

# Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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As usual, please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings and in order to do so I am going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice'.

## **THE INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES OF THE GROUNDS (cont.)**

Last time we finished the qualities of the seven impure grounds. There is a debate regarding the third quality, where for example on the first ground

*... They abide for a life of one hundred eons ...*

A first-level bodhisattva can engage these qualities in one instant. So the question arises - how does one abide for a life of one hundred eons in one instant? Here one can either say that the bodhisattva has the ability to bless his life force to be able to abide for one hundred eons in one instant, or, if the bodhisattva has only one instant of life-force left, he is able to extend that life force for one hundred eons.

The first seven grounds are called the seven impure grounds, while the eighth, ninth and tenth grounds are called the three pure grounds. The reason for this is that an eighth ground bodhisattva has abandoned the afflictions completely, and that's why the eighth, ninth and tenth grounds are called the three pure grounds. On the first seven grounds the bodhisattva has not completely abandoned the afflictions and afflictive obscuration, and that's why those grounds are called the seven impure grounds.

### **3.2.1.2.1.3. The qualities of the three pure grounds**

*Those without thought, abiding on the ground  
Immoveable,  
Attain qualities equalling the number  
Of however many atoms are found in the  
Sum of one hundred thousand great world systems.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*the* bodhisattvas *without* the *thoughts* of true-grasping, *abiding on the* eighth ground *Immovable*' ...

On the eighth ground immoveable, the bodhisattva's mind is completely at rest - not being moved by the thoughts of true-grasping.

*Mirror:*

... - they attain special qualities - because they *attain qualities equalling the number of however many atoms are found in the sum of one hundred thousand great world systems.*

Each of these twelve qualities equals in power the number of however many atoms are found in the sum of one hundred thousand great world systems.

*They attain the earlier mentioned qualities<sup>1</sup>,  
The atoms of ten sets of one hundred thousand countless  
ones<sup>2</sup>,  
Perfectly multiplied by one thousand.  
For now, here on the tenth, their qualities  
Have gone far beyond any words.  
They find as many qualities as there are atoms  
In the sum of the inexpressible.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'bodhisattvas who are *for now here on the tenth ground*' - they attain qualities far superior to those on the ninth ground and below - because their qualities *have gone far beyond any words*, and because *they find qualities as many as there are atoms in the sum of inexpressible* buddha fields.

*One pore can manifest the bodies of uncountable  
Perfect buddhas simultaneously with bodhisattvas.  
Likewise, they can manifest even gods, demigods  
And humans from moment to moment.*

Not only has the tenth level bodhisattva this set of twelve-fold qualities that have the power just mentioned, but also each individual pore of a tenth level bodhisattva can manifest without motivational thought Indras, Brahmas, worldly gods, worldly dharma protectors, worldly kings; also hearers, self-liberators, and tatagatas. By emanating different manifestations in such a way they are able in various ways to subdue the sentient beings that need to be subdued, which means the disciples. For example, bodhisattvas might emanate as kings in order to teach and subdue sentient beings. The tenth level bodhisattva can manifest from each individual pore uncountable numbers of such emanations, in order to teach sentient beings in various aspects moment by moment.

### **3.2.2. RESULTANT GROUND**

This is explained in five outlines:

3.2.2.1. Mode of becoming enlightened

3.2.2.2. Presentation of the bodies and qualities

3.2.2.3. Emanation body

3.2.2.4. Establishing it into one path

3.2.2.5. From the point of view of the times of becoming enlightened and remaining

#### **3.2.2.1. Mode of becoming enlightened**

This has two sub-divisions:

3.2.2.1.1. A presentation of the actual mode

3.2.2.1.2. Refuting objections

##### **3.2.2.1.1. Actual**

*The untainted sky is illuminated by the moon's brilliance,  
hence*

*You strive again on this ground before generating the ten  
powers.*

*In Ogmin you find the supreme peaceful state you strove  
for,*

*The peerless culmination of each and every quality.*

What the *Introduction to the Middle Way* is explaining here is that the resultant ground - the ground of a buddha - is the result of having practiced the ten perfections on the ten grounds. By practicing the ten perfections on the ten grounds and by excelling in the practice of one perfection on each of the grounds, one finally attains the fruit, or the result, of the buddha ground.

