
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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Please generate a virtuous motivation for the teaching, thinking that I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to do so I'm now going to listen to this profound Mahayana teaching. Then I'm going to put it into practice as much as possible.

2.2.2. *Contemplating the Many Benefits of Patience.*

There are two sub-outlines, outlining the individual benefits of patience; and advice to rely on patience as a summary .

2.2.2.1. *Outlining the Individual Benefits of Patience*

Patience creates qualities opposite to what was explained.

From patience comes beauty, endearment to aryas,

Expertise in knowing right from wrong, subsequently

Divine and human birth, cessation of negativities.

One arrives here because a question is asked:

If anger has all those faults that were outlined previously then what are the actual benefits of patience?

Patience creates qualities that are opposite to the faults of anger that have been previously explained. What are those qualities of patience that are opposite to the faults of anger?

First of all from patience becomes a beautiful form, and also endearment to the arya beings. Arya beings rejoice when they see that someone is practising patience. One becomes proficient in knowing right from wrong, and after that one will attain rebirth as a human or god, and the cessation of negativities.

By reflecting on these benefits of patience, as outlined above, then one should generate the courage and strength to practice of patience.

2.2.2.2. *Advice to Rely on Patience as a Short Summary*

This is explained in these four lines:

*Ordinary beings and conquerors' children
Comprehending anger's faults and patience's benefits*

Should abandon impatience and always quickly rely

On the patience praised by arya beings.

Why do we need to be able to discern the faults of anger and the benefits of patience?

From *Mirror*:

Ordinary beings comprehending anger's faults and conquerors' children comprehending patience's benefits, should abandon impatience and always quickly rely on the patience praised by the arya beings.

By understanding the faults of impatience and understanding the benefits of patience, then one should abandon one and practise the other. Why?

Because anger is the source of many faults, and patience is the source of many qualities.

So *Mirror* states it quite clearly.

2.3. Divisions of the Perfection of Patience

Even dedicated towards complete enlightenment

It is worldly if it has threefold focus.

*Lacking focus it is described by the Buddha
As perfection beyond transitory existence.*

Here the division is the same as with the previous perfections. The bodhisattva on the third ground has excelled in the perfection of patience, but in general there's a twofold division of the perfection of patience into the worldly perfection of patience, and the perfection of patience gone beyond.

As was defined earlier, if true grasping at the three circles inhibits the patience then it is a worldly practice of patience. The three circles are the person practising patience; that with regard to which one practises patience, like the suffering or the problem that one bears; and the person with regard to whom one is practising patience.

If the patience is inhabited by true grasping at those three circles then it is a **worldly patience**, and if the patience is free from true grasping at those three circles then it is a perfection of **patience gone beyond transitory existence**. The Buddha explained in the sutras that there is a perfection gone beyond transitory existence, and a worldly perfection that is still contained within transitory existence.

2.4. Showing the Other Pure Qualities Arising on This Ground

Here we have two-fold division of the qualities for the purpose of self, and the qualities for the purpose of others.

2.4.1. *Qualities of Realisation*

Conquerors' children on that ground have mental stabilisation

And clairvoyance; attachment and anger completely cease.

If one asks, apart from the practice of patience, what qualities has the third ground bodhisattva attained, then the answer is here in these lines, which refer to the qualities of realisation and cessation. The qualities of cessation are the absorptions of the form and formless realm, clairvoyances and the immeasurable thoughts.

The first line says, 'conquerors' children on that ground', so the ground is the third ground.

From *Mirror*:

Take the subject 'conquerors' children abiding on the third ground': - they also generate other special qualities, - because they have pure mental stabilisations of the form and formless realms as well as clairvoyance, and because here attachment, anger and ignorance completely cease.

So bodhisattvas of the third ground have attained certain qualities of realisation such as the four absorptions of the form realm, the four absorptions of the formless realm and the five types of clairvoyance .

The Four Levels of Absorption in the Form Realm

There are four form realms and the associated four mental absorptions of the form realm - the absorption of the first mental stabilisation, and then the second, and so forth. So in the form realm there are the four levels of absorption: the first absorption of the form realm, the second absorption and so on.

The Four Levels of Absorption in the Formless Realm

Even though there are four levels of the formless realm as well, they aren't actual places. There are the four formless absorptions of the formless realm, which relate to the four types of formless realms. Here we have:

- the formless realm of limitless space and the absorption of limitless space
- the formless realm of limitless consciousness and the absorption of limitless consciousness
- the formless realm of nothingness and the absorption of nothingness,
- the peak of existence and the peak absorption.

Cyclic existence can be divided into the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm.

