



TSADRA

MINING FOR WISDOM WITHIN DELUSION



MAITREYA'S *Distinction between
Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena*
AND ITS INDIAN AND TIBETAN COMMENTARIES

KARL BRUNNHÖLZL

EASTERN RELIGIONS/BUDDHISM

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MINING FOR WISDOM
WITHIN DELUSION:
*Maitreya's Distinction between Phenomena
and the Nature of Phenomena and Its Indian
and Tibetan Commentaries*

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A summary of the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga

Introduction

To give a brief overview of the contents of DDV, its introductory section (lines 1–35 in the versified version) first provides the distinction and the defining characteristics of phenomena and the nature of phenomena (1–23), that is “what appears as duality and how it is designated” and “suchness, which lacks any distinction between apprehender and apprehended, or [between] objects of designation and what designates them.” Phenomena make up all appearances in saṃsāra, which are nothing but manifestations or projections of false imagination (what is to be relinquished), while the nature of phenomena is suchness, nonconceptual wisdom, and nirvāṇa (what is to be directly perceived). Just like illusions, phenomena do not really exist but appear, thus causing afflictions and suffering. On the other hand, the nature of phenomena does exist ultimately, but does not appear for ordinary beings as long as it is obscured by the appearances of false imagination. Second (24–31), “the rationale” for both the ultimate nonexistence of phenomena and their seeming appearance is that both these elements are necessary in order to account for mistakenness and unmistakenness as well as affliction and purification. Third (32–35), when investigated, phenomena and their nature are neither the same nor different.

Detailed explanation of phenomena

The section that explains phenomena in detail (36–87) contains six points, with (1)–(3) (36–45) corresponding to the three main points in the introduction (defining characteristic, rationale, and phenomena and their nature being neither one nor different). Points (4) and (5) (46–79) consist of the twofold “matrix of phenomena” or the twofold manner in which phenomena manifest—the world as the environment and the sentient beings that live in it. The world as the surroundings of sentient beings is experienced as something in common among them. As for sentient beings, certain elements (such as behaviors, qualities, and faults) are also experienced in common, while others (such as happiness, suffering, karma, bondage, and liberation) are strictly individual “private” experiences. In general, however, both the world and the beings in it consist of nothing but a multitude of individual mind streams. That certain groups of beings (such as humans) experience a seemingly common external world is only due to the fact of the mind streams of these beings containing similar imprints that appear to each one of them individually as their own

projections of a world, but are mistaken by all of them for constituting an actual shared environment outside of their individual mind streams. The text also makes it clear that the minds of others can never be a direct object of another mind, be it in ordinary states of mind or in meditation. Thus, the text (and the Yogācāra system in general) maintains that whatever is perceived is nothing but appearances in individual mind streams, without thereby falling into the extreme of solipsism. Point (6) (80–87) discusses “the nonexistence of the appearance of apprehender and apprehended.” What appear as objects do not exist externally apart from mind as the perceiver, in which they appear. Consequently, what appear as the apprehenders of such objects do not exist either. Nevertheless, by virtue of beginningless latent tendencies, the seeming duality of apprehender and apprehended keeps appearing to ordinary beings.

Detailed explanation of the nature of phenomena

The bulk of DDV (70%) contains the detailed presentation of the nature of phenomena (88–300). Though DDV first defines the nature of phenomena in a more negative way by excluding what it is not (“suchness, which lacks any distinction between apprehender and apprehended, or [between] objects of designation and what designates them”), the text also speaks of suchness in a positive way as being existent and illustrates its natural and unchanging purity and qualities through the examples of space, gold, and water remaining unchanged throughout all kinds of obscurations. Thus, the goal of the mahāyāna path is to see through the illusory nature of the obscuring appearances of false imagination and to directly perceive the primordially existent true nature of all phenomena instead. This is the fundamental change in which all adventitious stains are eliminated and everything appears as nothing but suchness.

DDV presents the nature of phenomena in six points. Point (1) (88–94)—the defining characteristic—was already covered in the introduction above. (2) “The matrix of the nature of phenomena” (95–96), or where the nature of phenomena is found, consists of all phenomena as well as the Buddha’s teachings that explain this nature. (3) “Penetration” (97–100) refers to the path of preparation of properly engaging in the mahāyāna scriptures through conceptual study, reflection, and meditation. (4) “Contact” (101–4) represents the path of seeing, on which the nature of phenomena is realized directly in a nonconceptual manner for the first time. (5) “Recollection” (105–8) is the path of familiarizing with what was seen on the path of seeing, thus gradually eliminating all afflictive and cognitive obscurations.

(6) “The arrival at the true nature of the nature of phenomena” (109–300) is the main subject of the entire text (60% of DDV). It is explained as “the

- fundamental change" in ten points, which represents the most detailed discussion of this topic in Buddhist literature. (a) "The nature" of the fundamental change (121–25) refers to the direct appearance of suchness without any adventitious stains whatsoever.¹³⁶ (b) The threefold "substance" or "entity" of the fundamental change (126–33), that is, what changes into suchness, consists of mind appearing as the outer world, mind appearing as sentient beings, and the dharmadhātu as found in the sūtras all having changed into suchness, which respectively result in the manifestation of pure buddha realms and the realization of qualities, the ability to teach the profound and vast dharma, and the direct perception of everything that is to be known. (c) "The persons" who undergo this fundamental change (134–39) are twofold—the foundation that is the suchness of the mind streams of buddhas and bodhisattvas changes completely so that it is free from all obscurations, while the fundamental changes of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are only partial. (d) "The distinctive features" of the fundamental change (140–46) are the attainment of the dharmakāya, sambhogikakāya, and nirmāṇikakāya with their respective qualities and activities. (e) "The prerequisites" for the fundamental change (147–51) consist of previous aspiration prayers, the mahāyāna teachings as the focal object, and the training on the ten bhūmis.
- (f) The sixth point—nonconceptual wisdom as "the foundation" of the fundamental change (152–239)—is the main topic (25% of DDV) in the discussion of the fundamental change and may be considered the heart of DDV.¹³⁷ The explanation of nonconceptual wisdom in six points starts with (1) its "focal objects" (159–64)—the mahāyāna teachings, aspiring for them, gaining certainty about them, and completing the accumulations of merit and wisdom. (2) "The relinquishment of characteristics" (165–72) consists of abandoning the characteristics of the four progressively more subtle conceptions about antagonistic factors, their remedies, suchness, and realization (as explained in detail in the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*). (3) The fourfold "correct yogic practice" to approach nonconceptual wisdom (173–78) consists of the four well-known mahāyāna *prayogas* of observing all phenomena as being nothing other than mind, not observing them as external objects, not observing the observer or apprehender of such objects either, and observing that the duality of apprehender and apprehended is actually unobservable. (4) "The defining characteristics" of nonconceptual wisdom (179–97) are threefold. The first characteristic (abiding) means that nonconceptual wisdom rests in the nondual and inexpressible nature of phenomena. The second characteristic (nonappearance) means that duality, designations, sense faculties, objects, cognizance, and the outer world do not appear for nonconceptual wisdom. The third characteristic (appearance) means that all phenomena appear equal to space during meditative equipoise and appear like illusions

