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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga  
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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16 July 2002

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Generate a virtuous motivation, thinking that I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to become enlightened I'm now going to listen to this profound Mahayana Dharma, and then put into practice what I have heard.

We have covered the qualities that beautify the continuum of the practitioner, and begun the qualities that outshine the mental continuum of others.

## 2.2. *The Qualities That Outshine the Mental Continuum of Others (cont)*

### 2.2.2. *The Way a Bodhisattva on the Seventh Ground Outshines the Hearers and Self-liberator Vehicles Through Awareness*

The question arises, if a bodhisattva on the first ground outshines hearers and self-liberators through lineage, then when does a bodhisattva outshine hearers and self-liberators through the power of awareness? The answer is that this happens from the seventh ground onwards.

From the seventh ground onwards bodhisattvas outshine hearers and self-liberators through the power of their awareness, as well as through their lineage.

Bodhisattvas on the first ground outshine hearers and self-liberators through their lineage. The reason given in the sutras is that it is because they have attained bodhicitta with pure superior intention. Why do the bodhisattvas on the first ground have the bodhicitta with pure superior intention? It is because they have attained ultimate bodhicitta.

On the seventh ground the bodhisattva outshines hearers and self-liberators through the power of awareness. The reason is that a bodhisattva on the seventh ground can enter into, and come out, of non-dual meditative equipoise on cessation in one instant. This is a special quality that bodhisattvas on the previous grounds don't have. There are various types of 'instant'. For example there's the instant of 'for however long the action is going to take to be completed'. That is not what this is referring to here, where the instant is not a great length of time. Here the instant is the instant of the mind, a mental instant, which is a very short period of time. In one instant of the mind, a bodhisattva on the seventh ground can enter into non-dual meditative absorption on emptiness and then exit.

These are very special qualities that lower bodhisattvas don't possess. The reason is that when one enters non-dual absorption on emptiness, it is a very deep

meditation on emptiness, and it is very difficult to exit from that absorption very quickly. At the beginner bodhisattva stages in the stages of the conceptual realisation of emptiness, one can very easily enter into that meditation, and also exit from that equipoise. However once the meditation becomes a non-dual meditation on emptiness, then it is difficult to enter and to exit quickly. Bodhisattvas on the seventh ground, however, are so accomplished that they can enter and exit in one instant of the mind.

### 2.2.3. *Explaining the Meaning That Has Been Established Through the Previous Points*

Here the point made by the previous outlines is explained. This has several sub-sections.

#### 2.2.3.1. Showing that the *Sutra of the Ten Bhumis* Explains that Hearers and Self-liberators Realise Phenomena as Lacking Natural Existence

##### 2.2.3.2. Sources Proving This

##### 2.2.3.3. Eliminating Doubts with Regard to the Subject

#### 2.2.3.1. Showing that the *Sutra of the Ten Bhumis* Explains that Hearers and Self-liberators Realise Phenomena as Lacking Natural Existence

The points we have just covered, which prove that self-liberators and hearers realise the selflessness of phenomena, are that bodhisattvas on the first ground outshine hearers and self-liberators merely through their lineage, and not through the power of their awareness. This point shows that hearers and self-liberators have realised emptiness directly. Therefore these bodhisattvas don't outshine hearers and self-liberators through the force of awareness.

Chandrakirti himself explained very clearly how the *Sutra of the Ten Bhumis* shows hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena. That's one of the subheadings. The second is that this is also explained in the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara*<sup>1</sup>.

##### 2.2.3.1.1. Clarification of the Thought of Chandrakirti

*According to this system, which is the Prasangika system, hearers and self-liberated buddhas also realise all phenomena as lacking a natural existence. It is very clearly ascertained in the Prasangika system that hearers and self-liberated buddhas also realise that all phenomena lack natural existence.*

*If this were not the case, and hearers and self-liberators didn't realise the selflessness of phenomena, then various faults would arise.*

Do you see any problem if hearers and self-liberators don't realise the selflessness of phenomena?

Student: There would be no reason why they outshine bodhisattvas.

That is correct. If hearers and self-liberators didn't realise the selflessness of phenomena, then the first ground bodhisattvas would also outshine them through the force of their awareness. That first ground

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<sup>1</sup> *Entering the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, or A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*

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bodhisattvas don't outshine hearers and self-liberators through the force of their awareness is an indication that hearers and self-liberators have realised emptiness directly.

*If hearers and self-liberators did not realise emptiness directly then bodhisattvas who have the first mind generation would outshine them through the force of their awareness, in the same way as they outshine those who have the worldly abandonment of desires.*

Worldly abandonment of desires refers to the pacification of coarse manifest desires for the objects of the desire realm through having attained states of meditative absorption, after first having attained calm abiding. On the basis of calm abiding one attains superior insight. On the basis of superior insight and having meditated on viewing what is below as coarse, and what is above as peaceful and desirable, one pacifies the desires of the desire realm and achieves a concentrative absorption.

### Chandrakirti's Three Reasons

*If hearers and self-liberators have not realised emptiness directly then the bodhisattvas on the first ground would outshine them through the force of their awareness in the same way as they outshine those who have pacified their manifest attachment through the force of their concentration.*

*If hearers and self-liberated arhats have not realised emptiness directly then they would be like Hindu practitioners who haven't abandoned the subtle and coarse of the three realms. By focussing on the nature of forms and so on, their minds would become mistaken.*

Hearers and self-liberators would be like Hindus who haven't abandoned the basic delusions of the three realms. We have already explained on previous occasions that the various delusions are also contained within the sphere of the various realms. Of the ten root afflictions, the five afflicted views basically exist throughout the three realms. Of the non-view root afflictions, anger is the only delusion that doesn't exist in the higher realms. Apart from anger, however, all the other delusions can be found in all of the three realms.

The third reason is:

*If hearers and self-liberators haven't realised emptiness directly then also they wouldn't have realised the selflessness of person. Why? Because they focus on the basis for imputing the self, which is the aggregates.*

Then the text gives a quote from the *Precious Garland* by Nagarjuna.

As long as there's grasping at the aggregates  
There will also be grasping at the self,  
For that long  
The person will remain in cyclic existence.

Here the *Self Commentary* is giving three reasons proving that hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena.

*Hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena because otherwise three faults would*

*occur.*

1. The first reason basically says that:

*If hearers and self-liberated arhats haven't realised selflessness of phenomena then it would follow that first ground bodhisattvas would be able to outshine them through the force of their awareness, in the same way as they can outshine those who have the worldly abandonment of desires.*

2. Then comes the second reason, which reads:

*Take the subject hearers and self-liberated arhats - it follows that they haven't abandoned the delusions of the three realms - because they lack the wisdom that directly realises the selflessness of phenomena, for example like Hindu practitioners.*

3. The third reason is:

*Take the subject object of knowledge - it follows that hearers and self-liberated arhats don't realise the selflessness of person - because they elaborate the basis for the imputation of the person, the aggregates, as being truly existent.*

They elaborate the basis for imputation, the aggregates, as being truly existent because they haven't realised the basis for the imputation of the person, the aggregates, as lacking true existence. It follows that they haven't realised this, because they haven't realised the selflessness of phenomena.

That covers the three reasonings. There's a text called the *Madhyamaka Gone Far* that explains those three reasonings very clearly.

*Regarding the third reason, the meaning has to be explained as before, because it also states in the art of definitive and interpretative, that if one posits the self of phenomena as a tenet then it will be impossible to realise selfless of a person.*

Here it is saying that if someone accepts by tenet the self of phenomena, having the intellectually acquired view that a self of phenomena exists, then it is impossible to realise the selflessness of a person. So that is the Prasangika standpoint.

Did you get that?

Do hearers and self-liberators realise selflessness of phenomena?

Student: Yes

If they haven't realised the selflessness of phenomena then what faults would occur? How many are there - there are not many?

Student: Three

How do we arrive at those three faults? If you contemplate it a bit, it will make some sense. The *Self Commentary* stated three faults. Look at the first fault. How does that arise? Can somebody explain it to me?

[student answer unclear]

The first fault was that bodhisattvas on the first ground outshine arhats in the same way as they outshine those with only worldly abandonments. How do you arrive at that fault?

Student: Are they seeing things as inherently existent?

Of course what you say is correct, but how do we arrive at that through the first reasoning? The first reasoning says that bodhisattvas outshine arhats exactly in the same way as they outshine those with worldly abandonments.

Student: They have only abandoned delusions in a worldly fashion, not in an ultimate fashion. That's correct isn't it?

First you give an explanation and then you ask whether its correct. [laughter] Actually I didn't quite hear what you said.

Student: If they haven't realised the selflessness of phenomena they can't have abandoned all delusions completely.

No, that's not the first reasoning. The second reasoning is that arhats haven't abandoned the delusions of the three realms in the same way as Hindu practitioners. So the abandoning of the delusions comes in the second reasoning.

What is the third reasoning?

Student: Because they haven't abandoned the basis of imputation as being empty, they can't abandon the imputation itself as being empty.

### Summary of the three reasons

It is important that you get the point of what Chandrakirti is saying.

**Firstly**, if hearers and self-liberators don't realise the Prasangika point of view of emptiness then those three faults would occur. They would be outshone by bodhisattvas on the first ground in the same way as those with only worldly abandonments are outshone through the force of awareness.

**Secondly**, they wouldn't have abandoned the delusions of the three realms in the same way as non-Buddhist practitioners.

The **third** reasoning is they wouldn't even realise the selflessness of person, because they wouldn't realise the basis for the imputation of the person, which are the aggregates, as lacking true existence.

