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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

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

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We are up to the headings that explain the generosity of bodhisattvas. The previous headings were: explaining the generosity of the first ground; and explaining the generosity of a lower base.

Here the outlines are: showing the uncommon benefits of a bodhisattva's generosity; showing generosity to be the main advice for both bases, showing which joy bodhisattvas experience at the time of generosity; and showing whether or not bodhisattvas experience pain when giving their body.

### 2.3.3. *Showing the Uncommon Benefits of a Bodhisattva's Generosity*

The outline, showing the uncommon benefits of a bodhisattvas' generosity is shown in the next two lines of the root text,

*Those with mental commitment pledging to benefit  
migrators, attain joy from generosity not long  
after.*

We explained earlier how bodhisattvas experience joy by practising generosity. Under this heading we explain the uncommon joy experienced by a bodhisattva practising generosity.

When it says, 'Those with mental commitment pledging to benefit migrators', the subject, bodhisattvas, have made the mental commitment pledging to give all sentient beings both long-term benefit as well as temporary happiness. The long-term benefit is placing sentient beings in the state of enlightenment, while the short-term benefit is the happiness that the sentient beings get from their practise of virtue at the time. They have made a determination to benefit sentient beings both in the short-term as well as in the long-term, which is what bodhisattvas are about.

There's a reason why bodhisattvas have such great devotion to the practice of generosity. Immediately after having practised generosity, when bodhisattvas see the satisfaction that has been attained by the recipient, supreme joy is generated within their mind, which is the fruit of their generosity. That is the reason why they are so devoted to the practice of generosity.

It is good to know that only bodhisattvas experience supreme joy immediately after having practised generosity, and upon seeing the satisfaction of the recipient. When what are called lower base sentient beings practise generosity they don't attain this supreme joy from seeing the satisfaction of the

recipient. That's also why lower beings are more easily discouraged from the practice of generosity; they cannot directly attain that benefit from the practise of generosity.

### 2.3.3.1. *Showing Generosity to be the Main Advice for Both Bases*

For the next heading, showing generosity to be the main advice for both bases, the root text reads,

*Thus for compassionate ones and those without  
compassion,  
Therefore the very advice of generosity is  
central.*

From Mirror:

*The central advice on generosity alone, given to both  
types of practitioners, is very important. This is  
because the higher status and definite goodness of  
both compassionate bodhisattvas, and those who  
aren't compassionate bodhisattvas, are induced by  
generosity.*

### 2.3.3.2. *Showing Which Joy Bodhisattvas Experience at the Time of Generosity*

From Mirror:

*If it is asked, 'what type of joy do bodhisattvas  
experience at the time of generosity, and from which  
cause does that joy arise?'*

then the answer is this verse from the root text is given:

*If able ones can't generate the same bliss by  
abiding  
Within peace, as the joy conquerors' children  
generate  
by contemplating the word they heard, saying  
'give',  
What need is there to mention giving everything  
The bodhisattva's joy in giving away everything,  
body, possessions etc., is superior to the joy  
experienced by hearers and self-liberators through  
entering the sphere of peace.*

The inner joy that bodhisattvas experience from practising generosity is superior to the joy experienced by arhats in meditative absorption on peace, or cessation. When it says in the root text, 'if able ones can't generate the same bliss by abiding within peace', 'able ones' refers to the hearer and self-liberated arhats.

Mirror goes on:

*There is actually not even the need to talk about the  
joy that bodhisattvas experience when they actually  
practise generosity, because by abiding within peace  
the able hearer and self-liberated arhats can't even  
generate the same joy as conquerors' children receive  
from hearing, and contemplating the word saying  
'give'.*

So for bodhisattvas not even practising generosity, but just being asked for something generates this very great joy in their continuum, which exceeds by far the joy experienced by arhats who are in meditative absorption on peace.

Since bodhisattvas generate this very strong joy even when they are just requested to give something, when they hear the word 'give', then what need is there to

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mention the joy derived from giving everything? What need is there to mention the joy that arises for bodhisattvas from giving away everything, including their body, possessions, merits, and so on.

Therefore the activities engaged in by arhats and by bodhisattvas for the benefit of others differ very greatly. Actually an arhat is distracted from the purpose of others by their absorption in cessation, whereas a bodhisattva's mind becomes captivated by the bliss that arises from the practice of generosity. Then, with their mind captivated by the bliss arising from generosity, the bodhisattva whole-heartedly engages in the practice of benefiting sentient beings. Therefore the benefit that the bodhisattvas bring to sentient beings is far greater than the benefit brought to sentient beings by arhats.

### 2.3.3.3. Showing Whether or Not Bodhisattvas Experience Pain at the Time of Giving Away Their Body

Here we have four lines,

*Giving cut body and through having seen  
Suffering of self as mere knower of  
The sufferings of hells etc. of others,  
They quickly engage in efforts to eliminate  
those.*

Here the question is asked, do bodhisattva experience suffering or not when giving away their bodies?

Just before, it was explained that bodhisattvas experience supreme mental joy from the practise of generosity. So if they experience supreme mental joy during the practise of generosity, do they experience physical pain when giving away their body?

If this question is asked from the point of view of those great bodhisattvas who have attained a ground, then the answer is that they don't have physical suffering. For them it would be like a mindless object: if one cuts a mindless object there's no experience of pain. So for a bodhisattva who has attained one of the grounds, cutting off parts of the body will be exactly like that. This is supported by various quotations from the sutras

*It states in the Precious Garland,  
Since those bodhisattvas don't experience any physical  
pain  
then what need is there to mention mental  
pain?*

In answer to the question, 'Do bodhisattvas experience physical pain at the time of giving away their body?' then if the question is from the point of view of a bodhisattva who has attained a ground, then the answer is no. To support this, Lama Tsong Khapa gives this quotation from the Precious Garland by Nagarjuna, where it says that bodhisattvas who have attained a ground don't experience any physical suffering, and since they don't experience any physical suffering there's no need to even mention any mental suffering.

From *Illumination*:

*If it is asked from the point of view of not having  
attained the ground 'Extremely Joyful' that is*

*without the attachment completely grasping at body  
and possessions, physical suffering will definitely  
arise because of the body meeting with obstructive  
conditions to its abiding.*

*Even so, at that time, by depending on that suffering  
they abide<sup>1</sup> on the cause of superior engagement for  
the welfare of all sentient beings.*

*They look upon hell, animal, hungry ghost beings  
etc. as having a thousand-fold superior suffering, the  
intense great uninterrupted suffering without respite  
of having one's body destroyed, greater than the  
suffering of cutting one's own body. Having  
discounted their own suffering of being **cut** and  
**giving** their own flesh to the beggar they very  
**quickly engage in effort to cut off** those sufferings  
of the hell realms etc. of other sentient beings by  
taking the mere experience of **their suffering** as  
proof.*

They view their own suffering (of cutting off, and giving away parts of their body) as a mere self-knower, as a reason to quickly engage in an effort to eliminate the terrifying sufferings experienced by others in the hells. So bodhisattvas who haven't attained a ground view the suffering of self that arises through cutting off parts of the body as a self-knower, which shows them the greatly superior suffering experienced by sentient beings in the hell realms.

In such a way they can discount their own suffering of being cut and giving away their flesh to a beggar, and they very quickly engage in an effort to cut off the suffering of beings in the hell realms etc by taking the mere experience of their own suffering as a taste of the suffering that is experienced by others in the hells. In such a way they discount their own suffering, and very quickly become very enthusiastic about eliminating the suffering of beings in the hell realms.

Since it is possible for bodhisattvas who haven't attained the ground to have this strength of mind and motivation, it is explained that it is also possible for bodhisattvas who haven't attained the ground to give away their body. So giving away the body is not a practice that is exclusive to arya bodhisattvas.

