

Principle of Attaining Buddhahood with the Present Body

Sokushin-Jobutsu-Gi by Kukai

translated by Hisao Inagaki

INTRODUCTION

Chinese esoteric Buddhism entered a new epoch in the eighth century when Shubhakarasiṃha (善無畏 Zenmūi, 637-735) and Vajrabodhi (金剛智 Kongochi, 671-741) produced Chinese translations of the Mahāvairocana Sutra and the Diamond Peak Sutra, respectively, thereby promulgating what is called "genuine esotericism" (純密 junmitsu) as distinguished from "mixed esotericism" (雜密 zomitsu). Furthermore, Amoghavajra (不空金剛 Fukukongo, 705-74), Vajrabodhi's disciple, actively engaged in the dissemination of the teaching while translating a large number of esoteric texts which he had brought from India. It was his disciple Hui-kuo (惠果 Keika, 746-805) who transmitted the teaching to Kukai when the latter visited China.

Kukai (774-835), popularly known by the name of Kobo Daishi, after returning to Japan, propagated the esoteric teaching in Kyoto and elsewhere while writing a number of works. Being a faithful follower of the esoteric tradition, he based his system of thought on the teachings of Indian and Chinese masters and attached especially great importance to the sutras of genuine esotericism and two treatises attributed to Nagarjuna, namely, Treatise on Bodhi-Mind (菩提心論 Bodaishinron) and Commentary on the Treatise on Mahayana (釋摩訶衍論 Shakumakaenron). He further developed and systematized the doctrine with his extensive knowledge and religious ingenuity. Thus, the system of the Shingon sect which he founded represents the apex of Buddhist esotericism.

Of all the works of Kukai, the following six considered the most important in the Shingon sect:

- (1) Ben-kenmitsu-nikyo-ron (辯顯密二教論), 2 fascicles, T.T.No.2427, a treatise which compares exoteric and esoteric teaching and shows that the latter is superior because it was expounded by the Dharmakaya Buddha.
 - (2) Sokushin-jobutsu-gi (即身成佛義), 1 fascicle, T.T.No. 2428.
 - (3) Shoji-jisso-gi (聲字實相義), 1 fascicle, T.T.No. 2429, a treatise which establishes the doctrine that Mahāvairocana's preaching of Dharma is heard through phenomenal existences.
 - (4) Unji-gi (吽字義), 1 fascicle, T.T.No. 2430, a discourse on the significance of the mystic letter "HUM", saying that it contains deep and boundless significance of the absolute truth and that one can attain the state of Mahāvairocana by contemplating on it.
 - (5) Hizo-hoyaku (秘藏寶鑰), 3 fascicles, T.T.No. 2426, a discourse on the ten stages of spiritual progress which correspond to the ten categories of Buddhist and non-Buddhist paths.
 - (6) Hannyashingyo-hiken (般若心經秘鍵), 1 fascicle, T.T.No. 2203, a commentary on the Prajnaparamita-hridaya Sutra.
- These six works in nine fascicles and the Treatise on Bodhi-Mind, 1 fascicle, are put together in a collection of "The Ten-fascicle Books" (十卷章) explaining the fundamentals of the Shingon doctrine. The theory of the ten-stage spiritual progress is more extensively discussed in the Himitsu-mandara-jujushin-ron (秘密曼荼羅十住心論), 10 fascicles, T.T.No. 2425.

In Kukai's system of thought, attainment of Buddhahood with the present body occupies the most important place. Ordinarily, Buddhahood is to be attained after three "incalculable aeons" (asamkhyā-kalpa), during which one gradually accumulates merit, removes evil passions, and cultivates wisdom. All exoteric teachings, Kukai claims, more or less follow this pattern of practice, but esoteric teaching which is the direct and spontaneous revelation of the ultimate truth by the Dharmakaya Buddha presents a mysterious, transcendental means (神通乘 jinzujo) whereby one attains Buddhahood very quickly, even in the present life. This doctrine, however, was not Kukai's dogmatic elaboration. There is evidence that Amoghavajra and Hui-kuo had the same view. The theory of quick attainment of Buddhahood, it must be added, is not peculiar to esoteric Buddhism. The Tendai and Kegon schools have a similar doctrine, and Zen advocates instant realization of Enlightenment. Kukai's contemporary and the founder of the Japanese Tendai sect, Saicho (767-822), in fact, promulgated the teaching of quick realization of Buddhahood based on the Lotus Sutra against the Hosso teaching which expounds gradual progress toward Enlightenment over the period of three incalculable aeons. In Kukai's view, Tendai and Kegon talk only about theoretical possibilities of attaining Buddhahood quickly and lack an actual experience of realization.

It is not known exactly when Kukai wrote the Sokushin-jobutsu-gi. It is presumed that he wrote it during the Tencho period (824-33). It is also suggested that since the theory of the six elements is frequently mentioned in the works written after the first year of Tencho (824), he must have written this work in the late Konin period (c.820-4). There is still another assumption placing the date of compilation between the eighth and the ninth year of Konin (817-18) based on an investigation into the relationship between Kukai and Tokuchi, his contemporary and scholar of the Hosso doctrine.