We are living in the desire realm, and then there are the four form realms, which are also actual places. Then one has the four formless realms where one can't really speak anymore about a place. The highest formless realm, the peak of existence, is highest one can go in cyclic existence, and the lowest one can go is the hell realm of uninterrupted agony.

The Four Immeasurables

The bodhisattvas attain the four immeasurable thoughts, which are

- Immeasurable love,
- Immeasurable compassion,
- Immeasurable joy,
- Immeasurable equanimity.

The Clairvoyances

The five clairvoyances are:

- The clairvoyance of magical emanation,
- The clairvoyance of the divine ear,
- The clairvoyance of knowing the mind of others,
- The clairvoyance remembering previous places, and
- The clairvoyance of the divine eye

If there are six types of clairvoyance posited, then one adds the clairvoyance knowing the cessation of

contamination, but this clairvoyance exists only in the continuum of a buddha.

In general the individual absorptions of the form realm are the establishing link, or the establishing karma for rebirth in the respective form realm, and the preparatory stage of the individual absorptions is the projecting karma for rebirth in the respective form realms.

Here, however, even though the bodhisattva has attained those various absorptions they don't take rebirth in the form realm through being under the control of those absorptions. They're actually adept in meditating on those absorptions, and as such they don't have to take rebirth in the form or formless realm, but they take rebirth through the force of prayer.

So the question arises, why are those qualities such as the absorptions of the form realm, the absorptions of the formless realm, the four immeasurable thoughts, and the five types of clairvoyance etc. expressively mentioned here, since the lower bodhisattva on the second ground, on the first ground, or even on the path of preparation has already attained those qualities? The reason is because the third ground bodhisattva becomes extremely proficient in the meditation on those various absorptions and qualities. Therefore the doubt arises, 'Well if this bodhisattva is so proficient in those various types of concentrations and absorptions does he have to take rebirth in the form or formless realm through the force of those concentrations?' In order to clarify this possible doubt then those various qualities are expressively mentioned here.

Apart from patience we have the qualities of realisation and the qualities of abandonment. We have now completed the qualities of realisation, and now we can go onto the qualities of abandonment.

2.4.2. Qualities of Abandonment

The root text contains this few words, 'attachment and anger completely cease'. On this ground one attains the complete cessation of attachment and anger. Even though it doesn't expressively mention ignorance, ignorance is implied in the 'and'.

Even though it is saying, 'Attachment, ignorance and anger completely cease', does it really talk about an absolute cessation of those three delusions or not? What do you think?

Student: No they don't completely cease.

When will they be completely ceased?

Student: The eighth ground

According to Prasangika the complete cessation of afflictions is attained simultaneously with the attainment of the eighth ground. According to the lower tenets that happens when one becomes enlightened.

Here cessation is not an absolute cessation. Here the cessation of attachment also refers to the cessation of manifest attachment.. We have already said that that the bodhisattva has attained the various absorptions of

the form and formless realms. For example when one attains the absorption of the first formless realm then the manifest attachment that is contained within the desire realm is abandoned, and this abandonment has been attained through a worldly path.

Obscurations

Here we have to have a short discussion about afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge. Actually it already started to talk about this topic in the first lines of this chapter where it referred to the fire wholly consuming the firewood of objects of knowledge.

The abandonments through meditation have the threefold division into small, middling, and great, and each again has a threefold division into small, middling, and great. So we end up with the nine circles of abandonments through meditation. The first six levels of the abandonment through meditation are abandoned from the second ground through to the seventh ground.

The definition of **an obscuration is that which obstructs either the attainment of liberation or the attainment of omniscience**. So obscuration has the two-fold division into afflictive obscurations, and the obscurations to omniscience.

Afflictive Obscurations

The definition of **an afflictive obscuration is an obscuration that primarily obstructs the attainment of liberation**.

This definition is common to the Mind Only, Svatantrika-Madhyamika, as well as the Prasangika. Of course each will posit different examples, but the definition will be the same. For example the grasping at the self of phenomena is posited by the Mind Only and Svatantrika-Madhyamika as an obscuration to omniscience, whereas the self-grasping at phenomena is posited by the Prasangika as an afflictive obscuration.

The Prasangika posit all afflictions as being afflictive obscurations. The reason is that if one doesn't realise selflessness of phenomena as well as selflessness of person, then one will not be able to abandon self-grasping at phenomena as well as self-grasping at person. Then the person will continue to accumulate karma and be reborn within cyclic existence. More quotations are given here but maybe we can leave those.

Afflictive obscuration has a twofold division into intellectually acquired afflictive obscuration, and the innate afflictive obscuration.

1. Within the afflicted obscurations we have the **intellectually acquired afflicted obscurations**.

An affliction generated through the continuum being tainted by a tenet or a seed being generated by such a delusion is the definition of intellectually acquired afflictive obscuration.

