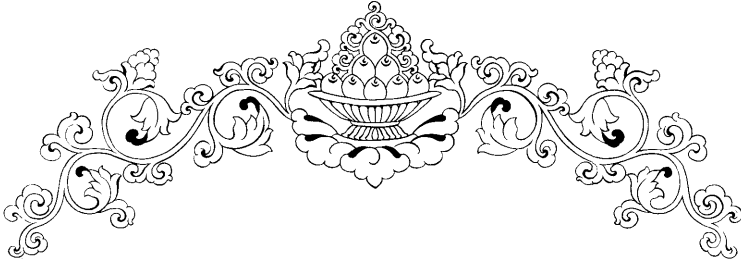


# Wisdom of Buddha

*The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*

Translated by  
John Powers





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The Questions of  
Guṇākara

*Chapter Six*

Then Bodhisattva Guṇākara<sup>1</sup> questioned the Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, when you say ‘Bodhisattvas are wise with respect to the character of phenomena; Bodhisattvas are wise with respect to the character of phenomena,’ Bhagavan, just how are Bodhisattvas wise with respect to the character of phenomena? For what reason does the Tathāgata designate a Bodhisattva as being wise with respect to the character of phenomena?”

The Bhagavan replied to the Bodhisattva Guṇākara: “Guṇākara, you are involved in [asking] this in order to benefit many beings, to bring happiness to many beings, out of sympathy for the world, and for the sake of the welfare, benefit, and happiness of many beings, including gods and humans. Your intention in questioning the Tathāgata about this subject is good! It is good! Therefore, Guṇākara, listen well and I will describe for you how [Bodhisattvas] are wise with respect to the character of phenomena.

“Guṇākara, there are three characteristics of phenomena. What are these three? They are the imputational character, the other-dependent character, and the thoroughly established character.

“Guṇākara, what is the imputational character of phenomena?<sup>2</sup> It is that which is imputed as a name or symbol in terms of the own-being or attributes of phenomena in order to subsequently designate any convention whatsoever.

“Guṇākara, what is the other-dependent character of phenomena? It is simply the dependent origination of phenomena. It is like this: Because this exists, that arises; because this is produced, that is produced. It ranges from: ‘Due to the condition of ignorance, compositional factors [arise],’ up to: ‘In this way, the whole great assemblage of suffering arises.’<sup>3</sup>

“Guṇākara, what is the thoroughly established character of phenomena? It is the suchness of phenomena. Through diligence and through proper mental application, Bodhisattvas establish realization and cultivate realization of [the thoroughly established character]. Thus it is what establishes [all the stages] up to unsurpassed, complete, perfect enlightenment.<sup>4</sup>

“Guṇākara, for example, the imputational character should be viewed as being like the defects of clouded vision<sup>5</sup> in the eyes of a person with clouded vision. Guṇākara, for example, the other-dependent character should be viewed as being like the appearance of the manifestations of clouded vision in that very [person], manifestations which appear as a net of hairs, or as insects, or as sesame seeds; or as a blue manifestation, or a yellow manifestation, or a red manifestation, or a white manifestation.

“Guṇākara, for example, the thoroughly established character should be viewed as being like the unerring objective reference, the natural objective reference of the eyes when that person’s eyes have become pure and free from the defects of clouded vision.

“Guṇākara, for example, when a very clear crystal comes in contact with the color blue, it then appears as a precious gem, such as a sapphire or a mahānīla.<sup>6</sup> Further, by mistaking it for a precious gem such as a sapphire or a mahānīla, sentient beings are deluded.

“When it comes in contact with the color red, it then appears as a precious gem such as a ruby and, by mistaking it for a precious gem such as a ruby, sentient beings are deluded. When it comes in contact with the color green, it then appears as a precious gem such as an emerald and, further, by mistaking it for a precious gem such as an emerald, sentient beings are deluded. When it comes in contact with the color gold, it then appears as gold and, further, by mistaking it for gold, sentient beings are deluded.

“Guṇākara, for example, you should see that in the same way as a very clear crystal comes in contact with a color, the other-dependent character comes in contact with the predispositions for conventional designations that are the imputational character. For example, in the same way as a very clear crystal is mistaken for a precious substance such as a sapphire, a mahānīla, a ruby, an emerald, or gold, see how the other-dependent character is apprehended as the imputational character.

“Guṇākara, for example, you should see that the other-dependent nature is like that of very clear crystal. For example, a clear crystal is not thoroughly established in permanent,

permanent time or in everlasting, everlasting time as having the character of a precious substance like a sapphire, a mahānīla, a ruby, an emerald, or gold, and is without the natures [of such things].

“In the same way, you should see that since the other-dependent character is not thoroughly established in permanent, permanent time, or in everlasting, everlasting time as being the imputational character, and is without its nature, it is the thoroughly established character.

“Guṇākara, in dependence upon names that are connected with signs, the imputational character is known. In dependence upon strongly adhering to the other-dependent character as being the imputational character, the other-dependent character is known. In dependence upon absence of strong adherence to the other-dependent character as being the imputational character, the thoroughly established character is known.<sup>7</sup>

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know the imputational character as it really is with respect to the other-dependent character of phenomena, then they know characterless phenomena as they really are.

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know the other-dependent character as it really is, then they know the phenomena of afflicted character as they really are.

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know the thoroughly established character as it really is, then they know the phenomena of purified character as they really are.

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know characterless phenomena as they really are with respect to the other-dependent character, then they completely abandon phenomena of afflicted character. When they have completely abandoned phenomena of afflicted character, they realize phenomena of purified character.

“Therefore, Guṇākara, Bodhisattvas know the imputational character of phenomena, the other-dependent character, and the thoroughly established character of phenomena as they really are. Once they know characterlessness, the thoroughly afflicted character, and the purified character as they really are, then they know characterless phenomena as they really are. They completely abandon the phenomena of afflicted character, and when they have completely abandoned phenomena of afflicted character, then they realize phenomena of purified character.