The treatise consists of three parts: scriptural evidence, verse, and exposition of the verse. In Part I, eight passages are quoted from the Great Sun Sutra, sutras belonging to the Diamond Peak group, and the Treatise on Bodhi-Mind as the scriptural evidence for establishing the principle of attaining Buddhahood with the present body. The verse, consisting of two stanzas in eight lines, is attributed to the "great Acarya of T'ang", namely Hui-kuo, in a different text of the Sokushin-jobutsu-gi,⁷ but this ascription is not generally accepted because the text in question is thought to have been composed by some other person. The verse, indeed, forms an integral part of the Sokushin-jobutsu-gi, presenting the essentials of the doctrine of attaining Buddhahood with the present body, and so it can be considered as the most important part of the entire system of Shingon esotericism. The first stanza explains the meaning of "sokushin", and the second one that of "jobutsu".

It is important to note that in Parts II and III Kukai follows the pattern of discourse adopted in the Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana and the Commentary on the Treatise on Mahayana (釋摩訶衍論 Shakumakāron), namely, (1) presentation of the essence (體 tai) of all things, (2) phenomenal manifestations of the essence in concrete forms (相 so), and (3) activity and function (用 yu) of the essence. The essential substance of the universe, according to Kukai, is the six elements (六大 rokudai, six mahabhutas), viz., earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness. In ordinary Buddhist teaching, these six are regarded as constituent elements of the phenomenal world (samskrita), and the very essence of things is shown in Mahayana by such terms as "Dharma-nature" (dharmata), "True Suchness" (tathata), and "Voidness" (shunyata). Kukai's view of the universe is that the six elements are its essence and are identical with the Dharmakaya Buddha Mahavairocana. As in other aspects of his esoteric doctrine, Kukai presents the ultimate essence of things in positive and concrete terms where those familiar with Zen may expect a negative expression. These six elements and all phenomena, including all sentient beings and even Buddhas, are in the relationship of "producing" elements and "produced" things, but in reality it is not a relative relationship, and a popular concept of "creation" does not apply here. Though the first five are treated as material elements and the last one as the mental elements, they are basically of the same nature. They penetrate each other and are mutually unhindered. Hence, what is material is mental, and what is mental is material. This provides the basis for universal, mutual unhinderedness through which the esoteric principle of the unity of man with Buddha is established. Kukai further demonstrates that the first five elements represent the noumenal principle (理 ri) and the last one signifies perfect wisdom (智 chi). This means to say that the whole universe produced from the six elements is the embodiment of Mahavairocana's noumenal principle and wisdom. In their original state, the six elements are "un-producing" (無作 musa) and "un-produced" (不生 fusho). The "original unproducedness" (本不生 honpusho, adyanutpada), indeed, is the keynote of genuine esotericism and is represented by the letter "A".

As we have seen above, phenomenal manifestations of the six elements can be considered as self-manifestations of Mahavairocana Buddha. The universe as such is, therefore, a pictorial presentation (Mandala) of this original Buddha. In terms of the four kinds of Mandalas, the universe is, first of all, a Maha Mandala (大曼荼羅 dai-mandara) and various phenomenal existences can be considered as deities arising out of the original body, Mahavairocana. Secondly, the universe is interpreted spiritually as a manifestation of his vows and ideas, and so various things in it are considered as swords, jewels, lotus-flowers, etc., held in the hands of the deities which represent their distinct vows and wishes. In this sense, the whole universe is a Samaya Mandala (三昧耶曼荼羅 samaya-mandara). Thirdly, the universe is a self-manifestation of Dharma, and each phenomenal existence is a letter of Dharma containing immeasurable meanings and merits. Also, various letters signifying deities in the Mantras are revealed as phenomenal existences in the universe. Hence, the whole universe is a Dharma Mandala (法曼荼羅 ho-mandara). Lastly, movements of things in the universe represent deities' actions; hence, the universe is a Karma Mandala (羯磨曼荼羅 katsuma-mandara). The four kinds of Mandalas which are usually shown in pictorial forms, seed-letters (種子 shushi, bija), or act-signs, have thus a cosmic significance. As it is said in the Sokushin-jobutsu-gi, each of the four kinds of Mandalas is as immense as space and they penetrate each other, being mutually unhindered.

The real religious significance of Kukai's theory of origination from six elements (六大緣起論 rokudai engi) lies in the spontaneous function of Mahavairocana. He manifests himself in various forms of Buddhas and deities, and reveals Dharma to sentient beings. Since it is conceived that the activity of Mahavairocana is displayed with his body, speech, and mind, one who seeks unity with him is required to take a specific physical posture and perform specific oral and mental exertions. Therefore, Kukai attaches great importance to the three kinds of practice, namely, Mudra-sign, incantation of Mantra, and Samadhi-meditation. These three are called "the three mystic practices" (三密 sanmitsu) - "mystic" because they are so profound and subtle that even the Bodhisattvas of the highest rank cannot recognize them. The three mystic practices originally belong to the Buddha, and the practitioner is only required to conform to them as they are transferred to him. It is further conceived ontologically that all sentient beings possess by nature the same mystic forms of action as the Buddha's - as it is technically called "無相の三密" (muso no sanmitsu) - but they do not realize them until they successfully perform the prescribed method of practice and attain unity with the Buddha.