In the third reasoning in Chandrakirti's *Self Commentary* it says that:

*If they haven't realised the selflessness of phenomena then it would follow that they wouldn't realise the selflessness of person. The reason is because they would actually grasp at the person's basis of imputation, the aggregates as being truly existent. Why would they grasp at a persons basis of imputation, the aggregates, as being truly existent? Because they wouldn't realise the aggregates' lack of true existence. Why would that be? Why would it follow that they wouldn't realise the person's basis of imputation, the aggregates as lacking true existence? It is because they wouldn't realise the selflessness of phenomena.*

### The Prasangika Point of View

Those three faults are posited from the Prasangika point of view. As it says, if one doesn't realise

emptiness from the Prasangika point of view then those three faults would occur.

### The Svatantrika-Madhyamika Point of View

We also have the point of view of the lower tenets such as the Svatantrika-Madhyamika point of view. There it is not necessary for arhats to realise the selflessness of phenomena in order to become liberated. It is enough to attain just the direct yogic perception that realises the selflessness of a person directly. This assertion has to be shown as being interpretative reasoning.

*According to the Svatantrika point of view, the person basically lacks substantial existence and, so it is possible to first of all realise that a substantially existing person is neither of one nature with the aggregates, nor of a different nature from the aggregates. In such a way it is possible to realise the selflessness of a person.*

*After that, if possible, one can also realise the other fifteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths. Once one has realised the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths then the practitioners who take those sixteen aspects as their main object of meditation intensely acquaint their mind with those.*

*After they have done so, then the practitioner will realise the selflessness of a person directly. Why? Because this is established through the reasoning that proves yogic direct perception. The reasoning that proves yogic direct perception is that if the mind is intensely acquainted with its object then it will be able to generate an extremely clear appearance of the acquainted object.*

*When the extremely clear appearance of the acquainted object, selflessness, is generated that means that one has realised selflessness directly. So because this reasoning proving that yogic direct perception exists, relies on this quality of the mind, that if the mind is intensely acquainted with its object of meditation, then sooner or later it will be able to generate this extremely clear appearance. This is the way yogic direct perception is generated.*

*The Svatantrika-Madhyamika say that a practitioner can generate a yogic direct perception that directly realises the selflessness of a person. Once the practitioner has directly realised only the selflessness of a person in such a way, then they have attained the path of seeing that abandons the intellectually acquired afflictions. After having done so, then the practitioner can further acquaint their mind with the already generated direct realisation of the selflessness of person, and in such a way establish the path of meditation, which then is able to overcome the innate afflictions. Even though the practitioner doesn't realise emptiness, all afflictive contamination has still been completely exhausted.*

The Svatantrika-Madhyamikas assert that it is not necessary to realise emptiness to abandon mental afflictions. Their concise explanation is that practitioners with the main aim of abandoning afflictions would first of all conceptually ascertain the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths. Without having realised emptiness, they would ascertain the selflessness of a person as the lack of a substantially

existing self-supporting person. Then, through continued and intense familiarity with this selflessness of person, that conceptual understanding would become a direct realisation.

The reasoning is that if their mind is intensely acquainted with the object of meditation, it will attain the final clear appearance of the meditation object, which means it will attain a direct realisation of the meditation object. By attaining this direct realisation of the selflessness of person in such a way, they have then attained the path of seeing that sees directly the selflessness of person. The path of seeing acts as the antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictions. Then the practitioner can further habituate their mind through the already established direct realisation of the selflessness of phenomena on the path of meditation. They do this in such a way as to overcome even the innate afflictions, thereby completely eliminating the afflictions from the mind.

Here *Illumination* says:

*Even though emptiness is not realised they are able to abandon all the afflictions of the three realms including their seeds.*

This mode of abandoning the abandonments through seeing and meditation is superior. It's not a worldly abandonment but it is an abandonment that has gone beyond. This means that it is not just a worldly abandoning of the delusions, but it is the final abandonment of the delusions.

That was an explanation of how the Svatantrika-Madhyamika assert that it is possible to abandon the afflictions without realising emptiness. Next is the way the Prasangikas refute that assertion.

### **The Prasangika Response**

*Illumination* says:

*If it is said that it was possible to abandon all afflictions by meditating on the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, so here this is to be said, it is not asserted by our own system that without realising emptiness merely by understanding the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth with valid cognition, and then by with intense and great effort meditating on those sixteen aspects in such a way then seeing directly the coarse selflessness of a person, and then also after having seen it furthermore acquainting oneself with it, we don't accept that mode of practice. Because through that type of path one won't be able to realise the selflessness of person completely in all aspects, or in all characteristics. It's not asserted as a path of seeing nor as a path of meditation that has gone beyond transitory existence. Therefore since one is not able to abandon the abandonment through seeing and the abandonments through meditation together with their seeds, and since it is therefore not possible to assert those paths and paths of meditation, to say that arhats have attained those two paths, and that arhats have eliminated both of those abandonments together with their seeds, is interpretative system. It is an interpretative meaning in the same way as a Mind Only assertion of partless particles and other*

*existence as an accumulation of those partless particles, and the absence of a mind that is of a different nature with this accumulation of partless particles.*

*If you remember the various tenets it gives various views of the mind only such as the existence of partless particles. This assertion by the Svatantrika-Madhyamika in which they sort of prove the above quite extensively is similar to when the Mind Only say that they have realised with valid cognition that there is no mind apprehending the object that is different from the nature of the object. So this assertion that there is no subject of different nature is, according the Prasangika also just an interpretative meaning, and not a definitive meaning. Where do the Svatantrika-Madhyamika base their view? It is on this quote from the Pramanavatika where it says,*

*Being liberated through viewing emptiness  
Meditating on the rest, that is the meaning.*

Here they think that there is a distinction to be made between those abandonments that can be achieved without the realisation of emptiness, and those that require the realisation of emptiness to be achieved.

Next week we can go into how the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara* proves the points discussed tonight.

### **The Four Aspects of the First Noble Truth**

Do you know the sixteen aspects? First of all what are the four aspects of the first noble truth of suffering?

Student: Suffering, impermanence, selflessness and emptiness

Impermanence, then

[student answer unclear]

There's a slight difference also between the way the sixteen aspects are asserted according to the lower tenets and the Prasangika tenets. It's empty and selfless. What are the four aspects of the four noble truths of origin?

[student answer unclear]

Next time you have to be able to posit those. You have to be able to relate those sixteen aspects to your own practice and meditation using this form: Take the subject the afflicted aggregates - they are suffering then because of such and such a reason, or take the subject afflicted aggregates they are impermanent and then because you know you can give a reason. You have to relate it to your own aggregates.

### **First Aspect: Impermanence**

What reason do we state in the proof statement: Take the subject contaminated aggregates - they are impermanent because?

Student: They are products

What is the necessity that if it is a product it has to be impermanent?

[student answer unclear]

### **Second Aspect: Suffering**

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What would you posit as a reason for: Take the contaminated aggregates, they are suffering because?

[student answer unclear]

We always say the aggregates are suffering for the reason that they are under the control of karma and delusions.

### **Third Aspect: Empty**

Take the subject contaminated aggregates - they are empty because?

[student answer unclear]

It is empty because there is no person that is self-empowered. This refers to the coarse selflessness of person, the lack of the person being empty of being self-sufficient and substantially existent.

### **Fourth Aspect: Lacking natural existence**

The fourth aspect refers to the person lacking natural existence. This is according to the Prasangika point of view.

### **Relationship between the Four Aspects**

When we meditate on those four aspects of the first noble truth, there is a certain evolution of ideas as one leads onto the next. **First** we realise that the aggregates are impermanent, then that leads to the **second** understanding that they are suffering. Why they are suffering? Because they are under the control of karma and delusions. Then that realisation acts as a building block for the **third** realisation, that there's a lack of self-empowered person, which is the coarse selflessness of person. That leads to the **fourth** realisation, which is the subtle selflessness of person - that a person lacks inherent or natural existence.

The realisation of those four aspects acts as an opponent to the four misconceptions regarding the first noble truth.

- ∞ The realisation of impermanence counteracts the grasping at permanence.
- ∞ The realisation of suffering counteracts the grasping at purity
- ∞ The realisation of empty counteracts the grasping at the self empowered person
- ∞ The realisation of selflessness counteracts the grasping at an inherently inherent person.

You can study those for yourself.

*Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson  
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23 July 2002

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Please generate a virtuous motivation as usual.

## 2.2.3.1. Showing that the *Sutra of the Ten Bhumis* Explains that Hearers and Solitary Realisers Realise Phenomena as Lacking Natural Existence (cont)

Last time we started with the outline explaining how the *Sutra of the Ten Bhumis* shows that hearers and self-liberators realise the lack of natural existence of phenomena. This is done in two sub-sections. Firstly, how Chandrakirti's *Self Commentary* shows this, which we covered last time. We went through the three faults that Chandrakirti said would occur if hearers and self-liberators didn't realise the selflessness of phenomena.

### 2.2.3.1.2. Showing this also to be according to the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara*

Today we come to the second sub-section, where the great bodhisattva Shantideva proves the same point.

#### The Point of Dispute

The point of this whole debate is to prove the Prasangika point of view that in order to attain liberation one needs to realise the selflessness of phenomena.

The point of dispute between the Prasangika tenets and all of the lower tenets is that the lower tenets assert that it is not necessary to realise the selflessness of phenomena in order to attain liberation. It can be done, they say, merely by realising the coarse selflessness of person.

However, the Prasangika make the point that in order to attain liberation one needs to also realise the selflessness of phenomena. That is the point of the dispute, and this is the point that Chandrakirti was proving.

The *Bodhisattva Charyavatara*<sup>1</sup> summarises the point of view of the lower tenets in two lines when it says:

*By seeing the truth one becomes liberated,  
what need is there to see emptiness?*

Basically what these lines are saying is that by seeing the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths one will be liberated from the afflictions. Therefore it is not necessary to see emptiness in order to exhaust the afflictions.