during subsequent attainment. Thus, nonconceptual wisdom is "ungraspable, indemonstrable, ungrounded, without appearance, without cognizance, and without base" (as also explained in the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* and the *Kāśyapaparivarta*).¹³⁸ (5) "The benefit of nonconceptual wisdom" (198–202) is the attainment of the dharmakāya, supreme bliss, mastery over seeing the suchness and the variety of all knowable objects, and mastery over the manifold ways of teaching as is appropriate for different beings.

(6) "The thorough knowledge of nonconceptual wisdom"¹³⁹ (203–39) is fourfold. (a) "The knowledge about its being a remedy" (209–15) means that nonconceptual wisdom remedies the fivefold clinging to what is non-existent—clinging to phenomena, persons, change (the arising and ceasing of phenomena), any difference between phenomena and the nature of phenomena, and denial (even denying the imputed existence of phenomena and persons). (b) "The thorough knowledge of the defining characteristic" (216–20) of nonconceptual wisdom refers to the exclusion of five misconceptions about what nonconceptual wisdom is. These five consist of mistaking it for the total absence of any mental engagement, mundane meditative states such as the second dhyāna and above, the complete subsiding of conceptions (such as when sleeping, being drunk, or fainting), matter, or just thinking of non-conceptuality. (c) "The knowledge of its distinctive features" (221–26) refers to the five features of being nonconceptual, not being limited in its scope of realizing all specific and general characteristics of all knowable objects, not abiding in saṃsāra or nirvāṇa, remaining even in the nirvāṇa without any remainder of the skandhas, and being unsurpassable. (d) "The knowledge of its functions" (227–39) refers to the five functions of its distancing itself from the movement of conceptions, granting unsurpassable bliss, freeing from the afflictive and cognitive obscurations, engaging in all aspects of knowable objects through the wisdom that is attained subsequent to the nonconceptual wisdom of meditative equipoise, and, finally, purifying buddha realms, maturing sentient beings, and granting omniscience.

(g) The seventh among the ten points of the fundamental change—"the mental engagement" (240–68)—means to realize that, by virtue of being ignorant about suchness, the delusive appearance of actually nonexistent false imagination and duality out of the ālaya-consciousness prevents the appearance of the nature of phenomena, and that the latter appears once the former two cease to appear. The manner of approaching such realization consists again of the fourfold correct yogic practice as explained above.

(h) "The trainings" to accomplish the fundamental change (269–85) consist of the level of engagement through aspiration (the path of preparation), the direct realization on the first bhūmi (the path of seeing), the remaining six impure and three pure bhūmis (the path of familiarization), and the effortless

and uninterrupted enlightened activity of a buddha (the path of nonlearning). In due order, these four stages are said to correspond to the above four stages of "penetration," "contact," "recollection," and "the arrival at the true nature of the nature of phenomena" (points three to six of the nature of phenomena).

(i)-(j) The last two points of the fundamental change—"the shortcomings of there being no fundamental change" and "the benefits of there being this fundamental change" (286-96)—are fourfold each, with the benefits being the reverse of the shortcomings. As for the shortcomings, if there were no fundamental change, there would be no support for the afflictions not operating, no support for engaging in the path, no basis for designating those persons who have passed into nirvāṇa, and no basis for designating the differences between the realizations of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas.

Finally, DDV concludes by providing examples (297-300) for both the fleeting nature of the adventitious stains (just like illusions, dreams, and so on) and the immutability of the nature of phenomena—suchness or mind's natural luminosity—as the ever-unchanging foundation of the fundamental change that is only revealed once the stains have been eliminated (just like space, gold, and water).

The fundamental change

As mentioned above, the two main—and closely related—topics of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* are the fundamental change and nonconceptual wisdom. The discussion of the fundamental change covers 60% of the entire text (being the most detailed treatment of this topic in any treatise) and the explanation of nonconceptual wisdom makes up 70% of that discussion. Thus, it seems appropriate to explore these two topics further and provide some more context for them.

Meaning of the term "fundamental change"

In the Sanskrit term *āśrayaparivṛtti* or *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, *āśraya* means "basis," "matrix," "foundation," "source," or "origin." It generally refers to something to which something else is annexed or with which something is closely connected or on which something depends or rests. This can also be a person or a thing in which some quality is inherent or retained. *Āśraya* can also mean "body," "seat" or "place of refuge." More specifically, it refers to the five sense faculties and the mental sense faculty as being the recipients of their respective objects. The primary meaning of the verbal noun *parivṛtti* is "turning about," "rolling," and "revolution." It can also mean "change,"

"transmutation," "removal," "end(ing)," "termination," "moving to and fro," "dwelling in a place," "returning (into this world)," "exchange," and "surrounding" (*parāvṛtti* also has all of these meanings plus "turning back or round or away from" and "rebounding"). The compound *āśrayaparivṛtti* is a *tatpuruṣa* compound, which can be taken to mean "change of the foundation," "change within the foundation," and "change by means of the foundation." Though the first one is the most common meaning, all three have been suggested as glosses by different Indian commentators.