“This is how Bodhisattvas are wise with respect to the character of phenomena. When the Tathāgata designates Bodhisattvas as being wise with respect to the character of phenomena, he designates them as such for this very reason.”

Then the Bhagavan spoke these verses:



“When one knows characterless phenomena,  
one abandons phenomena of afflicted character.  
When one abandons phenomena of afflicted character,  
one attains phenomena of pure character.

“Heedless beings, overcome by faults and lazy,  
do not consider the faults of compounded phenomena.  
Weak regarding stable and fluctuating phenomena,  
they are objects of compassion.”

This completes the sixth chapter of Guṇākara.





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The Questions of  
Paramārthasamudgata

*Chapter Seven*

Then Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata<sup>1</sup> questioned the Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, when I was in seclusion there arose this thought: ‘The Bhagavan has spoken in many ways of the own-character of the aggregates and further spoken of their character of production, their character of disintegration, and their abandonment and realization. Just as he has spoken of the aggregates, he has also spoken of the sense spheres, dependent origination, and the sustenances.

“The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the [own-] character of the [four] truths and further spoken of the realization [of suffering], abandonment [of the source of suffering], actualization [of the cessation of suffering], and meditative cultivation [of the path].

“The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the own-character of the constituents and has further spoken of the various constituents, the manifold constituents, and of their abandonment and realization.

“The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the own-character of the mindful establishments and further spoken of their discordances and antidotes, their meditative cultivation, the production of [the mindful establishments] that have not yet arisen, the abiding of those that have arisen, their non-forgetting, continued arising, increasing, and extending.

“Just as he spoke of the mindful establishments, he has also spoken of the correct abandonings, the bases of magical

abilities, the powers, the forces, and the branches of enlightenment. The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the own-character of the eight branches of the path of the Āryas and further spoken of their discordances and antidotes, their meditative cultivation, the production of those that have not yet arisen, the abiding of those that have arisen, their non-forgetting, continued arising, increasing, and extending.

“The Bhagavan has also said that all phenomena lack own-being, that all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’

“Then I thought, ‘Of what was the Bhagavan thinking when he said, “All phenomena lack own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa?”’

“Why was the Bhagavan thinking, “All phenomena lack own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa?”’ I ask the Bhagavan the meaning of this.”<sup>2</sup>

The Bhagavan replied to Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata: “Paramārthasamudgata, your thought, virtuously arisen, is good! It is good! Paramārthasamudgata, you are involved [in asking] this in order to benefit many beings, to bring happiness to many beings, out of sympathy for the world, and for the sake of the welfare, benefit, and happiness of beings,

including gods and humans. Your intention in questioning the Tathāgata about this subject is good! Therefore, Paramārthasamudgata, listen well and I will explain to you what I was thinking when I said: 'All phenomena lack an own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.'

"Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of the three types of lack of own-being of phenomena—the lack of own-being in terms of character, the lack of own-being in terms of production, and an ultimate lack of own-being—I taught, 'All phenomena lack own-being.'

"Paramārthasamudgata, what is the lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena? It is the imputational character. Why is this? The [imputational character] is a character posited as names and symbols, but it does not subsist by way of its own character. Therefore, it is the 'lack of own-being in terms of character'.

"Paramārthasamudgata, what is the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena? It is the other-dependent character of phenomena. Why is this? The [other-dependent character] arises through the force of other conditions and not by itself. Therefore, it is the 'lack of own-being in terms of production'.

"Paramārthasamudgata, what is an ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena? Phenomena that are dependently

originated lack an own-being due to the lack of own-being in terms of production. They also lack own-being due to an ultimate lack of own-being. Why is this? Paramārthasamudgata, I teach that whatever is an object of observation for purification of phenomena is the ultimate.<sup>3</sup> Since the other-dependent character is not an object of observation for purification, it is an 'ultimate lack of own-being'.

"Moreover, Paramārthasamudgata, the thoroughly established character of phenomena is also 'an ultimate lack of own-being'. Why is this? Paramārthasamudgata, that which is the 'selflessness of phenomena' of phenomena is known as their 'lack of own-being'. That is the ultimate. Since the ultimate is distinguished as the lack of own-being of all phenomena, it is an 'ultimate lack of own-being'.

"Paramārthasamudgata, for example, you should view lack of own-being in terms of character as being like a sky-flower.<sup>4</sup> For example, Paramārthasamudgata, you should also view the lack of own-being in terms of production as being like a magical apparition.

"The ultimate lack of own-being should be viewed as being something other than those [first two characters]. For example, Paramārthasamudgata, just as [space] is distinguished by being just the lack of own-being of forms in space and as pervading everywhere, in the same way the ultimate lack of

own-being is distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena and should be viewed as all-pervasive and unitary.

“Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of those three types of lack of own-being, I taught, ‘All phenomena lack own-being.’

“Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of lack of own-being in terms of character, I taught: ‘All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’ Why is this?

“Paramārthasamudgata, that which does not exist by way of its own character is not produced. That which is not produced does not cease. That which is not produced and does not cease is quiescent from the start. That which is quiescent from the start is naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. That which is naturally in a state of nirvāṇa does not have even the slightest remainder that could pass beyond sorrow. Therefore, thinking of lack of own-being in terms of character, I taught, ‘All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’<sup>5</sup>

“Moreover, Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of an ultimate lack of own-being that is distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena, I taught: ‘All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’ Why is this?

“An ultimate lack of own-being, distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena, abides solely in permanent,

permanent time and everlasting, everlasting time. That uncompounded reality of phenomena is free from all afflictions. That which is uncompounded, which abides in permanent, permanent time and everlasting, everlasting time due to being this very reality, is uncompounded. Therefore, it is unproduced and unceasing. Because it is free from all afflictions, it is quiescent from the start and is naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. Therefore, thinking of an ultimate lack of own-being that is distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena, I taught, 'All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.'

