

Handout for Buddha Nature Panel IATS 2022

“Buddha nature sings its song—*tathāgatagarbha* and its equivalents in the Indian *dohā* tradition”

Nāropa’s *Lta ba mdor bsdus* (**Drṣṭisamkṣipta*)

It is lucid and nonconceptual wisdom,
just like the example of sugata wisdom [10ab]

...

Therefore it is said, “If it is realized that
in luminous mind as such, mind is wisdom,
buddhahood is not searched for elsewhere”
Nevertheless, this mind becomes afflicted
by the stains of adventitious thoughts [11]

Similar to water, gold, and space,
it has two phases—pure and impure
These two—naturally luminous mind
and the stains of adventitious thoughts—[12]

whether they are one or different
is the great utter profundity indeed [13ab]

...

The buddha disposition too is just this
The sugata heart is just this [14cd]

By relishing its taste as it is,
great bliss is also just this [15ab]

...

This is called “primordial buddhahood sprung
from appearing-empty expanse and wisdom” [16cd]

Since that self-awareness with stains
does not depend on anything else,
self-arising wisdom is just this

...

Great Madhyamaka too is just this [17abcf]

That which is to be seen is just this
That to familiarize with too is just this
That to be attained is just this as well [18ac]

...

What are known as the three kinds of tantras—
the causal, the one of means, and the resultant—
and what are known as ground, path, and fruition
constitute the phases of just this [19]

Āryadeva's *Cittaviśuddhināmaprakaraṇa*

In the same way as a pure and clear
crystal becomes tinted by other colors,
so the jewel of the mind becomes
colored by the hues of thoughts [27]

The jewel of mind that is devoid
of the colors of ordinary thoughts
is pure from the beginning, unborn,
and its own nature is without taint [28]

...

A wise man having set out to cleanse
this wish-fulfilling jewel of the mind
besmeared with the mud of ignorance,
what could increase ignorance again? [74]

...

Similar to fire blazing up suddenly
within a jewel that is a sun stone
while struck by the light of the sun,
enabling you to accomplish your own goal, [91]

the mind that resembles a sun stone
and has cast off the web of thoughts,
while fused with prajñā's sun rays,
is blazing in the same way in yogīs¹ [92]

...

It is like one with the know-how
extracting ambrosia from milk,
which is flawless, cool, pleasant,
and overcomes all the diseases [96]

Having arisen from expertly churning
the milk of prajñā with great means,
the utterly pure dharmadhātu consists
of the true bliss that overcomes pain [97]

...

Just as a lotus that is born from mud
is not stained by any flaws of mud,
so the yogīs do not become stained
by the flaws of thoughts' imprints [115]

Just as the moon [reflected] in water
does not become stained by any water,
by seeing various reflection-like [things],
you will not be stained by any flaws [116]

The jewel of mind that is stained

¹ Two similar stanzas are found as *Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi* II.30–31.

by muds of beginningless imprints,
if washed with the water of prajñā
and means, will be shining brightly [117]

For the intelligent with stable minds
and their own supreme deity's yoga,
freed from the clouds of bad views,
the sun of the mind is shining forth [118]

Having ascertained the ultimate
by cutting with prajñā's weapon,
the dharmadhātu shall shine forth
from its cover of ignorance's cocoon [119]

Once the hammer of prajñā breaks
the vase of thoughts instantaneously,
the lamp of wisdom, being naturally
stainless and clear, illuminates [all] [120]

...
Similar to a pure water-gem
purifying water that is turbid,
likewise, the gem of devotion
is said to purify mind's jewel [131]

A song of Guru Dhiṣṭijñāna

The connate is the body of space—the body of the sugata heart [3a]

Saraha's *Kāyavākcittāmanasikāra*

The secret actuality, which is just as rare as the uḍumbara flower,
constitutes the heart that eliminates the darkness of oblivion,
is clearly manifest in everybody without anybody knowing it,
and is the actuality residing in the heart, becomes stainless [77be]