According to Schmithausen, there seems to be a tendency of *parivṛtti* positively emphasizing replacement through something new (and implying removal of something old), while *parāvṛtti* negatively emphasizes removal of the old (implying replacement with something new). Thus, when these terms are used in the sense of "termination" or "removal" of something (such as impurity), both naturally imply replacement by something else (such as purity). Generally, however, it is clear that these two terms are used interchangeably, which is further evidenced by both consistently having been translated as *chüan-i* into Chinese and mostly as *gnas* (*yongs su*) *gyur* (*pa*) into Tibetan, though one also finds (*gnas*) *gzhan du gyur pa* and *gnas 'phos pa* for *parāvṛtti*.¹⁴⁰

In its use in Buddhist texts, both the origin and the context of the term *āśrayaparivṛtti* are usually soteriological in nature, indicating (in one way or the other) a change from samsāric confusion and suffering to nirvāṇic wisdom and freedom. Thus, the term generally emphasizes the result of the process rather than the process itself or its origin. However, there is a great variety of different explanations as to what exactly changes into what. Also, often no real change of anything into anything is implied, but the result of the fundamental change is simply the revelation of the underlying true reality of all phenomena. This result can be the new state of that foundation (such as the state of the purity of suchness or buddha nature) or the foundation itself in this new state (such as suchness or buddha nature itself, once it has been purified).

There are a great number of Buddhist scriptures in which the term *āśrayaparivṛtti* (or *āśrayaparāvṛtti*) is used with reference to a variety of different states or processes. It is beyond the scope of this book to provide an exhaustive overview of all the ways in which this term is employed and understood in different texts, but some characteristic examples (primarily from Yogācāra works, in which the term appears most frequently) shall highlight its main meanings and contexts.¹⁴¹



The Prose Version of The Distinction between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena

- 70 In Indian language: Dharmadharmatāvibhāga³⁶⁰
70 In Tibetan language: Chö dang chönyi nampar jépa
[In English: The Distinction between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena]³⁶¹
- 70 I pay homage to Youthful Mañjuśrī.
- 1 Since something is to be relinquished after being understood
And something else is to be made fully perceptible,
Therefore, this treatise was composed out of the wish
To distinguish these two through their defining characteristics.
- 3 All this is summarized into two, that is, into phenomena and the nature of phenomena.³⁶² What is characterized by phenomena is samsāra. What is characterized by the nature of phenomena is the nirvāṇa of the three yānas.
- 8 What appears as duality and how it is designated is false imagination, which is the defining characteristic of phenomena. The appearance of what does not exist is false. Being without referents in all [respects], imagination is mere conception.
- 6 The defining characteristic of the nature of phenomena is suchness, which lacks any distinction between apprehender and apprehended, or [between] objects of designation and what designates them.
- 7 The mistakenness due to what does not exist appearing is the cause of afflictiveness, just like seeing illusory elephants and so on, and also because what exists is not seen either.
- 8 If any one of these two—nonexistence and appearance—did not exist, mistakenness, unmistakenness, afflicted phenomena, and purified phenomena would not follow.
- 3 These two are neither one nor different because there is a difference as well as no difference in terms of existence and nonexistence.

- 10 The realization of phenomena through six points is unsurpassable—comprehending the defining characteristic, the rationale, their being neither one nor different, their matrix,³⁶³ what is in common and not in common, and the nonexistence of the appearance of apprehender and apprehended.
- 11 The defining characteristic, the rationale, and not being one or different are as in the brief introduction [above].
- 12 Their matrix consists of what cycles in what—the world of sentient beings and the container. The world of the container consists of the cognizances that seem to be in common. The world of sentient beings consists of what is in common and what is not in common.
- 13 Birth, behavior, care, defeat, qualities, and faults cause each other and therefore are in common by virtue of mutual domination. The abode, cognizance,
- 14 karma, happiness, suffering, death and transition, birth, bondage, and liberation are not in common by virtue of not being in common.
- 15 What appears as something apprehended that is in common and external is
- 16 the cognizance that is the apprehender, but there is no referent that is apart from cognition because such is common.
- 17 The apprehended [objects] (the referents that are consciousness) that are not in common and are the minds and so on of others do not mutually serve as objects for the [two types of] cognizances that are the apprehenders [while] being or not being in meditative equipoise, respectively. Because for those who are not in meditative equipoise, their own conceptions appear and because [for] those who are in meditative equipoise, it is a reflection of the [mind of another] that appears in [the form of] the experiential object of samādhi.
- 18 If what appears as the apprehended does not exist, it is established that what appears as the apprehender does not exist either. Therefore, the realization of the nonexistence of the appearance of apprehender and apprehended is established. For arising without beginning is established. For while the two are not established at all, they are commonly known.
- 19 The realization of the nature of phenomena through six aspects is unsurpassable—the realization of the defining characteristic, the matrix, penetration, contact, recollection, and the arrival at its nature.
- 20 The defining characteristic is as in the brief introduction.
The matrix consists of all phenomena and the collection of the words of all sūtra collections that represent the twelve branches of the Buddha's speech.
- 21 Penetration is the entire path of preparation that consists of the proper mental engagement which relies on the sūtra collection of the mahāyāna.

- 22 Contact is the realization and experience of suchness through the path of seeing because the correct view is attained, which is by virtue of direct training.
- 23 Recollection is the entire path of familiarization that eliminates the stains of what consists of the factors concordant with enlightenment just as one has made contact with it.
- 24 As for the arrival at its nature, by virtue of suchness having become without stains, in all respects, nothing but suchness appears, which is the perfection of the fundamental change.
- 25 The realization of the fundamental change through ten points is unsurpassable—realizing the nature, the entity, the persons, the distinctions, the prerequisites, the foundation, the mental engagement, the trainings, the shortcomings, and the benefits.
- 26 As for realizing the nature, in stainless suchness adventitious afflictions and suchness do not appear and appear, respectively.
- 27 The realization of the entity refers to the change of the cognizance that is the common container into suchness, the change of the dharmadhātu of the sūtra collection into suchness, and the change of the cognizance that is the dhātu of sentient beings which is not in common into suchness.
- 28 As for realizing the persons, the first two are the changes into suchness that are those of buddhas and bodhisattvas. The latter one refers also to those of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.
- 29 The realization of the distinctive features refers to the distinctive feature of the pure realms of buddhas and bodhisattvas and the distinctive feature of having attained the dharmakāya, the sambhogika[kāya], and the nirmāṇikakāya, which is due to the distinction of having obtained seeing, instruction, and mastery, respectively.
- 30 The realization of the prerequisites is by virtue of the distinctive feature of previous aspiration prayers, the distinctive feature of the focal object that is the mahāyāna teaching, and the distinctive feature of training on the ten bhūmis.
- 31 The realization of the focal objects through four points is by virtue of the mahāyāna teaching, aspiring for it, being certain [about it], and the completion of the accumulations.
- 32 The realization of the relinquishment of characteristics through four points is by virtue of relinquishing the characteristics of antagonistic factors, remedial factors, suchness, and the dharmas of realization. Through this, corresponding to this enumeration, it is taught as the relinquishment of the characteristics that are coarse, middling, subtle, and associated for a long time.