The spiritual communication and unity between man and Buddha which thus involves physical, oral, and mental

correspondence is expressed by the term "加持" (kaji). It is originally a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit "adhithana" (power, authority, blessing) which refers to the Buddha's power brought to bear on a Bodhisattva, etc., to assist him in his spiritual progress. The term as it is interpreted by Kukai refers to this power on the part of the Buddha and also response to and reception of it on the part of the practitioner. "加" (ka), literally "adding", and "持" (ji), "holding", are given these two distinct meanings. In other words, as Kukai notes, "加" refers to the Buddha's great compassion, and "持" man's faith. In his introduction to the Mahavairocana Sutra, Kukai says, "'加持' (kaji) is '佛所護念' (butsu shogonen, favored by the Buddha) and '加被' (kabi, adding and endowing) in old translation. But these do not exhaust its implications. '加' (ka) is the term for '往來涉入' (orai-shonyu, communication and penetration), and '持' (ji) has the meaning of '攝而不散' (sho ni fusan, holding and keeping something from dispersing). This is to say, '入我我入' (nyuga-ganyu, Buddha entering into me and I entering into Buddha) is the significance of the term."

In explaining the principle of attaining Buddhahood with the present body, three kinds of "sokushin-jobutsu" are distinguished: (1) "理具" (rigu, intrinsic embodiment), (2) "加持" (kaji, empowerment and responding), and (3) "顯得" (kentoku, manifest realization). Firstly, all sentient beings intrinsically and spontaneously possess all the merit of the Vajradhatu and Garbhadhatu Mandalas, with their bodies containing the noumenal qualities of the five elements and with their minds embodying the Enlightenment-wisdom of the consciousness element. Therefore, they are in themselves Dharmakaya Buddhas. Secondly, one attains unity with Mahavairocana Buddha through the three mystic practices of empowerment and responding. In this stage of practice, the practitioner is identical with Mahavairocana as long as he is in the mystic Samadhi of Yoga, but when he leaves it he returns to the state of an ordinary man still bound by evil passions and desires. Thirdly, as the practitioner continues to perform the three mystic practices, he will attain the full realization of Buddhahood, with all his actions always in harmony with the Buddha's. Since he thus manifestly realizes the intrinsic virtue of Mahavairocana, his body is now the Buddha's body, and the Buddha's body his body.

The theory of the three kinds of attainment of Buddhahood should not be attributed to Kukai because it appears in a different text of the Sokushin-jobutsu-gi which was most probably composed by some other person, but it has been widely used in the Shingon sect to explain the deep meaning of this principle. In accordance with the three meanings of the principle, three distinct readings of "即身成佛" (soku-shin-jo-butsu) have been devised. In the case of the intrinsic embodiment of Buddhahood, the phrase is read "sunawachi mi nareru butsu" (in itself one's body is an actualized Buddha). In the second case of realizing Buddhahood through empowerment and responding, it is read "mi ni sokushite butsu to naru" (with the present body one becomes a Buddha). Lastly, with reference to the manifest realization of Buddhahood, the reading is "sumiyaka ni mi butsu to naru" (quickly one's body becomes Buddha's).

As Shingon esotericism is a highly sophisticated religious-philosophical system, it is impossible to discuss all aspects of the system in this article. The above introductory remarks on the principle of attaining Buddhahood with the present body may serve as an introduction to the whole system, which it is the translator's wish to discuss more fully in the future.

There are number of old and modern commentaries on the Sokushin-jobutsu-gi, of which the translator has chiefly availed himself of those written by Raiyu (1226-1304), Shoshin (1287-1357), Yukai (1345-1416), and Donjaku (1674-1742).

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即身成佛義

by Kukai

[I] SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

Question: Various sutras and treatises expound attainment of Buddhahood in three (asamkhyā) kalpas. What scriptural evidence is there to establish the principle of attaining Buddhahood with the present body? Answer: The Tathagata expounds it in the Esoteric Pitaka.

What is the exposition in the sutras?

(1) The Diamond Peak Sutra says,

"Those who practice this Samadhi

Will realize Buddha's Bodhi with the present (body)."

"This Samadhi" refers to the Samadhi of One Letter (i.e. BHRUM) representing the Bhagavat Mahavairocana incarnated as a

Golden Cakravartin.

(2) Again, it is said,

"If there are beings who encounter this teaching
And practice it diligently, day and night, throughout the four periods of day,
They will attain the stage of Joy in this life
And realize Enlightenment after sixteen lives."

I explain: "This teaching" refers to the Great King Teaching of Samadhi realized inwardly by the Dharmakaya Buddha. "Stage of Joy" is not the first bhumi mentioned in the exoteric teachings; it is the first stage of our Buddha-vehicle, as fully explained in the section on stages. "Sixteen lives" refers to the lives of the sixteen great Bodhisattvas; they are fully explained in the section on stages.

(3) Again, it is said,

"If one practices in accordance with this supreme principle,
One will attain the highest Enlightenment in this life."

