

## INTRODUCTION

Praising the awakened mind as a wish-fulfilling gem of incalculable value, the ancients asked:

जगदानन्दबीजस्य जगद्दुःखौषधस्य च ।  
चित्तरत्नस्य यत्पुण्यं तत्कथं हि प्रमीयताम् ॥

How can one measure the merit of that jewel of the mind,  
which is the seed of joy in the world  
and the remedy for all its sufferings?<sup>1</sup>

And, indeed, how is this great jewel to be attained? Having accumulated countless contaminations of bewilderment and conflicting emotion as we continue to wander helplessly throughout the six realms, this precious jewel is buried deep in confusion and difficult to uncover. According to Buddhist teachings, by following the causal system of the perfections (*pāramitānaya*), it is possible to accumulate sufficient merit and wisdom to achieve this goal if one strives for three aeons — a period of heartbreak for those of great love and compassion who have taken a solemn vow to release all sentient beings from the torments of saṃsāra. For these noble-minded bodhisattvas, however, there are the resultant teachings of secret mantra (*guhya mantra*) that focus directly upon the same aim and utilise it as the path:

एकार्थत्वेऽप्यसम्मोहात् बहूपायाददुष्करात् ।  
तीक्ष्णोन्द्रियाधिकाराच्च मन्त्रशास्त्रं विशिष्यते ॥

Being one in their purpose, because they are free of confusion,  
endowed with abundant skilful means and without difficulty,  
The teachings of mantra are the particular prerogative  
for those whose faculties are keen.<sup>2</sup>

The empowerment ritual for the Black Razor Vajrakīla, translated below, speaks of “a spontaneous self-empowerment of the mind, known as ‘the autonomous king of awareness’ (*svādhiṣṭhānavidyārāja*)”, and the opening words of the *Black Razor Tantra* itself describe a self-contained scene, transcending all space and time, within which the Lord of the maṇḍala

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<sup>1</sup> *Bodhicaryāvatāra*

<sup>2</sup> *Nayatrāyapradīpa*

teaches to a retinue of his own emanations.<sup>3</sup> A mind that rests in its own natural state of primordial liberation, of course, being free of confusion, requires no ritual performance of empowerment because it remains forever self-empowered (*svādhiṣṭhāna*) with the wisdom of non-duality (*advayajñāna*). But cognisance of this natural condition, unfortunately, has been lost to most of us so that, despite the fact that all living beings are possessed of inherent buddha nature, these statements should not be taken to imply that a beginner needs no introduction to the teachings.

स्वाधिष्ठानेन योगेन यस्य चित्तं प्रसाध्यते ।  
शिलां चर्वति मोहेन तृषितः खं पिबत्यपि ॥

One who attempts to control his mind by the yoga  
of self-empowerment,  
Eats rocks for food in his foolishness and, when thirsty,  
even drinks the sky.<sup>4</sup>

Those whose eyes can perceive no more than the illusory images of a dualistic world of confusion believe the enlightenment of Gautama, the sage of the Śākyas, to have taken place beneath the tree of awakening in Bodhgāyā. The opening chapter of the *Sarvatahāgatattvasamgraha tantra*, however, describes this event in terms of an empowerment of secret mantra, during the course of which the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi becomes Vajradhātu, the tathāgata:

अथ सर्वतथागतैरिदं बुद्धक्षेत्रं तद्यथा तिलबिम्बमिव परिपूर्णम् । अथ खलु  
सर्वतथागता महासमाजमापद्य येन सर्वार्थसिद्धिर्बोधिसत्त्वो महासत्त्वः  
बोधिमण्डनिषण्णस्तेनोपजग्मुः । उपेत्य बोधिसत्त्वस्य सांभोगिकैः  
कायैर्दर्शनन्दत्त्वैवमाहुः । कथं कुलपुत्रानुत्तरां सम्यक्सम्बोधिमभिसंभोत्स्यसे ।  
यस्त्वं सर्वतथागततत्त्वानभिज्ञतया सर्वदुःकराणि उत्सहसीति ॥

Then this buddhafield was filled by all those who had transcended the world (*tathāgata*, ‘thus gone’), just as a sesame pod is filled with seeds, and, forming a great assembly, all those tathāgata approached the great being, the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi, as he sat beneath the tree of enlightenment. Drawing near and revealing themselves in blissful bodhisattva forms, they asked him, “Oh, nobly born one, you who en-

<sup>3</sup> *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue*

<sup>4</sup> *Amṛtasiddhi*

sure every austerity, how will you realise complete and perfect enlightenment if you lack the understanding of all buddhas concerning the true nature of reality (*tattva*)?"

