

# Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

གྲུབ་མཐུན་རྣམ་གཞག་བཤམ་པ།

16 October 2001

I will teach for a short while, maybe forty minutes. Then we will do the Medicine Buddha puja.

Of the seven divisions of Prasangika we have completed the definition, the examples, the etymology and the objects. Now we are at the object-possessors.

## 8.5. Method of Asserting Object Possessors

### 8.5.1. Person

The mere 'I' labelled in dependence upon the five aggregates is posited as the example of the person. The person is pervaded by being a non-associated compounded phenomena.

The example of a person says 'mere I'. The word 'mere' eliminates an inherently existent 'I', an 'I' which exists from its own side, or a naturally existent 'I', as was posited by the lower tenets. It shows that here, in this tenet, the 'I' is merely labelled in dependence upon the aggregates.

The 'I', or the person, is pervaded by being a non-associated compounded phenomena, meaning the 'I', the person, is never form or matter, and the person is never mind.

The lower tenets posit a common base between a person and mind. Various lower tenets posit the continuity of mental consciousness or mental consciousness as an example of a person. They do not accept that if it is a person, it has to be a non-associated compounded phenomena.

Here if it is a person, there is a pervasion that it is a non-associated compounded phenomena. In general functional phenomena has this three-fold division into matter, which is basically form, awareness, and non-associated compounded phenomena.

Here it is good to know that when it says, 'the mere 'I' which is labelled in dependence upon the five aggregates' it refers to an example of a person, rather than giving a definition of a person. To give the definition of a person, it would have to say, 'on any of the five aggregates'.

Here at the time of the person, it says that the person is the mere 'I', which is labelled in dependence on the aggregates. There is a difference between the Prasangika Madhyamika and the Svatantrika Madhyamika with regards to being merely labelled by conception. The Svatantrika Madhyamika accept merely labelled by conception while the Prasangika say merely labelled there by conception.

### 8.5.2. Awareness

There is a two-fold division into valid cognisers and awarenesses which are non-valid cognisers. So here the definition of *awareness is a knower*. Knower, awareness and consciousness are synonymous.

#### 8.5.2.1. Valid Cogniser

Previously the definition for valid cogniser was a knower that is newly incontrovertible. Here the definition of *valid cogniser is an incontrovertible knower*.

Valid cogniser has a two-fold division into direct valid cogniser and inferential valid cogniser.

### Direct Valid Cogniser

The definition of a *direct valid cogniser is a knower which is not directly dependent upon a valid reason, and that is incontrovertible with regard to the object of knowledge, which becomes its apprehended object*. Direct valid cogniser has a three-fold division into sense direct valid cogniser, mental direct valid cogniser and yogic direct valid cogniser.

#### a. Sense Direct Valid Cogniser

The definition of sense direct valid cogniser is *a knower which is directly generated from the uncommon empowering condition of a physical sense power, and which is incontrovertible with regard to its apprehended object of knowledge, manifest phenomena*.

#### b. Mental Direct Valid Cogniser

The definition of a *mental direct valid cogniser is a knower which is directly generated from its uncommon empowering condition of a mental sense power, and which is incontrovertible with regard to its apprehended object*.

Here there is a special characteristic of the Prasangika tenet, which is that **mental direct valid cogniser has a two-fold division into conceptual direct valid cogniser, and non-conceptual mental direct valid cogniser**.

The feelings of happiness, suffering and equanimity that are concomitant with mental main consciousness in the continuum of a person, which has realised neither coarse nor subtle selflessness, are regarded as direct valid cognisers.

The conceptual thought concordant with reality apprehending blue, which was induced by a sense direct perception apprehending blue, is an example for a **conceptual mental direct valid cogniser**.

An example for a **non-conceptual mental direct valid cogniser** is the clairvoyance knowing the mind of others.

The lower tenets, from the Sautrantika tenet to the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet, all assert that the second moment of the sense direct perception apprehending form is a subsequent cogniser. They also assert that the conceptual thought apprehending form that was induced by the sense direct perception apprehending form is a subsequent cogniser.

So here there are some differences with regard to the points of view of the previous tenets. First of all, here the second moment of the sense direct perception apprehending form is also a valid cogniser. So the conceptual thought apprehending form that was induced by the sense direct perception apprehending form is also a valid cogniser. What kind of valid cogniser? It is a direct valid cogniser, because it is not generated directly from a reason.

The second moment of an inferential cogniser is also a valid cogniser. In the lower tenets it was a subsequent cogniser, but here it is a valid cogniser, and it is a direct valid cogniser. So the second moment of an inferential cogniser is a direct valid cogniser.

#### c. Yogic Direct Valid Cogniser

With regard to a yogic direct valid cogniser, the definition is *a knower that is a valid cogniser that is generated in dependence upon the uncommon empowering condition of the union of calm-abiding and special insight, and which realises directly any of subtle impermanence, coarse selflessness or subtle selflessness*.

The difference from the lower tenets is that here a yogic valid cogniser does not need to be in the continuum of an Arya being. Here a yogic direct valid cogniser can also exist

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in the continuum of what we call an ordinary being. This is a difference from the lower tenets.

According to the Prasangika point of view one talks about, Arhats according to the lower schools, who are ordinary beings, but who still have in their continuum yogic direct valid cognisers realising subtle impermanence or coarse selflessness. The empowering condition is the union of calm abiding and special insight.

I will explain this point further in the future. Maybe we can stop here and do the Medicine Buddha puja. The reason for doing this puja is because Geshe Lama Konchog has just passed away.

*Transcribed from tape by Kathi Melnic*

*Edit 1: Adair Bunnett*

*Edit 2: Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edit 3: Alan Molloy*

*Check and final edit: Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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23 October 2001

As usual, please try to establish the bodhicitta motivation.

## 8.5. Method of Asserting Object Possessors (cont)

Last week we started with the section on object possessors, and we said that an incontrovertible knower was the definition of valid cogniser.

This has a twofold division into direct valid cogniser and inferential valid cogniser.

Direct valid cogniser has a threefold division into sense direct valid cogniser, mental direct valid cogniser and yogic direct valid cogniser. Last time we stopped at the definition of yogic direct valid cogniser.

### Yogic Direct Valid Cogniser

The definition of a yogic direct valid cogniser was given on 16 October. It is quite similar to the definition posited in the lower tenets. It includes 'the uncommon empowering condition is the union of calm abiding and special insight'. This tenet and the lower tenets are the same in that both say that yogic direct valid cognisers realise any of the two, coarse and subtle selflessness.

The difference is that, according to the Prasangika point of view, a yogic direct valid cogniser doesn't have to be an unmistakable consciousness. That is because the Prasangika posit a yogic direct valid cogniser in the continuum of ordinary beings, and all awarenesses in the continuum of an ordinary being are mistaken awarenesses. So therefore there is a common base here between a mistaken awareness and direct yogic cogniser.

It is important to understand that those yogic valid cognisers in the continuum of an ordinary being do not directly realise subtle selflessness. What they do realise directly is subtle impermanence or coarse selflessness, and therefore they are direct cognisers. However because they are awarenesses in the continuum of an ordinary being, they don't realise subtle selflessness or emptiness directly. The yogic valid cogniser in the continuum of an ordinary being only realises subtle impermanence, and the emptiness of the person being a self-sufficient substantially existent.

They say that a yogic direct valid cogniser is a direct perception but is not what we call a direct perceptible<sup>1</sup>. The point is that the Tibetan words for direct perceptible and direct perception is the same, and that is how this subtle point comes about. A yogic direct cogniser is not a direct perceptible, because a direct perceptible and manifest phenomena are synonymous, and a yogic direct cogniser is not a manifest phenomenon - it is hidden phenomenon.

We said before that the difference between manifest phenomena and hidden phenomena is that if, when it is first realised, an ordinary being can realise the phenomenon through his experience without depending upon reason, then it is a manifest phenomenon. If an ordinary being, when first understanding an object, has to do so in dependence upon reason, then it is hidden phenomenon.

For example, a vase is a manifest phenomenon, but the emptiness of the vase is a hidden phenomenon. We can understand the vase just by looking at it. To understand the emptiness of the vase, we first have to depend upon valid reason. So the vase is what we call a manifest phenomenon, or a direct perceptible.

Furthermore there is no pervasion that if it is a subsequent cogniser then it cannot be a valid cogniser. The second moment of an inferential cogniser is a direct valid cogniser. The reason is that the second moment of inferential cogniser is not generated directly from a reason. If you ask, "Is it not dependent upon a reason?" then we say, "No, the second moment of inferential cogniser is generated in dependence upon a reason, but it is not generated directly from a reason."

