

capable of giving lucid teachings about reality. The intermediate composer has received permission and guidance from his or her personal *yidam*, the meditation deity. For example, if one experienced a vision of the Bodhisattva Manjushri and received the command to compose a particular teaching, then even if one were unable to perceive the truth of reality, under the *yidam*'s guidance and inspiration one would still be able to render a valid composition. One's faults would be dispelled while writing. In the last case, a qualified composer is one erudite in the Buddha's teachings as well as the *five sciences*. One is then capable of composing a treatise.

### *Lord Maitreya*

Lord Maitreya, regent of the fully enlightened Buddha Shakyamuni, composed the Uttara Tantra. Therefore, the author of our text belongs to the highest classification, the best of the best. Not only has Lord Maitreya perceived the truth of reality, but he attained the tenth bodhisattva *bhumi* and was empowered by Buddha Shakyamuni to be his successor.

Unexcelled in composition, Lord Maitreya transmitted this teaching to his disciple, Arya Asanga. The *Manjushri Mula Tantra* prophesied that one named Arya Asanga would someday appear. Moreover, Buddha Shakyamuni predicted that the monk, Asanga, would clarify and establish both the expedient and the definitive meaning of the scriptures.

### *Arya Asanga*

As predicted, Asanga appeared and undertook the practice of meditating upon Maitreya for twelve years. Initially, Asanga practiced for three years, but nothing happened and he thought, "I have undergone so much hardship. I've practiced diligently, but it has been fruitless." In despair, he left his retreat and wandered off. Along the road, he met a man polishing an iron bar with his bare hands. Asanga asked, "What are you doing?" and the man replied, "I'm trying to make a sewing needle." Asanga thought to himself, "He's making a needle from an iron bar. What diligence! Compared to him, my diligence is nothing. I must go back and practice."

Nine years elapsed and Asanga again felt that his practice was of no avail. Thinking he had accomplished nothing, he left his place of

retreat. Wandering the countryside, he noticed a dog laying in the road. The animal had numerous sores which were infested with maggots in the lower part of its body. Seeing this, Asanga felt immense compassion. He thought, "If I try to remove the maggots with my fingers, they will die, but if I don't take them out the dog will die." So he took out his knife and cut a piece of flesh from his own thigh. He placed it beside the dog. To avoid harming the worms, Asanga was about to lick them out of the wounds with his tongue and put them on the other piece of flesh. He could not bear to look, so he closed his eyes and put out his tongue as he bent down to lick off the maggots, but his tongue touched bare earth instead of the dog. Asanga opened his eyes. The dog had vanished and, instead, Maitreya appeared before him. Asanga cried out, "Maitreya! You have no compassion. I have practiced so hard for twelve years and you never appeared. Why didn't you come?" Maitreya replied, "I've always been right beside you, but your obscurations prevented you from seeing me. Now, because of your great compassion, the last obscuration has been purified and you can see that I'm here."

After their meeting, Asanga accompanied Maitreya to his dwelling place in Tushita Heaven where he received the renowned Five Teachings Of Maitreya. The first teaching, called *Ornament of Realization (Abhisamaya Lamkara)*, clarifies the Second Turning of the Wheel of Dharma. The next three teachings are general works given to clarify all of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings. These are called *Ornament of the Sutras (Sutra Lamkara)*, *Discerning the Middle and the Extremes*, and *Discerning Dharmas and Dharmata*. The fifth work taught by Lord Maitreya truly establishes the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma. It is the *Uttara Tantra*.

Asanga passed the first three sections of the Five Teachings of Maitreya on to his own disciples, but he considered the latter two sections of teachings — *Discerning Dharmas and Dharmata* and the *Uttara Tantra* — too profound for people of that day and age to readily understand. Therefore, he concealed them as treasures. Later on, they were rediscovered and revealed by Maitripa, guru of Marpa the Translator. After the master, Maitripa, revealed these teachings which had been hidden as treasures, he had a vision of Maitreya who appeared before him amidst a gathering of clouds. At that time, Maitripa received the complete transmission and instructions on these texts. Afterwards, Maitripa propagated this teaching widely.