
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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Generate a virtuous motivation for listening to the teachings thinking, 'I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to achieve that aim I'm going to listen to this profound Mahayana teaching, and then I'm going to put it into practise as much as possible'. It would be really good if you try to generate that motivation.

THE FOURTH GROUND 'RADIANT' (CONT)

1. Showing Enthusiasm to be Superior on this Ground

Last time we started on the fourth ground, 'Radiant', where there are three main outlines: showing enthusiasm to be superior on this ground; a description of the ground; and showing the attributes of abandonment. Last time we completed the first outline, 'showing enthusiasm to be superior on this ground', which is shown in this verse,

*All qualities follow enthusiasm, the cause of
Both accumulations of merit and wisdom
The ground where enthusiasm starts to blaze
Is the fourth, the one radiating light*

We said that all qualities of the other five perfections of generosity and so forth follow enthusiasm, which is the cause for the achievement of both accumulations. Those qualities that have not been attained yet will be generated, and those qualities that have already been generated will be increased through the force of one's enthusiasm.

We gave the definition of enthusiasm as 'being joyful regarding the practice of virtue'. So if one is joyful regarding the practice of virtue then one will not be overcome by the enemy of laziness, and will be able to build up the accumulation of merits, and as well the accumulation of wisdom.

Of the ten perfections, the practice of the perfection of enthusiasm becomes superior on the fourth ground, which is called 'Radiant' - the one radiating light.

Why does the bodhisattva on the fourth ground excel in the practice of enthusiasm? This comes about because the higher training of concentration on the third ground produces superior pliancy on the fourth ground. The pliancy on the fourth ground can no longer be harmed by laziness.

Of course on the first and second ground the bodhisattva already has great pliancy through the force of concentration, which will not be overtaken by laziness. On the fourth ground, however, one can

definitely say that even the possibility of the bodhisattva's pliancy being overcome by laziness is completely eradicated. If you relate this to your meditation, as the mind becomes more still and calmer you experience the physical and mental wellbeing that arises through that meditation, and this encourages you to continue with the meditation; it generates enthusiasm for the meditation.

Even though on the previous grounds bodhisattvas have attained the antidote to laziness, on the fourth ground they have attained the superior special antidote to laziness. So the pliancy to overcome laziness on the fourth ground has this superior potency to the lower grounds. That is the reason why the bodhisattva on the fourth ground excels in the perfection of enthusiasm .

2. Description of the Ground

The previous verse in the root text referred to the fourth 'ground where enthusiasm starts to blaze...is the one radiating light'. So we have to ask, why is the fourth ground called 'the one radiating light'? This is shown in the next lines,

*There, generated by superior meditation on
the features
Of complete enlightenment the Sugata's
children receive a
Radiance superior to the copper-red light*

The fourth ground is called radiant because there, generated by superior meditation on the thirty-seven features of complete enlightenment the Sugata's children receive a radiant transcendental wisdom light superior to the copper-red light attained on the third ground. They receive the radiance of transcendental wisdom light that is superior to the copper red light attained on the third ground.

Illumination quotes from the *Precious Garland of Madhyamika* where it says,

*The fourth is called radiating light
because it receives
the light of perfect
transcendental wisdom.*

As explained at the beginning, Chandrakirti composed this text by drawing in part on other texts by Nagarjuna, and one of those texts is the *Precious Garland of Madhyamika*. All the descriptions of the ten grounds, their names etc. are taken from Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*.

These thirty seven features are grouped into seven parts.

