- The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in this field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field.

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SAHASRA BUDDHA
Nirmal C. Sinha

The only image permitted in Theravada temples is that of the historical Buddha, Gautama Sakyamuni. In Mahayana temples—in the Himalayas, Tibet and Mongolia—besides the historical Buddha, designated simply Buddha (T. Samaya) or Sakyamuni (T. Skra Thubten), there would be many images ranging from Three to Thousand according to size and resources of temple or monastery concerned. Sahasra Buddha (T. Snyon Tonga) was no doubt the ideal count by 9th century A.D. when Mahayana pantheon was sculptured and painted in Samye (Central Tibet) and Tun Huang (northern outpost of ancient Tibetan empire). Sanskrit-Tibetan Lexicon Mahaviryupatti (Circa 820 A.D.) attributes to the usage of Sahasra Buddha as then current in Bhadra kalpa Sutra, now available only in Tibetan translation, the number recorded is 1000.

The figures are those of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, historical or legendary, besides the Goddesses. Figures of patrons and protectors of Dharma would be permissible in paintings and iconography as such persons no doubt had taken the Refuge in Dharma (T. Cho) and believers would admire them if not adore them as Bodhisattvas (T. Changchub Sempa).

Since Dharma was (T. Chogyal) was Bodhisattva par excellence and Asoka Maurya was the first and greatest Dharmaaraja, Mahayana pantheon had a place of high honour for Asoka. Following the Indian tradition the first and greatest Chogyal of Tibet Songtsen Gampo was apotheosized. Mahayana was preached by Nagarjuna a contemporary of the Kushanas in North India and the Satavahanas in South India. This preaching by Nagarjuna was described by Mahayana believers as Second Turning of the Wheel of Law and Nagarjuna was in Mahayana tradition the Second Buddha. Nagarjuna and the Mahayana exponents like Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignaga and Dharmakirti were thus placed high in Mahayana pantheon. In Tibetan tradition Guru Padmasambhava, Atisa Dipamkara and Tibetan saints like Marpa and Tsongkhapa were included in the pantheon and placed as high as Gautama Buddha or Nagarjuna. In fact a Guru like Padmasambhava or Tsongkhapa would dominate the gallery of icons or the

In Roman transcription, diacritical marks for Sanskrit and Tibetan words are omitted, except for quotes from other authors. Sanskrit words are spelt thus: Telhempa (for Tshelphupa), Asoka (for Ashoka or Hemtsogska), Buddha (for Bodha or Bumdolska). Tibetan words are transcribed as pronounced thus: Lams (Blama), Snyon (for Snga-dbyed) or Chogyal (for Chba-rgyal).
portrayal of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in mural or scroll painting. In
Mongolia Aties Dipankara is equated to Gautama Buddha. In short for an
ordinary believer or an average pilgrim the expression Sahana Buddha (T.
Sengay Tongda) was not exactly or approximately the name enumerated in
a scripture like Bhadralokapustika (T. Dode Kalsang). The ordinary believer
was as anxious to have a vision of Gautama Buddha as of the Guru known to
him. The average pilgrim would esteem the Guru nearer and dearer than
the historical Buddha. An ancient Tibetan edage runs thus: "When there
was so Guru the name of Buddha was not known even". This was not unlike
the Hindu tradition of venerating the Guru as Brahma, Vishnu and
Maheswara.

Thousands is no doubt a notional figure which could be less finite and
more infinite. In all animate beings, Semchen Thamchoe, there would be
Buddha potential, developing or developed. Whether well versed or not in
Avatamsaka Sutra (available in Tibetan translation), a Mahayana believer
feels that "there is not even one living being that has not the wisdom of
the Tathagata. It is only because of the vain thoughts and affections that
dings are not conscious of this".

II

The concept of multiple Buddha was not a Mahayana innovation. The
concept is writ large in Pali, that is Hinayana Canon.

Gautama Buddha did not claim to be first Enlightened One; on the other
hand he spoke of the previous Buddhas. Samyuto Nikaya records that
Gautama emphatically asserted that his path of Enlightenment was not new
and that there were a number of Enlightened Ones before him. He said "I
have discovered an ancient path, the Buddhists of ancient times trod this
path."

Seven Mahasahas Buddha reported from Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia are:
Kasyapa and 7. Sakya Muni. Sanskrit Saddharmapundarika as well as
Pali Mahapadana Sutta list the same names.

The six antecedent saints as precursors of Gautama Buddha may not be
all myth. Firm unimpeachable testimony about Kanaka Muni is borne by no
less an authority than Aeska Meurya, The Minor Pillar Edict from Nalgi
Sagar records that: "When king Devendrapriya Preyedyatthan had been
annointed fourteen years, he enlarged the Stupa of the Buddha Kanakama
the double (of its original size).

"And when he had been anointed (twenty) years, he came himself and
worshipped this spool (and caused a stone pillar to be set up)." Eng. Tr.
Hultsch.

The most celebrated among the precursors of Sakya Muni is Dipankara in
Pali, Sanskrit as well as Tibetan traditions. In some reckoning Dipankara was
the first Buddha and was the 24th predecessor of Buddha Sakya Muni.
Obviously Dipankara was a figure of legendary past and could not be called

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a Mahasaka Buddha in the period when, Nirmakaya concept was an established one.

Tathagata would mean: (one) thus gone or (one) thus come. In Hinayana tradition, that is, Pali literature the meaning of this epithet is not clear though it was used in Gautama Buddha’s life time, vide for example Mahaupaya Puja Sutta. The epithet was widely used later and it is widely used in Theravada countries today. Pali Nikayas suggest that the expression was pre-Buddhist and this suggestion is warranted if Gautama Buddha had at least six pre-cursors. In Mahayana tradition Tathagata (T. Desan-Shellaka) meant one who was gone in the same way as his predecessors.

Whether called Tathagata or Buddha the number of such beings in Mahayana tradition would be infinite through all time, past, present and future. The concept of thousands of Buddhas grew in the first four centuries A.D. that is, from Nagarjuna onwards. The numerous Buddhas in the mystic vision of Mahayana saints are one; the myriad emerge from and merge into the Sunya (void), the Absolute in the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Nagarjuna.

The doctrine of eternal and universal Buddha inspired the mystics’ quest for a Primordial Form of Adi Buddha. The quest began with a single form like Samantabhadra or Vajradhara and culminated into five forms designated Pancha Tathagatas or Pancha Sins in eighth century A.D.: centuries later in the Himalayas the five were called Pancha Dhyani Buddhas. These are Vairochana or the Brilliant, Akshobhya or the Importuntable, Ratnasambhava or the Jewylorn, Amitabha or the Infinite Light and Amoghasiddhi or the Unfailing Successor.