"Paramārthasamudgata, I do not designate the three types of lack of own-being because sentient beings in the realms of sentient beings view the own-being of the imputational as distinct [from the other-dependent and the thoroughly established character] in terms of own-being; or because they view the other-dependent and the thoroughly established as distinct in terms of own-being. Superimposing the own-being of the imputational onto the own-being of the other-dependent and the thoroughly established, sentient beings subsequently attribute conventions of the character of the own-being of the imputational to the own-being of the other-dependent and the thoroughly established.

"To the extent that they subsequently attribute such conventions, their minds are infused with conventional designations. Thereafter, because of being bound to conventional



designations or due to predispositions toward conventional designations, they strongly adhere to the character of the own-being of the imputational as the own-being of the other-dependent and the thoroughly established.

“To the extent that they strongly adhere [to this], they strongly adhere to the own-being of the imputational as the own-being of the other-dependent. Due to these causes and conditions, in the future [this view of] the own-being of the other-dependent proliferates. Based on this, the afflictive afflictions give rise to further afflictions.

“The afflictions of actions and the afflictions of birth give rise to further afflictions. For a long time sentient beings will wander, transmigrating among hell beings, or animals, or hungry ghosts, or gods, or asuras, or humans. They will not pass beyond cyclic existence.

“Paramārthasamudgata, I initially teach doctrines starting with the lack of own-being in terms of production to those beings who have not generated roots of virtue, who have not purified obstructions, who have not ripened their continuums, who do not have much conviction, and who have not completed the accumulations of merit and wisdom. When they hear those doctrines, they understand dependently originated compounded phenomena as being impermanent. They know them to be phenomena that are unstable, unworthy of confidence, and changeable, whereupon they develop aversion and antipathy toward all compounded phenomena.

“Having developed aversion and antipathy, they turn away from wrong-doing. They do not commit any wrong-doing, and they adhere to virtue. Because of adhering to virtue, they generate roots of virtue that were not previously generated. They also purify obscurations that were not previously purified. They also ripen their continuums, which were not previously ripened. On that basis, they have great conviction, and they complete the accumulations of merit and wisdom.

“In that way they complete everything from the generation of roots of virtue up to the accumulation of merit and wisdom. However, because they do not understand, as they are, the two aspects pertaining to lack of own-being in terms of production—lack of own-being in terms of character and ultimate lack of own-being—they do not become wholly averse toward all compounded phenomena. They do not become separated from attachment. They do not become fully liberated. They do not become fully liberated from the afflictive afflictions nor fully liberated from the afflictions of actions nor fully liberated from the afflictions of birth.

“The Tathāgatha further teaches them doctrines beginning with lack of own-being in terms of character and ultimate lack of own-being. Thus they become wholly averse toward all compounded phenomena, separated from attachment, and liberated; they pass beyond the afflictive afflictions, pass beyond the afflictions of actions, and pass beyond the afflictions of birth.

“Hearing these doctrines, they do not strongly adhere to the own-being of the other-dependent as being of the character of the own-being of the imputational. Further, they become confident that the lack of own-being in terms of production does not exist as an ultimate own-being in the sense that it is just an absence of own-being in terms of character with respect to those [phenomena]. They fully distinguish this. They realize it as it is and, in this way, their understanding is not infused with conventional designations. Thereafter, because they are not bound to conventional designations and because their understanding is free from predispositions toward conventions, in this lifetime they produce the ability to understand the other-dependent character. In future lives they achieve cessation through cutting off the continuum.

“Based on this, they become wholly averse toward all compounded phenomena, free from attachment, and liberated. They become fully liberated from the afflictive afflictions, the afflictions of actions, and the afflictions of birth.

“Paramārthasamudgata, through just this path and through just this attainment, even sentient beings of the Śrāvaka lineage attain the establishment and abiding of unsurpassed nirvāṇa. Through just this path and through just this attainment, sentient beings of the Pratyekabuddha lineage and sentient beings of the Tathāgata lineage also attain the establishment and abiding of unsurpassed nirvāṇa. Thus, there is a

single path of purification for Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas, and there is a single purification. There is no other. Thinking of that, therefore, I have taught that there is a single vehicle. Yet in the realms of sentient beings, there are various types of sentient beings, such as those who are naturally of weak faculties, or naturally of middling faculties, or naturally of sharp faculties.

“Paramārthasamudgata, even if all the Buddhas were to attempt to establish someone having the Śrāvaka lineage, who proceeds solely towards peacefulness, in the heart of enlightenment, that person would be unable to attain unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment.<sup>6</sup> Why is this? Due to extremely limited compassion and great fear of suffering, that one is simply by nature of an inferior lineage. Just as his compassion is extremely limited, so he turns away from the welfare of sentient beings. Just as he is extremely afraid of suffering, so he turns away from all the activities of compounded phenomena.

“I do not describe those who turn away from the welfare of sentient beings and who turn away from all the activities of compounded existence as unsurpassably, perfectly enlightened. They are ‘those who seek peace for themselves alone’.

“[However] I teach that Śrāvakas who evolve with respect to enlightenment are a type of Bodhisattva.<sup>7</sup> It is like this: Having become liberated from the afflictive obstructions, they

liberate their minds from the obstructions to omniscience when they are encouraged by the Tathāgatas. Thus, the Tathāgata designates those who initially work for their own benefit and are freed from the afflictive obstructions as being of the Śrāvaka lineage.<sup>8</sup>

“Paramārthasamudgata, it is like this: My disciplinary doctrine is explained well, is complete, and is taught with a very pure thought. With respect to this well-taught doctrine, degrees of conviction appear among sentient beings.<sup>9</sup>

“Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of just these three types of lack of own-being, through the teachings that are Sūtras of interpretable meaning, the Tathāgata taught such doctrines as: ‘All phenomena lack own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’

“When those sentient beings who have generated great roots of virtue, purified the obstructions, ripened their continuums, who have great conviction and have completed the great accumulations of merit and wisdom<sup>10</sup> hear those doctrines, they understand the teaching just as it is in accordance with my thought.<sup>11</sup> They further understand those doctrines to be doctrine. Through wisdom they also realize the meaning just as it is. Through cultivating realization of that [meaning], they rapidly attain the final state. Regarding [these doctrines],

they develop faith, [thinking], 'Ah! The Bhagavan is completely and perfectly enlightened. He is completely and perfectly enlightened with respect to all phenomena.'

