

BCA Ch. 1 Stanza 1, Text Sections 156-181

*To the sugatas, who are endowed with the dharmakaaya,
together with their sons,
And to all who are worthy of veneration, I respectfully pay homage.
That done, in accordance with the scriptures, I will briefly explain
Entering into the precepts of the sons of the sugatas.*

BCA 1-1, Text section 158:

These four steps of approaching the text: (1) declaring respect, (2) pledging to compose (the text), (3) casting away pride, and (4) generating joy can be applied to any work or activity one undertakes. You especially need these four steps when you study, contemplate or meditate on the teachings.

'Declaring respect' in Dharma and worldly situations means that in order to transform your mind, you at first supplicate, make aspirations, utter praises and go for refuge in the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and lineage masters. Through supplication you bring energy to your mind.

Next, you need to make a pledge or firm resolve to study, contemplate and meditate on the Dharma. Pledging to carry out such a task stabilizes your mind.

Then you should humble yourself and not allow yourself to become proud. On the other hand you should not be too timid either. You should study, contemplate and meditate on the Dharma with joy in your heart.

The Buddha teaches us to avoid the two extremes. Concerning the view, one must avoid the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. In regard to meditation, one needs to be on guard against falling into the extremes of drowsiness or agitation. Finally, regarding the conduct, avoid the extreme of sense gratification as well as the extreme of hardship and penance.

When you start your meditation in the morning, first pay respect to the Buddhas and your lineage masters by supplicating them in order to bring down their blessing to transform your mind. You pray to them, "May the precious bodhicitta be born in my mind." Then you make the firm resolve to meditate on bodhicitta, without any distraction, for the duration of your entire meditation session. You must further cultivate a motivation which is both modest and humble. You

should not meditate motivated by arrogance and pride. Neither should you meditate in a timid frame of mind. Do not think, “This is all too difficult. How could someone like me ever develop the precious bodhicitta?” You must establish in yourself the confidence that you are perfectly able to meditate on bodhicitta. Practice then with a heart overflowing with joy and inspiration.

BCA 1-1, Text section 159:

This section, called *declaration of respect*, deals with the first two lines of the first stanza. Traditionally, the author of a treatise would express his respectful praise to the deity of his choice right in the beginning, before starting his actual composition. Here, Shantideva shows his devotion by praising the three jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

The purpose of ‘declaring respect’ is to open your mind. Recollecting the qualities of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and the lineage masters, you declare respect. The phrase ‘declaration of respect’ primarily connotes ‘paying respect’ or ‘paying homage’ or ‘offering prostration’, as well as ‘supplicating’ and ‘expressing respectful praises’.

Declaring respect allows the blessings to enter into your mind-stream. Unless the blessings of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and lineage masters enter into your mind-stream, your mind will not be transformed.

The *path of bliss* is identical with the path or *vehicle of the bodhisattvas*. It is the path of the precious bodhicitta motivation and the application of the six transcendental perfections. The bodhisattvas utterly rejoice in benefiting others. Their sole motivation is to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment. To accomplish this benefit for others is the highest bliss for a bodhisattva.

Once a bodhisattva has reached the first bodhisattva level, which corresponds to the path of seeing, the realization of the natural state, he has overcome all obscurations of affliction and hence is free from gross manifestations of suffering. Through the supreme path, the bodhisattvas themselves reach the level of perfect enlightenment, *the fruition of bliss*. The attainment of perfect enlightenment is the highest bliss possible.

The Sanskrit term *Sugata* is a synonym for the Buddha and means ‘bliss-gone’ or ‘the one gone to bliss’. *Bliss*, in this context, connotes ‘liberation’ or ‘Nirvana’

and *gone* connotes 'having arrived at'. A Buddha is someone who has reached the highest level of bliss, Nirvana, liberation, enlightenment or Buddhahood.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 160-161:

Khenpo Kunpal lists three interpretations of the term 'Sugata': (1) *excellently or beautifully gone*, (2) *gone without returning*, and (3) *perfectly or completely gone*. This three-fold interpretation of the term 'Sugata' can also be explained by the terms *overcoming* and *realization*, both individually and in conjunction with one another. Such a scholastic explanation of the Indian and Tibetan scholars follows in the next text sections:

BCA 1-1, Text section 162:

(1) The individual explanation of *overcoming*, as included in the first interpretation of the term 'Sugata', is, as the text says: '*Excellently or beautifully gone,*' meaning that (the Buddha) has gone excellently or beautifully, as he is untainted by the defects of (the truth of) suffering and (the truth of) its origination, (both of) which point at afflictions.

Buddha is not tainted by the defects of the truth of suffering and the truth of origination, which both concern samsara, the realm of afflictions. Afflictions are understood to be 'totally polluted' or 'utterly defiled'. The truth of origination refers to karma and afflictions. Karma is enacted by body, speech and mind. The term *afflictions* refers to the six main afflictions, the twenty secondary afflictions as well as the three or five mind poisons.

The six main afflictions are: 1) ignorance, 2) desire, 3) aggression or anger, 4) pride, 5) doubt, and 6) wrong views or wrong believes.