### 2.3.4. The Divisions of the Perfection of Generosity

This is shown in the verse,

*Generosity empty of gift recipient and giver  
Is called perfection gone beyond transitory  
existence,  
That generating attachment for the three  
Is shown as perfection of transitory existence.*

The perfection of generosity gone beyond is shown in the first two lines where it says, 'the generosity empty of gift recipient and giver is called perfection gone beyond transitory existence'.

What it is saying here is that the generosity that is held by the direct realisation of the lack of inherent existence of a gift, recipient and giver is called 'perfection beyond transitory existence'. As we have said before, to become a perfection an action needs to

<sup>1</sup>They abide on compassion.

arise out of the motivation of bodhicitta, and it needs to be concluded with a dedication. To become a perfection gone beyond, at the time of the action it also needs to be held by the direct realisation of the lack of inherent existence of the gift, recipient the giver. So it needs to be held by an uncontaminated wisdom realising the lack of inherent existence of the three circles. Therefore the first instance of a perfection gone beyond can only occur on the first ground, and not before.

The uncontaminated wisdom realising emptiness directly is the mind that has gone beyond worldly existence, or beyond transitory existence. Therefore a person who has that wisdom is a person who has gone beyond transitory existence. Therefore their generosity, which is combined with that wisdom and the motivation of bodhicitta, and the dedication for complete enlightenment, will be a perfection gone beyond.

The practice of generosity will become only a perfection if it is based on the motivation of bodhicitta and the dedication for complete enlightenment. If it is then further combined with the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness it will be a perfection gone beyond. The significance here is that even though hearers and self-liberated arhats practise generosity, they don't practise the perfection of generosity, because they don't include bodhicitta motivation and the dedication in their practice. Also, as we explained before, in the uncommon Hinayana sutras the practice of the perfections aren't explained.

The generosity obscured by the generation of attachment for the true existence of the three circles is shown as perfection of transitory existence.

*Illumination:*

*The generosity bound by the generation of attachment that is true grasping for the three circles of giving is shown in the sutra as 'Perfection of Transitory Existence'.*

The Tibetan word for perfection is *pa-rol te-chen-pa* which is literally means having gone to the other side. Here one has the resultant perfection in the continuum of a Buddha and the causal perfection in the continuum of trainees.

1. One could look at it from the point of view as having already gone somewhere, so one looks at it from the point of view of the **result**. So as the result is already perfected, one says that the perfection exists in the continuum of a buddha.

That's the reason why the lower tenets say that perfections exist only in the continuum of a buddha, and that below the level of a buddha one has only the practice of a perfection, but one doesn't have the perfection.

2. There is another way of looking at 'gone to the other side', which is like the **cause**, so then one posits the perfection as also being the cause.

It is explained in the *Bodhisattova charyavatara* by Shantideva, that the resultant perfection of giving, the

perfected generous intention, exists only in the continuum of a buddha

Below that, one is perfecting the generous attitude, which makes it a causal perfection. There's an objection that could be made, which is that the perfection of generosity hasn't been attained, because there are still people in the world who are dissatisfied and who also, for example, experience the sufferings of hunger and thirst etc. The answer is that the perfection of generosity refers to the perfection of the generous thought. The fact that there are still sentient beings who experience hunger and thirst is not a sign that the perfection of generosity has not been achieved.

### 3. Qualities of the Ground

The final outline of the chapter is a brief summary of the qualities of the ground, The final verse of the chapter reads,

*Thus abiding intensely within a conqueror's child's mind,  
This joy beautifying with brilliance its superior base,  
Conquers by completely eliminating all impenetrable darkness,  
In the same way as a brilliantly white jewel.*

*Mirror:*

*The first ground 'Extremely Joyful' is like the brilliantly white moon jewel. The moon resides high in the sky and beautifies that residence with white light. It abides there completely eliminating all impenetrable darkness. In the same way the first ground 'Extremely Joyful' intensely abides within the mind of a conqueror's child on the first ground. It beautifies with the brilliance of transcendental wisdom its superior base, the first ground. It conquered the 'abandonment through seeing'.*

*Illumination:*

*The word 'thus' is to show that it has been explained above. Saying 'joy' perfectly proclaims the name of the ground. Saying, 'conquer' has the meaning of 'abiding after having eradicated adversaries'. By being merely in the nature of consciousness it abides in the mind of the children of conquerors. Therefore it abides high since the extremely joyful ground even conquers all impenetrable darkness by completely eliminating it in the manner explained above. In order to clarify the meaning explained above with an example I said 'like a brilliant white jewel'.*

*Showing the ground explained above called 'Extremely Joyful' by summarising briefly its qualities with the characteristics of uncontaminated consciousness.*

*This ground 'Extremely Joyful' is like the brilliant white jewel moon mandala. There are three ways of being like the moon.*

*Firstly abiding on a high place: It abides on a high path because of abiding intensely within the mind of a first ground conqueror's child who has attained the qualities of the ground explained before. Therefore it is like the moon residing high up in the sky. Since the first ground is a part of the mind of those*

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*Bodhisattvas it can be described as abiding there. For example like the eyes abiding within the head.*

*The mental continuum that is the supreme basis of the ultimate mind of the first ground, its superior residence, is beautified with the brilliant light of transcendental wisdom. This is like the moon beautifying with its white light its basis space.*

*Also the first ground abides within the victory over its adversaries, the abandonments of seeing. Therefore it is like the abiding of the moon after it has completely eliminated all impenetrable darkness.*

That completes the First Mind Generation 'Very Joyful'.

Next week we can start the second mind generation.

Having gone through the first chapter maybe you understand a little bit more about the practice of generosity.

You know that generally the definition of generosity is the generous attitude or intention. Even if one finds it difficult to practise generosity by giving something away, then it is important that one at least mentally trains one's mind, by being generous mentally. Then slowly, slowly through training one's mind in generosity, one will also be able to actually practice generosity - to actually give things away.

The perfection of generosity has a two-fold division into perfection of gone beyond, and worldly perfection. The difference is whether or not the perfection is held by the non-dual wisdom realising the emptiness of the three circles. Such wisdom is attained only from the first ground onwards, so the perfection that isn't held by that wisdom is called worldly perfection, which would refer to the perfection of ordinary beings.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that even though one might not yet be able to practise those very advanced practices of generosity, at least one should try to do it on a visualised level, or practise giving material offerings, or even just the very small offering of water to the Triple Gem etc. One can already start training in the practice of generosity, by giving these things on the basis of a motivation of bodhicitta. Then while one is practising, try to meditate on the emptiness of the three circles, and finally dedicating the merits for complete enlightenment. In such a way one trains one's mind and will then gradually reach the point where one will be able to attain the uncommon joy that is experienced by bodhisattvas at the time of practising generosity.

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*Edited Version*

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

We have finished the perfection of generosity, and now comes the perfection of morality. On the first ground, the bodhisattva excels in the practice of the perfection of generosity, and on the second ground the bodhisattva excels in the perfection of morality.

### **How a Bodhisattva Progresses from the first Ground to the Second**

There is something to explain about the way a bodhisattva progresses from one ground to the next. We talked about how the abandonments are eliminated from the continuum when we studied the tenets. It will also be discussed a bit when we reach the third mind generation, but maybe we can talk about it briefly now.

Very briefly, when the practitioner first reaches the *uninterrupted path of seeing*, the uninterrupted path of seeing acts as the direct antidote to the abandonments through seeing. So the uninterrupted path of seeing directly opposes and eliminates these abandonments. However, those abandonments have not yet been abandoned.

The elimination of the abandonments through seeing is achieved when the practitioner progresses to the *liberated path of seeing*, which is induced by the uninterrupted path of seeing. When the practitioner reaches the liberated path of seeing, which comes after the uninterrupted path of seeing, then the practitioner has attained the *first instance of the truth of cessation*. This cessation is the cessation of the abandonments through seeing.