From *Illumination* to the above two lines:

*Since one can attain liberation from the afflictions  
merely through the path seeing the sixteen aspects of*

*the Four Noble Truths there is no need to see  
emptiness in order to exhaust the afflictions.*

Shantideva's next two lines reply, saying:

*According to the scriptures, without  
this path one cannot attain enlightenment.*<sup>2</sup>

In response to the point being made by the lower tenets - that it is possible to attain liberation just by meditating on the coarse sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths without realising selflessness of phenomena - Shantideva refers to the *prajna paramita* sutras and so forth. These state that without realising the lack of natural existence of phenomena it is not possible to attain any of the three types of enlightenment.

*Without the path that realises the lack of inherent  
existence then it is taught that neither of the three  
types of enlightenment can be attained. According to  
the great commentary of the Bodhisattva  
Charyavatara this is taught in the prajna  
paramita sutras, 'Those with recognition of  
phenomena will be without liberation. All the stream  
enterers up to the self-liberated arhats of the three  
times rely for their attainment on this perfection of  
wisdom alone.' It is as quoted here and as such  
doesn't refer just to the highest enlightenment. The  
four lines of 'If one is a bikkhu, the doctrines root,'  
etc. also show that liberation can't be attained by a  
path that has the object of true grasping.*

*'If Arhats didn't realise emptiness then it wouldn't  
be possible to posit those arhats as the root of the  
Buddhadharma.'*

This is making the same point again, showing that Hinayana practitioners, arhats, have to realise emptiness, and also that emptiness is taught in the Hinayana scriptures.

Arhats are referred to as the root of the Buddhadharma because firstly, the arhats at the first council such as Kashapya, Upali and Ananda assembled the teachings of the Buddha, and secondly, the sixteen arhats are responsible for the continuation of the Buddhadharma.

#### Coarse and Subtle Aspects of the Four Noble Truths

Here it is important to mention the difference between the coarse Four Noble Truths, and the subtle Four Noble Truths. This refers to the difference between the Four Noble Truths from the point of view of grasping at the self as being a self-supporting substantially existent, and the Four Noble Truths that arise from the view of the transitory collection grasping at inherent existence.

#### Coarse Four Noble Truths

Here the root is the view of the transitory collection grasping the person to be a self-sufficient substantially existent. From that, craving is generated because of which one then accumulates throwing karma, and then from that karma the contaminated suffering aggregates are established. The contaminated suffering aggregates are the first noble truth of **suffering** and the view of

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<sup>1</sup> *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Chapter 9, verse 41ab

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, Ch.9, v.41cd

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the transitory collection grasping a self to be a self-sufficient substantially existent, the craving arising from that and the accumulated karma are the second noble truth of **origin**.

The coarse truth of **cessation** is the adventitious abandonment of the manifest grasping at the person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent. This is just an adventitious abandonment that certain lower tenet practitioners sometimes attain. The coarse truth of cessation is arrived at by meditating on the coarse truth of the **path** which is the yogic direct perceiver realising the person to be empty of being a self-sufficient substantially existent.

Apart from impermanence which doesn't have the division into coarse and subtle the other fifteen aspects of the coarse Four Noble Truth have to be related to the view of the transitory collection grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantially existent.

### Subtle Four Noble Truths

Here the root is the view of the transitory collection grasping the person to be inherently existing. From this craving arises, through which one accumulates throwing karma, which then in turn generates the suffering aggregates. The view of the transitory collection grasping the person to be inherently existing, the corresponding craving and the karma accumulated through them are the subtle noble truth of **origin**. The suffering aggregates generated by them are the subtle noble truth of **suffering**. The subtle truth of **cessation** is the abandonment of true grasping. This results from meditating on the subtle truth of the **path**, which is the wisdom realising the lack of true existence.

Apart from impermanence which doesn't have the division into coarse and subtle, the other fifteen aspects of the subtle Four Noble Truth have to be related to the view of the transitory collection grasping at an inherently existing person.

So the four truths have a coarse level and a more subtle level. At the coarse level the truth of origin is the coarse view of the transitory collection grasping at the self as being a self-supporting substantially existent, and from that arises the coarse truth of suffering.

The subtle truth of origin is the view of the transitory collection grasping at the self as being an inherently existent, and also the craving arising from that, which establishes the subtle truth of suffering.

Because there are two different levels to the Four Noble Truths, it is said that by meditating on the coarse sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths one can temporarily abandon the manifest coarse delusions.

### The Four Aspects of the Truth of Suffering

The very first of the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths is impermanence. Here there is no difference in the level of subtlety, since impermanence refers to something that is momentary. So there's no coarse or subtle impermanence. The other three aspects have coarse and subtle. We explained last week how the interpretation of empty and selfless differs according to the coarse and subtle systems.

These difference will appear very vividly to our mind if we reflect on them. It's necessary to think about the difference between those two sets of the Four Noble Truths, and then it will appear very clearly to our mind.

### Why Meditating on the Coarse Aspects Alone Does Not Lead to Liberation

There are many quotations in *Illumination*, which all try to establish the point that, according to the lower tenets the root of cyclic existence is the grasping at the person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent. Through that grasping then one creates karma and from that the contaminated suffering aggregates are established. Since the root is grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantially existent, by investigating that ignorance then the meditator realises the lack, or the emptiness of the person as a self-sufficient substantially existent. They then meditate on that selflessness, which is coarse selflessness. By meditating on and realising the person's emptiness of being a self-sufficient substantially existent, the meditator can temporarily pacify or subdue manifest grasping at the person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent. There are certain Hinayana practitioners who then believe that, because they have temporarily subdued the manifest coarse self-grasping, they have actually attained liberation.

The significance of saying 'temporarily' is that they haven't even abandoned the manifest coarse afflictions, not to mention that they haven't abandoned the seeds of the coarse afflictions, because by meditating on the coarse sixteen aspects one can't even attain the abandonment of the manifest coarse afflictions. If that did happen no coarse affliction would arise in post-meditational period. All one can attain by meditating on the coarse sixteen aspects is a temporary abandonment of the coarse afflictions during the meditation session.

That is the whole point of this debate. What it is trying to establish is that in order to actually abandon even the grasping at a person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent, one needs to abandon the seed of that grasping. The seed of this coarse self-grasping can only be abandoned by realising the person's emptiness of inherent existence, by realising that the view of the transitory collection viewing the person as being inherently existent is a mistaken consciousness.

Did you understand all that? If so we can go on. What are the Four Noble Truths?

Students: Truth of suffering, truth of origin, truth of cessation and truth of the path

Of the noble truth of suffering and the noble truth of origin, which is the cause and which is the effect?

Student: The truth of origin is the cause, and the truth of suffering is the result

Then how is it with cessation and the path?

Student: The path leads to the cessation.

Since the truth of origin is the cause, why is the truth of

suffering taught first?

Student: Everyone can relate to suffering.

Maitreya explained the reason why they are taught in this sequence when he said that,

The sickness is to be known  
The cause is to be abandoned,  
The cure is to be attained,  
The medicine is to be relied upon.

First we have to know the sickness. The main thing is that one first has to know the problem. After that one comes to understand the cause of the problem. Then, by understanding the cause of suffering, one understands that one can free oneself from that suffering, and then one arrives at the third noble truth, the cessation of suffering and its cause.

So that which is to be understood, the truth of suffering, is taught first. The reason why they are taught in that sequence is because of the way the meditator has to understand them. The order reflects the way an understanding of the Four Noble Truths is generated within the practitioner's mind. So they are taught from the point of view of the way they are realised.

That's why it is said that

- ∞ The noble truth of suffering is that which is to be understood
- ∞ The noble truth of the cause is that which has to be abandoned
- ∞ The noble truth of cessation that which has to be attained, and
- ∞ The noble truth of the path is that which has to be meditated upon.

Have you understood the point that by meditating on the coarse aspects of the four noble truths one is not able to attain liberation? Do you understand that point? So what is the point?

[student answer unclear]

Why can't one abandon the afflictions from the root by meditating on coarse selflessness?

Student: Because they don't realise subtle selflessness like the lack of inherent existence.

The lower tenets assert that the grasping at the person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent is the root of the cyclic existence. Therefore, according to them, by realising the person's lack of being a self-sufficient substantially existent, one can cut through the root of cyclic existence and attain liberation.

According to the Prasangika system this is not possible. Understanding the lack of the person being a self-sufficient substantially existent doesn't harm the actual root of cyclic existence, because the actual root of cyclic existence is the view of the transitory collection that grasps at the self as being inherently existent. So realising a person's lack of being a self-sufficient substantially existent doesn't harm the ignorance grasping at the person as being inherently existent.

Therefore not only do meditators who meditate only on the person's lack of being a self-sufficient

substantially existent not abandon the afflictions together with the seed, but of course they also don't abandon the manifest afflictions.

The explanation of the coarse truth of cessation refers to the momentary or adventitious abandonment of the coarse afflictions. Here this doesn't say that it abandons the adventitious abandonment of the afflictions, but one cannot even say that they abandon the manifest afflictions. If they did so, then the manifest afflictions also wouldn't arise again.

Here one talks about the momentary or adventitious abandonment of the afflictions at the time of meditation. While in meditation the afflictions don't arise for the time being, but then when they arise from meditation those afflictions again become manifest. So therefore one can't say that they have abandoned even the manifest afflictions. They have only achieved a temporarily abandonment of the manifest coarse afflictions while in meditative equipoise.

In order to abandon the afflictions from the root one needs to acquaint one's mind with the person's lack of inherent existence. By familiarising the mind with the person's lack of inherent existence then one can harm the root of cyclic existence, which is the view of the transitory collection grasping at the inherently existent 'I'.

Even though practitioners of the lower tenets have this shortcoming from the side of view, from method side of the path there's no lack. They can generate bodhicitta, they can practise the various perfections, generate love, compassion, bodhicitta, and so on. They can enter the path of accumulation but they won't be able to proceed from the path of accumulation to the path of preparation. In order to induce the path of preparation one needs the realisation of emptiness. So you can see that why the realisation of emptiness is called the door or gateway to liberation. It is because it is essential to understand emptiness if one is to attain liberation. Even though we might not realise emptiness in this life, at least by reflecting on and contemplating emptiness we will place very good karmic imprints on our mind, so that we will be able to realise emptiness in a future life.