The twenty secondary or subsidiary afflictions are: 1) anger, 2) holding a grudge, 3) concealment, 4) spiteful anger, 5) jealousy, 6) miserliness, 7) hypocrisy, 8) pretense, 9) haughtiness, 10) resentment, 11) lack of a sense of shame, 12) lack of a sense of embarrassment, 13) dullness, 14) agitation, 15) lack of faith, 16) laziness, 17) heedlessness, 18) forgetfulness, 19) distraction, and 20) lack of introspection.

The three mind poisons or the three afflictions are: 1) desire, 2) aversion and 3) ignorance. The five mind poisons are: 1) desire, 2) aversion, 3) ignorance, 4) arrogance, and 5) jealousy.

Because the Buddha has 'overcome' the obscurations of afflictions as well as all obscurations of cognition, he has thus excellently or beautifully gone. Buddha is not tainted any longer by karma and afflictions because he gathered the accumulations of merit and wisdom for three countless aeons. He overcame all there is to overcome.

The example for being untainted by afflictions is that of a person with a beautiful body. As the Buddha is free from all suffering and the origination of suffering, he can be compared to a beautiful person washed utterly clean. The Buddha has surpassed samsara, the truths of suffering and the origination of suffering. Therefore, he has excellently or beautifully gone. Worldly beings have not transcended suffering, its causes and their fruition. 'Worldly beings' are all beings within the three realms of samsara.

The cause for suffering is the truth of origination. The truth of origination refers to karma and afflictions. Karma and afflictions arise from holding on to ego. Ego-clinging results from ignorance. As sentient beings have not realized the wisdom of egolessness, they are constantly involved in afflictions and thus create karma. They create the causes for suffering and experience the fruition of suffering.

BCA 1-1, Text section 163:

(2) The individual explanation of *realization*, as included in the second interpretation of the term 'Sugata', is that since the Buddha has 'realized' the natural state as it is, he has *gone without returning*.

Gone without returning means that the Buddha has eradicated the seeds of the view of an identity, and, consequently, he does not return to samsara, just as firewood which has been burned will not again flare up.

The Sugatas have 'realized' the wisdom of egolessness. They are free from holding on to an identity. They have totally eradicated ignorance and can never fall back into samsara. The example is a person who has recovered from smallpox, because after recovering from smallpox one is then immune.

The Buddha has surpassed all the paths of the tirthikas. Even when the tirthikas reach the peak of worldly existence, they can never go beyond the confines of worldly existence. The great masters of the tirthika systems can reach samsara's peak but never go beyond that point because they have not realized the wisdom

of egolessness. Tirthika masters can temporarily overcome gross afflictions, but they never attain the wisdom of egolessness.

Tirthika meditation masters at best take rebirth in the subtle spheres of the realms of formlessness. These are the most subtle states within samsara and are reached through worldly meditation that still holds on to ego. Once the karma to remain in these states is exhausted, the tirthika meditation masters again fall into the lower realms. The Buddha has reached a state completely beyond samsaric existence and can, therefore, never fall back into any of samsara's three realms. The three realms of samsara are the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. Therefore, the Buddha is vastly superior to all tirthika teachers.

BCA 1-1, Text section 164:

(3) The combined explanation of the terms *overcoming* and *realization*, as included in the third interpretation of the term 'Sugata', is *perfectly or completely gone* and means the Buddha has attained the supreme qualities of perfect overcoming and perfect realization without the slightest degree of anything remaining to be attained. He has perfectly 'overcome' all that there is to overcome, namely the truth of suffering and the truth of origination.

The Buddha has also perfectly realized all that there is to 'realize', namely the relative truth and the absolute truth. Therefore, he has perfectly or completely gone. There is not even the slightest degree of anything remaining to be overcome or realized. Therefore, the example is that of a vase filled to the brim.

What must be overcome are the obscurations of afflictions and the obscurations of cognition. The Buddha has overcome both, including their most subtle aspects. What must be realized is the wisdom of the twofold knowledge: the wisdom of knowing the natural state as it actually is, and the wisdom of knowing all there is to know. The Buddha has realized the ultimate wisdom and has thus reached omniscience. Absolutely nothing remains to be attained.

In *his manner of having thus gone*, the Buddha has completely surpassed the shravakas and the pratyekabuddhas with his perfect qualities of overcoming and realization. Though they will not fall back into samsara, they have not completely developed all qualities of 'overcoming' and 'realization' and are therefore only *partially* realized.

A simple interpretation of the term 'Sugata' follows. As he has gone to the blissful level of Buddhahood, based on the blissful cause of the precious bodhicitta, he is called the 'Sugata', 'the one who has gone to bliss'.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 165-166:

The *Dharmakaya of realization* is the wisdom realized by the Buddha. The *Dharmakaya of the doctrine* is the expression of Buddha's wisdom, the spoken teachings of the Buddha, the Dharma. The Buddha's realization is Dharma as is also the doctrine that he teaches. The Dharma that the Buddha has in his mind is called the 'Dharmakaya of realization'; the Dharma he teaches, which he expresses verbally, is called the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine'. Therefore, the phrase 'endowed with the Dharmakaya' connotes 'Dharma' as the second jewel among the three: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It also connotes Buddha's realization from where the Dharma stems.