(4) Again, it is said,

"You should know that your body
Becomes the Vajradhatu.
When your body has become Vajra,
It is firm, solid and indestructible.
I have attained the Vajra-body."

(5) The Mahavairocana Sutra says,

"Without abandoning this body,
One attains supernatural power over the objective world,
Wanders freely in the state of great void,
And, moreover, accomplishes the Bodily Mystery."

(6) Again, it says,

"If you want to enter Perfection (Shiddhi) in this life,
Comply with (your Buddha's) empowerment and contemplate on it.
After receiving the Mantra (of your Buddha) personally from your reverend teacher.

Meditate on it until you become united with it. Then you will attain Perfection."

"Perfection" mentioned in the sutra refers to the Perfection (of five supernatural powers, etc.) by holding the Mantra and the Perfection of the Buddhahood of Dharmakaya. "The state of great void" means that Dharmakaya is unhindered like the great space, contains all the phenomenal forms and is everlasting; hence, "great void". It is the basis on which all existing things rest; hence, "state". "Bodily Mystery" means that even (Bodhisattvas of) the Equal Bodhi cannot see the Three Mystic Practices of the Dharmakaya Buddha; and so how can those of the tenth bhumi have a glimpse of them? Hence, it is called "Bodily Mystery".

(7) Also it is said in the Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's Treatise on Bodhi-Mind, "In the Mantra teaching alone is found (the theory of) attaining Buddhahood with the present body. Hence, it expounds the method of Samadhi. It is not found or mentioned in the various other teachings."

"It expounds (the method of) Samadhi" refers to the Samadhi self-realized by the Dharmakaya. "Various other teachings" refer to exoteric teachings expounded by the Enjoyment Body for the Sake of Others.

(8) Again, it says,

"If a man seeking Buddha's wisdom
Attains Bodhi-Mind,
He will quickly reach the stage of Great Enlightenment
With the body born from his father and mother."

[II] VERSE

This principle is established by the above passages of evidence in the scriptures. What are the distinct meanings of the words (即身成佛 sokushinjobutsu, "attaining Buddhahood with the present body") (as expounded) in these sutras and treatise?

A verse says,
"The six elements are mutually unhindered, everlasting and in
harmony (with Reality). [essence]
The four kinds of Mandalas are not separate from each other. [form]
Empowerment and responding in the Three Mystic Practices
quickly reveal (the Three Bodies of Buddha). [function]
Manifold relationships like Indra's net are shown as "即身" (sokushin, "present or identical body"). [unhinderedness]
One spontaneously possesses All-Wisdom,
With mental functions and mind-kings as numerous as the particles of the universe,
Each embodying the Five Wisdoms and boundless wisdom;
Because it functions like a clean mirror it is called Reality-Enlightenment Wisdom. [enlightenment]

I explain: With these two stanzas in eight lines I prize (the significance of) the four characters "即身成佛" (soku-shin-jo-but-su). These four characters contain boundless meaning. None of the Buddha's teachings goes beyond this one phrase. Hence, I have condensed them into these two stanzas to disclose the boundless virtue.

The verse is divided into two parts: the first stanza praises (the significance of) the two characters "即身" (soku-shin), and the next one that of the two characters "成佛" (jo-but-su). The first part is further divided into four: the first line shows essence, the second, form, the third, function, and fourth, unhinderedness. The second stanza presents four things: firstly, attainment to the Buddhahood of Dharmakaya Buddha, secondly, innumerableness, thirdly, perfection, and lastly, reason.

[III] EXPOSITION

(1) First line

I explain: "The six elements" are the five elements and consciousness. The Great Sun Sutra says,
"I have realized the original unproducedness,
Gone beyond the path of words,
Attained liberation from various faults,
Freed myself from causes and conditions,
And realized that voidness is like space."

This is the significance (of the six elements). A seed-mantra says, 'A VI RA HUM KHAM HUM.' The letter "A" signifying to original unproducedness of all dharmas represents the earth element. The letter "VA" signifying transcending verbal expositions represents the water element. Purity and non-defilement are referred to by the letter "RA", which represents the fire element. That causal karmas are not to be grasped is implied by the letter "HA" which represents the wind element. "Like space" is implied by the letter "KHA", which represents the space element. "I have realized" indicates the consciousness element.

The word "識" (shiki, consciousness) is used in the causal state, and "智" (chi, wisdom) in the resultant state. Since "智" (chi) is "覺" (kaku, realization), ("我覺", gakaku, "I have realized" indicates consciousness element). Sanskrit "buddha" and "bodhi" are derivatives of the same word (budh). "Buddha" is translated as "覺" (kaku), and "bodhi" as "智" (chi). Therefore, "samyaksambodhi" used in various sutras was formerly translated as "遍知" (henchi, universally knowing) and later as "等覺" (togaku, equal enlightenment), for "覺" (kaku) and "知" (chi) have the same meaning. This sutra refers to consciousness as "覺" in accordance with the superior sense of the term. The only difference is whether it refers to the state of cause or that of result, the original or the derivative state. The verse of this sutra makes this statement with reference to the five Buddhas' Samadhis.