"When sentient beings who have not generated great roots of virtue, have not purified the obstructions, have not ripened their continuums, do not have great conviction, and have not completed the great accumulations of merit and wisdom, who are honest and have an honest nature, who are unable to remove conceptuality, who are not fixated on holding their own view to be supreme, [when such beings] hear those doctrines, they do not understand the teaching just as it is in accordance with my thought.

"Still, [these beings] develop conviction and also attain faith in these doctrines. They are convinced that: 'These Sūtras taught by the Tathāgata are profound, brilliantly profound, are endowed with emptiness, are difficult to perceive, difficult to understand, unanalyzable, not subject to dispute, and are known by the wise capable of fine discernment and by the astute.'

"They think: 'We do not understand the meaning of those Sūtras or the meaning of those teachings.' They think: 'The enlightenment of the Buddha is profound. The reality of phenomena is also profound. The Tathāgata alone knows; we do not understand. The doctrinal teaching of Tathāgatas influences sentient beings according to their diverse beliefs. The Tathāgatas' wisdom and perception are infinite, whereas our

understanding and perception are like mere cowprints.’ With reverence toward these Sūtras, they copy the letters. Having copied them, they also memorize them, read them, propagate them, venerate them, receive their oral transmission, recite them, and repeat them to others. However, because they do not understand these profound teachings in accordance with my thought, they are unable to apply themselves to the types of meditative cultivation. Based on that, they progress due to the accumulation of merit; they also progress due to the accumulation of wisdom. They also progressively ripen their continuums which were not previously ripened.

“When other sentient beings who have not completed [the stages of the path] up to the great accumulations of merit and wisdom, who are not honest and do not have an honest nature, who are able to remove conceptuality, but who are fixated on holding their own view to be supreme<sup>12</sup> hear these doctrines, they do not understand this profound explanation just as it is, in accordance with my thought.

“Although they believe in the doctrine, they strongly adhere just to the literal meaning of the doctrine, [thinking], ‘All phenomena just lack own-being; all phenomena are just unproduced, just unceasing, just quiescent from the start, just naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’ Based on this, they adopt the view that all phenomena do not exist and that character does not exist.<sup>13</sup> Having adopted the view of non-existence and the

view that character does not exist, they also deprecate everything through [deprecating] all characters. Because they deprecate the imputational character of phenomena, they also deprecate the other-dependent character of phenomena and the thoroughly established character.

“Why is this? Paramārthasamudgata, if the other-dependent and thoroughly established characters exist, then the imputational character is also understood.<sup>14</sup> However, those who see the other-dependent character and the thoroughly established character as non-existent also deprecate the imputational character. Therefore, they also ‘deprecate all three types of character’. They perceive my doctrine to be doctrine, but they perceive what is not the meaning to be the meaning.

“Those who perceive my doctrine to be doctrine but perceive what is not the meaning to be the meaning also understand the doctrine to be doctrine. They also understand what is not the meaning to be the meaning. Due to belief in the doctrine, they progress by means of virtuous qualities. But, due to strongly adhering to what is not the meaning, they fall away from wisdom. When they fall away from wisdom, they also fall away from vast and immeasurable virtuous qualities.

“Others, having heard from them that the doctrine is the doctrine, but that what is not the meaning is the meaning, delight in that view. Because they conceive the doctrine to be doctrine and conceive what is not the meaning to be the



meaning, they strongly adhere to doctrine as being doctrine and to what is not the meaning as being the meaning. Know that based on this they also fall away from virtuous qualities.

“When people who do not delight in such views hear from others that phenomena lack an own-being and hear that phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, they become fearful and develop misgivings, saying, ‘This is not the word of the Buddha. This is a statement from Māra!’ Thinking in this way they also deprecate these Sūtras. They reject them, condemn them, and speak badly of them.

“Based on this, they earn great misfortune, and they also meet with great karmic obstructions. Also based on this, since they cause many beings to meet with great obstructions, they deceive them. I state that those who view all characters as non-existent and who teach what is not the meaning to be the meaning possess great karmic obstructions.

“Paramārthasamudgata, when those sentient beings who have not produced roots of virtue, have not purified the obstructions, have not ripened their continuums, do not have great conviction, have not completed the accumulations of merit and wisdom, who are not honest and do not have an honest nature, and who are unable to remove conceptuality and who are fixated on holding their own view to be supreme hear these doctrines, they do not understand the teaching

just as it is in accordance with my thought. They also do not develop belief in this doctrine; they perceive the doctrine as non-doctrine and perceive the meaning to be what is not the meaning. Strongly adhering to the doctrine as non-doctrine and to the meaning as not being the meaning, they say: 'This is not the word of the Buddha. This is a statement from Māra!' Thinking in this way, they deprecate these Sūtras. They reject them, condemn them, speak badly of them, and also engage in interpolation. In many ways they are involved with these Sūtras in order to reject, undermine, and eradicate them. They also perceive people who believe in these [Sūtras] to be enemies. From the very beginning, they are obstructed by karmic obstructions. Based on that, they continue to be obstructed by similar karmic obstructions. It is easy to designate the beginning of these karmic obstructions; it is difficult to designate during how many hundred thousands of millions of epochs they will continue to arise.

"Paramārthasamudgata, in that way, degrees of conviction appear among sentient beings with respect to this well-taught doctrine, my disciplinary instruction which is explained well, is complete, and is taught with a very pure thought."

