

HRS/HIST 147 | Preliminary Application Exercise #2

BELOW & ON THE BACK, identify the statement that most effectively presents **evidence of thoughts & feelings** that seem intended to **heighten** the **practice** described in the statement. ASSUME that the primary source cited provides some kind of reliable evidence, and focus on **two other criteria**:

1. How precisely does the statement cite or quote that evidence & frame it with paraphrase?
2. To what extent does the statement gather relevant details from different parts of the source?

IMPORTANT: Assess how well your chosen statement meets these criteria in relation to the other two statements, using circles & arrows below to indicate way(s) that each statement addresses each criteria.

- A. Several stories from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* appear designed to heighten the practice of exorcising the vengeful spirits of dead monks. These stories suggest that monks removing bodies of the dead for cremation should be careful about such spirits, which might “appear there with intense anger, wielding a club” (487-488); or be reborn as a poisonous snake which, “having made a great hood,” later escapes to a dense forest which burst into flames (495); or become reborn as a hungry ghost, “deformed in hand and foot and eye, his body totally revolting, standing there clutching his bowl and robe” (501). The cremation of dead bodies, bathing after carrying the corpse, recitation of the dharma, offering a monk’s bowl and robes, and directing the reward of such recitation and offering to the deceased monk’s name (488, 489, 494, 501) are all actions intended to help dispel the anger and power of such spirits. Several stories also urges monks that one way to prevent such negative spiritual results is to “avoid negative thoughts at the moment of death and to insure more positive thoughts at such time” (482, 501). The Buddha notes that this is just as much the responsibility of those attending to the dying: the attendant who did not give a dying monk his “lovely” bowl was in fact “guilty of an offense” (495).
- B. Although it seems initially to have been inspired by the practice of wandering Buddhist ascetics, the *Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra* (PPS) most likely served to guide the study of monks in settled communities who were critical of the Abhidharma tradition represented by Sariputra (see EGBT, 10 & *Sutra on Right View*, MN 9 @ accesstoinight.org). In the PPS, Sariputra insists that “one should listen to this perfection of wisdom, take it up, bear it in mind, recite it, spread it among others,...with the aim of procuring all the dharmas (essential qualities) which constitute a Bodhisattva” (84). Subhuti, on the other hand, states that a Bodhisattva is one who has no fear when it is pointed out that there is no dharma, no permanent entity, identifiable as “bodhisattva,” and that even the “perfect wisdom” he seeks is non-existent (84-86). Subhuti further says that Bodhisattvas and wanderers like Srenika do not grasp at form (85) and that all dharmas “unborn” (860); the Buddha further confirms that dharmas exist only for foolish people who “have constructed all the dharmas” (87). In the subsequent dialogue with the Buddha, Subhuti clarifies that “a Bodhisattva...should train himself like an illusory man for full enlightenment....form is like an illusion. And what is true of form, is also true of the six sense organs” and branches of experience (*skandhas*, 88; see also EGBT, 32). All these statement would support monks who rejected Abhidharma’s fascination with categorizing elements of experience.
- C. The *Bodhicāryāvātāra* was intended to guide Indian monks in the later Mahāyāna period (184) as they initiated and then renewed their vows on the bodhisattva path. The work focuses on three aspects of the thought of awakening: “the first instant...in which a person conceives of the possibility...of seeking Buddhahood,” “the subsequent will” to seek it, and the “prescribed forms of behavior that protect and nurture” that thought, including ritual, mental attitudes, rules and principles (183). The ritual described in the work frames the vow to attain buddhahood and helps acquire and dedicate merit to all living beings (184). After the first chapter explains the value of this thought, the second chapter “picks on the theme of worship” and describes “a ritual of worship and self-consecration” (184-85), following “the ‘standard’ order of the Mahāyāna liturgy...culminating in the bodhisattva’s vow and dedication of merit” (188). The author then “explains the importance of using this ritual as a basis for other dimensions of Buddhist practice” (190), including “the first moment in every act of worship, which is defined minimally and technically as a reverent bow or prostration” (191).