Again, the Diamond Peak Sutra says,
"All dharmas are originally unproduced;
Their substance is beyond verbal descriptions,
Pure and without defilement;
Though there are causes and karmas, they are like space."

This verse has the same (context) as the one in the Mahavairocana Sutra.
"All dharmas" refer to all mental dharmas. The number of mind-kings and mental functions is immeasurable; hence, "all".
"Mind" and "consciousness" are different words with the same meaning. For this reason, Vasubandhu and others established the principle of Consciousness-Only based on (the theory) that the Three Worlds are merely (manifestations of) Mind. The explanation of the rest (of the verse) is the same as above.

Again, the Mahavairocana Sutra says,
"I am in agreement with the mind-state,
Attaining freedom in reaching anywhere
And permeating universally various
Animate and inanimate beings.
The letter 'A' refers to the primordial life.
The letter 'VA' refers to water.
The letter 'RA' refers to fire.
The letter 'HUM' refers to wind.
The letter 'KHA' is the same as space."

In the first line of the passage of this sutra, namely, "I am in agreement with the mind-state," "mind" refers to consciousness-wisdom. The last five lines refer to the five elements. The middle three lines explain the unrestricted function and the quality of unhinderedness of the six elements. The Prajnaparamita Sutras, the Bracelet Sutra, etc., also expound the principle of the six elements.

These six elements produce the four kinds of Dharmakaya and the three kinds of worlds, such as all Buddhas, all sentient beings and receptacle-worlds. Hence, the Bhagavat Mahavairocana sets forth a verse on the arising of Tathagata and says,

"(The six elements) produce various conformable shapes
Of dharmas and dharma-aspects,
Buddhas, Shravakas,
World-saving Pratyekabuddhas,
Hosts of valiant Bodhisattvas,
And the Most Honored Man as Well.
Sentient beings and receptacle-worlds
Are produced in succession.
Dharmas which arise, dwell, and so on (i.e., change and perish),
Are thus produced perpetually."

What meaning does this verse reveal? It reveals that the six elements produce the four kinds of Dharmakaya, (four kinds of) Mandalas, and three kinds of worlds. "Dharmas" refer to mental dharmas, and "dharma-aspects" refer to material dharmas. Also, "dharmas" is a general term, whereas "dharma-aspects" refer to distinctive aspects (of dharmas). Hence, the following lines say that Buddhas, Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, sentient beings and receptacle-worlds are produced in succession. Also, "dharmas" refer to the Dharma Mandala; "dharma-aspects" refer to the Samaya Mandala Bodies; form "Buddhas" to "sentient beings" are the Maha Mandala Bodies; and "receptacle-worlds" refer to the lands on which they rest. "Receptacle-worlds" is a general term for the Samaya Mandala. Also, "Buddhas", "Bodhisattvas" and (sages of) the Two Vehicles refer to the world of Wisdom-Enlightenment; "sentient beings" refer to the world of sentient beings; and "receptacle-worlds" refer to the world of receptacle. Also, the producing agents are the six elements; "various conformable forms" are the produced dharmas, namely, the four kinds of Dharmakaya and the three kinds of worlds.

Therefore, it says next, "O Lord of Mystery, in laying out a Mandala, there are (proper) positions, seed-letters, and Samaya-signs of the Sacred Ones. You should listen carefully. I will now explain." Then he sets forth a verse and says,

"The Mantra-practitioner should first
Place a Mandala-platform in his own body.
From the feet to the navel,
Form a great Vajra-layer.
From there to the heart,
Imagine a water-layer.
A fire-layer is above the water-layer;
A wind-layer is above the fire-layer."

I explain: "Vajra-layer" refers to the letter "A"; the letter "A" represents earth. Water, fire, and wind are to be known from the passage. "Mandala-platform" refers to the space (element). "Mantra-practitioner" implies the mind element. "Sacred One" in the prose is a Maha Mandala Body; "seed-letter" is a Dharma Mandala Body; "Samaya-sign" is a Samaya Mandala Body; each of the three Bodies comprises a Karma Mandala Body. Detailed explanations are given extensively in the sutras. They are to be known from the passages (of the sutras).

Again, it is said, "The Bhagavat Mahavairocana says, 'O Vajrapani, the minds of various Tathagatas bring forth actions, as in

sports and dancing, displaying various forms extensively. They embrace the four elements, dwelling in the mind-king, and are identical with space. They produce great results, both visible and invisible, and produce various ranks of all Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas'."

What meaning does this passage reveal? It reveals that the six elements produce all things. How do we know? the reason is as follows: "mind-king" refers to the consciousness element; "embrace the four elements" indicates the four elements; "identical with space" refers to the space element. These six elements are producing agents. "Visible and invisible (results)" refer to the Worlds of Desire and Form and the World of Non-form, respectively. The rest are as shown in the passage. They are the produced dharmas.

Thus the passages of the sutras all treat the six elements as the producing agents, and the four kinds of Dharmakaya and the three kinds of worlds as the produced (dharmas). Though the produced dharmas, extending from Dharmakaya to the lower six realms, have the distinctions of fine and gross, great and small, they do not go beyond the six elements. For this reason, the Buddha expounds the six elements to be the essential substance of Dharmadhātu.

