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# Study Group - Madhyamakavatarama

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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26 October 2004

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Please generate a virtuous motivation as usual.

## 6.3.5.2.2.1. The Sixteen Emptinesses (cont)

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14. The emptiness of one's definition

Last time we started with the fourteenth emptiness, the emptiness of one's definition, which had two parts - the condensed part and the extensive part.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2. Extensive Explanation

The extensive explanation was further sub-divided into the definitions relating to basis, path and result and we completed the definitions relating to basis and path.

The definitions that we talked about last time, such as the three doors to liberation, the thirty-seven features of enlightenment and so forth, are all very useful to know.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2.3. The definitions relating to the result

A definition is that which posits the object and its major distinguishing features, and the lack of inherent existence of the definition of these features is the emptiness of definition.

*The powers are in the nature of  
Strong understanding, it is taught.*

It starts with the definition of what a power is. It says here that the powers are in the nature of strong intense knowledge that is devoid of attachment and anger, and the lack of inherent existence of that is the emptiness of the definition of power.

*The saving fearlessnesses  
Have the identity of strong stability.*

The saving fearlessnesses are the four fearlessnesses of a buddha; i.e. the fearlessness of stating what has to be abandoned, the fearlessness of stating what has to be adapted, and so forth. The Buddha is completely fearless in explaining to sentient beings what has to be abandoned, for example. When the Buddha makes these statements they have so much weight and strength that they become irrefutable, so they have the characteristic of very strong stability. The lack of inherent existence of that stability is the emptiness of the definition of fearlessness.

Also, as I have already explained hundreds and thousands of times, if we visualise the throne of Shakyamuni Buddha with four lions then those four lions represent those four fearlessnesses.

*The individual perfect knowledges have the definition  
Of uninterrupted confidence and so forth.*

Mirror:

*The individual perfect knowledges have the  
definition of an uninterrupted continuum of the*

*four, confidence and so forth.*

The four individual perfect knowledges are the individual perfect knowledge of dharma, meaning, terms and confidence.

This refers, for example, to the ability of being able to explain the terms and meaning of the dharma without any problems and obstruction with a confidence that is not overcome by adverse conditions. The lack of inherent existence of that is the emptiness of the definition of individual fearlessness.

*Superbly achieving the welfare of migrators  
Has to be called great love.*

The lack of inherent existence of superbly achieving the welfare of migrators is the emptiness of definition of great love.

*Completely saving those who suffer  
Is great-hearted compassion.*

The difference between love and compassion is that love is a giving mind that gives happiness to sentient beings, while compassion is more concerned with taking away the suffering of sentient beings.

*Intense joy  
Is the definition of joy.*

Intense joy in bringing benefit and happiness to sentient beings is the definition of joy, and the lack of inherent existence of that is the emptiness of the definition of joy.

*Know that  
Equanimity has the definition of being undiluted.*

Equanimity has the definition of being undiluted with anger and attachment, and the lack of inherent existence of that is the emptiness of the definition of equanimity.

*The uncommon dharmas of a buddha,  
Whichever one of the ten and eight one asserts,  
Since they aren't taken from the Buddha  
By that, therefore the definition 'not taken'.*

Then we have the eighteen uncommon dharmas of a buddha.

Mirror:

*Whichever one of the ten and eight uncommon  
dharmas of a buddha one asserts, it has the  
definition 'not taken', since they aren't taken from  
the Buddha by adverse conditions.*

And the lack of inherent existence of that nature of not being taken away by adverse conditions is the emptiness of the definition of the uncommon dharmas.

The eighteen uncommon dharmas of a buddha come in three groups of six:

**The six uncommon behaviours;** i.e. a buddha doesn't have any

- mistaken physical actions
  - idle speech; the Buddha has ascertained the needs and potential of the disciple and therefore he is able to guide the disciple perfectly and consequently everything the buddha says has impact and meaning for the disciple.
  - lessening of mindfulness
  - time out of meditative equipoise
  - discrimination between samsara and nirvana
  - equanimity that is not engaged in specific analysis;
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he possess the transcendental wisdom that is free from the equanimity that doesn't engage in individual analysis.

**The six uncommon realisations;** i.e. a buddha does not experience any lessening of

- aspiration
- enthusiasm
- mindfulness
- concentration
- wisdom
- liberation

**The six uncommon beneficial activities:**

- A buddha's physical enlightened activities are always preceded by transcendental wisdom and are also followed by transcendental wisdom.
- A buddha's enlightened activities of speech are always preceded by transcendental wisdom and followed by transcendental wisdom.
- A buddha's enlightened activities of the mind are always preceded by transcendental wisdom and followed by transcendental wisdom.
- The transcendental wisdom of a buddha sees the past without attachment and unobstructed.
- The transcendental wisdom of a buddha sees the future without attachment and unobstructed
- The transcendental wisdom of a buddha sees the present without attachment and unobstructed.

The essence is that a buddha perceives the three times without attachment and obstruction. One can relate the lack of attachment to not being obscured by the afflictive obscuration, and the lack of obstruction to not being obscured by the obscuration to knowledge. What it is saying is that a buddha can see the three times unobstructed and unmistakably.

The meaning of uncommon in 'uncommon dharmas of a buddha' refers to the fact that those eighteen are found only on the level of enlightenment and there is no other being that possesses those qualities. You should try to know the eighteen dharmas of a buddha well.

*Exalted omniscient transcendental wisdom  
knowledge  
Is posited as having the definition 'direct perception'.  
Others, being merely partial,  
Aren't called direct perception.*

Mirror:

*Exalted omniscient transcendental wisdom  
knowledge is posited as having the definition of  
'an exalted knower directly perceiving all objects  
of knowledge'. Other consciousnesses, by a mere  
partial engagement of the object, aren't called a  
direct perception of all objects of knowledge.*

The other consciousnesses that are referred to here can be consciousnesses of hearers or self-liberated arhats. Of course they also have direct perceptions but they are only partial direct perceptions of objects of knowledge, and not direct perceptions of all objects of knowledge.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14.3. Summary

*Any definitions of compounded phenomena  
And any definitions of non-compounded phenomena,*

*The emptiness of that alone,  
It is the emptiness of definitions.*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*the emptiness of the quintessential nature of the definitions of compounded and non-compounded phenomena alone*' - *it is the emptiness of definitions* - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of definitions.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.15. The emptiness of the unobservable

*The present doesn't abide and  
The past and future do not exist.  
They are unobservable at any time,  
They are called unobservable.*

*That which is the mere void  
Of the unobservable is not unchanging,  
And it also does not disintegrate, hence  
It is the emptiness of that called unobservable.*

The three times are referred to as unobservable because they are mutually unobservable at any time since the present does not abide in the next moment. So at the time of the present only the present exists; the past has disintegrated, and the future is yet about to come. At the time of the future only the future exists, and so forth.

Mirror:

*...the present doesn't abide in the next moment  
and, since the past has disintegrated and the  
future hasn't yet generated, they do not exist in  
the present.*

The three times are not observable at one time and the lack of inherent existence of them being such unobservable is the emptiness of the unobservable.

Mirror:

Take the subject '*that which is the mere void of the unobservable*' - *it is the emptiness of that called unobservable* - because it is the lack of the truly existing unobservable. The unobservable is *not* ultimately *unchanging and it also does not disintegrate.*

So the unobservable on the one hand is not ultimately unchanging and also it does not ultimately disintegrate.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.16. The emptiness of the quintessential nature of non-functionalities

*Since functionalities arise from conditions  
They don't have the nature of being compounded.  
The emptiness of the compounded itself  
Is the emptiness of non-functionalities.*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*functionalities*' - *they don't have the nature of being compounded inherently* - because they *arise from conditions.*

As we have said before, functionalities arise through the aggregation of causes and conditions, and therefore they are not in the nature of being compounded inherently.

#### Why sixteen emptinesses?

Regarding the distinctions of the sixteen emptinesses, first of all there is no distinction regarding the logical reasoning with which they are established. As we already

said before, once one has generated an inferential cognition of one emptiness then the only thing one needs to do is to transfer that understanding to another object, without employing any new type of reasoning. One can rely on the force of the old reasoning. If sixteen different types of reasoning were needed then one would have sixteen different emptinesses. One would need one reasoning to establish inner emptiness, then one reason to establish outer emptiness, and so forth. But this is not the case; there is no difference in the reasoning with which they are established.

**From the point of view of one individual**, after having meditated on emptiness with the reasoning that establishes emptiness, then that individual will meditate on these different emptinesses sequentially. So they describe the sequential stages of meditating on these different emptiness, but not with different reasoning. After the practitioner has initially realised emptiness with the reasoning establishing emptiness, then he or she just transfers that understanding to those individual different bases of emptiness.

Apart from being taught as the sequential basis for meditating on the emptiness of different objects for one individual, the sixteen emptinesses were also taught for the purpose of **opposing specific types of true-grasping on the continuum of different practitioners**. Certain individual beings hold different types of true-grasping - some might have stronger true-grasping for inner phenomena than outer phenomena, some might have stronger true-grasping for some other type of phenomena. These sixteen emptiness were also taught to eliminate specific types of true-grasping in certain individuals.

So there are two scenarios why the Buddha taught the sixteen emptinesses. From the point of view of one practitioner they describe the sequence of meditating on the different types of emptiness, and the other possible situation is that the Buddha taught the sixteen emptinesses in order to over-come specific types of true grasping in certain individuals.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.2. The four emptinesses

The four emptinesses are the emptiness of functionalities, the emptiness of non-functionalities, the lack of the quintessential nature of nature, and the emptiness of other functionalities.

*If summarised, the word 'functionality'  
Describes the five aggregates.  
Any such emptiness of theirs  
Is described as emptiness of functionalities.*

All functionalities are contained within the five aggregates, and if one does not describe all functionalities individually, then one can just summarise them as the five aggregates.

Mirror:

*...ny such emptiness of their quintessential nature  
- it is described as emptiness of functionalities -  
because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the  
true existence of functionalities.*

*In short, non-functionalities  
Are described as non-compounded phenomena.*

*The emptiness of the non-functionality itself  
Is the emptiness of non-functionalities.*

Non-functionalities can either refer to three objects or four objects. If it refers to three non-functionalities then it refers to non-compounded space, individually analysed cessation and not individually analysed cessation. If it refers to four then it refers to non-compounded space, nirvana with remainder, nirvana without remainder, and non-abiding nirvana.

In general *phenomenon that can perform a function* is the definition of a functionality and a *phenomenon that can't perform a function* is the definition of a non-functioning phenomenon, here non-functionality. If we don't list all the functionalities individually then they can just be condensed within the five aggregates, and if we don't list all the non-functionalities individually then here they can just be condensed into these three.

The lack of inherent existence of non-compounded space and the two types of cessation here is then the emptiness of non-functionalities. This of course can also be applied to all other types of non-compounded phenomena, such as emptiness itself, such as the sixteen emptinesses and so forth; they all are non-compounded phenomena.

*The lack of the quintessential nature of nature  
Is the emptiness of that called nature.  
Because nature wasn't created  
It is taught that it should be called nature.*

What is here referred to as nature is emptiness itself.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'the nature emptiness' - *it is taught that it should be called nature - because it wasn't created* by hearers, solitary realisers and so forth, but is the mode of abiding of phenomena and its lack of inherent existence is therefore the emptiness of nature.

*Whether the buddhas are present  
Or not, this very emptiness is the  
Nature of all phenomena, a nature  
Apart<sup>1</sup>, that is proclaimed to be empty<sup>2</sup>.*

This nature apart, the functionality apart refers to either emptiness or nirvana, and there are three reasons why they are referred to as a nature apart.