To attain enlightenment tenth ground bodhisattvas take rebirth

<sup>1</sup> The twelve sets of qualities

<sup>2</sup> 'Countless ones' refers to a particular type of world system.

in the higher pure land of Ogmin. In the post-meditation period of the tenth ground they accumulate merits, and at some point become aware that enough merits have been accumulated to be able to abandon the most subtle level of obscuration. Recognising this, the bodhisattva will go into meditative equipoise on emptiness to abandon the last traces of obscuration. This meditative equipoise is called the 'final uninterrupted path', which is the final path of the tenth ground. Just before tenth level bodhisattvas enter this meditative equipoise on emptiness they are facing the final uninterrupted path, and the purification of even the most subtle obscurations.

Then, upon having entered this meditative equipoise on emptiness, tenth level bodhisattva have become final bodhisattvas, and are referred to as final bodhisattvas on the final uninterrupted path. Simultaneously with having entered this final uninterrupted meditative equipoise on emptiness, the most subtle level of obscuration has been purified. What one has to note here is that, even though the most subtle level of obscuration is purified simultaneously with entering the final uninterrupted path, that is not synonymous with becoming enlightened. There is a difference between not have obscurations and having abandoned the obscurations.

In the continuum of a final bodhisattva, there are no obscurations left. However there is a distinction made between merely not having any obscurations in the mental continuum, and having abandoned the obscurations. Abandoning the obscurations is one step beyond not having any obscurations. Even though in the continuum of this bodhisattva, there are no obscurations, that final bodhisattva has not abandoned the stains of grasping at the two truths as being of a different entity.

When bodhisattvas are in the meditative equipoise on emptiness that is the final uninterrupted path, suchness is the only thing appearing to the perception of that meditative equipoise. The world of multiplicity does not appear to the perception of that meditative equipoise.

The reason why the world of multiplicity does not arise to the perception of the meditative equipoise is because the stains of holding the two truths to be a different entity have not been abandoned. The moment of the actual abandonment of those stains is simultaneous with attaining perfect complete enlightenment. In that moment that meditative equipoise becomes omniscient knowledge, because the whole world of multiplicity also appears to it. The bodhisattva will attain the enjoyment body of an enlightened being.

So you can see that final bodhisattvas at the tenth level do not arise out of meditative equipoise any more. Once the tenth level bodhisattva has become enlightened, it is not necessary for the buddha to arise out of meditative equipoise in order to perceive the world of multiplicity, and to help sentient beings. A bodhisattva, however, needs to arise from the meditative equipoise in order to again perceive the world of multiplicity and to be able to help sentient beings.

Final tenth level bodhisattvas will not arise out of meditative equipoise again, because they have progressed in meditative equipoise to the buddha ground. This meditative equipoise on emptiness, which on the bodhisattva level perceived only suchness, then transforms into omniscient transcendental wisdom perceiving both the world of multiplicity as well as suchness. The bodhisattva has become enlightened, has obtained the enjoyment body, and can benefit sentient beings whilst remaining in that meditative equipoise.

The resultant Dharmakaya is the final result arising from the practice of the ten perfections that become the method for its attainment. If the resultant Dharmakaya is divided into four bodies, they are the nature truth body, the wisdom-truth body, the enjoyment body, and the emanation body. In *Introduction to*

*the Middle Way*, Chandrakirti explains the buddha bodies in a three-fold division - the nature-truth body, the enjoyment body and then the emanation body.

Everything just explained is present in the above verse.

***The untainted sky is illuminated by the moon's brilliance...***

This is thought of as an analogy for the way the tenth ground bodhisattva attains enlightenment. If one has a full moon in a completely clear autumn sky that is unobscured by any clouds, then this full moon has the power to be incredibly brilliant and illuminating. Similarly to the ninth ground, here on the tenth ground the bodhisattva also generates ten qualities. As we said before, after having built up a big enough accumulation of merits through striving on this ground, similarly to having practiced before on the ninth ground, then the bodhisattva goes into this final meditative equipoise and attains the final result.

- The full autumn moon in the clear autumn sky is an analogy for the tenth level bodhisattva.
- The clear sky is an analogy for emptiness
- The clear untainted moonlight that can clear away the obscurations of all sentient beings is an analogy for the final uninterrupted path. So the tenth level bodhisattva enters into the final uninterrupted path which is uncontaminated, which has the ability to completely clear away each and every obscuration.

The final obscuration is the subtlest of obscurations, the finest residual that stems from having held the two truths to be of a different entity.