In various exoteric teachings the four elements, etc., are treated as insentient things; whereas, the esoteric teaching expounds that they are the Samaya Bodies of the Tathagata. The four elements, etc., are not separate from the mind element. Though mind and matter are different, their essential nature is the same. Matter is mind, and mind is matter; they are mutually unhindered and unobstructed. Wisdom is identical with object, and object with Wisdom; Wisdom is identical with object, and object with Wisdom, Wisdom is identical with Principle, and Principle with Wisdom; they are unhindered and free. Though there are two kinds of things, producing and produced, they are (in reality) entirely beyond active-passive distinctions. What creation is there in the Principle of Naturalness? Words, such as producing and produced, are all mystic symbols. Don't cling to the ordinary, superficial meanings and engage in various idle discussions.

The body thus made of the six elements which are the essential substance of Dharmadhātu, is unhindered and unobstructed, (with the elements) mutually penetrating and harmonizing with each other, everlasting and immutable, and equally dwelling in Reality-End (bhutakoti). Therefore, the verse says, "The six elements are mutually unhindered, everlasting and in harmony (with Reality)."

"Unhindered" means "freely penetrating". "Everlasting" means "immovable", "indestructible", etc. "Yoga" (in harmony) is translated as "相應" (soo, agreeing, uniting). Mutual agreement and penetration are the meaning of "即" (soku, of "即身" sokushin).

(2) Second line

Concerning the line, "The four kinds of Mandalas are not separate from each other," the Great Sun Sutra says, "All Tathagatas have (three kinds of) Mystic Bodies, namely, letter, sign, and figure."

"Letter" refers to the Dharma Mandala. "sign" refers to various ensigns, namely, Samaya Mandala. "Figure" is a body endowed with the marks and characteristics of excellence, namely, Maha Mandala. Each of these three bodies has specific postures and act-signs; this is called Karma Mandala. These are the four kinds of Mandalas.

According to the exposition of the Diamond Peak Sutra, the four kinds of Mandalas are as follows:

Firstly, Maha Mandala: it refers to each Buddha or Bodhisattva's body endowed with the marks and characteristics of excellence. A painting of his figure is also called Maha Mandala. It also refers to the main Honored One with whom (a practitioner) attains unity through the Five-Aspect (Meditation for Attaining the Buddha's Body). It is also called Maha Wisdom-Seal.

Secondly, Samaya Mandala: it refers to things held in the hands, such as ensigns, swords, wheels, jewels, vajras, and lotus flowers. It is also a painting of such things. It also refers to a Mudra which takes its shape from the "diamond bonds" formed by joining the two palms. It is also called Samaya Wisdom-Seal.

Thirdly, Dharma Mandala: It refers to the seed-Mantra of one's Honored One; namely, the seed-letter written in the position of each (deity). It also refers to all the Samadhis of Dharmakaya and the words and meanings of all the sutras. It is also called Dharma Wisdom-Seal.

Fourthly, Karma Mandala: it refers to various postures and act-signs of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, etc., and also cast and clay images. It is also called Karma Wisdom-Seal.

The four kinds of Mandalas and four kinds of Wisdom-Seals are immeasurable. Each of them is as immense as space. That is not separate from this; this is not separate from that; it is just as space and light are mutually unhindered and unobstructed. Hence, it is said, "The four kinds of Mandalas are not separate from each other." "Not separate" is the meaning of "即" (soku).

(3) Third line

"Empowerment and responding in the Three Mystic Practices quickly reveal (the Three Bodies of Buddha)" is to be explained. "The Three Mystic Practices" are: firstly, Bodily Mystic Practice, secondly, Oral Mystic Practice, and thirdly, Mental Mystic Practice. The Dharmakaya Buddha's 51 Three Mystic Practices are so profound and subtle that even Bodhisattvas of the Equal Bodhi and the tenth bhumi cannot perceive them; hence, "Mystic". Each Honored One equally possesses the Three Mystic Practices, numerous as the particles of the universe; one gives empowerment to another, and another responds to one. So it is with the Three Mystic Practices of sentient beings. Hence, it is said, "empowerment and responding in the Three Mystic Practices." If a Mantra-practitioner, after discerning this significance, holds his hands in the Mudra, recites the Mantra with his mouth, and settles his mind on the Samadhi, he will quickly attain the Great Shiddhi through the mutual correspondence and agreement of the Three Mystic Practices.

For this reason, a sutra says,

"These three mystic letters (i.e. OM, BHUM, and KHAM)
Of Mahavairocana Buddha,
Each contains immeasurable (significances).
If a man impresses his heart with (Mahavairocana's) sea and
mystic letters,
He will realize the (Great, Perfect) Mirror Wisdom
And quickly obtain the Bodhi-Mind
And the Adamantine Body.
If he impresses his forehead with them, it should be known,
He will realize the Wisdom of Equality
And quickly obtain the body of the Stage of Sprinkling (abhisheka),
With a mass of merits adorning his body.
If he impresses his mouth with the mystic words,
He will realize the Wisdom of Excellent Discernment,
Thereby turning the Wheel of Dharma,
And obtain the body of Buddha's wisdom.
If he impresses his head with the recitation of the mystic letters,
He will realize the Wisdom of Accomplishing Metamorphoses
And produce the Buddha's transformed bodies,
Thereby taming the beings difficult to tame.
If he impresses his whole body
With the seal and mystic letters,
He will realize the Wisdom of Essential Substance of Dharmadhatu,
The space body of Dharmadhatu
Of Mahavairocana Buddha."