Illumination:

*The meaning of the words 'a nature apart' is threefold. In the first case it means supreme suchness. 'Supreme' means that it exists never straying from the definition of suchness. In the second case 'apart' means apart from the world, i.e. the non-conceptual transcendental wisdom, which is the supreme among transcendental wisdoms having gone beyond the world. The 'nature' is that realised by that wisdom. In the third case 'a nature apart' means to exist on the other shore. The perfect end is the 'shore beyond samsara' because it is beyond samsara. End refers here to nirvana that has exhausted samsara.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'the lack of an inherently existing *perfect ending and suchness*, [we said the perfect ending refers to nirvana. And we already explained why these two are referred to as nature apart - because of being the object of the non-dual

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transcendental wisdom having gone beyond, because of existing on the shore beyond samsara, and so forth] the *very emptiness* that *is the nature of all phenomena, whether the buddhas are present* in the world *or not* – it is the emptiness of *the nature apart* – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of a truly existing nature apart.

*The perfect end and suchness*

*Are the emptiness of phenomena apart.*

*In the sutras of the Perfection of Wisdom Method*

*These are emphatically proclaimed in those words.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject ‘these emptinesses’ – they are explained in the sutras – because they are *emphatically proclaimed in those words* in the *sutras* of the *Method of the Perfection of Wisdom* as explained earlier.

What this means is that Chandrakirti didn’t just pull those sixteen emptinesses out of thin air, but those sixteen emptinesses are actually explained in the *Perfection of Wisdom sutras* by the Buddha himself in those words.

So then we can finish here. The conclusion through explaining the qualities of the ground and so forth we can do next time. From here on we will be very quick to finish the text and I want to thank you very much for your enthusiastic participation and your effort and study.

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*Edited Version*

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2 November 2004

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Generate a virtuous motivation as usual, thinking 'I have to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Therefore I am now going to listen to this profound Dharma, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

We have gone through the different divisions of emptiness. First we had the concise version, where emptiness was divided into two. Then we had the elaborate version, where emptiness is divided into sixteen, and then we have the intermediate version, where emptiness is divided into four.

If you remember, the emptiness of nature was explained in the elaborate version. In the four-fold division of emptiness, the emptiness of nature is explained again. However, there is no fault of redundancy, because the emptiness of nature is important to consider in both cases for the reasons that we already mentioned before. When one comes to realise that emptiness is permanent and that emptiness is the object of the transcendental wisdom, then the idea could arise that since it is the object of the ultimate wisdom it therefore has ultimate existence. In order to overcome this misconception, the emptiness of nature was taught. This is important, regardless of whether one meditates on emptiness according to the intermediate version of the divisions, or the elaborate version.

## 6.4. Concluding by expressing the qualities of the ground

At the beginning of the sixth chapter, the qualities of the sixth ground were praised<sup>1</sup>. This part condenses the qualities of the sixth ground.

*Having thus realised all the three worlds, illuminated by the brilliance*

*Of wisdom light like a gyurura lying in their hand,  
To lack generation from the outset,*

*They enter cessation through the power of nominal truth.*

This verse refers to the qualities of knowledge on the sixth ground. On the sixth ground bodhisattvas enter the absorption on cessation through the power of nominal truth. This refers back to the two lines saying that the nominal truth becomes the method and the ultimate truth becomes the result. The nominal truth becomes the method through which the bodhisattvas on the sixth ground enter absorption on cessation. Within that absorption on cessation, they realise that all the three worlds lack generation from the very beginning, and

were never generated. They realise this through the illumination of the brilliance of their wisdom as clearly as if they would see this 'medicinal nut' lying in the hand.

*Although always in the meditative stabilisation classified as cessation*

*They also generated compassion for protectorless migrators,*

*And above they will embarrass all those born from the speech of*

*The Tatagata and middling buddhas through their awareness.*

This verse deals with the extensive qualities. The first verse deals with the profound qualities and the second verse with the extensive.

*Although always in the meditative stabilisation classified as cessation* (referring to the absorption on cessation) they still generate *compassion for protectorless migrators*. The *And above* refers to the seventh ground, when they outshine *all those born from the speech of the Tatagata*, which refers to the hearer arhats and the *middling buddhas* - the self-realised arhats - through the power of their awareness. This refers to what already was mentioned before. On the seventh ground, the bodhisattvas will outshine the hearers and self-liberated buddhas, not only through the force of their lineage, but also through the power of their awareness.

*The king possessing the expanding white vast wings  
Of the illusory and suchness, having progressed to the seventh*

*Through the needs of beings, goes on to the supreme perfection*

*Of the ocean of the conquerors' qualities through the force of the gale of virtues.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas abiding on the sixth ground...' they progress to buddhahood through the path that is complete with method and wisdom - because *the king possessing the expanding white vast wings* of the sequence of *the illusory* extensive path *and* the sequence of the profound path realising *suchness, having progressed to the seventh* ground...

Bodhisattvas on the sixth ground have the wing of the illusory extensive path, as well as the wing of the profound path, with which then they can progress to the seventh ground.

Mirror:

...that fulfils the *needs of beings, goes on to the supreme perfection of the ocean of the conquerors' qualities through the force of the gale of virtues.*

They are able to achieve this because they have the path that is complete with method and wisdom. The sixth ground bodhisattvas possess a path that is complete with method and wisdom. With this path complete with method and wisdom they can also induce others into the path. So in order to induce others into the path, one needs to have method and wisdom.

*The king possessing the expanding white vast wings  
Of the illusory and suchness ...*

Here, the 'white' refers to the pure unstained non-dual transcendental wisdom. 'That they are extensive' is a

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<sup>1</sup> This was covered in the teaching of 19 November 2002, as 2. Praise of the Perfection of Wisdom.

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reference to the extensive path. That the wings are both white as well as vast, is a reference to the unification of the profound uncontaminated path and the extensive path. The **extensive** path refers to the superior intention, the thought of bodhicitta, the practice of the six perfections and so forth. The **profound** refers to the uncontaminated transcendental wisdom realising emptiness. Having both the wisdom - the profound uncontaminated transcendental wisdom - as well as method - bodhicitta and the other perfections - the bodhisattva can progress to the seventh ground and to the qualities of a conqueror.

*The king possessing the expanding white vast wings...*

This actually refers to a particular king and his minister who were able to engage in vast and extensive activities for the welfare of sentient beings. They are used here as an analogy.

Those who want to follow the example of the bodhisattvas on the sixth ground also need to progress along the path that is complete with the wings of both sequential paths of method and wisdom. We have previously given the sequence of the profound path and the sequence of the extensive path. If one wants to follow the example of a bodhisattvas on the sixth ground, one needs to progress along a path that possess both these wings. One should not be satisfied with practising just a partial path that possesses just one of those two wings. One has to proceed through enlightenment with a path that is complete in both method and wisdom.

## THE SEVENTH GROUND

First, a remark regarding the outlines. Here in *Mirror*, it is just simply the Seventh Mind Generation. One of the outlines at the beginning of the text was Explaining the Ten Grounds. So here it simply moves on from the sixth to the seventh ground. In *Illumination*, however, it is slightly different.

On the seventh ground, out of the ten perfections, the bodhisattva excels in the practice of method. The root text is:

*Here, Gone Afar, they enter cessation  
Moment by moment, and  
Have achieved the scorching perfection of method.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas abiding *here* in the seventh ground *Gone Afar*' - they have attained qualities distinguishing them from the sixth ground - because *they enter cessation moment by moment, and have achieved the scorching perfection of method*

One of the special qualities of this ground is that a bodhisattva on this ground can enter and exit meditative equipoise on cessation momentarily. Bodhisattvas on the lower grounds can also enter into and exit from meditative equipoise on cessation, but they are not able to do so on a moment-by-moment basis. This is that a bodhisattva on the seventh ground is able to do - enter into a cessation and then exit again in one moment This is special to this ground. They have also attained the perfection of method, because their actions are not hampered and stained by adverse conditions and

obscurations. Their activities to benefit others are not tainted by adverse conditions.

*The Bodhisattva Grounds* gives two sets of six methods. The first set of six methods relates to the inner practice of the buddhadharma. It concerns the ripening of one's own continuum.

1. Viewing all sentient beings with compassion
  2. Knowing the correct nature of all compounded phenomena accurately
  3. Wishing for the transcendental wisdom of highest unequalled enlightenment
  4. Not giving up on cyclic existence in dependence upon looking at sentient beings
  5. Circling in cyclic existence through a non-afflicted mind, in dependence on exactly knowing the way compounded phenomena exist
- Bodhisattvas circling in cyclic existence is a figurative expression. It actually refers to the bodhisattvas abiding within the *place* of cyclic existence. We will elaborate on this in the Eighth Mind Generation.
6. Their enthusiasm is inflamed because of their wish for enlightenment.

These are the six proficient methods regarding the inner practice of the Dharma - the ripening of the one's own continuum.

Then there are the six proficient methods concerning ripening the continuum of other sentient beings.

1. Bodhisattvas engage in transforming the small roots of virtue of sentient beings into an infinite result.
  2. Likewise bodhisattvas engage in establishing the small accumulations of sentient beings into great roots of virtue.
- They engage in eliminating the anger of those who don't like the Dharma.
4. They introduce those who have a neutral mind to the Dharma i.e. those who are still sitting on the fence, thinking they might want to enter the Dharma, but haven't yet done so.
  5. They ripen those who have already entered the Dharma.
  6. They liberate those whose continuum has already ripened.

In such a way, a bodhisattva on the seventh ground becomes proficient in the perfection of method.

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## THE EIGHTH GROUND

In the Eighth Mind Generation, we have three outlines:

- 8.1. Prayers are superior on this ground and the way of awaking them from cessation
- 8.2. Showing that they have exhausted all afflictions
- 8.3. Showing that they have attained ten powers

### 8.1. Prayers are superior on this ground and the way of awaking them from cessation

The root text reads:

*To repeatedly attain virtue superior to before,  
The Great Ones enter the Immoveable,  
Where they become completely irreversible.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*the Great Ones*, bodhisattvas abiding on the seventh ground' - *they* have a reason for *entering the Immoveable* ground, *where they become completely irreversible* - it is in order *to repeatedly attain virtue superior to before* on the seventh ground.

What this refers to is being able to repeatedly achieve a virtue superior to before. Something special happens in the mind of a bodhisattva when he progresses from the seventh to the eighth ground. From then on the practice of the path will be natural, and he will naturally progress along the path without great effort.

Until reaching the Eighth Ground, a bodhisattva needs to work with great effort. Once the bodhisattva has progressed to the Eighth Ground, the practices that he engages in will come completely naturally, and as such he will progress along the path naturally. This is likened to the difference between getting a boat into the water which needs to be done with great effort and sailing along effortlessly once out into the open sea. First one has to carry the boat into the water, and then use the oars to row out into the open sea where there is good wind. (These days of course, one has an engine.) Then, once one has reached the open sea the boat will sail very easily and smoothly. This is the analogy that Lama Tsong Khapa used to explain the difference between the practice of the path on the seventh ground and below, and the eighth ground.

*Their prayers become extremely pure and*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'these bodhisattvas abiding on the eighth ground' - *their* countless hundred thousands of *prayers become extremely pure* - because they have completed the perfection of prayer.

On the eighth ground the bodhisattva becomes proficient in the perfection of prayer because on this ground the bodhisattva purifies the hundreds of thousands of prayers done since the first ground.

*Conquerors awake them from cessation*

'Cessation' refers to emptiness, and awakening the bodhisattvas from cessation means awakening them from their meditative equipoise on cessation. This highlights the point that one cannot attain enlightenment merely by remaining in meditative absorption on cessation. Even

though there is no danger that these bodhisattvas would fall into the extreme of nihilism, to prevent them from remaining in meditative equipoise on emptiness they are awakened.

There might be certain bodhisattvas who could decide to remain in meditative absorption on emptiness. But if they were to remain in meditative absorption on emptiness, then they could not achieve the welfare of sentient beings, and therefore could not become enlightened. So in order to prevent even the theoretical possibility of that happening they are awakened from cessation. Otherwise, just merely by remaining in meditative absorption on cessation, one will not be able to achieve the form-body of a buddha.