### Inferential Cogniser

The definition of an inferential cogniser is a knower that is incontrovertible with regard to a object of comprehension being hidden with regards to it, and is generated directly from its base, a valid reason.

In the definition of inferential cogniser we have to say 'a knower which is incontrovertible with regards to a object of comprehension being hidden with regards to it'. Here we say that if a phenomenon becomes a hidden phenomenon with regard to a particular awareness, then there is no pervasion that it is necessarily a hidden phenomenon. For example, the fire on the smoky mountain path is generally not a hidden phenomenon, but it is a hidden phenomenon for the person who understands that a fire is on the smoky mountain path, in dependence upon the reason that there is smoke. To that person's mind the fire on the smoky mountain path becomes a hidden phenomenon. Generally, however, it is not a hidden phenomenon.

Inferential valid cogniser has a fourfold division:

1. Inferential cogniser through fact
2. Inferential cogniser through renown
3. Inferential cogniser through example
4. Inferential cogniser through belief

The **inferential cogniser through belief** is also called scriptural valid cogniser, because it is generated in relation to realising that a certain scripture or quote is incontrovertible with regard to its subject.

Here a new kind of inferential cogniser is introduced - the inferential cogniser which is generated from an example. This does not mean that this inferential cogniser is not generated in dependence upon reason. As we mentioned before, one part of the definition of an inferential cogniser is that it is generated directly from its base, which is a valid reason. This definition also applies to this valid cogniser - the inferential cogniser through example.

This valid cogniser of **inference through example** is one that we generate when we think for ourself about a certain topic, without having necessarily been given a consequence or a valid reason by another debater. Rather, we generate it by thinking of a valid reason by ourself, by use of examples. The valid inferential cogniser being generated from example is actually a valid cogniser of the first category, a valid inferential cogniser being generated through fact.

### Mistaken Awareness

The text says that if it is a valid cogniser, then there is no pervasion that it is unmistakable with regard to its determined object. For example, the inferential cogniser realising impermanent sound is a mistaken awareness with regard to impermanent sound.

<sup>1</sup> The Tibetan word for direct perception is also used for direct perceptible, and that is how this subtle point comes about.

The inferential cogniser realising impermanent sound is mistaken with regard to impermanent sound because, even though impermanent sound does not inherently exist, it appears to that inferential cogniser as inherently existent. Therefore we say that that this inferential cogniser is mistaken with regard to sound.

In this tenet all awarenesses in the continuum of ordinary beings will always be mistaken awarenesses. In fact, all awarenesses in the continuum of sentient beings, apart from the non-conceptual transcendental wisdom realising emptiness directly, will all be mistaken awarenesses. That is because they are all tainted by the karmic potential of true grasping.

### **Realising the Object of Comprehension**

Then the text goes on further to say, that "If it is consciousness there is a pervasion that it realises its object of comprehension".

This is an uncommon tenet of the Prasangika. If it is a consciousness there is a pervasion that it realises its object of comprehension. The meaning is that if it is consciousness it realises or it is incontrovertible with regard to its appearance. We don't say that if it is consciousness then it is incontrovertible with regard to its apprehended object, or with regard to its main object of comprehension. Here 'realising' means being incontrovertible. So all consciousnesses are incontrovertible with regard to the appearance of the object of comprehension, but they are not incontrovertible with regard to their main object of comprehension, or the apprehended object.

For example, the conceptual thought grasping at the horns of a rabbit will be incontrovertible with regard to its appearance. So the conceptual thought grasping at the horns of a rabbit is incontrovertible with regard to its object of comprehension, which is the appearance of the object. It is not incontrovertible with regard to its *main* object of comprehension, which is the apprehended object. The reason is that if the consciousness were not incontrovertible with regard to the appearance of the object, then it could not induce the ascertaining awareness that follows later.

As it says in the text, "The meaning generality of permanent sound is the object of comprehension of the grasping at permanent sound. The grasping at permanent sound is incontrovertible with regard to its object of comprehension, the appearing object that is the meaning generality of permanent sound. However is not incontrovertible with regard to the apprehended object that is permanent sound.

Did you digest all that? (*laughter*)

### **Subsequent Cognisers**

Is there a common base between a conceptual thought and a direct valid cogniser?

*The second moment of the mind apprehending blue.....*

That's not a conceptual thought. The second moment of the consciousness apprehending blue is a direct perception, isn't it? Also the second moment of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is still an eye consciousness, so it is still a direct perception and not conceptual thought. It is what we call a non-conceptual direct perception.

According to the lower tenets the second moment of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is no longer a valid cogniser - it is only a subsequent cogniser. According to the lower tenets there is no common base between a valid cogniser and a subsequent cogniser.

Here, in the Prasangika system, there is a common base between a subsequent cogniser and a valid cogniser. The

second moment of the eye consciousness apprehending blue is a subsequent cogniser, and is also a direct valid cogniser. So the first moment of an inferential cogniser is a valid cogniser, but is not a direct valid cogniser. It is an inferential valid cogniser. The second moment of an inferential cogniser is, however, a direct valid cogniser. The reason is that it is a valid cogniser, and it is a direct valid cogniser because it is not generated directly from a valid reason.

Whether or not something is a direct valid cogniser depends on whether or not that awareness is generated directly from a valid reason. If it is generated directly from a valid reason, then it is not a direct valid cogniser, but an inferential cogniser. Once it is no longer generated from a reason then it becomes a direct valid cogniser.

According to the lower tenets, a subsequent cogniser has a twofold division into direct and inferential. Here we don't have that twofold division. Here subsequent cognisers are always direct valid cognisers. We have conceptual valid cognisers and non-conceptual valid cognisers, but subsequent cognisers will always be direct valid cognisers.

Think about it for some time. Think about it as we explained it. Subsequent cognisers have a twofold division into conceptual subsequent cognisers and non-conceptual subsequent cognisers. Here in Prasangika system all subsequent cognisers have to be direct valid cognisers.

In their definition of a valid cogniser, the difference between the Prasangika and all the lower tenets stems from their different interpretation of the Sanskrit word '*ra*' that has the two meanings of *primary* and *valid*.

As we said before, according to the lower tenets a literal translation would be 'primary'. Whereas the literal translation according to the Prasangika, is 'valid'. The Sanskrit word for valid cogniser is *pramana*. The syllable '*ra*' has these two possible meanings. One meaning is 'primary', and the other meaning is 'valid'.

All the lower tenets have taken the first meaning. They take the *ra* in *prama* to be 'primary'. Therefore for them, what we call a valid cogniser is always a primary cogniser. Actually a more literal translation would be just 'primary cogniser'. The Prasangika system takes the second meaning. They say the *ra* means 'valid', so therefore the word *prama* is translated as valid cogniser. I have explained this many times before.

Now we can go to the sixth section, the positing of selflessness.

## **8.6. Method of Asserting Selflessness**

### **8.6.1. *The emptiness of the person being a self-supporting substantially existent is the coarse selflessness of a person.***

According to the lower tenets this selflessness was the subtle selflessness of a person but according to the Prasangika the emptiness of the person being a self-sufficient substantially existent is the coarse selflessness of person.

### **8.6.2. *The emptiness of true existence of the person is the subtle selflessness of the person.***

According to the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet the emptiness of true existence of the person was the subtle selflessness of phenomena, whereas according to the Prasangika, the emptiness of the person is subtle selflessness of the person.

### **8.6.3. *The emptiness of the coarse accumulation of partless particles and its valid cogniser being of different substance is the coarse selflessness of phenomena.***

According to the Mind Only point of view this is subtle

selflessness, but here it is the coarse selflessness of phenomena.

**8.6.4. *The emptiness of true existence of the basis of imputation, the aggregates, is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.***

As has been mentioned many times before, **the two selflessnesses of person and phenomena are categorised on the basis of emptiness.** So the two selflessnesses are categorised by way of the basis of emptiness, and not by way of the object of negation. The absence of the object of negation, true existence, on the basis of person is the subtle selflessness of the person. The absence or the negation of the object of negation, true existence, on the basis of the aggregates and so forth, is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

According to the lower tenets the two selflessness, the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena, are also different from the point of view of subtlety. There, the selflessness of phenomena is subtler than the selflessness of person. Here the two selflessness are not differentiated from the point of view of the object of negation. There is no difference in regard to subtlety between the two kinds of selflessness. The selflessness of phenomena and selflessness of person have the same subtlety, and there is no difference with regard to the object of negation, which we have to refute in order to realise those two kinds of selflessness.

