

The Jewel of Buddhahood

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There is a jewel—*Cintāmaṇi* is its name—by whose lustre the whole universe is illumined and by whose possession every wish of ours is instantaneously fulfilled.* Many have set out to acquire this precious jewel, but only very few have succeeded in finding it. For, to find this jewel we must transcend the limits of space and time and go beyond the boundaries of memory and anticipation. But this means that we have to give up all that is dear to us, to cut off everything to which we naturally cling and which tenaciously holds us in its embrace. If not the most difficult task, it is certainly the most daring adventure. Our self, outwardly bound by space and time and inwardly fluctuating between recollections of the past and anticipations of the future, is unable to tell us what we will find once self-hood has ceased to hold its sway over us. Is it the sinister abyss and dreadful night of nothingness and death, or is it the glorious light of emancipating wisdom and the ever-enduring spring of life? Our self may and will raise questions that shake us to the core, but it surely fails to answer them and to dispel the fear that haunts us, for all the answers the ego or self is able to give are disquieting rather than re-assuring. Therefore, how can we find firmness when the very ground upon which we take our stand is trembling every moment; how can the light we need shine forth in all its wondrousness when dark and heavy clouds obscure its source; how can every wish of ours be fulfilled when, in spite of our most strenuous efforts and best intentions, all our achievements fall slightly short of what we expected them to be? Indeed, as long as we harbour the sense of self-hood as something final the jewel is unattainable, for our ego with its reckless self-assertion is

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the negation and repudiation of this jewel. Keeping up our self-hood by all means is to surround ourselves with all sorts of mock truths, to lock ourselves up in an air-tight prison cell, and to ignore the source from which everything, our so highly cherished ego included, derives its existence. Therefore, in order to gain and to hold the most precious jewel, which once for all will end our sorrows and needs, we must break through our self-made fortifications, grasp the jewel with naked hands and not distort reality by our ordinary fancies about it. Only then shall we have as an inalienable possession what up to now we have felt to be wanting in us and be able to solve the problems of life and man instead of creating problems. As has been said:

When in due course, because of the removal of impositions, he who strives for reality (*tattvayogin*) has become the very nature of what is pointed out (by the words), the intrinsic knowledge of the five aspects (arrived at) by the removal of the various impositions and the intrinsic nature of the deities presiding over (the various points of) the mandala, and when in unique rapture he does not cling to any differentiations, then, as long as Samsara lasts, he fulfills all the desires of all the sentient beings by means of teaching the Dharma through ineffably ineffable, countless mantras and mudras of Bodhisattvas and Tathagatas—he who is without determinate (and hence limiting, veiling, and prejudiced) thought constructions. Thus he attains the highest order (in life). Since he fulfills all the needs of the sentient beings without having (preconceived and prejudiced) ideas (about the beings' needs) he is like the *Cintāmaṇi*, unshakable by the storm of thought constructions. Thus standing (on a firm basis) he fulfills all the wishes of the sentient beings.¹

But, it may be urged, when the boundaries artificially and arbitrarily set up by our ego have been transcended, how is it possible that there should still exist desires, since desires are the most conspicuous manifestations of our ego? The answer is that the removal of self-hood and of everything it entails is not identical with the inertia of a piece of rock but is the fullness of life which does now know of any limitations and hence gives quite a different meaning to what is generally understood by desire. Desire, like any other emotionally toned factor—and there is hardly any factor in life which is not emotionally toned—has a double aspect: the one dragging man down into the whirlpool of self-centered sentiments, the other uplifting and liberating and hence making possible for man a participation and

comprehensiveness that is otherwise denied to him. The emotionally moving and inspiring ineffableness of what is greater than self, the enjoyment of its inexhaustible and unimaginable riches, and the keeping it alive in all its liveliness instead of having it dried up in the barren formation of the self, is the meaning of desire when stripped of its self-centredness. Moreover, since out of its indeterminate, emotionally moving continuum, the differentiations of self and of objects other than self appear and into it go back, it is the common link between us and all nature's creatures. Since this continuum alone is all-pervading and all-embracing, timeless and spaceless—only the differentiations appearing in space and time—it is here, indeed, that we find the unique oneness with everything, the peace we have been longing for, and the fulfillment of all our aspirations. At the same time we can work for the good of humanity in a most effective way, because now humanity is no longer a lifeless abstraction but life itself, and life exists when emotionally laden immediacy is in anything. In other words, strange as they may sound, standing firmly in the indeterminate, which is no standpoint in the ordinary sense of the word, and looking with an all-comprehensive glance at the ever changing and passing manifoldness of the determinate objects, we always possess the right means at the right time. Our action has lost its hit-and-miss character so conspicuous in common life. This is what Advayavajra has in mind when he says that “desire is the Great Compassion which is concerned with the welfare of the whole world, and that which fulfills this desire in an effortless way (i.e. conditions favourable for a fulfillment have not to be created, but everything proceeds from its own, as it were) is (the *Cintāmaṇi*).”²

Now, it is precisely the unique commingling of wisdom and action that is either compared with the precious jewel *Cintāmaṇi* or said to be the jewel itself—of wisdom which is never abstract knowledge but immediately apprehends and uses reality without ever changing, falsifying and obscuring it by deadening concepts, and of action which, supported by all-revealing wisdom, is saturated with a deep fellow-feeling for all creatures, plants and animals as well as men. Anangavajra informs us that

He who is of the nature of wisdom and action (*prajñopāyaswarupātma*) is considered as the *Cintāmaṇi*. Indefatigably and without attachment (you should) work from now on for the benefit of the sentient beings.³

And

One praisingly speaks of wisdom, because its nature is without the (determinate and transitory) manifoldness (of what we call the world of subjects and objects). Working for the benefit (or, fulfilling the needs) of all sentient beings like the *Cintāmaṇi* is (called) Compassion.