Saraha's *Queen Dohā*

Mind as such, native actuality, is difficult to realize by all
It is the stainless heart that is unblemished by any extremes
As it is pure by nature primordially, no one can analyze it [4ac]

The heart points out the heart, which is thanks to the supreme gurus
Pointing it out to others by realization, they point it out to themselves [32cd]

The one who points out unified mind is the guru—
the ground to be pointed out is the student's heart [52ab]

Maitrīpa's *Kanakamālā*

Though it is undoubtedly the case

that oil pervades sesame seeds,
don't press a dry one—it has no fluid
Sesame cannot function as its oil does [IX.13]

Likewise, though the sugata heart exists
in saṃsāric sentient beings of the six classes,
without practicing, freedom will not be attained [IX.14]

Atiśa's *Dharmadhātudarśanagīti*

19 stanzas (1, 4–20, 44) correspond almost literally to Nāgārjuna's *Dharmadhātustava* (1, 2–10, 12–13, 27, 24, 26, 22, 30–32, 33) with examples such as butter in milk, a lamp in a vase, gold in its ore, and a grain in its husk; several stanzas closely resemble *Uttaratantra*.

Lūhipa's *Buddhodaya*

Having paid homage to the dharmadhātu
that is concomitant with beings, nondual,
and that from which buddhahood arises,
I shall discuss that [dharmadhātu] here [1]

Being untouched by any thinking,
it dawns from the state of equipoise,
free of skandhas, dhātus, and such,
untainted, and without any stains [2]

...

That which pervades the entirety of beings
constitutes that which the yogīs give rise to [15ab]

...

Just this is all sentient beings' nature
The entire world has the nature of this
With this nature present, in all respects,
all victors [will emerge] from just this [17]

Yoginī Padminī

Though buddhahood exists in themselves for sure,
sentient beings who don't realize this are pitiable!
Hey, son, realize your own mind and make its not being anything at all a living experience! . .
Stamp this saṃsāra with the seal of its being unborn!²

Maitrīpa's *Prīṇapañcaka* and Tipi Bumlabar's commentary³

If the supreme darling of appearance,
who is mere dependent origination,
did not exist, the truly impassioned
paramour of emptiness would be fettered [1]

² *Blue Annals*, 847–48.

³ 'Bri gung bka' brgyud chos mdzod chen mo, vol. kha, fol. 26a.4–26b.2.

Commentary parallels cause-and-effect relationship of 7 vajra points in *Uttaratantra* I.23/26:

The first stanza [teaches] the naturally pure basic element of beings (what is to be purified), the effortless means to purify it, its gradually becoming pure of the stains of thoughts, and the gradual realization of suchness. Through these primary and secondary factors, [there are] the dharma, the saṃgha, and the buddhahood that is purified through the path in such a way. From the perspective of buddhas endowed with threefold purity realizing unity, this is taught as the single essence free of thought, which is the unity of the triad of ground, path, and fruition.⁴

Dohanidhikoṣaparipūrṇagītināmanijatattvaprakāśāṅkā

Since childish beings do not notice the native nature,
childish beings are deceived by delusion, says the heart [32fg]

...

The wisdom of beings, which is connate,
is naturally neither being nor nonbeing—
thus the heart’s reality always shouts out! [34ce]

From the beginning, the wisdom **which is connate**—the native **wisdom** that exists in the mindstreams **of all beings**—is **naturally** free from thoughts about **being** and thoughts about **nonbeing**. Therefore **the heart’s reality always shouts out** in a mellifluous manner, shouts out in a blissful manner, and shouts out in a resounding manner: “This is ordinary mind, and through realizing it, it is buddhahood—that is, everything has the nature of great bliss!”

“If you seize that, there will be birth, death, and living.
Seizing the very same, supreme great bliss is achieved.”
The heart voices this, declaring it in a mellifluous way,
but the world of animals doesn’t get it—what can you do? [35]

...

Knowing this nature, delusion is the heart’s reality
Not blemishing the lotus of naturally pure mind [37ab]

...