To the Prasangika, **the selflessness of person and phenomena have no difference in terms of subtlety.** There is a difference, however, in terms of the difficulty with which they can be realised. Selflessness of person is realised more easily than selflessness of phenomena. In fact the Prasangika say that there is a sequence of realising selflessness of person first, followed by the selflessness of phenomena. They say this because the object of negation of phenomena refers to the truly existent aggregates, which are being engaged by the 'I'. So to realise that what is being engaged ('mine') is empty of true existence, we have to first realise that the engager ('I') is empty of true existence. To realise that 'mine' is empty we first have to realise that 'I' is empty.

**The two kinds of true grasping are differentiated in terms of their object,** not in terms of their mode of grasping or apprehension. Grasping at true existence, taking the person as the focal object is subtle grasping. So grasping at the basis of imputation, the person, as being truly existent, is subtle grasping at person. Taking the basis of imputation, the aggregates, as the focal object is subtle grasping at phenomena. So taking the basis of imputation, the aggregates, as being truly existent base is subtle grasping at phenomena.

#### **View of Transitory Collections**

It is important to know the difference between grasping at the self of person and the view of transitory collections. The view of the transitory collection is necessarily the grasping at the self of person. However grasping at a self of person is not necessarily the view of the transitory collection.

The view of transitory collection is **the grasping at truly existent 'I', after having focused on 'I' and 'mine' in ones own continuum.** Taking the 'I' and 'mine' as the focal object, and grasping at the 'I' is the view of transitory collection. The 'mine' is not the things that are mine. Grasping at mine is grasping at I. According to the lower tenets, the view of transitory collection is grasping at 'I' as a substantial self-existent, after focussing on 'I' and 'mine'. So the view of

transitory collection is based on focussing on the 'I' in one's own continuum. It is grasping at the self of person. Grasping at another person being truly existent is the grasping at self of person, but it is not the view of transitory collection. The view of transitory collection is having focussed on 'I' and 'mine' in one's own continuum, and grasping that the 'I' is truly existent.

#### **The Importance of Putting it into Practice**

This is important to contemplate, since the view of the transitory collection is the root of cyclic existence. By grasping at the 'I' and 'mine' as truly existent many mental sufferings arise. This is an important point to contemplate and consider. If we analyse how our problems and delusions arise, we will see they come from grasping at the 'I' as truly existent. To do this we need to investigate the way mental difficulties and delusions arise in the mind. So if we look for them externally we won't see them. If we look inside, however, then we can see that our problems arise from grasping at truly existent 'I and mine'.

To understand this we have to investigate the psychological generation of the various mental states in our own mind. If we look for the faults of our problems outside, then we will not understand how the root of cyclic existence is the grasping at the 'I' as being truly existent. For that we have to look within our own mind. If we are able to do that, then we will definitely be able to ascertain that the grasping at the 'I' as being truly existent is the root from which all the other delusions spring.

By investigating our own mind, we will find how the various delusions and the disturbing emotional states are generated from the grasping at the 'I' as being truly existent. At certain times in our life, there is a very strong grasping at the truly existent 'I' generated in the mental continuum. Then even though we might not have realised emptiness, it is important to try not to fall under the control of that self-grasping. If we do fall under its control, then strong attachment and anger are generated, which we would also find very difficult to bear.

So it is very important from the very beginning to try not to fall under the control of that self-grasping. If one doesn't practice like that now, while we have all the material conditions necessary for practice, together with a clear and sharp mind, then when will we ever do it? Now, when all the causes and conditions have come together, is the time to try to oppose true-grasping. Of course if you don't do it then that is something different, but now is the time.

The meditation evenings begin next month. I told Denis that you should meditate on calm abiding. That is because if you have attained calm abiding, then it is very easy to meditate on whatever you want, and the mind is very relaxed and happy. You can meditate on calm abiding using the teachings which I gave as part of the Lam Rim. You just have to look up the various methods, and go through what you have to abandon, and what you have to practise - the five abandonments, eight antidotes and so forth.

You have to look up what has to be done before the meditation, what has to be done during the meditation, what has to be done after the meditation and so forth. This is important to understand. There are many people who say they sit meditating for long hours, but they are actually not quite sure what has to be done during the meditation. It is important to be very clear about what the conducive conditions for meditation are, what helps meditation, and how meditation is actually practised and so forth.

Since Buddhism is quite new in Australia then in a way you

are the first batch of people who are learning how to meditate. It is very important for you to get it right, right from the beginning. If you don't do that, then later on the whole continuum will be deluded.

*I have a question about coarse selflessness of phenomena and partless particles. The definition of coarse selflessness of phenomena was said to be the same as the definition of the selflessness of phenomena in the Cittamatrīn view. How can this be when the Cittamatrīn don't assert partless particles?*

The Mind Only don't accept partless particles and coarse collection of partless particles. Neither does the Prasāngika school accept a coarse collection of partless particles. As I mentioned before the Prasāngika school accepts outer existence, but they don't accept coarse collection of partless particles. The school that accepts the coarse collection of partless particles is the Sautrāntika school. Because the Prasāngika don't accept a coarse collection of partless particles, they say that the coarse collection of partless particles and its valid cogniser are empty of being of different substance.

*The Cittamatrīn school doesn't assert partless particles and asserts that phenomena arise simultaneously with the mind as the ripening of karmic seeds. The Prasāngika definition relates to objects as collections of partless particles, which is different from the Cittamatrīn view. So do the Prasāngika have a different view of the way in which phenomena arise in the mind?*

No that is not correct. The Prasāngika don't accept that outer meaning and its valid cogniser are generated simultaneously from one karmic imprint. However they do assert outer existence. Outer existence is basically *that which is not contained within the continuum of the person*. They say that if you do not accept outer existence, then first of all that would be contrary to various quotes in scriptures, which say that outer existence exists. It would also be contrary to worldly convention, according to which, outer existence exists. However the meaning of outer existence is *that which is not contained within the continuity of the five aggregates*.

The Prasāngika don't accept that outer phenomena and the consciousness apprehending them are generated simultaneously from the one mental imprint. They say that the apprehended phenomena are, of course, dependent on the substance of consciousness. Both schools are the same, but the Mind Only School then says that one part of the substance of the consciousness can be found on the object, and one is the object-possessor.

The Prasāngika don't say this. Nor do they say that the object is independent of consciousness. What appears to the consciousness is dependent on the substance of consciousness, but they don't say there is a karmic imprint, part of which becomes the object, and part of which becomes consciousness. That is what the Mind Only school asserts.

With regard to non-compounded space, since non-compounded space doesn't have any substance, the Mind Only school says that you cannot talk about non-compounded space being of one substance with its valid cogniser. So then you talk about the appearance of non-compounded space being of one substance,

So what else do you have?

*Could you teach on the Diamond Cutter sutra? This is a request.*

I recite the Diamond Cutter sutra on a daily basis. It's all about emptiness.

It seems that Geshe Michael Roach teaches the *Diamond Cutter sutra* in relation to business ethics. I don't know about that, but maybe he mistakes the 'diamond' to be an

actual diamond; he is in the jewel business.

The *Diamond Cutter sutra* was taught in Srāvastī. There were 2500 bhikṣus. In the morning, the Buddha got up and went on his begging round. After he returned from the begging round, he washed his hands and face and then he sat down in meditation. Then all the monks did three circumambulations of the Buddha, and then three prostrations, and then sat down.

Then Subhūti got up and did three prostrations to the Buddha. There's a special way of putting on the *choga* for requesting the Buddha, so he put it over the shoulder in that way, then knelt down on his right knee, with the hands folded, and then made his request to the Buddha. There is much more after that. (*laughter*)

I have actually memorised most of the sutra. After that, then basically the whole sutra is about emptiness in the form of a dialogue between Subhūti and the Buddha. At the end it mentions how the four groups of disciples then rejoiced in the Buddha's teachings and so forth. The four groups of disciples are sometimes called the four entourages, they are the male and female ordained, and male and female lay disciples. At the end they meditated, expressing their joy in the Buddha's teachings, and said that they accepted exactly what the Buddha had said, in the way he taught it.

If, when we recite a sutra, the Buddha actually appears very clearly to our mind, then that can be also very beneficial. In connection with the *Diamond Cutter sutra* there is also a certain practice to reverse obstacles. Also, if you have the *Diamond Cutter sutra* on you, then you will not be harmed by weapons. For example, people will not be able to cut you with knives. There are also a few, not many, just a few commentaries on the *Diamond Cutter sutra* which I haven't read.

