

PART ONE:

**THE TREATISE ON THE PROVISIONS
FOR ENLIGHTENMENT**

**Ārya Nāgārjuna's
BODHISAṂBHĀRA TREATISE
(*Bodhisambhāra Śāstra*)**

THE TREATISE ON THE PROVISIONS FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

The Bodhisambhāra Śāstra
By Ārya Nāgārjuna

Translated into Chinese by the Great Sui Dynasty's
South Indian Tripiṭaka Master Dharmagupta (550?-619 CE)

001

Now, in the presence of all the Buddhas,
With palms pressed together, I bow down my head in reverence.
I shall explain here in accordance with the teachings
The provisions essential for the bodhi of the Buddhas.

002

How would one be able to describe without omission
All of the provisions for the realization of bodhi?
This could only be accomplished by the Buddhas themselves,
For they, exclusively, have realized the boundless enlightenment.

003

The boundless qualities of a buddha's body
Are rooted in the provisions essential to enlightenment.
Therefore the provisions for enlightenment
Themselves have no bounds.

004

I shall then explain but a lesser portion of them.
I render reverence to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.
It is all such bodhisattvas as these
To whom one should next make offerings, after the Buddhas.

005

Since it is the mother of the Bodhisattvas,
It is also the mother of the Buddhas:
The prajñāpāramitā
Is foremost among the provisions essential for enlightenment.

006

Because giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor, meditation,
 And the others following from these five
 All arise from the perfection of wisdom,
 They are included within the pāramitās.

007

These six pāramitās
 Encompass the provisions essential for bodhi,
 They are comparable in this to empty space
 Which entirely envelopes all things.

008

There is also the idea proposed by another master
 That, as for the provisions for enlightenment,
 Truth, relinquishment, cessation, and wisdom—
 These four bases subsume them all.

009

The great compassion penetrates to the marrow of one's bones.
 Thus one serves as a refuge for every being.
 With a feeling as strong as a father's regard for his only son,
 One's kindness extends universally to all beings.

010

If one brings to mind the qualities of a buddha
 Or hears of a buddha's spiritual transformations,
 One becomes purified through one's admiration and joyfulness.
 This is what is meant by the great sympathetic joy.

011

In his relations with beings, the bodhisattva
 Should not allow himself to forsake them.
 As befits the abilities determined by his powers,
 He should always strive to draw them in.

012

From the very beginning, the bodhisattva
 Should accord with the power of his abilities
 And use skillful means to instruct beings,
 Causing them to enter the Great Vehicle.

013

Even if one taught beings as numerous as the Ganges' sands
So that they were caused to gain the fruit of arhatship,
Still, by instructing but a single person to enter the Great Vehicle,
One would generate merit superior to that.

014

Instructing through resort to the Śrāvaka Vehicle
Or through resort to the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle
Is undertaken where, on account of lesser abilities,
Beings are unable to accept instruction in the Great Vehicle.

015

Where even when relying on Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha Vehicles
In addition to the Great Vehicle teachings,
There are those who still cannot accept any such instruction,
One should strive to establish them in merit-creating situations.

016

If there be persons unable to accept
Instruction conducing either to the heavens or to liberation,
Favor them through bestowing present-life benefits.
Then, as befits one's powers, one should draw them in.

017

Where, with regard to particular beings, a bodhisattva
Has no conditions through which to instruct them,
He should draw forth the great kindness and compassion
And should refrain from abandoning them.

018

Drawing them in through giving, through explaining Dharma,
Through listening to them discuss the Dharma,
Or through endeavors beneficial to them—
These are skillful means through which to attract them.

019

In that which is done for the benefit of beings,
Do not succumb to either weariness or negligence.
Bring forth vows for the sake of realizing bodhi.
Benefiting the world is just benefiting self.

020

Entering the extremely profound Dharma-realm,
 One extinguishes mental discriminations.
 As they are devoid of any useful function,
 In all contexts, one naturally abides in equanimity.

021

Personal gain, reputation, praise, and happiness—
 One refrains from attachment to any of these four points.
 Nor do their opposites present any sort of obstacle.
 This is the sort of conduct comprising equanimity.

022

So long as he has not yet gained irreversibility,
 In the bodhisattva's striving for bodhi,
 He should be as intensely diligent in practice
 As someone whose turban has caught on fire.

023

Thus it is that those bodhisattvas,
 When striving for the realization of bodhi,
 Should not rest in their practice of vigor,
 For they have shouldered such a heavy burden.

024

Until one develops the great compassion and the patiences,
 Even though he may have gained irreversibility,
 The bodhisattva is still subject to a form of "dying"
 Occurring through the arising of negligence.

025

The grounds of the Śrāvakas or the Pratyekabuddhas,
 If entered, constitute "death" for him
 Because he would thereby sever the roots
 Of the bodhisattva's understanding and awareness.

026

At the prospect of falling into the hell-realms,
 The bodhisattva would not be struck with fright.
 The grounds of the Śrāvakas and the Pratyekabuddhas
 Do provoke great terror in him.