Here one posits the delusion that has been generated in dependence upon acceptance of a tenet. So studying

and accepting a particular tenet, and then generating true-grasping in dependence upon that belief would be an example of intellectually acquired afflicted obscuration. Also included here is the seed of that delusion. So that intellectually acquired delusion itself, as well as the seed will both be intellectually acquired afflictive obscuration.

So we have afflictive obscuration, the definition of which is an obscuration that primarily obstructs the attainment of liberation. Then this obscuration has a two-fold division into intellectually acquired and innate obscurations. The meaning of the intellectually acquired obscuration is an affliction generated through the continuum being tainted by a tenet, or the seed being generated by such a delusion. The intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations also have a twofold division into manifest and seed.

a. The **manifest obscuration** will be a mind that actually apprehends an object. The manifest obscuration will be **an actual consciousness that perceives something that is generated in dependence upon the contamination of a tenet**.

b. The **seed** has been generated in dependence upon the manifest obscuration that acts as its substantial cause, and has the potential to generate further manifest obscurations.

Of the twofold division of abandonments, the abandonment through seeing and the abandonments through meditation, the intellectually acquired obscurations fall within to the category of abandonments through seeing. There are no abandonments through meditation that are intellectually acquired. The intellectually acquired obscurations will always be abandonments through seeing.

2. Next are the **innate afflicted obscurations**.

An affliction that didn't come about through the continuum being tainted by a tenet but arose through imprints coming from beginningless time or the seed being generated through such an affliction, is the definition. Here also we have either the manifest one which will be a consciousness, or the part of the seed.

Being innate and a consciousness that perceives would be a manifest obscuration. Being innate but seed would be the seed part.

Obscurations to Omniscience

Next are the obscurations to omniscience. The definition of obscuration to omniscience is **an obscuration that primarily obstructs the attainment of omniscient consciousness**. Here there is also a two-fold division into manifest and seed.

There are no obscurations to omniscience that are consciousnesses. Also there are no intellectually acquired obscurations to omniscience. If it is an obscuration to omniscience it will always be an abandonment through meditation. There is no obscuration to omniscience that is an abandonment through seeing. So therefore obscurations to

omniscience will always be innate obscurations that aren't consciousness.

We have this twofold division into manifest and seed.

a. The **manifest** would be, for example, the appearance of true existence to the consciousness. So the appearance itself, the mistaken appearance of true existence, would be an example for a manifest obscuration to omniscience.

b. The part of the **seed** would be the potential within the mind that acts as a cause for that appearance to arise within the consciousness.

We have the afflictions such as, for example, true grasping, then we have the seed of true grasping, and we have the imprint of true grasping. So true grasping and the seed of true grasping will be afflictive obscuration, while the mere karmic imprint is the obscuration to omniscience. We can see that as long as one hasn't purified the imprints, one will not get rid of the manifest obscurations.

Hearer's Path

First the practitioner generates innate or spontaneous renunciation. At that time they enter the **hearer's path of accumulation**.

When the practitioner attains the union of calm abiding and special insight, they will progress from the hearer's path of accumulation to the hearer's path of preparation.

On the **hearer's path of preparation** they meditate on the conceptual union of calm abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness and deepening their understanding of emptiness. Then, when through the force of their meditation they realise emptiness directly, the practitioner progresses from the hearer's path of preparation to the **hearers' path of seeing**.

First the hearer reaches the uninterrupted path of seeing, which acts as the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictions. Then when the practitioner progresses from the uninterrupted path of seeing to the liberated path of seeing that has been induced by the uninterrupted path of seeing, they have attained the cessation of the abandonments through seeing.

However, the practitioner has still to abandon the innate afflictions, and this is done on the **path of meditation**. First one progresses through the first uninterrupted path of meditation, which acts as the direct antidote to the great great innate true grasping, to the first liberated path of meditation, which has attained the cessation of the great great innate true grasping. In such a way they progress along the nine levels of a path of meditation until they reach the final path of meditation which is the vajra-like concentration of the hearers path of meditation. The final uninterrupted path of meditation is the hearer's vajra-like concentration that acts as the direct antidote to the small small innate true grasping. Then one attains **the liberated path** that is induced by this vajra-like concentration that is an uninterrupted path. That is

simultaneous with the **attainment of a foe destroyer or an arhat**.

The various levels of the innate true grasping are divided into what is called the nine circles of true grasping. Here there are the three great circles, the three medium circles, and the three small circles. Similarly we have the nine circles of the path of meditation - the three great, three mediums, and three small.

The first of the nine circles of the path of meditation, the small small path of meditation, acts as the antidote to the great great innate true grasping. So the smallest acts as the antidote against the greatest. If you contemplate how the small to smaller path acts as the antidote to the greater delusion then you can see how they fit together.