There's no need to be so fixated on the *Diamond Cutter sutra*. Everything about emptiness is there in the *Heart sutra*. Of course, if you have a particular empathy with that lineage then that is fine with me. If you go to take teachings from Geshe Michael Roach or from somebody else, that's also fine with me.

There are 60 pages in the *Diamond Cutter sutra* so we wouldn't finish it in one year. At the end, there is this quote where it says that compounded phenomena are like the stars, the candlelight, a flash of lightning and so forth. Even just to teach on that would take me many months.

The important point is one's own practice. By practising the Dharma one will be able to develop some potential within one's own mind. One won't develop potential in one's own mind just by listening to somebody saying something. As Dharmarakṣita mentioned at the end of *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, "even though there are many profound teachings found in the Tantric teachings of the Buddha, for me the most beneficial are the mind-transformation teachings".

It is important to recite the *Heart sutra* well. It is beneficial for everybody. It is called *Heart sutra* because it is the heart of wisdom. The *Heart Sutra* belongs to the heart or the essence of the wisdom sutras. The *Diamond Cutter sutra* falls into the category of the wisdom sutras. So the *Diamond Cutter sutra* is a Perfection of Wisdom sutra. In the same way as the essence or centre of the physical body is the physical heart, so the *Heart sutra* is the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. That's why it's called the *Heart sutra*.

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Please establish a virtuous motivation for listening to the teachings.

## 8.7. Principles of Grounds and Paths

We have reached the seventh point of the Prasangika tenets, which is the explanation concerning grounds and paths. Grounds and paths have a twofold division into objects of abandonment, and the actual explanation of grounds and paths.

### 8.7.1. Objects of Abandonment

#### 8.7.1.1. Obscurations to Liberation

The text says that 'the two, the Coarse and subtle self-graspings together with their seeds, and the delusions of attachment and so forth together with their seeds, which arise through the force of the self graspings and their seeds, are what is called afflictive obscurations.'

The meaning of 'afflictive obscurations' is those **obscurations that primarily obstruct the attainment of liberation.**

The text mentions 'Coarse and subtle self-graspings'.

- Subtle self-grasping refers to grasping at the person as being inherently existent, and grasping at phenomena as being inherently existent.
- Coarse self-grasping refers to the grasping at the person as being a self-sufficient substantially existent.

This is an important point that you should keep in mind: true grasping at the person and true grasping at phenomena are the two subtle self-graspings, and they are classified in the Prasangika system as afflicted obscurations.

The text says 'Coarse and subtle self-graspings together with their seeds'. So if you go through them individually,

- The potential to again create the grasping at the person as being inherently existent in the future, is the seed of the self-grasping at person.
- The potential to again create the grasping at phenomena as being inherently existent in the future, is the seed of the self-grasping at phenomena.
- The potential to again create the grasping at the person being a self-sufficient substantially existent in the future, is the seed of the coarse self-grasping at a person.

When the text says 'attachment and so forth which arise through the force of those', 'the force of those' refers to the various kinds of self-grasping, while 'attachment and so forth' refers to six types of root delusions such as anger, attachment, doubt, ignorance and so forth, as well as the twenty secondary delusions. So 'attachment and so forth' refers to the six root delusions and twenty secondary delusions, and also the seeds of those various delusions.

The seeds of those various delusions and the delusions themselves are classified as afflictive obscurations. This is an important point that should be clearly understood. First one has self-grasping, and then because of self-grasping one generates attachment towards oneself and aversion towards others. From that all the various other delusions arise.

When the text talks about the seed of attachment it is referring to the karmic latency that has the potential to generate attachment again in the future. The seed of anger is the karmic latency that has the potential to arouse anger again in the future. If one has abandoned manifest attachment, but then attachment arises again, that is the sign that the seeds of attachment in one's mental continuum have not been

abandoned. If one abandons the seeds of the delusions, then the delusions are not able to arise again.

The text continues with, 'Those various delusions [that we just described], and their seeds are obscurations that primarily obstruct the attainment of liberation'. The significance of saying 'primarily' is that of course those obscurations also obstruct the attainment of omniscience, but primarily they obstruct the attainment of liberation. It doesn't mean that they don't obstruct the attainment of omniscience, because they do. However they do not do so primarily.

#### 8.7.1.2. Obscurations to Omniscience

Then the text goes on to explain the obscurations to knowledge. Here it cites the karmic latencies of true grasping and the part that is mistaken with regard to the dualistic appearance arising through the force of those karmic latencies, as obscurations to knowledge.

Here, as the obscurations to knowledge, the text mentions the karmic latencies of true-grasping, and the part that is mistaken with regard to the dualistic appearance arising through the force of those karmic latencies. It explains the two types of obscurations to knowledge. There is one part that is referred to as the latent part and there is another part, which is referred to as the manifest part.

- Karmic latencies are the latent part.
- The mistaken part with regard to dualistic appearance is the manifest part of the obscurations to knowledge.

If we have abandoned true grasping and the seeds of true grasping, then our perceptions can still have a mistaken part with regards to dualistic appearance. This is what it is referring to when it says 'the part which is mistaken with regard to dualistic appearance'.

This mistaken part arises through the force of the karmic latencies of true grasping. As long as one has this mistaken part within one's perception one cannot realise all phenomena simultaneously, and thus is not able to attain omniscient mind. Therefore this mistaken part in our perception, which one can still have even after having abandoned true grasping and its seeds, is called obscuration to knowledge. That is because as long as one has this mistaken part within one's perception, one cannot talk about having attained omniscience. So therefore they are called obscurations to knowledge.

How does this mistaken part arise? The mistaken part within the perceptions arises from the karmic latencies of true grasping. Even after having abandoned the seeds of true-grasping and true-grasping itself, there are still karmic latencies in the mental continuum, and these cause the mistaken part within the perception.

So the obscurations that primarily obstruct the attainment of the all-knowing transcendental wisdom, or omniscience, are called obscurations to knowledge.

To repeat this, there are two types of obscurations - afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge.

- The coarse and subtle self-graspings together with their seeds, and the delusions such as attachment and so forth together with their seeds, which arose through the force of those self-graspings, are classified as afflictive obscurations.
- The karmic latencies of true grasping, and the mistaken part with regard to the dualistic appearance, which arises through the force of those karmic latencies, are classified as obscurations to knowledge.

This is very important to keep in mind.

We have now concluded the objects of abandonment.

### 8.7.2. Actual Explanation of Grounds and Paths

Now I am going to talk about how the ways those objects of abandonment are actually abandoned by the three vehicles, the Hearer, the Solitary Realiser and Mahayana. This is not

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mentioned in the tenet text itself, but I am going to explain it from the commentary on the Madhyamika. Even though, of course, this is going to be discussed again next year, it's good to go through it now.

### **Path of Accumulation**

We begin with the practitioner who abides from the beginning in the Hinayana lineage. From the point when he or she generates spontaneous renunciation, they enter the Hinayana path of accumulation. They are then called a Hinayana practitioner on the path of accumulation. The etymology of the meaning of why they called practitioners on the path of accumulation has been explained previously.

### **Path of Preparation**

Once the practitioner on the path of accumulation attains the unification of calm-abiding and special insight focusing on emptiness, they proceed from the path of accumulation to the path of preparation. One proceeds from one path to the next in meditative equipoise.

The practitioner at the time of accumulation meditates on calm abiding focused on emptiness by way of the unification of the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. While in this meditation the practitioner attains superior insight focused on emptiness, and then proceeds to the path of preparation. This happens in the meditative equipoise.

### **Path of Seeing**

The meditator has attained the unification of calm-abiding and special insight. Once this unification of calm-abiding and special insight becomes the meditative equipoise realising emptiness directly, then the practitioner has proceeded from the path of preparation to the path of seeing, in this case to the Hinayana path of seeing.

#### ***Uninterrupted Path of Seeing***

This first concentration realising emptiness directly is called the uninterrupted Hinayana path of seeing. It is the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, but it is not the direct antidote to innate afflictive obscurations. It has put a stop to the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, but it hasn't yet completely removed them from the mental continuum. So it has completely stopped them, and that is the meaning of being the direct antidote.

#### ***Liberated Path of Seeing***

Once the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations are eliminated from the mental continuum, the practitioner attains the liberated Hinayana path of seeing.