Then the Bhagavan spoke these verses:

"What sage would propound, without a thought behind it,  
that dharmas lack own-being; dharmas are unproduced;  
dharmas are unceasing; dharmas are quiescent from the start;  
that all dharmas are naturally in a state of nirvāṇa?"

“I explain lack of own-being in terms of character,  
in terms of production, and in terms of the ultimate.  
Whatever sage understands the thought behind this  
will not travel a path of degeneration.

“The path of purity is this alone;  
there is one purity; there is no other.  
Thus this one vehicle is designated,  
although there are various types of beings.

“In the realms of beings, innumerable beings  
seek nirvāṇa for themselves alone.  
Those who, steadfast and compassionate,  
attain nirvāṇa without abandoning beings are very rare.

“The uncontaminated realm of those who are liberated  
is subtle, inconceivable, equal, and undifferentiated,  
all-beneficial, free from suffering and affliction,  
inexpressible in dualistic terms, blissful and stable.”

Then the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata said to the  
Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, since [your] teaching, having the thought  
of the Buddhas and the Bhagavans, is subtle, is supremely  
subtle, profound, supremely profound, difficult to realize,  
supremely difficult to realize, it is amazing and wondrous.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of that which the  
Bhagavan said in this way: The imputational character con-  
sists of [first] those things that are posited in terms of names

and symbols—the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, the signs of compounded phenomena—as the character of the own-being or as the character of attributes of ‘the form aggregate’; and [second], those things that are posited in terms of names and symbols as the character of own-being or the character of attributes of ‘the production of a form aggregate’, or its ‘cessation’, or the ‘abandonment and realization of a form aggregate’. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan designated the lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena.

“Those things that are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, the signs of compounded phenomena, are the other-dependent character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan designated the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena and, additionally, an ultimate lack of own-being.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: Those very objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are not established as being that imputational character, and they lack own-being. Because of just that, the lack of own-being, selflessness of phenomena, suchness, and object of observation for purification are the thoroughly established character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated the ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena.

“Just as this is applied to the form aggregate, so it should also be applied to the remaining aggregates. Just as this is applied to the aggregates, so it should also be applied to each of the sense spheres that comprise the twelve sense spheres. The same is true for each of the limbs of existence that comprise the twelve limbs of existence. The same is true for each of the sustenances that comprise the four sustenances. The same is true for each of the constituents that comprise the six constituents and the eighteen constituents.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: The imputational character consists of those things posited in terms of names and symbols—which are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena—as the character of own-being and the character of attributes of the ‘truth of suffering and understanding the truth of suffering’. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan designated lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena.

“Those things that are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are the other-dependent character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena and an ultimate lack of own-being.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: Those things that are the objects of

conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are not established as being the imputational character. And because of just that own-being, the lack of own-being, the selflessness of phenomena, suchness, and the object of observation for purification are the thoroughly established character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated an ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena.

“Just as this is applied to the noble truth of suffering, so it should be applied to the remaining truths. Just as this is applied to the truths, so it should be applied to the mindful establishments, the correct abandonings, the bases of magical abilities, the powers, the forces, the branches of enlightenment, and each of the branches of the path of the Āryas.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: The imputational character consists of those things posited in terms of names and symbols—which are objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena—as the character of own-being or the character of attributes of ‘pure samādhī’ or the ‘discordances and antidotes of samādhis’, or the ‘production of those which have not been produced’, or the ‘abiding of those which have been produced, and their non-forgetting, their further arising, and their increasing and extending’. In dependence upon that, the

Bhagavan designated the lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena.

“Those things which are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are the other-dependent character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena and an ultimate lack of own-being.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: Those things which are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are not established as being the imputational character. And because of just that own-being, the lack of own-being, the selflessness of phenomena, suchness, and the object of observation for purification are the thoroughly established character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated an ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena.

“Bhagavan, for example, dried ginger is added to all medicinal powders and elixirs. Similarly, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with [the teachings that phenomena are] unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, the Bhagavan

also placed teachings of definitive meaning in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning.<sup>15</sup>

“Bhagavan, for example, the background of a painting, whether it is blue, yellow, red, or white, is of one taste throughout the entire painted work and also highlights the details of the painting. Similarly, the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, ranging from the lack of own-being of phenomena to their being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, are all of one taste in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning and also highlight meanings that are interpretable.

“Bhagavan, for example, when one adds clarified butter to all types of dishes, for instance cooked grain or cooked meat, it is very satisfying. Similarly, when the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, ranging from the lack of own-being of phenomena to their being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, are added to all Sūtras of interpretable meaning, it is satisfying, supremely satisfying!

“Bhagavan, for example, space is all of one taste and yet does not obstruct any undertakings. Similarly, the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, ranging from the lack of own-being of phenomena to their being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, are also all of one taste in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning, and yet do not obstruct any undertaking concerned with either the Śrāvaka vehicle, or the Pratyekabuddha vehicle, or the Great Vehicle.”<sup>16</sup>



“Excellent!” the Bhagavan replied to the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata. “Paramārthasamudgata, that is good, good! Paramārthasamudgata, having the thought of the Tathāgata, you understand this explanation.

“Your good illustrations of the meaning, [analogies] such as dried ginger, the background of a painting, adding butter, and space, are accurate, Paramārthasamudgata. The [teaching] is not other than this. Therefore it should be apprehended in just this way.”

Then the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata said to the Bhagavan: “Initially, in the Vārāṇasī area, in the Deer Park called Sages’ Teaching, the Bhagavan taught the aspects of the four truths of the Āryas for those who were genuinely engaged in the [Śrāvaka] vehicle. The wheel of doctrine you turned at first is wondrous. Similar doctrines had not been promulgated before in the world by gods or humans. However, this wheel of doctrine that the Bhagavan turned is surpassable, provides an opportunity [for refutation], is of interpretable meaning, and serves as a basis for dispute.<sup>17</sup>

“Then the Bhagavan turned a second wheel of doctrine which is more wondrous still for those who are genuinely engaged in the Great Vehicle, because of the aspect of teaching emptiness, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with their absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being

naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. However, this wheel of doctrine that the Bhagavan turned is surpassable, provides an opportunity [for refutation], is of interpretable meaning, and serves as a basis for dispute.