It is also said, "Entering the meditation of Dharmakaya-Suchness, one realizes the equality, like space, of the perceiving subject and the object perceived. If a man practices it exclusively and without interruption, he will enter the first bhumi in this life and acquire instantly the provision of merit and wisdom to be accumulated during the period of one asamkhya kalpa. Owing to the empowerment of many Tathagatas, he will soon reach the tenth bhumi, the stage of Equal Bodhi and (finally) that of Supreme Bodhi, thus attaining Sarvajna (All-Wisdom), equality of self and others, and the same Dharmakaya as all the Tathagatas'. He will then benefit infinite sentient beings always with the unconditioned great compassion, thereby fulfilling the great task of the Buddha."

Again it is said, "If (a practitioner) avails himself of the teaching arising out of the inwardly realized wisdom of self-enlightenment expounded by the Self-Enjoyment Body of Mahavairocana Buddha and also avails himself of the wisdom of the Enjoyment Body for Others' Sake of Vajrasattva in the state of the great Samantabhadra, he will meet a Mandala Acarya and be able to enter the Mandala. That is to say, he will acquire the Karma (for abiding by the precepts) and, as (the Acarya) conjures up Vajrasattva in Samantabhadra Samadhi, Vajrasattva will enter his body. Owing to the divine power of empowerment, he will instantly attain immeasurable Samayas and Dharani-gates. (The Acarya) transforms with the wonderful Dharma his disciple's seeds of innate self-attachment. The disciple will immediately acquire in his body the merit and wisdom to be accumulated during the period of one great asamkhya kalpa, whereat he will be considered to have been born into the Buddha's

family. He has been born from the mind of all the Tathagatas, from the Buddhas' mouth, from the Buddhas' Dharma, and from the teaching of Dharma, and has acquired the treasure of Dharma. The treasure of Dharma refers to the teaching of (awakening) Bodhi-Mind through the Three Mystic Practices." [This shows the benefit which a practitioner gains from his Acarya's performance of the method of empowerment and responding when he receives the precept of Bodhi-Mind for the first time.] "By just looking at the Mandala, he produces the pure faith in a moment. As he sees it with joyful mind, the seeds of Vajradhatu are planted in his Alaya-consciousness." [This passage shows the benefit he gains on seeing various Honored Ones in the Mandala-assembly for the first time.] "He fully receives a Vajra name as he is commissioned with the task (of succeeding to the Buddha's place) at the ceremony of Sprinkling. After this he obtains the vast, profound, and inconceivable teaching, whereby he transcends (the results of) the Two Vehicles and ten bhumis. If a man fixes his thought on and practices this teaching of the five mystic Yogas of great Vajrasattva uninterruptedly, throughout the four periods of a day, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, then he will remove all attachment to self and things in the realm of visible, audible and perceptible objects, thereby attaining equality (of all things), and he will realize the first bhumi in the present life and advance gradually (in the Bodhisattva' stages). Owing to the practice of the five mystic (Yogas), he will not be tainted in Samsara or attached to Nirvana. He will widely benefit (beings of) the five states of existence in the boundless Samsara. Displaying tens of billions of incarnate bodies, he will wander freely in various states of existence and bring sentient beings to perfection, enabling them to attain the rank of Vajrasattva." [This shows the inconceivable benefit of the teaching which one gains when practicing in accordance with the prescribed rite.]

Again, it is said, "With the Three Mystic Adamantine Practices as the contributing condition," one realizes the resultant stage of Vairocana's Three Bodies."

Such sutras as quoted above all expound this teaching of the Samadhi with quick efficacy based on the inconceivable supernatural powers. If a man practices diligently, day and night, in agreement with the prescribed rite, he will obtain with the present body the five supernatural powers. If he practices on and on, he will advance and enter the Buddha's stage without abandoning the present body. Detailed explanations are given in the sutras.

For this reason, it is said, "Empowerment and responding in the Three Mystic Practices quickly reveal (the Three Bodies of Buddha)." "加持" (kaji, empowerment and responding) indicates the Tathagata's great compassion and a sentient being's faith. "加" (ka, empowerment) means that the sun of Buddha is reflected in the mind-water of sentient being. "持" (ji, holding, responding) means that the mind-water of the practitioner perceives the sun of Buddha. If the practitioner meditates on this principle well, he will quickly reveal and realize the original Three Bodies with the present body through the correspondence of the Three Mystic Practices. Hence, it is said "quickly reveal". The meaning of ("即"soku of) "即身" (sokushin, identical or present body) is the same as that of the secular words "即時" (sokuji, instantly) and "即日" (sokujitsu, on the same day).