I. Four close placements of mindfulness

1. Close placement of mindfulness of body
2. Close placement of mindfulness of feelings
3. Close placement of mindfulness of mind
4. Close placement of mindfulness of dharmas

II. Four perfect abandonments

5. Generation of virtue that hasn't yet been generated
 6. Increasing the virtue that has already been
-

- generated
- 7. Non-generation of non-virtue that hasn't yet been generated
- 8. Abandoning non-virtue that has already been generated

III. Four legs of magical emanation

- 9. Leg of magical emanation of aspiration
- 10. Leg of magical emanation of enthusiasm
- 11. Leg of magical emanation of intent
- 12. Leg of magical emanation of analysis

IV. Five powers

- 13. Power of faith
- 14. Power of enthusiasm
- 15. Power of mindfulness
- 16. Power of concentration
- 17. Power of wisdom

V. Five strengths

- 18. Strength of faith
- 19. Strength of enthusiasm
- 20. Strength of mindfulness
- 21. Strength of concentration
- 22. Strength of wisdom

VI. Seven limbs of enlightenment

- 23. Limb of perfect mindfulness
- 24. Limb of enlightenment that is perfect discrimination of Dharma
- 25. Limb of enlightenment that is perfect enthusiasm
- 26. Limb of enlightenment that is perfect joy
- 27. Limb of enlightenment that is perfect pliancy
- 28. Limb of enlightenment that is perfect concentration
- 29. Limb of enlightenment that is perfect equanimity

VII. Eight limbs of the arya path

- 30. Limb of the arya path of perfect view
- 31. Limb of the arya path of perfect thought
- 32. Limb of the arya path of perfect speech
- 33. Limb of the arya path of perfect style of action
- 34. Limb of the arya path of perfect livelihood
- 35. Limb of the arya path of perfect effort
- 36. Limb of the arya path of perfect mindfulness
- 37. Limb of the arya path of perfect concentration

If we relate those seven sets to the four learner paths, then

- on the **small path of accumulation** we have the **four close placements of mindfulness**
- on the **middling path of accumulation** we have the four perfect abandonments on the **greater path of accumulation** we have the **four legs of magical emanation**
- on the **first two paths of preparation**, the heat and peak level, we have the **five powers**
- on the **second two paths of preparation**, the level of forbearance and supreme dharma, we have the **five strengths**
- on the **path of seeing** we have the **seven limbs of enlightenment**

- on the path of meditation we have the **eight limbs of the arya path**

The reason why one makes this distinction between five powers and five strengths on the path of preparation is because starting from the forbearance level of the path of preparation the practice cannot be harmed by obstacles. Since there is this shift, they are named differently even though they are the same five qualities of faith, enthusiasm, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

The bodhisattva on the fourth ground becomes proficient in the wisdom understanding the coarse and subtle levels of the thirty-seven features. For example, with the first close placement of mindfulness on the body we are meditating on the impermanence, suffering, and selfless nature of the body. We can relate this first placement of mindfulness to the coarse level of the Four Noble Truths as well as to the subtle level of the Four Noble Truths. For example meditating on the lack of the inherent nature of the body is subtler than just meditating on the absence of a self supporting substantially existing self of the body.

One can relate it like that all the way through. They are called 'close placements of mindfulness' because after having generated the wisdom understanding that particular aspect of the body, then it is held in place by mindfulness. They are called 'close placements of mindfulness', because the mindfulness acts as the antidote to forgetting. The mindfulness protects that wisdom from becoming forgotten. It places the wisdom close to the object. So the bodhisattva on the fourth ground has become proficient in the wisdom meditating on both the coarse and subtle aspects of those thirty-seven features.

Relationship to Three Higher Trainings

The subject of the *Madhyamakavatara* is divided into three parts, the basis of training, the nature of training, and the result, the fruit of training.

The first part, the **basis of training**, was explained at the time of the first ground, when the perfection of generosity was explained.

From the second ground up to then tenth ground the **nature of the training** is explained.

The eleventh ground is the **resultant ground**, the resultant buddha body, and that is the fruit of the training.

Nature of the Training

Within the nature of the training we have the three higher trainings: the higher training of morality; the higher training of concentration; and the higher training of wisdom.

As said before the first ground becomes the basis for the training.

- Within the nature of the training, the three higher trainings, the bodhisattva on the second ground has the higher training of morality.
- On the third ground the bodhisattva has the higher

training of concentration.