Wisdom (unlike ego-centred intellectual knowledge) is without (determinate) object; Great Compassion (unlike ego-bound sentimentality) is without (determinate and prejudiced) object. Having become one with (unlimited) mind (the commingling action of Wisdom and action is) like that of sky with sky.”⁴

Indrabhūti speaks of the ever-active knowledge in the following way:

Since always and definitely the needs of the sentient beings are fulfilled, this knowledge which is not senseless helplessness of inert matter is called *Cintāmaṇi*.⁵

All this shows that the *Cintāmaṇi* is not an object to be sought in the world as given us through the senses and through introspection, but that it is found only when the dualistic tendency of minding has been transcended. Hence the *Cintāmaṇi* is but a picture, a simile which by means of the imagery it evokes in us stimulates us to ascertain its intricate meaning—the realization of Buddhahood. That this jewel is not a tangible outer object or just a fleeting mental phantom is borne out by Advayavajra:

Just as the substantiality of the *Cintāmaṇi* can nowhere be seen, but when one has this jewel in one’s hand even which torpid things think to accomplish all works, so also the instruction by the Guru accomplishes for the Yogins the Buddhahood which (now) is like a jewel in one’s hand and no longer a wishful dream.⁶

The fact that the *Cintāmaṇi*, the most precious thing in the world is not one of the local, specific sensed or introspected qualities such as a determinate colour or sound or idea, is also borne out by the Guhyasamājatantra where we read:

O venerable Tathagatas, just as the *Cintāmaṇi* jewel is the most precious of all jewels, endowed with all qualities, and whatever the beings (who possess it) may wish, be it gold or jewelry or silver, all this it accomplishes the moment (such things) are

thought of, and yet this jewelry and so on **keeps** not localized in mind (*citta*, as the determinate aspect of self-consciousness) nor is it localized in the *Cintāmaṇi*, so also, O venerable Tathagathas, all things are to be conceived (i.e. as non-local, non-specific, and hence ineffable).⁷

All this shows that the nature of the *Cintāmaṇi* and of what is effected by it cannot be understood unless it is immediately apprehended. The immediacy of apprehension, in which no limitations as to determinate local objects obtain, has a higher emotional intensity and conscious lucidity than the more determinate objects can convey. Moreover, because of its primacy and creativity—out of it the local determinate and transitory factors appear as late products of differentiation and back into it they fade away—it provides the emotionally moving immediacy and transparent luminosity without which the sharply determinate colours, sounds, fragrances and flavours of nature, as well as the faculties of the human mind, would not be. The words we use only denote local, specific qualities or differentiations, and hence are unable to convey the emotional, all-embracing and all-pervading ineffability which is the very stuff of which we as conscious selves and the world to be experienced with immediacy are made. This is the Vajra- or Buddha-nature of which Indrabhūti says

All-pervading is the Great Vajra, all present like the sky, penetrating the minds of all beings, the great source of all that is good.

Interpenetrating is the Vajra, omniscient, the Lord of the world, he is the Vajradhara, the king, described in all Mantras.⁸

Therefore it would be erroneous to assume that all the predicates about the *Cintāmaṇi* are meant in a determinate sense. They are but so many attempts somehow to convey the richness experienced in its immediate apprehension. Thus, when it is said that mind (*citta*) is like the *Cintāmaṇi*, or that mind is like a jewel casket, no determinate quality or so-called positive content, which is always limited by conceptual thought, is meant. On the contrary, it means what is not concrete and limited and for which no terms are available, it means the ineffability we experience in what we call Samsara and Nirvana when we have lost the immediacy and veil ourselves with concepts.

Saraha-pada says that

Citta alone is endowed with all seeds (i.e. potentialities) out of which even the Samsara and the Nirvana burst forth: bow down before it which has the nature of the *Cintāmaṇi* fulfilling all wishes.⁹

And Tilopa declares: “Citta is a jewel casket. Free from attachment it shines like the sky.”¹⁰ It is the purity of boundlessness that is the Buddha-nature—the purity and luminosity that has been ours from beginningless time and which we have lost by allowing ourselves to be carried away by conceptual powers. It is when we tear the shrouds of conceptualism and of sentimentalism, when we do away with ego-centred minding (*jneyāvaraṇa*) and with our ego-centred affective moods (*kleśāvaraṇa*) that we regain our Buddha-nature. Or, as has been said: “When the *Cintāmaṇi* is wiped clean all our wishes come true.”¹¹

NOTES

* Ed.: *Cintāmaṇi* (Sanskrit) is a wish-fulfilling jewel. In Tibetan Buddhism it is depicted in the hands of the bodhisattvas. Reciting the dharani (ritual invocation) of *Cintāmaṇi* one seeks to attain or realize wisdom and enlightenment.

¹ *Subhāṣitasamgraha*, p. 67. The five aspects are the five skandhas. The knowledge of their intrinsic nature has been described in *SekkodevāŚikā*, p. 6.

² *Commentary on Saraha-pāda's Doha* 41.

³ *Prajnopāyavinīṣayasiddhi* III 28.

⁴ do., IV 10-11.

⁵ *Jñānasiddhi* IV 24

⁶ *Commentary on Saraha-pāda's Doha* 76.

⁷ *Guhyasamājatantra*, p. 110.

⁸ *Jñānasiddhi* I 21-22

⁹ *Saraha* 41

¹⁰ From the *Phyag-rgya-chen-po bsam-gyis-mi-khyab-pa* (acintamahāmudrā).

¹¹ From the *Phyag-rgya-chen-po-rdo-rje'i glu* (mahāmudrāvajragītī).