In the sutra path, there is no possibility of building up both the accumulation of merit as well as wisdom in one meditative equipoise. While they're in the meditative equipoise on emptiness, bodhisattvas cannot build up the accumulation of merits in the sutra system. This is different to the tantric system, where the meditation practice of visualising oneself as the deity while meditating on emptiness provides the possibility of building up both the accumulation of merit as well as wisdom in one equipoise.

Visualising of oneself as the deity becomes the cause for the achievement of the form-body of a buddha, and being aware of emptiness at the same time builds up the accumulation of wisdom, which becomes the cause for the wisdom-truth body of a buddha. In the tantric system this can be done simultaneously.

### 8.2. Showing that they have exhausted all afflictions

*Since awareness without attachment does not abide  
simultaneously with faults,  
The stains and their roots are completely  
pacified on the eighth ground.  
Though afflictions are purged and they are above  
the three realms, they  
Haven't attained all the limitless space-like  
actions of a buddha.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas abiding *on the eighth ground*' - they have *completely pacified the stains* of the afflictions *and their roots*...

Here, the 'roots' of the afflictions refers to the seeds of the afflictions, and the potential for the subsequent regeneration of the affliction. So bodhisattvas on this ground have abandoned both the afflictions as well as their seeds.

*Mirror:*

...- because they have become empowered in the non-conceptual transcendental wisdom *awareness without attachment*, that *doesn't abide simultaneously with the faults* of the afflictions.

They have become empowered by the non-conceptual transcendental wisdom awareness that lacks attachment, which doesn't abide simultaneously with the faults of the afflictions. There is not enough space for both in the mental continuum - there can be only one or the other.

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They are a non-simultaneous dichotomy, simply meaning that they can never abide simultaneously together.

Here somebody comes up with a debate saying: Take the subject 'the bodhisattva on the eighth ground' - there is no purpose for that bodhisattva to engage in Dharma practice - because they are Mahayana practitioners without any afflictions and they have become the highest of the three realms.'

The answer is that even though afflictions are purged and they are above the three realms, they haven't obtained all the limitless space-like actions of a buddha. They have to strive along the path because they still need to attain the state of complete enlightenment. In order to attain the space-like actions of a buddha, these bodhisattvas need to strive further along the path.

### 8.3. Showing that they have attained ten powers

*Though having ceased to be in cyclic existence they attain ten powers and show themselves to migrators in cyclic existence in various ways.*

At this point another doubt is voiced. Take the subject 'bodhisattvas on the eighth ground' - they don't need to take further re-birth in cyclic existence - because they have exhausted all their mental afflictions. If one takes re-birth in cyclic existence, one has to take re-birth through the power or through the force of karma and afflictions. But if it were to be the case that an eighth level bodhisattva does not take re-birth in cyclic existence, then they would not be able to complete the path to enlightenment, because the path to enlightenment is completed over a series of re-births.

The answer to that is stated in the two lines: 'though having ceased to be in cyclic existence...' and so forth.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas abiding *on the eighth ground*' - *though having ceased to be in cyclic existence* through karma and afflictions, that doesn't stop them from completing their accumulations - because *they attain ten powers*, and though those ten powers they *show bodies of themselves to migrators in cyclic existence in various ways*.

They have attained the ten powers, one of which is the power of life, through which they are able to take bodies in the nature of mind.

We will do the ten powers next time. They are very easy. It is also very good to remember the twelve methods that were mentioned before. Next time we can do the ninth ground, which is very quick.

#### Summary

On the seventh ground 'Gone Afar', the bodhisattva becomes proficient in the perfection of method, and here we had these different methods that have been explained.

Then on the eighth ground 'Immoveable', the bodhisattva becomes proficient in the perfection of prayer. Why? Because on the eighth ground the hundreds of thousands of prayers that were engaged in by the bodhisattva from

the first ground onwards become purified.

Bodhisattvas excel in one of the perfections on each of the grounds, but this doesn't mean that the perfections don't exist on all the grounds. For example, the bodhisattva on the first ground attains proficiency in the practice of generosity, but has not attained proficiency in the practice of morality. That does not mean that this bodhisattva does not possess the practice of the perfection of morality. Rather he has not become proficient or has not excelled in the practice of that perfection. On the next ground, the bodhisattva attains proficiency in the practice of the perfection of morality and so forth. In this way, each of the progressing grounds adds further qualities to the grounds below, by excelling in the practice of another perfection.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett  
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavatarama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པ་ལོ།

9 November 2004

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As usual generate a virtuous motivation, thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings and in order to attain that enlightenment I now listen to this profound teaching, and will then put it into practice.'

### *EIGHTH GROUND, 'IMMOVEABLE'*

#### **8.3. Showing they have attained the ten powers (cont.)**

Last time we reached the point where somebody brings up a point of discussion, saying that there is a discrepancy between on the one hand saying that an eighth level bodhisattva has exhausted all the mental afflictions, and on the other hand saying that complete enlightenment is attained over a succession of rebirths. This opponent says that if one takes rebirth in cyclic existence then it has to be through the force of karma and afflictions, and since an eighth level bodhisattva has exhausted all afflictions then such a bodhisattva can no longer take rebirth in cyclic existence.

The answer is that there is no contradiction, because even though eighth level bodhisattvas have exhausted all mental afflictions they can still take rebirth in cyclic existence, not through the force of karma and mental afflictions but through the force of the ten powers that they have attained, such as the power over life and so forth. Through those powers an eighth level bodhisattva can take rebirth in cyclic existence, taking a mental body where they wish, and in such a way can show the Dharma to sentient beings in a variety of bodies.

#### **Ten powers of an eighth level bodhisattva**

##### **1. The power of life**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of life, because they are blessed by a lifespan that lasts for expressible many eons.

##### **2. The power of mind**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of mind, because their mind abides in concentration through being engaged by boundless transcendental wisdoms.

##### **3. The power of livelihood objects**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of livelihood objects, because they show the blessing of being adorned with various ornaments of all worldly realms. They are never without the necessary wealth and material possessions that one needs for daily life, unlike us.

##### **4. The power of karma**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of

karma, because they have the blessing to accurately predict the timing of the ripening of karma. They still don't understand the subtle dependent arising between the karmas.

##### **5. Power of birth**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of birth, because they exhibit all the different types of rebirths of the samsaric realms.

##### **6. Power of prayer**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of prayer, because they reveal in which buddha field and at which time they want to attain perfect complete awakening.

##### **7. Power of wish**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of wish, because they can show how all the realms of sentient beings are filled with buddhas.

##### **8. Power of magical emanation**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of magical emanation, because they can emanate to all the Buddha realms of all the transitory worlds.

##### **9. Power of transcendental wisdom**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of transcendental wisdom, because they are able to exhibit the ten powers of a tathagata, the four fearlessness, the uncommon dharmas of a buddha, the marks and signs of a buddha, and complete enlightenment.

##### **10. Power of Dharma**

Eighth level bodhisattvas have attained the power of Dharma, because they can show the Dharma without limits or centre. At one's present stage there are limits to one's ability to show the Dharma - one can only show the Dharma in certain places and in certain circumstances. However, for an eighth level bodhisattva these limits don't exist any more. This power is an expansion of the quality of a bodhisattva on the path of seeing of being able to show the Dharma in hundred-fold way.

### *NINTH GROUND, 'EXCELLENT WISDOM'*

*On the ninth, look at its powers, all becomes completely pure,  
Likewise it attains the dharmas of perfect knowledge - its pure qualities*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas abiding *on the ninth*' - they have attained qualities superior to the eighth ground - because their perfection of the *powers becomes completely pure* and *likewise they attain the pure qualities* of the individual *perfect knowledges*.

Out of the ten perfections the bodhisattvas on this ground excel in the practice of the perfection of power. There are ten powers these bodhisattvas excel in, but they are different from the ten powers of a completely enlightened being.

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## Powers of a ninth level bodhisattva

### 1. Power of intent

The bodhisattva is completely without any afflicted type of action.

### 2. Power of superior intention

This power is the refinement of the transcendental wisdom of the ground. In general we have refinement of the ground on each of the ten grounds, which refers to eliminating the faults of the ground, and developing the qualities of the ground.

### 3. Power of perfect memory

The power of perfect memory is comprised of wisdom and mindfulness, which perfectly retain the different Dharma terms as well as their meaning.

### 4. Power of concentration

A ninth level bodhisattva has the power of being able to concentrate continuously and permanently without any mental wandering.

### 5. Power of perfect action

A ninth level bodhisattva is proficient in all the behaviours and customs of the different types of rebirth taken in all the limitless realms of the worlds.

### 6. Power of strength

What this means is that this bodhisattva has perfectly attained everything that one could mentally wish for.

### 7. Power of confidence

A ninth level bodhisattva is proficient in all the practices and divisions of the Buddha's teachings.

### 8. Power of prayer

They never give up training in the actions of all the buddhas.

### 9. Power of perfection

These bodhisattvas ripen their own continuum through the Buddhadharma, and perfectly ripen that of other sentient beings. They never give up actions benefiting all sentient beings.

### 10. Power of great love

Bodhisattvas at this level never give up in their extra strong effort to rescue all sentient beings.

### 11. Power of compassion

These bodhisattvas endeavour to eliminate all the sufferings of all sentient beings.

### 12. Power of suchness

Having manifested the illusory-like suchness, these bodhisattvas have attained the power of suchness.

### 13. Power of being blessed by all Tathagatas

They are just about to face the manifestation of the transcendental wisdom that unfolds into complete omniscience.

### Four perfect knowledges

As it says in the root text, similarly to excelling in the perfection of power these bodhisattvas have also purified the individual perfect knowledges of the Dharma.

1. **Perfect knowledge of Dharma** - the knowledge of the individual definitions of the individual dharmas.
2. **Perfect knowledge of meaning** - the knowledge of the divisions of all phenomena.
3. **Perfect knowledge of words** - being able to show the dharmas purely and unmixed.
4. **Perfect knowledge of confidence** - being able to unobstructedly teach all Dharma terms and meanings.

This explanation of the four perfect knowledges is according to the *Self Commentary* by Chandrakirti. In other texts it lists them slightly differently, referring to:

1. Knowledge of the different lists of Dharma
2. Knowledge of the meaning of the subject that is being expressed
3. Knowledge of the terms
4. Knowledge of inexhaustible confidence.

### TENTH GROUND, 'CLOUD OF DHARMA'

*On the tenth ground they are initiated by the buddhas, They attain purity and receive supreme superior transcendental wisdom.*

*Like a shower of rain from a rain cloud, a shower of Dharma falls simultaneously*

*From the conquerors' child for the crop of virtue of migrators.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas on the tenth ground' - they have attained qualities superior to the ninth ground and below - because *they are initiated* from all directions *by the buddhas* with the initiation of great light, because *they* have *attained purity* and because they attain excellence in the perfection of *transcendental wisdom*.

Take the subject 'the tenth ground' - there is a reason why it is labelled 'Cloud of Dharma' - because *a shower of exalted Dharma falls simultaneously from the conquerors' children* on the tenth ground, *like a shower of rain from a rain cloud, for the crop of virtue of migrators*.

Bodhisattvas on the tenth ground receive the initiation of great light. After having perfected tens of hundreds of thousands of uncountable concentrations they finally have attained a special concentration called Being Initiated into the Transcendental Wisdom of Omniscience.

Because of this particular type of concentration it is possible for all the buddhas of the ten directions to initiate this bodhisattva with the initiation of great light.

From the special hair that grows between the eyebrows of all the supreme emanation bodies of all the buddhas, light rays emanate that are in the nature of transcendental wisdom knowing omniscient mind. This light expands into hundreds of thousands of lights surrounded by hundreds and thousands of other lights, which then initiate the bodhisattva.

