter.*

The first three examples relate to the dharmakaya. The dharmakaya can be divided into the actual dharmakaya and the relative dharmakaya which is also called dharmakaya, but is not really the dharmakaya. The true dharmakaya is the stainless dharmadhatu, the actual Buddha-nature, which is by nature luminosity and in the domain of self-cognizant jnana. Relative dharmakaya is called the "teaching dharmakaya" which are the scriptures that teach the meaning of the dharmakaya. These scriptures have a deep aspect related to the dharmakaya and a vast aspect related to the various mentalities of beings.

The first example is of the true dharmakaya which cannot be fathomed so it is represented by the Buddha in a withering lotus.

The second example of honey represents the teaching dharmakaya because the taste of honey is very subtle, as are the

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teachings of the dharmakaya. Honey is always very sweet and all kinds of honey have this same sweet taste. In comparison, all the various phenomena of the dharmakaya have one taste or a similar nature. The third example of grain in husks, the millions of grains represent the great variety of teachings. The deep aspect of the teaching is represented by the honey, the vast aspect is represented by the grains in the husk.

The fourth example of gold illustrates the changeless character of the suchness. Suchness is not completely pure and not changed by suffering or defilements. It is perfectly pure and therefore is compared to gold which has the same qualities.

The last five examples refer to causal ground. The causal ground is compared to a treasure because a treasure can lie beneath the ground for hundreds of years and remain unchanged. The causal ground is compared to a fruit because when a fruit is still a fruit one cannot see the tree, but the fruit contains the potential of a tree. The example of a treasure describes the innate aspect of the causal ground and the example of the fruit describes how the proper practice of virtue can manifest into Buddhahood. These two aspects of the causal ground develop into the three kayas of the Buddha. The dharmakaya is the outcome of the innate aspect and the form kayas are the outcome of the practice of virtue.

151. The essence-kaya, magnificent should be know as being similar
to the statue made of precious substance,
because that is natural and uncreated
and it is a treasure of jewel qualities.

152. The sambhogakaya is like the cakravartin,
being endowed with the greater dharma's majesty.
Like the gold image are the nirmanakaya
having the very nature of a representation.

The essence-kaya, svabhavikakaya or dharmakaya, is compared to an example of a buddha statue made of precious substances. The innate aspect of causal ground is compared to a treasure of jewels because it is there naturally. The sambhogakaya is compared to a

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great king or chakravartin because the sambhogakaya is endowed with the great power of dharma. The nirmanakaya is illustrated by a golden statue because it is a representation of the Buddha.

153. This ultimate truth of the spontaneously born
to be understood through faith alone—
The orb of the sun may shine but it cannot be seen by the
blind.

154. There is nothing whatever to remove from this,
nor the slightest thing thereon to add.
Truly beholding the true nature—when truly seen—complete
liberation

As an ordinary person one cannot understand Buddha essence directly and therefore needs the help of faith to understand it. The Buddha-nature has been there from the very beginning and was never created by anyone. It is the spontaneously present jnana. An ordinary person cannot see this directly because his Buddha-nature is covered by impurities. He or she may be able to gain some indirect understanding of it by inference, but even this is hard to understand because it is in the domain of the inconceivable. For example, the sun sheds its brilliant rays all the time; as far as the sun is concerned, it never is obscured by anything. But a blind person will never see this sunshine. In the same way, the spontaneously present jnana has been there from the very beginning but it is hidden from ordinary beings who do not have the clear eyes of prajna to see through the thick darkness of ignorance. They must rely on faith in order to understand this Buddha-nature.

Buddha essence has two kinds of purity: it is naturally pure, and it is pure from incidental impurities. It has always had these qualities, but when one doesn't see this fully one makes mistakes, goes astray, and wanders in samsara.

155. The Buddha-nature is devoid of any affect—
such an intrinsic characteristic would be completely foreign.
Yet it is not devoid of the supreme qualities,

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whose intrinsic characteristics are indifferntiable from its domain.

Buddha-nature is void and not void in a way. The buddha essence is devoid of any passing impurity because these are not an intrinsic part of it. On the other hand, the buddha essence is not devoid of the supreme qualities because the qualities are an inseparable part of the actual nature of the buddha essence.

