
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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Please generate a virtuous motivation for listening to this teaching, thinking that I have to generate the profound Mahayana bodhicitta, and in order to do so I have to listen to these teachings and then put into practice what I have heard.

2.1.1.3. The Three Qualities of Conquering Higher Grounds and so forth

Conquering ground from ground and ascending steadily higher,

At the time all their paths to bad migrations completely cease,

At the time all their grounds of individual beings exhaust.

With regard to the first line, 'Conquering ground from ground and ascending steadily higher', it is the bodhisattva on the first ground that is 'ascending steadily higher' and 'conquering ground from ground'. The bodhisattva on the first ground is conquering the second ground from the first ground, and in this way is steadily ascending up the grounds. As he has already achieved the first ground he can see that he is close to achieving the second ground, and therefore is extremely enthusiastic about conquering the second ground, and thus ascending steadily to higher grounds.

The root text says, 'At the time', which refers to the time of attaining the first ground. Of course 'their paths' refers to the path of the bodhisattva who has attained the first ground.

Concerning this *Mirror* says:

If we consider the subject, bodhisattvas at the time of having attained the first ground - then one can say that all their paths to hell completely cease - because they have abandoned the seed for rebirth there.

At the time of having attained the first ground the bodhisattva has achieved a complete cessation of all the paths that lead to bad migrations. The reason is because bad migrations are regarded as abandonments through seeing, and the bodhisattva on the first ground has completely abandoned these abandonments together with their seeds.

There are no seeds for rebirth in the lower realms in the mind stream of a bodhisattva on the first ground. So the path to bad migrations has ceased. Actually it is said that once they have reached the forbearance level of the path of preparation a bodhisattva cannot take rebirth in the lower realms, and the doors to the lower realms are closed.

The doors are closed at the forbearance level because

the conditions that are needed for rebirth in the lower realms have been eliminated, although the seeds for lower rebirth in the lower realms in the mind stream are still there. If the seeds for rebirth in the lower realms are to ripen they need certain causes and conditions. Once one has reached the forbearance level of the path of preparation those causes and conditions will not be there. Therefore bodhisattvas will not take rebirth in the lower realms. Have they abandoned rebirth in the lower realms? No. That only happens when they reach the path of seeing, because for that a bodhisattva needs to have abandoned the seeds of lower rebirth from the mind stream.

The 'at the time' in the third line of this part of the root text, refers to the time of attaining the first ground, while 'their' refers to bodhisattvas who have attained the first ground. So as it says in *Mirror* one can say:

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas at the time of having attained the first ground' - at that time all their individual being's grounds exhaust - because they are arya bodhisattvas.

Since they are arya bodhisattvas they have gone beyond the grounds of individual beings, and therefore for them all the grounds of individual beings are exhausted.

2.1.2 Showing the Qualities in a Condensed Manner

In this section the qualities of the bodhisattvas are shown in a condensed manner using an example.

The root text reads,

They are clearly shown to be like eighth arya.

Here again, the subject 'they' is bodhisattvas on the first ground. They are clearly shown to be like an eighth arya. Here the eighth arya refers to the trainee stream-enterer. We have four basic divisions of aryas: stream-enterers, once-returners, never-returners, and arhats, and each of those have a trainee level and a resultant level. So there are eight levels in all. If we count them down from the arhats, then the very first one, the trainee stream-enterer, is the eighth arya. So here according to *Mirror*:

Take the subject 'first ground bodhisattvas' - they are clearly shown to be like that eighth arya - because through attaining the first ground they exhaust the faults of the first ground and attain the related qualities.

Summary of the qualities beautifying the continuum of the practitioner

- The first of the four qualities was attaining a meaningful name and so forth. First of all the bodhisattva attains the name 'ultimate bodhisattva'.
 - Since the Buddhist practitioner has attained the Mahayana path of seeing, they have been born into the **Tathagata lineage**, which means that they are now irreversibly on the path to buddhahood. The abandonments they have eliminated from their mind stream are the **three strong fetters** of the intellectually acquired view of the transitory collections, afflicted doubt, and the view of holding morality and discipline as supreme. Within one
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instant they can manifest the **twelve sets of a hundred-fold qualities**.