Both the uninterrupted path of seeing and the liberated path of seeing, are what is called the *path of seeing that is meditative equipoise*. After that the bodhisattva arises out of their meditative equipoise and goes into the post-meditational period, during which merits are accumulated.

This *post-meditative path of seeing* is the second division or possibility for a path of seeing. Once a practitioner feels that they have enough merits to eliminate another level of abandonments from their continuum, then they again go into meditative equipoise. This meditative equipoise is just an ordinary meditative equipoise, which is neither an uninterinterrupted not liberated path.

So they again go into meditative equipoise and then, once that meditative equipoise becomes the direct antidote to the coarse-coarse, innate obscurations, that meditative equipoise becomes the *first uninterrupted path of meditation*. In the same way as the uninterrupted path of seeing directly opposed the abandonments through seeing, this first instance of the uninterrupted path of meditation directly opposes the coarse-course innate self-grasping, but hasn't eliminated it yet; it is in the process of eliminating it.

Once he or she has eliminated from their continuum this first coarse level of the abandonments through meditation, then the practitioner progresses from the first ground to the second ground, and has also attained the *second level of the truth of cessation*. Here the coarse- coarse innate obscurations cease, and the practitioner has attained the first instance of the *liberated path of meditation*.

When they reach the liberated path of seeing then the practitioner has attained the truth of cessation that is the cessation of the intellectually acquired true-grasping. Then when the practitioner reaches the first instance of liberated path of meditation, which is also the first instance of the second ground, then the practitioner has attained the cessation of the coarse-coarse innate true-grasping.

So you can see that on the first ground there are actually two types of uninterrupted paths, an uninterrupted path of seeing and an uninterrupted path of meditation.

### ***THE SECOND GROUND, ' STAINLESS'***

Then we go onto the explanation of the second ground 'Stainless', which has five divisions: showing morality on this ground to be perfect; praising morality; showing an example for being unmixed with immorality; showing the divisions of the perfection of morality; concluding by expressing the qualities of the ground

#### ***1. Showing Morality on This Ground to be Extremely Pure***

The first main division, showing morality on this ground to be extremely pure, has four subdivisions: showing morality on this ground to be perfect; showing the related qualities to be very pure; showing its morality to be superior to that on the first ground; showing the other cause of completely pure morality.

##### ***1.1. Showing Morality on this Ground to be Perfect***

The first two lines of the second chapter,

*Because of having perfect morality, pure qualities,  
They abandon immorality's stain also during  
dreams*

shows morality on this ground to be perfect. Here it is explaining what kinds of qualities have been attained.

What is the result of having excelled in the perfection of generosity on the first ground? The special quality that is attained on this ground through having practised on the first ground is excellent morality, and

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this is expressed in these first two lines. 'Because of having perfect morality, pure qualities, they abandoned immorality's stain also during dreams.'

Because the bodhisattva on the second ground has perfect morality and pure qualities, then they abandon the stain of immorality to the point that even during their dreams they will not have any type of immorality occurring. This is the special quality that distinguishes the practice of a bodhisattva on the second ground from that of a bodhisattva on the first ground.

If one asks, 'What does a second ground bodhisattva have that a first ground bodhisattva doesn't have?', then they have this special purity in the practice of morality.

There are two types of non-virtue, natural non-virtue and non-virtue through breaking vows. Here for example, it would refer to a bodhisattva breaking the bodhisattva vows, such as the eighteen root vows of a bodhisattva etc. So on this ground they have completely abandoned any type of immorality related to their vows, and also they have abandoned natural negativities, or natural non-virtuous actions. Actually the Tibetan word that is used to describe the non-virtue of creating natural negativities and breaking ones vows literally means 'that which can't even be expressed verbally' - it is so bad it cannot even be talked about. Arya beings would view non-virtuous karma in such a way.

Natural non-virtue is an action that will be non-virtuous for everyone who does that action, regardless of whether they have vows or not. So it is just a natural non-virtue.

Bodhisattvas on the second ground have abandoned all types of immorality, so their practice of morality is not partial. They don't say that they keep a certain type of vow, but break another type of vow, or that they avoid a particular natural non-virtue but still create other natural non-virtues. Their practice of morality is completely all-encompassing.

The action of killing is a natural non-virtue, and anyone who engages in the action of killing will create a non-virtuous karma. However, if an ordained person engages in the action of killing another human being, then on top of creating the natural non-virtue of killing another human being, then the monk or nun will also receive a root downfall. It works like that for all the non-virtuous actions.

The definition of morality is the **intention to restrain from non-virtue**. Therefore if, for example, even during a dream one kills another human being, then at that time one's morality has also been broken. If we think about the meaning of what morality really is from that point of view, then we can understand how one can also break one's morality during one's dreams, and one's practice will benefit.

As Nagarjuna said, in the same way as the earth is the ground that supports the mountains, the forests, etc., morality is the ground that supports our all qualities. The Sanskrit word for morality, *shila*, means 'to attain

happiness', from *shi* meaning 'happiness' and *la* meaning 'to attain'. The happiness that one attains is the pacification of the fires of regret. By practising morality then one will attain a particular type of happiness, which is the alleviation of the fires of regret and non-virtue.

As has been explained many times before, the practice of morality is the basis for the higher training of concentration. The reason why one doesn't have concentration is because the mind does not abide internally, and the reason it doesn't abide internally is because it is constantly distracted towards the outside. By pacifying the behaviour of body and speech then automatically the mind will remain more internally calm. By first subduing the coarse disturbing thoughts through the practice of morality, one then subdues the subtle disturbing thoughts through the practice of concentration. So the practice of morality pacifying the non-virtuous actions of body, speech, and mind constitutes the pacification of the coarse disturbing thoughts, which then serves as the basis on which one can subdue the subtle disturbing thoughts through the practise of concentration.

### The Ten Non-Virtues

As the next lines of the root text express, *They should practise all ten superior paths, By abandoning the ten non-virtuous karmic paths of body, speech, and mind.*

The ten non-virtuous actions are the three non-virtuous actions of body, the four non-virtuous actions of speech, and the three non-virtuous actions of mind. If these are abandoned then the activities become pure. The seven non-virtuous actions of body and speech (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, idle gossip), are what we refer to as non-virtuous karma. The other three of the mind, (covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view), wouldn't be regarded as non-virtuous karma because they are delusions. Non-virtuous karma arises from the delusions, but all are still referred to as karmic paths. So with seven actual non-virtuous karmas and the three motivations, then we get ten non-virtuous karmic paths.

We have seven types of non-virtuous karma and ten non-virtuous karmic paths. The difference is that the three motivations (the three delusions) are not karma, but the other seven are all karmas. One difference between karma and delusions is that delusions are definitely wrong consciousnesses, whereas karmas are not necessarily wrong consciousnesses. First, one has the motivation arising from one of the delusions, which are wrong types of mind that distort reality. However when one engages in the actual non-virtuous action on the basis of that delusion and creates the karma, then the action actually exists. So the karma that is created in relation to that action is not a distorted state of mind, because the action actually exists. Even though it is not completely clearly explained in the text, that's how I think about it.

As stated by Chandrakirti himself, in his *Self Commentary*, 'the abandonment of the ten non-virtuous

actions, which is the ten virtuous actions, is the practice of morality'. So the ten non-virtuous actions are that from which one has to restrain oneself. If one has prevented the ten non-virtuous actions from occurring then one is practising the ten virtuous actions, which are the reverse of the ten non-virtuous actions.

Practising abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions to create the practice of the ten virtuous actions is not a small practice that one should disregard. Even very high bodhisattvas on the second ground regard this practice as very important. If it is very important for those high practitioners then there's no question that it is also important for oneself at the present time. One can definitely practise the ten virtuous actions at least partially, and of the ten non-virtuous actions there are some that one can definitely abandon. If not all, there are definitely five, six, seven that one can abandon. One can definitely abandon killing, and stealing. Abandoning sexual misconduct is not so difficult, so that also can be done, and the faults of speech, lying, slander, harsh speech, and idle gossip, can also be abandoned. So abandoning these seven is definitely possible.