अथ सर्वार्थसिद्धिर्बोधिसत्त्वो महासत्त्वस्सर्वतथागतचोदितः समानस्तत आस्फानकसमाधितो व्युत्थाय । सर्वतथागतान्प्रणि पत्याहूयैवमा ह । भगवन्तस्तथागता आज्ञापयत कथं प्रतिपद्यामि कीदृशं तत् तत्त्वमिति । एवमुक्ते सर्वतथागतास्तं बोधिसत्त्वमेककण्ठेनैवमाहुः । प्रतिपद्यस्व कुलपुत्र स्वचित्तप्रत्यवेक्षणसमाधानेन प्रकृतिसिद्धेन रुचिजप्तेन मन्त्रेण इति ॐ चित्तप्रतिवेधं करोमि ॥

Then the great being, the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi, arose from the depths of his meditation at this exhortation of all tathāgata and, bowing down before them, he asked, "Oh, holy tathāgata, please instruct me on how I should proceed, and explain to me the nature of this reality." Then all the buddhas, speaking with one voice, addressed the bodhisattva with these words, "Oh, son of noble family, you should apply yourself to the profound contemplation of your own mind with discriminating clarity and recite this delightful mantra that naturally brings success, OM CITTAPRATIVEDHAM KAROMI (*I analyse the mind*)."

अथ बोधिसत्त्वः सर्वतथागतानेवमाह । आज्ञातं मे भगवन्तस्तथागताः स्वहृदि चन्द्रमण्डलाकारं पश्यामि । सर्वतथागताः प्रोचुः । प्रकृति-प्रभास्वरमिदं कुलपुत्र चित्तं तद्यथा परिकर्ष्यते तत् तथैव भवति । तद्यथापि नाम श्वेतवस्त्रे रागरञ्जनमिति ॥

And the bodhisattva said this to all the buddhas, "Having received the instructions of all tathāgata, I see the disc of the moon in my heart." And the buddhas replied, "This is the natural radiance of your mind, oh noble one, and the more that you meditate upon it, the brighter it becomes. It is similar to a white cloth that is dyed a pleasing colour."

अथ सर्वतथागताः प्रकृतिप्रभास्वरचित्तज्ञानस्य स्फीतीकरणहेतोः पुनरपि तस्मै बोधिसत्त्वाय ॐ बोधिचित्तमुत्पादयामि इत्यनेन प्रकृतिसिद्धेन मन्त्रेण बोधिचित्तमुत्पादितवन्तः ॥

Then all the tathāgata, in order to expand the bodhisattva's understanding of the natural luminosity of mind, further aroused the thought of

enlightenment for his sake by teaching him this mantra which is naturally effective: OM BODHICITTAM UTPĀDAYĀMI (*I arouse the thought of enlightenment*).

अथ बोधि सत्त्वः पुनरपि सर्वतथागताज्ञाया बोधिचित्तमुत्पाद्यैवमाह । यत् तच्चन्द्रमण्डलाकारं तच्चन्द्रमण्डलमेव पश्यामि । सर्वतथागता आहुः । सर्वतथागतहृदयन्ते समन्तभद्रश्चित्तोत्पादः सामीचीभूतः । तत्साधु प्रतिपद्यताम् । सर्वतथागतसमन्तभद्रश्चित्तोत्पादस्य दृढीकरण-हेतोः स्वहृदि चन्द्रमण्डले वज्रबिम्बं चिन्तयानेन मन्त्रेण ॐ तिष्ठ वज्र ॥

Then, as instructed by all the tathāgata, the bodhisattva also generated the mind of awakening and spoke these words, “That which has the form of a moon disc, I see exactly as the orb of the moon.” And the buddhas replied, “The awakening of that thought in the hearts of all the buddhas is praised as ‘totally auspicious’ (*samantabhadra*) and you should practise it well. Furthermore, in order to stabilise the arousal of that totally auspicious mind of all tathāgata, you should contemplate the image of a vajra upon the moon disc in your heart and recite this mantra, OM TIṢṬHA VAJRA (*Stand firm, oh Vajra*).”

बोधिसत्त्व आह । पश्यामि भगवन्तस्तथागताश्चन्द्रमण्डले वज्रम् । सर्वतथागता आहुः । दृढीकुर्विदं सर्वतथागतसमन्तभद्रश्चित्तवज्रमनेन मन्त्रेण ॐ वज्रात्मकोऽहम् ॥

The bodhisattva spoke, “Blessed tathāgata, I see the vajra on the orb of the moon.” And all those tathāgata spoke in reply, “You should make that totally auspicious mind vajra of all buddhas firm by reciting the mantra OM VAJRĀTMAKO ’HAM (*I have vajra nature*).”