Later on in this text, particularly in the sixth chapter, the primary subject will be emptiness. Then you can understand the importance and significance of studying it.

## Review

### Outshining by Lineage and Awareness

The point where we began was that first ground bodhisattvas outshine hearers and self-liberators by lineage but not by the force of their awareness. What was the reason for that?

Student: Their lineage is a Mahayana lineage, which is superior. The force of awareness is less because they haven't realised emptiness.

Why do first ground bodhisattvas outshine hearers and self-liberators through their lineage and not through the force of their awareness?

[student answer unclear]

Who doesn't realise emptiness?

[student answer unclear]

First ground bodhisattvas outshine hearers and self-liberators by lineage because they have attained bodhicitta with pure superior intention. They have this bodhicitta with pure and superior intention because they have attained ultimate bodhicitta. So here the reason is not because they have ultimate bodhicitta, but because they have bodhicitta with pure and superior intention. However that bodhicitta of pure and superior intention comes about because they have ultimate bodhicitta.

They do not outshine hearers and self-liberators through the force of their awareness because hearers and self-liberators realise emptiness. If hearers and self-liberators did not realise emptiness then the three faults as outlined by Chandrakirti would occur.

If we are informed that first ground bodhisattvas don't outshine hearers and self-liberators through the force of their awareness but only by lineage then the next question automatically arises. At what stage do bodhisattvas outshine hearers and self-liberators through the force of their awareness? The answer is that this happens once a bodhisattva attains the seventh ground. So from the seventh ground onwards, called 'gone far' onwards, the bodhisattva will outshine hearers and self-liberators by both lineage and through the force of awareness.

### **Types of Compassion**

What are the three types of compassion?

Students: Compassion merely focussing on human beings, compassion focussing on dharmas, compassion focussing on non-focus.

What is the first compassion?

Student: Compassion merely focussing on sentient beings.

What is the second one?

Student: Compassion merely focussing on sentient beings.

The third one?

Student: Compassion focussing on non-focus.

Why is the first type of compassion called compassion merely focussing on sentient beings, what is the significance of merely focussing on sentient beings'?

Students: [Many answers suggested.]

It doesn't take away the realisation of impermanence or emptiness. What it does say is that this compassion focuses on sentient beings without those sentient beings being characterised or discerned as either impermanent or selfless.

Normally when we focus on other sentient beings then we don't discern them as being impermanent or lacking a self. However if we reflect on the impermanence or selflessness of other beings then we have discerned them as being either impermanent or

lacking a self. The other two types of compassion then focus on sentient beings after having then discerned them as such.

So the compassion focusing on phenomena dharmas needs to be directly held by the wisdom realising impermanence, and the compassion focussing on non-focus needs to be directly held by the wisdom realising selflessness.

What are the three dharmas explained at this particular point in the text?

Student: Mind of compassion, non-dual awareness and bodhicitta

What type of bodhicitta is it?

Student: Bodhicitta through the force of meditation.

We talk about the bodhicitta that comes with effort. So by meditating on the various stages of the bodhicitta meditation such as equanimity, recognising all beings as one's mother, love, wanting to repay kindness, superior intention, great compassion then bodhicitta will naturally arise within one's mind. However that's still the generation of bodhicitta with effort, which is what one is talking about here.

There is also innate bodhicitta, where one has meditated on bodhicitta so much that it becomes a natural part of one's mind.

### **The Five Paths**

What are the five paths?

Students; Path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, path of meditation, path of no-more-learning.

When does one attain the path of accumulation?

Student: When they generate bodhicitta.

When does one attain the path of preparation?

Student: When one realises calm abiding.

Then when do we attain the path of seeing?

[student answer unclear]

When you attain the path of seeing which of the ten grounds do you attain?

[student answer unclear]

### **The Grounds and the Perfections**

When you attain the first ground then what title do you attain?

[student answer unclear]

What is the name of the first ground?

Students: Extremely Joyful/very joyful.

Why is the first ground called extremely joyful?

Students give various answers.

Please posit the ten grounds together, very loudly and in unison.

Students; Extremely joyful, the stainless, the luminous, the radiant, difficult training, ...

The bodhisattva on the first ground becomes proficient

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in the practice of which one of the ten perfections?

Students: Generosity.

What are the ten perfections?

Students: Generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, meditation, wisdom, method, power, prayer, transcendental wisdom.

When we talk about the various perfections such as the perfection of generosity, the perfection of morality and so forth, we talk about the generous attitude having been perfected, the mental attitude of giving having been perfected. It is the difference between going somewhere and having arrived there.

Even though at the learner's stage one hasn't achieved the perfection of generosity of a buddha, one still says that the perfection of generosity exists at the learner's stage from the point of view of being the causal perfection of generosity. At the learner's stage one trains to achieve the resultant perfection of generosity. So the perfection of generosity exists at the learner's stage but it is the causal perfection of generosity rather than the resultant perfection of generosity.

In general to become a perfection it needs to be held by bodhicitta, dedication, and the wisdom realising emptiness. For example it is said that the realisation of emptiness that is being held by bodhicitta and dedication becomes the perfection of wisdom. So if one meditates on the wisdom realising emptiness out of the motivation of bodhicitta then that wisdom realising emptiness becomes the perfection of wisdom. A training that is held by bodhicitta, dedication, and the wisdom realising emptiness becomes a perfection.

### Correction from last week

Please substitute this corrected version of the translation of *Illumination* under the heading, 'The Prasangika Response', at the foot of page 3.

*Illumination* says:

*If it is said that it is possible to abandon all afflictions by meditating on the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, here this is to be said,*

*We don't say that it isn't possible without understanding emptiness to understand the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth with valid cognition and then for the disciples to meditate on them with great effort, and then after having meditated on them to see directly coarse selflessness of person and then to continue to meditate on what has been seen.*

*What then is our point? Since this path isn't a path that realises selflessness of person completely we don't posit it as path of seeing or path of meditation having gone beyond transitory existence. Since it therefore can't abandon the abandonments through seeing nor the abandonments through meditation it is an interpretive system to posit this path as path of seeing or meditation, to say it can abandon the abandonments of seeing and meditation and that one*

*can attain arhatship through it.*

*For example, it is established that partless particles, an outer existence that is an accumulation of those partless particles and a mind that is of different nature with this accumulation of partless particles are negated by valid cognition. If the disciples then meditate on that for a long time they can see it directly and then meditate on what they have seen, but it is interpretive to say they can attain the ten grounds and progress along the later three paths depending on that realisation.*

*Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson*

*Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett*

*Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དབྱིངས་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བརྟུགས་མོ།

30 July 2002

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As usual first generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta thinking, 'I have to place all sentient beings into the stainless state of liberation, and for that purpose I have to attain complete enlightenment'.

## Why Hearers and Self Liberators Need to Realise Phenomena as Lacking Natural Existence

### 2.2.3.1.2. Showing this also to be according to the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara* (contd.)

#### Completely Abandoning the Afflictions

Last time we said that those paths with the apprehended object of true grasping cannot lead to liberation, as they cannot exhaust the afflictions. Why? It is because we can find manifest craving in the continuum of practitioners who have meditated on such a path. Therefore practitioners who follow the two *Knowledges*<sup>1</sup> alone cannot attain liberation. Why? It is because their meditation will not be free from the object of true grasping.

So the point is made quite clearly: without realising emptiness one will not be able to abandon craving. As it also says in the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara*<sup>2</sup>,

*The mind that is separated from emptiness  
That stopped is generated again, similarly to  
the meditative absorption without recognition.*

What this shows is that if one wants to practise a path that leads to liberation and omniscience, then one needs to rely on the path that realises the absence of inherent existence of the person, in addition to the aggregates.

What would happen if one didn't realise this emptiness? As the second line of the verse just quoted says, even though they have been abandoned the afflictions arise again. For example, by meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths as mentioned in the two *Knowledges*<sup>3</sup>, although one will be able to temporarily abandon the manifest coarse delusions, they will arise again later.

Practitioners who meditate on absorption without recognition have abandoned the five types of sense recognition and also coarse mental recognition, and abide on subtle mental recognition. However those various types of coarse recognition are just temporarily subdued because they have not actually been abandoned. Later when the practitioner arises out of their trance, then those various recognitions will arise again. Similarly by

meditating on those sixteen aspects as explained in the two texts by Asanga and Vasubandhu, although one can temporarily abandon grasping at the person as being self-supporting substantially existent, later on those delusions will arise again.

The point being made here is that Hinayana practitioners need to realise subtle emptiness in order to abandon the afflictions and attain liberation.

## The Importance of the Realising the Selflessness of Phenomena

Previously the point was made in *Illumination* that without realising the selflessness of phenomena then one cannot realise the selflessness of person. Here the subject is hearer and self-liberated arhats. Hearer arhats and self-liberated arhats cannot realise the selflessness of person without the realising selflessness of phenomena. If the subject hearer arhats and self-liberated arhats don't realise the selflessness of phenomena, they will not accept the selflessness of the five aggregates, and then they won't be able to completely realise the selflessness of person.

It is said that a person's lack of inherent existence is the selflessness of person, and therefore the aggregates' lack of inherent existence is the selflessness of phenomena. Therefore the grasping at the aggregates as being inherently existent is the self-grasping at phenomena, and the grasping at the person as being inherently existent is the self-grasping at a person. Why? It is because the reasoning is the same.

There are some slight differences in the way the selflessness of person and the selflessness of aggregates is posited according to the different tenets. However regardless of what they posit as the selflessness of person, all tenets will say that in order to attain liberation one needs to realise the selflessness of person. So there's no positing the grasping at the self of person as anything else apart from an obscuration to liberation.