- Thirdly we considered the three qualities of conquering ground from ground and ascending steadily higher and so forth.
- Then there was an explanation of the qualities in a condensed manner by example.

When we reflect, we can see how none of those qualities can in any way show the bodhisattva in a negative light.

2.2. The Qualities of Outshining the Continuum of Others

The qualities outshining the continuum of others has three subdivisions: on this ground outshining hearers and self-liberators through lineage; on the seventh ground outshining hearers and self-liberators through the power of the mind; and the meaning that has been established through the two previous points.

2.2.1. Outshining Hearers and Self-Liberators Through Lineage

The root text reads:

***Even abiding on the first mind of complete enlightenment,
They diminish those born from the speech of buddhas
And self-buddhas through the power of merits increased.***

Mirror:

Consider even those abiding on the first mind of complete enlightenment, Extremely Joyful – they outshine hearers and self-liberators through their lineage – because they diminish hearers born from the speech of the Powerful Able Ones and self-buddhas through the power of the merits of their compassion and bodhicitta; having outshined them their merits increase.

Illumination:

Not only while abiding on the second etc. complete Bodhicitta views, but even while abiding on the first mind of 'Extreme Joy' one's merits will have increased much more than those of self-liberated buddhas and hearers born from the speech of the Powerful Able Ones.

Through the power of one's merits of conventional Bodhicitta and compassion they become diminished and one outshines them. This is another quality different from the qualities mentioned above.

Here a doubt can be generated: if the bodhisattvas on the first ground outshine hearers and self-liberators through the power of their lineage then, first of all, why don't they outshine them also through the power of their mind as well, and from what point onwards do they outshine hearers and self-liberators also through the power of their mind?

So in order to clarify that doubt then here the sutra *Maitreya's Liberation* is quoted.

Son of good family it is like this, shortly after a prince is born he outshines through the power of his

lineage even all the old and very important ministers, because he has the name of the king.

So even though the prince is just a child, because of his name even very senior ministers and important people in parliament etc will pay great respect to the prince, because of the force of his lineage and his heritage.

In the same way, not long after beginner bodhisattvas have generated the mind of enlightenment they are born into the lineage of the king of Dharma, the Tathagata, and through the force of their compassion and bodhicitta they outshine hearers and self-liberators who have been practising the pure path for a long time.

Here the bodhisattvas being referred to are first level bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas who have reached the first ground are born into the Tathagata lineage. From that point onwards through the force of their bodhicitta and compassion they outshine hearers and self-liberators. The bodhicitta being referred to here is the bodhicitta arising from signs, or conventional bodhicitta. Specifically, it is the bodhicitta with pure superior intention.

Types of Bodhicitta

If bodhicitta is divided according to the grounds, and the five paths, then we have four types of bodhicitta.

1. The bodhicitta of aspiration and practice is found on first two paths, therefore they are referred to as the grounds of aspiration and practice.
2. Once the bodhisattva has reached the path of seeing then the bodhicitta will be referred to as bodhicitta with pure superior intention. From the first ground up until the seventh ground the bodhicitta will be referred to as pure superior intention. That covers the seven impure grounds.
3. On the three pure grounds the bodhicitta is called ripening bodhicitta,
4. On the path of no-more-learning the bodhicitta is referred to as bodhicitta that has eliminated obscurations.

When it says here that bodhisattvas outshine hearers and self-liberators through the force of their bodhicitta, it refers to the bodhicitta with pure superior intention.

Once bodhisattvas have attained the first ground they outshine hearers and self-liberators through the power of their lineage. That is because they have both bodhicitta and superior compassion.

On this first ground bodhisattvas outshine hearers and self-liberators through the force of the bodhicitta with pure superior intention. Now the question arises: it is mentioned in the scriptures that as one of the benefits of generating bodhicitta, one will outshine hearers and self-liberators. Doesn't that mean that the initial bodhicitta will also outshine hearers and self-liberators? The answer is yes.

