

The Jewel of Dharma

First the Buddha made a commitment to achieve enlightenment in order to help sentient beings.

Next, he accumulated the two kinds of merit for three aeons.

Finally, he attained perfect buddhahood, and according to our tradition, his enlightened activity is summarized in twelve deeds.

1. He descended from the Tushita realm
2. Entered the womb
3. Took birth
4. became proficient in arts
5. Enjoyed the company of his consort
6. Renounced himself from the world
7. Practiced asceticism
8. Reached the profound state of enlightenment
9. Vanquished mara's hosts
10. Became the Buddha
11. Turned the wheel of the teachings
12. And demonstrated the final act of Nirvana

Among these, his supreme deed was turning the Wheel of Dharma. He did this in three stages.

First, he taught the Four Noble Truths in Varanasi. This was the relative truth.

Second, he taught the Perfection of Wisdom, the truth of emptiness, on Vulture's Peak. This was the definitive truth.

Third, he taught mainly about buddha nature and luminosity in Yangpachen and various places; as well as secret mantrayana teachings some of which were taught during Buddha's lifetime and most of which Buddha himself predicted to arise again in the future. Although Buddha displayed these teachings in many different forms at different times it is the realization of one Buddha.

All of his teachings can be condensed into the two truths, relative and ultimate. We shouldn't think that we need to reject relative truth and strive for ultimate truth. We need to realize the union of the relative truth of appearances and the ultimate truth of emptiness.

In the *Perfection of Wisdom*, the Buddha said,

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,

Form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form.

Later, Nagarjuna, Dignaga and other great Buddhist scholars clarified his teachings.

Nagarjuna said,

Except for what arises from causes and conditions,

There exist no other phenomena.

Therefore, apart from emptiness

There exist no other phenomena.

This kind of view, the union of dependently arisen appearances and ultimate emptiness, was taught by the Buddha over more than 2500 years ago.

Now we are in a time when everyone is interested in science and technology, and temporarily these are very useful for us.

However, whether or not you consider yourself Buddhist, there is absolutely nothing that exists apart from this union of dependently arisen appearances and emptiness.

Everything in the material world is merely labeled by human beings, including religions, science and technology.

Take the example of a computer. It is the combination of its parts that makes it a useful machine. If just one of those parts is missing, it is useless. We think computers are amazing, but we can't say what exactly makes them amazing or where exactly it comes from.

The products of science and technology can be very useful and also very destructive, depending upon how we use them. But if we realize the union of dependent arising and emptiness, and we rest

in that awareness, no harm can come at all. And it brings benefit forever, until we reach the heart of enlightenment.

If we realize this truth, our attachment to material things falls away. The Buddha is the only one in this world who has ever taught this truth. If we realize this view, our faith in the Buddha becomes irreversible. If we invest our faith in material things, they will always fall apart and disappoint us. That's why we need faith united with the wisdom of emptiness.

This view is not created by anyone. Not by some important god, naga, or kings. This is the true nature of all sentient beings. The only difference between us and the Buddha is our lack of recognition of this nature. Beyond that, we are the same.

It's like a beggar who doesn't realize that he has pots of gold and diamonds buried under his house.

This is why we are gathered here today to remember and honor the Buddha. And we pray together that all beings may realize the truth of the Buddha's teachings. The power of our merit is multiplied millions of times on this day.

In these terrible times of war and violence, famine and sickness, this realization has the power to bring peace and happiness. It is precisely this enlightened mind, bodhichitta, that can bring world peace. Without this, no amount of weapons or negotiation will ever bring lasting world peace.

I pray that all sentient beings may realize the truth of the Buddha's teachings.

Thank you, that is the end of my speech.