## Obscurations to Liberation

What is established here is that the grasping at the self of phenomena belongs to the category of obscurations to liberation. All the schools will agree that the grasping at the self of person is an obscuration to liberation. What needs to be proved is that the self-grasping at phenomena is also an obscuration to liberation.

This is done by saying that first of all the self-grasping at the person is the grasping at the person as being inherently existing or naturally existing. Since the selflessness of phenomena is also the phenomena's or aggregates' lack of inherent existence, then the grasping at the aggregates as being inherently existent is the self-grasping at phenomena.

Since both the self-grasping at phenomena and the self-grasping at person are concepts grasping at inherent existence, therefore they both have to be obscurations to liberation. Did you get that? Was it clear that the grasping at the self of phenomena is an obscuration to liberation? *[students reply yes]*

So this establishes the uncommon tenet of the Prasangika that the self-grasping at phenomena belongs to the obscurations to liberation. All the lower Mahayana tenets say that the self-grasping at phenomena belongs to the obscurations to omniscience, while the Hinayana tenets don't even talk about the obscurations to omniscience. Those lower Mahayana tenets will usually posit the self-

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<sup>1</sup> *Treasury of Knowledge* by Vasubandhu and the *Compendium of Knowledge* by Asanga

<sup>2</sup> *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Ch 9, verse 48. The numbering of the verse in *Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism* is different from that in the Batchelor, Padmakara and Wallace translations, which is used here.

<sup>3</sup> See page 5

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grasping at phenomena as being an obscuration to omniscience. The Prasangika say that the self-grasping at phenomena doesn't belong to the obscurations to omniscience, but that it is an obscuration to liberation. Their reasoning has just been stated.

### 2.2.3.2. Sources Proving That Hearers and Self-Liberators Need to Realise Emptiness in Order to Attain Liberation

Now we move to the various scriptural sources showing that arhats need to realise emptiness in order to attain liberation. These include the Mahayana sutras and commentaries, and also Hinayana sutras. For example if the Hinayanist accepts them, Mahayana sutras can be posited as a reasoning to a Hinayanist.

All tenets accept that an arya being realises the selflessness of a person directly. However it is not commonly accepted that an arya being realises firstly, the selflessness of phenomena directly and secondly, that the selflessness of person is actually the person's lack of inherent existence. That is the special Prasangika tenet.

#### 2.2.3.2.1. Mahayana Sutras

We first start with the Mahayana sutras. Here there is the sutra called *Questions of Adhyashaya*.

*Here a question is asked by the Buddha. There is a monk who, upon seeing a illusory woman that has been created by a magician, feels strong desire. Having recognised that his mind has been overcome by desire he becomes very ashamed, gets up, goes to another place and then meditates on the impurity, impermanent, suffering, empty and selfless aspects of the woman. Then the Buddha asks the bodhisattva, 'Son of good lineage is that a proper way of practising or is it not?'*

*The bodhisattva replies, 'A person who meditates on the impurity of a non-existent woman by meditating on the impermanent, suffering, empty, and selfless aspects is training in the wrong way.'*

*Then the Buddha replies, 'O son of good family, regardless of whether it's a monk, a nun, a male or a female lay person, by meditating on that which has neither been generated nor has arisen, as being impure, impermanent, suffering, empty, and selfless, I'm not saying that such a stupid person is meditating correctly, in fact I'm saying that they are meditating incorrectly.'*

This quote establishes the need for the realisation of emptiness in order to attain liberation from the afflictions. The Buddha gives this example of a practitioner who after having seen an illusory woman meditates upon her impurity, impermanence, empty and selfless nature, and then says that if a practitioner meditates in such a way he won't be able to overcome attachment. Why? It is because that meditation is actually a wrong consciousness. The mind thinking that an illusory woman has all those features of impurity, impermanence and so on, is a wrong mind, and therefore is not able to act as the antidote to attachment. Why? It is because it is based on the premise that something that isn't a woman is a woman.

Likewise if one meditates on the impermanence, impurity, selflessness and empty nature of truly existing aggregates, then one will not be able to overcome the afflictions. Why? It is because one views that which lacks true existence as being truly existent, and then meditates on the sixteen

aspects of something that is actually non-existent. One will not be able to abandon the afflictions if one holds the non-truly existent aggregates to be truly existing, and then meditates on the impure, impermanent, suffering, empty, and selfless features of the truly existing aggregates, because that meditation will actually be a wrong consciousness.

It is accepted by the Prasangika system that it is possible to realise the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths according to the lower tenets, and then to abandon the manifest coarse delusions temporarily through that meditation. There are followers of the lower tenets who in general might accept true existence, and who also in general accept inherent existence, but who don't necessarily qualify the aggregates as being inherently existent, or as being truly existent.

If a practitioner who, although accepting true existence and inherent existence in general, doesn't qualify or discern the aggregates as being inherently existent or truly existent, and then meditates on the sixteen aspects of the aggregates, then that meditation is a valid meditation, and it can become a path.

So there's a difference between the wrong path of meditating on the sixteen aspects of the aggregates after having qualified them as being truly existent, and meditating on the sixteen aspects of the five aggregates without holding the aggregates as being inherently existent, even though generally accepting inherent existence. That second meditation is a valid meditation.

Next *Illumination* gives a quote from another Mahayana sutra called, *The Miserliness Of Superior Meditative Absorption*. Without quoting it in detail, what it basically says is the same point - that in order to attain liberation one needs to realise the empty nature of the Four Noble Truths.

Having dealt with that very briefly then we go onto the next quote, which is from the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*.

The *Diamond Cutter Sutra* first of all says,

*Subhuti, what should one make of this? Does a stream enterer think, 'I have attained the fruit of a stream enterer'? Subhuti: 'Oh Buddha, it isn't like that. If it is asked for what reason, Ven Buddha, it is for the reason that they haven't entered anything. Then they are called stream enterer.'*

*Oh Buddha, in case a stream enterer would think, 'I have attained the fruit of a stream enterer', then they would be grasping at that self. They would be grasping at sentient beings, at life, at a person.'*

Subhuti says, 'No, stream enterers wouldn't think like that'. Why wouldn't they think like that? It is because they have abandoned the three fetters that are the abandonments of seeing. So they have abandoned the intellectually acquired true-grasping, and since they have abandoned the intellectually acquired true-grasping they would neither view themselves nor their attainment as being truly existent. So therefore they wouldn't say, 'I, the truly existent stream enterer, have attained the truly existent result of a stream enterer'.

Subhuti says, 'Buddha, the stream enterer doesn't think, "the truly existent person has attained the result of a stream enterer". Why not? It is because if they thought like that, then what would follow is that they would have the intellectually acquired true grasping - self-grasping at

the person. They would also grasp at inherently existent, truly existent sentient beings, they would grasp at a truly existent life force, they would grasp at a truly existent person.

Then there comes a doubt. What does the non-grasping of the stream enterer, as in 'I have attained the result of a stream enterer on the basis of viewing the 'I' as truly existent', refer to? This comes about because that practitioner has refuted the object of true grasping. The previously mentioned non-grasping comes about through the force of having refuted the object of true grasping, and it doesn't mean that the practitioner doesn't have innate true grasping.

So there's a doubt as to what this quote from the sutra actually shows. It doesn't show that the stream enterer doesn't have innate true grasping. What it does show is that they have refuted the object of the true grasping. Through the force of having eliminated the object of the true grasping they don't think 'I the truly existent person have attained the result of a stream enterer'. What it does say is that that the practitioner still has the innate true grasping even though being free from the intellectually acquired true grasping.

Once someone has realised emptiness, they no longer have the intellectually acquired true grasping. However there are learner aryas at this stage who still have the innate true grasping.

That completes the outline of sources from Mahayana sutras.

#### 2.2.3.2.2. Commentaries and Hinayana Sutras

Now we come to the second outline in which commentaries and Hinayana sutras are given as sources.

The first quote given to prove that one has to realise the selflessness of phenomena in order to attain liberation is from the *Precious Garland* by Nagarjuna. This is a quote that I want everyone of you to have and to know. This quote is very important, because it is always applicable.

*As long as one has grasps at the aggregates;  
So long one definitely has grasping at 'I';  
If grasping at 'I' exists then karma also;  
From that then also birth;  
Their three paths are in mutual causation;  
Without beginning, end or middle;  
The wheel of cyclic existence turns;  
Like the wheel of a firebrand;  
Because it isn't obtained from self, other  
or both and nowhere in the three times;  
The grasping at 'I' ceases;  
And from that karma and birth.*

The first two lines say, 'As long as one grasps at the aggregates, so long one definitely has grasping at "I"'. The person it is talking about here is an arhat. For as long as hearer and self-liberated arhats grasp at truly existent aggregates they also definitely grasp at a truly existent self. Even an arhat will have that grasping, because it is said that if one asserts true existence, then one will not go beyond true grasping.

So even though it seems to say here that one has to realise the selflessness of the aggregates first, in order to realise the selflessness of person, that's not what it is actually saying. That is because the selflessness of person is realised first. Then, having realised the selflessness of

person, by focussing on the aggregates one realises the selflessness of phenomena. So what these two lines are saying is that if it is an arhat who asserts the aggregates to be truly existent then that arhat will not have realised the selflessness of person.

The lines 'If grasping at "I" exists then karma also, then birth etc.' are saying that for as long as one has that self-grasping then the creation of karma also exists. If one creates karma then one will take a further rebirth.

Regarding the intellectually acquired view of true grasping *Illumination* mentions Gyaltsab-Je's commentary on the *Ornament of Clear Realisation*, where it says that, if one investigates whether or not the basis and the path and the result are truly existent, and after that investigation one decides that they are truly existent, then that would mark the generation of the intellectually acquired true grasping, and such a person can't go beyond true grasping.

For as long as such a person accepts or asserts the aggregates to be truly existent, that person won't be able to eliminate the object of the self-grasping at person as being truly existent. A superficial reading of the first two lines might convey the meaning that one can't realise selflessness of person without realising selflessness of phenomena, but it isn't saying that at all.