the b. 167 was vāsa - Aśvat = "realization of the foundation is by virtue

- 35 The realization of the correct yogic practice, also in four points, is by virtue of the yogic practice of observation, the yogic practice of nonobservation, the yogic practice of the nonobservation of observation, and the yogic practice of the observation of nonobservation.
- 36 The realization of the defining characteristics in three points is by virtue of abiding in the nature of phenomena due to abiding in the nature of phenomena that is nondual and inexpressible. It is [also] by virtue of nonappearance because what appear as duality, how it is designated, sense faculties, objects, cognizance, or the world as the container do not exist. Through these, the defining characteristic is clearly taught as it is described in the sūtras: “Nonconceptual wisdom is ungraspable, indemonstrable, ungrounded, without appearance, without cognizance, and without base.” It is [also] by virtue
- 38 of appearance because all phenomena are seen like the center of space and because all conditioned phenomena are seen like illusions and so on.
- 39 The realization of the benefit in four points is by virtue of attaining the dharmakāya in a complete manner, by virtue of attaining the supreme state of bliss, by virtue of attaining mastery over seeing, and by virtue of attaining mastery over instruction.
- 40 The realization by virtue of thorough knowledge in four points consists of the thorough knowledge of [being a] remedy, the thorough knowledge of the defining characteristic, the thorough knowledge of the distinctive features, and the thorough knowledge of the functions.
- 41 Here the thorough knowledge of [being a] remedy refers to nonconceptual wisdom, that is, [its being] a remedy for clinging to these five—phenomena, persons, change, difference, and denial—in terms of their having a real nature.
- 42 The thorough knowledge of the defining characteristic refers to its specific characteristic that is the exclusion of these five—lacking mental engagement, transcendence, complete subsiding, what is naturally [nonconceptual], and
- 43 picturing. The thorough knowledge of the distinctive features is by virtue of the distinctive features of the five factors of being nonconceptual, not being
- 44 partial, nonabiding, lasting, and being unsurpassable. The thorough knowledge of the functions refers to the distinctive features of function that are fivefold—distancing conceptions, granting unsurpassable bliss, uniting with the freedom from afflictive and cognitive obscurations, engaging in all aspects of knowable objects through the wisdom that is attained subsequent to it, and purifying buddha realms, maturing sentient beings, and bestowing the knowledge of all aspects.
- 46 As for the realization of mental engagement, as it is said, bodhisattvas who wish to realize nonconceptual wisdom engage mentally as follows: due to

- being ignorant about suchness since beginningless time, false imagination consists of what contains all seeds (the cause for what is not real appearing as duality) and also what is based on it yet different. Here what entails cause and result appears, but it is not real. By virtue of appearing in such a way, the nature of that does not appear. By virtue of that not appearing, the nature of phenomena does appear. When bodhisattvas mentally engage in this in a proper manner, they realize nonconceptual wisdom.
- 47 By virtue of such observing, they realize focusing on mere cognizance. By virtue of focusing on mere cognizance, they realize that all referents are non-observable. By virtue of all referents being nonobservable, they realize that mere cognizance is not observed either. By virtue of not observing that [cognizance], they realize that a difference between those two is not observable.
- 48 Those two not being observable as such is nonconceptual wisdom—it lacks an object and lacks observation because it is characterized by not observing any characteristics.
- 49 The realization of the training is fourfold by virtue of the training through aspiration on the level of engagement through aspiration (this is the phase of discernment), by virtue of the training in discriminating awareness on the first bhūmi (this is the phase of contact), by virtue of the training in familiarization on the six impure bhūmis and also on the three pure ones (this is the phase of recollection), and by virtue of the training in completion on the buddhabhūmi because the deeds of a buddha are effortless and uninterrupted (this is the phase of the arrival at the nature of the [nature of phenomena]).
- 53 As for realizing the shortcomings, [they occur] if there is no fundamental change. The shortcomings are fourfold—the shortcoming of there being no support for the afflictions not operating, the shortcoming of there being no support for engaging in the path, the shortcoming of there being no support for presenting conventional terms for persons having passed into nirvāṇa, and the shortcoming of there being no support for presenting conventional terms for the differences between the three types of enlightenment.
- 54 Based on the opposites of those, the existence of the fundamental change should be known as [entailing] a fourfold benefit.
- 55 One should understand that these are the ten points of how to realize the fundamental change.
- 56 That nonexistent phenomena appear corresponds to, for example, illusions, dreams, and so on. Examples for the fundamental change are that it corresponds to space, gold, water, and so on.
- 57 *This concludes The Distinction between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena composed by noble Maitreya. It was translated, edited, and finalized*

by the Indian abbot paṇḍita Śāntibhadra and the great editor-translator and fully ordained monk Tsültrim Gyalwa. It was corrected and finalized by the Kashmirian junior abbot paṇḍita Parahita and the great editor-translator and fully ordained monk Gador at the practice place that is the temple of Toling.³⁶⁴
Maṅgalaṃ



The Versified Version of The Distinction between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena

- 8 10 In Indian language: Dharmadharmatāvibhāgākārikā
10 In Tibetan language: Chö dang chönyi nampar jépe tsig le'ur jepa
[In English: The Stanzas on The Distinction between Phenomena and the Nature of Phenomena]
- 20 I pay homage to the protector Maitreya.
- 2 Something is to be relinquished after being understood 1
And something else is to be made fully perceptible.
Therefore, this treatise was composed out of the wish
To distinguish the defining characteristics of these two.
- 3 If one summarizes all these, 5
They should be known as twofold
Because everything is included
In phenomena and likewise the nature of phenomena.
- 4 Here what constitutes phenomena 10
Is saṃsāra. What constitutes
The nature of phenomena is the three yānas'
Nirvāṇa.
- 5 Here the defining characteristic of phenomena
Is what appears as duality and how it is designated.
It is false imagination 15
Because what does not exist appears.
Therefore, it is false.
Since it is without referents [in] all [respects]
And is mere conception, it is imagination.
- 6 Furthermore, the defining characteristic of the nature of phenomena 20
Is suchness, which lacks any distinction
Between apprehender and apprehended,
Or [between] objects of designation and what designates them.

