

As usual let us devote some time to our meditation practice. [Meditation]

PRESENTING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A BEING OF MIDDLE SCOPE (CONT.)

In the commentary, at the conclusion of the section on the person of middling scope, there is a quote from Maitreya Buddha:

The illness is to be recognised; the causes of illness to be abandoned; the cure is to be attained; and the medicine to be taken. Likewise suffering, cause and cessation of the path are to be recognised, abandoned, attained and undertaken.

This quote from Maitreya relates to the four noble truths. Just as an *illness is to be recognised* or understood, suffering also needs to be recognised and understood; just as one needs to understand *the causes of the illness* that have *to be abandoned*, likewise the cause of suffering, or true origination, is to be abandoned; just as the *cure* for a particular illness *is to be obtained*, the truth of cessation is to be attained; and just as the medicine to cure that illness is to be taken, the truth of the path is also to be practised and undertaken. This presents the way the four noble truths are to be practised.

As presented in the earlier sessions, the way to overcome cyclic existence is through understanding and meditating on the four noble truths, which I have already explained extensively. One needs to understand that by generating disenchantment with the excellences of samsara, one develops a yearning to be free from cyclic existence, and the way to do this is by means of the four noble truths. It is good to really understand and contemplate these points and try to put them into practice, which will definitely help to subdue and overcome our unruly minds.

The Buddha's presentation of the four noble truths is that suffering is to be recognised, true origins are to be abandoned, cessation is to be attained and the path is to be meditated on. It is said that when the Buddha first gave his teachings on the four noble truths to his retinue of five excellent disciples, they all gained spontaneous realisations of these truths. That is because they were beings of pure stainless karma and were able to fully understand the meaning of the teaching the Buddha presented.

That is the reason why we don't find any further commentary on the Buddha's original teachings that are recorded as the sutras. The Buddha did not need to give any further commentary because his disciples were all perfect recipients who were able to understand and actualise every word of the Buddha as it was being taught. The commentaries of the sutras came only much later, after the Buddha's passing.

For example, when the Buddha presented the truth of suffering to his disciples, indicating that 'suffering is to be understood', he did not need to give any further extensive explanation, as his disciples developed renunciation spontaneously just by listening to his words. The Buddha didn't need to give specific details about suffering, such as the six types of suffering, the eight types of suffering, and so forth. Because the minds of the disciples were ripened, they were able to understand and actualise the teachings with the mere mention of few words such as 'suffering is to be understood', and thereby developed these realisations spontaneously.

It is good for us to be inspired by this account. If we put some time and effort into understanding the teachings now, a time will come when, by merely hearing these teachings again, we will develop spontaneous realisations. That is definitely possible.

When the Buddha taught in this world, it was in the aspect of a supreme emanation, which only beings with pure karma are able to receive teachings from. So his disciples were not mere ordinary beings, but beings with pure karma, who had created the particular causes to be living at the time when the Buddha presented the teachings, and were able to hear them directly and develop spontaneous realisations. This was a result of the causes and conditions that they had previously created.

As presented in the teachings, the supreme emanation body can only be seen by beings with pure karma. As older students will recall from previous teachings, only bodhisattvas can see the **supreme enjoyment** body of the Buddha. So when we hear these accounts of the Buddha's teachings and how his disciples developed spontaneous realisations, we can gain a sense of how wonderful it would be if we could also gain spontaneous realisations whilst listening to the teachings. If we aspire to gain spontaneous realisations, then we need to create the causes, by putting time and effort into study and practice now.

It is good to understand how the different types of the Buddha's bodies are continuously benefiting numberless sentient beings. In summary, the Buddha's body is of two types, the **truth body**¹ and the **form body**².

The **truth body** is further subdivided into the **nature truth body**³ and the **wisdom truth body**⁴. These two truth bodies are the highest levels, which can be only seen and understood by other enlightened beings.