***There are no distinctions in space through distinctions in vessels.***

***Likewise, there are no distinctions of produced functionalities in suchness.***

***Therefore, when comprehending perfectly as purely of one taste, you,***

***Pure Exalted Knowledge, comprehend objects of knowledge instantaneously.***

*Mirror:*

***You, Pure Exalted Knowledge, comprehend objects of knowledge instantaneously, because you perfected comprehending emptiness perfectly as purely of one taste.***

In one instant, the bodhisattva can comprehend all objects of knowledge instantaneously, through having perfected comprehending all emptinesses perfectly as being of one taste.

*Mirror:*

***There are no distinctions in space, apart from the mere lack of obstruction through distinctions in vessels...***

There are actually no distinctions in space. Space pervades equally everywhere. Of course, for example, there is space in one particular vessel and there is space somewhere else. But that difference comes about only through the difference in place, and not any distinction in space itself. Both are a mere lack of obstruction, and the only way the difference comes about, is because they are in different objects. One talks about the space in different vessels only because of there being different vessels, and not because of any distinction in space itself. It is the same with emptiness.

*Mirror:*

***Likewise, you are in irreversible meditative equipoise on suchness where there are no distinctions of produced functionalities.***

As we have said, the different divisions of emptiness don't come about because of a difference in emptiness itself. There is no distinction from one emptiness to the next. The only way this distinction comes about is through a distinction in the basis. That's why one can say that all emptinesses are all of one taste, which is why a bodhisattva can meditate in equipoise on all emptinesses, comprehending them perfectly as being purely of one taste.

### 3.2.2.1.2. Refuting objections

3.2.2.1.2.1. The objections

3.2.2.1.2.2. The answer

#### 3.2.2.1.2.1. The objections

**When pacification is suchness then wisdom won't engage it; an ascertaining knowledge-**

**Object's object-possessor without engaging awareness is also illogical.**

**How can complete not knowing become knowing, they are mutually exclusive.**

**Without exalted knower, how can you teach 'It is like that' to others? Who could?**

The Realists state the following objection:

**When pacification of intrinsic generation is suchness then wisdom won't engage it...**

If pacification refers to pacification of intrinsic generation, then wisdom will not be able to engage pacification. Why? Because pacification will be non-existent.

Where does this objection arise from? It is the Realist's view that if forms and so forth don't exist intrinsically, then they become non-existent. Their view is that if something does not exist intrinsically, then it becomes non-existent. Hence a pacification that is the pacification of intrinsic generation would also become a non-existent, and thus not be engaged by wisdom. **An ascertaining knowledge object's object-possessor without engaging awareness is also illogical.** If pacification is the pacification of intrinsic generation, then pacification becomes non-existent. If pacification becomes non-existent, then there will not be any awareness that engages that pacification, because awareness cannot arise in the aspect of something that does not exist. If an awareness does not arise in the aspect of something, then it will not know anything. Therefore you don't have an object possessor. It would become an object-possessor without any object, which you cannot have. It is illogical.

*Mirror:*

... and to have **an object-possessor ascertaining** the object '**object of knowledge**' without an awareness that is **engaging** an object, **is also illogical...**

That is what we just said - if you don't have an object, you can't have the awareness that engages an object, and so you don't have an object-possessor.

*Mirror:*

**How can complete not knowing become knowing,** since knowing and not knowing **are mutually exclusive?**

If you don't have an object, you can't have knowledge of an object. Actually what you have is not knowing. As knowing and not knowing are mutually exclusive, how can complete not knowing be knowing?

*Mirror:*

**Without** one being an **exalted knower** of suchness, **how can you teach** 'suchness is like that' to others? **Who could?**

#### 3.2.2.1.2.2. The answer

#### 3.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to realise suchness

**When the lack of generation is suchness and awareness lacks generation,**

**Then realising suchness is the very apprehension of its aspect.**

**Like mind knowing any object the aspect of which**

**It comes to possess, according to the nominal this is knowing.**

Just as the debate is in two parts, so the refutation of the objection is in two parts.

3.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to realise suchness (which was the first part of the objection)

3.2.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to be an exalted knower (which was the second part of the objection).

#### 3.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to realise suchness

**When the lack of generation is suchness and awareness lacks generation,**

**Then realising suchness is the very apprehension of its aspect.**

**Like mind knowing any object the aspect of which**

**It comes to possess, according to the nominal this is knowing.**

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'buddhas' - they **know** suchness **according to nominal** truth, even though they don't have the motivational thought to teach the Dharma - because the presentation of them **realising suchness** is based on **the very apprehension of its aspect** - because **when** all dualistic appearances have subsided, then **the lack of** intrinsic generation **is suchness, and awareness** is generated in the image of that **lack of** intrinsic generation.

