
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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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 uninterrupted 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

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 practice 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

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.

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.

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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