Attaining the truth of cessation, and attaining the liberated Hinayana path of seeing are simultaneous. Here you can see that first the uninterrupted path of seeing was attained, and at that time the truth of cessation had not yet been attained. The truth of cessation is attained with the liberated path of seeing.

Although this is not an actual cause-and-effect relationship, we still say that the truth of the path is the cause, and that the truth of cessation is the result. While not an actual result, the truth of cessation is still referred to as such. We can relate that understanding to the sequence of the different paths and how the truth of cessation is attained. First one attains the uninterrupted path of seeing, and only after having attained the uninterrupted path of seeing does one attain the truth of cessation.

The reason why the truth of cessation is referred to as the result of the truth of the path is because the truth of cessation is induced through the force of meditating on the truth of the path. Then having abandoned the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations on the path of seeing, the practitioner has to then abandon the innate afflictive obscurations on the path of meditation.

### ***The Nine Levels***

As you know, here we talk about the nine-fold division of the innate true-grasping. There are nine levels of obscurations, and also the nine paths that are their antidotes. Basically it is very easy. There are three coarse divisions into subtle or small true-grasping, medium true-grasping and great true-grasping. Each of those three divisions again has three subdivisions. So you have:

1. Great great true grasping; middling great true grasping, and small great true grasping.
2. Great middling true grasping, middling middling true-grasping and small middling true-grasping.
3. Great small true grasping, middling small true grasping and small small true grasping.

Having an understanding of those various levels of true grasping is very important. Even though one can have abandoned the more coarse true-grasping (that is, one can have abandoned great great true-grasping, or middling great true-grasping, or small great true-grasping), there are still more subtle levels of true grasping left in the mind to be purified and abandoned. We might say "I have eliminated anger from my mind, however, in fact we don't even yet know about small small true-grasping, as that is something we cannot even see yet. So it is very important to know that there are these various levels of true-grasping.

We have these nine types of true grasping, which can actually be categorised into three groups. In the same way we also have nine paths of meditation, which are similarly categorised into three groups. The way they oppose the various true-grasping is exactly opposite. So great great true grasping will be opposed by the small small path of meditation; middling great true grasping will be opposed by the middling small path of meditation. The nine true-grasping and meditation paths are exactly opposite to each other. It is said that the small paths act as the antidote to the great delusions.

It is very important to think about the significance of a small path acting as an antidote to a great delusion. At the beginning one is not able to oppose the delusions with the very great paths. Rather one starts out with small paths, which act as the antidote towards the greater delusions. The significance of this is very important to keep in mind, because sometimes we have the feeling "Oh, my mind is completely overwhelmed with so many great delusions". It seems like a huge effort is required to overcome those delusions, and so one feels incapable of generating those great paths. So it is important to keep this psychological significance in mind, and remember that in the beginning the antidote will always be the small path.

So the practitioner meditates on the small path of meditation and opposes through that concentration great great true grasping. Then, when the practitioner further develops in their practice, he or she generates the medium small path of meditation, which is slightly more effective and stronger than the preceding one. Then he or she can oppose a slightly subtler true grasping. In this way the practitioner proceeds along those nine paths of meditation, gradually abandoning the nine more subtle levels of innate true grasping.

### **Path of No-More-Learning**

All of this has been in the context of a Hinayana practitioner, so this is the Hinayana path of meditation. When the practitioner, having proceeded in such a manner along the path of meditation, has finally abandoned the afflicted obscurations, and has abandoned the small small innate true-grasping with the great great path of meditation, then they proceed to the Hinayana path of no-more-learning. They have become an Arhat.

If you look at those nine paths of meditation, in particular how one proceeds along those nine paths of meditation, then first one will attain the uninterrupted path of meditation. From that uninterrupted path of meditation one will proceed to the

liberated path of meditation. Both the uninterrupted path and the liberated path are states of meditative equipoise. Having attained the liberated path of meditation then the practitioner will arise from their meditative equipoise, and will attain what is called the post-meditational path or the post-meditational transcendental wisdom. This refers to the various paths that exist in the continuum of the practitioner while not in meditative equipoise.

Having arisen out of the meditative equipoise of the liberated path of seeing, the practitioner goes into the post-meditational state, similar to in-between sessions. During that time the practitioner accumulates merits. Then having accumulated merits, when the practitioner feels able to again oppose another level of delusion, they again enter into meditation.

There are three types of paths of meditation. There is:

- The path of meditation that is classified as transcendental wisdom of meditative equipoise
- The path of meditation that is classified as a post-meditational transcendental wisdom
- The path of meditation which is classified as being neither

First a practitioner attains the path of meditation that is meditative equipoise, which are the uninterrupted path and the liberated path.

Secondly the practitioner attains the path of meditation that is classified as being post-meditational, during which time, having arisen out of meditative equipoise they accumulate merits and wisdom.

Having accumulated merits and wisdom the practitioner again goes into meditation, but this meditational state is not classified as meditative equipoise. Rather it is classified as a path of meditation that is neither meditative equipoise nor post-meditational. This path of meditation becomes the next uninterrupted path of meditation.

So the meditation at the beginning is not meditative equipoise. Later it becomes meditative equipoise when it becomes an uninterrupted path. So that's completely clear? That's the way the Hinayana abandon the obscurations.

### **The Mahayana Practitioner's Progress on the Path**

In the case of the Mahayana practitioner who is abiding in the Mahayana lineage from the start, before entering any path trains in, and meditates on Bodhicitta.

Once that Bodhicitta becomes spontaneous Bodhicitta that practitioner enters the Mahayana path of accumulation, and becomes a bodhisattva. They are a bodhisattva on the **path of accumulation**.

When that practitioner attains the unification of calm-abiding and special insight on emptiness, then they progress from the path of accumulation to the **path of preparation**.

When that practitioner has proceeded along the four paths of preparation, heat and so forth and finally realised emptiness directly, then he has attained the Mahayana **path of seeing**. That Mahayana path of seeing acts as the antidote towards the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations. Abandoning the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, and attaining the liberated path of seeing occurs simultaneously.

After having attained the liberated path of seeing, which is simultaneous with abandoning the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, (also called the abandonments of the path of seeing), then the meditator again arises out of meditation in the post-meditational state. He or she attains the path of seeing, which is the post-meditational path of seeing during which the practitioner will engage in the unified two accumulations. After that again they will go into meditation. So this meditation after the post-meditational state, during which merits were accumulated, is referred to as the path of seeing that is neither meditational equipoise nor post-meditational.

### *Three Mahayana Paths of Seeing*

1) At first the uninterrupted path of seeing is attained, which acts as the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations. Then when the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations are abandoned, the liberated path of seeing is attained. Those two are called path of seeing that is transcendental wisdom of meditative equipoise.

2) The post-meditational path of seeing is attained, during which the bodhisattva, engages in the unified two accumulations in the post-meditational period. This is called the path of seeing that is the post-meditational transcendental wisdom.

3) Then the bodhisattva then goes into meditation, and this meditation is the path of seeing which is neither meditative equipoise nor post-meditational. During that path of seeing which is neither of the two, the practitioner progresses to the first uninterrupted path of meditation.

So when the practitioner attains the path of seeing, they are referred to as a bodhisattva on the path of seeing, and have attained the first of the ten bodhisattva grounds. To proceed from the path of seeing to the path of meditation, the nine levels of true grasping (which were explained before) have to be abandoned while on the path of meditation.

There is one further tiny subdivision of those nine levels of true grasping. The great Jetsun Chokyi Gyalsten divided great true-grasping into coarse and a subtle forms. There is a coarse great true grasping and a subtle great true grasping.

The very first innate true grasping that is going to be abandoned is the coarse great true grasping. That happens after having proceeded through the various stages of the paths of seeing as we have described. At the time of the post-meditational path of seeing, the bodhisattva engages in the two accumulations of merit and wisdom unified.

Then the bodhisattva understands that through having engaged in the two accumulations, they have attained the power to abandon the first level of innate true grasping, because until now no innate true grasping has been abandoned. When the bodhisattva understands that they have attained the power to overcome the first level of innate true grasping, which is the coarse great true grasping, they again go into meditation.

This meditation was classified as the path of seeing that is neither meditative equipoise nor post-meditational. That meditation is still the path of seeing. So when that transforms in meditation on emptiness into the first uninterrupted **path of meditation**, then the practitioner has proceeded from the path of seeing to the path of meditation. He or she has attained the direct antidote to coarse great innate true grasping; this is still on the first bodhisattva ground.