The fifth line says, 'their three paths are in mutual causation'. The three paths being referred to are the two causal paths that are the afflictions and true grasping, and then karma, and the resultant path of suffering, the entire suffering of birth etc. Those three are referred to here as the three paths.

Then there is the line 'without beginning and or middle', meaning that one cannot say which one came first. It is impossible to say whether the afflictions, karma, or suffering came first, even though there is this sequential generation of the affliction being the root, and through that karma being accumulated, and then the combination of those two creating suffering. However if we look it from a broader point of view there's no definiteness about that sequence and there is no way of saying what actually came first. This is because afflictions are also generated from suffering, and from those afflictions one generates karma. So sometimes the afflictions are the cause and the suffering the result, but at other times the suffering is the cause, the afflictions the result. Then through those karma is created.

So there are various types of combinations possible. It is the same also with our afflictions. Even though there is this sequential generation of ignorance, desire, attachment, actually they are not always sequential. For example sometimes anger acts as the cause for ignorance. So it is very important to reflect upon how there's no beginning, middle, or end, but that it's a continuous cycle.

The last lines say, 'Because it isn't obtained from self, other, or both, and nowhere in the three times the grasping at "I" ceases, and from that karma and rebirth'. There is no generation from self, other or both anywhere in the three times. So by realising the lack of inherent existence of dependent arising then the grasping at 'I' ceases. Once the grasping at 'I' has ceased, then also the generation of karma has ceased, and therefore also birth has ceased. Because it isn't obtained from self, other, and so on, this one can relate to the non-generation of the four extremes, so it is not generated from inherently existent

self, inherently existent other, inherently existent both, and no inherently in the three times. By realising in such a way non-generation, then the grasping 'I' ceases, and through that also karma and birth are stopped.

So now you have understood that meaning of that quote from the *Precious Garland*. It will be printed out and you should keep it well.

Next time we can go onto the quotes from the Hinayana sutras and there is also a further quote from the Precious Garland.

Today we have covered three Mahayana sutra quotes as sources showing that arhats have to realise selflessness of phenomena. They were the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*, the *Sutra of the Miserliness of Superior Meditative Absorption*, and then the Lhabhi sampa dempa sutra *Questions of Adhyashaya*. We had also various quotes from the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara*, also from the *Sixty Reasons* by Nagarjuna and so forth.

We have now more or less completed the Middle Way Gone Far where it deals with this particular topic, showing by the three types of reasoning (which we discussed) as well as through various quotes (which we also went through) that arhats have to realise the selflessness of phenomena. There are a few remaining difficult points to cover, but we should finish the chapter quite quickly.

It's called the Madhyamika Gone Far because the root text reads, 'For those gone far also awareness becomes superior', and as the explanations given here evolve from that line, they are referred to as the Madhyamika Gone Far.

*Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett  
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## The Sixteen Aspects of the Four Noble Truths

### Truth of Suffering

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of suffering by grasping at purity, happiness, permanence and self. Understanding the four aspects of the truth of suffering, which are impermanence, suffering, empty and selfless, counteracts this.

Take the subject suffering of suffering - it is **impermanent** - because it is generated adventitiously; it is **suffering** - because it is powered by karma and afflictions; it is **empty** - because there is no separate controlling self; it is empty - because it **isn't** established in the nature of **a n independent self**.

### Truth of Origin

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of origin by grasping at sufferings to be without cause or to have a discordant cause. Regarding the latter there is the grasping at suffering being produced by only one cause, being produced by a creator the intention of whom preceded the result, and grasping at suffering to be changeable adventitiously but being essentially permanent. Understanding the four aspects of the truth of origin, which are cause, origin, intense generation and condition, counteracts this.

Take the subject contaminated karma and craving - it follows it is the aspect of **cause** - because it is the root of its resultant suffering; it is **origin** - because it generates its resultant suffering entirely again and again; it is **intense generation** - because it generates it strongly; it is the aspect of **condition** - because it is the concurrently acting condition of its resultant suffering.

### Truth of Cessation

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of cessation by grasping at liberation to be non-existent, by grasping at certain contaminated dharmas to be liberation, by grasping at certain sufferings to be supreme liberation, and by thinking that even though one can exhaust the sufferings one could reverse from that state.

Understanding the four aspects of the truth of cessation, which are cessation, peace, supremacy and definite emergence, counteracts those misconceptions.

Take the subject complete freedom from suffering achieved through the power of the antidote - it is the aspect of **cessation** - because it is the freedom having abandoned suffering; it is **peace** - because it is the freedom having abandoned the afflictions; it is **supreme** - because it is liberation with benefit and bliss; it is the aspect of having **definitely emerged** - because it is irreversible liberation.

### Truth of the Path

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of the path by thinking that a path to liberation is non-existent, thinking that meditation on selflessness isn't suitable to be the path, holding certain meditative absorptions alone to be the path to liberation and holding a path reversing suffering to be non-existent.

Understanding the four aspects of the noble truth of the path, which are path, suitable, accomplishment and definitely liberating, counteracts those misconceptions.

Take the subject wisdom directly realising selflessness - it is the aspect of **path** - because it is a path progressing towards liberation; it is the aspect of **suitable** - because it is the direct antidote against the afflictions; it is the aspect of **accomplishment** - because it is a transcendental wisdom directly realising mind's final nature; it is the aspect of **definitely liberating** - because it is the antidote irreversibly eliminating the afflictions.

Because I saw faults in the other two translations that have been sent around I wrote this for the use of the Tara Institute study group alone, based on Gyaltshab-Je.

Maybe you will find it useful.

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May all be auspicious.

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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga  
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པ་ལ།

6 August 2002

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Generate a bodhicitta motivation thinking that I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and for that purpose I am going to listen to this profound Mahayana Dharma, and will then put into practice what I have heard.

## Why Hearers and Self Liberators Need to Realise Phenomena as Lacking Natural Existence

### 2.2.3.2.2. Commentaries and Hinayana sutras (contd.)

The outline that we reached was the commentaries and Hinayana sutras used as sources for the necessity to realise the selflessness of person in order to attain nirvana.

Here it is important that you understand that the Hinayana sutras and the other quotes are given as sources in order to show the above-mentioned point. These scriptural quotes are not being used to establish emptiness through scriptural proof. Emptiness is not an extremely hidden phenomenon and therefore it is not established by relying on scriptural texts. It is necessary to know this important difference.

Aryas also can realise the selflessness of phenomena, because the Hinayana sutras explain the selflessness of phenomena. In order for Hinayana practitioners to be able to abandon the obscuration of the afflictions then it is taught in a sutra for hearers:

*Forms are like foam,  
Feelings are like water bubbles,  
Recognitions are like mirages,  
Compositional factors are like reeds,  
Consciousness is like an illusion,  
The friend of the sun told it thus.*

This establishes emptiness with the help of an example for each of the five aggregates. In relation to the first aggregate of **form** it says that 'forms are like foam'. Here it is talking about the foam that we can find in polluted water, for example in a swamp and so forth. The foam arises through the accumulation of impure water, it is very transient, and it arises through the continuity of the water. In the same way the form aggregate is an accumulation of impure substances, it is very transient, and it arises through the river of conceptual thoughts.

When we contemplate the example of form relating these three characteristics (that it is transient, that it is an accumulation of impure substances, and that it comes about through the continuity of the imputing conception) back to the our body, then we can understand that the aggregates lack inherent or natural existence.

The next line states that, 'feelings are like water bubbles'. Water bubbles are dependent on the basis of the water, there is the time when they are actually formed, and then they rise up to the surface of the water and then disintegrate. In the same way as the water bubbles have three characteristics, our **feelings** also have three characteristics. They are dependent upon the basis of the sense powers, they are generated in relation to the object, and they are generated through the contact with the object. When one reflects on how feelings are generated in dependence upon the sense power, the object and contact, then one can understand the non-inherent nature of feelings.

**Recognition** is like a mirage, which is an example for how something actually exists in a different way from the way that it appears to exist. A mirage appears as water even though there isn't actually any water there.

**Compositional factors** are like reeds<sup>1</sup>, which are hollow in the inside. There are two ways of explaining this example. When one actually looks for the essence of the reed there's really nothing to find there. It is the same with the banana tree. If one peels off layer after layer of its stem, there's nothing to be found on the inside. When we investigate this fourth aggregate of compositional factors then like the reed one will also not find the imputed meaning at the time of analysis. When we investigate and look for the imputed meaning at the time of analysis, then it cannot be found. So this example shows how the imputed meaning vanishes at the time of analysis.

As an example of something that is without essence, it is said that one can also use the banana tree and the reed as an example of cyclic existence.

In the fifth line **consciousness** is likened to an illusion, for example to an illusory woman who appears to exist even though there is actually no woman, or any other type of illusion that actually appears to be an object that it is not. In the same way a consciousness appears also to be something that it is not.

What has been established through all of these various quotes is that there is a pervasion that if it is a hearer or self-liberated arhat then they realise emptiness. It is accepted by the lower tenets such as the Svatantrika-Madhyamika that hearer and self-liberated arhats can realise emptiness, but according to them there's no necessity or pervasion that they do.

### 2.2.3.3. Eliminating Doubt

We now move to the third outline of the heading Why Hearers and Self-liberators Need to Realise Emptiness. Having given all of those quotations proving that the Hinayana scriptures show emptiness and that Hinayana practitioners need to realise emptiness, various doubts arise that need to be refuted. Here there are two sub-sections, eliminating doubts that were mentioned in Chandrakirti's *Self Commentary*, and eliminating doubts that come from other sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Here the Tibetan word is *chu-shing*, which seems to have to have two possible meanings. 1) A tree that dries out after having generated fruits once; 2) Reeds

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### 2.2.3.3.1. Eliminating Doubts Outlined in Chandrakirti's Self Commentary

*Illumination says: From the Self-Commentary: The school of someone who thinks, 'If the selflessness of phenomena is shown also in the hearer vehicle then it becomes senseless to teach the Mahayana', is contrary both to reason and scripture.*

Chandrakirti's *Self Commentary* mentions the doubt that was raised by Bhavaviveka, which is that if the hearer vehicle shows the selflessness of phenomena then it becomes pointless to teach the Mahayana. Thinking like that is contrary both to reason as well as to scripture.