These Five are spiritual offspring of the Primordial Form and these Five have their emanations or reflexts. These Five and their emanations have their own Consorts. All these figures originating in the vision or meditation of the mystic saints along with the Mundane Buddhas constitute the Mahayana pantheon conventionally called Shikara Buddha or Thousand Buddhas. The pantheon thus has three tiers: the top tier is composed of the Five, the middle tier consists of further emanations or reflexts and the bottom tier is composed of the Historical Buddha and his pre-cursors and successors. For the believers the Three tiers are three Bodies: Dhamakaya or the Cosmic Body, Sambhogakaya or the Body of Bliss, and Nirmakaya or the Mundane Body.

The Mahayana concept of Three Bodies was a development of the earlier concept of Two Bodies, namely, that Gautama Buddha had a Dhamakaya and a Rupakaya. Dhamakaya stood for Dharma as Buddha’s real form and Rupakaya stood for Buddha’s mundane or transitory form. In Mahayana
Rupakaya came to be designated Nirmanakaya and an intermediate Body designated Samsthavakaya emerged.

The Trikaya are: Dharmakaya or Cosmic Body which is Absolute or Reality; Samsthavakaya or Body of Bliss which in a personal manner blesses the believers; and Nirmanakaya or Mundane Body which appears on earth to teach Dharma.

The philosophy underlying the theology of Trikaya (T. Ku-sum) is well expressed in the words of TRV Murti.

"As the Dharmakaya, Buddha fully realises his identity with the Absolute (dharmatā, ēśvaratā) and unity (samādhi) with all beings. It is the consciousness with the Absolute that enables Buddha to intuit the Truth, which it is he sacred function to reveal to phenomenal beings. This is the fountain-source of his implicit strength which he concretises in the finite sphere. The Samsthavakaya is the concrete manifestation to himself (aṣṭaccheda) and to the elect (prataraṇaṣṭopa) the power and splendour of god-head. In furtherance of the great resolve to succour all beings, Buddha incarnates himself from time to time in forms best calculated to achieve this end (nirmāṇakāya)." \(\text{The Central Philosophy of Buddhism.}\)

The forms of the Five Tathagatas, lines or Buddhas and their emanations as also the different forms of the historical Buddhas are more relevant than their underlying philosophy in this account of the Mahayana Pantheon. The Five Buddhas represent or embody the five cosmic elements as the Five in totality are identical with the cosmos or universe. The five elements are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space with Consciousness as the all pervasive overall element. The colour and forms of the Five Buddhas are given thus in Saññāna Malā: The lines (viceous ones) are Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi and Akshobhya. Their colours are white, yellow, red, green and blue and they exhibit the Bodhanyu (teaching), Varada (boon), Dhīyanā (meditation). Abhayas (protection) and Bhūpanas (earth touching) pose of hands respectively." Eng. tr. Bhoṣṭāchārya.

If the Five Buddhas are portrayed in one canvas Vairocana is in centre with Akshobhya in west, Ratnasambhava in south, Amitabha in west and Amoghasiddhi in north. Their respective consorts are Vajrañānakara, Lokāna, Mānasik, Pandita and Tara. Their respective emanations are Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Ratnapani, Ardhākritāvāra and Vajrapani.

Since Dharmakaya (T. Chokṣa) is the Absolute, its form is Sunya and for the mystic's Kapali (skull) is the best Rupa for meditation. For other believers, one of the five primordial Buddhas—Vairocana (T. Nampom Nangsi), Akshobhya (T. Minuka), Ratnasambhava (T. Ranchan Yuga), Amitabha (T. Opame) and Amoghasiddhi (T. Domya Dubq)—is the sacred illustration of Dharmakaya. The symbolic pose of hands, or mode of sitting of a figure make the icon familiar.
The Sambho akaya (T. Longchyo Zogkhu) are emanations from the five primal Buddhas in their different forms. The number of such emanations by ninth century as recorded in Mahayavyupatti was ninetytwo. In Nispannayogavali a work of eleventh century the Bothisattvas recognised as Sambhoakayas are forty-eight. Whatever was the final number-forty-eight, ninetytwo or more—all the four sects of Tibet agree in counting a set of eight as topmost. These are Manjusri (T. Jampelyang), Vajrapani (T. Chana Dorje), Avalokitesvara (T. Chenrezig), Kshitigarbha (T. Sayi Ningpo), Sarvanivaranivakambhi (T. Deppathambchod Nampheshedga), Akasagarbha (T. Nekkho Ningpo), Maitreya (T. Lampe) and Semantabhadra (T. Kuntu Sangpo). This is in conformity with the pre-ninth century Indian tradition.

The Sambhoakaya icons are, in the believer's esteem, far more concrete than the Dhamakaya figures. The believers adore the Sambhobhakaya Bothisattvas as personal god-heads and experience in prayer and meditation no distance or impersonal quality as with the Sunyata (T. Tongpeny). Manjusri the embodiment of Knowledge (Prajna/Sherab) was in the beginning the first or topmost. Later, sometime after sixth century, Avalokitesvara the embodiment of Compassion (Karuna/Ningpo) came to occupy the top position among the celestial Bothisattvas and finally emerged as the head of the entire Mahayana pantheon.

These celestial Bothisattvas have their distinctive symbols and respective Consorts. They are depicted in various forms. Avalokitesvara has two popular forms: one four handed and, other eleven headed. A total of one hundred and eight forms of Avalokitesvara are found in Nepal. Manjusri has no less than a dozen forms. Two forms of Manjusri are famous: one with Sword of Knowledge in right hand and Book of Knowledge in left hand and the other with two Wheels of law in his hands and riding the Lion of Knowledge in blue colour.

Tara is Consort of Avalokitesvara while Padminiaramis is Consort of Manjusri. The Consort goddesses have also variant forms. Tara for example has a set of twenty one forms. Green Tara may be depicted in eight forms. The Consort deities need a separate notice. Here it is necessary to state that these feminine deities constitute the essential part of the esoteric mystic pantheon. Icons of Yugasiddhi (T. Yab Yum) depicting Buddhas and Bothisattvas in the embrace of their consorts, must be mentioned here as part and parcel of Sahsara Buddha; this theme of Yugasiddhi also needs separate notice.