The attainment of the first bodhisattva ground is simultaneous with the attainment of the path of seeing. However the attainment of the first instance of the path of meditation still happens on the first bodhisattva ground. So the first instance of the path of meditation, the first uninterrupted path of meditation, is at the very end of the first bodhisattva ground. That happens when the bodhisattva attains the direct antidote to coarse great innate true grasping.

From the point of view of bodhisattva grounds, it is still the first bodhisattva ground. From the point of view of the path, it is the first of the three groups of paths of meditation.

When this first uninterrupted path of meditation attains the power to abandon its appropriate level of obscuration, then the bodhisattva attains the first liberated path of meditation. That is simultaneous with attaining the second bodhisattva ground. So the attainment of the second bodhisattva ground is simultaneous with attaining the first instance of the liberated path of meditation, which happens when the preceding

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uninterrupted path of meditation attains the power to abandon  
its level of obscuration.

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# Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

20 November 2001

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As usual please generate the motivation of bodhicitta.

## The Path of the Mahayana Practitioner

Last time we talked about the way the Bodhisattva who abides from the beginning within the Mahayana lineage progresses along the path and abandons the various levels of obscurations.

## The Path of Accumulation

We said that the practitioner who abides in the Mahayana lineage generates spontaneous bodhicitta, then enters the Mahayana path of accumulation, and becomes a Bodhisattva.

That Mahayana practitioner can be a practitioner of sharp faculty, or a practitioner of dull faculty. Of the two types of bodhicitta, ultimate bodhicitta and conventional bodhicitta, the practitioner of sharp faculty will generate ultimate bodhicitta first. That is, they will first realise emptiness and then generate conventional bodhicitta. The practitioner of dull faculty will first generate conventional bodhicitta. However, whatever kind of faculty the bodhisattva has, once they reach the greater path of accumulation, then they have definitely attained calm abiding focussing on emptiness.

While the bodhisattva is on the **medium path of accumulation**, there is still a possibility that he or she has not realised emptiness. However once the bodhisattva has reached the **greater path of accumulation** he/she definitely has attained calm abiding focussing on emptiness. When through the force of their meditation, that realisation becomes what is called the union of calm-abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness, or special insight focussing on emptiness the practitioner progresses from the path of accumulation to the path of preparation.

## Path of Preparation

Then deepening this realisation of the union of calm-abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness during the path of preparation the bodhisattva will go through the four paths of preparation.

## Uninterrupted Path of Seeing

### *First Bodhisattva Bhumi*

When the bodhisattva realises emptiness directly for the first time, then they have attained the Mahayana path of seeing and attained the first bodhisattva ground. That first instant of the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness directly is the uninterrupted path of seeing.

This uninterrupted path of seeing is the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired obscurations to liberation, and to the abandonments of the path of seeing.

## Liberated Path of Seeing

When the bodhisattva progresses from the uninterrupted path of seeing to the liberated path of seeing then they will have abandoned the intellectually acquired obscurations.

You will recall that there are three instances of the path of seeing: meditative equipoise, the path of seeing that is post-meditational wisdom, and the path of seeing that is neither.

The path of seeing that is meditative equipoise refers to

both the uninterrupted and the liberated path of seeing. The bodhisattva arises out of the liberated path of seeing, and goes into the post-meditational period, during which he or she accumulates the various merits. When the bodhisattva has accumulated merits for a certain time, then he or she will again go into meditation. This meditation is called the path of seeing that is neither meditative equipoise nor post-meditational wisdom.

## Uninterrupted Path of Meditation

When during this session the bodhisattva's meditation becomes the first instance of the path of meditation that is the first uninterrupted path of meditation. This happens at the very end of the first bodhisattva ground. The bodhisattva has now attained the direct antidote to coarse great great innate self-grasping.

Out of subtle and coarse great great self-grasping, the first uninterrupted path of meditation is the direct antidote to coarse great great self-grasping.

### *Second Bodhisattva Bhumi*

When the bodhisattva progresses from the uninterrupted path of meditation to the first liberated path of meditation, then they have progressed to the second bodhisattva bhumi and have abandoned coarse great great innate self-grasping. That is where we finished last week.

The first uninterrupted path of meditation is attained at the end of the first bodhisattva bhumi. If one distinguishes between coarse and subtle great great self-grasping, one can talk about the uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva bhumi, which is the direct antidote to coarse great great self-grasping. If one doesn't make this distinction, then one would just say it becomes the antidote to great great self-grasping. Either is acceptable.

When this uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva ground has induced its resultant liberated path of meditation, then the bodhisattva has progressed to the second bodhisattva bhumi, and he or she will have abandoned coarse great great innate self-grasping.

Then, the sequence is the same as before. The bodhisattva will arise out of meditative equipoise, and go into the post-meditational period where merit is accumulated. Then having accumulated merits the bodhisattva again goes into meditation, which is the path of meditation that is neither post-meditational nor equipoise.

When the bodhisattva attains the uninterrupted path of meditation of the second bodhisattva bhumi they have attained the direct antidote to subtle great great innate self-grasping. When he or she attains the **liberated path of meditation**, which was induced by the uninterrupted path of meditation of the second bodhisattva bhumi, then they have abandoned subtle great great innate self-grasping. That is simultaneous with the attainment of the liberated path of meditation of the third bodhisattva bhumi.

### *Third Bodhisattva Bhumi*

If we go through it again, the first uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva ground was at the end of the first bodhisattva ground. This uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva ground acted as the antidote to coarse great great innate self-grasping. Then the attainment of the liberated path of meditation, which was induced by that uninterrupted path of meditation, occurred simultaneously with the attainment the second bodhisattva bhumi.

The uninterrupted path of meditation at the end of the second bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote to

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subtle great great innate self-grasping. Then the bodhisattva progresses to the third bodhisattva bhumi. The system is the same as we explained before. The uninterrupted path of meditation at the end of the third bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote to the middling great innate self-grasping, (because the great great self grasping has already been overcome).

In summarised form, the uninterrupted path of meditation of the third bodhisattva bhumi acts as the antidote to middling great innate self-grasping.

#### ***Fourth Bodhisattva Bhumi***

The uninterrupted path of meditation of the fourth bodhisattva bhumi acts as the antidote to small great innate self-grasping.

#### ***Fifth Bodhisattva Bhumi***

The uninterrupted path of meditation on the fifth bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote to the great middling innate self-grasping

#### ***Sixth Bodhisattva Bhumi***

The uninterrupted path of meditation of the sixth bodhisattva bhumi acts as the antidote to middling middling innate self-grasping. That is the point that we have reached. The bodhisattva still needs to attain the antidote to the small middling and the three small innate self-graspings.

#### ***Seventh Bodhisattva Bhumi***

We said that the uninterrupted path of meditation of the sixth bodhisattva bhumi is the direct antidote to middling middling innate self-grasping.

The bodhisattva has abandoned the middling middling innate self-grasping when the first liberated path of meditation of the seventh bodhisattva bhumi, which is induced by that uninterrupted path, is attained. Thus the seventh bodhisattva bhumi is attained.

At the seventh bodhisattva bhumi there are two instances of uninterrupted paths.

- The uninterrupted path that acts as the direct antidote to small middling innate self-grasping
- The uninterrupted path that acts as the direct antidote to all three small innate self-graspings simultaneously

The way it happens is that first the bodhisattva progresses to the seventh bodhisattva bhumi, when he or she abandons middling middling innate self-grasping, and attains the first liberated path of meditation of the seventh bodhisattva bhumi. Then the bodhisattva again arises out of that meditative equipoise, engages in the accumulation of merit, and then again goes into meditation on emptiness. Then the first uninterrupted path of meditation on the seventh bodhisattva bhumi is attained, which is the direct antidote to small middling innate self-grasping.

The bodhisattva then attains the liberated path of meditation, which is induced by that uninterrupted path. The bodhisattva again arises out of meditation, again accumulates merits, again goes into meditation on emptiness and then attains the second uninterrupted path of meditation on the seventh bodhisattva bhumi, which simultaneously acts as the direct antidote to all three small innate self-graspings.

#### ***Eighth Bodhisattva Bhumi***

When the bodhisattva attains the liberated path of meditation, which is induced by that uninterrupted path, then they have progressed to the eighth bodhisattva bhumi,

and completely abandoned all obscurations to liberation. So when he or she attains the first liberated path of meditation of the eighth bodhisattva bhumi they have abandoned the obscurations to liberation.