The 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' means that, based upon the Buddha as the cause, the words and letters of the teachings appear for those to be tamed. Therefore, the root text says in stanza one: "The Sugatas, who are endowed with the Dharmakaya,..."

In other words, the 'Dharmakaya of realization' is the wisdom of knowing the natural state as it is, and the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' is the wisdom of knowing all that can be known, which is omniscience. These wisdoms are inseparable.

'Kaya' in the term Dharmakaya means 'support for qualities'. Literally, Dharmakaya means 'body of Dharma', a term connoting 'support for the Dharma', both support for the Dharma of realization and support for the Dharma of the doctrine.

'Dharma' also refers to wisdom and 'kaya' to the perception aspect of it. 'Kaya' actually means 'body' and has also the connotation of 'appearance' and 'perception'. In other words, there is something there—a wisdom body—that can be seen or that manifests but only to the Buddha. Therefore, Dharmakaya means 'wisdom appearance' or 'wisdom perception'.

The term 'Sambhogakaya' denotes the support for the wisdom of great bliss. 'Nirmanakaya' denotes the support or basis that gives rise to inconceivable emanations.

One who is endowed with the qualities of the Dharmakaya is a Buddha. Among the three jewels this is the jewel of the Buddha. The jewel of the Dharma has the twofold meaning, the Dharmakaya of realization and the Dharmakaya of the doctrine.

Moreover, the term 'Dharmakaya', 'body of Dharma' can be interpreted at various levels. In this context, 'Dharma' refers to the natural state, to emptiness. The nature or the 'expression' of this emptiness is called 'body' or 'manifestation'. In this case 'body' and 'appearance' have the same meaning. The Buddha is thus endowed with the Dharmakaya.

The empty essence of the Dharmakaya is called the 'expanse Dharmakaya'. The cognizant nature of the Dharmakaya is called the 'wisdom Dharmakaya'. The Buddha is endowed with both the 'expanse Dharmakaya' and the 'wisdom Dharmakaya'.

The Dharmakaya of realization and the Dharmakaya of the doctrine can also be explained in other ways. The 'Dharmakaya of realization' can refer to the wisdom of the Buddha. The 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' can refer to the teachings and scriptures that are principally concerned with the truth of cessation and the truth of the path. The truth of cessation and the truth of the path are known as the 'Dharmakaya of realization', or the 'actual Dharmakaya'. The scriptures or teachings that manifest from this wisdom are called the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine'.

The Dharmakaya of realization is the realization of the truth of cessation. The truth of cessation is endowed with a nature of twofold purity, the 'nature of perfect purity' and the 'transtemporal purity'. The 'nature of perfect purity' means that the nature of one's mind is primordially pure. The nature of the mind is primordial Buddhahood and has never experienced any stain or defect.

The 'transtemporal purity' refers to the afflictions which arise temporarily. All afflictions and habitual patterns are compounded phenomena. They are neither primordial nor uncompounded and, therefore, can be completely eliminated. In the face of the realization of Dharmakaya they are entirely absent. This explains 'transtemporal purity'.

The Dharmakaya of realization, the truth of cessation, is gained through non-dual wisdom, where no distinction any longer exists between subject and object.

The Dharmakaya of the doctrine refers to the teachings and scriptures that establish this realization.

The 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine' also includes the teacher of the profound way and the teacher of the manifold way. These two teachers refer to the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya respectively.

Generally, a Buddha is endowed with the three kayas: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. The Dharmakaya is said to have the nature of twofold purity as described above.

The Sambhogakaya is endowed with the five certainties, which are (1) certainty of place: the Sambhogakaya Buddhas dwell only in the Akanistha realm; (2) certainty of time: they remain until samsara is emptied; (3) certainty of body: their bodies are distinctly ornamented with the major marks and minor signs; (4) certainty of entourage: they are surrounded exclusively by noble beings of the Mahayana; and (5) certainty of the teachings: to this noble entourage they exclusively teach the Mahayana Dharma.

Concerning the Nirmanakaya, different Nirmanakaya or emanations are distinguished: the 'supreme Nirmanakaya', the 'created Nirmanakaya', the 'rebirth Nirmanakaya', and the 'manifold Nirmanakaya'.

All these different distinctions of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya refer to the jewel of the Buddha, first among the three jewels.

We can, however, distinguish between different Nirmanakaya or emanations of the Buddha. Buddha Shakyamuni himself is called the 'supreme Nirmanakaya'. His body, speech and mind are beyond compare; his qualities are beyond imagination. A 'supreme Nirmanakaya' like Buddha Shakyamuni teaches sentient beings through the twelve great deeds.

The twelve deeds of the Buddha are:

1. Descending from Tushita's heavenly place.
2. Entering the womb.
3. Birth.
4. Demonstrating his physical prowess.
5. Enjoying the company of his queen.
6. Leaving home.
7. Undergoing penance.

8. Realizing the essence of enlightenment.
9. Defeating the maras.
10. Total awakening.
11. Turning the wheel of Dharma.
12. Entering into Nirvana.

A 'created Nirmanakaya' is an emanation of the Buddha that looks exactly like him and gives teachings. Examples of these are the six munis, each of which manifests as a Buddha in one of the six realms of samsara. The term 'created Nirmanakaya' does not refer to statues or thangkas of the Buddha, which are created by human beings, and are instead called 'manifold Nirmanakaya'.