Of the three mental non-virtuous actions of covetousness, ill-will, and wrong view, maybe abandoning covetousness might be a little bit difficult, but then again abandoning ill-will and wrong view should be possible.

The practice of the ten virtuous actions is also important from the point of view of attaining a human life. It is definitely something that everyone can do, and it is a very important practice within one's life. If one transgresses them, then one purifies those transgressions through the practice of confessing the transgressions with a very strong regret. It is also the same for ordained practitioners. They have taken a number of vows to follow the practice of morality, and if they break some of the vows then they have to confess them with very strong regret, and purify them through confession.

### **1.2. Showing the Related Qualities to be Very Pure**

The next two lines are,

*By body, speech, mind's activities having become  
pure  
They should practice all ten superior paths.*

These two lines actually arise as the result of the question, 'How do the second ground bodhisattvas generate pure qualities through excellent morality?' The answer is by body, speech and mind's activities having become pure, they should practice all ten superior paths.

The second ground bodhisattvas have attained pure qualities through excellent morality, because through the activities of their body, speech and mind having become pure even during their dreams, they practise all ten superior karmic paths, which are the ten virtuous actions.

The activities of body, speech and mind can become pure basically by practising the three virtuous actions

related to the body (abandoning killing, abandoning stealing, and abandoning sexual misconduct) and then by practising the four virtuous actions of speech, and the three virtuous actions of mind. Then the activities of body, speech, and mind have become pure. In such a way they should practice all ten superior paths.

Here it talks about, perfecting those virtuous actions of body, speech, and mind. This is not only abiding free from the abandonments of body, speech, and mind, but also having perfected all the associated practices of morality that come in conjunction with the practice of morality.

### **1.3. Showing its Morality To Be Superior to That on the First Ground**

Here the root text reads,

*By excelling in all ten virtuous paths  
He becomes exceedingly pure,  
Eternally pure like an autumn moon,  
Beautified by such peace, radiance.*

First the question is asked, 'Don't those ten karmic paths also exist on the first ground?' The answer is that of course they do - the ten karmic paths of the ten virtuous actions are also practised by a first ground bodhisattva.

Bodhisattvas on the first ground also practice those ten karmic paths, but bodhisattvas on the second ground are superior in morality to the first ground because by excelling in all ten virtuous paths they become exceedingly pure.

The line 'Eternally pure like an autumn moon' introduces a metaphor.

Out of the ten perfections, the bodhisattva on the second ground has now attained superiority in the practice of the first and second perfection. However he has not yet excelled in the practice of the other eight perfections. Of course they also practise patience, and the other perfections. What it means is that they haven't excelled in the practice of those other eight perfections yet.

Even though here, expressively, of the ten virtuous actions, it just refers to the practice of the morality, one should take this only as an example. Actually the bodhisattvas on the second ground excel in the practise of all types of morality. Therefore the second ground bodhisattva, who is endowed with this incredibly pure morality, is likened to an autumn moon.

The autumn moon has very special qualities. It pacifies the suffering of heat, and its white light shines very brightly. The autumn moon abides very brightly in the sky. Bodhisattvas abiding on the second ground of eternally pure morality are like an autumn moon, because they are beautified by the peace and serenity arising from having restrained the doors of the sense powers, and by their brilliant aura's radiance.

First of all a practitioner who keeps very pure morality will exude a certain type of peace, which arises from having restrained the doors of the sense powers. They will also have a brilliance, a certain radiance in the

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same way as the autumn moon shines very brightly in the autumn sky. That radiance comes about through the practice of morality, and not from shaving one's head.

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

Some people say that monks seem to be very attractive as long as they are still monks, but once they have stopped being monks then they lose that quality. They seem to have the light of morality as long as their practice of morality is intact, but which they lose when their morality dissipates.

*Edited Version*

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You have to consider the benefits of morality - morality brings both mental as well as physical happiness. Abandoning physical non-virtuous actions takes away a certain physical heaviness. The body somehow feels lighter and better without that particular physical heaviness.

#### ***1.4. Showing the Other Cause of Completely Pure Morality***

*If one views pure morality as inherent,  
Consequently one's morality won't become pure,  
Therefore they also always completely forsake  
Activities of dualistic awareness regarding all  
three.*

Here it states that the wisdom realising emptiness is the other cause for completely pure morality, and that one needs to realise emptiness in order to have completely pure morality.

First of all you need to think about whether or not you need to have the realisation of emptiness in order to have pure morality.

If you think about it, you don't need to have the realisation of emptiness in order to have pure morality. For example although a mind-only bodhisattva hasn't realised emptiness they do have pure morality. So it's not necessary to have the realisation of emptiness in order to have pure morality. However it is necessary to have the realisation of emptiness in order to have the pure morality gone beyond. So in order to have the pure morality gone beyond, the realisation of emptiness is necessary.

We have to understand that this verse means that in order to attain the morality gone beyond one has to realise emptiness. As long as one views pure morality as inherent then one's morality gone beyond won't be pure. Therefore bodhisattvas always completely forsake activities of the dualistic awareness regarding all three.

As long as one doesn't forsake activities of dualistic awareness regarding the three circles of what is abandoned, by whom, and in regard to whom, then the morality won't be pure morality gone beyond. Bodhisattvas on the second ground always completely forsake activities of dualistic awareness regarding the three circles, and therefore they have attained pure morality gone beyond.

So maybe we can leave here for today.

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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

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

དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པ་ལ།

10 September 2002

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Generate the motivation that I have to attain the state of complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to do so I am now going to listen to this profound Mahayana teaching, and then put it into practice as much as possible.

## 2. Practising Morality

The division of praising morality has five subdivisions: enjoying the fruits of generosity in happy migrations depends upon morality; enjoying the fruits of generosity continuously depends upon morality; showing it to be extremely difficult to be liberated from the lower realms if one is separated from morality; the reason for teaching morality subsequently to generosity; and praising morality as the cause for both higher status and definite goodness.

### 2.1. *Enjoying the Fruits of Generosity and Happy Migrations Depends Upon Morality*

What this is saying is that one has to practise generosity on the basis of keeping pure morality.

The root text reads,

*Wealth arising from generosity in lower migrations  
Is due to the being's degenerated legs of morality.*

Previously we talked about how the second ground bodhisattva excels in the perfection of morality, and how they have achieved pure qualities through perfecting their practice of morality. Having established that, then here it praises the qualities of morality, the various beneficial aspects of morality.

If one wants to enjoy the fruits of generosity continuously on the basis of higher rebirth then one has to depend upon morality. So if one practises generosity on the basis of morality then one will enjoy the fruits of the generosity on the basis of a higher rebirth such as human or god.

As *Mirror* says:

*Since one wishes to enjoy the fruits of generosity on the basis of a happy migration one needs to keep morality, because if a sentient being's legs of morality degenerate, then wealth from generosity will arise on the basis of a lower migration.*

Wealth from generosity will arise, but if one lacks morality it will arise on the basis of a lower migration. Therefore if one wishes to enjoy the fruits of one's generosity on the basis of a higher rebirth then one has to practise morality.

We can observe for ourselves how some animals actually have more wealth than some human beings.

Here the projecting and establishing karma was non-virtuous karma causing rebirth in the animal realm, but then because of the virtuous completing karma, the animal enjoys great comfort and wealth during this life. There are many non-human beings that are said to have very great wealth, and here the same applies - they enjoy the fruits of virtuous completing karma while being thrown by non-virtuous projecting karma into a lower rebirth. Therefore we can see the significance of combining the practice of generosity with the practice of morality.