Not creating good or bad distinctions in the disposition [41a]

All these phenomena that appear and resound are [in fact] **the tathāgata disposition**, which is like space. **Not creating any distinctions or any good or bad in it**, they should be regarded as the dharmakāya . . . the *Apratiṣṭhitatantra* declares this:

The three realms’ beings are the sugata disposition
Their entirety is to be regarded as the dharmakāya

...

This is the supreme great bliss that constitutes the heart
This is the buddhas’ awakened mind, buddhahood itself
It is not experienced by others but conveyed by Saraha
His followers should take it up as dances with songs [47]

⁴ The dhātu (vajra point 4) is the cause; awakening, its qualities, and its enlightened activity (vajra points 5–7) are the conditions; and the three jewels of Buddha, dharma, and saṃgha (vajra points 1–3) are the results (in the first model in *Uttaratantra* I.3, the first three vajra points are the conditions, while the last three are the results).

This actuality constitutes the heart: once it is realized, [unawareness] **is** completely overwhelmed by **supreme great bliss**. **This is the awakened mind of the buddhas** in the ten directions and three times. Since they are not different, this true reality is also **buddhahood itself** . . . **his followers** should understand it in the form of **songs**, because its nature is that everything is not established, and they **should take it up** in the form of **dances**, because experience is inconceivable.

...

If this is realized in such a way, the heart is put to song [57a]

If this essence taught above is realized in such a way, the actuality that great yogīs teach to all saṃsāric sentient beings as the heart of awakening is put to song.

...

Clouds arise from the pure sky and dissolve through wind
Having realized mind's true reality, the imaginary dissolves
This is what the heart says: once it is endowed with power,
what's impermanent and moving will swiftly be abandoned [63]

...

In the entirety of all creatures that are alive,
true reality is present, but it is not realized [67ab]

Thus this means that they are naturally endowed with the awakened mind of a buddha. Therefore, in **all** sentient beings, the wisdom of true reality is present in a self-pervading manner. Thus **in the entirety of** appearing and resounding phenomena, the essence of **true reality is present** in the manner of sesame [seeds] and their oil, **but it is not realized**.

...

Don't be deluded about self and other!
All are buddhas in a continuous way
This is the stainless supreme state,
the nature of the mind that is pure [132]

The dispositions of [all] sentient beings **are buddhas** [by nature] **from the** very start. However, [sentient beings] do not realize this very [buddhahood], because it is [also] tainted by adventitious thoughts from the very start. Thus they do not realize that they themselves are [in fact] buddhas. **This is the stainless supreme** [state]—**the nature of** buddhahood that is **the** essence of **the mind**—because it is devoid of any clinging to any entity.

...

Through this vajra song of nonduality,
the letters of the ultimate nonduality
that reveal the wisdom of true reality,
may beings sing it within themselves! [170]

Through this vajra song of the great bliss that is the **nonduality** of appearances and mind, it is **revealed** that **the wisdom of true reality** exists in the mindstreams of [all] sentient beings. This is **the ultimate nondual** wisdom: **may** the **beings** who have the fortune for it **sing it** and realize it **within themselves!**

Nāropa's *Ratnaprabhā*

Within the wisdom that consists of bodhicitta,
the heart's equality is primordial buddhahood

Within the heart's actuality, there is no effort
The ultimate self-arising is without any duality [78]

Through the mind, self-awareness is realized
It is thoughts that are blazing as wisdom itself
This is the ultimate fruition without any effort
In this heart encapsulating the teachings' pith,
all nectar is incorporated, just as in the ocean [79]

This essential reality is the secret pith
This heart that is an illuminating lamp
is the circle that incorporates everything,
the heart to be realized by buddha words [80]

It is this mind as such, this very self-arising heart,
that incorporates outer, inner, and secret maṇḍalas
Lucid as the heart without arising and reentering,
it abides as self-arising, perfect awakened mind [81]

This very heart of wisdom that is similar to the sky
lacks end, middle, and anything to adopt or to reject
The heart that's not appropriated is the lucid no-self
This heart that encapsulates the pith of the teachings
is realized as the jewel heart, the great medicine [82]

...