Nirmakayas (T. Tulku) or Manusha Buddhas par excellence is Gautama Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha as distinct from a legendary Buddha or a Buddha of meditation. When Buddhism came to be recorded in stone, wood or plastic medium Gautama Buddha and his six precursors, described earlier, were depicted as Seven Mortal Buddhas. Meanwhile Mahayana
teachers like Nagarjuna came to be recognized as Manwha Buddha. Later in Tibet and Mongolia, Buddha Sakya Muni was adopted as Dharma Kay after his Mahaparinirvana and the saints or teachers like Nagarjuna, Padmasambhava and Ajas was cited as Namnamay. Following the Indian tradition Tibetan saints like Marpa of Kongkyhapa would be depicted as iconic forms of Manwha Buddha. The first Tulku (Nimnemaykaya) to be recognized in Tibet were Chogyal Sonam Gampo and his scholar minister Thumi Samkhathe the Choygyi was recognized as incarnation of Chomekyi (Avalokiteshvara) and the minister was recognized as incarnation of Jamyangtyang (Manjuri). The Tibetan custom of recognizing incarnations of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas of meditation among the believers in Tibet was confirmed according to tradition by Ajas who was in Tibet (1042-1054).

Gautama Buddha may be depicted in various forms with varying modes of settings, varying poses of hands with one or more Extraordinary Marks like the Ushnisa. The Buddhist or Bodhisattvas who came after Gautama Buddha were depicted with symbols or objects connected with their lives and teachings. Thus Nagarjuna is depicted usually as receiving the book of Pratisamagama from the Naga princess, Padmasambhava with the Vajra (Dome) or Thunderbolt in his right hand and a Kapali or skull in his left hand and Dipenka Arya with a metal statue (T. Chorten) or his right hand and a wicker basket containing scriptures on his left. The Tulku or incarnations in Tibet and Mongolia were very numerous and a good number of such Tulkurs would also be accommodated in the panchen depicted in mural or sculptures. All these figures can be identified by the symbols peculiar to them.

If a temple has only three Images, the set may be of the Buddhas of Past, Present and Future, that is, Dipenka, Sakayamuni and Maitreya; or of Dharma Kay, Sambhogakaya and Nimnamay. In Nepal Three Images representing Buddha, Dharma and Sungha are common.

IV

Western visitors to the Himalayan monasteries often enquire about the comparative numerical superiority between Puranic Hindu and Mahayana Buddhist Pantheon. It is indeed a moot question which is the correct answer categorically. Both Hindu and Mahayana deities passed through phenomenal proliferation for centuries. Many of new deities or new varieties of the deities are reported from time to time. A few years ago an Indian archaeologist reported the find of Avalokiteshvara with twelve hands. Why and how numerous deities entered into the Mahayana Pantheon may be seen from the point of view of Tantra. In the words of the leading scholar in the field, Benoy Tosh Bhattacharya, the process may be described thus:

The individual soul is known in Buddhism as the bodhisattva, while the infinite of the universal Soul is called Sunya. When they combine in the state of the highest meditation and concentration, an artificial condition, in a way akin to deep sleep, is brought about, and the deity appears in the mind- sky in flashes and sparks. The nature of the bodhisattva
being finite, it is not possible to realize the Infinite in its entirety. That is to say, the result of the mystic experience of the bodhicitta also remains finite. And as the object for which the worshipper sits in meditation is different in different cases, the deity visualized also becomes different. It is the chakravāra (desire) of the worshipper, which is of the nature of psychic force, that results in the infinite energy giving rise to different manifestations according to the nature of reaction. The nature of this reaction is still indistinguishable variety, and thus the resultant deity also appears in an infinite variety of forms, and this is the chief reason why we find a large number of gods and goddesses in the pantheons of both the Buddhists and the Hindus. *The Cultural Heritage of India, Volume I*, Ch. Mahayana Pantheon.

About the imagery of the deities Hindu and Mahayana concepts are not identical. The Puranic Hindu view was that the Devas were actually present on this earth in the ancient past and that the Devas gradually left this earth as not worthy for their stay and were merged in the ether. A concise notice from the Puranic text Vayupadamritam was made by Ramanuja that:

"The Vayupadamritam tells us that the gods were worshipped in their visible forms, not images, in the Sātīya yuga, in the Treta and Dvapara yugas, worship was done both in their visible forms and in their images. In the Treta yuga they were worshipped in the house and in the dhāmas in the forest in the Kali yuga, however, the practice of building houses of gods (i.e. temples) in town was known. The environment of the gods (i.e. their images) should be done in land suitable for such purpose, which should be donated according to the rules followed in gifts of lands." The Development of Hindu Iconography.

In Mahayana, the images or forms of the deities were as in the vision or meditation of the Mahāsiddhas (mystery mystic). The artist, whether from the clergy or from the laity had to draw or depict the image to the satisfaction of the mystic. The mystic process of visualisation of the deity is described in Abhayagiri Sūtra thus:

"The form of the deity is an expression of the sāṃskāra. Such expressions are by nature non-existent. Whatever there is as expression, it must be sāṃskāra in essence."

"From the right perception of sāṃskāra proceeds the germ-syllable, from the germ-syllable proceeds the conception of an icon, from the icon, the external representation. The whole process therefore is one of dependent origination." Bha Tr. Bhaṭṭabhārīya.

It may be noted that in prayer or meditation as in painting or sculpture, Gautama Buddha’s basic teaching of Prajñāpāramitā (Prajñā Parama) was the inspiration to realize excellence. Modern aesthetics may or may not appreciate this process but must listen to the believer’s word if aestheticistic grooves are to be understood. A free translation of an ancient saying chanted by the believers may be made: "One who perceives the Cause and Effect merges perceives the Truth. One who perceives the Truth perceives the Buddha."
(1) देवानंदिनं पियादासिनं लाजिनं चौद्रवक्षसामासिद्दीनं
बुधस्य कोनाकमनसं श्रवे दुसशं विषते
....सामासिद्दीनं च अतनं आभावं सामीयते
.... पापते

अशोक, अनुशासनं निभाति अभागः

(2) गुस्त्रवन्हा गुस्त्रविविधूः गुस्त्रवे सिंहवरः।
गुस्त्रवे परे वथ्यं तस्मे श्री गुरवे नामं।

(3) देविभाषसः
सत्ययुगं देवानं प्रत्यष्पूजनं - नेताभापरयोः
प्रत्यष्पूजा प्रतिमायु च - तत्प्रथिततदायुः स्येके
ढंपरे वर्षं - कलीं च देवातन्त्रास्मतीमनिर्देशार्थं
सन्मालतं, भुमिविहारं विधाविनेत्रादितनास्तिचि
कालोः, देवायिष्टायाः श्रमिनः।