The sutras give the example of a diamond that has been broken into splinters. Even a sliver of diamond still outshines gold ornaments and can eliminate

worldly destitution. In the same way even bodhicitta that is separate from the trainings still outshines hearers and self-liberators and places sentient beings in happiness.

The *Compendium of Training* refers to a bodhicitta that is separate from the trainings, meaning the bodhisattva training. Actually that is not really possible. Bodhicitta that is separated from the training of the six perfections is just not possible. What this is referring to is either the aspirational bodhicitta in the continuum of a practitioner who hasn't yet taken engaging bodhicitta vows, or the aspirational bodhicitta in the continuum of a bodhisattva who has broken the bodhisattva vows. In either of those two cases then the bodhicitta is referred to as bodhicitta separate from training.

So as this is completely impossible on the path of accumulation, then it certainly doesn't happen on the first ground. Here it specifically refers to bodhisattvas outshining hearers and self-liberators on the first ground, and this is done from the point of view of having attained bodhicitta with pure superior intention, because it is done here from the point of view of having attained ultimate bodhicitta. Once one has attained ultimate bodhicitta then the conventional bodhicitta becomes bodhicitta with pure superior intention. But it doesn't mean that the bodhicitta on the lower levels doesn't also outshine hearers and self-liberators, because it does.

2.2.2. Outshining Both Hearers and Self-Liberators on the Seventh Ground Through Awareness

The relevant line of the root text is,

For those 'Gone Far' also awareness becomes superior.

Mirror has this to say about this line:

If it is asked, 'From which point onwards do they outshine them through the power of their awareness?' Take the subject first ground bodhisattvas – when reaching the seventh ground Gone Far their awareness realising emptiness becomes superior to that of hearers and self-liberators – because from that time they are able to enter into and come out of cessation on a momentary basis.

In *Illumination* Lama Tsong Khapa says:

When those first ground Bodhisattvas reach the ground 'Gone Far', not only will they outshine Hearers and Self-liberators with Conventional Bodhicitta but they will also outshine, they will become superior to, hearers and self-liberators through the power of the awareness of ultimate mind generation.

Here it quotes from the *Sutra of the Ten Grounds*, which says:

'Child of the conquerors it is like that, for example the child of a conqueror endowed with the name of a king by being born into the family of a king will outshine the various group of ministers merely by birth. But it won't outshine them through the force of learning and insight, only through the force of birth and lineage.'

Then once the child of the king has become older and has developed the power of the mind then it will have gone beyond all the activities of all the ministers.

In the same way a child of the conqueror bodhisattva just after having generated bodhicitta outshines all of the hearers and self-liberators through the greatness of the superior thought, but not through the force of their insight and awareness.

The bodhisattva abiding on the seventh bodhisattva ground abides on the greatness of knowing the object, and therefore has gone beyond all the activities of hearers and self-buddhas.

Review

From which point onwards does one become an ultimate bodhisattva?

Student: The first ground.

Bodhisattvas have earned the name ultimate bodhisattvas because they've attained ultimate bodhicitta. Why is a bodhisattva on the first ground born into the lineage of the Tathagatas?

[Student answer unclear]

You have to think that they are definitely abiding within their lineage. This is actually the same for all three types of practitioners: hearers, self-liberators and Mahayana bodhisattvas. Once the individual practitioners of the individual paths have reached the path of seeing belonging to their lineage or their family, then they will not change that lineage and change to another path. They will only follow the path of the lineage into which they have been born as they attained their particular path of seeing.

This means that bodhisattvas are born into the Tathagata lineage, because they don't change to another path. From that point onwards the lineage is definitely abiding.

There is a verse from the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara*, where it says, 'Today I have been born into the lineage of the buddhas etc etc', When we say, 'Today I've been born into the buddha lineage' then as it is referring to the generation of bodhicitta, at that point one has been born into the lineage of buddhas. So that's a bit different from the *Six Session Guru Yoga*, where after taking the bodhisattva vows we say, 'Today I've been born into the Tathagata lineage and from now on I have to act in accordance with those vows etc etc.'

Why do we say a bodhisattva on the first ground has eliminated the three strong fetters, or has eliminated the abandonments through seeing?

