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Elucidating the Meaning of
Rāhula's *Praise of the Mother*

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KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

sgra gcan 'dzin gyis yum la bstod pa'i don 'grel

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Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Beyond words, beyond thought, beyond description is the Perfection of
Wisdom,
Unborn, unceasing, of the nature of space,
To be experienced by individual, self-cognizant pristine wisdom.
Homage to the mother of the buddhas of the threefold time!

In his brief commentary, Khyentse Wangpo discusses the meaning of these lines in terms of the four aspects of view, meditation, conduct, and fruition, and concludes with heartfelt words of advice. He explains how this stanza expresses the profound truth that the genuine recognition of ultimate reality defies and transcends the realm of thought and conceptuality. According to the colophon, Khyentse Wangpo composed this brief work for an individual named Samādhībhadrā.

These lines are often chanted by Tibetan communities prior to recitation of the *Heart Sūtra*. They are also included in canonical works preserved in the Tengyur.¹ In the Tibetan tradition, this stanza is often attributed to the arhat Rāhula, who was the Buddha's only child. However, this attribution remains uncertain, as it is also sometimes ascribed to the Indian Madhyamaka master Rāhulabhadra, who is said to have composed another longer work titled *In Praise of Prajñāpāramitā*.² The available editions of this composition, however, do not include the lines that are commented on by Khyentse Wangpo in this text.

སྒྲ་གཅན་འཛིན་གྱིས་ཡུམ་ལ་བསྟོད་པ།

Elucidating the Meaning of Rāhula's *Praise of the Mother*

Homage to the guru!

As it was said:

Beyond words, beyond thought, beyond description is the Perfection of
Wisdom,

Unborn, unceasing, of the nature of space, [187]

To be experienced by individual, self-cognizant pristine wisdom.

The true nature of one's mind cannot be apprehended by the conceptual mind, and it is beyond verbal expression. Yet, mere luminous awareness is experienced in an unceasing manner. This very experience is the view beyond assertions.

Any conceptual thought that arises from within this state is seen like a drawing on water: the very moment it appears, it vanishes by itself without a trace. Not doing anything—not correcting or modifying, not rejecting or adopting—except for sustaining without distraction the unobstructed natural radiance of this awareness, free of obscuring veils, is how meditation is connected to one's experience.

Whether walking, moving about, lying down, or sitting, and whatever conduct that is engaged in, such as the ten Dharma activities, including the practice of the generation stage, mantra recitation, and so forth, adopt and abandon actions in accordance with the karmic law of cause and result. Do so from within the state that is not separated from the ineffable experience of the union of luminosity and emptiness of your own awareness—this is how conduct is connected to time.³

Through familiarization with this path of inseparable skillful means and wisdom, the veils of mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations will all gradually be eliminated. At this point, the dharmakāya will be actualized, accomplishing one's own benefit, and in terms of the benefit of others, there will be an uninterrupted, continuous manifestation of form bodies. This is how the result to be attained is connected to other beings' well-being.

In brief, at all times and under all circumstances, from within the state of the natural, present, momentary knowing [188] beyond words and descriptions, practice the generation stage, carry out mantra recitation, make offerings, practice generosity, collect accumulations, and so forth, thus gathering a store of merit. In particular, with a yearning mind filled with renunciation toward saṃsāra, having compassion for beings and devotion for the lama, and being mindful of the uncertain time of death, train without hypocrisy by abandoning and performing deeds in accord with the karmic law of cause and result. This is the unmistakable path by which you will delight the buddhas and their heirs. Therefore, take these words to heart.

This was written by Mañjughoṣa in response to a letter from Samādhībhadra. May the goodness born from this work become the cause for the true nature of all phenomena, the pristine wisdom of the nonduality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, to be directly realized.