(4) विष्णुधमेंतर
स्मृतिः देवाताकाराः निरस्त्रवायः निरभावः।
यथा यथा भवेत्र स्मृतिः सा तथा गुरुन्तात्त्मिकः॥

शाख्तालकाधितौ बीजं बीजाधितं प्रजयते।
विष्णुं - भानविन्यासों समासाधर्मं प्रतित्यजस्॥
अद्वयवर्गसमागः॥
(5) जिने वैशेषिको स्वयंत्र सत्त्वसम्बन्धु सुचते।
अभिषाधोगैरसद्द्विरूपत्वम् प्रकटीतितः

र्जनि अभिन्नां सितां पीते सदा हतिमुक्ताः।
वेदध्वनिः वरङ्गो धारणं मुद्रा अभवान-भूस्पर्शो।

(6) साधनमश्च
वा प्रत्यत्त्वसमुपाद्य प्रवृत्तिः स धर्मं पञ्चानिः।
य: धर्मं पञ्चानिः सुप्रभातं पञ्चानिः॥

(७) सुप्रभातं
TUNG SHA
Thirty-five Buddhas who receive confession
GAUTAMA BUDDHIST & OTHER BUDDHAS
including celestial Buddhas
Bodhisattvas and Master Exponents
SIPA'I KHORLO
Wheel of Life depicting six worlds of existence.
TIBETAN LAMAS IN WESTERN EYES

H.E. Richardson

The quiet competence with which many Tibetan exiles from their own land have found success in a new life in India, Europe and America is a fine example of their national resilience and initiative allied to a natural friendly charm and good manners.

That is no surprise to those who knew them in Tibet and I remember when Dr. David Snellgrove and I went in 1960 to discuss the future of the Tibetan refugees with the U.N. High Commissioner and were bored by a generally gloomy view that they would find it very difficult to adapt themselves to strange conditions, we vigorously maintained that, given a helping start, the Tibetans would rapidly do very well in their new surroundings.

Now among the many successful and popular figures in a variety of activities, there are many learned Lamas. Some have established teaching and meditation centres where they inspire their disciples by their dedicated sincerity and conviction. The most notable of the Lamas is, of course, the Dalai Lama.

On 27th March after two shells from Chinese batteries had fallen in the grounds of his summer palace when the hope of finding a peaceful outcome for the growing tension and hostility between Tibetans and Chinese had broken in violence, His Holiness left his capital secretly at night to seek refuge in India. A month later, after a journey full of danger and hardship, he arrived at Tezpur in Assam. Instead of the expected exile some may have expected, the assembled pressmen saw a serenely figures of great dignity and presence. He might have been a ruler secure in his throne paying a ceremonial visit, but behind the outer manner his unshaken calmness many could perceive the spiritual depth which without affectation set the Dalai Lama apart from similarity and made him effortlessly master of his surroundings.

There is beyond doubt something about a high lama that is outside the ordinary experience of our Western civilization. Even among the lesser lamas, of whom there were many, I found as well as calmness, benevolence, dignity and humour, the unsaid certain - so much pen of the man that it would never occur in him to analyse or explain it - that he was not only the person we see but the same who had lived in the bodies of many predecessors. He is as sure of that as that he is himself. I shall not speculate.

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how that comes about; but now H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama has become an
international figure, the friend of religious and political leaders all over
the world but also accessible with direct simplicity to many thousands of
ordinary people whom he influences by his teaching of peace, mutual
understanding and goodwill. I am not going to attempt the impossible task
of explaining him: charisma is not something to be put into words, only to be
experienced in personal contact. What I set out to do is to recall how some
earlier lamas, who were never seen outside Asia, appeared to the eyes of the
rare western visitors who chanced to see them in the seven centuries or so
preceding this.

The first foreigners to meet Tibetans were Franciscan friars in the 13th
century, braving the arduous journey to the court of the Mongol Khan who
took pleasure in assembling round them representatives of every available
religion whose blessings they accepted, indeed demanded, indiscriminately. They also enjoyed hearing debates between champions of
the different faiths. In 1254 William of Rubruck met at that court a red-robed
Tibetan priest with whom he had a long conversation - in what language it
is not specified - and from whom he acquired some ill-digested information.
He also saw a ten-year old child-monk said to be a reincarnation of two
pread-priests. He took part in a debate with the Buddhists in which he claims
to have triumphed. If the Tibetans were his opponents they probably
enjoyed debating then as much as they do today and, in the end, it was they
who won the Khan’s favour. William brought to the west the first version of
the six letter prayer which he represents as Om Mani Padam. About half a
century later another Franciscan, John of Montecorvino, was at the Mongol
capital in Peking where he met a red-robed “Tibetan” pope - the Grand
Tubus (perhaps the Tzin who was at that time Skya Lama Ye-shes Rin-
chen) but he has nothing significant to say about him.

Then and for many years to come, foreigners who came in touch with
Tibetans were mainly missionaries and so, professional critics and rivals of
Buddhism. Further, lack of a common language stood in the way of mutual
understanding. As exception, at least to the extent that he was a lama, was
Marco Polo who was in China and Mongolia some years before
Montecorvino. It is not clear whether he actually spoke to a Tibetan but he
has a good deal to say about the priesthood whom he describes in general as
“idolaters” and “Bakas”. He never uses the word lama but mentions some
deities as leading an ascetic life in great monasteries where the monks
were of a superior kind. Marco’s chief interest was in the more spectacular
activities of the Bakhas who were able to control the weather and to perform
miracles such as raising the Khan’s drinking cup from one place to appear
on the table in front of him. These persons whom he describes as generally
dirty and unkempt, resembling perhaps some types of modern naga-pa,
were also credited with good deeds such as persuading the Khan to make
charitable donations to the poor.

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After the fourteenth century there was a long interval before a further meeting between foreign missionary and Tibetans, and the scene moved from the east to the west of Tibetan influence when Antonio de Andrade paid a short visit in 1624 to the kingdom of Tsepantsang. His mission had been sparked off by a report from a Portuguese merchant Diogo d’Almeida who claimed to have lived two years in Tibet, perhaps Ladakh, and affirmed that there were traces of Christian practice in that country among whom a bishop called Lama. That appears to be the first mention of the word in the Western vocabulary. Andrade won favour with the lay ruler of Tsepantsang who pressed him to return, describing him in a letter as his Lama. Andrade did so, and the following year met many lamas with whom he could communicate after a fashion through one of them who spoke Hindi. But these relations or any real study of Tibetan religion were not possible because his patron, the king, was on very bad terms with his priesthood who before long brought about his fall, and with it the Christian mission too came to an end.