अथ यावन्तः सर्वाकाशधातु समवसरणः सर्वतथागतकायवाक्चित्तवज्रधातवः । ते सर्वे सर्वतथा गताधिष्ठाने न तस्मिन् सत्त्ववज्रे प्रविष्टाः । ततः सर्वतथागतैः स भगवान्सर्वार्थ सिद्धिर्महाबोधिसत्त्वो वज्रधातुर्वज्रधातुर् इति वज्रनामाभिषेकेणाभिषिक्तः ॥

Then the spheres of vajra Body, Speech and Mind of all tathāgata came down from every corner of the realm of space and entered fully into that adamantine being (*sattvavajra*) by the blessing of all the buddhas. And all the tathāgata consecrated the great bodhisattva Sarvārtha-

siddhi, with the vajra name empowerment, saying, “Vajradhātu! Vajradhātu!”

अथ वज्रधातुर्महाबोधिसत्त्वस्तान् सर्वतथागतानेवमाह । पश्यामि भगवन्तस्तथागताः सर्वतथागतकायमात्मानम् । सर्वतथागताः प्राहुः । तेन हि महासत्त्व सत्त्ववज्रं सर्वाकारवरोपेतं बुद्धबिम्बमात्मानं भावयानेन प्रकृतिसिद्धेन मन्त्रेण रुचितः परिजप्य ॐ यथा सर्वतथागतास्तथाहम् ॥

Then Vajradhātu, the great bodhisattva, addressed these words to all the tathāgata, “Oh, blessed tathāgata, I perceive myself to be the embodiment of all buddhas.” And those tathāgata replied, “Oh, great being! Now you should meditate upon yourself as the adamantine being – the buddha body endowed with the best of all appearances – with the delightful recitation of this spontaneously effective mantra, OM YATHĀ SARVATATHĀGATĀS TATHĀHAM (*As are all tathāgata, so am I*).”

अथैवमुक्ते वज्रधातुर्महाबोधिसत्त्वस्तथागतमात्मानमभिसम्बुध्य । तान् सर्वतथागतान् प्रणिपत्याहूयैवमाह । अधितिष्ठ मां भगवन्तस्तथागता इमामभिसंबोधिं दृढीकुरुत चेति । अथैवमुक्ते सर्वतथागता वज्रधातोस्तथागतस्य तस्मिन्सत्त्ववज्रे प्रविष्टा इति ॥

And, as those words were said, Vajradhātu, the great bodhisattva, understood himself to be a tathāgata. Bowing down before all those tathāgata, he addressed them thus: “Oh, blessed tathāgata! Please bless me and make this realisation firm by the power of your consecration.” And, when he had spoken those words, all the tathāgata became absorbed into the adamantine being of Vajradhātu, the tathāgata.

Thus it is said.

From this account we can clearly see that the occasion of a vajra empowerment has the simple format of a conversation between the guru and disciple during the course of which the guru guides his follower through a sequence of meditations, each one of which is sealed by mantra. The five meditations described here in the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha tantra* are known as the five ‘clear realisations’ (*abhisambodhi*) and comprise the sequence of visualisations employed in the practice of the creation stage (*utpattikrama*): emptiness, the lunar throne, the seed syllables of buddha speech, the hand implements of buddha mind, and the

complete body of the deity. This reaches a climax when “all the tathāgata become absorbed into the adamantine being of (*Name*), the tathāgata”. Each empowerment takes place within a buddhafield, represented by a specific maṇḍala, which may be drawn in sand (coloured powder) or painted on cloth or imagined in the mind or located within the body, etc.

Although the body maṇḍala is considered to be the only true maṇḍala in the manifest world, itself being less valid than the unmanifest maṇḍala of mind, for the sake of disciples whose view of reality is still unclear, the formal representation of a maṇḍala drawn in coloured powders or painted on cloth is required. Of these, the construction of a maṇḍala made of coloured powders offers the best opportunity for generosity on the part of the sponsors (the disciples themselves) and is therefore universally preferred.

As it is said:

बाह्यं मण्डलं तन्न कुर्वीत । स्वकायमण्डमं मुक्त्वा बहिर्मण्डलस्य  
तत्त्वतोऽभावात् ॥

One should not construct a maṇḍala outside because, other than the maṇḍala of one’s own body, no external maṇḍala has any reality.

And also:

स्वदेहे चैव बुद्धत्वं स्थितं नान्यत्र कुत्रचित् ॥

For buddhahood abides within one’s own body,  
not in any other place at all.

The resolution of this dilemma is explained in the *Vimśatavidhi*:

मन्त्रनीतौ स्थितो योगी अद्वयज्ञानयोगवान् ।  
मायोपमेन कायेन चक्रं मायोपमं लिखेत् ॥

A yogin who is well established in the way of secret mantra,  
accomplished in the wisdom of non-duality,

Uses his body like an illusion to draw the illusory maṇḍala circle.

In this text, Nāgabuddhi, an expert in the system of the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, lists twenty rituals for the construction of a maṇḍala of coloured powders in the context of the rite of empowerment:

भूमिसंशोधनं पूर्वं ततो भूमिपरिग्रहः ।  
विघ्नोपशमनं पश्चात् खटिकासूत्रपातनम् ॥