(4) Fourth line

"Manifold relationships like Indra's net are shown as 'with the present body'" shows with a metaphor that the Three Mystic Practices, numerous as the particles of the universe, of various Honored Ones are perfectly fused and unhindered. "帝網" (taimo, Indra's net) means Indra's net of jewels. "身" (shin, body) refers to one's own body, Buddha's body, and sentient beings' bodies; these are called "body".

Also there are four kinds of bodies; namely, self-nature, enjoyment, transformed, and homogeneous (bodies) are referred to as "body". Also there are three kinds (of bodies): letter, mudra, and figure. These bodies are in manifold relationships and are like a lamp and its images in the mirrors, penetrating each other. That body is this body; this body is that body. Buddha's body is sentient beings' bodies; sentient beings' bodies are Buddha's body. They are not-identical and identical, not-distinct and distinct.

Therefore, the Mantra of three equals and unhinderedness reads, "ASAME TRISAME SAMAYE SVAHA". The first word means "unequal"; the next one means "three equals"; and the following one means "three equalities". "Three" refers to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Also it refers to body, word, and mind; also mind, Buddha, and sentient beings. These three things are equal with each other, constituting oneness. They are one but innumerable, innumerable but one. And yet they are not in disorder. Hence, it is said, "Manifold relationships like Indra's net are shown as 'with the present body'."

(5) Fifth to eighth lines

Concerning the line, "One spontaneously possesses All-Wisdom", the Great Sun Sutra says,

"I am the primordial being of all,

Called 'the Support of the World';

I expound the Dharma unparalleled;

I am from the beginning tranquil and unsurpassed."

"I" is the word referring to the Bhagavat Mahavairocana himself. "All" means innumerable (things). "Primordial being" means the original forefather who has realized from the beginning and spontaneously all the dharmas which are thus unrestricted. The Tathagata's Dharmakaya and the Dharma-nature of sentient beings possess this principle of original tranquillity. But since

sentient beings do not realize and know this, Buddha expounds this principle and enlightens them.

Again, it is said, "One who seeks various causes and effects, such a fool does not know the Mantra and the characteristics of the Mantra. For what reason?"

Since it is expounded that a cause is not the agent (of the effect),

The effect is unproduced.

Since the cause is void,

How can there be an effect?

One should know that the effect of the Mantra

Is entirely separated from causes and effects."

The significance of the spontaneous possession (of All-Wisdom) is equally revealed by the verses quoted above, that is, "I have realized the original unproducedness;... Freed myself from causes and conditions" and "All dharmas are originally unproduced;... Though there are causes and karmas, they are like space."

Also, the Diamond Peak Sutra says, "The kinsmen produced from the Self-nature, the sixteen great Bodhisattvas such as Vajrapani, and so forth, each brings forth five hundred million kotis of subtle Dharmakayas, Adamant (Bodies)."

Passages such as this have the same import.

"Spontaneously" shows that all dharmas are naturally as they are. "具足" (gusoku, possess) has the meaning of "accomplish" and "without deficiency". "薩般若" (sappanya, All-Wisdom) is Sanskrit. An older word "薩云" (satsuun) is a corrupted abridgement. If spelt in full, it is "薩羅婆枳孃" (saturabakijona, sarvajnana), which is translated as "一切智智" (issaichichi, all-knowing wisdom). With regard to "一切智智", "智" (chi), means "discernment" and "discretion". Each and every Buddha possesses five wisdoms, thirty-seven wisdoms, and wisdoms as numerous even as the particles of the universe.

The next two lines reveal this significance. In showing the quality of "discernment", the word "智" (chi, wisdom) is used. In showing (the meaning of) "collectively arising", it is called "心" (mind). To show (the meaning of) "rule and holding" we have the word "法門" (homon, dharma-gate), No word (of the above three) is separate from personality. such personalities are more numerous than the particles of the universe. Hence, it is called "一切智智" (issaichichi, all-knowing wisdoms). The use of the appellation is different from that of exoteric teachings in which one (all-knowing) wisdom is set against all (objects). "Mind-kings" refer to the wisdom of essential substance of Dharmadhatu, etc. "Mental functions" refer to the many-included-in-one consciousness.

"Each embodying the Five Wisdoms" shows that each mind-king and each mental function has these (five wisdoms).

"Boundless wisdom" means exalted, extensive, and innumerable (wisdoms).

"Because it functions like a clean mirror, it is called Reality-Enlightenment Wisdom," gives the reason. For what reason are all Buddhas called "覺智" (kakuchi, Enlightenment-wisdom)? The answer is: Just as all the forms are reflected in a clean mirror on a high stand, so it is with the Tathagata's Mind-mirror. The clean mirror of Mind hangs high on the top of Dharmadhatu, being serene and shining of all without perversion of mistake. What Buddha does not possess such a clean mirror? Hence, it is said, "Because it functions like a clean mirror, it is called Reality-Enlightenment Wisdom."

[Translator's note] This translation with introduction was first published in the Asia Major, Vol XVII, Part 2, 1972, and reproduced with the original text in Japanese by the Ryukoku Translation Center as Ryukoku Translation Pamphlet Series 4 in 1975. The translation has been presented in this website with minor revisions.