A nearly simultaneous Jesuit mission reached central Tibet by way of Bhutan under fathers Caceli and Colbran. In Bhutan they saw the great reverence in which the Dharma Raja - the Zhaba-drung Rin-po-che - was held and the great state in which he lived but they were still seeking for traces of Christian practice and did not get the least idea of Tibetan religious beliefs. When they went on to Shigatse they became, like the Jesuits in Tsepantsang, involved in rivalry between their protector the lay king and the lamas of differing sects, and learnt little more about lamas and their ways except that they gradually perceived that they were relics of past Christianity. Moreover they did not display the bigotry of another pair of Jesuits, Gueseler and D’Orville, travelling from China to India who were the first foreigners to see Lhasa. They declined to seek a meeting with the Dalai Lama, describing him as “that devilish god the father who put to death those who refuse to adore him”. Doubtless he kept that ungracious thought to himself at that time for he admits that they were treated with great kindness by the Dalai Lama’s own brother.

At last, in the early years of the 18th century there came to Lhasa the first foreigner to acquire a sound knowledge of Tibetan and an insight into Tibetan thought and learning. It is difficult to exaggerate the greatness of Ippolito Desideri; in a few words to summarize his achievement. On his arrival at Lhasa in 1716 he was graciously received by the actual ruler, Lobang Khan. Within nine months he had learned enough Tibetan to write, in traditional verse form, an exposition of Christian doctrine which he presented to the King and which created a great stir of interest. The King arranged for him to continue his studies first in Ramoche and later in Sera where he was allowed to celebrate mass for himself. His command of Tibetan led to many discussions with learned lamas and he was engaged on
comprising a refutation of Buddhism when his studies were interrupted by
the Dragon's invasion. The work, sadly now lost, was completed just before
he had to leave Tibet in 1721. Later he wrote a careful account of Tibet, its
people, customs, administration and, of course, its religion. In general he
shows a respect for the institutions and conduct of the lamas and monks and
he found, as he has been agreed many times since, that there is much in
common in the moral principles and aims of both faiths; but his Christian
beliefs made him denounce some aspects of Tibetan Buddhism as
obscene and abominable. The sticking points then as later were Tibetan
denial of a God and their doctrine of transmigration. Although he knew
many lamas and had one special favourite who taught him Tibetan, he
takes no picture of the character and personality of any of them; it is only of
his patron Latsang Khan, to whom he was much indebted and whom he
obviously liked, that he gives any personal description.

He records the amazing veneration accorded to the Dala Lama and to
other lamas too: "would to God", he says "that Christian Catholics showed
one hundredth part of such sentiments to... Religious of our Holy Church".
And having seen the devotion of the common people to "Omyen" which
made them ready to sacrifice everything they had rather than give up their
faith in him Desideri comments: "I confess I blamed myself and was amazed
to have a heart so hard that I did not honour, love and serve Jesus, sole
Master, sole and true Redeemer, as this people did a traitor and deceiver".

Desideri's view of reincarnating lamas carries Christian logic to a
conclusion which modern readers may find an excess of dogma. He was
impressed by the recognition of past possessions and connections and by
the claims by newly discovered lamas to remember past existences and he
rejects the idea that this is simply due to deceit and collusion; so, since it
cannot be the work of God, it must be that of the Devil. But his careful
examination of other Tibetan religious doctrines is generally impartial and
acute.

The Capuchin missionaries who briefly preceded Desideri and continued
after his departure until 1745, like him, enjoyed the protection and
friendship, especially of the chief administrator, Pholha Néwang, and also
of the Dala Lama and other monks. But they had no one of the calibre of
Desideri among them and although several of them must have acquired the
rudiments of Tibetan, only one, the gentle, devout, Orazio Della Penna is said
to have been fully proficient in the language. They had many close
acquaintances among the lamas with whom they held lengthy discussions;
and they met the 13th Dala Lama on several occasions. They seem to have
been more concerned with preaching their own beliefs than with attempting
to understand those of the Tibetans and some of their letters show an
amusing naïvety. They claim to have proved in argument with learned lamas that the Buddha was neither a deity nor a saint, that it was no sin to kill animals, and that the lamas with whom they were debating could not possibly be reincarnations. The lamas listened attentively. Orazio himself presented the Dalai Lama with a copy of his work refuting Buddhism. The Lama accepted it with interest and politely advised Orazio not to condemn the religion of other people. Nevertheless, one of the Capuchins reported that the Dalai Lama was lecturing on the verge of conversion. All such optimism came to an abrupt end when a handful of lowly Tibetans whom they had converted were persuaded to disown their loyalty to the Dalai Lama. After being given every opportunity to recant, they received a comparatively mild floging of twenty strokes and the fathers who tried to intercede were told by their patron Pho Losang that they should not interfere with the faith of other people, adding "we do not do so". After a short time when Pho Losang and the Dalai Lama declined to receive them, they were once more granted audience and were treated with the customary kindness but it was made clear that their actions were, in Tibetan eyes, an unworthy and discordant return for years of tolerant hospitality. That was in effect the end for the Capuchins fathers and for a permanent Christian mission in Central Tibet. Depleted and out of funds, the good Orazio, Della Penna, who had been for twenty years in Tibet, left Lhasa in April 1745 only to die of weakness and sorrow at the age of sixty five soon after his arrival in Nepal.

Nearly thirty years later there was a mission of quite a different sort when Warren Hastings despatched George Bogle as his envoy to Tashilhunpo with the aim of encouraging friendship and commerce between India and Tibet. Bogle, an intelligent, observant and cheerfully sociable Scot was singularly fortunate to meet in the person of the Third Panchen Lama the most powerful and popular figure in Tibet at the time and he has left the first lively description of a great Lama as a warm human personality as well as a charismatic leader.

On his first receptions at Tashirabgnya Bogle was charmed by the engaging manner of the Lama and thereafter for the best part of five months was frequently in his company and in that of his hospitable, light-hearted family. The Lama clearly enjoyed Bogle’s presence and treated him with the greatest consideration, sending dress and food to make his stay more comfortable. Bogle attended the Lama on his journey to Tashilhunpo, at formal reception and at religious ceremonies and, more important, he had about thirty private meetings when the Lama who had a fair knowledge of Hindi, received him with friendly informality, spoke freely about all aspects of the political situation and approved of Bogle’s hopes of closer relations between India and Tibet. Bogle was regularly invited to religious services and, from courtesy and in the interest of occupying his time, he always attended. He has described well enough what he saw of temples, services
and so on but shows no real interest in the meaning of it all and on the one occasion when the Panchen initiated a conversation about religion Bogle seems to have absorbed little of his explanation of Buddhist doctrines and on his part made it clear that he was no missionary with an evangelistic axe to grind, and was politely vague and non-commital in his interpretation of Christian tenets. They came to the usual agreement that the moral aims of their faiths were similar.