“Then the Bhagavan turned a third wheel of doctrine, possessing good differentiations, and exceedingly wondrous, for those genuinely engaged in all vehicles, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with their absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. Moreover, that wheel of doctrine turned by the Bhagavan is unsurpassable, does not provide an opportunity [for refutation], is of definitive meaning, and does not serve as a basis for dispute.

“Bhagavan, when sons or daughters of good lineage hear the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, from [the teachings] of the lack of own-being of phenomena up to [the teachings] of [phenomena] being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, they develop conviction in them and write them down. Having transcribed them, they also memorize them, read them, venerate them, propagate them, receive their oral transmission, recite them to others, and reflect and apply themselves to the types of meditative cultivation. How much merit will they generate?”

The Bhagavan replied to the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata: “Paramārthasamudgata, those sons or daughters

of good lineage will generate immeasurable, incalculable merit. It is not easy to give examples of that [merit], but I will explain it to you briefly.

“Paramārthasamudgata, for example, if one compares the particles of earth on the tip of a fingernail to all the particles of earth in the earth, they do not approach even a hundredth part. They do not approach even a thousandth part, [or] even a one-hundred-thousandth part. They do not approach any number, any part, any approximation, any comparison. If one compares the water in a cow’s hoofprint to the water of the four great oceans, it does not approach even a hundredth part. It does not approach any comparison.

“Paramārthasamudgata, similarly, I have described the merit [generated] by people who develop conviction in Sūtras of interpretable meaning up to those who apply themselves to the types of meditative cultivation. If one compares this merit to the merit [generated] by people who are established in teachings of definitive meaning through conviction up to those who are established [in them] through applying themselves to the types of meditative cultivation, that merit does not approach even a hundredth part. It does not approach any comparison.”

The Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata asked the Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, what is the name of this form of Dharma discourse that explains your thought? How should it be apprehended?”

The Bhagavan replied: "Paramārthasamudgata, this is the teaching of the ultimate, the definitive meaning. Apprehend it as 'the teaching of the ultimate, the definitive meaning'."

When this teaching of the ultimate, the definitive meaning, was explained, six hundred thousand beings generated the aspiration toward unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. Three hundred Śrāvakas purified the Dharma eye that is free from dust and stainless with respect to the Dharma. One hundred and fifty thousand Śrāvakas liberated their minds from contamination, becoming free from attachment. Seventy-five thousand Bodhisattvas attained the forbearance of the doctrine of non-production.

This completes the seventh chapter of the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata.



"If the basis-consciousness did not exist, appropriation of a body would be impossible; initial operation [of consciousness] would be impossible; clear operation [of consciousness] would be impossible; seeds would be impossible; karma would be impossible; bodily feelings would be impossible; meditative absorptions in which mind is absent would be impossible; and transmigration of consciousness would be impossible." (B, vol. cho [205]:124.6)

8 This passage refers to the fanciful etymology of the Sanskrit word *citta* from the verbal root  $\sqrt{ci}$ , which means 'to accumulate'. Thus, *citta* is what 'accumulates' the predispositions. The basis-consciousness has seeds within it that ripen into eye-consciousnesses. When these become activated, an eye-consciousness results. (KJ 4.12-6.9 and KY 5a, 11b. See also JBW 111-19, 138, 409-20)

9 In other words, this reason alone is not sufficient for Bodhisattvas to merit the designation: "wise with respect to the secrets of mind, thought, and consciousness." They must also directly realize the ultimate in order to be worthy of this designation.

10 "It is deep because it is difficult for its depth to be fathomed by the intelligence even of the wise of the world. It is subtle because it is difficult to know even for Śrāvakas. Therefore, [Buddha] does not teach this [basis-]consciousness to Śrāvakas and the like, because they do not seek extremely subtle omniscience. With respect to [the phrase,] 'all its seeds flowing like a river': Because it continues from one moment to another, it flows without its continuum being cut off, like a river. With respect to [the phrase,] 'I have not taught this to children': It is not revealed to those having a view of self. This is because those who conceive of a self would apprehend [the appropriating consciousness] as being a unitary, unchanging 'self' that exists as long as cyclic existence lasts." (W, vol. ti [118]:489.6, citing Asvabhāva's commentary on MS)

### *Notes to Chapter Six*

1 "With respect to [the name] Guṇākara ('Source of Qualities'): Because [he] has accumulated the causes of [good] qualities for immeasurable eons, this is a case of a designation of a name from a causal point of view. Because [he] has accumulated both types of

bases of [good] qualities—the collections of merit and wisdom—he is [called] *Guṇākara*.” (W, vol. ti [118]:493.5)

This entire chapter is quoted by Asaṅga in VS (P 5539, vol. 'i [111]: 60a.2–62b.2). He states that the subject of this chapter is the character of phenomena (*chos-rnams-kyi-mtshan-nyid*, *dharma-lakṣaṇa*).