- 7 Because of the appearance of what does not exist, mistakenness
Is the cause of afflictiveness, 25
Just like the appearance of illusory elephants and so on,
And because what exists does not appear either.
- 8 If any one of these two—nonexistence and appearance—
Did not exist, mistakenness and unmistakenness, 30
And likewise afflicted phenomena
And purified phenomena, would not be tenable.
- 9 These two are neither one
Nor are they distinct
Because there is a difference as well as no difference
In terms of existence and nonexistence. 35
- 10 Through six points, the comprehension
Of phenomena is unsurpassable—
Through comprehending the defining characteristic, the rationale,
Their being neither one nor different, 40
Their matrix in common and not in common,
And the nonexistence of the appearance
Of apprehender and apprehended.
- 11 Here the defining characteristic, the rationale,
And being neither one nor different
Are as in the brief introduction. 45
- 12 When something cycles in something,
That makes up their matrix—
The realm of sentient beings and the realm of the container.
The realm of the container is in common—
The cognizances that seem to be in common. 50
The realm of sentient beings is what is in common
Or what is not in common.
- 13 Birth, behavior,
Care, defeat,
Benefit, harm,³⁶⁵ 55
Qualities, and faults are causes
For each other by virtue of mutual domination.
Therefore, they are in common.
- 14 Since the abode, cognizance,
Happiness, suffering, karma, death and transition, 60
Birth, bondage,
And liberation are not in common,
They are the matrix that is not in common.

- 15 What appears as something apprehended that is external
And in common is the cognizance that is the apprehender. 65
- 16 External to consciousness,
There is no referent
Because such is in common.
- 17 The other, the apprehended [objects] not in common—
The referents that are cognizance— 70
Are the minds and so on of others.
For the cognizances that are the apprehenders
[While] being or not being in meditative equipoise,
They do not mutually serve as objects.
Because for those who are not in meditative equipoise, 75
Their own conceptions appear and
Because for those who are in meditative equipoise,
What appears is a reflection
That is the experiential object of samādhi.
- 18 If it is established that what appears as the apprehended does not exist, 80
It is established that what appears as the apprehender does not exist [either].
By virtue of that, the comprehension
Of the nonexistence of what appears as apprehender
And apprehended is established because beginningless 85
Arising is established.
For while the two are not established at all,
They are commonly known.
- 19 The comprehension of the nature of phenomena
Through six points is unsurpassable—
Through comprehending the defining characteristic, the matrix, 90
Penetration, contact,
Recollection, and the arrival
At its nature.
- 20 The defining characteristic is as in the introduction.
The matrix consists of all phenomena 95
And all the sūtra collections of the Buddha's speech.
- 21 Here penetration
Is the entire path of preparation that consists of
The proper mental engagement which relies
On the sūtra collection of the mahāyāna. 100
- 22 Because the correct view is attained, contact
Is the experience

- And attainment of suchness in a direct
Manner through the path of seeing.
- 23 What consists of the factors concordant with enlightenment 105
Of the path of familiarizing with the actuality that was seen
Through contact is recollection
Because it eliminates the stains of that.
- 24 As for the arrival 110
At its nature, once suchness
Has become without stains,
All appears as nothing but suchness,
Which is the perfection
Of the fundamental change. Through ten points
- 25 The comprehension of the fundamental change 115
Is unsurpassable
Through comprehending the nature, the substance, the persons,
The distinctions, the prerequisites, the foundation,
The mental engagement, the trainings,
The shortcomings, and the benefits. 120
- 26 Here, as for comprehending the nature,
It is stainless
Suchness in terms of
Adventitious stains and suchness
Not appearing and appearing, respectively. 125
- 27 The comprehension of the substantial entity
Refers to the cognizance that is the common container
Having changed into suchness,
The dharmadhātu of the sūtra collection
Having changed into suchness, 130
And the cognizance that is the dhātu
Of sentient beings which is not in common
Having changed into suchness.
- 28 As for comprehending the persons, 135
The first two are the changes
Of suchness that are those of buddhas
And bodhisattvas.
The latter one refers to those of śrāvakas
And pratyekabuddhas too.
- 29 The comprehension of the distinctive features 140
Is by virtue of the distinctive feature of the pure realms

- Of buddhas and bodhisattvas
And the distinctive feature of having attained
Seeing, instruction, and mastery
Through the attainment of the dharmakāya, 145
The sāmāhoga[kāya], and the nairmāṇikakāya, respectively.
- 30 The comprehension of realizing the prerequisites
Refers to the distinctive feature of previous aspiration prayers,
The distinctive feature of the focal object
That is the mahāyāna teaching, and the distinctive feature 150
Of training on the ten bhūmis.
- 31 The comprehension of the foundation or support
Is by virtue of nonconceptual wisdom
Being comprehended through six points—
Through comprehending the focal objects, the relinquishment of
characteristics, 155
The correct yogic practice,
The defining characteristics, the benefit,
And the thorough knowledge.
- 32 Here, first, the comprehension
Of the focal objects should be understood as four points 160
By virtue of the mahāyāna teaching,
Aspiring for it, being certain [about it],
And the completion of the accumulations.
- 33 Second, the comprehension of the relinquishment
Of characteristics in four points 165
Is by virtue of relinquishing the characteristics
Of what is antagonistic, remedies,
Suchness, and realization.
- 34 Through this, in due order,
This is the relinquishment of the characteristics 170
That are coarse, middling, subtle,
And associated for a long time.
- 35 The comprehension of the correct
Yogic practice in four points
Is the yogic practice of observation, 175
The yogic practice of nonobservation,
The yogic practice of the nonobservation of observation,
And the yogic practice of the observation of nonobservation.