Mahayana Practitioner's Path

Next we look at it from the point of view of a Mahayana practitioner who abides within the Mahayana family from the very start of their practice. At the point when such a practitioner generates the spontaneous non-artificial bodhicitta within their mind-stream then they enter the **Mahayana path of accumulation**.

When the practitioner first attains the union of calm abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness, then they progress from that Mahayana path of accumulation to the **Mahayana path of preparation**.

Then the practitioner will progress through the **four levels of the path of preparation**, heat, and so forth, and then through the force of the meditation they realise emptiness directly. That is the time when they will progress from the path of preparation to the **path of seeing**. The first path of seeing that is attained is the uninterrupted path of seeing.

The **uninterrupted path of seeing** is called an uninterrupted path of seeing of the first ground because it's attained simultaneously with the attainment of the first ground.

At that time the practitioner has attained the first ground, so it is an uninterrupted path of the first ground, and acts as the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired obscurations.

When then the intellectually acquired afflicted obscurations are actually abandoned, the practitioner attains the **liberated path of seeing**. This liberated path can also be called the liberated path of the first ground. Here it is good to note that on the first ground one first attains an uninterrupted path, and then one attains a liberated path. Later on the sequence is different.

The uninterrupted path of seeing acts as the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired obscuration. When the practitioner has actually abandoned the intellectually acquired obscuration they attain the cessation of the intellectually acquired obscuration, which is simultaneous with the attainment of the **liberated path of seeing of the first ground**.

After the practitioner has attained the liberated path of

seeing and has such attained the abandonment of the intellectually acquired afflicted obscurations then they will arise from their meditative equipoise, and start to accumulate merits in order to be able to abandon the first level of the innate afflicted obscurations, the coarse great great true grasping. They will accumulate merits until they reach a point where they will feel, 'Now it is possible that I will be able to abandon the coarse great great innate true grasping'. Then they will go into meditative equipoise, which at first will be neither an uninterrupted path nor a liberated path, but just a general meditative equipoise.

When that meditative equipoise transforms into the direct antidote to the coarse innate true grasping, then it becomes the **first uninterrupted path of meditation of the first ground**. We have the nine circles of the innate true grasping, the first one being the great great, and actually the great great has a two-fold division into coarse and subtle. When the general meditative equipoise that a bodhisattva has entered, (after having accumulated merits until they felt they were able to abandon the coarse great great innate true grasping), transforms into the direct antidote against the coarse great great innate true grasping, it becomes the uninterrupted path of meditation of the first ground.

When the bodhisattva actually attains the cessation of the coarse great great innate true grasping, they will attain the **liberated path of meditation of the second ground** that has been induced by the uninterrupted path of meditation of the first ground.

The liberated path on the first ground has attained the cessation of the intellectually acquired afflictions, and the liberated path on the second ground has attained the cessation of the coarse great great innate true grasping.

If you keep that in mind so then you can see how it works on the different grounds. However if we talk about it much more tonight you will get a headache. So we can continue with it next time.

Summary of the Mahayana Path

In summary, we have the ten grounds and on the ten grounds the intellectually acquired obscurations and the innate obscurations are gradually abandoned.

- On the path of seeing the intellectually acquired obscurations are abandoned, and
- on the path of meditation the innate obscurations are abandoned.

It is good to do an analytical meditation within one's mind going through the various stages at an imaginary level. Even though one hasn't actually attained spontaneous bodhicitta yet, just imagine attaining spontaneous bodhicitta and then simultaneously entering the Mahayana path of accumulation. Then think how one would attain the union of calm abiding and special insight, and simultaneously with that progress to the path of preparation. Then think how one would progress from the path of preparation to the path of seeing when, through the force of one's meditation on emptiness, one attains direct realisation of emptiness.

Then think how this first direct realisation of emptiness, the uninterrupted path of seeing, is the direct antidote against the intellectually acquired afflictions, and then how one attains the cessation of the intellectually acquired afflictions, and simultaneously with that the liberated path of meditation. Now one has completely purified the intellectually acquired afflictions, but one still has to abandon the innate or spontaneously arising afflictions, the spontaneously arising true grasping.

To do this then one has to progress through the various paths of meditation. So after having accumulated merits, then one again goes into meditative equipoise and when that meditative equipoise transforms into the direct antidote against the coarse great great innate true grasping, then one has attained the first uninterrupted path of meditation. When one attains the actual cessation of the coarse great great innate true grasping one attains the first liberated path of meditation and simultaneously with that attainment one has progressed from the first ground to the second. Then think of how one progresses in such a manner through the various grounds up until the tenth ground, and then to buddhahood.

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