
Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

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Reinforce your bodhicitta motivation.

We will continue with the commentary on *Lamp for the Path*. In terms of the outline, we are at the subheading 'The benefits of calm abiding meditation'.

Prior to this, we covered the favourable conditions that we must meet in order to begin calm abiding meditation, and so forth.

THE BENEFITS OF CALM ABIDING MEDITATION

For those of you who have the translation of the *Lamp* commentary, verse 41 reads:

*41ab. When the practitioner has gained calm abiding
Higher perception will also be gained.*

Relating to this, the commentary continues:

Following the meditation instruction as described earlier, through exerting continuous effort in single-pointed concentration like an unbroken stream of water, the yogi will achieve calm abiding, and along with that achieve the power of clairvoyance, and engage in fulfilling the two welfares.

In the earlier sessions, we touched on the reason why we need to achieve the state of calm abiding – to gain special insight. As we will discover later, calm abiding is a condition for gaining special insight and other important qualities, such as the clairvoyant powers. These qualities are all achieved through calm abiding.

When the commentary says, *along with that achieve the power of clairvoyance, and engage in fulfilling the two welfares*, 'the two welfares' refers to fulfilling the ultimate goal for oneself, and the ultimate goal for other sentient beings.

Attaining clairvoyant powers makes it easier to fulfil the two welfares because, in order to benefit others, it is an advantage for the practitioner to know exactly the individual predispositions, interests, spiritual temperaments and thoughts of other sentient beings. When the practitioner has such knowledge, he or she is able to benefit other sentient beings more effectively. Thus, clairvoyant powers are important for benefitting others, and attaining these clairvoyant powers depends on achieving calm abiding.

The commentary continues:

Sharawa said that not only clairvoyance but also non-conceptual wisdom would arise.

This implies that the purpose of achieving calm abiding is not chiefly to gain clairvoyant powers but, more importantly, to gain non-conceptual wisdom, which here refers to the wisdom realising selflessness – this has the capacity to cut completely the root cause of cyclic existence.

As it says here, to produce this powerful wisdom realising selflessness, wisdom has to be conjoined with, or supplemented by, the calm abiding state. It is in fact this union of calm abiding and special insight which has the capacity to uproot the cause of cyclic existence.

The commentary next refers to 'Jowo', who is Jowo Je Atisha:

This is well said because Jowo says, 'To achieve clairvoyance power and to generate uncontaminated path, first one should generate calm abiding'.

This is self-explanatory.

TRAINING IN THE PRECEPT OF WISDOM

Then the commentary refers to the next part of the root text outline:

As to the third, How One Trains in the Training of Wisdom has two:

1. Presentation on special insight by proving the necessity of conjoining method and wisdom
2. How one trains in special insight

Presentation on special insight by proving the necessity of conjoining the method and the wisdom

Here we should note the difference between calm abiding and special insight. As we have already discussed, calm abiding is really a state of single-pointed meditative concentration accompanied by a deep experience of the bliss of the mental and physical pliancy. This bliss is induced by the meditator's perfect state of single-pointed concentration.

In order to gain special insight, what the meditator needs to do next is to remain in that perfect state of calm abiding, and within that state be able to utilise his or her wisdom to analyse the truth at the same time.

So special insight arises when the meditator experiences the bliss of pliancy through the force of wisdom analysing the truth while in a perfect state of calm abiding. This bliss of pliancy in association with the gaining of special insight is induced by the force of wisdom analysing the truth, whereas the bliss of pliancy associated with calm abiding is induced by the force of perfect meditative concentration.

We can clearly see here how special insight depends on achieving calm abiding. Without depending on the support of calm abiding, it is not possible to produce such a penetrative wisdom of analysis which can induce a bliss of pliancy culminating in the state of special insight. This is because the perfect mental stability of the focus is required in order to gain special insight. If the concentration is not firm or steady enough, you will easily lose the object of meditation and hence it is impossible to gain special insight. The word 'special' in the context of the term 'special insight' connotes that the kind of bliss of pliancy the meditator experiences upon achieving special insight is extraordinary because it is induced by the force of penetrative wisdom analysing the object, more than the bliss induced by the force of the single-pointed concentration of simply stabilising the mind on the object.

So try to understand the difference between calm abiding and special insight, and why achieving special insight depends first on achieving calm abiding.

