

A Discourse on the Buddha Treasury Sutra

Preface

“Buddha Treasury¹” in the *Buddha Treasury Sutra* denotes that this sutra’s main theme is the treasury of all Buddhas. The treasury of all Buddhas is essentially *tathāgatagarbha*, the fundamental origin of all phenomena. The *Surangama Sutra* describes *tathāgatagarbha* mind as “the wondrous mind of reality-suchness.” The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (Vol. 7, Chapter on Buddha Nature) states:

Mahamati! The *ālaya-vijñāna* is called *tathāgatagarbha*; it coexists with the ignorant seven *vijñānas* (consciousnesses) as it coexists with the physical body and is permanent and unceasing, like the ocean and its waves. It transcends the faults of impermanence and a self, and has a pure intrinsic nature. The seven other consciousness minds, including manas and mental consciousness, are constantly changing thoughts and are dharmas that arise and cease.²

The meaning of the foregoing is summarized as follows:

The *ālaya-vijñāna* (a.k.a. *tathāgatagarbha*) contains and stores the seeds of ignorance (*avidyā*)³ and of the seven evolving consciousnesses while giving rise to and simultaneously presenting and working in unison with them to form a five-aggregate sentient being. The seven evolving consciousnesses correspond with ignorance, are brought forth from *tathāgatagarbha*, and are ongoing. The mental faculty prompts the perceptive minds—the consciousness aggregates (six consciousness minds)—to arise every morning and incessantly work in unison as one entity. They appear to be permanently existing minds, not ceasing, but are actually minds brought forth and then appearing from the flowing seeds of *tathāgatagarbha*, which ordinary, unenlightened masters commonly refer to as the “clear and discerning” mind. This mind repeatedly arises every morning and synergistically works with the constantly decisive mental faculty, as if they were one mind. Notably, the seeds of the seven consciousness minds and the associated seeds of ignorance flow out simultaneously

¹ 「佛藏」

² 《入楞伽經》卷七〈佛性品〉則說：「大慧！阿梨耶識者名如來藏，而與無明七識共俱，如大海波常不斷絕，身俱生故；離無常過，離於我過，自性清淨。餘七識者心，意、意識等念念不住，是生滅法。」

³ 無明種子

from *tathāgatagarbha* every day, just like the ocean and its waves. They are “permanent and unceasing” because they coexist with and are brought forth along with the physical body.

Tathāgatagarbha transcends the fault of impermanence and is an everlasting dharma, with no interruptions. It has no beginning or end, and will continue to exist in the endless future. It is forever uninterrupted and indestructible. *Tathāgatagarbha* also transcends the fault of the impermanence of self in the three realms, etc., and is inherently free from self-view, self-attachments, and self-belongings. Its self-nature is intrinsically and eternally pure, without defilements since the beginningless eons. It does not correspond to the six fundamental afflictions of greed, and so forth, or to the other derivative afflictions. The remaining seven evolving consciousnesses are minds (*citta*) consisting of the mental faculty (*manas*), mental consciousness, and the five other consciousnesses (e.g., the eye-consciousness). The first six consciousnesses (mental consciousness and the five other consciousnesses) can clearly discern the states of the six sense objects upon confronting them, while the *manas* is the constantly decisive mental faculty. These seven consciousnesses minds and ignorant seeds are intrinsically ever-changing and non-abiding owing to their outflowing seeds, which are present in the physical body from *tathāgatagarbha*. After the physical body is born and works in unison with the mental faculty, the mental consciousness, and so forth, the six consciousnesses simultaneously emerge and become present along with the physical body. Given that all sorts of seeds constantly arise and cease, the seven minds (the mental faculty, mental consciousness, and so forth) are said to belong to the arising and ceasing dharmas.

In the case of an individual who attains the fruition of arhat and enters the remainderless nirvana after having extinguished the afflictions of self-view, self-attachments, and self-belongings, the seeds of the aforementioned seven consciousnesses minds will no longer flow out from *tathāgatagarbha*. The generation of the bardo bodies of arhats will no longer take place and will have no future rebirth. Hence, the seven consciousnesses will be extinguished forever. Thus, they are again subsumed as arising and ceasing dharmas.

In the three translated versions of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, the *tathāgatagarbha* mind is generally not directly called the eighth *viññāna* (the common parlance). Rather, this mind and the first seven evolving consciousnesses are classified into two categories. One category is the single *tathāgatagarbha* mind, which exists permanently; it gives

rise to the “mental faculty”⁴ and “mental consciousness, and so forth”⁵ of the six consciousnesses, including the physical body. This shows that this mind is different from the minds of the seven consciousnesses it generated.