Bhavaviveka says that it is unnecessary to teach the Mahayana if the Hinayana explains the selflessness of phenomena. His reason is that he has found fault with Buddhapalita who, in his commentary on the seventh chapter of the *Root Wisdom of Madhyamaka*, says that Hinayana sutras explain the selflessness of all phenomena, or show all phenomena to be selfless. Bhavaviveka says that if in the Hinayana sutras it shows the selflessness of phenomena then there's no need to teach the Mahayana. In his commentary, *Lamp of Wisdom*, he gives this very brief quote where it says, 'It becomes pointless to teach the Mahayana'.

Because this is not very clear, then the following question is asked of Bhavaviveka, 'When you say it becomes pointless to teach the Mahayana, do you mean it becomes pointless to teach the Mahayana in general, or do you mean it becomes pointless to teach the selflessness of phenomena in the Mahayana sutras?'

**If the first is the case**, then the consequence of your reasoning would be that the Mahayana teaches only the selflessness of phenomena and nothing else. Actually it is not like that, because the Mahayana teaches about the various bodhisattva grounds, it teaches about the bodhisattva practices of the six perfections such as generosity and so forth, it teaches about the great practices of prayer and dedication, it teaches about great compassion, the two accumulations, and the various powers and abilities of the bodhisattvas, and so on and so on.

*Nagarjuna's Precious Garland says:*

*Since the Hinayana vehicle  
Doesn't teach the aspiration, practice  
And dedications of a bodhisattva,  
How could one become a bodhisattva through  
those teachings?*

If you say there's no point to teaching the Mahayana at all as it teaches the selflessness of phenomena in the Hinayana sutras, then implicitly what you are saying is that that all the Mahayana sutras teach is the selflessness of phenomena, and nothing else.

However, actually there is a need to teach the Mahayana sutras because they also teach the various practices that we just mentioned, which are not taught in the uncommon Hinayana sutras.

I already mentioned to you previously that in the

sutras that are shared by the Mahayana and Hinayana we find teachings on the bodhisattva grounds, practices, and so on. However in the uncommon Hinayana sutras that are not shared with the Mahayana, one cannot find those explanations. So as Nagarjuna says here, 'Since in the uncommon Hinayana sutras, it doesn't teach the aspiration, practice and dedications of a bodhisattva, therefore there's a need to teach those in the Mahayana sutras'.

This refutes the first possibility if Bhavaviveka meant to say that there's no need to teach the Mahayana in general since it teaches the selflessness of phenomena in Hinayana sutras.

**If it is the second possibility**, that there's no need to teach the selflessness of phenomena in the Mahayana sutras, then there's also no pervasion to your reason, because the Hinayana scriptures only teach the selflessness of phenomena in a very condensed form. Whereas in the Mahayana sutras the selflessness of phenomena is explained very extensively.

There's a difference in the way the Hinayana scriptures and the Mahayana scriptures explain emptiness. In the Hinayana scriptures emptiness is only explained in a very condensed manner. In the Mahayana scriptures emptiness is explained via the door of limitless inference.

Here, as there's a difference in the way emptiness is explained, so too there's a difference the way the two types of practitioners, the Hinayana practitioner and the Mahayana practitioner, meditate on emptiness. The Hinayana practitioner will meditate on emptiness in a simplistic way, while a Mahayana practitioner meditates on emptiness via the door of limitless inference.

It is said that Hinayana practitioners don't fully meditate on the selflessness of phenomena. The reasoning for this view is that even though they meditate on the selflessness of phenomena, they don't do so fully because they don't meditate on the selflessness of phenomena in order to eliminate the obscurations to omniscience. Hinayana practitioners do fully meditate on the selflessness of a person. Why? It is because their practice is aimed primarily at abandoning the obscurations to liberation. In order to fully meditate on the selflessness of phenomena the practice has to be directed primarily at the elimination of the obscurations to omniscience. So because Hinayana practitioners don't meditate primarily to eliminate the obscurations to omniscience, it is said that they don't meditate fully on the selflessness of phenomena. Bodhisattvas fully meditate on the selflessness on phenomena because their primary aim is to overcome the obscurations to omniscience.

### 2.2.3.3.2 Eliminating Doubts Not Mentioned in the Self Commentary

This doubt is raised by Haribadra in relation to a quote from the *Ornament of Clear Realisation* where it says that in order to attain the state of a solitary realiser one abandons the conception of objects, but one doesn't need to abandon the conception of subjects.

The system of the *Ornament of Clear Realisation* posits the grasping at outer objects as coarse obscurations to omniscience, and the grasping at the true existence of subjects as the subtle obscurations to omniscience. It says that, in order to attain the state of a solitary realiser, or a self-liberated arhat, one needs to abandon the grasping at outer existing objects, but one doesn't need to abandon the grasping at truly existent subjects. Therefore Haribadra asserts that it is incorrect to say arhats need to abandon the self-grasping of phenomena. However that is another debate, which we won't go into here. The Prasangikas do accept outer existence.

We have now completed the qualities beautifying the bodhisattva's continuum, and the qualities outshining the continuum of others.

### 2.3 The Superiority of the Perfection

Now we come to the third major outline, the superiority of the perfection, which has four subdivisions: explaining the generosity of the first ground; explaining generosity of lesser practitioners on a lower base; explaining the generosity of bodhisattvas; and explaining the division of the perfection of generosity.

#### 2.3.1. Explaining the Generosity of the First Ground

Regarding this first subdivision, the root text says,

*At that time generosity alone first cause of  
Complete enlightenment becomes superior for  
them,  
Having devotion for even giving one's flesh  
Further becomes cause for inferring the  
unimaginable.*

This shows that of the ten perfections, the perfection of generosity is superior on the first ground.

With reference to 'at that time', what time is one talking about? It's talking about at the time of attaining the first ground. 'Become superior' refers to the bodhisattvas at the time of attaining the first ground. Here one can take the subject bodhisattvas at the time of attaining the first ground - the perfection of generosity alone becomes superior for them - because they are without the stains of insatiable greed that prevents the giving away of a body and wealth.

This perfection of generosity is the first cause of complete enlightenment. Here there comes a doubt. What does saying the perfection of generosity on the first ground becomes the first cause for complete enlightenment mean, because actually the first cause for complete enlightenment is the path of accumulation. Here it is from the point of view of being a perfection that has gone beyond.

Then one might ask why is the generosity of a bodhisattva on the first ground superior, and how do we know it is special? The next two lines of the root text say, 'having devotion for even giving one's flesh further becomes cause for inferring the unimaginable'.

How can one know that the first ground bodhisattva has very great qualities? One can infer those inner qualities by observing a first ground bodhisattva

practising generosity. Not only do first ground bodhisattvas practise material generosity, but with strong devotion they also practise the giving of their own flesh. So this practice of generosity of one's own body with strong devotion becomes the cause or proof for inferring the attainment of the inner qualities that otherwise are very difficult for us to imagine. It is like when we see smoke on a distant mountain pass and infer from the smoke that there is a fire, or when we see smoke over the horizon on the ocean. Even though we don't see the fire directly with our eyes, through the sign of smoke we can faultlessly infer that there has to be fire on the smoky mountain path, or somewhere over the horizon. In the same way, by seeing the practice of generosity of first ground bodhisattvas, then we can infer that they have very great inner qualities.

We cannot see the inner qualities of another person directly with our eye consciousness. We can see the form of the other person but we don't know their mind. It's very important to take this moral that one cannot know the qualities of another person. A bodhisattva of lesser realisation cannot realise or understand directly the realisations of a higher bodhisattva. We are not able to see the qualities of another person just by looking at them; it is impossible to say what qualities they have or don't have. So therefore saying, 'That person doesn't have any qualities because I cannot see them' is a faulty reasoning.

This is very important to keep in mind. It is an absolutely essential instruction that one has to practise pure appearance with regard to others. Our ordinary reasoning that, 'That person doesn't have any qualities, because I don't see them' doesn't apply, as we are not able to know the inner qualities of another person just by looking at them.

#### 2.3.2. Explaining Generosity of a Lower Base

The next section is explaining generosity of a lower base. Here there are two subdivisions, attaining samsaric happiness through generosity, and attaining the happiness of liberation through generosity.

##### 2.3.2.1. Attaining Samsaric Happiness Through Generosity

As the root text says,

*All beings strongly wish for happiness and  
Without wealth there isn't any happiness for  
humans either*

*Having realised that wealth arises from  
generosity*

*The Able One initially taught generosity*

*All beings strongly wish for happiness, and without  
having wealth, meaning without having food, drink,  
etc., there isn't any happiness for humans either.*

Having understood that, as well as knowing that that the wealth that is needed arises from generosity, and that generosity is a method easily practised, then the Able One initially taught his disciples generosity.

In case it is thought that in order to attain wealth by practising generosity the giver needs to practise correctly, then this isn't necessary. As it says in the next

verse,

*Whoever is working only for their own purpose  
Having a very rough mind and inferior  
compassion  
Even their desired wealth arises from generosity  
that  
Becomes the cause for completely pacifying  
suffering*

In order to attain wealth by practising generosity it is not necessary for the giver to practise correctly. That is because even the desired wealth arising from the generosity of one who is working solely for their own purpose, with a very rough mind and inferior compassion, becomes the cause for completely pacifying their sufferings.

With reference to, 'since it is a method easily practised', of all the six perfections generosity is easiest one to practise. The only thing that prevents one from practising generosity is greed. Practising morality is a little bit more difficult.