- 36 Here the comprehension of the defining characteristics
Should be understood through three points—
By virtue of abiding in the nature of phenomena
Due to abiding in the nature of phenomena
That is nondual and inexpressible. 180
- 37 It is [also] by virtue of nonappearance because there is nothing
That appears as duality, how it is designated,
Sense faculties, objects, cognizance,
Or the world as the container. 185
- Therefore, nonconceptual wisdom's
Defining characteristic is described through this
As in the sūtras: "Ungraspable,
Indemonstrable, ungrounded,
Without appearance, without cognizance,
And without base." 190
- 38 It is [also] by virtue of appearance because
All phenomena appear equal to the center of space
And because all conditioned phenomena
Are appearances like illusions and so on. 195
- 39 The comprehension of the benefit in four points
Is the attainment of the dharmakāya in a complete manner,
The attainment of supreme bliss,
The attainment of mastery over seeing,
And the attainment of mastery over teaching. 200
- 40 The comprehension of the thorough knowledge
Should be understood through four points—
The thorough knowledge of [being a] remedy,
The thorough knowledge of the defining characteristic,
The thorough knowledge of the distinctive features,
And the thorough knowledge of the five functions. 205
- 41 Here the knowledge of [being a] remedy
Refers to nonconceptual wisdom
Because it is taught to be the remedy
For the fivefold clinging to nonexistents—
Clinging to phenomena and persons,
Change, difference,
And denial. 210
- 42 The thorough knowledge of the defining characteristic
Refers to its own defining characteristic that is the exclusion 215
- Of the fivefold clinging to
Mental nonengagement, transcendence,
Complete subsiding, what is naturally [nonconceptual], and picturing. 220
- 43 The thorough knowledge of the distinctive features
Refers to the fivefold distinctive features
That are the factors of being nonconceptual,
Not being limited,
Nonabiding, lasting, 225
And being unsurpassable.
- 44 Finally, the thorough knowledge of the functions
Refers to the distinctive features of five kinds of function—
Distancing conceptions, 230
Granting unsurpassable bliss,
Freeing from the afflictive
And cognitive obscurations,
Engaging in all aspects
Of knowable objects through the wisdom
That is attained subsequent to it, 235
And purifying buddha realms,
Maturing sentient beings,
And granting and bestowing
The knowledge of all aspects.
- 45 As for the comprehension of mental engagement, 240
Bodhisattvas, who are
The persons who wish to comprehend
Nonconceptual wisdom,
Engage mentally as follows:
Through being ignorant about suchness, 245
The imagination of what is unreal
Is "what contains all seeds"
(The cause for what does not exist appearing as duality)
And the continuum³⁶⁶ that is based on it yet different.
Therefore, what entails cause and result 250
Appears, but it does not exist.
- 46 It appears and the nature of these phenomena does not appear.
By virtue of its not appearing, the nature of phenomena does appear.
If they mentally engage in this in a proper manner,
Bodhisattvas engage in 255
Nonconceptual wisdom.

- 47 By virtue of such observing, they observe
Mere cognizance. By virtue of observing [them]
As mere cognizance, they do not observe referents.
By virtue of not observing referents, 260
They do not observe mere cognizance [either].
By virtue of not observing that [cognizance], they engage in
Observing the lack of difference between those two.
- 48 To not observe these two as being different
Is nonconceptual 265
Wisdom—it lacks an object and lacks observation
Because it is characterized
By not observing any characteristics.
- 49 To enter the bhūmis through the training
Should be understood as being fourfold— 270
By virtue of the training through aspiration
On the level of engagement through aspiration
(This is the phase of penetration),
- 50 By virtue of the training in discriminating direct
Realization [on] the first bhūmi 275
(This is the phase of contact),
- 51 By virtue of the training through familiarization
[On] the six impure bhūmis
And the three pure bhūmis
(This is the phase of recollection), 280
- 52 And by virtue of the training in completion
Because the deeds of a buddha are effortless
And uninterrupted
(This is the phase of the arrival
At its nature). 285
- 53 As for comprehending the shortcomings,
These are the four shortcomings of
There being no fundamental change—
The flaw of there being no support for the afflictions not operating,
The flaw of there being no support for engaging in the path, 290
The flaw of there being no basis for designating
The persons who have passed into nirvāṇa,
And the flaw of there being no basis for designating
The differences between the three [types of] enlightenment.
- 54 The comprehension of the benefit (the opposite) 295
Should be known as being fourfold.

Examples for nonexistent phenomena appearing
Are being like illusions, dreams, and so on.
If examples for the fundamental change are given,
It is like space, gold, water, and so on. 300

*This concludes The Verses on the Distinction between Phenomena and the
Nature of Phenomena composed by the protector Maitreya. They were trans-
lated, edited, and finalized by the Kashmirian paṇḍita Mahājana and the
translator and fully ordained monk Sengé Gyaltzen.*

Maṅgalam



Appendix 1: *The Dhāraṇī of Entering Nonconceptuality*

(1) The setting of the discourse⁸⁶²

{M1b} {D1b}⁸⁶³ Thus have I heard at one time when the Bhagavān was residing in Rājagṛha⁸⁶⁴ in the palace that is the heart of the nonconceptual dharmadhātu superior to all three realms,⁸⁶⁵ together with a great gathering of bhikṣus and a great assembly of bodhisattvas. He was in the company of the bodhisattva mahāsattva Avikalpa, the bodhisattva mahāsattva Avikalpaprabhāsa, the bodhisattva mahāsattva Avikalpacandra, Nirvikalpavīra, Nirvikalpadharmanirdeśakuśala, Nirvikalpasvabhāva, Nirvikalpamati, Nirvikalpanāda, Nirvikalpaspharaṇa, Nirvikalpasvara, Nirvikalpamaheśvara,⁸⁶⁶ Nirvikalpamahāmaitrisvara, {D2a} and the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.⁸⁶⁷

(2) The opening of the discourse

Then, surrounded by a retinue of many hundreds of thousands, the Bhagavān, looking forward, taught the dharma, beginning with the nonconceptuality of [all] phenomena⁸⁶⁸ in the mahāyāna.

(3) The encouragement to retain

Then the Bhagavān, having looked at the retinue of all the assembled bodhisattvas, said to the bodhisattvas, “Sons of good family, you must retain the dhāraṇī called ‘Entering Nonconceptuality.’ Those bodhisattva mahāsattvas who retain the dhāraṇī called ‘Entering Nonconceptuality’ accomplish the buddhadharmas very swiftly and always progress in a distinguished manner.”

(4) The request

Then the bodhisattva mahāsattva in the retinue whose name was Avikalpaprabhāsa rose from his seat, put his upper robe over one shoulder, placed his right knee cap on the ground, bowed in the direction of the Bhagavān with joined palms, and said to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavan, please teach the dhāraṇī of entering nonconceptuality, which bodhisattva mahāsattvas, upon having heard, will retain, read, mentally engage in a proper manner, and teach widely to others.”

[5] Making the retinue into a proper vessel]

When he had spoken in that way, the Bhagavān answered, “Therefore, bodhisattva mahāsattvas, listen well and mentally engage properly, and I will explain the dhāraṇī of entering nonconceptuality.” “Very well, Bhagavan,” {D2b} said the bodhisattvas. They listened to the Bhagavān and the Bhagavān said the following to them.