*Sarvadā maṅgalam!*⁴

NOTES

1. Works from the Tengyur that include this stanza include, for instance, *Praise of the Deities of the Four Yogas* (Toh. 1170) and *A Maṇḍala Ritual for the Perfection of Wisdom* (Toh. 2644).
2. *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* (Toh. 1127) is attributed either to the Indian master Nāgārjuna or to Rāhulabhadra, who was the former's contemporary and possibly his teacher.
3. The expression "conduct connected to time" may indicate the type of conduct displayed by an individual on the path, which may evolve over time, depending on their level of accomplishment.
4. "May it forever be auspicious!"

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GLOSSARY

awareness

རིག་པ། • *rig pa*

The most subtle level of mind, inherently free of mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations. The Tibetan equivalent, *rig pa* (*vidyā*), is a fundamental term for knowledge, which has the sense of “science” or true, verified knowledge, not mere information. In tantric and Dzogchen contexts, the term connotes knowledge in the sense of direct seeing of the true nature of reality.

cognitive obscurations

ཤེས་བྱའི་སྒྲིབ་པ། • *shes bya'i sgrib pa* • jñeyāvaraṇa

The subtle veil obscuring the mind's true nature, consisting of the latencies of mental afflictions manifesting as dualistic perception and conceptual thought.

conceptual mind

སྒོ། • *blo* • buddhi

Ordinary, dualistic consciousness.

dharmakāya

ཆོས་སྐུ། • *chos sku* • dharmakāya

The wisdom dimension of perfect awakening, purified of the twofold veil of mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations.

form bodies

གཟུགས་སྐུ། • *gzugs sku* • rūpakāya

The dimension of buddhahood perceived by other beings. It comprises two aspects: bodies of perfect enjoyment (*sambhogakāya*; *longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*), perceived by highly realized beings, and emanation bodies (*nirmāṇakāya*; *sprul pa'i sku*), perceived by ordinary beings.

generation stage

བསྐྱེད་རིམ། • *bskyed rim* • utpattikrama

The first of the two stages of practice according to the highest class of Buddhist Tantra, involving the visualization of the deity and related practices.

individual, self-cognizant pristine wisdom

སོ་སོ་རང་རིག་ཡེ་ཤེས། • *so so rang rig ye shes*

The nondual experience of pristine wisdom. It is termed “individual” because this experience cannot be derived from external means but must be had firsthand by the meditator themselves. It is “self-cognizant” in the sense that it is a direct experience of the true nature of nondual mind itself.

luminous awareness

གསལ་རིག ་ *gsal rig*

The cognitive quality of the mind.

mental afflictions

ཉོན་མོངས། • *nyon mongs* • kleśa

The coarse veil obscuring the mind’s true nature, consisting of active and potential states of desire, hatred, ignorance, and so forth.

Mother

ཡུམ། • *yum*

Another name for the Perfection of Wisdom, so called because all the buddhas are born from wisdom.

Perfection of Wisdom

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ། • *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa* • prajñāpāramitā

The sixth of the six perfections cultivated on the bodhisattva path. This wisdom is the determining factor to transform the other five qualities of generosity, discipline, forbearance, diligence, and concentration into liberating factors. Also personified as the goddess Prajñāpāramitā who is the mother of all buddhas.

pristine wisdom

ཡེ་ཤེས། • *ye shes* • jñāna

The nondual wisdom of the awakened mind.

Rāhula

སྲ་གཙུག་པོ་ལྷོ་མ། • *sgra gcan ’dzin* • rāhula

Śākyamuni Buddha’s own son, who became a distinguished disciple.

ten Dharma activities

ཆོས་སྟོན་རྣམ་བཟུ། • *chos spyod rnam bcu* • daśadharmacaryāḥ

As taught in Maitreya’s *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* (*Madhyāntavibhāga* 5.8c–9), the ten Dharma activities are writing, venerating, giving generously, hearing the Dharma, reading, memorizing, teaching, reciting, reflecting on the Dharma, and meditative cultivation.