[Students give various answers]

The point is, what is the measure that shows that a practitioner has abandoned those particular delusions etc.?

One student answer: Because they haven't got the intellectual view of the transitory collection anymore.

If you say that they don't have intellectual true-grasping because they have realised emptiness, and therefore they have abandoned the intellectual acquired view of the transitory collections, then that

would also apply of course to the bodhisattva on the uninterrupted path of seeing. For a bodhisattva on the uninterrupted path of seeing, the intellectually acquired view of the transitory collections cannot be generated again. However we don't say that they have abandoned the intellectually acquired view of the transitory collections.

Just because a delusion has been rendered ineffective, or has been basically eliminated from the mind stream, and cannot be generated again, doesn't mean that it has been abandoned. At the time of the uninterrupted path of seeing, the intellectually acquired true-grasping cannot be generated. It is not existent and cannot be generated again. Why? Because the uninterrupted path of seeing is the direct antidote that is opposing the intellectually acquired view of the transitory collections. However that doesn't mean that at that time the practitioner has already abandoned the intellectually acquired view of the transitory collection. That happens only when the practitioner attains the liberated path of seeing, and attains the cessation that has abandoned the intellectually acquired true-grasping.

For a bodhisattva, reaching the first ground is simultaneous with attaining an uninterrupted path. From now onwards progressing to a higher ground will always be simultaneous with attaining a liberated path.

Please posit the three fetters that belong to the abandonments through seeing.

Student: Intellectually acquired view of the transitory collection, afflictive doubt, holding moralities and disciplines as supreme.

From the point of view of the five afflicted views and the five afflictive non-views then can you be clearer?

Please tell me the six root delusions.

Students: Anger, attachment, pride, ignorance, afflicted doubt, and wrong view.

What do we have within the wrong views?

[Student answers unclear]

Within the wrong views we have the view of the transitory collection, extreme view, the view holding moralities and disciplines as supreme, and the view holding views as supreme.

The first five delusions are called the non-view affliction. The last five are called the five afflicted views.

Why is the first ground called Extremely Joyful? Why does one say that the first ground holds supreme joy?

Student : Because after abandoning obscurations and attaining the first ground one has great joy.

Which types of powers and abilities does that bodhisattva have?

[Student answer unclear]

It is mentioned here that bodhisattvas in one instant can shake one hundred world systems.

What are the ten perfections?

Students: Generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, concentration, wisdom.

What are the last four?

Students: Method, power, prayer, and transcendental wisdom.

For example, on the seventh ground one excels in the perfection of method, and so we have the perfection of method, and on the eighth the perfection of power, on the ninth the perfection of prayer, and on the tenth ground the perfection of transcendental wisdom. It is good to be able to name those ten perfections, which are for the purpose of ripening the continuum of the practitioner.

There are four practices for the ripening of the continuum of others. What are those four practices?

[Students give a variety of answers]

The first one is being generous. Then there is speaking pleasantly. Third is explaining the meaning and fourth is practising the meaning.

First of all one would try to benefit the disciples and try ripen the continuum of others with material generosity.

Then one continues by speaking pleasantly and kindly. For example having invited them in and offered them tea and so forth, and said very pleasantly, 'Hello', and being very kind to them, one then explains the Dharma to them. When we explain the Dharma, especially at the beginning one has to teach very kindly, and according to the mind of the listeners. What one says has to accord with them.

Then of course one has to explain the meaning of the Dharma, such as the ten grounds, the resultant buddha stage, the path etc.

Finally 'practice according to the meaning' means one has to exhort the disciples to practice to what they have heard in accordance with the actual meaning of the teachings. One also has also to practice in accordance with the teachings.

What is a bodhisattva?

[Student answer unclear]

Take the subject buddha. Is a buddha a bodhisattva?

Student: They are bodhisattvas because they have generated bodhicitta.

A bodhisattva is a sentient being who has generated bodhicitta. So it is a practitioner on any of the four learners paths: the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, or meditation.

Next week is discussion group, so please discuss well!

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Edited Version

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