Attaining the first instance of the liberated path of meditation of the eighth bodhisattva bhumi occurs simultaneously with abandoning the obscurations to liberation. Only from this point onwards will the bodhisattva begin to abandon the obscurations to omniscience.

This is a special feature of the Prasangika system - that the abandonment of the obscurations to omniscience doesn't start before the abandonment of the obscurations to liberation. Thus it doesn't start before the attainment of the eighth bodhisattva bhumi. In the Svatantrika Madhyamika it is different - one starts to abandon the obscurations to omniscience, even while one is still abandoning the obscurations to liberation.

By now, having attained the eighth bodhisattva ground, the bodhisattva has abandoned innate self-grasping. Some people may wonder if the bodhisattva has now become an arhat. They have not become an arhat, because in order to do so they would have to have attained the path of no-more-learning. This has not been achieved, so they are not an arhat.

The Prasangika do not posit intellectually acquired obscurations to omniscience. We only have this division into intellectually acquired and innate obscurations with regard to obscurations to liberation. Intellectually acquired true-grasping is the intellectually acquired obscuration to liberation, and innate true-grasping is the innate obscuration to liberation.

We do not have but this division with regard to the obscurations to omniscience. If it is an obscuration to omniscience there is a pervasion that it is never awareness. So obscurations to omniscience don't have common basis with awareness. The two types of obscurations to liberation have a common basis with awareness, but the obscurations to omniscience do not have that common basis.

When one has abandoned the obscurations to liberation then one has completely abandoned true-grasping, and one has completely abandoned the seeds of true-grasping.

Obscurations to omniscience have a two-fold division into the manifest obscurations to omniscience, and the part of the obscurations to omniscience that is the seed.

- 'The seed' refers to the karmic latencies which can produce the part that is mistaken with regard to dualistic appearance.
- The manifest obscurations to omniscience is that part which is mistaken with regard to dualistic appearance. There is actually quite a long definition, but this short one will suffice.

Obscurations to omniscience are again divided into three groups of small, middling and great. The great obscurations to omniscience again have two parts, a subtle and a coarse part.

The uninterrupted path of the eighth bodhisattva ground is the direct antidote to the coarse great obscurations to omniscience.

#### ***Ninth Bodhisattva Bhumi***

The uninterrupted path of the ninth bodhisattva ground is the antidote to the subtle great obscurations to omniscience.

The system of progress is the same as before. The

uninterrupted path of meditation of the eighth bodhisattva ground acts as the direct antidote to the coarse great obscurations to omniscience. Then when the liberated path of meditation at the beginning of the ninth bodhisattva bhumi is attained, the bodhisattva has abandoned the coarse great obscurations to omniscience. The uninterrupted path of the ninth bodhisattva bhumi is the direct antidote to the subtle great obscurations to omniscience.

### *Tenth Bodhisattva Bhumi*

The first liberated path of meditation of the tenth bodhisattva bhumi, which was induced by that uninterrupted path of the ninth bhumi, has abandoned the subtle great obscurations to omniscience. So the liberated path of the ninth bodhisattva bhumi has abandoned the coarse great obscurations to omniscience, and the first liberated path of the tenth bodhisattva bhumi has abandoned the subtle great obscurations to omniscience.

The uninterrupted path of the eighth and ninth bodhisattva grounds acted as the antidotes to the coarse and subtle great obscurations to omniscience. What we have left are the middling and small obscurations to omniscience. Those two levels are both abandoned on the tenth bodhisattva ground.

It is the same as at the time of the seventh bodhisattva ground - there are two stages of uninterrupted path within the one bodhisattva ground. After having attained the liberated path at the beginning of the tenth bodhisattva bhumi, the bodhisattva again arises out of meditation, accumulates merits, and then again goes into meditation and attains the first uninterrupted path of meditation of the tenth bodhisattva ground. This acts as the antidote to the middling obscurations to omniscience. Then the liberated path of meditation, which is induced by that uninterrupted path is attained, and the middling obscurations to omniscience are abandoned. Then, as before, the bodhisattva arises out of meditation, accumulates merits and again goes into meditation and attains the final uninterrupted path of bodhisattva practice.

This final uninterrupted path of meditation is the antidote to all obscurations - the antidote to everything. It is the direct antidote to the small obscurations to omniscience. It is also called the vajra-like concentration.

In the moment after that path has been attained then the bodhisattva has abandoned the obscurations to omniscience. They have attained the omniscient consciousness that can see all phenomena as clearly as one can see the medicinal nut *guyura* in the palm of one's hand. So we can see that having attained the final liberated path the bodhisattva becomes enlightened, and attains the omniscient mind that can see all phenomena as clearly as a *guyura* in the palm of one's hand. We have already talked about that example before.

Thinking about this progression along the path places very profound imprints on our mind. Just thinking about it, and imagining it in one's mind places very powerful imprints on one's mental continuum.

Then you have become enlightened!

This explanation is according to Jetsun Chokyi Gyalsten, which is actually in accordance with the explanation given by Lama Tsong Khapa in his *Illumination of the Thought*.

There is another explanation where there is no division into coarse and subtle obscurations. That is not necessarily a problem. There you have:

- The first uninterrupted path of meditation acting as the

direct antidote to great great innate self-grasping;

- The uninterrupted path of the sixth bodhisattva ground acting as the direct antidote to small middling innate self-grasping;
- The uninterrupted path of the eighth bodhisattva ground acting as the antidote to the great obscurations to omniscience.
- That concludes the explanation of how the bodhisattva abandons the various levels of obscurations and proceeds along the path.

Next week we will probably finish with the tenets. There is not much left, so we will probably finish in one session. In this round of teachings we have only three sessions on the tenets and then we finish. Then I will just start again with a little bit from the beginning. I don't know yet what we will do for the rest of the session.

Maybe on the fourth Tuesday I can teach you how to do the mudras during the Tara Puja, how to do the blessing of the offerings, how to perform the offerings and so forth. Since we are doing the Tara Puja I thought that would be a good idea. So everyone has to bring a vajra and bell.

When they do the mudras some people wave their hands around a lot, which is actually not allowed. It is a secret practice that you do it just in front of you - you are not allowed beyond the boundary of your knees. You should keep it secret and do it in your lap, even though some people do it a more upward.

While they do the mudras, some people look at others, and how they do their mudras. There was one person who realised that another person was looking at him. He touched his nose with the dorje, and then the other person thought that was how it was done, so he started to do the same thing.

It happened once that a tantric monk, who was performing a fire puja, [accidentally] threw his vajra into the fire [when it slipped out of his hand]. One of those looking on thought that, since he was a tantric monk, he would know how it should be done - that throwing the dorje into the fire was the correct way. He went back to his smaller monastery and said that's how it has to be done. Actually when you do the fire puja you bind your vajra to your hand; otherwise it becomes a little bit difficult.

What is the first of the five paths?

### *Path of Accumulation*

What do you have to do to acquire the great path of accumulation?

### *Acquire Bodhicitta*

When we talk about a bodhisattva who follows the Mind Only tenet, then that bodhisattva will most likely find only the small path of accumulation. Likewise for the bodhisattva who is a Svatantrika Madhyamika. What do you have to do in order to attain the great path of accumulation?

### *Attain the four states of samadhi.*

You have to attain calm abiding focussing on emptiness, so then when that realisation becomes the union of calm-abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness, then the bodhisattva progresses to the path of preparation. At that time the bodhisattva hasn't yet realised emptiness directly. That sequence is in relation to a bodhisattva who abides in the Mahayana lineage from the beginning.

What do you need to attain in order to progress from the path of preparation to the path of seeing?

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*inaudible*

When you attain the path of seeing first then what do you attain?

*Inaudible.*

Yes so how is that called?

*Uninterrupted path of .....*

At that time has the bodhisattva already attained the truth of cessation?

*No.*

Then what happens in the second moment?

*Inaudible*

After the uninterrupted path of seeing then you go to the liberated path. You also attain the truth of cessation. The type of cessation you attain is the cessation that has abandoned the obscurations to the path of seeing. You have attained that liberated path of seeing, and then the bodhisattva arises out of meditative equipoise into the post-meditational period. He or she then accumulates merits and again goes into meditation and then attains the final uninterrupted path at the end of the first bodhisattva bhumi. That final uninterrupted path at the end of the first bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote against which obscuration?

*Coarse great great self grasping*

*At this point Ross Moore made an offering of flowers to Geshe Doga "on the occasion of this auspicious day of hearing the completion of the stages to enlightenment". Geshe-la blessed Ross with the khatag saying,*

White signifies the good pure relationship between the teacher and the student. With it the student is saying "I shall make my mind as pure as the lama's mind.