His close acquaintance with his host moved Bogle to admiration, respect and affection. He wrote:

"His disposition is open, candid, and generous. He is extremely merry and entertaining in conversation, and tells a pleasant story with a great deal of humor and action. I endeavoured to find out, in his character, those defects which are inseparable from humanity, but he is so universally beloved that I had no success and not a man could find in his heart to speak ill of him."

He has much more to say about his gentleness, his preference for conciliation, his diplomatic sagacity, and of the profound veneration and devotion in which he was held, and, in general he says "I never knew a man for whom on so short acquaintance I had half the heart's liking."

No foreigner has lived on terms of closer confidence and intimacy with a Great Lama, and Bogle parted from the Panchen, his family, Tibet and its people, with genuine sadness. Later, writing to his sister, he regrets the absence of his friend the "Teshu Lama" for whom I have a hearty liking and could be happy again to have his fat hand on my head."

Bogle may not have achieved any great practical success but he had paved the way for future friendly relations and Hastings determined to follow this up by another mission. Sadly the Panchen and Bogle were not to meet again; the former died in China in 1780 and Bogle a year later in Calcutta.

So, the next envoy to Tashilhunpo, in 1783, was Captain Samuel Turner, an English officer in the East India Company's army. Hastings was good at choosing men and Turner like Bogle was able, observant and intelligent, also he was patient and able to get on well with Tibetans but from the rather formal language of his account he seems to have lacked Bogle's warm spontaneity and sense of fun, and he did not have Bogle's advantage in meeting any figure comparable to the Third Panchen Lama for his visit the new reincarnation was only eighteen months old but he has left, in the
rather staid language of the eighteenth century, an enchanting account of his reception by the child.

"The Lama's eyes were scarcely ever turned from us and when our cups of tea were empty he appeared uneasy, throwing back his head and contracting the skin of his brow, and continued to make a noise, for he could not speak, until they were filled again. He took some sugar out of a golden cup... and stretching out his arm made a motion to his attendants to give it to me". Turner then addressed the child briefly: "it was hinted that notwithstanding he is unable to reply, it is not to be inferred that he cannot understand". During Turner's speech "The little creature turned, looking steadily towards me, with the appearance of much attention, while I spoke, and nodded with repeated but slow movements of his head, as though he understood and appreciated every word but could not utter a reply. His parents who stood by the time eyed their son with a look of affection, and a smile expressive of heartfelt joy at the propriety of the young Llama's conduct. His whole attention was directed toward us; he was silent and sedate, never once looking towards his parents as if under their influence at any time, and with whatever pains, his manners may have been so correctly formed, I must own that his behaviour, on this occasion, appeared perfectly natural and spontaneous, and not directed by any external action, or sign of authority."

The child, Dzasa-pa' Nyima, grew up to be a presage of almost equal importance to his predecessor, Boppo's friend, and lived to the age of seventy three.

The promising start to relations between India and Tibet was stunted by the closing of the country after the Gorkha invasion in 1792, and it was left to Thomas Manning, a sensitive, intellectual, English eccentric to find his own way to Lhasa in 1811, apparently without serious obstruction. Manning was a friend of Charles Lamb who was fascinated by his "incomparable genius, congenial nature, sparkling eccentricity and addiction to occasional levity"; he was also a considerable linguist who became specially attached to Chines and having mastered the language and manners, wanted to travel in remote parts. He arrived at Calcutta in Chinese dress which did little to disguise his nationality, and with a Chinese servant and the help of Chinese living in Tibet, he found his way through Bhutan to Lhasa. His fragmentary diary, though containing several significant observations, is largely given up to the description of the journey. At Lhasa he paid his respects to the Chinese Amban and seems to have received official hospitality from the Tibetans, apparently in his role as a foreign physician. He had no difficulty in securing audience of the Ninth Dalai Lama, Lung-rije rgya mtsho. At his reception Manning presented himself three times and offered a scarf and presents. His
account as another classic: "The Lama’s beautiful and interesting face engrossed almost all my attention. He was at the time about seven years old (actually, he was just six); had the simple, unaffected manners of a well-educated princely child. His face was, I thought, poetically and affectingly beautiful. He was of a grey and cheerful disposition; his beautiful mouth perpetually unbending into a graceful smile, which illuminated his whole countenance. Sometimes, particularly when he had looked at me, his smile almost approached to a gentle laugh. No doubt my grim beard and spectacles somewhat excites his curiosity." There was an exchange of formal questions and compliments before Manning withdrew. He says: "I was extremely affected by this interview with the Lama. I could have wept through strangeness of sensation. I was absorbed in reflections when I got home." He paid five more visits to the Lama but has left no detailed comment on those occasions.

In 1845/46 missionaries appeared once more at Lhasa. The Lazarists fathers, Ernesto Hub and Joseph Gabel had set out in 1844 from the borders of China, north of Peking, on instructions from the Pope to survey the mission field in Mongolia. A long journey brought them at the end of 1845 by way of Nagchuksa to Lhasa where they were received kindly by the Tibetans but with suspicious hostility by the Chinese Amban who evicted them after about three months and compelled them to return eastwards through Tibet instead of proceeding by the short journey to India. During their stay, like all missionaries before them, they received the patronage of the lay authority, in this case the senior minister, Shatra, whom they wrongly describe as the Regent. They were allowed to make a chapel and preach their faith and they had the usual anxious discussions about religion with Shatra and a few monks. Owing to a smallpox scare they were unable to meet the Dalai Lama, Mikha-s-grub rgya-mtsho, who was then about eight years old, and have little to say about him as a person. But they were much impressed by what they heard of the Panchen Lama, the same whom Turner had met in 1794, now sixty-five years old, a figure of majestic presence with a great reputation for sanctity and learning. He had also acted as Regent for eight months from September 1844 to May 1845. Petech appears to state that he remained at Lhasa until about September 1846 but this seems improbable for the missionaries evidently did not meet him but were advised to go to Tashilunpo to do so, which they were unable to do.