The next level is the **form body**, which is divided the **complete enjoyment body**⁵ and the **emanation body**⁶. As explained previously, the complete enjoyment body can only be seen by higher level bodhisattvas who reside in a pure land. So we ordinary beings cannot see the complete enjoyment body. The emanation body is divided into three types: the **supreme emanation body**, the **emanation by birth body**, and the **artisan emanation**

¹ Skt: *dharmakaya*

² Skt: *rupakaya*

³ Skt: *svabhavikakaya*

⁴ Skt: *jnanakaya*

⁵ Skt: *sambhogakaya*

⁶ Skt: *nirmanakaya*

body. As mentioned earlier the supreme emanation body can only be seen by beings with pure karma. Therefore, in order to interact with ordinary beings, the Buddha takes the aspect of the emanation by birth body, which is an emanation that has taken birth in an ordinary form.

When presenting the topic of how to rely on a spiritual teacher, the lam-rim explains how one needs to regard one's teachers as an emanation by birth body. The teachings explain that one regards a spiritual teacher as an emanation of the Buddha in the aspect of an emanation by birth. In this way, we can get some understanding that amongst one's teachers, there can definitely be an emanation body of the Buddha. It is in this way that one can generate stronger faith in one's spiritual teachers. In summary, the Buddha benefits an infinite number of sentient beings in various ways by means of these different aspects.

At our level, even if the Buddha were to be here in his actual form, we would not be able to see him because of the obscurations that have defiled our minds. Once our obscurations are purified, then we will be able to see and recognise the Buddha.

At our level, the best we can do to receive direct blessings from the Buddha is to develop the strong conviction that the Buddha is actually present in the aspect of our teachers and other representations, such as statues and so forth. We need to view the statue in front of us as if the Buddha was actually present, then although we might not hear direct teachings from the statue, we will definitely receive blessings. It is said that with strong faith and by envisioning the Buddha as actually being present, you will definitely receive blessings.

This reminds me of a comment that Casper made when he was barely three years old. At that young age, he asked his mother, 'If the Buddha doesn't speak to us, then how can we know that we are receiving his blessings?'. Even at that young age, he was wondering how it was possible to receive blessings from an image of the Buddha? It was a significant doubt, which his mother did not have a ready answer to.

Indeed, the purpose of having statues or images of the Buddha and other enlightened beings is to make offerings and do prostrations as a means to engage in purification practices and gain merit. The way to understand how these offerings and prostrations become effective is by generating the conviction that the buddhas are actually present. This is done by visualising statues of the buddhas as being actual representations of the buddhas. Then, as mentioned earlier, when one engages in practices, one will definitely receive blessings.

As I have mentioned in the past, by doing practices relating to enlightened beings in the form of a deity, one can definitely receive great benefit. I have shared with you some simple, regular practices in connection with deities such as Tara. Recite the mantra, and whilst reciting the mantra, visualise that Tara is actually present, and as you recite the mantra, visualise receiving enlightened nectar and light from her that descends through your crown, filling you up completely. Then, as the white light and nectar fills your body, it simultaneously expels all negativities and obscurations,

and thus your body is filled with pure nectar and light. This symbolises receiving the blessings of the enlightened body, speech and mind of the deity.

There are great benefits from engaging in this practice with strong conviction and faith, and you will definitely make a strong connection with deities such as Tara. People have confided in me that when they do this practice, they feel a transformation taking place in their mind, which is a great source of solace for them, especially in times of difficulties and strife.

We recently did the tenth chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, so you may recall the aspiration that, due to a connection with Manjushri, for example, may the denizens of the hell realms and the hungry ghosts and so forth actually see Manjushri in the space before them, and receive his blessings, so that all their sufferings will be completely alleviated. As presented in the teachings, it is possible for beings to be benefited by Manjushri by having made a connection with him. This is how we need to understand the significance of these practices.

Not too long ago, when Susie Coates was going through the last stages of her illness, I sent a message via Sandra to keep her mind steady and focus on White Tara, and develop an unwavering faith in White Tara, and that would be all that she needed to do. When she heard that message, she immediately smiled in recognition and understanding, and soon after that, she passed away.

Indeed, this practice is said to be of the greatest benefit for people at the time of death.