[6] Taking one’s stand]

O sons of good family, here bodhisattva mahāsattvas hear the dharma related to nonconceptuality, place their intention on nonconceptuality,⁸⁶⁹

[7] The correct practice to relinquish characteristics]

and then relinquish all characteristics of conceptuality. As the first of these [characteristics], they relinquish all characteristics of the conceptions about a nature, that is, about either apprehender or apprehended. These characteristics of the conceptions about a nature here consist of the characteristics with regard to contaminated entities. These contaminated entities are the five appropriating skandhas, that is, the appropriating skandha of form, the appropriating skandha of feeling, the appropriating skandha of discrimination, the appropriating skandha of formation, and the appropriating skandha of consciousness. How are those characteristics of the conceptions about a nature⁸⁷⁰ relinquished? What becomes perceptible by way of being an appearance [is relinquished] through not mentally engaging [in it].⁸⁷¹

Once the [bodhisattvas] have gradually relinquished these characteristics of the conceptions about a nature,⁸⁷² the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the remedies, which are other than the [former], occur and become perceptible by way of being appearances. They consist of the following—the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze generosity, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze ethics, {M2a} the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze patience, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze vigor, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze dhyāna, and the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze prajñā, which [operate] either by way of analyzing a nature, by way of analyzing qualities, or by way of analyzing an essence. The [bodhisattvas] also relinquish these characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the remedies through not mentally engaging [in them].⁸⁷³

Once the [bodhisattvas] have relinquished those [characteristics of the conceptions about the remedies], the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze true reality, which are other than the [former], occur and become perceptible by way of being appearances. {D3a} They consist of the following—the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze emptiness, the

characteristics of the conceptions that analyze suchness, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the true end, and the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze signlessness, the ultimate, and the dharmadhātu, which [operate] either by way of analyzing specific characteristics, by way of analyzing qualities, or by way of analyzing an essence. The [bodhisattvas] also relinquish these characteristics of the conceptions that analyze true reality through not mentally engaging [in them].⁸⁷⁴

Once the [bodhisattvas] have relinquished those [characteristics], the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze attainment, which are other [than the former], occur and become perceptible by way of being appearances. They consist of the following—the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of the first bhūmi up through the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of the tenth bhūmi, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of the poised readiness for the dharma of nonarising, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of the prophecy, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of the purity of buddha realms, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of maturing sentient beings, the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of the empowerment, up through the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the attainment of the knowledge of all aspects, which [operate] either by way of analyzing specific characteristics, by way of analyzing qualities, or by way of analyzing an essence. The [bodhisattvas] also relinquish these characteristics of the conceptions that analyze attainment through not mentally engaging [in them].⁸⁷⁵

Once bodhisattva mahāsattvas have relinquished all aspects of the characteristics of conceptions through not mentally engaging [in them], they strive hard for the dhātu of nonconceptuality.⁸⁷⁶ Though they have not yet made contact with the dhātu of nonconceptuality, there is the proper samādhi through which they will make contact with the dhātu of nonconceptuality.⁸⁷⁷ {D3b}

[8] Entering the dhātu of nonconceptuality]

By virtue of pursuing that correct practice through reliance,⁸⁷⁸ by virtue of pursuing it through familiarization, by virtue of pursuing it through enhancement, and by virtue of pursuing it through correct mental engagement, they make contact with the dhātu of nonconceptuality in a spontaneous and effortless manner and progressively purify it.⁸⁷⁹

[9] The characteristics of the dhātu of nonconceptuality]

Sons of good family, for what reason is the dhātu of nonconceptuality called “nonconceptual”? It is due to being beyond all conceptions that analyze, due

to being beyond all conceptions in terms of demonstrating and illustrating,⁸⁸⁰ due to being beyond all conceptions in terms of sense faculties, due to being beyond all conceptions in terms of objects, due to being beyond all conceptions in terms of cognizance, and due to not being the locus of any afflictive, secondary afflictive, and cognitive obscurations. Therefore, the dhātu of nonconceptuality is called “nonconceptual.” What is nonconceptuality? Nonconceptuality is ungraspable, indemonstrable, unfounded, without appearance, noncognizance, and without base.⁸⁸¹

[10] The signs of having entered it]

Through the nonconceptual wisdom that is not different from what is to be known, bodhisattva mahāsattvas who abide in the dhātu of nonconceptuality see all phenomena as being like the center of space. {M2b} Through the wisdom that is attained subsequent to that [nonconceptual wisdom], they see all phenomena as being like illusions, mirages, dreams, optical illusions, echoes, reflections, [reflections of] the moon [in] water, and magical creations.⁸⁸²

[11] Its benefits]

Therefore, they attain the vast mastery over dwelling in great bliss. They attain the vast great excellence of mind. They attain vast great prajñā and wisdom. They attain the vast mastery over great teaching.⁸⁸³

[12] Its activity]

At all times they will be able to promote all aspects of the welfare of all sentient beings. For effortless buddha activity is uninterrupted.⁸⁸⁴ {D4a}

[13] Pointing out the dhātu of nonconceptuality through an example]

Sons of good family, it is thus. Assume that beneath very hard and solid rock mountain there is a great treasure full of all kinds of precious substances, that is, various great radiant precious substances that are wish-fulfilling jewels and consist of precious silver, precious gold, and various gems that are the cores of stone.⁸⁸⁵ Then a person who wishes for a great treasure comes by. An [other] person who knows about that great treasure through supernatural knowledge says to the [first person], “O sir, beneath that very hard and solid rock mountain [there is] a great treasure full of radiant precious substances. Below that [treasure] [there is] a great treasure of the precious substance that is a wish-fulfilling jewel. So first you should dig up everything that has the nature of rock. Once you have dug up [all] that [rock], there will appear rock that appears to be silver. You should not think of this as being the great treasure, but fully know it [for what it is] and keep digging. Once you have dug out that [silver], there will appear rock that appears to be gold. You should not think of this as being the great treasure either, but fully know it [for what it

is] too and keep digging. Once you have dug out that [gold], there will appear rock that appears to be various gems. You should not think of them as being the great treasure either, but fully know them [for what they are] and keep digging. Thus, O sir, having applied diligence, without [any further] exertion of digging you come to see the great treasure of the precious wish-fulfilling jewel without further effort. Through obtaining that great treasure of the precious wish-fulfilling jewel, you will be rich, having great wealth and great possessions, and be endowed with the power of [accomplishing] your own welfare and that of others.”