Through realization, it doesn't come from elsewhere—
the self-arising heart does not have any beginning
It abides free from discursiveness, similar to space,
and naturally possesses the kāyas of the victors [84]

...

This very heart of luminosity here that is completely perfect
becomes realized by being scrutinized through jewel speech [90cd]

...

If awareness is let be freely within the expanse,
this is meditation free of the disease of searching
For this reason, familiarize with the stainless heart
as being nothing but the luminosity of awareness [115]

...

If aware of the actuality of the mind that is the heart,
it abides as the fruition of wisdom that is consummate
Major and minor marks are naturally accomplished
and emanations arise as anything, just as you please . . . [133ad]

...

The thoughts of the six classes' minds
and the self-lucid awareness of wisdom
are not different, being one as the heart [155def]

Stanza 4 of Kṛṣṇa's *Song in 5 Stanzas* with Tāranātha's comments

Mind is empty and perfect within its native state

The skandhas are laughable, but I have no regrets
Just as you don't see that butter exists within milk,
passion exists but is not seen by worldly people

Within its native state—the primordially accomplished kāyas and wisdoms—the entire dynamic energy of their qualities is **perfected** . . . This teaches that there is nothing to be removed from or added to the ultimate expanse. Though **butter exists within milk**, people **do not see that** butter is already there at the time of the milk. **Just as** in that case, here, **passion**—the dharmakāya of beings as the expanse, . . . what is to be realized or to be attained—is present in all sentient beings **but is not seen by ordinary worldly people**. As appropriate, it is seen by the great noble ones who dwell in the **Mahāyāna**, but solely the buddhas' seeing is the ultimate unobscured seeing. This example of milk is just an illustration of what is likewise to be understood through the nine examples of tathāgatagarbha and so on.

In Kagyü School, equations of tathāgatagarbha with *tha mal gyi shes pa*, mahāmudrā, and connate wisdom are very common (see Higgins and Draszcyk, *Buddha Nature Reconsidered*)

Layagpa Byang chub dngos grub (student of Gampopa):

What is called 'tathāgatagarbha' or 'connate wisdom' is mind as such, which is naturally luminous and utterly pure.⁵

Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje's *Snying po bstan pa*

It is this ordinary mind that is called
dharmadhātu, the heart of the victors (*jinagarbha*)

Dvags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal's *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer*, copied in Karma bkra shis chos 'phel's catalogue (NG) of *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*

To summarize, in the entirety of the sūtras and tantras, all statements about the basic nature of the ground, such as teaching that the tathāgata heart abides primordially in the mind streams of [all] sentient beings and teaching that the nature of mind is luminosity, [teach] ground mahāmudrā. All teachings on the dharmas that make the basic element of the [tathāgata] heart unfold, the freedom from discursiveness, the specifics of emptiness, and that all phenomena are without reality, identityless, equality, and unity [teach] path mahāmudrā. All statements on the manner of awakening as the wisdom that is the knowledge of all aspects, such as the four kāyas and the five wisdoms, teach fruition mahāmudrā.⁶

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If this [sugata heart] is not asserted as the basic nature—self-arising luminous mahāmudrā—. . . there are only the sources that assert the sugata heart during the phase of the ground as a nonimplicative negation that is a dead emptiness and utter nothingness. During the phases of the path and the fruition too, even if one undergoes hardships, such as analyzing this [nonimplicative negation] with the corresponding scriptures and reasonings, [engaging in] resting meditation with profound samādhis . . . one just ventures again and again into the midst of discursiveness that is nothing but mental fabrication.⁷

⁵ *Mnyam med dvags po'i chos bzhir grags pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa snying po gsal ba'i rgyan*, 210.6–7.

⁶ *Nges don phyag chen rgya gzhung dang bod gzhung*, 1:11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.