We have to relate those two lines to our own personal practice. Through our own experience we can confirm that there are some animals that enjoy a greater degree of wealth and comfort than some human beings. In fact in some situations they are often better off than the human beings that serve and take care of them. This comes about because they enjoy the fruits of virtuous completing karma. The care and comfort they enjoy is all the result of their previous generosity.

To relate this to ourselves, when we practise generosity we should remember that if our practice of generosity is devoid of the practice of morality then we will end up like that in a future life. The reason why those animals end up in that situation is because they didn't practice morality together with generosity.

Likewise many human beings who have attained a human rebirth because of virtuous projecting karma, endure great sufferings and destitution throughout their whole human life because of a non-virtuous completing karma. They practised morality in a previous life but their practice of morality lacked the practice of generosity.

We should remember those two situations when we practise generosity, and remind ourselves that we have to combine our practice of generosity with the practice of morality. Otherwise we will end up like those animals enjoying the fruits of their previous generosity.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that because they were separate from morality, then the wealth that arose as a result of the practice of their generosity didn't ripen on the basis of happy rebirth, but ripened on the basis of a lower rebirth.

This is shown in those two lines of the root text. Since one wishes for a higher rebirth, one needs the fruits of one's generosity to ripen into the basis of that higher rebirth. So, as was explained before, one should practise generosity on the basis of keeping morality.

### 2.2. *Enjoying the Fruits of Generosity Continuously Depends Upon Morality*

Having explained that if one doesn't practise morality then one will experience the fruits of one's generosity in a lower rebirth, the root text now explains the types of faults that ensue if one experiences the fruits of one's generosity in a lower rebirth.

Here the root text reads,

*Once accumulated wealth and interest are  
completely exhausted,  
From then on they won't receive resources.*

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From *Mirror*:

*The continuous enjoyment of the fruit of generosity depends upon morality, because if the result of generosity ripens upon a lower base on account of degenerated morality, then once the accumulated wealth and interest from practising generosity are completely exhausted, from then on that person won't receive the slightest resources.*

If one's practice of generosity is devoid of the practice of morality the results of the practice of generosity will ripen on a lower base. If that lower rebirth happens, one lacks the opportunity of increasing one's wealth through further practice of generosity. All that one will do is use up the accumulated merits. One will use up one's good karma through the experience of all of one's good fortune in that lower rebirth, but one won't create any further new karma. It is the same way as a farmer, who instead of planting all the seeds uses them for food. Once he has eaten all the seed he has nothing left, and also no means to produce any further crop. If, in the same way, one uses up all the fruits of previous generosity in a lower rebirth, one will not have the opportunity to create any further causes for future wealth.

The way one has to look at it is that human beings are more intelligent than animals, so therefore human beings are able to practise generosity, whereas animals are too stupid to practice generosity. If one is a human being and in possession of wealth or resources then automatically one will think about ways of not losing those resources, and increasing them. This makes that point very clear.

One should remind oneself that one has a very precious opportunity to practise generosity now, and in such a way create the causes for the future experience of that generosity. One is in a situation now where it is very easy to practise generosity, where it is very easy to practice morality, where it is very easy to practise patience, where it is very easy to practise enthusiastic effort, where it is very easy to practise mental stabilisation and wisdom. In short, one is in a very good situation to practise the six perfections now, and to create very good causes for future good results. One should consider this very carefully and make full use of one's present situation.

At the beginning of the teaching sessions when reciting the four line refuge prayer one should try to recite the prayer very well, meditating on the combination of the words and the meaning. If this prayer to the buddhas is offered in such a way with good motivation, it becomes the practise of generosity. Enduring the difficulty of practising the asceticism of sitting in the proper posture becomes the practise of morality. Then one practises patience as one bears the difficulties that arise during the recitation of the prayers. One practises joyous enthusiasm when one is very happy to recite those prayers, and when the mind remains on the prayers, one has mental stabilisation. One also has wisdom, because one understands the meaning of the prayers. In such a way then, the practise of the six perfections becomes complete during the practise of

reciting the prayers. It is very important to keep in mind how one can practise the six perfections in order to make one's life meaningful.

If one visualises that one's surroundings are filled with other sentient beings, and that they hear one's recitations of prayers, then that also becomes the generosity of the Dharma.

### **2.3. Showing It To Be Extremely Difficult To Be Liberated from the Lower Realms if Separated from Morality**

It is very important to keep this verse from the root text in mind, and to reflect upon it well,

*If while acting freely and living agreeably  
One doesn't act to protect oneself,  
Losing control by falling into an abyss,  
How will one rise after that?*

From *Mirror*:

*If one's morality degenerates then it is difficult to find liberation from the lower realms. If while acting freely and living in the agreeable realm of gods or humans, which are agreeable with Dharma practice, one doesn't act to protect oneself from the lower realms through the practise of morality, then once one has fallen into the abyss of the lower realms, it is very difficult to rise by any means.*

This is because in the lower realms the practice of immorality and non-virtue is much greater and more widespread than the practice of virtue and morality.

You should relate this to your practice and to your path. In the lower realms the practice of immorality and non-virtue is very widespread and common. These practices are actually natural to those realms, while the practice of morality and virtue is extremely rare and difficult. For example, in the animal realm it is very, very common and natural for one animal to only eat other animals. So once one is reborn in the lower realms then one goes from the lower realms to the lower realms. One should try to go from to higher realm to another higher realm now, while one is reborn in the higher realms, and has the opportunity to practice morality and virtue. Once one has fallen into a lower realm then one will go from that lower realm onto another lower realm. This is very important to understand and to relate to one's practice.

In *Illumination* Lama Tsong Khapa says:

*Then starting right now one should protect oneself from falling into the lower realms, and one should know that the way to do so is by putting effort into the practice of morality.*

So Lama Tsong Khapa says that one should start practising morality right now.

### **2.4. The Reason for Teaching Morality Subsequently to Generosity**

Here the root text says

*Thus the conqueror, having taught on generosity,  
Gave the ensuing discourse on morality alone.*

This verse arises from the question, 'What is the reason that the Buddha taught morality after teaching

generosity?'

There is a reason why the Conqueror after having taught on generosity gave the ensuing discourse on morality alone. The Conqueror refers to someone who has abandoned all non-virtue and immorality, who has abandoned all faults, and who has accomplished all qualities and all virtue. The reason why the Conqueror would teach morality alone after generosity is that if the qualities of generosity etc. are cultivated in the field of morality, the enjoyment of the fruits becomes unceasing, but if morality degenerates then it becomes the source of many faults. So in order to ensure that the enjoyment of the fruits of the other perfections such as generosity etc. becomes unceasing, one has to cultivate them in the field of morality, and that is the reason why the Conqueror, after having taught on generosity, gave the ensuing discourse on morality alone.

*If qualities are cultivated in the field of morality,  
And the enjoyment of the fruits becomes  
unceasing.*

So morality is like a field in which the fruits of the other perfections such as generosity and so forth can be cultivated. If they are cultivated in the field of morality, then the enjoyment of those fruits becomes unceasing. However if one's morality degenerates then this degeneration of morality becomes a source for many faults.

## **2.5. Praising Morality as the Cause for Both Higher Status and Definite Goodness**

Here we have the four lines,

*For ordinary beings, those born from teachings,  
Those in definite nature of self-enlightenment,  
And conquerors' children, the cause for definite  
goodness  
And higher status is none other than morality.*

From Mirror:

*Other than morality there isn't any cause for  
ordinary beings, higher status and definite goodness  
of hearers born from the teachings of self-liberators  
in a definite nature of self-enlightenment and  
conquerors' children. This is because morality is the  
indispensable cause for continuously enjoying the  
fruits of generosity on the basis of happy migrations,  
and the indispensable cause for definite goodness.*

If one doesn't practise morality one will neither be liberated from the lower realms nor attain liberation; one will attain neither a higher status nor definite goodness.