As we will see later, the text mentions that in general the practice of generosity is particularly taught for lay people, and the practice of morality is particularly taught for ordained people. The reason is that if ordained people had to practise generosity very extensively then they would have to engage in too many activities to attain the materials to give. Of course that doesn't mean that lay or ordained people aren't allowed to practise either generosity or morality.

That completes the outline attaining samsaric happiness through generosity.

### 2.3.2.2. Attaining the Happiness of Nirvana Through Generosity

The root text reads:

*At one time through the occasion of generosity  
Even they quickly achieve a meeting with Arya  
beings  
Then, having perfectly cut existences continuum  
Those possessing such cause start going to peace*

When it says, 'at one time through the occasion of generosity, even they', the 'even they' refers to the same person we mentioned above, which is a person working only for their own purpose, having a very rough mind, with inferior compassion. 'Even they' can quickly achieve a meeting with an arya being by practising generosity. So Chandrakirti says, generosity establishes the bliss of nirvana; even those of inferior character practising generosity quickly achieve a meeting with an arya being through the occasion of their generosity.

Through practising the Dharma taught to them by that superior being, they perfectly cut existence's continuum. Then having done so those who possess such a cause of meeting with an arya being start going towards peaceful nirvana.

#### Summary

- ∞ The first verse we discussed tonight explains that generosity on the first ground, the first cause of complete enlightenment, becomes superior. For

bodhisattvas, having the devotion to even give one's own flesh further becomes a cause for inferring the unimaginable experiences. This explains why the practice of generosity on the first ground is superior.

- ∞ The next verse, 'all beings strongly wish for happiness and without wealth there isn't any happiness for humans either' says that having realised that wealth arises from generosity, then everyone is initially taught generosity. This explains how the even lesser beings attain worldly happiness through the practice of generosity.
- ∞ Then the question was asked, in order to get that benefit from the practice of generosity, is it necessary to practise correctly? The answer was no. Even for the person working only for their own purpose, having a very rough mind and inferior compassion, their desired wealth arises from generosity, and that becomes the cause for completely pacifying their suffering.
- ∞ Attaining the happiness of nirvana explains that through generosity one meets with aryas, and are so able to cut existences continuum Those possessing such cause start going to peace.

We can do the next outline, explaining the generosity of bodhisattvas, next time.

#### Definitions of Generosity

Although the bodhisattva on the first ground excels in the practice of the perfection of generosity, this doesn't mean that the bodhisattva doesn't practise the other ten perfections. They practise the perfections of morality and so on, but on the first ground the bodhisattva excels in the practise of the perfection of generosity. The first ground bodhisattva excels in the practice of the perfection of generosity. Does that mean that they don't practise any of the other perfections? No, they still practise also all the other perfections, for example the perfection of morality. Does the bodhisattva on the first ground excel in the perfection of morality? No, the bodhisattva on the first ground doesn't excel in any of the other nine perfections; they excel only in the practice of the perfection of generosity.

The bodhisattva on the first ground is completely free from the stains of greed that prevent giving anything away freely. So a bodhisattva on the first ground can give away freely everything including his or her own body. They haven't also excelled in the practice of the perfection of morality, because they aren't completely free from the impurities of the stains of immorality.

What is the meaning of generosity?

Student: The mind of wishing to give.

The mind of giving, which is a generous attitude. Then what is the perfection of generosity?

Student: Giving up one's own purpose for the sake of others.

That's going in the right direction. For generosity to become a perfection of generosity it first of all needs to

---

be induced by the motivation of bodhicitta. Then it has to be followed by dedication of the merits for complete enlightenment. So if the practice of generosity is first of all based upon the motivation of bodhicitta, and then completed with the dedication of the merits for complete enlightenment then it is called a worldly perfection of generosity.

If one has realised emptiness and then meditates on the emptiness of the three circles at the time of actually practising generosity, then it becomes a perfection gone beyond.

So there are two possibilities. First of all the practice of generosity has to be based on the motivation of bodhicitta, and then if one has realised emptiness then one has to meditate on the lack of natural existence of the three circles of the practice of generosity, and then complete the practice with a dedication of the merits for complete enlightenment. In that case it would be the **perfection of generosity gone beyond**. If it is lacking the wisdom realising emptiness at the time of actually practising the generosity, then it will be a **worldly perfection of generosity**.

The wisdom realising emptiness is the path that has gone beyond worldly or transitory existence. It is no longer contained within transitory existence, that's why it is said to have 'gone beyond'.

It is very good to keep this principle in mind and then apply it also to our practice as much as we can. For example when we offer prostrations, first of all we should do it on the basis of a motivation of bodhicitta, first meditating on bodhicitta; then while doing the prostrations meditate on the emptiness of the object of prostration, the action of the prostration, and the person that is performing the prostration; and then having done the prostrations then one can complete it with the dedication of the merits for complete enlightenment.

Although our practice is not yet able to equal the practice of bodhisattvas, we should take the practice of bodhisattvas as an example for our own practice, and according to our ability practice like them. We all have an understanding of bodhicitta and know what it means, we also have an understanding of emptiness, in addition to an understanding of complete enlightenment, so therefore those three seeds are already present. All you need to do now is to further habituate your minds with those potentials, so as to increase them further and further, and then finally your practice will be the practice of a bodhisattva.

Nobody starts out with the first bodhisattva ground. All bodhisattvas start out as beginners and work their way up to the bodhisattva ground.

For example by using one's understanding of emptiness when one has created a non-virtuous karma to meditate on the emptiness of the non-virtuous karma, on its lack of inherent existence or natural existence, one will have already purified a great deal of that non-virtuous karma.

If one has created strong non-virtuous karma at one

moment, we have the methods purify it the moment afterwards. Then there are also the practices of combining the view with virtue and combining virtue with the view. Combining virtue with the view means that one meditates on the emptiness of the virtuous karma that has been created. Combining the view with virtue would be if out of the meditation of emptiness one then engages in a virtuous activity.

Next week there's discussion group.

Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett  
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

*Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett  
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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# DISCUSSION

BLOCK:	5
WEEK:	5
	13TH AUGUST

## **Week One**

1. Discuss the relationship between the 5 Paths, the 10 Perfections and the 10 Grounds.
2. Describe the special meditative ability that Bodhisattvas on the Seventh Ground possess.
3. What are the four aspects of the first noble truth? Discuss the logical statements that prove each one, and the misperceptions each aspect counteracts. For whom and when do these become 'truths'?

## **Week Two:**

4. Why are 'Arhats' referred to as the root of the Buddha's Teachings?
5. What mode of emptiness realization is required to reach the path of preparation?
6. Discuss the difference between an act which is a 'Perfection' (resultant) and a 'Perfectionizer' (causal). Give a real life example.

## **Week Three:**

7. Why did Arya Nargarjuna make a bodhisattva vow 'Holding that a person cannot eliminate desire and the rest by following the way of the Learner'? Discuss the debate about whether or not Hinayanists see emptiness directly?
8. Arya Nagarjuna said, "As long as one grasps at the aggregates, so long one definitely has grasping at 'I'. If grasping at 'I' exists then karma also, and then birth. The three paths are in mutual causation without beginning or middle. The wheel of cyclic existence turns, like the wheel of a firebrand. Because it is obtained from self, other, or both in nowhere in the three times, the grasping at 'I' ceases and from that karma and birth."

Why is this quote so vital? Discuss practical applications.

## **Week Four:**

9. "Without wealth, there is no happiness for humans." Is this literal or figurative? Discuss
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*Tara Institute Study Group 2002 - 'Entering the Middle Way'*

**EXAM**

NAME:

BLOCK: **4**  
WEEK: **6**  
ASSIGNED: **20TH AUGUST**

MARK:

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1. Identify three sources (author and title) from scripture that indicate that Hearers and Self-liberated budhas *can* and *do* realise emptiness directly. [3 marks]

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2. Some schools within Buddhist philosophy assert that the two Hinayana practitioners (Hearers and Self-liberators) can never see emptiness directly. Point out why this is not the case by giving three absurd consequences to this commonly held tenet. [6 marks]

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3. Outline the main difference between the subtle and coarse levels of the four noble truths. [2 marks]

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4. Are hinayana practitioners ever fooled into believing they have reached Nirvana? Explain. [3 marks]

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5. What are the Four Noble Truths? Why are they taught in that order? Quote Maitreya in your answer. [4 marks]

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6. Relate the point Lord Buddha was making from the 'non-existent woman' scenario. (from the '*Questions of Adhyashaya Sutra*') [4 marks]

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7. 'Now Subhuti, what do you think? Do those who have entered the stream ever think to themselves, "Now I have attained the goal of entering the stream"?' How did Subhuti answer the Conqueror? Describe what this quote from the Diamond-Cutter actually shows. [4 marks]

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8. *Since the Hinayana Sutras teach 'Selflessness of Phenomena',  
And as all Hearers and Self-Liberators realize this Selflessness directly,  
There is no need to teach the Mahayana.* Address Bhavaviveka's doubt. [4 Marks]

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9. What are the active ingredients for an act of 'perfection'? (Gone beyond) Describe a typical scenario. [3 Marks]

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**PRESENT THE FOLLOWING:**

**[18 Marks]**

<b>The Sixteen Aspects of the Four Truths:</b>
<b>1.</b>
<b>2.</b>
<b>3.</b>
<b>4.</b>
<b>5.</b>
<b>6.</b>
<b>7.</b>
<b>8.</b>
<b>9.</b>
<b>10.</b>
<b>11.</b>
<b>12.</b>
<b>13.</b>
<b>14.</b>
<b>15.</b>
<b>16.</b>

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<b>The Ten Perfections:</b>	<b>The Ten Bodhisattva Grounds:</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>1.</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>2.</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>3.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>4.</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>5.</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>6.</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>7.</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>8.</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>9.</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>10.</b>