From the fourth ground onwards, the bodhisattva has the higher training of wisdom. Within the higher training of wisdom we have the wisdom being proficient in the thirty-seven features of enlightenment; the wisdom being proficient in the Four Noble Truths; and the higher training of wisdom being proficient in both the sequential as well as reverse order in the twelve dependent links, and as such being proficient in the both nominal as well as ultimate nature.

- So the bodhisattva on the fourth ground becomes proficient in the wisdom understanding the coarse and subtle aspects of the thirty-seven features of enlightenment.
- Then the bodhisattva on the fifth ground completes the wisdom proficient in the Four Noble Truths.

Then we have the wisdom that is proficient in the sequential and reverse order of the twelve interdependent links. Regarding this, we have a wisdom that trains in the nominal aspect, and the wisdom that trains in the suchness aspect.

- The wisdom that trains in the suchness aspect of the sequential and reverse order of the twelve interdependent links becomes completed on the sixth ground.

The wisdom that trains in the nominal aspect of the sequential and reverse order of the twelve interdependent links becomes completed sequentially on the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth ground.

- On the seventh ground the bodhisattva excels in the perfection of method
- On the eighth ground the bodhisattva excels in the perfection of prayer,
- On then on the ninth ground the bodhisattva excels in the perfection of power,
- On the tenth ground the bodhisattva excels in the perfection of transcendental wisdom.

So the bodhisattva on the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth ground becomes proficient in the nominal aspect of the sequential and reverse order of the twelve interdependent links, and excels on those grounds respectively in the perfections of method, prayer, power, and transcendental wisdom.

It would be good to be aware of this aspect of the bodhisattvas' development.

3. Showing the Attributes of Abandonment

This section is shown by the line,

And completely ceases that related to self-view

which refers to the level of true grasping that is the abandonment of the fourth ground

I don't know about different translations of this line in English, but there are some Tibetan versions where instead of 'self' it talks about 'extreme view'. In Tibetan

the two words are quite similar, as there is just a difference of one letter. Anyway the correct version is 'self-view'.

The self-view it is talking about is the view of the transitory collections apprehending 'I' and 'mine' contained within one's own continuum. Here we talk about the innate view of the transitory collection apprehending both 'I' and 'mine' contained within one's own continuum, arising from that the grasping at the self as being a self supporting substantially existent, as well as the other various types of true grasping at the aggregates, spheres, and sources, etc.

Here 'completely ceases' refers to a cessation that includes the seeds - the seeds of those various delusions have been abandoned. Of course here it is talking about the delusions that have ceased on that ground. We know now that all the levels of delusions haven't completely ceased on the fourth ground. Therefore what it talks about here is the particular level of delusion that has been abandoned on this ground.

FIFTH GROUND 'DIFFICULT TO TRAIN'

The fifth ground has just one verse.

*The great being on the ground 'difficult to train'
Can't be overcome even by all demons
Superior mental stabilisation, attaining great
skill in realising
The profound nature of the Good Minded Ones'
truths*

This ground has two outlines: description of the ground; and showing mental stabilisation as superior and having expertise in truth.

1. Description of the Ground

The first two lines,

*The great being on the ground 'difficult to train'
Can't be overcome even by all demons*

are the description of the grounds, and they explain why the ground is called 'Difficult to Train'.

From *Illumination*:

*That great being abiding on the fifth ground
'Difficult to Train' cannot be defeated by all the
demons called 'son of gods' that reside in all the
transitory realms.*

Of the various types of demons - the demon of aggregate, the demon of affliction, the demon of the lord of death, and the demon of the 'son of gods' - the demon of the son of gods is the most difficult to overcome. The bodhisattva on the fifth ground cannot be defeated even by all the demons that are called 'son of gods', of all the transitory realms together.

Therefore what need is there to mention that that bodhisattva cannot be harmed or overcome by other types of demons such as the servants of the demon son of gods and so forth. One doesn't need to mention that of course he cannot be overcome by those lesser demons as well, and therefore this ground is called 'Difficult to Train'.