Importance of Buddha-nature

The fourth major division in this chapter on Buddha-nature explains why it is necessary to teach about the presence of the Buddha-nature and what benefits one can expect from understanding this teaching.

To review, the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma three times. The second turning demonstrated the voidness of all phenomena. In these teachings the Buddha said there is no form, sound, taste, smell, etc. with everything being devoid of any actual nature. Everything is void beyond the four extremes of existence and nonexistence and beyond the eight mental fabrications. Everything is the dharmadhatu devoid of any actual nature of its own. In the third turning, Buddha stated all beings had Buddha-nature and he described the nature of the Buddha-nature in detail. Ordinary beings might think that there is a contradiction between teachings of the second turning in which the Buddha said there wasn't anything and in the third turning in which he said there was.

156. He had taught in various place
that every knowable thing is ever void,
like a cloud, a dream or an illusion.
Then why did the Buddha declare the essence of
Buddhahood
to be there in every sentient being?

In the text it states that the Buddha taught phenomena are devoid of actual nature; they are like a cloud, a dream, or an illusion. This was explained in many sutras in the long, middle, and short form of the

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Prajnaparamita sutra. The Buddha in this teaching stated that anything knowable is devoid of any actual nature; that is, it is always void and always has been void. In the third turning the Buddha said that all beings have Buddha essence which appears to contradict the second turning teachings.

157. There are five mistakes: faintheartedness,
contempt for those of lesser ability, to believe in the false,
to speak about the true nature badly,
and to cherish oneself above all else.

The answer to this contraction is that if we do not understand the presence of Buddha-nature in all beings, we will make five mistakes in reasoning. The first mistake is faintheartedness; we will become discouraged about the possibility of attaining Buddhahood. We will think the Buddhas of the past have managed to attain Buddhahood, but they were individuals quite different from ourself, so Buddhahood is totally out of reach. If we think this way, we may not even begin to work for liberation. The second mistake is we don't know that other beings have Buddha-nature and we might feel contempt for persons who have a lesser understanding than our own and believe they have no chance of achieving Buddhahood. The third mistake is to have misconceptions of the true nature of things and believe appearances are real. Fourth, if we don't understand that all beings have Buddha-nature and therefore have the possibility of reaching Buddhahood, we might think that beings are simply empty and void and we might therefore ridicule their true nature. If we do not understand all beings are alike because they all possess Buddha-nature, we may make the fifth mistake of thinking more highly of ourself than others. We therefore spend more time looking for happiness for ourself and less in helping others. To prevent these five mistakes the Buddha gave three teachings.

158. The ultimate true nature is always
devoid of anything compounded:
so it is said that defilements, karma,
and their full ripening are like a cloud, etc.

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The ultimate nature of everything is devoid of anything composite. In this true nature there is no such thing as form, sound, sight, etc. because it is beyond both existence and non-existence, the four extremes, and the eight conceptual fabrications. In the ultimate sense everything is voidness, but in the relative sense everything manifests because of the defilements, karma, and the fruition of karma.

159. The defilements are said to be like clouds,
karma is likened to the experience in dreams
and the full ripening of karma and the defilements—
the aggregates—are likened to conjurations.

These three causes of manifestation are compared to clouds, a dream, and an illusion respectively. In the second turning, all relative manifestations are described as an illusion but in the ultimate sense all phenomena are void. The defilements of attachment, aggression, ignorance, and belief in a self are compared to clouds which cover buddha essence. These defilements give rise to our good and bad actions (karma) which are tainted by the presence of defilements. These actions are compared to the experiences we have in dreams. Although sounds, forms, feelings, and so on appear to us as real in a dream, they have no reality in themselves. This is the same for everything we experience. As a result of defilements and karma there is the maturation of the five aggregates. A great magician with different tricks can conjure up different illusions. These illusions are produced by the magician, but they do not have any actual independent reality. In the same way, all aggregates and manifestations of existence are conjured up by the defilements and karma and are like an illusion with no independent reality. The second turning made clear that on the ultimate level everything is void, but on the relative level everything manifests to us like clouds or dreams or illusions.