Now, back to the commentary. We mentioned two headings, the first of which has three sub-headings:

1. Reason for training in the wisdom of special insight
2. Reason for training in the union of method and wisdom
3. Presentation of the actual path of union

1. Reason for training in the wisdom of special insight

Here 'wisdom' refers to the supermundane wisdom of realising selflessness. We can see here how the root text presents the topics in an orderly manner. For example, soon after teaching about calm abiding, it explains how calm abiding is the cause for gaining special insight, and then goes on to explain what special insight is.

In the root text, verses 41cd and 42 say:

- 41cd. *But without practice of the perfection of wisdom,
The obstructions will not come to an end.*
42. *Thus, to eliminate all obstructions
To liberation and omniscience,
The practitioners should continually cultivate
The perfection of wisdom with skilful means.*

The commentary continues:

Now, if we ask, is it enough simply to generate calm abiding and the clairvoyant mind that arises from its force. Master Chandragomin says (in his *Praise in Confession*):

Over and over, with the forest fire of meditation,
The jungle of faults may be burned, yet
The fixed root of 'self' being unconsumed,
It comes to life in advance, as though moistened by rain.

The quote by Chandragomin points out why we need to gain special insight. In this quote, when it says, *over and over, with the forest fire of meditation*, the analogy is that a mundane state of concentration only has the capacity to prevent the manifest and very gross forms of delusions.

We touched on this earlier, when we were discussing calm abiding. On the basis of the calm abiding gained through the ninth stages of mental abiding you can move forward to achieving all the higher realm's levels of Concentration and Formless through relying upon the mundane path having the aspects of grossness and peacefulness. By relying on such a mundane path, however, you can only prevent the arising of manifested forms of mental affliction while on the high level mental states of concentration.

Chandragomin continues, *the jungle of faults may be burned, yet the fixed root of 'self' being unconsumed*. This clearly indicates that, while depending on a mundane state of meditative concentration one will be able to prevent some delusions to arise but only temporarily, as it will not 'burn' the root of the delusions, which *comes to life in advance, as though moistened by rain*. Similarly, if the understorey of a forest is very wet then, when the fire is gone, the root of a forest tree *comes to life in advance, as though moistened by rain*.

This is further explained when the commentary says:

Although it is possible to subdue manifested afflictions through applying the worldly concentration ...

The term 'worldly or mundane' here should not be confused with the general meaning of the same in terms of the differences between the worldly and the spiritual, or the mundane and the supermundane. Here, *worldly concentration* specifically refers to the different high level mental states of concentration which enable one to traverse through the higher planes within cyclic existence, such as from the state of being on the desire realm to the concentration realm to the formless realm. At each level, one engages on the path viewing the level below as gross, and the one above as peaceful.

Here, the commentary clarifies the meaning of the root text when it says:

Although it is possible to subdue manifested afflictions through applying the worldly concentration, without applying the perfection of wisdom of suchness it is impossible to eliminate the seed of both of the two types of obstructions.

When it says, *subdue manifested afflictions*, we also referred to this in our early discussion concerning the different types of object for calm abiding, one of these being the object for abandoning the mental afflictions. By applying worldly concentration - sometimes called the 'worldly or mundane special insight' - although the root cause of the afflictions is not affected, when you experience the abandonment of the manifest form of the afflictions, you feel as if the afflictions are permanently abandoned. Of course, they are not permanently abandoned because, as the commentary says, *without applying the perfection of wisdom of suchness it is impossible to eliminate the seed of both of the two types of obstructions*.

Practices in which one focuses on, for example, the four noble truths and their sixteen aspects, are the means by which one counteracts the root cause of the mental afflictions.

The commentary continues:

Therefore, one needs to continually engage in the yoga of the perfection of wisdom of suchness along with the skilful means of giving and so forth in order to eliminate mental afflictions, such as desire and so forth, and obstructions to omniscience, which are in the form of latencies of dualistic misconception.

Here, *dualistic misconception* refers to the manifest form of obstructions to omniscient mind, whereas the *latencies* are not a manifest form, but are propensities of the obstruction to omniscient mind.

We have talked about the 'seed' of the mental afflictions before. I have already explained the difference between the seed and the latency of mental afflictions so many times that by now you should know it! The 'seed' of something means something which can produce the result similar to its cause.