Another type of Nirmanakaya results when the minds of advanced Dharma practitioners receive the Buddha's blessings in the bardo, the intermediate state. When these practitioners are subsequently reborn, they are known as 'rebirth Nirmanakayas'. The Mahayana sutra tradition refers to such consciousnesses which have been blessed in the bardo as 'tulkus', Nirmanakayas. This occurrence is a merging of the Buddha's blessings with the mind of an advanced practitioner. Meditating at all times on the Buddha establishes the auspicious conditions for the Buddha's emanations to merge with one's mind in the bardo. When this occurs it is called a 'rebirth Nirmanakaya', a 'tulku'.

A tenth level bodhisattva becomes a fully enlightened Buddha at the very moment that the bodhisattva realizes the genuine Dharmakaya of the Buddha. That moment is called 'fully realizing the Dharmakaya'. The moment a practitioner realizes the genuine Sambhogakaya, he becomes a genuine bodhisattva. This is possible from the first bodhisattva level onward. From the first to the tenth level he will perceive and realize different levels of the Sambhogakaya.

'Manifold Nirmanakaya' refers to all representations of the Buddha's body, speech and mind. It refers also to relics of the Buddha as well as to anything which can benefit sentient beings, such as lotus flowers, jewels, medicine, food, clothing, vehicles, bridges, and so forth.

The utterly immaculate Dharmadhatu, the expanse of Dharma, connotes the Dharmakaya of realization. The Dharmadhatu is inseparable from wisdom, and it is wisdom that recognizes the Dharmadhatu. The realization of Dharmadhatu, as it is in itself, is called the Dharmakaya of realization.

Conducive to the cause of its (realization) means 'conducive to the causes of the wisdom that realizes the utterly immaculate Dharmadhatu.

The *profound* refers to profound emptiness. *Manifold* denotes the vast classifications of the teachings. In both sutra and tantra we find the distinction into what is known as 'profound teachings' and 'vast teachings'. The 'profound' and 'vast' teachings are a *manifestation* of the enlightened mind of the Buddha, similar to his own realization. The teachings only manifest 'similar to' and are *conducive to* the Buddha's realization because the Dharmadhatu itself cannot immediately manifest in the mind-stream of a sentient being as it is in reality. The Buddha's realization replicates in the mind-stream of beings according to the degree of realization they can achieve.

Since the Buddha is endowed with the wisdom that realizes the Dharmadhatu as it actually is in itself, the Dharmakaya of realization, his wisdom has the power to give rise to many profound and vast teachings. This is the Dharmakaya of the doctrine and is also the twofold knowledge of the Buddha. Truly realizing the natural state as it is, one also gains omniscience, the knowledge of all that can be known.

Patrul Rinpoche said:

If one knows (the natural state) as it is but cannot see all that can be known, Then even if one (appears to be) a noble being, this is still not the enlightened mind of the Victor.

BCA 1-1, Text section 167:

After completing the commentary on what is meant by 'the jewel of the Dharma', Khenpo Kunpal proceeds to explain 'the jewel of the Sangha'. The Buddha has three sons: his *physical son*, the *sons of his speech*, and the *sons of his mind*. Rahula was his physical son. The shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are the sons of his speech, and the bodhisattvas are the sons of his mind. Generally, these are collectively known as the jewel of the Sangha, the third of the three jewels. Here, 'Sangha' means 'those aspiring to virtue, whose minds will not divert from virtuous actions'.

One should be aware that, in text section 169, Khenpo Kunpal explicitly classifies the bodhisattvas as the Mahayana Sangha and counts them among the three jewels. In text section 170, he classifies the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas as being 'worthy of veneration'.

When Buddha Shakyamuni was the young prince Siddhartha, he married Yasodhara, Gopa and Mrigaja. His union with Gopa produced Rahula, *his physical son*. The shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are called the *sons of his speech* because they attained liberation by listening to and practicing the Dharma he taught them. They have arisen from his speech.

BCA 1-1, Text section 168:

The bodhisattvas are the sons of Buddha's mind because they are his true *successors*. Eventually they will attain complete enlightenment and themselves become Buddhas. They will then lead the bodhisattvas from their own entourage to complete enlightenment. The bodhisattvas are called the 'Mahayana Sangha', while the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are called the 'Hinayana Sangha'.

With this understanding, Shantideva pays homage to the Buddha and his sons. Paying homage to the Buddha and the Sangha, the Dharma is automatically included, since the Dharma naturally dwells in the minds of the Buddha and the Sangha. The Dharma includes the wisdom of statements and the wisdom of realization, both of which abide in the minds of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. Together they constitute the jewel of the Dharma, second among the three jewels.

The 'teachings of statements' is a term referring to all the teachings the Buddha has given: the complete tripitaka, 'the three baskets' of the teachings. These are: 1) the vinaya pitaka, 'the basket of discipline'; 2) the sutra pitaka, 'the basket of discourses'; and 3) the abhidharma pitaka, 'the basket of the doctrine'.

The 'teachings of the statements' can also be divided into the twelve sections of scriptures. The wisdom of statements is the wisdom which knows all the statements of the tripitaka. The wisdom of these three baskets of teachings abides within the minds of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, those who have realized the teachings of the tripitaka.