The bodhisattvas on the tenth ground have this vision that all these light rays come down from all the buddhas

of the ten directions and pacify the sufferings of all the sentient beings in the lower realms, and the three poisons. Then the light rays absorb into the crown of the bodhisattva and through this blessing of the light rays the bodhisattva experiences many different special types of concentrations not experienced previously.

Here a question is asked: What is the difference between the perfection of wisdom and the perfection of transcendental wisdom? The bodhisattva on the tenth ground excels in the practice of the perfection of the transcendental wisdom. What then is the difference between the perfection of transcendental wisdom and the perfection of wisdom? Regarding the difference between those two, Asanga said in his text *Bodhisattva Grounds*:

Having knowledge in meditative equipoise of all phenomena just as they are is the perfection of transcendental wisdom. The wisdom that apprehends the ultimate nature of all phenomena is the perfection of wisdom.

Here the perfection of transcendental wisdom is the apprehension of the illusory conventional while the perfection of wisdom is the apprehension of the ultimate.

It is good to contemplate the way a bodhisattva attains excellence in the individual perfections as he or she progresses along the grounds. The bodhisattva on the **first ground** has attained excellence in the practice of the perfection of generosity but has not yet attained excellence in the practice of morality, and is specifically training in the perfection of morality to refine that perfection. Once a bodhisattva has attained the **second ground** he or she excels in the perfection of morality but not in the practice of the perfection of patience and so endeavours to perfect the practice of patience. Likewise on the **third ground**, having mastered patience the bodhisattva trains in the perfection of enthusiasm. On the **fourth ground** the bodhisattva excels in the practice of the perfection of enthusiasm, on the **fifth ground** in the practice of the perfection of mental stabilization, on the **sixth ground** the practice of the perfection of wisdom and so forth. It is good to contemplate how the bodhisattva develops while progressing along the different grounds.

## **THE INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES OF THE TEN GROUNDS**

This is divided into three parts:

3.2.1.2.1.1. The qualities of the first ground

3.2.1.2.1.2. The qualities of the second to the seventh ground

3.2.1.2.1.3. The qualities of the three pure grounds

### **3.2.1.2.1.1. The qualities of the first ground**

*At that time they see one hundred buddhas,  
Are blessed by them and realised by them.  
They abide for a life of one hundred eons and  
Perfectly enter the earlier and later boundaries.*

*Those with awareness enter and exit from a hundred-fold equipoise.*

*One hundred transitory realms are moved and perceived by them.*

*Likewise, with magical power they ripen one hundred sentient beings*

*And they go to realms as many as the number one hundred.*

*They perfectly open the door of Dharma and*

*The body of this child of the able ones shows bodies wholly,*

*Having one's own entourage makes for beauty and training, each body*

*Is shown in the company of one hundred children of the conqueror.*

Here we have the set of twelve one-hundred fold qualities that a bodhisattva attains on reaching the first ground. When we read through those qualities it is important to keep in mind that these are things that a bodhisattva can do in one instant. This bodhisattva can see one hundred buddhas in one moment. Generally, for a bodhisattva this wouldn't be such a great achievement over time, but here the special thing is that it is done in one instant, and that applies to the whole set of twelve qualities.

*Mirror:*

1. *see one hundred buddhas,*
2. *are blessed by them and realised by them;*
3. *they abide for a life of one hundred eons*
4. *and perfectly enter the earlier and later boundaries of one hundred eons;*
- I. *those with awareness enter and exit from a one hundred-fold concentrative equipoise; so they enter and exit from one hundred concentrations.*
6. *one hundred transitory realms are moved*
7. *and perceived by these bodhisattvas;*
8. *likewise, with magical powers they ripen one hundred sentient beings*
9. *and they go to realms as many as the number one hundred;*
10. *these bodhisattvas perfectly open the door of one hundred dharmas*
11. *and the body of this child of the able ones shows one hundred bodies wholly;*
12. *each body is shown in the company of one hundred children of the conquerors - having one's own entourage makes for beauty and training.*

### **3.2.1.2.1.2. The qualities of the second to the seventh ground**

*After those with awareness have attained these qualities through abiding  
On the Extremely Joyful, then just likewise, through abiding on the Stainless,  
They perfectly attain them in thousands. On the five grounds  
Bodhisattvas attain one hundred thousand and*

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*One billion; they attain also ten billion;  
Then they also attain one trillion; ten million  
Ten trillion are completed. Again they are completed  
By a thousand and all are attained.*

From the second to the seventh ground the set of qualities will always be the same twelve-fold set of qualities, but the power of each of these qualities increases exponentially as the bodhisattva progresses along the path.

*Mirror:*

*After those with awareness have attained these, a set of twelve hundred-fold qualities, through abiding on the Extremely Joyful, then likewise bodhisattvas, through abiding on the second ground Stainless, perfectly attain a set of twelve thousand-fold qualities, because they can see in one instant the faces of one thousand buddhas and so forth, up to being able to show one thousand bodies, each surrounded by one thousand bodhisattvas.*

*Bodhisattvas on the five grounds, from the third ground to the seventh, attain sets of twelve qualities because on the third ground they attain twelve one-hundred-thousand-fold qualities, on the fourth ground twelve one-billion-fold qualities.*

On the **first ground** these qualities are hundred-fold.

On the **second ground** they are thousand-fold so we have twelve thousand-fold qualities.

On **third ground** we have twelve one hundred thousand-fold qualities.

On the **fourth ground** there are twelve one billion<sup>1</sup>-fold qualities.

On the **fifth ground** there are twelve ten billion-fold qualities.

On the **sixth ground** there are one trillion<sup>2</sup>-fold qualities.

On the **seventh ground** they attain twelve ten million times ten trillion-fold qualities.

On the **eighth ground** the qualities are simply beyond count, so it says that these twelve qualities equal the number of atoms found in the sum of one hundred thousand great world systems.

On the **ninth ground** the qualities equal the number of atoms of ten sets of one hundred thousand of one hundred countless ones perfectly multiplied by one thousand. 'Countless ones' refers to a particular world system. On the previous ground we had the great world system and here 'countless ones' refers to an even greater type of world system. The qualities on this ground equal the number of sets of ten of one hundred of the countless ones, further multiplied by one thousand.

On the **tenth ground** their qualities have gone far beyond any words. They find qualities as many as there are atoms in the sum of the inexpressible buddha fields.

Next time we can continue with the verses from the qualities from the eighth ground which we haven't read

yet. Also I think there is a summary of those qualities mentioned in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, where it talks about the qualities of the Sangha.

After the remaining verses of the grounds we reach the resultant ground. There it talks about the results of the long bodhisattva path, which is very inspiring. It shows what the final fruit is of all these long labours that one has engaged in beforehand.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks*

*Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett*

*Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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<sup>1</sup> One billion - one thousand million

<sup>2</sup> One trillion - one thousand billion

# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དངུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ།

16 November 2004

As usual, please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings and in order to do so I am going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice'.

## THE INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES OF THE GROUNDS (cont.)

Last time we finished the qualities of the seven impure grounds. There is a debate regarding the third quality, where for example on the first ground

... *They abide for a life of one hundred eons ...*

A first-level bodhisattva can engage these qualities in one instant. So the question arises - how does one abide for a life of one hundred eons in one instant? Here one can either say that the bodhisattva has the ability to bless his life force to be able to abide for one hundred eons in one instant, or, if the bodhisattva has only one instant of life-force left, he is able to extend that life force for one hundred eons.

The first seven grounds are called the seven impure grounds, while the eighth, ninth and tenth grounds are called the three pure grounds. The reason for this is that an eighth ground bodhisattva has abandoned the afflictions completely, and that's why the eighth, ninth and tenth grounds are called the three pure grounds. On the first seven grounds the bodhisattva has not completely abandoned the afflictions and afflictive obscuration, and that's why those grounds are called the seven impure grounds.

### 3.2.1.2.1.3. The qualities of the three pure grounds

*Those without thought, abiding on the ground  
Immoveable,  
Attain qualities equalling the number  
Of however many atoms are found in the  
Sum of one hundred thousand great world systems.*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*the* bodhisattvas *without* the *thoughts* of true-grasping, *abiding on the eighth ground Immoveable*' ...

On the eighth ground immoveable, the bodhisattva's mind is completely at rest - not being moved by the thoughts of true-grasping.

Mirror:

... - they attain special qualities - because they *attain qualities equalling the number of however many atoms are found in the sum of one hundred thousand great world systems.*

Each of these twelve qualities equals in power the number of however many atoms are found in the sum of one hundred thousand great world systems.

*They attain the earlier mentioned qualities<sup>1</sup>,  
The atoms of ten sets of one hundred thousand countless  
ones<sup>2</sup>,  
Perfectly multiplied by one thousand.  
For now, here on the tenth, their qualities  
Have gone far beyond any words.  
They find as many qualities as there are atoms  
In the sum of the inexpressible.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas who are *for now here on the tenth ground*' - they attain qualities far superior to those on the ninth ground and below - because their qualities *have gone far beyond any words*, and because *they find qualities as many as there are atoms in the sum of inexpressible* buddha fields.

*One pore can manifest the bodies of uncountable  
Perfect buddhas simultaneously with bodhisattvas.  
Likewise, they can manifest even gods, demigods  
And humans from moment to moment.*

Not only has the tenth level bodhisattva this set of twelve-fold qualities that have the power just mentioned, but also each individual pore of a tenth level bodhisattva can manifest without motivational thought Indras, Brahmas, worldly gods, worldly dharma protectors, worldly kings; also hearers, self-liberators, and tatagatas. By emanating different manifestations in such a way they are able in various ways to subdue the sentient beings that need to be subdued, which means the disciples. For example, bodhisattvas might emanate as kings in order to teach and subdue sentient beings. The tenth level bodhisattva can manifest from each individual pore uncountable numbers of such emanations, in order to teach sentient beings in various aspects moment by moment.

### 3.2.2. RESULTANT GROUND

This is explained in five outlines:

3.2.2.1. Mode of becoming enlightened

3.2.2.2. Presentation of the bodies and qualities

3.2.2.3. Emanation body

3.2.2.4. Establishing it into one path

3.2.2.5. From the point of view of the times of becoming enlightened and remaining

#### 3.2.2.1. Mode of becoming enlightened

This has two sub-divisions:

3.2.2.1.1. A presentation of the actual mode

3.2.2.1.2. Refuting objections

##### 3.2.2.1.1. Actual

*The untainted sky is illuminated by the moon's brilliance,  
hence  
You strive again on this ground before generating the ten  
powers.  
In Ogmin you find the supreme peaceful state you strove  
for,  
The peerless culmination of each and every quality.*

What the *Introduction to the Middle Way* is explaining here is that the resultant ground - the ground of a buddha - is the result of having practiced the ten perfections on the ten grounds. By practicing the ten perfections on the ten grounds and by excelling in the practice of one perfection on each of the grounds, one finally attains the fruit, or the result, of the buddha ground.

To attain enlightenment tenth ground bodhisattvas take rebirth

<sup>1</sup> The twelve sets of qualities

<sup>2</sup> 'Countless ones' refers to a particular type of world system.

in the higher pure land of Ogmin. In the post-meditation period of the tenth ground they accumulate merits, and at some point become aware that enough merits have been accumulated to be able to abandon the most subtle level of obscuration. Recognising this, the bodhisattva will go into meditative equipoise on emptiness to abandon the last traces of obscuration. This meditative equipoise is called the 'final uninterrupted path', which is the final path of the tenth ground. Just before tenth level bodhisattvas enter this meditative equipoise on emptiness they are facing the final uninterrupted path, and the purification of even the most subtle obscurations.