According to the aforementioned quote, which already clearly states that *tathāgatagarbha* “transcends the faults of impermanence and a self, and has a pure intrinsic nature,”⁶ the generated “seven other consciousness minds, including manas and mental consciousness”⁷ are “constantly changing thoughts and dharmas that arise and cease”⁸. These two types of classifications undoubtedly differentiate the significant properties of *tathāgatagarbha* and of the seven evolving consciousnesses. That is, the former can generate all phenomena, while the latter have been generated, and the two are interrelated. The *tathāgatagarbha* mind, which can generate all phenomena, is permanently existing, intrinsically pure, free from the flaws of being impermanent, of the three-realm self, and of the notions of self-view and self-attachments, among others. On the other hand, while all thoughts arise and cease constantly in the seven generated consciousness minds, they are extinguishable, exhibit the flaws of self-view and self-attachments belonging to the three-realm self, among others, and are thus impure and impermanent dharmas.

Therefore, the core subject of the *Buddha Treasury Sutra* is the delineation of the intrinsic nature of this *tathāgatagarbha* mind, also known as the “nameless dharma”⁹ or the “non-conceptual dharma”¹⁰ rather than being called the eighth consciousness. The sutra elucidates this *tathāgatagarbha* mind from multiple perspectives. To the disciples of the four assemblies in the later generation who cannot realize the Buddha Dharma due to their remaining karmic obstructions, it brings hope of being able to eliminate these obstructions in their future lives and realize the fruition of liberation and the wisdom of the ultimate reality. For these reasons, the Buddha first elaborated on the essence of “the ultimate reality of all dharmas”¹¹, *tathāgatagarbha*, to remind Buddhist disciples of the pitfalls they must avoid to attain awakening and ensure the cause and condition for their enlightenment. In addition, those who have fallen into

⁴ 「意」

⁵ 「意識等」

⁶ 「離無常過，離於我過，自性清淨」

⁷ 「餘七識者心，意、意識等」

⁸ 「念念不住，是生滅法」

⁹ 「無名相法」

¹⁰ 「無分別法」

¹¹ 「諸法實相」

wrong views, misled sentient beings, committed immoral acts, or violated precepts will inevitably bring about karmic hindrances on themselves. Unless they eliminate such karmic hindrances, they cannot attain enlightenment even after they have paid respect, studied under, and made offerings to 9.9 billion Buddhas throughout the entire inconceivable and incalculable eons in the future. Thus, with deep compassion for these people, Buddha Sakyamuni began explaining various intrinsic natures of *tathāgatagarbha*, the mind of ultimate reality, in the chapter “The Ultimate Reality of All Dharmas,” and soon afterwards, He taught Buddhist learners how to distinguish wholesome mentors from unwholesome ones. Only when practitioners are able to choose a truly enlightened mentor will they stand a chance to correctly pursue the Path to Liberation and attain the ultimate reality of all dharmas. Therefore, Buddhist learners can rely on the tenets taught in the chapters “Mindfulness of Buddha,” “Mindfulness of the Dharma,” and “Mindfulness of Sangha¹²” to ascertain who is a truly enlightened mentor and who is a false one, and thus properly follow the correct guidance of cultivating the Buddha Dharma. Henceforth, practitioners can attain the fruition of liberation and enter the ultimate reality of all dharmas to initiate the wisdom of the intrinsic nature, the nature, the purity and the nirvana. After a long period of continuous practice, they will simultaneously accomplish the Two-Vehicle nirvana. Thus, they can enter the stage of First Ground (*bhūmi*) after making the ten inexhaustible vows, and can retain the last portion of afflictive hindrance to nourish their future rebirths.

Suppose practitioners have not carefully selected a truly enlightened mentor but have mistakenly followed a false mentor (a phony mentor usually looks like a good mentor). In that case, they will inevitably follow this false mentor and make grave mistakes unintentionally. Even in the future, for incalculable *asaṃkhyā-kalpas*, it will still be impossible for them to genuinely accept and undertake the cultivation of the Path to Liberation and the correct definitive True Dharma (S: *saddharma*) of the ultimate reality, despite supporting and making offerings to 9.9 billion Buddhas. Attaining the Path of Vision in the Buddha Dharma is already impossible for them, let alone entering the stage of the First Ground. For this reason, the World-Honored One subsequently taught the four Buddhist assemblies how to keep themselves from transgressing the precepts and how to follow the correct method of Dharma practice, as expounded in the chapters “Purification of Precepts¹³” and “Purification of Dharma¹⁴,” along with other teachings.