We might have side-tracked a bit but these are all significant points to keep in mind. As the great master Gyaltsab Dampa Rinchen said in one of his works on valid cognition, one does not know where a great supreme being might be, so one needs to be very careful when encountering others, because they might be a supreme being. The point is that one needs to be very careful of being critical of others.

PRESENTING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A BEING OF THE GREAT SCOPE

We have come to the third type of being, the being of the great scope. However, it is also important to keep in mind the description and definitions of beings of the small scope, and beings of the medium scope that we have just covered. The text explains what a great scope being is with a brief explanation and an extensive explanation.

BRIEF EXPLANATION

The commentary begins by quoting this verse from the *Lamp of the Path* which reads:

5. *Those, who through their personal suffering
Truly want to end completely
All the suffering of others
Are persons of supreme capacity.*

We first get a general understanding of beings of the great scope from the literal meaning of the verse itself. *Those who through their personal suffering* refers to gaining a thorough understanding of one's own suffering. Then, as a result, they *truly want to end completely all the*

sufferings of others, and thus such beings are, as identified here, *persons of supreme capacity*.

As the commentary explains:

The person of great scope is explicitly mentioned here.

It goes on to say:

Having fully trained in the paths of the small and medium scope...

This part clearly explains that one needs to have first fully immersed oneself in the trainings of the small scope, which then leads one to engage in the practice of the medium scope. Training in the practices presented in the small scope, and the medium scope, in particular, is essential. The essence of the practice of the medium scope is to renounce cyclic existence: without developing renunciation and the determination to be free from cyclic existence, it will be impossible to do the same for others.

As Shantideva clearly mentions in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, without generating the wish to develop renunciation even in a dream, how could one possibly develop the compassion that wishes for others to attain liberation? Thus, without first developing renunciation oneself, one cannot possibly develop great love and compassion for other sentient beings, wishing them to be free from cyclic existence and suffering. On the path of the great scope, that wish for others to develop renunciation has to be preceded by seeing the possibility that one can, in fact, be free from cyclic existence. Through seeing that possibility and yearning to be free from the sufferings of cyclic existence, one can then relate that to other beings who are also suffering in cyclic existence, and generate love and compassion for them.

We need to understand that all of these practices – the development of the states of mind of renunciation, bodhicitta, and love and compassion – fall within the category of analytical meditation. Without engaging in analytical meditation, it is impossible to progress along the path. As I have mentioned previously, feeling content with just focusing on an object and keeping your attention on that, thereby developing some mental stabilisation is not, in itself, any great achievement. Getting carried away with and dwelling on that sort of meditation would be a great loss, because one would not be progressing along the path.

There is a danger of just being satisfied with stabilising meditation, without really contemplating other aspects of the path. If one is not careful, instead of the mind becoming clearer and brighter, there is a danger that the mind will become duller and duller. So one needs to apply some cautionary measures against thinking that just being able to develop one's attention and focus on one object is sufficient.

Some have commented that having meditated over some period of time, their mind just seems to be getting darker and duller. That is, in fact, proof of this danger. You can end up in a state of stupor rather than a state of clarity, and we need to be careful about that.

The commentary further explains:

...that person who has trained, then recognises how they themselves have been tormented in samsara from the beginning, middle and end.

Having recognised this, they also see how mother sentient beings are aimlessly wandering, lost in the ocean of samsara and how, just like themselves, are burning in the blazing fire of cyclic existence.

As presented earlier, contemplating and meditating on the plight of having to experience suffering is an impetus to develop renunciation. When we see other beings having to experience exactly the same suffering, that becomes an impetus for us to develop love and compassion for other sentient beings.

In presenting its description of great scope being, the commentary further explains that:

Inspired by this 'unbearable compassion', they generate the aspiration to seek others' benefits that all the suffering of others together with its causes, two obscurations and their latencies, are all completely purified without anything left to be extinguished.

The *two obscurations* are the deluded obscurations, and the obscurations to omniscience, which are the *latencies*. So the great scope being aspires to that state of enlightenment.

This, conjoined with the aspiration to seek complete enlightenment, is the precious mind of bodhicitta.