Then, upon having entered this meditative equipoise on emptiness, tenth level bodhisattva have become final bodhisattvas, and are referred to as final bodhisattvas on the final uninterrupted path. Simultaneously with having entered this final uninterrupted meditative equipoise on emptiness, the most subtle level of obscuration has been purified. What one has to note here is that, even though the most subtle level of obscuration is purified simultaneously with entering the final uninterrupted path, that is not synonymous with becoming enlightened. There is a difference between not have obscurations and having abandoned the obscurations.

In the continuum of a final bodhisattva, there are no obscurations left. However there is a distinction made between merely not having any obscurations in the mental continuum, and having abandoned the obscurations. Abandoning the obscurations is one step beyond not having any obscurations. Even though in the continuum of this bodhisattva, there are no obscurations, that final bodhisattva has not abandoned the stains of grasping at the two truths as being of a different entity.

When bodhisattvas are in the meditative equipoise on emptiness that is the final uninterrupted path, suchness is the only thing appearing to the perception of that meditative equipoise. The world of multiplicity does not appear to the perception of that meditative equipoise.

The reason why the world of multiplicity does not arise to the perception of the meditative equipoise is because the stains of holding the two truths to be a different entity have not been abandoned. The moment of the actual abandonment of those stains is simultaneous with attaining perfect complete enlightenment. In that moment that meditative equipoise becomes omniscient knowledge, because the whole world of multiplicity also appears to it. The bodhisattva will attain the enjoyment body of an enlightened being.

So you can see that final bodhisattvas at the tenth level do not arise out of meditative equipoise any more. Once the tenth level bodhisattva has become enlightened, it is not necessary for the buddha to arise out of meditative equipoise in order to perceive the world of multiplicity, and to help sentient beings. A bodhisattva, however, needs to arise from the meditative equipoise in order to again perceive the world of multiplicity and to be able to help sentient beings.

Final tenth level bodhisattvas will not arise out of meditative equipoise again, because they have progressed in meditative equipoise to the buddha ground. This meditative equipoise on emptiness, which on the bodhisattva level perceived only suchness, then transforms into omniscient transcendental wisdom perceiving both the world of multiplicity as well as suchness. The bodhisattva has become enlightened, has obtained the enjoyment body, and can benefit sentient beings whilst remaining in that meditative equipoise.

The resultant Dharmakaya is the final result arising from the practice of the ten perfections that become the method for its attainment. If the resultant Dharmakaya is divided into four bodies, they are the nature truth body, the wisdom-truth body, the enjoyment body, and the emanation body. In *Introduction to*

*the Middle Way*, Chandrakirti explains the buddha bodies in a three-fold division - the nature-truth body, the enjoyment body and then the emanation body.

Everything just explained is present in the above verse.

*The untainted sky is illuminated by the moon's brilliance...*

This is thought of as an analogy for the way the tenth ground bodhisattva attains enlightenment. If one has a full moon in a completely clear autumn sky that is unobscured by any clouds, then this full moon has the power to be incredibly brilliant and illuminating. Similarly to the ninth ground, here on the tenth ground the bodhisattva also generates ten qualities. As we said before, after having built up a big enough accumulation of merits through striving on this ground, similarly to having practiced before on the ninth ground, then the bodhisattva goes into this final meditative equipoise and attains the final result.

- The full autumn moon in the clear autumn sky is an analogy for the tenth level bodhisattva.
- The clear sky is an analogy for emptiness
- The clear untainted moonlight that can clear away the obscurations of all sentient beings is an analogy for the final uninterrupted path. So the tenth level bodhisattva enters into the final uninterrupted path which is uncontaminated, which has the ability to completely clear away each and every obscuration.

The final obscuration is the subtlest of obscurations, the finest residual that stems from having held the two truths to be of a different entity.

*There are no distinctions in space through distinctions in vessels.*

*Likewise, there are no distinctions of produced functionalities in suchness.*

*Therefore, when comprehending perfectly as purely of one taste, you,*

*Pure Exalted Knowledge, comprehend objects of knowledge instantaneously.*

*Mirror:*

*You, Pure Exalted Knowledge, comprehend objects of knowledge instantaneously, because you perfected comprehending emptiness perfectly as purely of one taste.*

In one instant, the bodhisattva can comprehend all objects of knowledge instantaneously, through having perfected comprehending all emptinesses perfectly as being of one taste.

*Mirror:*

*There are no distinctions in space, apart from the mere lack of obstruction through distinctions in vessels...*

There are actually no distinctions in space. Space pervades equally everywhere. Of course, for example, there is space in one particular vessel and there is space somewhere else. But that difference comes about only through the difference in place, and not any distinction in space itself. Both are a mere lack of obstruction, and the only way the difference comes about, is because they are in different objects. One talks about the space in different vessels only because of there being different vessels, and not because of any distinction in space itself. It is the same with emptiness.

*Mirror:*

*Likewise, you are in irreversible meditative equipoise on suchness where there are no distinctions of produced functionalities.*

As we have said, the different divisions of emptiness don't come about because of a difference in emptiness itself. There is no distinction from one emptiness to the next. The only way this distinction comes about is through a distinction in the basis. That's why one can say that all emptinesses are all of one taste, which is why a bodhisattva can meditate in equipoise on all emptinesses, comprehending them perfectly as being purely of one taste.

### 3.2.2.1.2. Refuting objections

3.2.2.1.2.1. The objections

3.2.2.1.2.2. The answer

3.2.2.1.2.1. The objections

*When pacification is suchness then wisdom won't engage it; an ascertaining knowledge-*

*Object's object-possessor without engaging awareness is also illogical.*

*How can complete not knowing become knowing, they are mutually exclusive.*

*Without exalted knower, how can you teach 'It is like that' to others? Who could?*

The Realists state the following objection:

*When pacification of intrinsic generation is suchness then wisdom won't engage it...*

If pacification refers to pacification of intrinsic generation, then wisdom will not be able to engage pacification. Why? Because pacification will be non-existent.

Where does this objection arise from? It is the Realist's view that if forms and so forth don't exist intrinsically, then they become non-existent. Their view is that if something does not exist intrinsically, then it becomes non-existent. Hence a pacification that is the pacification of intrinsic generation would also become a non-existent, and thus not be engaged by wisdom. *An ascertaining knowledge object's object-possessor without engaging awareness is also illogical.* If pacification is the pacification of intrinsic generation, then pacification becomes non-existent. If pacification becomes non-existent, then there will not be any awareness that engages that pacification, because awareness cannot arise in the aspect of something that does not exist. If an awareness does not arise in the aspect of something, then it will not know anything. Therefore you don't have an object possessor. It would become an object-possessor without any object, which you cannot have. It is illogical.

Mirror:

*... and to have an object-possessor ascertaining the object 'object of knowledge' without an awareness that is engaging an object, is also illogical...*

That is what we just said - if you don't have an object, you can't have the awareness that engages an object, and so you don't have an object-possessor.

Mirror:

*How can complete not knowing become knowing, since knowing and not knowing are mutually exclusive?*

If you don't have an object, you can't have knowledge of an object. Actually what you have is not knowing. As knowing and not knowing are mutually exclusive, how can complete not knowing be knowing?

Mirror:

*Without one being an exalted knower of suchness, how can you teach 'suchness is like that' to others? Who could?*

3.2.2.1.2.2. The answer

### 3.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to realise suchness

*When the lack of generation is suchness and awareness lacks generation,*

*Then realising suchness is the very apprehension of its aspect.*

*Like mind knowing any object the aspect of which*

*It comes to possess, according to the nominal this is knowing.*

Just as the debate is in two parts, so the refutation of the objection is in two parts.

3.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to realise suchness (which was the first part of the objection)

3.2.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to be an exalted knower (which was the second part of the objection).

### 3.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to realise suchness

*When the lack of generation is suchness and awareness lacks generation,*

*Then realising suchness is the very apprehension of its aspect.*

*Like mind knowing any object the aspect of which*

*It comes to possess, according to the nominal this is knowing.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'buddhas' - they *know* suchness *according to nominal* truth, even though they don't have the motivational thought to teach the Dharma - because the presentation of them *realising suchness is based on the very apprehension of its aspect* - because *when* all dualistic appearances have subsided, then *the lack of intrinsic generation is suchness, and awareness is generated in the image of that lack of intrinsic generation.*

The Realists voiced this objection to the Prasangika, 'According to you it is not possible to realise emptiness because your emptiness is non-existent. Since you have no object you have no awareness of the object as there is no image in which the mind can arise. No mind will arise and no wisdom-knowledge will be generated.

Answer: Even though the buddha's mind is not disturbed by any type of motivational thought they realise suchness, because they apprehend the aspect of suchness. When the appearances of intrinsic generation have subsided, then the lack of intrinsic generation is suchness. The very absence of intrinsic generation is suchness. The awareness arises in the very image of that lack of intrinsic generation, and that is why one can talk about the wisdom-knowledge that understands emptiness or the lack of intrinsic generation.

Mirror:

For example, *like* the presentation of the *mind* apprehending blue *knowing* the *object* blue being based on *it [the mind] coming to possess that aspect [of blue].*

For example, the conceptual thought apprehending blue is the conceptual thought apprehending blue, because it is a conceptual thought that arises in the aspect of blue. That's why one says that a mind is apprehending an object, because the mind arises in the image of that very object. Similarly, the conceptual thought apprehending blue apprehends blue, because of arising in the aspect or image of blue. Likewise with the wisdom-knowledge understanding emptiness; it apprehends emptiness because it arises in the image of the very lack of intrinsic generation of intrinsic existence.

### 3.2.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to be an exalted knower

*Their perfect enjoyment bodies held by merits,  
Emanations and otherwise space, through their power  
The sounds conveying suchness of phenomena arise,  
Through which the worlds come to know suchness.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'buddhas' - they can teach the Dharma without having any motivational thought - because *from the buddhas' perfect enjoyment bodies*, which are *held by* the accumulation of *merits*, from *emanations and otherwise*, through *their power*, from *space*, grass, trees and so forth, *arise the sounds conveying the suchness of phenomena*, through which *the worlds come to know suchness*.

The perfect enjoyment body emanates the different types of emanation bodies, primarily the supreme emanation body. Through their force and ability sounds conveying suchness can just resonate in space or in the air, and trees and grass can whisper sounds conveying suchness. For example the four seals of Buddhism are conveyed in the sounds of a drum. Even though the buddha is not actually present in that place, through the force of previous meditation and though the build-up of the two accumulations, a buddha can produce these sounds conveying suchness in many different ways. One can think that in the future, when one has built up the two accumulations, one will be able to do the same.

*Here the potter's wheel, having been given momentum  
with great effort  
By a potter possessing great strength, turns and is  
perceived  
As the cause of vases and so forth, even though that effort  
Hasn't been made for a long time.  
Likewise, though there is no striving generated now,  
Those abiding in the very body of the nature of  
phenomena,  
Their actions are projected by the virtues of beings  
As well as special prayers, and is greatly inconceivable.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'buddhas' - *though there are no striving* conceptual thoughts *generated now* when they have attained enlightenment, *the greatly inconceivable engagement* of the enlightened activities of *those living in the very body the nature of phenomena*, the Dharmakaya, *is projected by the virtues of beings* to be subdued *and the special prayers* they did when they were bodhisattvas.

i) One's own virtues

How are those virtues referred to here generated? An example would be the white seeds that are planted in one's mental continuum from making offerings to the buddhas with faith. In the future, these white seeds can ripen and one can be benefited through the enlightened activity of the buddhas, even though the buddhas might not be present in our actual location. For example, one might receive teachings on the meaning of suchness in one of the ways described above, which comes about through a ripening of one's own virtue that one accumulated previously.

ii) Bodhisattva's prayers

The other condition for these enlightened activities to come about are the special prayers that buddhas did when they were bodhisattvas, such as praying to be able to teach the Dharma to other sentient beings in different kinds of ways, e.g. being able to convey it just through sounds coming with the wind, or arising from trees and the grass, and so forth.

