

**Chandrakirti –  
The One Clarifying Arya Nagajuna's Point of View**

based on Yongdzin Yeshe Gyaltzen's Biographies of the  
Lam-Rim Lineage Lamas, translated by Fedor Stracke

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## Praise to Manjushri

He, whose discriminating awareness, by shining brilliantly like the sun free from the clouds of the two obscurations, sees all objects of multiplicity like they are, holds therefore a wholesome text.

He loves those who exist in the prison of existence dazed by the darkness of ignorance, all the groups of migrators that are afflicted by suffering, like an only child.

His melodious speech, endowed with sixty features, reverberates dragon-like, awakening from the stupor of the afflictions, liberating from the iron chains of karma.

He holds the sword that cuts any sprout of suffering and clears the darkness of ignorance.

The body of a foremost child of the Conqueror, pure from the beginning and naturally complete with the qualities of having perfected the ten grounds, beautified with one hundred and twelve ornaments,

I prostrate to Manjushri, who clears away the darkness of my mind.

## Chandrakirti – The One Clarifying Superior Nagajuna's Point of View

### **Birth and General Life**

Chandrakirti was born ca. the 6th century A.D. to a Brahmin couple in South India, in a place called Mandya. As he had the marks and signs of an emanation, his parents consulted a proficient soothsayer, who told them that those were signs of great purity. He predicted that the boy would become a great Dharma holder if he would follow the teachings of the conqueror.

The parents acted in accordance with the prediction and had Chandrakirti ordained at Nalanda. He took novice vows from the abbot, Dawa Gonpo, and accordingly received the name Dawa Drakpa . Subsequently he took the vows of full ordination and gradually studied the three baskets of teachings and the four tantras. He became an excellent scholar who had crossed the oceans of Buddhist and non-Buddhist tenets. Placing the dust of Superior Nagajuna's feet on his head he listened to the complete instructions on sutra and tantra and practised them accordingly. By single-mindedly practising the complete body of both the sutric and tantric paths he attained superior realisations. Abandoning all outer and inner elaborations he continually remained in meditation on ultimate bodhicitta, day and night.

### **Milking the Picture of a Cow**

To ordinary monks it appeared as if Chandrakirti was occupied with sleeping the whole time, breaking only to eat, drink and go to the toilet. This they disliked, saying, 'With Chandrakirti we have someone who even lies down while eating, and who does not do any of the activities of a monk, such as listening, contemplating and meditating. He may even still be a Hindu,

since he used to be one. He is evil, possessing the nine signs of black magic. Because he has not given up his Hinduism he does not do any monastic activities. By continuing to deceive us, it seems he wants to harm us later. It is appropriate that we do something to prevent that.'

The abbot Dawa Gonpo however realised the true nature of the great Chandrakirti, and was very happy to have him engaging in single-pointed equipoise, so he stopped the monks by proclaiming, 'It would be inappropriate to expel this monk.' Then Nalanda's abbot said to the Pandit Chandrakirti, 'Even though your meditative equipoise is immovable, among the Sangha many ordinary monks don't understand your true nature and so create lots of negative karma. I am therefore appointing you as assistant manager to the manager Nyima Kirti.'

Having thus become assistant manager, one day Chandrakirti led the monastery's buffalos, cows and so on to a far away forest and left them there. Upon returning to his room he then drew the picture of a cow.

When noontime came the monks observed, 'He left all the buffalos and so forth behind in the forest. Let's see how he is now going to serve lunch.'

With the help of Nyima Drakpa, Chandrakirti served plenty of milk and curd to the monks. Then Nyima Drakpa started to wonder, 'Where does all this milk and curd come from? After all, he left all the animals behind in the forest.' When he went to have a look he saw Chandrakirti milking the picture of a cow. When Chandrakirti came out of the storage house again and served plenty of rice and other things to the monks they wondered where all the rice and inexhaustible butter had come from, since he had left the buffalos and cows behind in the forest.

Then Nyima Drakpa declared, 'The glorious Chandrakirti drew curd from a cow's picture. Today he took good care of the Sangha's needs'. The abbot then also praised Chandrakirti, 'To milk curd from the picture of a cow through having attained mastery over one's mind is indeed excellent.'

### **Preventing War**

Again, at one time when it was said that the army of the Turushakay was only half a month away from reaching Nalanda, the pandits and all the ones with abilities were asked whether there would be a way to avoid war, but nothing came of it. Then from the heart of Nalanda's Dharma protector a crow came forth and proclaimed that Chandrakirti should be asked. The pandit said that he knew a way to avoid war. 'A lion of stone has to be carved,' he said. 'Buddhists should request the Triple Gem for blessings, and Hindus should make prayers to Indra.'

