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# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 4. Divisions of Morality

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Mirror:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From *Mirror*:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From *Mirror*:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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