

Appendix C

The first of the fifty-two steps on the Bodhisattva path:

The Monk ‘Cloud of Virtue’ (Bhikṣu Megha Śrī, 功德雲比丘) teaches

The Prince ‘Of Sublime Wealth’ (Sudhana Kumāra, 善財童子) about attaining the resolve of meditation through remembrance of the Buddha (buddha anusmṛti samādhi, 念佛三昧)
From the final chapter of The Scripture on the Great Garland of Universal Enlightenment (Mahā Vaipulya Buddha Avataṃsaka Sūtra, 大方廣佛華嚴經)

Although originally a separate scripture, ‘The Whole Arena of Life’s Purpose’ (Gaṇḍa Vyūha), also known as ‘Entering the Sphere of Purpose’ (Dharma Dhātu Praveśa, 入法界) and ‘Entering into the Inconceivable Sphere of Emancipation Through the Practice-Fulfilling Vows of the Bodhisattva ‘Wholly Worthy’ (Samantabhadra Caryā Praṇidhāna Acintya Dhātu Praveśa, 入不思議解脫境界普賢行願品), is the final chapter of The Scripture on the Great Garland of Universal Enlightenment (Mahā Vaipulya Buddha Avataṃsaka Sūtra, 大方廣佛華嚴經). It is the story of a young prince (kumara, 童子) named ‘Of Sublime Wealth’ (Sudhana, 善財) who embarks on a great spiritual journey and, through the aid of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (personifying the transcendental discernment of purpose, encounters fifty-two good spiritual friends (kalyāṇa mitra, 善知識) who teach him different practices that will lead to the attainment of enlightenment. In the first of these fifty-two, the monk (bhikṣu, 比丘) ‘Cloud of Virtue’ (Meghaśrī, 功德雲) teaches Sudhana about ‘the resolve of meditation that keeps the Buddha in mind’ (buddha anusmṛti samādhi, 念佛三昧), the practice that enables one to enter into the state of joyfulness, the first level of grounding in the transcendental nature of life’s purpose (pramuditā bhūmi, 極喜地), elsewhere called ‘The Land of Pure Bliss’ (Sukhāvātī, 極樂世界)’. The following is an English translation of this first encounter:

At this time Mañjuśrī addressed the young prince ‘Of Sublime Wealth’ (Sudhana, 善財), saying:

“Virtuous son, in the south there is a nation called ‘The Land of Pleasant Living’ (Rāmāvarānta, 可樂) where there is a mountain called ‘Beautiful Neck’ (Sugrīva, 和合). On this mountain there is a monk (bhikṣu, 比丘) named ‘Cloud of Virtue’ (Meghaśrī, 功德雲); You should go visit him and ask how to study and cultivate the practice the bodhisattva path, and how to ultimately become endowed with the practice-fulfilling vows of the Bodhisattva ‘Wholly Worthy’ (Samantabhadra carya, 普賢行) in which all the practices of the bodhisattvas are included in a single one. Virtuous son! This monk will be able to skillfully teach you about this practice.”

The young prince Sudhana rejoiced upon hearing about this from Mañjuśrī. He bowed his head at Mañjuśrī’s feet and circumambulated about him countless times in reverent worship. Upon leaving him, he wept tears of sorrow and longing. Working his way south, he headed for Rāmāvarānta and climbed Mount Sugrīva. Once on the top of the mountain, Sudhana looked about for the monk ‘Cloud of Virtue’ for a period of seven days. He finally saw this monk on the top of a mountain, walking about it in a deep meditation with complete stillness of thought. Running up to him, he bowed at the monk’s feet, turned his right shoulder towards him (pradakṣiṇa, 右邊) out of respect and then addressed him, saying:

“Great and noble one, I have aspired to realize the supreme universal enlightenment but I have not yet understood how to study or cultivate the path of the bodhisattvas. I have heard (from Mañjuśrī) that you are a great teacher who can skillfully explain it. I pray that you will have mercy on me and teach me about it.”

The monk then addressed Sudhana, saying:

“Virtuous son! It is very good that you have been able to aspire to attain the supreme universal enlightenment and ask about the practice of the bodhisattvas.

Virtuous son! The work that is the most difficult of the difficult is being able to:

- Ask about the practice of the bodhisattvas
- Cultivate the path of the bodhisattvas
- Enter into the sphere of the bodhisattvas
- Become freed from the stream of life and death and
- Walk on the path of the bodhisattvas that is pure of affliction.

In seeking out the broad range of bodhisattva practices with purity of heart, there are the many vows that will perfect one’s response and adaptation to the stream of life and death (sāṃsara, 生死). In seeking the gateways to spiritual emancipation, one’s mind must not be not corrupted by any attachments to them.

Virtuous son! Through the power of the emancipated mind, I have realized skillful ways and means that purify

the eye of discernment (prajñā cakṣu, 慧眼), the universal illumination that observes the whole world and makes it a sphere without any barriers. Upon eliminating spiritual obstacles, one will manifest all the spiritual powers found in the Buddha's prayer-formulas that are retained and kept in mind (dhāraṇīs, 陀羅尼);

Some look east and see one Buddha, two Buddhas, a hundred or even a hundred thousand Buddhas.

Some see a million or even a billion Buddhas;

Some see an infinitely countless number of Buddhas, a number that is boundless, inestimable, incalculable, unimaginable, indescribable, inexpressible and inexpressibly inexpressible ...

Some see as many Buddhas as there are particles of dust in the jungle of this world (Jambū Dvīpa, 閻浮提).