Aspiration refers to the aspiration for other sentient beings to be free from suffering and its causes. What is being clearly identified here is the meaning of the mind of enlightenment, which some translations call the awakening mind. That mind of bodhicitta or the awakening mind is the aspiration that consists of the two aspirations: wishing to free others from all suffering; and, in order to achieve that, wishing to achieve enlightenment oneself. The mind of bodhicitta is, as indicated here, the gateway for entering the great path.

Furthermore, as explained in the commentary:

From that bodhicitta mind one then engages in all of the bodhisattvas' deeds. This is what is explicitly described here as the great scope person.

What is clearly presented here is a description of a great scope person as one who has developed the mind of bodhicitta, and who, on that basis, engages in the bodhisattva's deeds. As I regularly tell you, a bodhisattva is defined as a being who has the mind of bodhicitta, or the mind of enlightenment, and the deeds that they engage in are the bodhisattva's deeds, such as the six perfections.

When a bodhisattva is explicitly presented as a great scope being, as is the case here, we can get a sense of how precious such a being is, and thus develop a strong sense of admiration for, and faith in the bodhisattvas. Indeed, as presented here, the very term 'bodhisattva' refers to a being who has a twofold aspiration. One aspiration is to solely benefit sentient beings by alleviating all their suffering, so their intention is without any ulterior motive. They are completely dedicated to benefiting sentient beings by alleviating their suffering and leading them to complete happiness. With that aspiration, they then aspire to achieve enlightenment themselves to achieve that goal.

Here, we can also get a sense of how, in order to actually engage in the practices of a bodhisattva, one cannot have any self-cherishing in one's mind. We have to overcome

our self-cherishing mind, and solely dedicate our actions and thoughts to the benefit of all sentient beings. With this aspiration and this state of mind, bodhisattvas engage in the practices of the six perfections, such as generosity and morality. So, while they are striving to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment, their actions benefit sentient beings. Here, we can get a sense of the kind of mind that a bodhisattva possesses, what kind of practices they engage in, and the ultimate goal that they seek to achieve. This is all encompassed in this definition of a great scope being.

The commentary concludes by saying:

In brief, the great scope person who is explicitly described here primarily refers to those who engage in the unmistakable Mahayana path.

As the commentary explains, *the great scope person who is explicitly described here primarily refers to those who engage in the unmistakable Mahayana path.*

Then the commentary presents different ways in which a great scope being can be categorised.

Here the great scope person can be subdivided according to:

- View: There are two subdivisions: the Madhyamika view and the Cittamatrin view.

This refers to the *view* of proponents of the *Madhyamika* and *Cittamatra* (or Mind Only) schools of tenets.

- Vehicle: There are two subdivisions: the sutra and mantra or tantra vehicles

In terms of *vehicle*, there are two subdivisions: those who follow *the sutra* vehicle and those who follow the *tantra* vehicle.

The commentary further explains:

Relating to the explanation of the great scope the *Tantra of the Enlightenment of Mahavairocana* (*Abhisambodhi* of Vairochana) says,

The all-knowing exalted wisdom of the secret lord arises from the root of compassion, and the cause of bodhicitta is the perfection of the method.

What is being explained is that the ultimate state of enlightenment arises from the basis of compassion, which is the immediate cause of bodhicitta.

As said above, the complete unmistakable Mahayana path refers to the combination of these three: great compassion, mind of bodhicitta and the method of generosity and so forth. The same meaning is also mentioned in the *Three Stages of the Meditation* by Kamalashila.

What is further presented here is also presented in the Madhyamaka teachings. Also Chandrakirti in citing (Nagarjuna's) *Precious Garland*:

If you and the world wish to attain unsurpassable full awakening,
The root is the awakening mind
That should be as stable as Mt Meru, king of the mountains:
(Comprised of) compassion extending to all quarters, and discriminating wisdom which does not rely on duality.

This explanation was also presented during the Middle Way or *Madhyamakavata* teachings, and also the teachings on *Precious Garland*.

Then the commentary further presents:

By citing that text also,

All the bodhisattvas' paths are condensed into these three - compassion, non-dual wisdom and bodhicitta.