After the Lazarists the age of explorers and adventurers in the competition to be first into Lhasa, set in. The arrogant bullying and not infrequent deceit by some of these travellers did nothing to enhance the reputation of foreigners in Tibetan eyes. They met few Tibetans of any standing, had no common language and were generally more interested in the topography than the people.
It was not until the mould of exclusion was broken by the rough wooing of
the Youngusband expedition that a Great Lama was seen again by
foreigners. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama after his enforced flight to China was
met by the American diplomat W. W. Rockhill who spent a week with him at
Wu-tai shan. He comments on the Lama's unsurpassed intelligence and
ability, great natural dignity, quick temper but kindly cheerfulness, his
thoughtfulness and courtesy as a host. He also describes his personal
appearance in considerable detail. The Viscomte D'Ollone also met the
Dalai Lama at Wu-tai shan for a short rather formal visit from which he got an
impression of the Lama as a statesman and man of action. Later, the friend of
longest standing and closest intimacy was Sir Charles Bell who looked after
the Dalai Lama when he took refuge in India in 1910 and was in constant
contact with him when he was invited to Lhasa in 1921. Bell has written
about the Dalai Lama with deep affection and respect in 'Portrait of the Dalai
Lama', which I cannot attempt to summarize enough to quote him that the
Dalai Lama and he were "men of like minds". From Bell's account the
powerful personality of the Lama emerges clearly but it is as a strong-
minded man of action and administrative ability and political interests
rather than of deep spirituality and that is the impression conveyed not only
by Rockhill and D'Ollone but also by the Japanese Kawaguchi and by
Political Officers who visited Lhasa after Bell until the death of the Dalai
Lama in 1933. He was nevertheless profoundly learned in Buddhist
discipline but apparently in an intellectual way and he was eager in his
position as head of the church to see that the standard of teaching and
achievement in religious studies was improved.

By contrast, his contemporary the Sixth Panchen Lama impressed all who
met him by his gentleness and spirituality. Sir Frederick O'Connor, who was
fluent in Tibetan, enjoyed a warm friendship with him beginning with visits
to Tashihumpho in 1904 and 1905; he later accompanied the Lama on his
visit to India. O'Connor tells a pleasant story that on their first meeting, the
Panchen Lama, retarding, without the need of explanation, to the visits of
Bogle and Turner to two of his predecessors, expressed his pleasure at
meeting British officers "again" and recalling the happy relations he had
had with them. He also showed O'Connor a number of presents - watches,
china, silver and so on - received on those early occasions. O'Connor writes
with affection of the gentle and saintly character of the Lama and the love
and reverence of his people towards him. Unfortunately he was drawn
innocently into a short-lived plan in which O'Connor, perhaps carried away
by his admiration for the Lama, sought to set him up as a substitute for the
absent Dalai Lama. This had tragic consequences for the Panchen Lama
who was to end his life in exile, and for the peace of Tibet. Sir Charles Bell
wrote of him: "Truly the Tashi Lama has a wonderful personality. Somewhat
short in stature, with a fair and healthy complexion, the smile with which he
regards you is touched with the quiet solemnity of one who prays and works
for all mankind, but it is at the same time the smile of a friend who takes a personal and sympathetic interest in your own concerns. It is not surprising that he should be loved by his people. It is good that there is such a man in Tibet; it is good that there are such men in the world. The great explorer Sven Hedin described him in even more enthusiastic terms: "Wonderful, never to be forgotten; incomparable Tashi Lama", and released the deep impression made by his calm, dignity and courtesy and his wide humanity: "Extraordinary, unique, incomparable!"

The participation of the Panchen Lama, whether willingly or not, in political matters beginning with the plans of Frederick O'Connor and continuing through his involvement in Chinese designs on Tibet since his flight from Tibet in 1926 until his death in 1937 are a sadly uncharacteristic story. And the involvement of the two Great Lamas in international politics to some extent robbed them of their remote mystery but, although there remained an aura of spirituality it made them more credible human beings.

Today the balance has changed. The present Panchen Lama is something of an enigma. In the early days of the Tibetan tragedy he appeared as the political creature and puppet of the Chinese; and contentious and offensive words were put into his mouth. But people who have met him lately emphasize that when he is able to speak for himself he is a true Tibetan and Buddhist.

The Dalai Lama - Chos-erdzay gnyis-lden, Master of Religion and State - is inevitably and deeply concerned with the politics of his country and when he speaks of them, which he does mainly on special occasions and when he is specifically asked about them, he makes his views and meaning clear but in balanced and temperate language. In his daily life and in his public utterances politics are subordinated to his deep, mature feeling for religion, and the good of all beings. His radiant, generous spirituality is all he says has restored the mystique of the incarnate Lama underlying his warm humanity and approachability.

As I have said charisma is not to be described. I make no further attempt to do so and will only add my twentieth century working account of a child Lama to the incomparable descriptions by Turner and Manning.

On 6th October 1939 the whole population of Lhasa, so it seemed, had congregated in bright cool autumn weather on the plain below Rikya monastery some two miles from Lhasa, where a great camp had been ornamented with auspicious designs in blue, sheltered the tent proper, the roof of which was even more splendidly decorated with religious symbols in gold, red and blue and with golden peacock figures perched on the roof
pole. The floor was open showing the inner walls lined with splendid gold, red and blue brocade hangings and with bright banners hanging from the supporting poles. In the centre stood the tall throne of the Dalai Lama, covered in patterned gold and red brocades. There was a lower throne at the side for the Regent. The crowd waited in tense excitement which was heightened when the base of the Dalai Lama's bodyguard, which had gone out to meet him, was heard in the distance; and soon in a cloud of dust and of incense smoke from burners all along the route, the first banners of the procession came in sight. Long trumpets sounded from the monastery above and the crowd pressed forward eagerly. A small troop of Chinese soldiers in dusty quilted clothes came first at a quick pace and then a long line of mounted men, carriers of banners and symbols, and then the whole body of Tibetan officials in ascending importance in magnificent brocades and white or crimson topped hats. At last in the centre of the cavalcade we saw a small carrying chair draped in yellow silk, and through the glass window the face of the little Dalai Lama could be seen looking calmly but curiously at the mass of people prostrating themselves by the roadside, many weeping with joy. The procession moved at a rapid pace up the hill to the monastery where the child was to have a short rest and change his clothes. Soon he was carried down the winding path in the large gilded state paraquin with eight bearers in yellow silk and red tasseled hats. The whole official body accompanied him into the camp to the Peacock Tent where he was lifted on to the throne by his Lord Chamberlain. Everyone then took their proper places in the enclosure and we members of the British Mission and those of the Nepalese and Chinese were led to our seats. Ours were just in front of the Dalai Lama's father, mother and family. The Regent opened proceedings by prostrating three times before the Dalai Lama and then offering him a scarf; after which the officials began to file past to offer white scarves and receive the blessing. The child, wearing yellow brocade and a yellow, peaked hat with a fur trim set quaintly and with great dignity, completely at ease in these strange surroundings, giving the proper blessing to each person, with both hands or one, or with a flash on the end of a rod, according to their rank. He looked often in our direction, partly because we were so near to his parents but also it seemed, fascinated by our unfamiliar appearance; and when our turn came to offer our scarves he was smiling broadly and as I bent down for his blessing he took a pull at my hair. But a greater centre of amusement and interest were the rosy face and fair hair of Reginald Fox, the Mission Radio Officer; the Dalai Lama felt his hair for quite a long time. After the stream of worshippers continued to flow for over an hour until at last tea in a golden tea pot studded with turquoises was brought in; the tea was first tasted formally by a high official then poured into a jade cup and offered to the Dalai Lama. He was then lifted down and carried back in state up to the monastery.
Although not surprisingly he seemed a little tired at the end of the long day his behaviour through the whole ceremony was movingly impressive. He maintained a calm and interested appearance and a look of happy benevolence. The rapt devotion of the Tibetan crowd could almost be felt and all of us like Manning experienced "the strangeness of sensation".