¹² 〈念佛品〉、〈念法品〉、〈念僧品〉

¹³ 〈淨戒品〉

¹⁴ 〈淨法品〉

Furthermore, to put an end to some people’s doubts and disbelief in the Buddha Dharma, the Buddha subsequently expounded what is contained in the chapter “Passage to the Past.¹⁵” It highlights the fact that inconceivable and incalculable *asaṃkhya-kalpas* ago, under the Great Adornment Buddha, there were four disciples (one of whom was named “Hardship Onshore¹⁶”) who were bad mentors adhering to erroneous views, thus becoming tainted (impure) preachers and misleading sentient beings. For this reason, they were trapped for a long time in the cyclic existence of birth and death and had caused countless sentient beings to transmigrate back and forth to the human world and the three lower paths of rebirth until now. They repeatedly went through the utmost anguish and torment in the Avīci hell and many different levels of hells, suffering enormously in the realms of hungry ghosts, animals, and human beings. After repeated cycles of endless torment, they finally became disciples of Buddha Sakyamuni and diligently cultivated the dharmas under Him. Yet, they could not even accept and endure the cultivation of *saddharma*; thus, the fruition of *sotāpanna* is far beyond their reach, not to mention realizing the ultimate reality of all dharmas and entering the Mahayana Path of Vision! Their plight is so unfortunate. There is no way to help them enter the stage of the Path of Vision. They can be helped only after they have exhausted their karmic retributions and eliminated all their sins in the future *asaṃkhya-kalpas*.

In view of the foregoing, the World-Honored One taught two more chapters—“Purification of Views¹⁷” and “Understanding of Precepts¹⁸”—in the hope that they would inspire the wrong viewers to uproot their erroneous views developed from the past and to thoroughly understand the cause of the establishment of pure precepts so that they could observe them properly and uphold pure precepts. Only in this way could they look forward to attaining the fruition of liberation and Buddhahood.

Having completed the aforementioned teachings, in the chapter “Entrustment¹⁹,” the World-Honored One tasks Venerable Ananda and His other great disciples to teach and skillfully guide the many future Buddhist practitioners so as to ensure their correct knowledge and views and enable them to observe pure precepts. This will eliminate the karmic obstructions that they obtained in the past by defaming the True Dharma and violating Buddhist precepts. Only then can practitioners stand a chance to attain awakening in their future lifetimes. On the occasion of the venerable Śāriputra’s inquiry, one can see the kindness and compassion of the World-Honored One during a dialogue

¹⁵ 〈往古品〉

¹⁶ 苦岸弟子

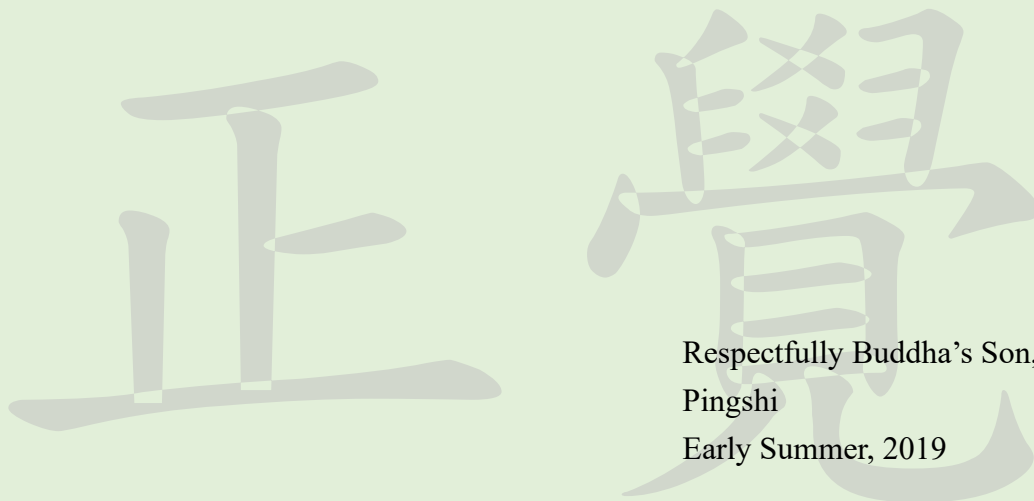
¹⁷ 〈淨見品〉

¹⁸ 〈了戒品〉

¹⁹ 〈囑累品〉

with Śāriputra to speak of the dharma of ultimate reality, among others, hoping that future Buddhist disciples can learn from His teachings to overcome their karmic hindrances and attain enlightenment to the Dharma.

In the dharma-ending era, the disciples of the Buddha left behind in the contemporary age, although diligent in their practice, still cannot break away from corrupt views and impure precepts. They cannot achieve the fruition of Liberation or the Buddha Bodhi if they do not succeed in eradicating false views and perverted practices. Their predicament is so unfortunate. Toward this end, the recordings of this discourse have been arranged into print, and it is hoped that this book's circulation will benefit all four assemblies of Buddhist disciples.



Respectfully Buddha's Son,
Pingshi
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