Why is it like that? It is because apart from morality there isn't any cause for the higher rebirth of ordinary beings who haven't entered any of the paths. Morality is the only cause to attain a higher rebirth for ordinary beings who haven't entered any of the paths. Also, there's no cause other than morality for the definite goodness of hearers born from teachings. So apart from morality there is no cause for the definite goodness, the liberation of the conquerors' children - the bodhisattvas, the hearers, and the self-liberators.

So morality is the indispensable cause for ordinary

beings who haven't entered any of the paths to attain a higher rebirth; it is the indispensable cause for the attainment of liberation by hearer arhats and self-liberated arhats; and it is also the indispensable cause for the attainment of enlightenment by the conquerors' children, the bodhisattvas. This is not saying that morality is the only cause and that there are no other causes. Rather, what it is saying is that morality is an indispensable cause.

It doesn't say that there's no other cause than morality. What it does say is that morality is an indispensable cause to attain, for example, the special higher status of a precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments (for ordinary beings who haven't entered the path), and for the attainment of the individual types of liberation by arhats and bodhisattvas.

It is explained in the *Sutra of the Ten Bhūmis* that extremely strong non-virtue leads to a rebirth in the hell realms, that medium non-virtue leads to rebirth in the hungry ghost realm, and the slighter non-virtue leads to rebirth in the animal realm. In the *Sutra of the Ten Bhūmis* it is explained just like in the *Lam Rim*, how the various levels of non-virtue lead to rebirth in the various levels of lower realms.

The ten virtuous actions are the opposite of the ten non-virtuous actions. For ordinary beings who haven't entered any path yet, the practice of the ten virtuous actions becomes the cause for rebirth as a desire realm god, or as a human, or for rebirth in any type of realm from the human realm up to the realm of the peak of existence.

A hearer practitioner is someone who has generated the one-sided mind of thinking only of one's own purpose, being afraid from cyclic existence but lacking great compassion. Having generated the training in the wisdom realising selflessness in dependence upon listening to teachings from others they will definitely become liberated through the vehicle of the hearer by practising the ten virtuous actions as a minimum. Of course there needs to be more practice but the minimum are the ten virtuous actions.

If one goes even higher than the hearer to the practitioners, who in the final lifetime don't rely on an outer teacher, and who aim for the enlightenment of a self-buddha, but who lack direct compassion and skilful means, then when they comprehend and train in the suchness of profound dependent arising they become liberated through the vehicle of the self-liberator again in dependence upon the minimum practice of the ten virtues.

To go even higher than the self-liberated arhats, then the minimum practise of the ten virtuous actions forms the basis for the immeasurable and extensive compassion and love, affection, and the skilful means, the great waves of prayers, and the practice of holding all sentient beings dear, the purity of the grounds of a bodhisattva, the extensive practise of the pure six perfections and the extensive profound transcendental wisdom of a buddha that are attained by a bodhisattva.

From Nagarjuna's *Letter to a King*,

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You will not fall into lower rebirth if you don't degenerate your morality, therefore you should always rely on it, never be separated from it, and not be afraid of it. Morality is like the ground for the generation of qualities in the same way as houses etc rely on the cause of the earth.

Quoting in that manner from the *Letter to a King* by Nagarjuna, then Lama Tsong Khapa concludes by saying that training in morality is extremely important.

Then Lama Tsong Khapa goes onto say:

Even though this explanation is given here now at the second ground the practice also has to be done by a first ground bodhisattva. It is very important to rely on the morality of restraining ones' mind even from the cause, non-virtuous motivation, that would lead to the ten non-virtuous actions. One not only abandons the ten non-virtuous actions, but the mind should be restrained even from the causal motivation of the ten non-virtuous actions, it is very important to rely on the morality of restraint in that way.

One has to practise a pure morality that is held by the wisdom realising the lack of true existence.

On top of training in morality one should also train one's mind in the wisdom realising the lack of true existence, and then train our mind to hold our practice of morality with this wisdom realising the lack of true existence. This cannot be done just on the basis of just a mere superficial understanding. Nor can it be accomplished on the basis of partially meditating only from time to time. One has to train one's mind continuously in the morality being held by the wisdom realising the lack of true existence. If one trains one's mind continuously, if one practises continuously, if one meditates continuously then one will be able to train one's mind in the very difficult bodhisattva practices that even cause fear in our mind when we first hear them, and that we find so incredibly difficult to practise. The Buddha explained them to us, but by continuously training our mind in those practices then we will be able to achieve their spontaneous and natural generation within our mind.

Then he gives a quote from *Praise to Limitless Qualities* where it says the same thing.

By continuously familiarising one's mind with those qualities that cause fear in the minds of ordinary beings when they first hear them, those practices and qualities that seem to be so incredibly difficult to accomplish and to practise, one will be able to achieve their spontaneous generation within one's mind. One will be able to make them a natural part of one's mental continuum through the force of familiarity and meditation.

So Lama Tsong Khapa advises us first of all to practice morality, to regard the practice of morality as very important and also not to let our practice be partial. Through continuously acquainting our mind in all aspects of the path we will be able to accomplish the natural and spontaneous realisation of those practices within our mind through the force of continuous

familiarity. This is the advice from Lama Tsong Khapa.

Lama Tsong Khapa cautions you very strongly to be very careful with regard to the practice of morality saying that if one is not very careful with regard to one's morality, then one's practice of generosity will only lead to an enjoyment of the generosity in a lower realm.

So if Lama Tsong Khapa is really telling you to be very careful, then you should take great care.

We didn't quite finish the second chapter today, but there are only a couple of verses left.

*Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson*

*Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett*

*Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

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

དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པ་ལ།

17 September 2002

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Generate a virtuous motivation, thinking that I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and for that purpose I'm now going to listen to this profound Mahayana Dharma, and then, as much as possible, I'm going to put what I hear into practise.

### 3. Metaphor for Being Unmixed with the Opposite of Morality

We are now at the third outline, and here we have the four lines:

*Similarly to an ocean and a corpse's co-existence  
And the co-existence between fortune and calamity,  
A great being subdued by morality  
Doesn't wish to co-exist with immorality.*

The first example refers to the lack of co-existence between an ocean and a corpse, because an ocean repels a corpse. Similarly fortune doesn't co-exist with bad fortune, calamity, and so on. Likewise a great being that is subdued by morality doesn't wish to co-exist with immorality in its mental continuum. A great being subdued by morality and immorality are polar opposites.

The meaning that one has to take here is that the subject 'great bodhisattva on the second ground' doesn't wish to co exist with immorality in their continuum, because they are subdued by pure morality. This is similar to the polarity between the ocean and the corpse, and the polarity between fortune and misfortune.

Therefore the moral here in relation to one's own practise is that in the same way as a bodhisattva on the second ground doesn't allow their morality to co-exist with immorality in their mental continuum, you also shouldn't allow your practice of morality to co-exist with immorality.

Further, here the meaning relating to oneself is that one shouldn't associate with non-virtuous friends that harm one's Dharma practice. If one wishes to practice pure morality then one shouldn't associate with those whose morality is impure, because that association will cause the breakdown of one's own morality. So if one wants to practise pure morality one should associate only with those who also practise pure morality.

### 4. Divisions of Morality

*Abandoning by whom, what, to whom,  
The morality having the threefold focus  
Is called perfection of transitory existence.  
Lacking attachment to these three is beyond  
transitory existence.*

This section shows twofold division into worldly morality and morality gone beyond. The morality having the threefold focus is called a perfection of transitory existence, a worldly perfection. Lacking attachment to these three is a perfection beyond transitory existence, a perfection gone beyond. This is the morality that is held by the wisdom realising the emptiness of the person who is practising morality, the morality that is being practised, and with regard to whom the morality is being practised.

Here of course the wisdom realising the emptiness of the three circles is not the morality. Rather it is a supportive condition for that morality. The morality lacking that threefold wisdom is morality contained in transitory existence. You can relate this to what was explained previously in the perfection of giving, where that division is made on the basis of the same reasons.