The twelve sections of scriptures are: 1) sutra, 2) aphorisms in prose and verse, 3) prophetic declarations, 4) verses, 5) meaningful expressions, 6) narratives, 7) parables, 8) legends, 9) tales of past lives, 10) extensive teachings, 11) marvelous events, and 12) established instructions.

The 'teachings of realization' is a term referring to the three precious trainings: 1) the training in discipline, 2) the training in samadhi, and 3) the training in

knowledge. The wisdom of realization is the wisdom that comes from the practice of the three trainings. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas train in discipline and samadhi and hold knowledge in their minds.

Thus, one should understand that the sublime Dharma is the wisdom of statements and the wisdom of realization, both of which abide in the minds of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. The Dharma is the mind that has realized wisdom. The Buddhist books and scriptures are mere representations or replicas of the sublime Dharma, not the actual Dharma.

In this way the Bodhisattva-caryavatara has introduced the three jewels. 'Jewel' is the English translation of the Tibetan word 'konchok', which is derived from the Sanskrit word 'ratna'. Ratna connotes 'jewel'. In this world the three jewels are as 'rare' and as 'supreme' as a jewel.

The three jewels possess the six qualities of a jewel:

1. The three jewels are of 'rare appearance', as they do not manifest unless beings have accumulated sufficient merit. Like a jewel, they are difficult to find. The appearance of a Buddha is very rare. For three countless aeons Buddha Shakyamuni gathered the accumulations of merit and wisdom and purified afflictive and cognitive obscurations. Unless beings have accumulated sufficient merit, a Buddha does not appear. Without a Buddha, there is neither Dharma nor Sangha.

Buddha Shakyamuni is the only Buddha who ever appeared in a time when the five degenerations were widespread. He made five hundred great aspirations to particularly benefit beings of lesser merit in such a time. Had Buddha Shakyamuni not made these great aspirations, due to our insufficient merit, the three jewels would not even be mentioned. The five degenerations are the degeneration of time, the degeneration of sentient beings, the degeneration of lifespan, the degeneration of actions, and the degeneration of afflictions. Sometimes the degeneration of views is listed instead of the degeneration of actions.

2. The three jewels are 'immaculate', naturally without stains just as a jewel is free from flaws and imperfections. Buddha himself is utterly unblemished. His body, speech and mind have not the slightest flaw. The sublime Dharma is immaculate because both the 'pronouncements of the tripitaka' and the 'teachings that lead to realization, namely the three trainings', are flawless in

word and meaning. The Sangha, though not utterly unblemished, is on the path to becoming so.

3. The three jewels are 'powerful' as they benefit oneself and others. The example is a magic jewel, which enables one to accomplish whatever one wishes. The Buddha is powerful because he has attained the Dharmakaya for his own benefit and has manifested the Rupakaya for the benefit of others. The sublime Dharma is powerful because it leads to liberation and enlightenment. The Sangha is powerful as it holds the knowledge of the path to liberation and enlightenment and as it explains that knowledge to others.

4. The three jewels are the 'ornamentation of the world', causing wholesome thoughts in beings and thus beautifying the world, as a jewel beautifies the person who wears it. The Buddha beautifies the world by causing beings to generate virtuous thoughts. The Dharma beautifies the world as it is the actual method to attain enlightenment. The Sangha beautifies the world by inspiring virtue in beings and as companions along the path.

5. The three jewels are 'supreme' since in this world nothing is superior to them. Similarly, jewels are considered supreme among worldly objects. The Buddha is supreme in this world because he has completely transcended the world. The Dharma is supreme as it is the perfect path to liberation and enlightenment; the Sangha is supreme as it has embarked on that path.

6. The three jewels are 'unchanging'; like jewels they are by nature without change. Unchanging means not falling under the power of impermanence. The Buddha has attained the unchanging wisdom. The Dharma is unchanging as it teaches the unchanging Four Noble Truths. The Sangha is unchanging since once Sangha members have reached the level of exalted persons, they will unwaveringly progress to enlightenment.

The Tibetan translators tried to capture two of these six qualities when they coined the word 'konchok', 'supreme and rare' for the Sanskrit word 'ratna'. They thought that the Tibetan word 'rinchen', meaning jewels like rubies and emeralds, did not convey the full meaning well enough.

Why did they choose these two qualities from among the six? Because the cause for enlightenment is difficult to obtain. People have many negative thoughts. Positive thoughts, emotions and actions, which form the cause to embark upon the path of enlightenment, are rare. Even rarer is the actual attainment of enlightenment. As the Buddha is free from all defects and endowed with all

qualities, he is supreme in this world. These two, rare and supreme, are the most outstanding of a jewel's six qualities. Therefore, the Tibetan translators selected a word that reflects the implied meaning rather than adhering strictly to a literal translation.

The sutra teachings recognize only 'three jewels': the teacher, the teaching, and the followers. More than three are not necessary. Practicing the path to enlightenment, one need rely only on the three jewels.

When paying respect to the three jewels one must understand what they are. According to the Mahayana teachings, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are each endowed with eight qualities:

Being endowed with eight qualities of the twofold benefits is the hallmark of the jewel of the Buddha.