When the time of one's subduing has arrived, then the enlightened activity of the buddhas will immediately and unflinchingly spring into action. To illustrate this process, the root text uses the example of the potter's wheel that continues to turn for a long time once it has once been put in motion by a strong potter with great strength. Even though the potter has stopped turning it, the wheel continues to turn for a long time.

What this illustrates is the effortless enlightened activity of a buddha. Even though a buddha does not have any motivational thought, a buddha engages in spontaneous enlightened activity to benefit sentient beings. Why? Because a bodhisattva has trained in benefiting other sentient beings over long lifetimes. As the bodhisattva progresses along the bodhisattva path, the activities to benefit sentient beings have become more and more perfected. When the practitioner reaches the culmination of the bodhisattva's path, which is enlightenment, then those activities have become perfected to such an extent that they will continue, even though there is no motivational thought.

### 3.2.2.2. Presentation of the bodies and qualities

Next there is a presentation of the different buddha bodies. It is perfectly understandable. If you just read through *Mirror*, there is nothing that you won't be able to understand.

On 9 December I go to India, so we have only two classes left this year. Instead of having the discussion group and the exam, we can have two more classes. It's a good sign that we don't have to align our classes to fall in with Lama Tsong Khapa day, as this year Lama Tsong Khapa day falls naturally into the rhythm of our classes.

Transcribed by Bernii Wright  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett  
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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བརྟུགས་སོ། །

23 November 2004

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings and in order to accomplish this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible.

## 3.2.2.2. PRESENTATION OF THE BODIES AND THEIR QUALITIES

### 3.2.2.2.1. Presentation of the bodies

#### 3.2.2.2.1.1. *The truth body ( dharmakaya<sup>1</sup>)*

There are two types of dharmakaya, or truth body: the wisdom truth body and the nature truth body.

i. **nature truth body - the final sphere possessing the two purities** (this definition should definitely be memorised)

- The purity of adventitious obscurations - adventitious obscurations refer to the afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge.
- The purity of natural obscuration - natural obscurations refers to inherent existence. Even though inherent existence is not an obscuration by definition, here it is referred to as an obscuration, because it is the ultimate final object of negation.

ii. **wisdom truth body - a final exalted knower in relation to both seeing suchness and seeing the world of multiplicity.**

Any type of awareness in the continuum of an arya buddha is a wisdom truth body, while the emptiness of the mental continuum of an arya buddha is the nature truth body. The nature truth body is the truth of the cessation in the continuum of an arya buddha.

*Through having burned up all the dry wood of  
Objects of knowledge, this peace is the conquerors'  
dharmakaya.*

*At this time there is no generation and no cessation.  
Due to ceasing mind it is found directly by the kaya.*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*this peace*, which is suchness free from all stains *through having burned up all the dry wood of objects of knowledge*' - it is the dharmakaya of the conquerors - because it is suchness free from all stains.

Take the subject '*sambogakaya*, the enjoyment body of a buddha' - it finds the dharmakaya directly where there is *no generation and cessation* - because it is in irreversible equipoise on suchness due to the *ceasing* of conceptual *minds* and mental factors.

Chandrakirti explains the nature truth body by way of three characteristics:

- The abandonment of dualistically appearing objects of knowledge
- Having ceased inherent generation and disintegration
- The lack of conceptual minds and mental factors (ceasing mind does not mean the sambogakya does not have

mind, but rather that a sambogakaya does not have conceptual minds or mental factors.)

#### 3.2.2.2.1.2. *The enjoyment body (sambogakaya<sup>2</sup>)*

Definition: *a final form body endowed with the five-fold definiteness*

- definiteness of place - resides only in the higher pure land of Ogmin.
- definiteness of time - abides until the very end of cyclic existence.
- definiteness of entourage - is only surrounded by arya bodhisattvas.
- definiteness of Dharma - teaches only the Mahayana Dharma.
- definiteness of body - is endowed with the major and minor signs of a buddha.

The way to think about it is that initially the wisdom truth body is in meditative equipoise on the nature truth body. However, this alone cannot benefit sentient beings, and that is why the sambogakaya manifests. The sambogakaya is only accessible to arya bodhisattvas, so in order to benefit sentient beings completely another form body is needed, which is the supreme emanation body. The supreme emanation body, however, is again only accessible to comparatively few sentient beings, so there needs to be other types of emanation bodies such as the artistic emanation bodies and so forth. Think about how an enlightened being manifests these different bodies for the benefit of sentient beings. The emanation bodies arise through the power of the truth body and the enjoyment body.

*The kaya of peace is clearly like the wish-granting tree  
And non-conceptual like the wish-fulfilling jewel.  
Enduring to enrich the world until migrators are  
liberated*

*It appears to those free from elaborations.*

Chandrakirti explains the enjoyment body by way of four characteristics:

- It is non-conceptual, having pacified conceptual minds and mental factors.
- Even though, it has the capacity to accomplish the purpose of sentient beings, like a wish-granting tree and a wish-fulfilling jewel.
- It endures to enrich the world until all migrators are liberated, i.e. it abides until the end of cyclic existence.
- It appears only to bodhisattvas who are free from dualistic elaborations during meditative equipoise, which can only be arya bodhisattvas.

If you ask, 'Why does the enjoyment body not appear to ordinary individuals who are not free from elaborations', then the answer is, 'because the enjoyment body is endowed with the five-fold definiteness.'

#### 3.2.2.2.1.3. *The body concordant with the cause (emanation body)*

The emanation bodies are referred to as bodies concordant with the cause, because their cause is both the truth body as well as the enjoyment body. Having gone through and understood the qualities of the truth body and the enjoyment body, one then wants to understand the qualities of the emanation body.

##### 3.2.2.2.1.3.1. *How the body and one of its pores shows all of one's activities*

<sup>1</sup> Dharma = dharma; kaya = body

<sup>2</sup> Samboga - enjoyment, but more from the point of view of active use and engagement than passive bliss.

*One form body concordant with the cause  
Of an able one displays at the very same time  
All the past ceased from the time of one's rebirths  
Clearly and perfectly in every detail.*

Take the subject 'buddhas, gifted destroyers gone beyond' - they can display all their past activities with each pore of their bodies - because *one form body concordant with the cause of the emanation body of an able one displays all the past*, which has now *ceased, from the time of one's rebirths clearly and perfectly at the very same time in every detail.*

One pore of an emanation body can display all his or her past lives in every detail. Not just the past life itself, but all the details of the circumstance of that life. Here it uses the example of when the buddha practised generosity in the past, whilst a bodhisattva. The perfection of generosity is generosity that is held by bodhicitta, the wisdom realising emptiness and dedication for complete enlightenment.

*Every buddha land and the Able One,  
And whatever ability and power of their body and  
action,  
All hearers that were found and such,  
And all bodhisattvas and their bodies,  
Whatever dharmas and all selves therein,  
The Dharma heard, the actions performed,  
And however much generosity one offered them,  
One body shows all of this.  
Likewise, all the actions from when one practised  
Morality, patience, enthusiasm, concentration and  
wisdom  
In earlier times, without leaving any out,  
Are shown clearly by one pore of the body.*

One pore of the emanation body of a Gifted Destroyer Gone Beyond can display:

- *every buddha land* where they used to practise generosity,
- *the Able One* performing the actions of birth and so forth<sup>3</sup> in that buddha land, to whom they made offerings
- the supreme *ability and power of that Able One's body and action*,
- *all hearers that were found* in that Able One's retinue,
- *and such* practitioners who entered this retinue through their serious practise,
- *all bodhisattvas* who were in that buddha land, *and their bodies* endowed with marks and signs, as well as their robes, food and residence,
- *whatever Dharma* was taught there, whether it was from the point of view of one vehicle or three vehicles,
- *and all the selves* therein, i.e. beings such as householders and ordained ones,
- *the Dharma*, such as teachings on the three higher trainings *heard* and *the bodhisattva actions performed* upon hearing. (The bodhisattvas in this pure land repeatedly listen to the Dharma and always translate what they have heard into practice. In such a way they progress, by listening repeatedly and not just once.)
- *and however much generosity*, such as food, robes, precious garland and so forth, they *offered* to these buddhas and bodhisattvas,

*All of this* is shown by one body.

This refers to when a buddha was practising generosity in the past in a particular pure land. They can also show from

one pore the complete circumstances from when they practiced morality, patience, enthusiasm and so forth.

Buddhas can display all their past bodhisattva actions not only at a very coarse level, but even just one pore of a buddha's body has the ability to show all of their past lives in such detail.

### 3.2.2.1.3.2. *How the body and one of its pores shows all the activities of others*

*Likewise, the actions of the past buddhas, of those yet to come,  
And of those present, who stay in samsara until the end of space,  
Teaching the Dharma with high resonance,  
Bestowing breath on migrators in the grip of suffering,  
From embracing the first mind up to the essence of enlightenment,  
Knowing phenomena's deceptive nature  
All of them are shown clearly, like one's own,  
From one pore of the body at the same time.  
Likewise, the actions of the three times of bodhisattas,  
Superior solitary realisers and all hearers,  
And on top of that all instances of beings  
Are shown simultaneously by one pore.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'buddhas, gifted destroyers gone beyond' - they are able to show with each pore of their bodies all the actions of others - because

- they show clearly all the actions of the past buddhas, of those yet to come, and of those present, who stay in samsara until the end of space, bestowing breath on migrators in the grip of suffering through teaching the Dharma with high resonance;
- they show clearly all their actions, from embracing the first mind-generation up to the essence of enlightenment, from one pore of the body at the same time, like one's own, upon knowing the deceptive nature of phenomena;
- and likewise, the actions of the three times of bodhisattvas, superior solitary realisers and hearers, and of top of that, all the instances of ordinary beings, are shown simultaneously by one pore.

A buddha's form body doesn't show only their own past actions in the manner explained above, but it can also show all the past actions of all the different types of ayra beings of the three times - bodhisattvas, aryas, solitary realisers and hearers and so on - as well as all instances of ordinary beings simultaneously with one pore.

All of this tries to describe the power of the form body. You have to relate it back to the outline 'the body concordant with the cause'.

### 3.2.2.1.3.3. *Showing the perfect power of enlightened thought*

This powerful form body has such immense power even though a buddha does not have motivational conceptual thoughts. What is the exact power of enlightened thought?

**From the point of view of places:**

*This purity, induced by thought, shows  
Worlds extending to the edge of space on the object of one particle,  
And one particle pervading the limitless worlds;  
The particle didn't become bigger, the worlds didn't become smaller.*

This verse answers the recurring question, 'How did

<sup>3</sup> The twelve deeds.

thousands of disciples fit on Vultures Peak in Rajagriha?'.  
Mirror:

Take the subject 'buddhas, gifted destroyers gone beyond' - they are empowered with a perfect mind - because with *this purity* that is their activity induced by their mere thought they can *show on the object of one extremely small particle worlds extending to the edge of space...*

On the one hand a buddhas mind can project all the infinite worlds extending to the edge of space onto the space of one extremely small particle.

... and at the same time they can show *one particle pervading the limitless worlds*; however in the first cast, *the one particle didn't become bigger* and in the second case *the worlds didn't become smaller*.

The enlightened thought of the enlightened mind has power over the object, and that is how a buddha can fit several thousand disciples on tiny Vulture's Peak. A buddha can fit hundred of thousands of millions of human beings on one atom through the power of enlightened thought. It may be similar to hundreds of thousands of people being reflected in a small reflecting surface.

It is like Mahasiddhas sitting in the hollowed-out cow's horn. The Mahasiddha didn't become smaller and the cow's horn didn't become bigger but through the power of enlightened thought it is possible for the Mahasiddha to sit in the cow's horn.

**From the point of view of time:**

*You without conceptual thought, however many Actions you show each moment, until The end of existence, there are not enough Particles in all the continents to account for them.*

Mirror:

You without conceptual thought, however many actions you show each moment until the end of cyclic existence, there are not enough particles in all the continents to account for them.