### 5. Concluding Briefly by Expressing the Qualities of the Ground

*Arising from the moon of a conqueror's child,  
Non-samsara becomes samsara's perfection,  
Like the untainted moonlight during autumn time,  
Stainless also dispel migrators' mental distress.*

The autumn moon has this special quality of being able to relieve the sufferings of heat, and also the sufferings of mental distress of migrators. It has a soothing effect on those mentally agitated. In the same way the second ground, which is free from the stains of immorality, can also dispel the distress of migrators.

*Mirror:*

*The second ground, 'Stainless', came to be like the moonlight during autumn time, because it emanates from the moon that is a conqueror's child on the second ground, and because it removes with morality's light, free from the stains of immorality, the mental distress of migrators.*

The second ground bodhisattva is free from the stains of samsara but comes samsara's perfection nonetheless, as *Mirror* says, 'non-samsara becomes samsara's perfection'. What this means is that, *even though they aren't of samsara, they will become the perfection of samsara, because through the force of prayers and through the force of compassion they will take rebirth as wheel-turning kings ruling over the four continents for the purpose of others. Through the force of their prayers and compassion they naturally, without any thought for self, will take rebirth without any control as a wheel-turning monarch for the purpose of others.*

That concludes the second chapter of *Entering the Middle Way*. The practice of each of those perfections has its own particular obscuration that prevents its practise. The obscuration preventing the practise of generosity is greed, and the obscuration preventing the practise of morality is immorality.

One needs to analyse whether greed and immorality are worthwhile states. Greed, for example, belongs to the family of desire and attachment and prevents one from practising generosity. So it is worthwhile thinking about whether you want to abandon greed. Likewise with immorality, which prevents us from keeping the actions of our body, speech, and mind pure. In order to

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properly restrain and subdue the actions of our body, speech, and mind, we need to practise morality. However that practice of morality is prevented by our practise of immorality.

### **THE THIRD GROUND, LUMINOUS**

The chapter, on the third mind generation, 'Luminous' has four major outlines which are: description of the ground that is the basis of the characteristics; showing the characteristics which are the qualities of the ground; showing the differentiating characteristics of the first three perfections; and as a summary conclusion, expressing the qualities of the ground.

#### **1. Description of the Ground - Basis of the Characteristics**

How are the qualities of the third ground attained? They are attained through meditating on the second ground.

By excelling in the practice of morality on the second ground, the bodhisattva excels in the practice of patience on the third ground.

The description of the ground, is given in these four lines<sup>1</sup>,

*Because the light of the fire wholly consuming  
The firewood of objects of knowledge arises,  
The third is luminous, then the sugatas' children  
Behold a copper-like light similar to the sun.*

It is said that on this ground a particular type of luminosity arises as a result of the practice, and that's why the third ground is called 'Luminous'.

We have already explained in depth why the first ground is called Extremely Joyful, and why the second ground is called Stainless. Now there is an explanation of why the third ground is called Luminous.

As you go through the names of the various grounds saying their names then the meaning of the names will appear to your mind.

From *Mirror*:

*Consider the subject, 'the third ground': it is called 'Luminous' because the light of the transcendental wisdom fire completely consuming the firewood of dualistic objects of knowledge arises.*

So they behold a special light of transcendental wisdom during the post-meditational period.

When it says, 'the third is luminous then the sugatas' children behold a copper-like light similar to the sun', 'the sugatas' children' refers to the bodhisattvas, the children of the conquerors. So during the post-meditational period the bodhisattvas, the conquerors' children, behold a copper red light, very similar to the morning red at the time of sunrise.

It is important to understand the significance of beholding the special transcendental wisdom light similar to the dawn red of sunbreak during the post-

meditational period. One has to reflect upon how it arises. First of all the bodhisattva is in meditative equipoise on emptiness. All obscurations to knowledge are completely subdued at this time through the rising of the transcendental wisdom and a good part of it is actually completely consumed.

Through that, one can say that in the same way as the light of fire has the power to consume firewood, this light of the wisdom realising emptiness non-dually has the power to consume the obscurations to knowledge. Of course during meditative equipoise on emptiness no light appears to the meditator, as this would be a dualistic appearance.

Then in the post-meditational period the bodhisattva perceives this special transcendental wisdom light that is similar to the red of the dawn. This does not refer to the red of the normal ordinary morning dawn, because in order to see that we just have to get up very early.

Beholding this appearance of light like the morning red at dawn in the post-meditational period arises through the experience of the non-dual transcendental wisdom during meditative equipoise. It is very important to understand that at the time of meditative equipoise the only experience that the meditator has is the pure appearance of emptiness, the non-affirming negation of emptiness, where everything has been purified into the appearance of emptiness. There's no conventional appearance, there is no appearance of true existence, and there is no appearance of subject/object. The only appearance there is the appearance of emptiness and in such a way becomes a consciousness that is non-dually absorbed into emptiness.

#### **2. Explaining the Characteristics of the Ground**

This section has four subdivisions which are: showing patience to be superior on this ground; the way one relies on patience; the divisions of patience; and showing the other pure qualities that have arisen on this ground.

##### **2.1 Showing Patience to be Superior on this Ground**

What type of superior qualities has this ground attained? This ground has attained superiority in the practice of patience.

There are two verses belonging to this outline. The first verse shows how patience is superior on this ground from the point of view of compassion, and the second one shows how patience becomes superior on this ground through the wisdom realising emptiness.

*Even though flesh and bones are cut from  
The body of one not a source, piece by piece  
Over a long time by someone disturbed,  
They generate superior patience for their  
mutilator.*

*For bodhisattvas seeing selflessness  
What, by whom, what time, way of cutting  
Seeing all those dharmas like the reflection,  
For that reason also they become patient.*

This is how a bodhisattva on the third ground excels in patience.

<sup>1</sup> The text as printed here differs from that previously distributed in that 'the Sugata's children' has been changed to 'the sugatas' children' to reflect the content of the commentary.

In 'Even though flesh and bones are cut from the body of one not a source', 'one not a source' refers to the third ground bodhisattva. A third ground bodhisattva is not a source of any type of disturbance since their mind is completely undisturbed by any type of aversion or anger. As such they are not a source of even the tiniest bit of anger or aversion.

The reason for this is because they are completely free from the nine reasons for ill-will to arise. There are the three categories relating to oneself, one's friends, and to one's enemies.

**Relating to oneself** thinking of another person as one who:

- ∞ has harmed me in the past,
- ∞ is harming me now,
- ∞ will harm me in the future.

**Regarding one's friends**, thinking of another as a person who:

- ∞ has harmed my friends,
- ∞ is harming my friends,
- ∞ will harm my friends in the future.

**in relation to one's enemies**, viewing another person as :

- ∞ having benefited my enemies
- ∞ is benefiting my enemies
- ∞ will benefit my enemies

Those nine types of thoughts cause ill-will to arise within the mind.

The higher realms such as the form and formless realm are free from those nine types of thoughts. It is said that there is no ill-will and anger present in the continuum of beings in the form and formless realms. Because the bodhisattva on the third ground is completely free from any type of mental disturbance, such as ill will, they are referred to here as one who is not a source of mental disturbance.

If through the force of their disturbed mind someone, even without provocation from that bodhisattva, cuts off the flesh and bones from the body of such a bodhisattva not being a source of agitation, piece by piece over a long time, then not only would the mind of that bodhisattva not be disturbed by anger, but instead they would generate superior patience for the mutilator.

What this means is that not only is the practice of patience perfect from the point of view that their mind will not become disturbed, but on top of that they will generate superior compassion for the person who is mutilating them. That is what distinguishes the practice of patience of a bodhisattva on the third ground from a bodhisattva on the second ground. The patience of a bodhisattva on the third ground is perfect from the point of view that they are not being affected by that type of harm, and that they generate a superior compassion for the person who is mutilating them.