160. Previously was it thus presented,
then, further to this, the presence of Buddha-nature

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*was taught ultimately in the “changeless continuity” as
here,⁹
so that these five faults could be abandoned.*

161. Not learning in this fashion
*some people are disheartened,
through mistaken self-contempt
and bodhicitta will not develop in them.*

The purpose of this teaching was to eliminate five mis-conceptions which arise from not knowing about Buddha-nature. The first mistake is discouragement or fainthearted-ness which is a form of self-contempt. It appears when one thinks one is unable to do something because one is not good enough to do it. We think, “I cannot get rid of the defilements; I cannot achieve Buddhahood and help beings and practice dharma” and lack the confidence to practice. In general, when someone doesn’t have enough confidence in worldly affairs, they cannot accomplish what they have to do. This is also true of the dharma; if we don’t have enough courage, we aren’t able to generate the state of mind conducive to enlightenment. A Bodhisattva must have compassion and understanding. Without self-confidence, the Bodhisattva won’t be able to practice along these lines.

162. Some people, when proud, think, “I am best,”
*because bodhicitta has dawned in them,
and they strongly dwell on the idea
that those in whom it has not dawned are inferior.*

If we are able to generate some bodhicitta, then others who don’t have this motivation appear inferior. So to think, “I’m much better than others because they don’t have strong motivation” and to develop strong pride and look down on others is the second mistake because everyone has Buddha-nature.

163. Right understanding cannot arise in those who think like this
and so, since they misinterpret the true,

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they will not understand the truth.

The third mistake is to lack the right kind of understanding and to believe phenomenal appearances to be real. We cling to this misconception, because we do not understand that all phenomenal appearances are empty.

164. Beings' defects are not the true,
being but a fabrication and accidental.
In reality, these faults are not entities
whereas the qualities are naturally pure.

The faults and defects in beings are only transient and fabrications. Actually, within individuals all the qualities are pure and present. If we don't understand this, we will speak ill of the true nature which is the fourth fault.

165. If one clings to the faults, the untrue,
and disparages the qualities, the true,
one will not have the loving kindness of the wise
which sees the similarity of others and oneself.

The fifth mistake of not knowing that all beings possess Buddha-nature and to value oneself over all beings. The opposite is characteristic of Bodhisattvas who love others as much as themselves. If we don't know about Buddha-nature, one cannot achieve this complete love.

166. Through learning in such fashion there will arise enthusiasm
and respect towards the Buddha, prajna, jnana, and great
love.

If we know about the presence of Buddha-nature, the five mistakes can be dispelled. On hearing the teaching of Buddha-nature we will not be discouraged; on the contrary we will be happy to learn there is no need to continue in samsara because we possess this essence of Buddhahood and has the power to achieve Buddhahood in the future.

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We will be joyous because we discover we are on the path with all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future and is able to achieve enlightenment because we have the cause of it in ourself.

The second benefit of this teaching is that we will develop respect for all beings. Because all beings are potential Buddhas, we cannot despise them, but can only feel respect for them. The knowledge of Buddha-nature will also dispel the three remaining faults. Knowing all persons possess Buddha-nature allows us to stop believing the reality of phenomena. At first we believe everything is empty and believe in this reality. Knowledge of Buddha-nature gives rise to prajna which is the understanding of the true nature of things. Understanding that Buddha-nature is possessed by all beings gives birth to jnana. Finally, loving-kindness will develop as a result of giving up egotism or valuing oneself over others.

167. Due to the growth of these five qualities,
*the unwholesome aspects will be absent and the similarity
will be seen.*
*Through faultlessness, inherent qualities and through loving-
kindness*
which sees oneself and others' similarity,
Buddhahood will be swiftly achieved.

With the growth of these five good qualities, the five unwhole-some qualities will be abandoned and we will understand that all beings are the same in that they all possess the buddha essence and have the power to achieve Buddhahood. When we know this, we will develop loving kindness towards beings making it possible to achieve Buddhahood quickly.

This was the first chapter, one the "Essence of the Tathagatas" from the analysis of the "Potential for the Rare and Supreme" in the Ultimate Explanatory Mahayana Teaching on the Uttara Tantra.