2. Showing Mental Stabilisation as Superior and Having Expertise in Truth

Superior mental stabilisation, attaining great skill in realising

The profound nature of the Good Minded Ones' truths

Having already excelled in the first four perfections the fifth ground bodhisattva has become superior in the perfection of mental stabilisation.

It has already been shown that the bodhisattva on the previous grounds excelled in the first four perfections, so now it explains which of the remaining six perfections the bodhisattva on this ground excels in.

Of the remaining six perfections the bodhisattva on this ground excels in the perfection of mental stabilisation, because here on this ground their mental stabilisation cannot be harmed by obstacles such as the faults of distraction, and so forth.

On the lower grounds that was still possible, but from this ground onwards it is not possible anymore.

Here the significance lies in saying that 'they definitely will not be harmed by the faults of distraction and so forth'. Whether or not the bodhisattvas on the lower ground can be harmed by distractions might be difficult to say, but what it is saying is that on this ground their concentration will definitely not be harmed by distraction and so forth. There is not even the possibility. However on this ground they haven't yet excelled in the perfection of wisdom.

Not only has the bodhisattva on this ground attained superiority in mental stabilisation, but here they also have the superior wisdom realising the subtle and coarse aspects of the profound nature of the Good Minded Ones' truth - the Four Noble Truths.

An objection or doubt is noted: Apart from the two truths, the Four Noble Truths are taught. Then the doubt could arise that those Four Noble Truths are not contained within the two truths. Of course the Four Noble Truths are contained within the two truths - all phenomena are contained within the two truths.

Since all phenomena are contained within the two truths, the Four Noble Truths are therefore contained within the two truths. The Four Noble Truths are taught from the point of view of the causal and resultant truth belonging to the totally afflicted side, and the causal and resultant truth belonging to the completely purified side. Here, within the truth belonging to the completely afflicted type we have the causal truth of origin, and the resultant truth of suffering, and that is what is to be abandoned. Next comes that which has to be generated, and that is the truth that belongs to the type being completely purified. In the purified truth, we have the causal truth, which is the path, and the resultant truth, which is the truth of cessation.

Of the Four Noble Truths the truth of origin, suffering, and the path are conventional truths, and the truth of cessation is ultimate truth.

That the truth of cessation is ultimate truth is established through much reasoning in the *Sixty Lines of Reasoning* by Nagarjuna and so forth. Since the truth of cessation is ultimate truth, it follows that it is emptiness, which we mentioned before.

So the truth of cessation is emptiness. Generally emptiness is the absence of true existence. So the absence of true existence is emptiness, and the truth of cessation is the cessation that comes about through abandoning the adventitious afflictions and obscurations. However the suchness of the mind becomes purified from the adventitious obscurations through the practice of the path, and in such a way becomes the truth of cessation. So when the afflictions and obscurations are purified from the mind, then the emptiness, the suchness, of the mind becomes the truth of cessation.

As much as the mind becomes purified from the stains of the afflictions, then proportionally the emptiness of the mind also becomes purified from those stains. Therefore once the mind has become completely purified from all obscurations, then also the mind's suchness has become purified from those obscurations, and has become the truth of cessation.

So here, apart from the suchness of mind it is not possible for the mind to become purified from the stains, but for its suchness not to become purified from those stains. Proportionally as much as the mind becomes purified from stains then its emptiness becomes purified from stains. Even though generally one says that to be emptiness it has to be the lack of true existence, that doesn't mean that if it is emptiness it cannot have also another object of negation.

Following that line of thought you can understand how the truth of cessation is posited as ultimate truth because it is emptiness.

So then, next time we can start with the sixth ground, which is called 'Manifest'. So we all become manifest at that time.

Next week you have discussion and then after that you have the examination. Anthony thought it would be good to have an examination of all the material we have been doing this year, because it is the last examination within this year, as after that we will have four teachings but no further examination.

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Edited Version

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