Being endowed with eight qualities of cessation and path is the hallmark of the sublime Dharma.

Being endowed with eight qualities of knowledge and liberation is the hallmark of the noble Sangha.

These qualities will be explained in great detail in Khenpo Kunpal's commentary to the second chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 169-171:

Shantideva furthermore pays respect to all who are worthy of veneration. This includes the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the sons of Buddha's speech. In addition, he pays homage to any person who has a single quality greater than his own. In the same way, one should pay respect to any spiritual master, teacher, fellow monk or Dharma friend who possesses a single quality in a greater degree than oneself, such as a monk who is *even one shadow cast* senior in ordination age.

At the conclusion of the ordination ceremony for monks, one monk, called 'the time measurer', has the task of measuring the time. He determines the exact time when the ordination vows are conferred upon each aspirant, the very moment the preceptor snaps his fingers. He records in the ordination certificate the minute, the hour, whether it is daytime or night-time, the date, whether it is in the first or second half of the month, the season and year of the ordination. Traditionally, the exact time was measured according to the shadow cast by a small, pyramidal wooden device called a 'shadow stick'.

A monk who was ordained on the same day, even one finger-width of a shadow cast earlier than another monk, will always be considered 'a senior monk', someone who has received the monk vows at an earlier stage and hence should be respected by all those ordained after him.

Nevertheless, seniority is not the only type of ranking within the Sangha. In addition to ranking according to seniority is ranking according to wisdom. The Buddha taught that the attainment of wisdom always supercedes seniority in ordination age when it comes to one's position in the Sangha. Even a Buddhist lay practitioner who has realized wisdom is held in higher esteem than a fully ordained monk who has not yet realized wisdom.

Those who are helpful refers to one's father and mother, spiritual friends and so forth.

There are various reasons to declare respect when beginning to compose a treatise: (1) in order to complete the composition of the treatise without any obstacles, (2) so that the author's followers truly trust in the authenticity of the treatise, develop faith, and are inspired to diligence, (3) so that the teachers and students will be able to successfully expound and study the treatise without any obstacles.

Shantideva expresses his devotion to the three jewels with the *three gates*], body, speech and mind. He respectfully offers prostrations with his body; he respectfully supplicates with his voice; and he respectfully recalls the special qualities of the three jewels in his mind.

For the blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to enter your mind, you must open your mind to these supreme fields of merit. Realization will dawn only when the blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have entered your mind. You should practice pure perception concerning your personal master and teacher, focusing only on his positive qualities.

The author's declaration of respect to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas at the very beginning of the treatise ensures that everyone who reads the book will immediately recognize it as a Buddhist text.

BCA 1-1, Text section 172:

Nagarjuna states that if an author declares respect to the Buddha when he begins to compose a treatise the composition will always yield good results. Declaring respect at the beginning of the treatise causes the readers to develop faith and devotion in the Buddha and in the treatise. If the author pays respect, the readers will naturally follow his example.

BCA 1-1, Text section 173:

The quote from the Lalita-vistara-sutra¹⁴⁶⁹ links the declaration respect to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the proclamation of the names of the Buddhas, to the generation of immeasurable merit. The blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas will enter such a meritorious person's mind-stream, and he will accomplish whatever he wishes.

Before a master teaches, he first offers three prostrations to the seat or throne from which he will teach the Dharma. This cuts through any possible pride that he might develop, and instead produces humility. There is always the danger that sitting upon a high throne and teaching the Dharma to many people might lead a teacher to become proud.

Whenever my teacher, Khenpo Pentse, entered into the Shri Singha Shedra hall to teach, right at the door he would prostrate himself three times to the throne, books and statues. Then he would ascend the throne where he remained standing while the monks offered three prostrations to him. After Khenpo Pentse had sat down, all the monks also sat. Apart from such teaching situations, Khenpo Pentse would refuse to accept prostrations from monks or lay people saying "Don't prostrate to me. I am just an ordinary sentient being. Prostrate to the Dharma books and statues."

The tradition of offering prostrations to the throne started with the Buddha when he taught the Prajnaparamita for the first time. Buddha arranged his own teaching throne and prostrated to it before sitting down. Buddha did this to acknowledge the 'greatness of the teaching'. The Prajnaparamita teachings are very profound and difficult to realize. From that time onward, teachers in the monasteries and shedras of India and Tibet began prostrating to their thrones before they started teaching. The throne itself is not a sign of the greatness of the master, but rather symbolizes the greatness of the Dharma.

Moreover, a teacher should always wash before he teaches. He should touch the scriptures only with clean hands. This is another gesture of respect to the

Dharma and to the scriptures. Once the teacher has ascended to the throne, the students must present three prostrations as a gesture of respect to the teacher who is the expounder of the Dharma.

BCA 1-1, Text section 175:

Precept is defined as 'that which safeguards against non-virtuous tendencies of body, speech and mind'. The literal meaning of the term 'precept' is 'to bind', 'to close', or 'to close down all three gates of non-virtue'. Therefore, 'taking precepts' safeguards against or causes one to refrain from all misdeeds.

A bodhisattva commits himself to three disciplines: (1) the discipline of refraining from negative conduct, (2) the discipline of practicing virtuous Dharmas and (3) the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings.