There was already a lion carved from stone, which they placed fifteen pagtse from the monastery, but when the advancing army arrived there, the stone didn't move. 'This will not work,' murmured the monks. 'Now we are going to lose everything.'

The pandit Chandrakirti quickly arose and, taking an armful of sandalwood sticks, beat the lion over the head three times with them. Thereupon the lion shook his mane three times, which frightened the soldiers, who took off in all directions. When it was over those who dared to look could see that the lion's face was covered with blood.

Then the King Youthful Powerful One said, 'The glorious Chandrakirti sent the powerful lion. He stopped the army of the Turushakayas without inflicting death or wounds. It is wonderful.' The Sangha however replied, 'This was not due to

the power of Chandrakirti. The lion needs to be consecrated first by the sangha.’ But when they had consecrated the lion he melted into the ground and the abbot proclaimed ‘It was after all due to the blessings of Chandrakirti having gained mastery over his mind.’

### **Conquering the Elements**

At one time, while the master was remaining in meditation in the forest, a fire broke out there. When all the residents of Nalanda and the area went to have a look, a forest goddess showed herself to them and proclaimed, ‘Fire won’t burn him and water won’t sweep away this loving and compassionate protector! How could a storm blow him away?’ They went into the forest after the fire had subsided and found that the fire had not even touched Chandrakirti’s grass hut. The master then addressed them, ‘My teacher Nagajuna burnt up all the wood of phenomena within the fire of non-generation. The abbot has burned them likewise. I have also consumed the wood of phenomena in the fire of non-generation. How could the fire of phenomena do me any harm?’

### **Psychic Powers**

Chandrakirti possessed limitless psychic powers. At one time the Hindu Kumarika challenged him, saying, ‘I don’t believe that the master has psychic powers. If you have them, then tell me what Indra is doing at the moment.’ Chandrakirti replied, ‘The actual Indra is presently in the realm of the thirty-three, but one of his emanations is in the Pureland of Joy taking teachings from Maitreya.’ However, Kumarika did not believe him.

Then Chandrakirti gestured with his hand and the actual Indra appeared, but Kumarika was unable to see him. When Chandrakirti gestured again with his hand the emanation of

Indra appeared. Kumarika was able to see it and asked, 'Are you Indra?'

The emanation replied, 'I am not the actual Indra. The actual Indra has one thousand eyes, whereas I have only the impressions of those eyes.' After having a close look Kumarika saw that there were only the impressions of the eyes, and believed Chandrakirti.

### **Supreme Scholar**

Chandrakirti was the supreme scholar in Nalanda. Even though there were many pandits in Nalanda, if one was not able to defeat Hindus in debate then one could not teach outside the monastery. Chandrakirti however was allowed to. At one time, when Chandrakirti was teaching outside the monastery, the great south-Indian scholar Chandragomin came to the teaching site. Since he remained standing without paying his respects to Chandrakirti everyone thought, 'Oh, here comes one who wants to challenge Chandrakirti's point of view.'

When asked where he was from and which Dharma he knew Chandragomin said, 'I come from the south and I know the Trapani, the fifty verse Prajnaparamita and the Expression of Manjushri's Names.' Then he recited the root texts of literature, philosophy and tantra and was accepted as proficient in both quotations as well as analysis. However, because his speech lacked any kind of pride they still wondered whether he really was Chandragomin, to which he replied, 'Worldly people would get that kind of doubt'.

The monks decided it was inappropriate to have a great scholar just appear like that, that he should be received properly, and Chandrakirti discontinued his discourse. Then all the pandits were summoned with a gong.

They said, 'The great scholar Chandragomin has come and needs to be welcomed. Let us prepare two carriages; on one we will place a statue of Manjushri and on the other Chandragomin. Then we will formally invite him, with vast offerings.'

During the course of his welcome Chandragomin paid respect to Manjushri's statue, which rejoiced and, looking at him, said, 'Now someone else with great blessings, somebody of great fame and depth is residing in Nalanda.' Chandragomin expressed great happiness about having come to Nalanda and then sat with Chandrakirti, and together they discussed the Dharma.

Chandrakirti answered Chandragomin's questions straight away, without hesitation, while Chandragomin always took some time because he had to ask Chenresig for the answer first. One time Chandrakirti saw Chandragomin coming out of a house that contained a stone statue of Chenresig. Chandrakirti went and listened from the back of the house. Hearing someone teach, he thought 'Chenresig is there and I need to see him', and went into the house. But when he entered the house the face of the emanation body disappeared. Vowing not to move until his aim was achieved Chandrakirti knelt down and prayed, 'Please show yourself to me as you have shown yourself to him'. Thereupon he fell into a dream. 'Since you are a great scholar blessed by Manjushri you have no need for my blessing. I am blessing Chandragomin a little, but do not reveal that,' said Chenresig.