So it is very important to reflect very well here on the

nature of the practice of patience of the bodhisattva on this ground. Even though the mutilator might cut off their flesh slice by slice, taking their time, the mind of the bodhisattva would still completely remain completely undisturbed. Not only would their mind remain completely undisturbed, but they would generate superior compassion for their torturer.

The mind of a bodhisattva on the second ground would also remain completely undisturbed in such a situation, but they wouldn't generate the superior compassion for the torturer. The third ground bodhisattva, however, by reflecting on the nature of the non-virtuous karma that the torturer is creating and by reflecting on how they will have to take experience rebirth in the lower realms as a result of their non-virtuous actions, will generate strong compassion for the mutilator.

Reflecting on the results that the person who is giving harm to oneself will have to experience as a result of their non-virtuous action then acts as a cause for generating compassion for the person who is harming oneself. By reflecting very well on the practice of a third ground bodhisattva we should realise the need to avoid retaliating and giving harm to others.

The second verse shows the superiority of patience on the third ground. Of the various divisions of patience the patience being referring to here is the patience unaffected by harm.

The next verse deals with the practice of patience in relation to the wisdom realising selflessness. In the third verse, 'For bodhisattvas seeing selflessness' shows how their practice of patience becomes superior through the wisdom realising selflessness. This is because they see directly that all the dharmas of the three circles such as the harm that is being done and by whom, the way of cutting and so on, as the realised emptiness of those dharmas. They see it as being like a reflection, which for those bodhisattvas who see selflessness directly, becomes a further reason to be patient. This is the patience of bearing harm to the Dharma.

## ***2.2. The Way of Relying on Other Types of Patience***

Here there are two basic outlines: showing that it is inappropriate to become angry; and showing that it is appropriate to rely on patience.

### ***2.2.1. Showing that it is Inappropriate to be Angry***

The outline, showing that it is inappropriate to be angry, has four subdivision: The first is, anger is inappropriate because it has no purpose and great disadvantages.

Second is, showing that to retaliate is contradictory with not desiring subsequent suffering, so it is completely contradictory if on the one side one doesn't wish for future suffering but then retaliates to harm.

Third is, anger is inappropriate because it destroys the virtue accumulated over long periods of time. Here, a further reason why anger is inappropriate is because it can destroy huge amounts of virtue.

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The next outline, stopping anger after having contemplated the many faults of impatience. So after having reflected on the various faults of impatience then one makes a decision to refrain from anger. One has to reflect on this very well, as there's probably no other practice needed than this practice.

### **2.2.1.1. Anger Is Inappropriate Because It Has No Purpose and Great Disadvantages**

Here it shows the nature of the disadvantages of anger, and that anger has no purpose.

From *Mirror*:

*Being resentful to the enemy definitely has no purpose here because how could the inflicted harm be undone by resenting the enemy in return? It won't.*

So if it won't do so for an arya being, then it definitely won't do it for oneself. What is being showing here is that one should definitely rely on patience.

*In case if one resents the harm inflicted,  
How could it be undone by resenting it.  
Therefore resenting it definitely has no purpose here,  
It also becomes the antithesis of the world yonder.*

'Resenting' means even becoming angry, so how could it be undone by resenting it? First of all, if one resents the harm inflicted it won't have any purpose within this life. One won't receive any benefit in this life if one resents any harm that has been inflicted on oneself.

What is to be gained within this life if one generates resentment and becomes angry if harm is inflicted? How could a harm that has been done be undone by resenting it? If one has received a wound because someone has hit oneself over the head, then how can that wound be healed if one hits the other one over the head in return. That won't heal the wound on one's own head. In addition to the wound that one already has, there is great danger that one will get a further one. If someone says something sharp or provoking to us, then what the other person has said will not be undone by us saying something sharp and hurting him or her in return.

So we have to relate the practice of the third ground bodhisattva to our own practice of patience. As we also said before, not only do high bodhisattvas have to practice patience but one also has to do so. One has to relate it to one's own level and then slowly, slowly one's practice can become the perfection of patience. Resentment here can refer to ordinary anger but also to hate and the wish for vengeance.

Anger has not the slightest purpose within this life but also it becomes the antithesis for any kind of success in future lives, the world yonder, because it projects an unpleasant ripening result. Because anger creates a non-virtuous projecting karma that projects an unpleasant ripening result, anger becomes the antithesis for achieving any type of purpose in future lives. If one desires future pleasantness and happiness, then one has to abandon anger now. If one is angry now then future pleasantness won't arise.

Even now, if we look now at the face of a person who

is overcome by anger then the face of that person will twisted into a mask of anger. The face completely loses its attractiveness when the person is overcome by anger. So anger even destroys beauty and pleasantness within this life. Similarly, one can relate that to the results in future lives.

What is patience? It is a mind that is undisturbed by suffering and adverse conditions.

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

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# DISCUSSION

BLOCK: 5  
WEEK: 5  
24<sup>TH</sup> SEPT 02

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## 5\_1 Twenty-seventh of August

1. If Lord Buddha has perfected giving, then why are there still beggars in this world?
2. Why are bodhisattvas so devoted to giving?
3. Ordinary bodhisattvas experience pain as their arm is cut to give away, they like it in a way, because it inspires them to help other suffering beings, Therefore they are masochists. **Critique.**

## 5\_2 Third of September

4. What's the difference between a 'path of karma' and a 'karma' – give examples of both.
5. Chandrakirti said, "The practice of morality is the practice of the ten virtues". Discuss the varieties of each of the first seven non-virtues.
6. How does a first grounders practice of the ten virtues differ from that of a second grounder?

## 5\_3 Tenth of September

7. Buddhism says your current rebirth is the result of actions done in previous lives. Diagnose the karmic history of a rich animal (e.g. the Queens cat), and a suffering beggar (human). Distinguish between the *rebirth karma* and the *completion karma*.
8. An understanding of emptiness has no particular use to the practice of ethics. Discuss.

## 5\_4 Seventeenth of September

9. 'Not associating closely with people who do not believe in the Path...' Discuss the meaning of this vow, explaining how non-virtuous friends harm one's dharma practice.
  10. What is a 'sugata'? Who are their children?
  11. What is 'non-dual' about the direct perception of emptiness? Can the mind ever melt into emptiness, and become one with ultimate reality? Why/why not?
  12. There is obviously nothing to gain from responding to harsh words with harsh words. So why do we do it?
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**EXAM**

NAME:

BLOCK: **5**  
WEEK: **6**  
ASSIGNED: **1<sup>ST</sup> OCT 2002**

MARK:

**/38**

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1. At what point does a bodhisattva no longer experience suffering in giving away his/her body? What is the nature of the suffering of those bodhisattvas who experience suffering in regard to giving their body? Does this become a hindrance to their practice of giving? Explain your answer. [4 marks]

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2. The Tibetan word for 'perfection' is *Paroltu Chinpa*. Explain the etymology of this term, and demonstrate the two ways in which this term is applied. [6 marks]

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3. Why is the second bodhisattva ground called 'stainless'? What sign indicates the extent of this second grounder's purity? Give an example. [3 Marks]

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4. What are the two types of bad deeds? (A and B) [2 Marks]

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**[Bonus 4 Marks]** Posit an example from the four possibilities:

- A not B:
- B not A:
- Neither A or B:
- Both A and B:

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5. How does the enjoyment of the fruit of giving depend on morality? [3 Marks]

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6. Why did Lord Buddha teach the perfection of ethics after the perfection of giving? [3 Marks]

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7. Why is the third ground called 'luminous'? [3 Marks]

8. Why is the third grounders patience superior to the first and second grounders practice of patience? Give an example that highlights this difference. [4 Marks]

9. Give the following: [20 \* \_ Marks]

**10 Non-Virtues:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**10 Virtues:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.