Also Chandrakirti said in his text *Supplement to the Middle Way*:

The mind of compassion, non-dual understanding and the mind of enlightenment, are the causes of children of conquerors.

This, of course, was presented in more detail in the Middle Way teachings. *The mind of compassion, non-dual understanding and the mind of enlightenment, are the causes of children of conquerors* indicates that the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta is not actual bodhicitta, but the bodhicitta that is like bark of the sugar cane. It is this contrived bodhicitta that is developed before developing actual bodhicitta.

The point to understand here is that if this bodhicitta is one of the causes of conquerors' children, then it cannot also be resultant or actual bodhicitta. That is because if actual bodhicitta has already been developed, it cannot be a cause. It is only when actual bodhicitta is developed that one becomes a child of the conquerors, which is the term for bodhisattvas. That which serves as a cause to become a bodhisattva cannot be the actual result. Therefore, one needs to understand that the bodhicitta referred to here is the contrived bodhicitta (which is explained using the analogy of the bark of sugar cane) that is developed prior to developing the actual awakening mind of bodhicitta.

The mind of non-dual understanding, which is emptiness, explicitly refers to the causes for the bodhisattva of sharp intellect. Bodhisattvas who have a duller intellect don't need to realise emptiness in order to develop bodhicitta. For them, the causes are love and compassion alone.

The main point here is that compassion, the non-dual understanding of emptiness, and the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta, are the essence of the Mahayana path.

Then the commentary presents some further quotations from other great masters:

As stated in the *Essence of The Middle Way* by Bhavaviveka:

Do not give up the mind of bodhicitta and perfectly follow the austerities of the Able One, and seeking the wisdom of suchness, these are the practices which accomplish all purposes.

According to the *Ornament of the Middle Way* by Shantarakshita:

The mind of enlightenment, the austerities of the bodhisattva and the view of suchness, these three are the summarised teaching. As it says,

Then Shantarakshita gives this quotation:

The followers of faith generate the mind of complete enlightenment and then take upon the austerities of the Able One and strive to seek the wisdom of suchness.

This refers back to the point about those of duller faculties. *The followers of faith* refers to those of duller intellect who, without depending on many reasons, first

generate the mind of bodhicitta, then take up the austerities or practices of the Able One, and finally strive to develop the wisdom of suchness. So, for those who are not of sharp intellect, emptiness is realised after having developed bodhicitta.

From this explanation, we can see that bodhisattvas don't necessarily have to have the realisation of emptiness. There are bodhisattvas who, at the outset, have gained the realisation of emptiness, and there are those who may not have gained the realisation of emptiness when they enter into the bodhisattva path. This is asserted by the Mind Only point of view, as well as the Prasangika Middle Way view.

The commentary further explains:

The Great Teacher Shantideva mentioned in *Compendium of Practice*,

By reflecting on the great meaning and rarity of the life of leisure and endowment, we generate the wish to take its essence and faith in the general teaching and especially conviction faith and appreciation of the qualities of the great vehicle. As a result, we hold wishing bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta [wishing bodhicitta is developed before engaging bodhicitta]. We then engage in giving, protecting, purifying and increasing of the three – body, wealth and root virtues.

This implies that all the bodhisattvas' deeds are included in the six perfections.

As mentioned here, the quote from Shantideva implies that all bodhisattva deeds are included within the six perfections. In another teaching on the lam-rim there is an explanation of protecting, purifying and increasing the three deeds, so we need not to go into detail about them now.

Further down, the commentary explains:

Moreover, the summary of the practices of the Great Vehicle is condensed into three: in the preliminary generate the mind of enlightenment, then the actual practice is the training in the six perfections and the conclusion is the dedication to enlightenment.

This really summarises the main points of practice.

In relation to our own daily practices, this again reminds us that we first engage in some *preliminary practice*, part of which is engaging in generating the bodhicitta motivation. Then we engage in the *actual practice*, and finally we conclude with a *dedication*. This, as I regularly emphasise, essentially encompasses our practice.

The part at the beginning is very important, the middle or the actual practice is very important, and the end is also most beneficial. So, at the beginning, we generate the intention that our practice is for the benefit of sentient beings, then we engage in the practice, which will become a cause to benefit sentient beings, and finally we dedicate our practice towards that end.