027

It is not the case that falling into the hell realms
 Would create an ultimate obstacle to bodhi.
 If one fell onto the grounds of the Śrāvakas or Pratyekabuddhas,
 That would create an ultimate obstacle.

028

Just as is said of one who loves long life
 That he is frightened at the prospect of being beheaded,
 So too the grounds of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas
 Should provoke in one this very sort of fear.

029

As for “not produced and not destroyed,”
 And “neither unproduced nor undestroyed,”
 One denies assertions of “both” and “neither.”
 So too in cases involving “emptiness” and “non-emptiness.”

030

No matter which “existent” dharma one encounters,
 One persists therein in the contemplation, remaining unmoving.
 That is the “unproduced-dharmas patience.”
 It is based on the severance of all mental discriminations.

031

Once one gains this patience,
 One immediately receives the prediction:
 “You will definitely become a buddha.”
 It is then that one achieves “irreversibility.”

032

Those bodhisattvas already dwelling at the stage of immovability
 Have gained irreversible wisdom cognizing all dharmas’ reality.
 As their wisdom cannot be turned back by two-vehicles adherents,
 It is only at this point that they are designated as “irreversible.”

033

Until the bodhisattva has gained
 The solid samādhis
 On the ground of all Buddhas’ “direct presence,”
 He should not allow any negligence to arise.

034

The solid samādhis

On the ground of all Buddhas' "direct presence"

Serve for the bodhisattva as his father,

Whereas the great compassion and patience serve as his mother.

035

As for the perfection of wisdom being his mother

And skillful means being his father,

It is because the one gives him birth and the other supports him

That they are said to be the bodhisattva's father and mother.

036

With but a lesser accumulation of merit

One remains unable to realize bodhi.

Only by collecting merit more massive than a hundred Sumerus

Can one succeed in achieving that realization.

037

Although one may perform but a minor meritorious deed,

Even in this, one possesses a skillful means:

Taking the sphere of "all beings" as the object,

One should generate a mental transformation of the conditions.

038

Where one reflects: "May whatever actions I undertake

Always be done for the welfare of beings,"

Who could measure the merit of he

Whose mental actions are of this sort?

039

Where one isn't constrained by fondness for relatives, retinue,

Body, life, or wealth,

Where one isn't held back by desiring pleasure in Ívara's heavens,

Brahma-world heavens, or any other heavens,

040

Where one isn't constrained even by coveting nirvāṇa,

Where one's actions are done for the sake of other beings,

And where in all this, one thinks only of the welfare of beings,

Who then could measure the vastness of his merit?

041

When for those of the world without refuge or protection,
He rescues and protects them from their bitter afflictions—
When he raises forth such thoughts and actions as these,
Who could possibly measure his merit?

042

It would be so even in according with the perfection of wisdom
For only the moment of tugging forth a stream of cow's milk.
If one acted thus for a month or for many more months,
Who could possibly measure his merit?

043

Where one recites to himself or teaches to others
Those profound sutras praised by the Buddhas—
Also, where one interprets and explains them for others—
These are the bases of an accumulation of merit.

044

Through influencing countless beings
To generate the bodhi resolve,
One's treasury of merit increases yet more
And one becomes bound to gain "the ground of immovability."

045

Where one follows in turning what the Buddha turned,
The wheel of the supreme Dharma,
Thus clearing away all of the "noxious thorns,"
This creates the bodhisattva's treasury of merit.

046

Where, to benefit beings and make them happy,
One would endure even the sufferings of the great hells,
How much the more the other lesser sufferings,
It is as if bodhi lay in the palm of one's own right hand.

047

Where whatever one does, it is not for one's self,
But solely to benefit beings and make them happy—
Because this all arises from the great compassion,
It is as if bodhi lay in the palm of one's own right hand.

048

Where wisdom is such that one abandons frivolous discourse,
 Where vigor is such that one abandons indolence,
 And where giving is such that one abandons miserliness,
 It is as if bodhi lay in the palm of one's own right hand.

049

Where meditation is such that one is free of reliances or ideation,
 Where morality is such that its practice is perfect and unmixed,
 And where patience is such that one realizes non-production,
 It is as if bodhi lay in the palm of one's own right hand.

050

In the abodes of all who have gained the right enlightenment,
 Now abiding throughout the ten directions,
 I appear there in the presence of them all,
 And completely lay forth all my unwholesome deeds.

051

Where there are buddhas who have realized bodhi
 In those realms throughout the ten directions,
 But they have not yet proclaimed the Dharma,
 I entreat them to turn the Dharma wheel.

052

Wherever there are those possessing the right enlightenment
 Abiding in the present era in the ten directions' realms,
 But now on the verge of relinquishing their lives and actions,
 I bow down my head in reverence, beseeching them to remain.

053

Wherever there may be any beings
 Who, by acts of body, mouth, or mind,
 Have created any merit through giving, moral virtue,
 And so forth, including through cultivation of meditation—

054

No matter whether they be āryas or common persons—
 And no matter whether its creation is past, present, or future—
 I am moved to rejoice
 In all of that accumulated merit.