Thus, O sons of good family, this example is given in order to make you understand the following meaning as best as possible. “Very hard and solid rock mountain” means the kinds of formation that consist of afflictiveness and being engrossed in duality. “A great treasure of the precious wish-fulfilling jewel below” refers to the dhātu of nonconceptuality. “The person who wishes for the great treasure of the precious wish-fulfilling jewel” {D4b} refers to a bodhisattva mahāsattva. “The person who knows about that great treasure through supernatural knowledge” refers to the arhat who is the Tathāgata, the completely perfect Buddha. “What has the nature of rock” refers to the characteristics of the conceptions about a nature. “Digging” means “not mentally engaging.” “Rock that appears to be silver” stands for the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the remedies. “Rock that appears to be gold” stands for the characteristics of the conceptions about emptiness and so on. “Rock that appears to be various gems” stands for the characteristics of the conceptions about attainment. “Obtaining the great treasure of the precious wish-fulfilling jewel” refers to making contact with the dhātu of nonconceptuality. Sons of good family, through adducing this example, the entering into nonconceptuality should be understood.⁸⁸⁶

[14] The means]

Sons of good family, how then do bodhisattva mahāsattvas who examine the characteristics of conceptions as taught [above] {M3a} enter the dhātu of nonconceptuality? Here, sons of good family, bodhisattva mahāsattvas who dwell in the dhātu of nonconceptuality, when the characteristics of the conceptions about a nature of form become perceptible [for them], examine them as follows. To entertain [the notion] “my form” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “the form of others” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “This is form” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notions] “Form is arising, ceasing, afflicted, or purified” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “Form does not exist” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notions] “[Form] neither exists by a nature of its own, nor does it exist as a cause, nor does it exist as a result, nor does it exist

as karma, {D5a} nor does it exist as linkage, nor does it exist as a process” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “Form is mere cognizance” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “Just as form does not exist, so does the cognizance that appears as form not exist” is to entertain conceptions.

Therefore, sons of good family, bodhisattva mahāsattvas neither observe form nor do they observe the cognizance that appears as form. However, it is not that cognizance is utterly and completely nonexistent. Any other phenomenon apart from cognizance is not observable. This cognizance is not perceived as the lack of existence nor is the lack of existence perceived apart from cognizance. It is not that the lack of existence of the cognizance that appears as form and that cognizance are perceived as being one nor are they perceived as being different. It is not that the lack of existence of that cognizance is perceived as an existent nor is it perceived as a nonexistent. Sons of good family, what is not conceived by any aspects of all those conceptions—“the dhātu of nonconceptuality”—is not perceived either. Sons of good family, this is the way of entering the dhātu of nonconceptuality. In this way, bodhisattva mahāsattvas dwell in the dhātu of nonconceptuality. The same is to be applied to feeling, discrimination, formations, and consciousness; likewise, to the pāramitā of generosity, the pāramitā of ethics, the pāramitā of vigor, the pāramitā of dhyāna, and the pāramitā of prajñā; and likewise, to [everything] from emptiness and so on up through the knowledge of all aspects.

Sons of good family, bodhisattva {D5b} mahāsattvas, when the characteristics of the conceptions that analyze the knowledge of all aspects become perceptible [for them], examine them as follows. To entertain [the notion] “my knowledge of all aspects” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “the knowledge of all aspects of others” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “This is the knowledge of all aspects” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “The knowledge of all aspects is to be attained” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “The knowledge of all aspects relinquishes all afflictive and cognitive obscurations” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “The knowledge of all aspects is what is utterly purified”⁸⁸⁷ is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notions] “The knowledge of all aspects is arising, ceasing, afflicted, or purified” is to entertain conceptions.⁸⁸⁸ To entertain [the notion] “The knowledge of all aspects does not exist” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notions] “The knowledge of all aspects neither exists by a nature of its own, nor does it exist as a cause, nor does it exist as a result, nor does it exist as karma, nor does it exist as linkage, nor does it exist as a process” is to entertain conceptions. To entertain [the notion] “The knowledge of all aspects is mere cognizance” is to entertain conceptions. {M3b} To entertain [the notion] “Just

as the knowledge of all aspects does not exist, so does the cognizance that appears as the knowledge of all aspects not exist” is to entertain conceptions.

Therefore, just as bodhisattva mahāsattvas do not observe the knowledge of all aspects, so do they not observe the cognizance that appears as that [knowledge of all aspects]. However, it is not that the cognizance that is the [knowledge of all aspects] is utterly and completely nonexistent. Any other phenomenon apart from the cognizance that is the [knowledge of all aspects] is not observable. This cognizance is not perceived as the lack of existence nor is the lack of existence perceived apart from that cognizance. It is not that the lack of existence of the cognizance [that appears as the knowledge of all aspects] and that cognizance are perceived as being one {D6a} nor are they perceived as being different. It is not that the lack of existence of that cognizance is perceived as an existent nor is it perceived as a nonexistent. Sons of good family, what is not conceived by any aspects of all those conceptions⁸⁸⁹—“the dhātu of nonconceptuality”—is not perceived either. Sons of good family, this is the way of entering the dhātu of nonconceptuality. In this way, bodhisattva mahāsattvas dwell in the dhātu of nonconceptuality.⁸⁹⁰

Sons of good family, great is the merit of retaining, writing, preserving, and reading⁸⁹¹ this dharma specification. It is not equaled by giving away bodies as numerous as the sands of the River Gaṅgā. It is not equaled by giving away worldly realms as numerous as the sands of the River Gaṅgā that are full of gems.⁸⁹² It is not equaled by the amount of merit of giving away worldly realms as numerous as the sands of the River Gaṅgā that are full of buddha images. Then, at that point, the Bhagavān spoke the following two verses:

The children of the Victor who reflected
On nonconceptuality in this dharma,
By transcending conceptions difficult to traverse,
Gradually attain nonconceptuality.

By virtue of that, bodhisattvas
Discover the bliss of nonconceptuality,
Which is peaceful, immovable, supreme,
Powerful, and equal yet unequal.⁸⁹³

When the Bhagavān had spoken these words, the bodhisattva mahāsattva Avikalpaprabhāsa, the entire retinue, and the world with its gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised the words of the Bhagavān.