Then the commentary further explains:

Here in the *Lamp of the Path* these four are taught.

(First) That generation of the mind of enlightenment is the entrance door to all the paths of the great vehicle

(Second) The means of generating that mind

(Third) From having generated this mind how to train in the deeds

(Fourth) Identifying the results of the training.

This is the main content of the text.

The **first** is presented in the four lines (Verse 5) beginning with

Those, who through their personal suffering

And the two lines beginning with (Verse 6) *For those excellent living beings*

The **second** is presented in the lines beginning with (Verse 7)

Facing paintings, statues and so forth

And other verses which present about taking the aspiring bodhicitta by ritual, as well as the associated precepts with it. To train in the deeds we must hold the engaging vow. The method of taking that, is presented beginning with (Verse 19)

Without the vow of the engaged intention

The **third** is (from having generated this mind what are the trainings in the practice). To quote the Gyaltshab Dampa in relation to all the deeds of a bodhisattva

The Buddha well explained the six perfections from the perspective of the threefold trainings, the first (training of morality) includes the (first) three (of the six perfections). The last two of both (threefold training and six perfections) match. Then one (joyous effort) is included in all (three trainings).

Henceforth all the bodhisattva deeds are included in the threefold uncommon trainings.

The morality of restraint from negative actions, the gathering of virtuous Dharma, acting to benefit sentient beings. The training in these three moralities are included in (Verse 32)

Which causes purity of body, speech and mind

It is also said,

The training in concentration, is described in (Verse 34)

whose nature is merit and exalted wisdom.

It is also said, the training in wisdom, is described from (Verse 41) *but without the practice of the perfection of wisdom.*

The **fourth** is (Identifying the results of the training)

From (Verse 59) *having thus meditated on suchness*

EXPLAINING THE SUPREME BEING EXTENSIVELY

Here there are two parts:

Elaborate presentation on the paths of perfection vehicle; and a mere portion of how to enter into the mantra vehicle.

The indication of 'a mere portion' suggests that entering the mantra vehicle is not explained in great detail.

Elaborate presentation on the paths of the perfection vehicle

This is divided into two: presenting the system of the paths; and presenting the system of the result.

Presenting the system of the paths

This is divided into the pledge, and presenting the actual path .

THE PLEDGE

The pledge is presented with the next verse, but we can leave that for our next session.

Next week will be a discussion week, and it is good for you to engage in discussion on the topics presented thus far in the text. The significance of engaging in discussion is that it allows you to refresh and bring out whatever you have learnt and understood before. Otherwise, whatever you have learnt may just lie dormant.

We didn't have time to go through the twelve links of dependent origination in much detail, so it will be good for you to go over them in more detail in your discussion session. More specifically, try to get a clear understanding of how many lifetimes it takes to complete one round of twelve interdependent links. They are said to be completed either in two or three lifetimes; they cannot be completed in just one lifetime. So, it is good to develop a good understanding of these important points.

As mentioned previously, it is through these twelve interdependent links that one understands how oneself and other beings enter into cyclic existence. The forward presentation of the twelve interdependent links shows how beings enter into the cyclic existence, beginning with ignorance, leading on to compositional factors, consciousness, and so forth. When the reverse order is presented, one then understands how to end the process of cyclic existence. Through ensuring the cessation of ignorance, compositional factors cease, then the imprints left on the consciousness cease, and so forth. This is how to understand the reverse order of the twelve interdependent links.

The most important thing is to recognise the cause for the ignorance of grasping at a self and identify it within oneself. It is important to really be able to identify that self-grasping on a personal level. Identifying the self-grasping of others won't, in itself, contribute much to freeing ourselves from cyclic existence. We need to focus on overcoming the self-grasping in relation to oneself right from the beginning.

In order to overcome the wrong conception of grasping at a self, one needs to see how that mistaken view is based on falsity and how it can be completely eradicated. In order to achieve liberation oneself, one has to eradicate grasping at one's individual grasping at the self, rather than focusing on the self of others.

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