The khatag should be folded lengthwise and presented with the opening to the front, and the fold towards oneself. It should not be used as a scarf

*What about the use of coloured khatags?*

It happened that during an initiation somebody couldn't find a red cloth, so he used a yellow eye blind. That is okay because of the relationship with Lama Tsong Khapa, because Lama Tsong Khapa did that once when he couldn't find a red cloth. So he used a yellow eye blind.

The Mongolians use red and blue khatags.

Generally the five colours signify the five types of transcendental wisdom. When you offer the mandala, there are five colours in the cloth or brocade that is attached, which signifies the five transcendental wisdoms. Also the Buddhist flag has five colours. Whether or not it's done these days, the Buddhist flag actually has five colours.

The red colour of the eye blinds at the time of initiation signifies that the lama is following compassion and bliss. Because the eye blind is thin, that signifies the profoundness of the teaching. So you don't make thick eye blinds. Putting on the eye blind is just symbolic.

*Transcribed from tape by Kathi Melnic*

*Edit 1: Adair Bunnett*

*Edit 2: Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edit 3: Alan Molloy*

*Check and final edit: Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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# Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

གྲུབ་མཐུན་རྣམ་གཞག་བཤམ་པ།

27 November 2001

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As usual, please establish the motivation of bodhicitta for listening to the teachings, thinking that I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and that it is for that purpose that I am going to listen now to this profound teaching.

## 8.7. Principles of Grounds and Paths (cont)

Last time we started on the seventh point, the positing of grounds and paths, which has two subdivisions. They are the explanation of the objects of abandonment, and the actual explanation of grounds and paths.

We have finished with the first subdivision, the explanation of the objects of abandonment. Last time we explained how the objects of abandonment are actually eliminated from the mental continuum, and we went through the whole path until we reached Buddhahood.

### 8.7.2. Actual Explanation of Grounds and Paths

#### 8.7.2.1. Object of Meditation

It says in the text that, "The practitioners of the three vehicles do not take as their main object of meditation various different higher and lower views of emptiness". In the lower tenets, the Svatantrika Madhyamika and so forth, the practitioners of the three vehicles had as their main object of meditation different levels of the view of emptiness. Some were higher, and some lower. Here that is not the case.

The text goes on to say, "The three types of practitioners take as their main object of meditation the subtle selflessness of person as well as the subtle selflessness of phenomena. So in that regard, the three types of practitioners are the same in taking as their main object of meditation the subtle selflessness of person as well as the subtle selflessness of phenomena. They do not have various high and low views of selflessness as their main object of meditation.

Because the Prasangika posit true grasping at phenomena as being afflicted obscurations or obscurations to liberation, one has to realise selflessness of phenomena as well as selflessness of person in order to just attain liberation. In the Svatantrika tenet it was enough for the Hinayana practitioner to take as the main object of meditation the selflessness of person, but here that does not work anymore. For the Prasangika, in order to purify obscurations to liberation, even a Hinayana practitioner has to meditate on the subtle selflessness of phenomena, as well as the selflessness of person.

The way to look at it is like this.

- Those practitioners for whom the main object of abandonment is the self-grasping at person, have to take the selflessness of person as their main object of meditation.
- Those practitioners for whom the main object of abandonment is the self-grasping at phenomena have to take the selflessness of phenomena as their main object

of meditation.

This is the way the main object of meditation is decided. The practitioner says that, in order to be free from samsara one has to abandon the root of cyclic existence, which is self-grasping. They then take that as the main object of abandonment and selflessness of person as the main object of meditation. If the practitioner sees that without abandoning self-grasping at phenomena then one will get nowhere, then they will take the selflessness of phenomena as their main object of meditation.

#### 8.7.2.2. Object of Abandonment

So between the practitioners of the three vehicles there is no difference from the point of view of the main object of meditation. There is, however, a difference in regard to the main object of abandonment. As we learnt the other day, the practitioners of the Hearer and Solitary Realisers vehicles practise the abandonment of self-grasping, together with their seeds. The bodhisattvas take as their main object of abandonment the karmic latencies of self-grasping.

We explained the other day that there is a division into afflictive obscurations, and the obscurations to omniscience. Afflictive obscurations are those obscurations that primarily obscure, or prevent the attainment of liberation. The obscurations to omniscience are those obscurations that primarily obstruct the attainment of enlightenment.

The practitioner, who primarily wants to attain liberation from cyclic existence, takes the afflictive obscurations as the main object of abandonment. In order to eliminate them from the mindstream they take subtle selflessness of person and subtle selflessness of phenomena as the main object of meditation.

The practitioner who wants to attain complete enlightenment takes as the main object of abandonment the obscurations to omniscience. To purify those there is no difference with regard to the main object of meditation; one also meditates on the subtle selflessness of person and the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

This is a very important point, which you need to contemplate well. What does one have to abandon in order to attain one's aim? To attain liberation, what kinds of obscurations have to be abandoned from the mindstream? Contemplating and thinking about this, and making it clear to one's own mind is very beneficial.

#### 8.7.2.3. Two Types of Nirvana

With regard to the two types of nirvana, nirvana with remainder and nirvana without remainder, the text says that, "The suchness that is characterised by having abandoned the two true-grasplings together with their seeds, in the continuum of a Hearer and Solitary Realiser arhat at the time of meditative equipoise, is nirvana without remainder. The suchness that is characterised by the abandonment of the two true-grasplings together with their seeds, in the continuum of Hearer and Solitary Realiser arhats during the post-meditational period, is nirvana with remainder".

Here, whether the nirvana is nirvana with remainder, or without remainder is defined by whether or not the arhat is in meditative equipoise. The reason is that it becomes a nirvana with remainder if, in the continuum of the person, there is manifest true appearance.

- If in the continuum of the person is manifest appearance of true existence then that nirvana becomes **nirvana with remainder**.
-

- If in the continuum of the person is no manifest appearance of true existence then that nirvana becomes **nirvana without remainder**.

Therefore here, nirvana without remainder is attained first, and then nirvana with remainder is attained.

This is different from the lower schools like the Mind Only and so forth. There nirvana with remainder will be attained first, and later the nirvana without remainder will be attained. This is because their definition of nirvana with remainder, and without remainder, is different. The lower schools say that it is a nirvana with remainder if there are still some suffering aggregates left in the continuum of the arhat. Once the last suffering aggregates are abandoned then the nirvana becomes nirvana without remainder. So there is this difference between the Prasangika school and the lower schools.

#### 8.7.2.4. Attainments

1. Then the text says that, "For the practitioner who abides from the beginning in the Mahayana lineage, the abandonment of the afflictive obscurations, and the attainment of the eighth bodhisattva ground are simultaneous".

This is as we explained the other day. Being a bodhisattva who abides in the Mahayana lineage from the beginning means the practitioner hasn't first practised the Hinayana path. Rather, from the very beginning upon entering the path, they have only practised the Mahayana path.

Somebody who first completed the Hinayana path will of course have abandoned the afflictive obscurations earlier. However for the person who hasn't first entered the Hearer or Solitary Realiser path, but practised the Mahayana path from the beginning, the attainment of the eighth bodhisattva ground and the abandonment of the afflictive obscurations are simultaneous.

2. The text says that, "For the same practitioner the abandonment of the obscurations to omniscience and the generation of the four buddha bodies is simultaneous." We explained this in the last session.

So now you know what the obscurations to omniscience are, and that their abandonment, and the attainment of the four Buddha bodies, when the four Buddha bodies become manifest, is simultaneous.

Please posit those four Buddha bodies, which will place very beneficial imprints on your mind.

*Wisdom Truth Body*  
*Nature Truth Body*  
*Emanation Body*  
*Enjoyment Body*

The Sanskrit names for the four buddha bodies are:

- Nirmanakaya for emanation body
- Sambhogakaya for enjoyment body
- Svabhavakaya for the nature truth body
- Dharmakaya for the wisdom truth body

We went through the definitions and their meanings when we discussed the Mind Only School so you can look it up. The Sanskrit word *kaya* is translated as 'body'.

That completes the teaching on the tenets. It has gone very well.

As we are receiving an oral transmission, there will be no further study group transcripts for the remainder of the year.

*Transcribed from tape by Kathi Melnic*

*Edit 1: Adair Bunnett*

*Edit 2: Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edit 3: Alan Molloy*

*Check and final edit: Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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