Some see as many Buddhas as there are particles of dust in all four quarters of the world below heaven.

Some see as many Buddhas as there are particles of dust in a thousand, a million or even a billion such worlds.

As it is in the east, so it is in the south, the west, the north, up above and down below. Assuming various kinds of shapes and forms, with various kinds of mastery and adorned with various kinds of followers, they emit great networks of radiance.⁹⁶ Their various fields of enlightenment (buddha kṣetra, 佛刹) to be cultivated are adorned with pure motives, and (in adapting to the hearts and minds of sentient beings) they are manifested, revealing a mastery of the methods employed (dharma paryāya, 法門) by the bodhisattvas to see the ones that have descended into this world (tathāgatas, 諸如來) and let out a lion's roar among their great assemblies.

Virtuous son! I have only understood this universal gateway to the splendor and radiance of grace through the resolve of meditation that properly keeps the Buddha in mind (buddha anusmṛti samādhi, 念佛三昧); And how is it that one can attain a perfectly pure knowledge of the practice of the bodhisattvas through this single practice? This resolve of meditation that properly keeps the Buddha in mind is attained by the great ones who awaken the transcendental nature of life's purpose in sentient beings (bodhisattvas mahāsattvas, 諸大菩薩):

In being a perfectly complete illumination, they are able to see all the Buddhas and their followers who adorn and purify their fields (lands) of enlightenment (buddha kṣetra, 佛刹).

In being a far-reaching elimination of all delusions, they are able to adapt and respond to the capacities of all sentient beings, making them pure of heart.

In being ultimately powerful, they are able to cultivate and learn all of the ten powers of the Buddha through proper mindfulness of it.

In being without any delusions about the transcendental nature of life's purpose:

They are able to see the vast clouds of enlightened beings, hear all of their teachings about this nature of life's purpose and keep them all in mind.

They are able to distinguish all those in the ten directions of space that have descended into this world (tathāgatas, 如來), seeing vast oceans of them descending into the oceans of this world.

They are able to see that which is invisible and impenetrable through the mastery of the Buddhas over all of the most sublime spheres (of meditation).

In being without any delusions about time:

They are able to see the Buddhas from all the distant ages, including all those that have never been seen before in the past or the future.

They are able to adapt to all times, ever seeing all of the Buddhas from all periods of time.

They are able to adorn and purify all the fields of enlightenment, manifesting all of them and seeing all of the Buddhas that are found in them.

In being without any delusions about the past, present and future, they are able to see all of the Buddhas with all of their followers throughout the past, present and future.

In being an indestructible sphere, they are able to see all the Buddhas found within all the spheres of life's purpose.

In being a serene stillness, in a single moment, they are able to see all worlds and all of the enlightened beings that have descended into them (sarva tathāgataḥ, 一切如來), manifesting their spiritual lives with perfect spiritual freedom (nirvāṇa, 涅槃).

In being apart from the cycles of time, they are able to see all the enlightened beings that descend into this world and travel about it each and every single day, teaching about the nature of life's purpose and spiritually transforming sentient beings.

In being broad and great, they are able to see the grace of all the Buddhas' spiritual lives seated with their legs locked in lotus position, filling up the whole sphere of life's purpose (dharma dhātu, 法界).

In being most sublime, they are able to see all of the Buddhas who attain the supreme universal enlightenment within each pore of the Buddha's hair.

In being adorned with spiritual power, in a single moment they are able to see all the Buddhas in all the worlds attaining the perfect universal enlightenment.

In being pure in intent, they are able to see all of the Buddhas and, with a radiance of discernment that

universally illuminates all things, turning the sublime wheel of life's purpose.

In being pure of heart, they are able to look into their own hearts and thoroughly reveal all of the Buddhas there.

In being pure in action, they are able to see the consequence-producing actions (karmas, 諸業) of all sentient beings like they were reflections in a mirror.

In being masterful, they are able to see all of the adornments in the sphere of purpose and the Buddhas that fill them.

And, in being endowed with the universal nature of emptiness, they are able to see the grace of the spiritual lives of the enlightened beings who have descended into this world everywhere, illuminating both the sphere of purpose and the sphere of empty space.

Having taught about this gateway to enlightenment, the monk 'Cloud of Virtue' (Meghaśrī, 功德雲) then told Sudhana where to go for his next lesson, saying:

"Virtuous son, to the south there is a country called 'Gateway to the Ocean' (Sāgara Mukha, 海門) where there is a monk named 'Ocean Cloud' (Sāgara Megha, 海雲). Go to him and ask him about the practice of the bodhisattvas and how to cultivate the bodhisattva path. He will be able to:

- Skillfully distinguish and reveal the broad and vast range of practices found in cultivating the roots of virtue
- Make you properly penetrate the preparatory practices that are broad and great
- Make you properly attain the powers found in the roots of virtue that are broad and great
- Make you properly teach (others) the cause for inspiring the spiritually awakened mind (bodhicitta, 菩提心)
- Make you properly illuminate the vehicle of enlightenment that is broad and great
- Make you properly attain the powers of spiritual deliverance (pāramitā, 波羅蜜) that are broad and great
- Make you properly enter into the ocean of bodhisattva practices that is broad and great
- Make you properly turn the wheel of transcendental vows that is broad and great
- Make you properly purify the way to adornment with merits and virtues that is broad and great
- Make you properly raise up the mercy and compassion that is broad and great

Sudhana then worshipped at the feet of the monk Meghaśrī, circumambulating about him a countless number of times. Having properly venerated and paid his respects to him, he departed (to seek out the monk 'Ocean Cloud').