The above paragraph from the commentary explains the meaning of the verse in such a way that you could almost trace every word of the root text in the commentary. Basically, it's saying here that we need to rely on special insight or the wisdom of selflessness because it is the direct antidote to the root cause of all the mental afflictions. What is the root cause? It is self-grasping. So,

these two – self-grasping and the wisdom of selflessness – directly counteract each other.

As an example, if you had to completely destroy a tree, it's not sufficient to just prune the branches and leaves, because if the root remains under the ground, the tree will keep growing.

In the same way, there's not much point in simply abandoning the manifest form of the mental afflictions, because even though temporarily you may not experience them, those delusions will arise again for as long as the root is there. That is the main meaning.

The commentary continues with a quotation by Shantideva:

The antidote to afflictive and
Omniscience obstructions is emptiness.
If you wish to quickly attain the all-knowing state,
Why don't you meditate on it?

(With reference to the verses 41cd and 42) The first two lines imply that without the realisation of emptiness it is impossible to eliminate any mental afflictions. Therefore, it implies that even hearers and solitary realisers should have the realisation of subtle emptiness.

This clearly confirms that to achieve the state of liberation, *even hearers and solitary realisers* must have the realisation of selflessness. The next bit of the commentary says:

The next four lines imply that the differences between the Great and Lesser Vehicles are not made on the grounds of philosophical standpoints; they imply that those who transcend on Great Vehicle train themselves in the wisdom conjoined with vast skilful means.

As we already know, these four lines (verse 42) imply that even the followers of the Lesser Vehicle must have the realisation or wisdom of emptiness. Therefore, the difference between the Lesser and Great Vehicles is not based on the grounds of the wisdom aspect; rather, as it says here, the difference is based on the grounds of the *vast skilful means* or the method side.

2. Reason for training in the union of method and wisdom

The commentary continues:

The second is Reason for Training in the Union of Method and Wisdom which relates to verse 42cd.

*42cd. The practitioners should continually cultivate
The perfection of wisdom with skilful means*

What is the reason? The answer is provided in verse 43.

*43. Wisdom without skilful means
And skilful means without wisdom
Are referred to as bondage.
Therefore do not give up either.*

This shows the necessity of the union of both method and wisdom. The commentary continues:

Those who aspire to achieve the complete enlightenment have to rely on both method and wisdom, not one without the other. In alignment with this the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra says, 'Wisdom not supported by method is bondage as well as method not supported by wisdom is bondage'. This section responds to the fifth question of Nagtso's system.

Earlier on, there were a number of questions raised by the translator, Nagtso, so here, as it says, *this section responds to the fifth question of Nagtso's system.*

This is a reminder to us as to why there's a need for both method and wisdom on the path. One way to understand this is in terms of the ultimate result or goal of the spiritual path, which can be categorised into the two bodies, or kayas, of the Buddha – truth body and form body. Wisdom is the main cause to achieve the truth body, whereas method is the main cause to achieve the form body. We can also understand this by looking at the structure of the entire path, from beginning to end, in terms of the two truths as the basis (object/truth to be known), the two of method and wisdom as the path (subjective mind that realises the truth), and the two kayas of the truth body and form body as the result.

So is it clear why you need to train in both method and the wisdom? Wisdom refers to the wisdom realising emptiness or selflessness, and method refers to generating bodhicitta, and so forth.

3. Presentation of the actual path of union

The third, which is the presentation of the path of union, has two subheadings:

1. Brief explanation
2. Detailed explanation

Brief explanation

The commentary reads:

The first: With regard to meditating on the union of the method and wisdom, it is necessary to know the meaning of them (method [skilful means] and wisdom) individually. To answer this, the text says in verse 44:

*44. To eliminate doubts concerning
What is wisdom and what is skilful means,
I shall make clear the difference
Between skilful means and wisdom.*

The key point to be explained here is implied in the line, 'I shall make clear the difference'.

What needs to be clarified?

The meaning of skilful means and wisdom may appear to be mixed, and this needs to be differentiated clearly or correctly so that the features and divisions of each one are not mixed. The purpose of doing this is to eliminate not understanding, wrong understanding and doubts with regard to the meaning of skilful means and wisdom. Potowa was supposed to have said, 'The beginning and the end parts of the *Lamp for the Path* have a few words, but are of great significance where lies the cream of butter'.