Later, Sir Basil Gould came to Lhassa for the installation ceremony. By then I had left Lhassa but Gould had left a very full account of the story of the discovery and recognition of the child as well as of the enthronement. He tells of his reception by the Dalai Lama, describing his steady gaze and absorption in what was going on, and using the language of Isaiah: "Unto us a child is born".

When I returned to Lhassa in 1944 and on many later occasions, I was formally received by the Dalai Lama and never failed to be impressed, also grew up, by his composure, his self-possession and his look of kindly interest. As he was a minor all my time in Tibet and state affairs were conducted by the Regent, I never had an opportunity to meet and talk to him privately. During much of that time my friend Heinrich Harrer was frequently in contact with the Dalai Lama whose curiosity about the outside world and things mechanical he was able to satisfy in many ways. Harrer has told his remarkable story in Seven Years in Tibet. I was fortunate in being able to exchange, through him, messages with the Dalai Lama to whom I used to send cinema films, illustrated magazines and books, and flowers from our garden. But it was only after he had reached safety in India that I was able to meet him personally on several occasions, first at Mussoorie in 1960 and then at Dhanasala in 1961, when I was privileged to enjoy his hospitality at delightful informal family lunch and dinner parties.

At those meetings I could feel the immediate impact of his personality. Behind the simple often humorous friendliness of manner there was a transparent goodness, an inner peace devoid of hatred and a wide compassion not only for the pressing needs of his own people but for the wider troubles and cares of all humanity. That feeling perhaps developed even greater intensity in the travels he was later to undertake all over the world and in his meetings with leading religious and political figures in many countries.

For me, my experience in those meetings in India showed that "His Holiness" was not merely a title but a reality.
THE GOING FOR REFUGE SUTRA

Kenneth Liberman

This sutra from the Great Vehicle is called "Going for Refuge to the Three Sublime Ones."

If I prostrate to the triple gem, Thus have I heard. The Conqueror was residing with a great gathering of 250 assembled monks in the park of the benefactor Anathapindika in the forest of King Itevanes. At the time Shariputra was living in solitude, and there arose in his mind the thought, "If I have the opportunity to meet the Praised One, I would go before the presence of the Dharma King, the One Gone Thus, and ask him how much merit one can accumulate if, with sincere devotion, one takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?"

One afternoon, upon arising from meditative absorption and having gone to where the Conqueror was staying, he prostrated to the Conqueror's feet and stood a seat off to one side. After having sat down, Shariputra addressed the Conqueror in this way, "Revered One, when I was alone in meditative absorption this thought came to me, How much merit can one accumulate if, with sincere devotion, one takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?"

After Shariputra had posed his question, the Conqueror replied in this way, "Shariputra, it is excellent that you have asked your question for the sake of the happiness of others and with compassion for your fellow beings. You have come before the presence of the One Gone Thus with the thought of inquiring this, therefore, Shariputra, in order to help you understand the matter well I will explain by giving an example.

"If someone having miraculous power were to construct a stupa out of seven kinds of precious stones, beautifully arranged—gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystals, red pearls, emeralds, and gems—and covered an area equal to that of this world landmass and its adjacent continents having a length and breadth of 7,000 miles and it reached as high as the world of Brahmas; and then, having made an offering to the stupa of heavenly incense, heavenly flowers, heavenly garlands, heavenly umbrellas, victory banners, and silk pennants, if this person having miraculous power also poured the water out of the four great oceans with Maha oil, placed in wick as big as M. Meru, and burned this offering lamp continuously for many eons until the end of existence, what would you think of that, Shariputra? On the basis of that how much merit do you think he would accumulate?"

"Oh Conqueror, a great deal of merit," he replied. "Oh One Gone to Bliss, a great deal of merit! Indeed, It would be beyond the understanding of all the Hearers and Solitary Realizers. Oh Conqueror, this is only a object of understanding for the One Gone Thus. Oh, One Gone to Bliss, thus is an object
of understanding for the One Gone Thus. Oh, One Gone to Bliss, this is an object of understanding for One Gone to Bliss."

The Buddha then commented, "Shariputra, the collection of merit of such a person would not approach the vicinity of the collection of merit of one who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The latter collection is a hundred times greater than the former. A thousand times greater. A hundred thousand times greater. The amount of merit and the quality of its substance is inconceivable."

Following the Buddha's statement the third world system of great thousands shook and trembled. Everything trembled. It quaked and trembled, and quaked again. Its contents collided together and these collisions brought on further tremors. At that moment a great bolt of lightning flashed above that very spot, and even the gods beat their drums in proclamation.

Then Ananda asked the Conqueror thrice, "Oh Conqueror, what shall we call this particular instruction? How shall we best maintain its significance?"

The Conqueror replied, "Ananda, call this instruction, 'endless means for attainment.' Its significance may be held in that way. That is how you shall refer to it." Upon the conclusion of this statement, Shariputra and the assembled monks rejoiced at the Conqueror's words.

Thus concludes the Great Vehicle Sutra known as "Going to Refuge to the Three Sublime Ones."³

1. The Tibetan translator.
2. Shariputra.
3. sang, du, yang, dag: lit. "placing the inside in perfect order."
4. Translated into English from the Tibetan by Ven. Jampa Tsultrim and Kenneth Liberman at Sakya College, Rajpur, India.
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