When he awoke from his dream he continued praying as before to be able to directly see Chenresig's face and received a direct vision.

He prayed to Chenresig, 'Now you that are residing on my crown please reveal yourself to all sentient beings as well.'

Chenresig replied, 'I went before all sentient beings but because of their karmic obscurations they could not see me.'

'Please remain seated on my crown anyway,' requested Chandrakirti, who then went around announcing to people, 'Look, look, I have Chenresig seated on my crown.' Even though some prostrated and made offerings they were not able to see anything. Some saw the corpse of a dog. However most people just said, 'He has taught too much and now he is stressed out and has gone mad.' It is said that one woman working in a liquor store merely saw Chenresig's foot and attained the common siddhis .

### **Texts composed by Chandrakirti**

Chandrakirti composed *Entering the Middle Way* as well as the self-commentary to it. *Entering the Middle Way* extensively explains the complete body of the profound and extensive paths, together with grounds, paths and result.

He also composed *Clear Words*, a commentary on the Root Wisdom of Madyamaka, conveying emptiness (phenomena's mode of abiding), through manifold proofs and *Clear Lamp*, a commentary on the root tantra of Guyasamaya, the king of tantra. This text shows completely both the doors for entering the uncommon unequalled path, initiation and vows, as well as the way of actual meditation, including the result. Both *Clear Words* and *Clear Lamp* were praised by the scholars of old as commentaries unequalled on earth, being like the sun and moon illuminating the earth from space.

Chandrakirti further composed a commentary on the 400 Stanzas, showing the important points of the view of the graduated path; a commentary on the Sixty Reasons; the Five Aggregates of Madyamaka; a commentary on Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness; Seventy Stanzas on Refuge; praise to the Great Compassionate One; a commentary on the six aspects of Guyasamaya; a commentary on the Clear Ornament of Realisation of Guyasamaya; a sadhana of Vajrasattva; a sadhana of the 'Essential wrathful nectar'; and a praise to Tara.

### **Chandrakirti's inner Qualities**

Chandrakirti intentionally took rebirth for the purpose of elucidating and clarifying Arya Nagajuna's teachings.

The great Lama Tsong Khapa asked the Venerable Manjushri, 'When explaining Nagajuna's point of view, is it appropriate to regard Chandrakirti as completely faultless?'

Manjushri replied, 'Chandrakirti is a bodhisattva with superior intelligence and courage who, from the feet of a Tathagata in another realm, intentionally took rebirth in this realm to clarify the essence of Nagajuna's teachings. Therefore there is not the slightest mistake in his commentaries on Nagajuna's point of view, both sutra and tantra, and they should be regarded as completely reliable in all aspects . '

Chandrakirti is also one of the eighty mahasiddhas.

From the praise to the eighty mahasiddhas by Lama Dorje Den,

'Born as an emanation of Manjushri,  
Comprehending Nagajuna's point of view,  
I prostrate to the Lama called Chandrakirti.'

## **Benefits of making Requests to Chandrakirti**

For those wishing to train in the graduated path to enlightenment it is most important to supplicate this great master for the clear realisations of the important points of the graduated path, as well as to listen to, contemplate and meditate on his teachings. If one supplicates this master from the depth of one's heart, blessings will be received quickly, because he has attained the vajra body and is still working for the benefit of disciples in this world.

The translator Batsab supplicated Chandrakirti for a long time with faith and respect. Thinking, 'I have to propagate the pure Madyamaka teachings here in Kawachen', he went to India, where Chandrakirti revealed himself to him. He was blessed by receiving teachings and explanations and thus was able to spread the pure Madyamaka system widely in Tibet.

## **Colophon**

This short biography of Chandrakirti is based on the one found in Yongdzin Yeshe Gyaltsen's Biographies of the Lam-Rim Lineage Lamas. It was translated with minor adjustments by Gelong Tenzin Dongak (Fedor Stracke) at Tara Institute, Melbourne, in 2002.

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Mangalam

## Dedication

By the merits of translating this biography may all sentient beings immediately attain the supreme state of enlightenment.

May His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche, Khen-rinpoche Lama Lundrub, Lama Ösel Rinpoche, Ven Geshe Dawö, Ven Geshe Doga and all other spiritual teachers remain like a vajra, with healthy aspect, and continually turn the wheel of dharma of sutra and tantra, especially Lama Tsong Khapas teachings.

The qualities of the Buddha are inconceivable  
The qualities of the Dharma are inconceivable  
The qualities of the Sangha are inconceivable  
The ripening result, brought about through  
Faith in the inconceivable, is also inconceivable.