### 3.2.2.2.2. PRESENTATION OF THE QUALITIES OF THE POWERS

#### 3.2.2.2.2.1. Showing the ten powers in brief

*The power of knowing locations as well as non-locations,  
And likewise, awareness of karma's fruition,  
Comprehending the variety of wishes and  
The power of knowing the variety of spheres;  
Similarly, knowing supreme as well as inferior faculties,  
And the power of knowing all journeys,  
Mental stabilisations, emancipations, concentrations  
Along with absorptions and so forth;  
Knowledge remembering previous places and  
Likewise awareness of death, transference as well as  
birth, plus  
The power of knowing the exhaustion of contaminants;  
These are the ten powers.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'the powers of a buddha' - it has a tenfold division - because there are:

1. The *powers of knowing locations as well as non-locations*,
2. *And likewise*, the *awareness* power of the *fruition's karma*,
3. The power of *comprehending the variety of wishes*,
4. *The power of knowing the variety of spheres*,
5. The power of *knowing supreme and inferior*

*faculties*,

6. *The power of knowing all the paths journeying anywhere*,

7. *The awareness power knowing mental stabilisations, emancipations, concentrations, absorptions and so forth*,

8. *The power of knowledge remembering previous places*,

9. *Awareness power of death, transference as well as birth*;

10. *Plus the power of knowing the exhaustion of contaminants*.

All these powers refer to different types of unobstructed awareness.

#### 3.2.2.2.2.2. Showing the ten powers extensively

##### 3.2.2.2.2.2.1. The power of knowing locations and non-locations

*The cause from which something is definitely generated Was taught by those that are exalted knowledge as its location.*

*Non-location is the opposite of that explanation.*

*Knowing*

*Limitless objects having abandoned obstruction is called 'power'.*

Here the object possessor is enlightened transcendental wisdom, and the object ascertained is what produces happiness and what doesn't produce happiness, what produces suffering and what doesn't produce suffering. For example, happiness arises from virtue, so virtue is the location of happiness, and suffering arises from non-virtue, so non-virtue is the location of suffering. Suffering does not arise from virtue, so therefore virtue is a non-location of suffering and vice versa. This power is about knowing the specific locations and non-locations without attachment or obscuration.

##### 3.2.2.2.2.2.2. The power of knowing the fruition of karma

*Desired and undesired, the opposite of that, karma through*

*Purging phenomena, and also the great variety of their ripening,*

*The exalted knowledge with the power and ability to engage individually,*

*Pervading the three time objects of knowledge, is posited as power.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'buddhas, gifted destroyers gone beyond' - they have attained what is *posited as the power* of knowing the fruition of karma - because they have attained *the exalted knowledge pervading the three time objects of knowledge with the power and ability to engage individually the desired*, i.e. virtue, and the *undesired*, i.e. non-virtue.

Since one desires happiness, virtue becomes that to be desire, and since one doesn't desire suffering, non-virtue becomes the undesired.

This knowledge refers to the specific knowledge of the individual karmic causes and their results, such as the different pure virtuous karmas and its fruitional results, pure non-virtuous karmas and their fruitional results, *the opposite of that*, which is mixed karma, the karma of uncontaminated *purging phenomena through* which contaminated bad *karma* is purged, i.e. uncontaminated karma and *also the great variety of their ripening* effects.

This becomes very detailed, and only an enlightened being can know fully can know the subtle interdependences of karmic cause and effect. For example, there is a specific

cause for each characteristic of one's body and a buddha is able to say exactly when one created the specific cause, and in which circumstances. There are many examples in the sutras when the Buddha explained what the specific causes were for specific results that individuals were experiencing.

#### 3.2.2.2.2.3. The power of knowing the variety of wishes

*Desires through the power of the elements of attachment etc.,*

*A great variety of inferior, average and distinguished superior wishes,*

*Even the wishes hidden by being at odds with them, knowing them by*

*Pervading and going into the three times is called power.*

#### 3.2.2.2.2.4. The power of knowing the variety of spheres

*Awakened ones proficient in the divisions of spheres Engage with the infinite exalted knowledge of perfect buddhas*

*That taught as spheres, i.e. any nature of the eyes and so forth,*

*In all characteristics; this is posited as power.*

#### 3.2.2.2.2.5. The power of knowing superior and inferior faculties

*Only the highly intelligent entirely conceptual etc. is thought of as superior.*

*Occasions when merely mediocre and dull are taught as inferior, also*

*Understanding the eyes etc., plus the mutual ability to establish;*

*The omniscient exalted knowledge without attachment is taught as power.*

#### 3.2.2.2.2.6. The power of knowing all journeys

*Some paths lead to the Conqueror, some to the enlightenment*

*Of a solitary realiser or of a hearer, to the pretas,*

*Animals, gods, humans as well as the hells and so forth.*

*Their limitless exalted knowledge without attachment is posited as power.*

#### 3.2.2.2.2.7. The power of knowing the utterly afflicted and the entirely purified

*The different specific yogas of the limitless worlds, Mental stabilisations, eight emancipations and various calm abidings,*

*Any specific absorptions - one and eight;*

*Unobstructed exalted knowledge of them is taught as power.*

#### 3.2.2.2.2.8. The power of knowing previous places

*Past selves as well as other sentient beings, remaining in samsara*

*As long as ignorant, however many individual samsaric sentient beings*

*And their limitless bases, countries, locations, and appearances,*

*Any exalted knowledge aware of them is called power.*

#### 3.2.2.2.2.9. The power of knowing death, transference and birth of sentient beings

*Every death, transference and birth of each individual sentient being*

*Abiding in the worlds extending to the limits of space, limitless exalted knowledge*

*Of their many details at this time, engaging them without attachment,*

*Completely and perfectly, is posited as power.*

#### 3.2.2.2.2.10. The power of knowing the exhaustion of contaminants

*Through the power of the omniscient mind of the*

*conquerors*

*The afflictions together with their karmic latencies are quickly obliterated;*

*Any cessation of afflictions through the awareness of hearers etc.,*

*Limitless exalted knowledge of them without attachment is asserted as power.*

You can understand the ten powers by just reading through them. There is nothing there that one can't understand.

#### 3.2.2.2.2.3. Why it is impossible to express all the qualities

*Birds won't be impeded by a non-existence of space*

*But exhaustion of their strength will stop them there.*

*Likewise, disciples and the Buddha's children will have to stop*

*Without having expressed the infinite space-like qualities of a buddha.*

Sooner or later hearers, self liberators and bodhisattvas will have to give up trying to express the qualities of a buddha; not because the qualities of the buddha are exhausted, but because they are exhausted.

Mirror:

That hearer *disciples*, self-liberators and *the Buddha's children have to stop without having expressed all the infinite space-like qualities of the Buddha* is not because the qualities of the Buddha have dried up, but because the power of their minds is not sufficient.

For example, when *birds* fly in the sky, *a non-existence*, or exhaustion, *of space won't impede* their faculty of flight so for example when a bird falls down from the sky it will not be because they have been stopped by the lack of space but they will fall down because they have been completely exhausted.

*Therefore, since I am the same, what of your qualities Am I able to know and express? Even though, Because they were taught by Arya Nagarjuna I abandon doubt and explain them a little.*

Mirror:

*Since I*, the author of the commentary, *am the same, what of your*, the Buddha's, *qualities am I able to know and express? Even though*, the reason that *I abandon doubt and explain them a little* is *because they were taught by Arya Nagarjuna*.

#### 3.2.2.2.2.4. Explaining the benefits of knowing the two qualities

*The profound is emptiness, consequently*

*The other qualities are extensive.*

*Through knowing the mode of the profound and extensive These qualities will be attained.*

Mirror:

The Buddha's qualities are condensed into two, *the profound emptiness*, i.e. the cause-and-effect of the dharmakaya, and the *other, extensive, qualities*.

There is a point to meditating on *the profound and extensive* after *knowing* their *mode* - because one *will attain these two buddha qualities*.

The profound is the emptiness truth body, and the emptiness of basis and path. Meditating on them becomes the cause for the truth body. The other qualities and powers of the ten grounds are the extensive, and meditating on them become the cause for the form body. By knowing these two and meditating on them one attains the two buddha bodies.

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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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30 November 2004

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As usual, adopt a good motivation, which is the motivation of bodhicitta.

### 3.2.2.3. *The emanation body*

We have said before that the nature truth body, the wisdom truth body, and the enjoyment body of a buddha abide until the end of cyclic existence. Then the question arises, 'What about the emanation body?' Is the emanation body finished after one lifetime? Shakyamuni Buddha, a supreme emanation body, completed the twelve deeds in this world, and since then there has not been another supreme emanation body in this world. So it is a fair enough question to ask, 'Is there only one supreme emanation body? Was that supreme emanation body then 'it', after that emanation body has passed away?'

*Further, having ventured into the three worlds, you who hold the immoveable body  
Show through emanations descending, birth, and the wheel of enlightenment's peace.  
Thus you guide all worldly beings of diverse backgrounds, conceived by hope, copiously bound, with compassion to a state beyond sorrow.*

This verse is saying there is not just one single emanation body performing the twelve deeds, but that there are infinite emanation bodies that are working in all the realms that fill the expanse of space.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'gifted buddhas gone beyond' - they wield various emanation bodies - ...

Here it is showing that a buddha such as Shakyamuni Buddha is empowered with many different types of emanation bodies. For example, Shakyamuni Buddha taught extensively to hearers, solitary realisers and bodhisattvas, but one shouldn't think that there were no other emanation bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha teaching other beings. Why?

*Mirror:*

...because *having ventured into the three worlds,*

The three worlds refers to the lower realms, the realms in the middle, and the higher realms.

*Mirror:*

*...you who hold the immoveable body shows through emanation bodies descending from Tushita, birth, and the wheel of enlightenment's peace, and thus you guide all worldly beings of diverse background,...*

The buddhas guide all the different disciples according to their different dispositions by manifesting the twelve

deeds of descending from Tushita and so forth.

*Mirror:*

*...who are conceived by hope, and copiously bound, with compassion to a state beyond sorrow.*

'Hope' refers to craving, 'copiously bound' refers to being copiously bound by affliction and karma. While guiding these beings to a state beyond sorrow with non-discriminating great compassion, the body is in immoveable equipoise on emptiness.

When it says:

*Thus you guide all worldly beings of diverse backgrounds*

this also includes the beings who are more inclined to follow the hearer's path, those who feel more inclined to follow the solitary realiser's path and those who that feel more inclined to follow the Mahayana path. The Buddha taught the three vehicles with compassion to those beings. That's how one arrives at the teaching of three final vehicles.

This naturally leads on to the question, 'Well, are there three final vehicles in Buddhism or is there only one final vehicle?' The answer is that there is only one vehicle. That three final vehicles were taught is an interpretive teaching, and not to be taken at its surface meaning.

### 3.2.2.4. *Establishing it into one path*

*To eliminate all stains nothing is more important than knowing suchness.  
Hence different expressions of phenomena's suchness are not taught.  
Also, there is not a variety of wisdoms, its object possessor.  
That is why you show migrators an unequalled non-dual vehicle.*

First of all, what one has to consider is that even though on the surface, it looks as if the Buddha taught three final vehicles, those seemingly three final vehicles are actually one unequalled non-dual vehicle. The Buddha taught only one non-dual vehicle unequalled by other vehicles.

*Mirror:*

Why? Because *different expressions of phenomena's suchness are not taught*; and wisdom, the object possessor of that suchness, also does not have *a variety of modes of apprehension*. *To eliminate all stains, nothing is more important than knowing suchness* directly.

Here it explains the reasoning why there is only one final vehicle in Buddhism. First of all, the significance of suchness - only the knowledge of suchness eliminates the stains of true grasping, true appearance and inherent existence. Secondly, there aren't different types of suchness. There is only one suchness and the wisdom that apprehends suchness does not have different modes of apprehension. There aren't different modes of apprehension for the wisdom that realises suchness, but it is only one mode of apprehension, which shows also that there is only one suchness.