(1) *The discipline of refraining from negative conduct:* A bodhisattva avoids all ten unwholesome actions as though they were poison and practices their opposites, the ten virtuous actions. A bodhisattva safeguards his body, speech and mind, maintaining the basic training of the 'seven categories of the precepts of individual liberation'.

(2)

The seven categories of the precepts of individual liberation are those of: (1) a fully ordained monk; (2) a fully ordained nun; (3) a monk; (4) a nun; (5) a male lay practitioner; (6) a female lay practitioner and (7) a probationary nun.

A bodhisattva avoids any negative action such as the ten non-virtuous actions, the five crimes with immediate retribution, the five secondary crimes with immediate retribution, the five perverted means of sustenance, and others.

The ten non-virtuous actions are: 1) taking life, 2) taking what is not given, 3) sexual misconduct, 4) speaking lies, 5) sowing discord, 6) harsh words, 7) worthless chatter, 8) covetousness, 9) wishing harm to others, and 10) wrong views.

The five crimes with immediate retribution are: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, creating a split in the Sangha, and malevolently causing a Tathagata to bleed. Among these five creating a split in the Sangha is considered the most severe misdeed.

The five secondary crimes with immediate retribution are: acting impurely with a female arhat, killing a bodhisattva, killing a Sangha member who is on the path of learning, stealing the sustenance of the Sangha, and destroying a stupa.

The eight perverse acts are: 1. criticizing goodness, 2. praising evil, 3. interrupting the accumulation of merit of a virtuous person, 4. disturbing the mind of those who have devotion, 5. giving up one's master, 6. giving up one's deity, 7. giving up one's vajra brothers and sisters, and 8. desecrating a mandala.

The five perverted ways of sustenance are: 1) obtaining something through pretentiousness, 2) obtaining something through flattery, 3) obtaining something through hinting at it, 4) obtaining something through open theft, and 5) obtaining something through calculated generosity.

1) 'Pretentiousness' means trying to obtain food or donations from a sponsor by pretending to be something which one is not, or by pretending to have certain qualities which one does not have. 2) 'Flattery' means trying to obtain food or donations from a sponsor through speaking pleasant words that will delight the sponsor. 3) 'Hinting' means trying to obtain something that belongs to someone else by praising it. For instance, praising someone else's watch with the expectation that it will be given. 4) 'Open theft' in this context means obtaining something that belongs to someone else by saying, "I need this," and simply snatching it from its owner. 5) 'Calculated generosity' means presenting a small gift to the sponsor in hope of obtaining a large donation in return.

(2) *The discipline of practicing virtuous Dharmas*: While maintaining discipline of gathering merit by practicing any type of virtue, a bodhisattva studies and ponders the sublime teachings and practices the teachings which lead to enlightenment, such as the six transcendental perfections.

The six transcendental perfections are: generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom-knowledge.

(3) *The discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings*: This refers to how a bodhisattva benefits sentient beings. A bodhisattva meets the needs of beings in an appropriate manner and works exclusively for the benefit of others. In general, *discipline* means maintaining a code of conduct which accords with the nature of reality.

Shantideva composed the Bodhisattva-caryavatara by consolidating the teachings and scriptures of the Buddha. He did not change or add anything to the teachings but composed this text in exact accordance with the Buddha's teachings. Hence, it says without *pretence* or *idiosyncratic fabrication*.

BCA 1-1, Text section 176:

Any treatise which is *in accordance with the scriptures* is thereby trustworthy. One knows immediately that this text is based on the scriptures and quotes the direct words of the Buddha. With these few words Shantideva has actually made a great commitment to rely only on the words of the Buddha, the highest authority for a Buddhist. The Pramanavarttika says:

The scriptures are words one can trust.
Since (the Buddha) is free from defects,
He lacks the basis for speaking lies.
Therefore, the scriptures should be understood to be (words) free of defects.

The Tibetan word 'lung' has the connotation of 'a handle', 'something the hand can grasp'. In the Buddhist context, the word 'lung' is 'a word worthy of trust'. This does not refer to ordinary words, since they might lead to disappointment. 'Lung' are words in which one can ultimately trust. We have translated the term here as *scripture*, 'scriptural authority', or 'teaching'. The direct words of the Buddha are written down in the scriptures.

There are words that have defects and words that are free from defects. However, since the Buddha himself is free from any defects, he lacks the basis for lies. Buddha's body, speech and mind have not the slightest defect. All defects have ceased to exist. Therefore, there is no basis within the Buddha for lying, for saying what is not true. For this reason one should consider the scriptures and the Buddha's teachings [lung] as words free from any defects. Since the Buddha himself is flawless, his teachings are equally flawless.

Without defects means 'without error'. Buddha is free from any ego-clinging and, therefore, free from all errors and defects; he has no basis for speaking what is not true. All words uttered within a mind frame of anger, attachment, jealousy, pride, desire and so forth are words that are imbued with defects and harm. Therefore, before one accepts the authority of any written teaching, one should carefully examine whether the teacher who wrote these words is truly free from

mind poisons. In any spiritual system, check carefully the one who taught the rules, laws and regulations to live by. Analyze who is deciding what is considered to be good or bad. If a teacher is tainted by defects, his teachings cannot be flawless.