2 “Why is it called ‘imputational’ (*kun-btags*, *parikalpita*)? Because mental consciousness, having the aspects of immeasurable conceptions, just gives rise to error, [it is termed] ‘imputational’. Also because its own character does not truly exist, but is merely perceived conceptually, it is called ‘imputational’.” (W, vol. ti [118]:496.4, citing MS) “‘A character that gives rise to error’ means that it has a character of unreal, erroneous objects of observation. ‘Its own character does not truly exist’ [because] its nature does not truly exist.” (W citing Vasubandhu’s commentary, 496.7)

“The imputational character is a character that is posited in the manner of names and terminology, but is not posited through its own character. Since it is utterly non-existent in terms of both of the two truths, it lacks own-being due to lacking own-being in terms of character.” (B, vol. cho [205]:213.5)

3 “The ‘other-dependent (*gzhan-dbang*, *paratantra*) character’ is the own-being of internal and external phenomena that are dependently arisen through the power of other conditions. Because the own-being of things that are apprehended objects and apprehending subjects are produced due to the power of other causes and conditions, it is the ‘other-dependent character’.” (B, vol. cho [205]: 187.7) “The other-dependent character is produced by the power of other conditions but is not [produced] through its nature. Therefore—since it exists merely [like] a magician’s illusions in terms of conventional truths—it is a lack of own-being due to being a lack of own-being in terms of production. Since it does not have ultimate lack of own-being because it is not an object of observation for purification, it is not an ultimate lack of own-being because it is not an ultimate truth. Therefore, it is a lack of own-being, and the thoroughly established character is the ultimate, and the ultimate is distinguished by being the lack of own-being of all phenomena. Because [the thoroughly established character] is both the ultimate truth and a lack of own-being, it is a lack of own-being due to being the ultimate lack of own-being.” (B 213.6. See also pp. 99–105 of this Sūtra)

“Because this exists, that arises” indicates that [effects] arise from conditions unalterably. “Because this is produced, that is produced” indicates that objects are produced from conditions that are impermanent. This is because production of an effect from causes that do not give rise to any phenomenon is not established. The phrase, “due to the condition of ignorance, compositional factors [arise],” indicates that [effects] are produced from conditions that are potencies. Although phenomena are unfluctuating and impermanent, any effect does not arise from any condition. Why is this? Since there are different divisions of potencies of phenomena, it is said that “there are [the links of dependent origination] ranging from the arising of compositional factors due to the power of ignorance up to the arising of old age and death due to the power of birth.” “The whole great assemblage of suffering” indicates that there is no beginning or end to the accumulation of suffering. (W, vol. ti [118]: 504–5)

4 “Because [the thoroughly established character] does not change into something else, because it is an object of observation for purification, because it is supreme of all virtuous phenomena, it is called the ‘thoroughly established character’ in the sense of being supreme.” (W quoting MS, vol. ti [118]:499.7) “‘Because it does not change into something else’ it is not a false phenomenon. It is like a minister who is free from falsity.” (W quoting Vasubandhu, 500.1)

“The ‘thoroughly established character’ is correct knowledge and suchness that are distinguished by having been transformed and by being the suchness of phenomena.” (B, vol. cho [205]:187.6)

5 “Clouded vision” (rab-rib, timira) indicates a wide range of visual defects, including occluded or hazy vision, seeing spots or lines in the visual field that may look like a net of hairs, insects, sesame seeds, etc., or perceiving colors incorrectly. (See W, vol. ti [118]:517.4, 518.5; *Viṃśatikā-kārikā-vṛtti* 161, verse 2 and commentary)

6 Mahānīla (mthon-ka-chen-po) is a blue-colored gem.

7 “In that way, through entering into [understanding of] the character of objects that appear in the manner of mental verbalizations, those Bodhisattvas enter into [understanding of] the imputational character. Through entering into [understanding of] cognition-only, they enter into [understanding of] the other-dependent character. How do they enter into [understanding of] the thoroughly established character? They enter after having reversed even concep-

tions of cognition-only." (W, vol. ti [118]:538.1, citing MS) "At that time, since objects of observation and observers are equalized for those Bodhisattvas, the non-conceptual exalted wisdom of equality arises. Therefore, those Bodhisattvas have entered into [understanding of] the thoroughly established character." (W 538.6)

### *Notes to Chapter Seven*

1 Regarding the name of this Bodhisattva, Paramārthasamudgata ('Exalted by the Ultimate'): "The 'ultimate' is the object to be attained, and it is the object of the supreme exalted wisdom. Therefore it is called 'ultimate'. Because the exalted wisdom that is the means of attainment arises from observing the ultimate, he is 'exalted'." (W, vol. ti [118]:544.7) This chapter explains the meaning of the character of lack of own-being of phenomena. (VS, P 5539, vol. 'i [111]:62b.2)

2 Paramārthasamudgata's question implies that the two sets of teachings (the teachings concerning the aggregates and so forth taught in other Sūtras and the teachings concerning lack of own-being and so forth taught in this Sūtra) are mutually contradictory (phan-tshun-'gal-ba). (W, vol. ti [118]:552.4) Paramārthasamudgata is asking the Buddha to clarify the intentions behind his earlier teachings in light of the teachings being given in this text. According to G (74.6-75.13), Paramārthasamudgata is asking this question not for himself, but for the benefit of others who might have such questions.

3 "That suchness which is the object of the exalted wisdom purifying the two obstructions [i.e., the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience] is the thoroughly established nature and is the object of observation for purification." (DLG 48.1)

4 "Lack of own-being in the sense of lack of own-being in terms of character should be understood to be an utter non-existence in terms of both conventional and ultimate truths, like a sky-flower. . . . Like a magical apparition, lack of own-being in the sense of lack of own-being in terms of production and ultimate lack of own-being should be understood as existing only as a conventional truth." (B, vol. cho [205]:187.6) "The similarity of imputational natures with a sky-flower is an example of their merely being imputed by thought and is not an example of their not occurring among objects of knowledge." (EG 13.11)



5 Asaṅga states that when the Buddha said that all phenomena are unproduced and so forth, he was “thinking only of lack of own-being in terms of character.” (VS, P 5539, vol. ‘i [111]:18a.8)

6 “‘Peacefulness’ (zhi-ba, śānti) refers to liberation from the afflictive obstructions. ‘Proceeds’ (bgrod-pa, yāna) refers to the path and the fruit: the path of the Śrāvaka vehicle and the fruit of liberation. ‘Solely’ (gcig-pu, eka) refers to not attaining the lineage which achieves the conditions for complete transformation into [the state of] unsurpassable enlightenment at that time, and abiding in the partial liberation and nirvāṇa of the Śrāvaka.” (B, vol. cho [205]: 239.1. See also Bh 14.5)