Chandrakirti uses this reasoning to show that there is only one final vehicle, implying that if there were to be three final vehicles, then there would have to be three

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different types of suchness, which there aren't.

To sum it up, one can say that there are not three final vehicles because:

- a. Every sentient being has the capacity to be free from all stains;
- b. There are no different appearances of suchness – there is only one.

*Because migrators are degenerate, which causes them to generate faults,  
They, the worldly beings, aren't interested in the deep and profound objects of a buddha.  
Tathagata, you possess the method of compassion simultaneously with exalted knowledge,  
And you stated directly 'I will liberate sentient beings'.*

Even though there is one final vehicle, it is still valid for the Buddha to teach three final vehicles. One has to look into the reason why the Buddha taught three final vehicles.

Why would the Buddha induce some of his disciples into the Hinayana path, such as the hearer's path, and not try to induce all of his disciples directly into the Mahayana path? The Mahayana teachings are extremely deep and profound and as such, it is extremely difficult for sentient beings to become interested in those teachings. The reason why it is difficult to induce sentient beings into the deep and profound Mahayana vehicle is because now is a time when the five degenerations are flourishing and running wild, which causes sentient beings to generate many faults.

### The five degenerations

1. The degeneration of sentient beings. This degeneration refers to us. Even though there have been limitless, countless buddhas who have become enlightened, there are so many sentient beings for whom simply the karma to meet buddhas, and to be ripened themselves has not ripened.
2. The degeneration of afflictions. Afflictions arise very intensely and strongly in the continuum of sentient beings through the cause of just a tiny condition. Mental states that make the mind inflexible and unworkable arise very easily and strongly through small conditions.
3. The degeneration of view. Sentient beings very easily grasp as correct that which is incorrect.
4. The degeneration of life. On the whole, the life span of sentient is becoming shorter.
5. The degeneration of time or the degeneration of the eon. This refers simply the time that one is living in. The time is degenerated. Why? Because of all these other degenerations.

Because sentient beings experience these many faults, it is extremely difficult for a buddha to induce a sentient being immediately into the Mahayana path. However, a buddha does not give up on sentient beings just because of not being able to induce them directly into the Mahayana path. As it says he uses:

*'...the method of compassion simultaneously with exalted knowledge,...*

Also because of having made this promise at the learner stage, while practicing the bodhisattva's path,

*'...I will liberate sentient beings.'*

a buddha does not give up on sentient beings because of not being able to induce them directly into the Mahayana path. Instead, a buddha teaches other different paths with which sentient beings feel more comfortable at first, and then later, slowly introduces them into the Mahayana path. That is the reason why the Buddha taught three final vehicles, even though ultimately there is only one final vehicle. Because of the promise made during the learner's stage, and because of his great compassion and exalted knowledge, a buddha teaches the three final vehicles in order to make disciples more comfortable at the beginning. It is good for you to keep this in mind. Plan that in the future you will be able to teach sentient beings likewise. These are the reasons for teaching three final vehicles.

Apart from the Mahayana vehicle why did the Buddha also teach the hearer and the solitary realiser vehicles? It was in order to place the mind of trainees who cannot be induced directly into the Mahayana path, but who can be taught the hearer's path and solitary realiser's path, within the method of purification, so that they can achieve the happiness of cessation. In this the Buddha was very skilful.

*Therefore, like the skilled, who established a pleasant town to overcome boredom  
For the people travelling to the continent of jewels,  
You taught this vehicle to place the mind of trainees within the method of pacification.  
Those with a purified isolated mind you taught separately.*

The root text gives this analogy of a captain who is ferrying a boatload of people on a long journey to a continent with many jewels. In order to avoid having the passengers becoming bored, depressed and so forth due to the long journey, the captain establishes with magical powers a nice illusory town for the passengers. While they are on the journey they have the impression of being in this very nice town, and so they don't mind the long journey. This is an analogy for why the Buddha taught the hearer vehicle and the solitary realiser vehicle for those who cannot be induced directly into the Mahayana path. However this ascertainment of the bliss of liberation is not enough to complete the path. That's why the hearer and the solitary realiser vehicles are not final vehicles. Those who abide within the peace of having pacified the afflictions, still have to be guided up to complete enlightenment along the Mahayana path.

### 3.2.2.5. From the point of view of the times of becoming enlightened and remaining

#### 3.2.2.5.1. From the point of view of the time of becoming enlightened

*For as many times as there are particles found in all the worlds  
Of the ten directions that are the Buddha's objects,  
The Tathagata went to supreme superior enlightenment.  
However, this secret of yours should not be told.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'gifted buddhas gone beyond' - the number of times they became enlightened and went forth to the essence of enlightenment is inconceivable - because you *the Tathagata went to supreme superior enlightenment for as many times as there are particles found in all the worlds of the ten direction Buddha fields.*

*However, this secret of yours should not be told to divisive students, because it is difficult to believe for those who haven't accumulated merits previously.*

This secret of yours should not be told to those of a lesser mind because they lack the merits to believe it.

Shakyamuni Buddha did not just manifest enlightenment once; he did not show the twelve deeds just once. Any buddha doesn't just show the twelve deeds - the deed of descending from Tushita-heaven; the deed of taking a place in the mother's womb; the deed of manifesting enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and so forth - just once. They are shown repeatedly over and over again, limitlessly in the many, many different places for the benefit of sentient beings.

#### 3.2.2.5.2. From the point of view of the time of remaining

If a buddha manifests the twelve deeds time and again, then for how long will this continue? For how long will emanation bodies be around?

*As long as not all transitory beings have gone to supreme thorough peace,  
And as long as space has not disintegrated,  
Why would you, the Conqueror who nurses like a second mother,  
Born from the mother of wisdom, go into extreme peace?*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'Gifted Buddha Gone Beyond' - *why would you go into extreme solitary peace, you won't - because as long as not all transitory beings have gone to supreme thorough peace, and as long as space has not disintegrated, you, the Conqueror born from the mother of wisdom nurses sentient beings like a second mother, until cyclic existence is empty.*

For as long as transitory beings have not gone to supreme thorough peace themselves the Gifted Buddha Gone Beyond does not go into extreme solitary peace. Why? Because the Buddha has non-discriminatory great compassion.

*Transitory beings eat poisoned food due to the fault of ignorance.  
The anguish of a mother for her suffering sick son who ate poison  
Does not equal your affection for the family members of a person who ate poison.  
Hence, the protector doesn't go into supreme and thorough peace.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'Gifted Buddha Gone Beyond' - you, the *protector, don't go into supreme and thorough solitary peace - because the mental anguish of a mother*

*for her suffering sick son who ate poison does not equal your affection for the family members of a person who ate the poisoned food of the sensory inputs due to the fault of ignorance*

Unskilled sentient beings grasping at phenomena and non-phenomena as truly existent generate suffering during generation and disintegration, through separating from and meeting with beauty and ugliness; and experience becoming evildoers. Therefore transitory beings become the urgent object of great compassion, Tathagata, since your greatly compassionate mind has rejected peace, you don't go beyond misery.

### 3.3. THE WAY OF COMPOSING THE COMMENTARY

*I, the bikkhu Chandrakirti, expounded this school,  
In accordance with scriptural reference  
And oral instructions,  
Extracting it from the treatise on the Middle Way*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*this school*' of the 'Introduction to the *Middle Way*', - it is free from the fault of having been invented by *the bikkhu Chandrakirti - because it is expressed in accordance with definitive scriptural reference, and the oral instructions of Nagarjuna, extracting it from the treatise on the Middle Way, Root Wisdom.*

When Chandrakirti wrote *Introduction to the Middle Way*, he relied upon scriptural references, he relied upon all the instructions of Nagarjuna and also he relied upon valid reasoning. By relying on these three he could compose this commentary, extracting it from the treatises on the Middle Way by Nagarjuna. As such, it is not something that has been invented by Chandrakirti. It is a valid commentary on the Buddha's teachings.

*Just like this dharma  
Does not exist apart,  
The school arising here also does not exist elsewhere.  
Scholars, endeavour to ascertain this statement.*

This next verse deals with the purpose of composing this commentary. The ultimate purpose is of course to lead sentient beings to enlightenment.

*Afraid of the extremely vast colour of  
Nagarjuna's awareness ocean  
Beings distance themselves from any pure tenet.  
Now Chandrakirti fulfils hopes completely with the water  
That has opened the petals of the blossoming utpala  
that is its composition.  
Profound, potentially frightening, suchness elucidated, beings realise decisively only through previous habituation. Others won't comprehend it, despite extensive listening. Therefore, having seen these fictional approaches, like scholarly systems asserting self, give up fondness for texts asserted by other systems, different from this.*

A more immediate reason for composing this commentary is to show the validity of having a total lack of inherent existence, while on the other hand having the possibility of action and result, cause, effect and action. To show that while on the one hand it is correct to say

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that there is not even one atom of inherent existence, it is still possible on the other hand to have the valid presentation of conventional and ultimate truth, and the presentation of cause, effect and action.

Certain students, such as Bhavaviveka, started to assert that actually Nagarjuna's *Root Wisdom* supported the Vaibhashika and Svatantrika assertions of the inherent existence of conventional and ultimate truth. *Entering the Middle Way* was written in order to refute that.

### 3.4. DEDICATING THE MERITS OF COMPOSING THE TREATISE

*Merits from explaining master Nagarjuna's pure school, white like an autumn star in the gloom of the afflictions in the mind's sky, or like the jewel of the crown ornament of the snake of the mind, pervade to the edge of existence. From attaining these may all transitory beings, having realised suchness, quickly ascend to the Tathagata's ground.*

Mirror:

The merits that arise from explaining master Nagarjuna's pure school, are white like an autumn star in the midst of the gloom of the afflictions in the mind's sky, or are like the jewel of the crown ornament of the snake of the mind, and pervade to the edge of existence...

First of all, Chandrakirti is saying there are no limits to the merits gained from explaining master Nagarjuna's school. They are infinite. Then he says:

*'...white like an autumn star in the gloom of the afflictions in the mind's sky, ...'*

Here, Chandrakirti refers to his own mind as 'the mind's sky'. Basically he says that the sky of his mind is very gloomy, because of all the afflictions present there. However despite having such an afflicted mind, the merits that are gained from explaining master Nagarjuna's school are like 'an autumn star', shining in the gloom of the afflictions in his mind. Despite having an afflicted mind, there is some white virtue that was created by composing this commentary.

Chandrakirti also likens the merits that are gained from explaining master Nagarjuna's pure school to the crown ornament of a snake, 'the snake of the mind.' He likens his mind to an angry snake, the snake of anger, saying, 'Despite having such a mind, I still gained merits from explaining Nagarjuna's school, and these merits are like a crown ornament that this snake is wearing'. Then he dedicates these merits saying, 'Having realised emptiness directly may all sentient beings quickly ascend to the buddha ground'.

Then we have the Colophon, which deals with who composed the commentary and who translated it and so forth. So there is not really much need for explanation.

## 4. COLOPHON

### 4.1. Composer's colophon

*This completes the Introduction to the Middle Way, which clarifies the extensive And the profound, by master Chandrakirti, whose mind entered the supreme vehicle; Who holds irreversible exalted knowledge and compassion; And who opposed true grasping by milking the drawing of a cow with plenty of milk.*

When Chandrakirti was in Nalanda, at one point he was made the manager of the monastery. As such he also became responsible for the monastery's livestock. Part of the responsibility of the manager was to supply milk on a regular basis to the monks. When the time came for him to give milk to the monks, the cows were in a far off field. So in order to illustrate the nature of mere imputation, he drew a cow on a wall and then milked the drawing of the cow.

We have created a lot of merit by going through this text, which you should dedicate well.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright  
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*Edited Version*

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