BCA 1-1, Text sections 177-178:

The Buddha is utterly free from delusion and from fear. People tell lies based on delusion and fear. If someone is free from ignorance, desire, anger, jealousy and stinginess, then that person is not able to tell lies, even if he wants to.

The 'sublime Dharma' which the Buddha held in the *endless knot* within his heart refers to the 'Dharmakaya of realization'. The endless knot in his heart is simply a poetic expression for the Buddha's mind. His throat is compared to an overflowing vase, his tongue to a lotus, and his teeth to conch shells. His spoken teachings are known as the 'Dharmakaya of the doctrine'.

The sublime Dharma is comprised of the 'words' or 'pronouncements' of the Buddha and treatises composed by the Buddha's followers. One can identify different kinds of pronouncements of the Buddha.

1) 'The pronouncements given orally by the Buddha' are considered the most important and were all eloquently proclaimed by the Buddha himself. This refers to sutras such as the Prajnaparamita-sancaya-gatha, the Manjushrinama-samgiti, and others.

2) Moreover, 'the pronouncements given through blessings' are teachings not proclaimed by the Buddha in person but by his great followers like the arhats and the bodhisattvas. When these great beings teach the Dharma, the blessings of the Buddha come through in their teachings. The Dashabhumika-sutra was taught through the blessings of the Buddha's body by Vajragarbha and Vimukticandra after the Buddha had placed his hand on the crown of their heads.

The Ashta-sahasrika-prajna-paramita was taught through the blessings of the Buddha's speech by Subhuti after the Buddha had encouraged him with a statement. The Bhagavati-prajna-paramita-hridaya was taught through the blessings of the Buddha's mind in a dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, while the Buddha remained in samadhi.

3) Furthermore, 'the pronouncements given by mandate' are teachings given by persons who have been authorized by the Buddha or by their masters to teach the Dharma to others. This refers to all teachings of the Buddha transmitted through the compilers of the teachings, such as Ananda, Mahakashyapa and others. This type of teachings begins with the phrase, "Thus have I heard, at one time..."

All pronouncements of the Buddha are included within the Kangyur, which has preserved the entire tripitaka. The Kangyur includes all sutras and tantras since they are both considered pronouncements of the Buddha. The three promulgations of the Dharma as well as the fourth promulgation, the 'promulgation of the Secret Mantra', are incorporated within the Kangyur. The Tangyur contains all treatises.

BCA 1-1, Text section 179:

The 'treatises' are 'commentaries', texts which elucidate these pronouncements. Khenpo Kunpal enumerates four types of treatises. (1) *A treatise which rectifies sequential disorder* systematizes and structures a vast text when the order and systematic treatment of the teaching are not obvious. (2) *A treatise which elucidates difficult points* explains difficult subjects, passages and words. (3) *A treatise which gathers what has been dispersed* compiles knowledge of a particular subject from many scriptures, consolidating it into one book. (4) *A treatise for the practice of meditation* is written for practitioners.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is a treatise which gathers what has been dispersed as well as a treatise meant for the practice of meditation.

Actually, the Bodhisattva-caryavatara combines the three kinds of genuine treatises in one text. It is a treatise which is meaningful, a treatise that leads to the overcoming of suffering, and a treatise concerned with the application of practice.

The word *treatise* translates the Sanskrit word 'shastra', which is derived from 'shasti', meaning to overcome or to transform, and from 'trayate', meaning to protect. A true Buddhist treatise must possess the two qualities of 'overcoming' and 'protecting'. Thus, a treatise teaches how to overcome the five afflictions of attachment, aversion, ignorance, arrogance and jealousy, and thus protects one from the causes for taking rebirth in the three lower realms. Therefore, the Vyakhya-yukti says:

That which overcomes the enemy of afflictions without exception
And affords protection from rebirth in the (three) lower realms
Is a treatise, for it has the qualities of overcoming and protecting.
Treatises that have both these (qualities) do not exist in other traditions.

Only treatises which are exclusively based on the direct words of the Buddha are 'ultimate' treatises. Only they are endowed with the qualities of overcoming and protecting. Therefore, studying and practicing them diligently is very meaningful.

By studying a treatise such as the Bodhisattva-caryavatara one can reach a level of knowledge about the Dharma that will remedy blind faith. A practitioner of the Dharma should eventually gain the faith of conviction, an unshakeable certainty in the Dharma. A Buddhist practitioner should know what Buddha, Dharma and Sangha really are. Such a practitioner should really understand how to practice bodhicitta and the six transcendental perfections. Intellectual understanding of the teachings must lead to direct experience of the teachings. Finally, the experience must lead to the realization of the teachings. As one reads, studies and practices the Dharma more, one's wrong views, misunderstandings and doubts should to that extent be dispelled, and certainty about the Dharma should dawn in one's mind.

BCA 1-1, Text section 181:

Nagarjuna's quote from the Prajna-danda is made to show the nature of Shantideva's pledge to compose this treatise. Sublime beings never waver in their promises. Such a promise or pledge is like taking on a precept. Through fulfilling the pledge of composing a treatise, the author gathers tremendous merit, much more than if he had simply written the text without making any pledge. A pledge, precept, or discipline, when taken on, immeasurably increases the merit in any virtuous action.