“Since the causes of unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment are thoroughly ripening sentient beings and ripening the qualities of a Buddha for oneself, those who do not complete those two [activities] lack the causes of that [i.e., enlightenment] at that time. Moreover, this is merely a difference in practice; it does not come from the nature of the mind. Therefore, [Buddha’s] thought is that they are called ‘those who proceed solely towards peacefulness’ as long as they have not attained the lineage of transformation into unsurpassed enlightenment and do not exert themselves.” (B 240.3)

7 “Because Śrāvakas [who evolve with respect to enlightenment] immediately thereafter abide on the eighth Bodhisattva stage, Śrāvakas are also indicated as being among the enumeration of Bodhisattvas.” (B, vol. cho [205]:241.2) “When [Śrāvakas] become non-learners [when they reach the path of no more learning of the Śrāvaka vehicle], they turn away from the aspirations of Śrāvakas, and through the Tathāgatas’ encouragement they apply themselves to unsurpassed, complete, perfect enlightenment with a body that has a remainder of aggregates [impelled by former contaminated actions and afflictive emotions].” (B 241.3. See also WE 261)

8 “As long as [their enlightenment] is not transformed into unsurpassed enlightenment, they are designated as being of the Śrāvaka lineage.” (B, vol. cho [205]:241.4)

9 The “disciplinary doctrine” (chos’dul-ba, dharma-vinaya) is here understood as “the teaching of the Bhagavan, the Buddha, [which is] endowed with the eight branches of the path of Āryas. Correct views, realization, mindfulness, and samādhi are doctrine. Correct speech, aims of actions, and livelihood are discipline. Correct exertion is

omnipresent. It is 'well taught' since that disciplinary doctrine is explained exceptionally well. It is 'well taught' since it is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end." (B, vol. cho [205]:242.1) "Because all three scriptural collections [of Vinaya, Sūtra, and Abhidharma] have the capacity to discipline ill deeds, [they are] 'disciplinary'." (W, vol. thi [119]:46.4. See also WE 29–34)

10 "‘Having ripened their continuums’ [means that] although Bodhisattvas on the occasion of having gained the Bodhisattva lineage abide in the lineage and have thoroughly purified obstructions, due to four causes, they are unable to attain unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment. Due to being free from those four causes indicated earlier, [these Bodhisattvas] have ‘thoroughly ripened continuums’. . . . ‘Great conviction’ [refers to] conviction in the ability to attain the qualities of a Buddha . . . Thoroughly ripened wisdom [is that which] differentiates doctrines and apprehends the ultimate truth. This is indicated by ‘they have completed the great accumulations of merit and wisdom.’" (B, vol. cho [205]:244.2)

11 The Buddha’s thought differs from what the actual words of his teaching indicate to beings who do not understand this thought. This point is developed at length in EG, especially 3–29, and DLG, especially 8–36. See also JBW 294–97.

12 This is because they do not seek the definitive meaning and the Mahāyāna but adhere to the literal meaning, thus misunderstanding the teachings. (W, vol. thi [119]:61.7) Because they do not seek scriptures of definitive meaning, but grasp at scriptures of interpretable meaning, they hold their own views to be supreme. (W 62.1)

13 The dGe-lugs-pa tradition, beginning with Tsong-kha-pa, interprets this passage to mean that these beings, whom they identify as Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas, think that no object exists by way of its own-character. Thus they fall into the extreme of nihilism. (See EG 13–14) W states that this passage indicates the faults of exaggerated adherence to literal meanings. (W, vol. thi [119]:62)

14 "‘They [adopt] the view that all phenomena do not exist’ [because] they view the phenomena that lack character, the phenomena of thoroughly afflicted character, and the phenomena of purified character as being equally non-existent. ‘They [adopt] the view that character does not exist’: They view all imputational char-

acters, other-dependent characters, and thoroughly established characters as equally non-existent. With respect to [the phrase,] ‘If other-dependent and thoroughly established characters exist, then the imputational character is also understood’: This is because imputation of names and terminology in the manner of own-being and attributes is itself the imputational character. [The phrase,] ‘Therefore, they also deprecate all three types of characters’ indicates [that they hold] a specific type of belief that arises from little wisdom.” (B, vol. cho [205]:252.4)

15 “When dried ginger is put in medicinal powders, they become potent. When one puts these words of lack of own-being and so forth in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning, then one will understand the thoughts [behind] those Sūtras.” (W, vol. thi [119]:107.5)

16 Through these examples, Paramārthasamudgata offers four ways of looking at the relation between what the Buddha said in his interpretable teachings and the definitive teachings that state his actual thought. In the first example, the definitive teaching is compared to an ingredient in a medicinal preparation essential to its efficacy. In the second example, the definitive teaching is compared to the background of a painting, which may remain unnoticed, but which provides the basis for the placement of lines and color. In the third example, the definitive teaching is compared to an ingredient in cooking that enhances flavor. In the final example, the definitive teaching is compared to space. Space is all-pervasive, subtle, imperceptible, and generally not noticed, but makes possible the manifestation of physical objects. In the same way, the definitive teaching is said to be subtle, difficult to perceive, and so forth, but is the essence of the explanations given by Buddha in the first two wheels, even when this was not noticed by his audience. (See W, vol. thi [119]:109.2; B, vol. cho [205]:262; and Bh 14–15)

17 “‘Surpassable’ indicates that there are other Sūtras of definitive meaning that are higher. [They] ‘provide an opportunity’ [for refutation because they] provide an opportunity for other disputants to find fault with respect to the literal reading of the explicit teaching. . . . [The first wheel] serves as a basis for controversy in that there is a basis for dispute because the Teacher did not differentiate individually in terms of the three characters whether they do or do not exist by way of their own character.” (DLG, 29.4)