Detailed explanation

The second Detailed Explanation has three:

1. Identifying the method
2. The purpose of becoming familiar with it
3. Identifying the wisdom

Identifying the method

Regarding the first [root text, verse 45]:

*45. Apart from the perfection of wisdom
All virtuous practices such as
The perfection of giving are described
As a skilful means by the victorious ones.*

Here, the method refers to all the virtuous white Dharma conjoined with bodhicitta such as the perfection of giving as well as the four other perfections, but not the perfection of wisdom. This is what is taught by the victorious ones of three times as the method or skilful means.

So, the five perfections other than wisdom (the sixth perfection) are considered here as the method side. With the mind or spirit of bodhicitta, the bodhisattva engages in the six perfections, the first five of which are the method side, and the last one being the wisdom side. Having said that, if we look at the perfection of joyous effort, it can have the aspect of both method and wisdom.

The purpose of becoming familiar with it

The commentary continues:

Regarding the second [verse 46]:

46. *Whoever, under the influence of familiarity
With skilful means, cultivates wisdom
Will quickly attain enlightenment –
Not just by meditating on selflessness.*

Beginning with topics such as impermanence and the law of karma and then the practice of giving and so forth, as one steadily becomes familiar with the method then, through the force of bodhicitta, one meditates to gain insight into wisdom. Such wisdom will have the capacity to cut through the grasping of the sign with respect to any external or internal objects of observation. This wisdom is also very powerful in overcoming obstructions, and thereby will make it quicker to achieve the peerless state of enlightenment. However, meditating on selflessness alone without the support of the method, one will not be able to achieve the peerless state of enlightenment as it says,...

As it says here, wisdom alone is not enough. That's why the commentary says, *beginning with topics such as impermanence and the law of karma. Impermanence is a topic of meditation that belongs to the person of small scope, and the law of karma belongs to the middle scope. The practices of giving and so forth, as one steadily becomes familiar with the method then, through the force of bodhicitta are related to the person of great scope.*

This indicates the need to progress through all those stages of the path. Once one has made good progress on the method side, especially with the bodhicitta mind, and so forth, as the commentary says, *one meditates to gain insight into wisdom. Then one may choose a specific type of object and meditate to gain the wisdom realising the ultimate truth of that particular object.*

Here, there's also the implication of the need to accumulate both merit and wisdom in order to attain the wisdom of selflessness.

The commentary continues:

... 'Partial cause produces partial result, Full cause produces full result; Hence, it is said how can an intelligent one be content with the partial cause?'

When it says the *partial cause produces partial result...*, it's referring to method and wisdom. You have to employ the complete path of method and wisdom, otherwise whatever means we apply, if they represent only a partial cause, then the result will be also only partial, not the full result.

This can also be understood in terms of worldly education. If you were to only focus on one specific area, but not have a complete understanding of a topic, you will only have a partial knowledge or education.

We will find that the knowledge of Dharma enhances the knowledge of the world and supports us in living a better worldly life. However, worldly knowledge doesn't help us understand the Dharma. Practising the Dharma in worldly life, such as maintaining positive thinking, being honest and compassionate is effective for living a successful happy worldly life.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama commented that, although he has hardly studied modern science, he's not nervous about discussing science with scientists and receiving questions from them. His Holiness says that he always keeps his mind clear and open to others; this helps him understand the other's view and find something to say to their questions. Surely it all has got a lot to do with the His Holiness's rich knowledge of Dharma!

We must always keep our mind clear and open. It's the wrong meditation approach if our meditation is narrowing our mental outlook, rather it should be widening our mind. I advise you to read the commentarial texts, and in that way you will acquire broader knowledge which is important. You must read Tsongkhapa's *Great Stages of the Path*. In the sections on calm abiding, there is a detailed explanation about manifested afflictions and so forth.

I don't read English, but I understand that these days there are a lot of Dharma books available in English and many are available as electronic copies, so these days people don't need to carry heavy books around. There are electronic copies of the large corpus of Tibetan texts as well. A friend of mine in America says, 'Just ask me. Whatever book you want, I'll send to you electronically'.

The friend made the suggestion that, when you travel, you don't want to carry too many books. But I still end up carrying a heavy load of books when I travel!

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