The Realists voiced this objection to the Prasangika, 'According to you it is not possible to realise emptiness because your emptiness is non-existent. Since you have no object you have no awareness of the object as there is no image in which the mind can arise. No mind will arise and no wisdom-knowledge will be generated.'

Answer: Even though the buddha's mind is not disturbed by any type of motivational thought they realise suchness, because they apprehend the aspect of suchness. When the appearances of intrinsic generation have subsided, then the lack of intrinsic generation is suchness. The very absence of intrinsic generation is suchness. The awareness arises in the very image of that lack of intrinsic generation, and that is why one can talk about the wisdom-knowledge that understands emptiness or the lack of intrinsic generation.

*Mirror:*

For example, **like** the presentation of the **mind** apprehending blue **knowing** the **object** blue being based on **it [the mind] coming to possess that aspect [of blue].**

For example, the conceptual thought apprehending blue is the conceptual thought apprehending blue, because it is a conceptual thought that arises in the aspect of blue. That's why one says that a mind is apprehending an object, because the mind arises in the image of that very object. Similarly, the conceptual thought apprehending blue apprehends blue, because of arising in the aspect or image of blue. Likewise with the wisdom-knowledge understanding emptiness; it apprehends emptiness because it arises in the image of the very lack of intrinsic generation of intrinsic existence.

### 3.2.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the objection that it is impossible to be an exalted knower

*Their perfect enjoyment bodies held by merits, Emanations and otherwise space, through their power The sounds conveying suchness of phenomena arise, Through which the worlds come to know suchness.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'buddhas' - they can teach the Dharma without having any motivational thought - because *from the buddhas' perfect enjoyment bodies*, which are *held by* the accumulation of *merits*, from *emanations and otherwise, through their power*, from *space*, grass, trees and so forth, *arise the sounds conveying the suchness of phenomena*, through which *the worlds come to know suchness*.

The perfect enjoyment body emanates the different types of emanation bodies, primarily the supreme emanation body. Through their force and ability sounds conveying suchness can just resonate in space or in the air, and trees and grass can whisper sounds conveying suchness. For example the four seals of Buddhism are conveyed in the sounds of a drum. Even though the buddha is not actually present in that place, through the force of previous meditation and though the build-up of the two accumulations, a buddha can produce these sounds conveying suchness in many different ways. One can think that in the future, when one has built up the two accumulations, one will be able to do the same.

*Here the potter's wheel, having been given momentum with great effort  
By a potter possessing great strength, turns and is perceived  
As the cause of vases and so forth, even though that effort Hasn't been made for a long time.  
Likewise, though there is no striving generated now,  
Those abiding in the very body of the nature of phenomena,  
Their actions are projected by the virtues of beings  
As well as special prayers, and is greatly inconceivable.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'buddhas' - *though there are no striving* conceptual thoughts *generated now* when they have attained enlightenment, *the greatly inconceivable engagement* of the enlightened activities of *those living in the very body the nature of phenomena*, the Dharmakaya, *is projected by the virtues of beings* to be subdued *and the special prayers* they did when they were bodhisattvas.

i) One's own virtues

How are those virtues referred to here generated? An example would be the white seeds that are planted in one's mental continuum from making offerings to the buddhas with faith. In the future, these white seeds can ripen and one can be benefited through the enlightened activity of the buddhas, even though the buddhas might not be present in our actual location. For example, one might receive teachings on the meaning of suchness in one of the ways described above, which comes about through a ripening of one's own virtue that one accumulated previously.

ii) Bodhisattva's prayers

The other condition for these enlightened activities to come about are the special prayers that buddhas did when they were bodhisattvas, such as praying to be able to teach the Dharma to other sentient beings in different kinds of ways, e.g. being able to convey it just through sounds coming with the wind, or arising from trees and the grass, and so forth.

When the time of one's subduing has arrived, then the enlightened activity of the buddhas will immediately and unfalteringly spring into action. To illustrate this process, the root text uses the example of the potter's wheel that continues to turn for a long time once it has once been put in motion by a strong potter with great strength. Even though the potter has stopped turning it, the wheel continues to turn for a long time.

What this illustrates is the effortless enlightened activity of a buddha. Even though a buddha does not have any motivational thought, a buddha engages in spontaneous enlightened activity to benefit sentient beings. Why? Because a bodhisattva has trained in benefiting other sentient beings over long lifetimes. As the bodhisattva progresses along the bodhisattva path, the activities to benefit sentient beings have become more and more perfected. When the practitioner reaches the culmination of the bodhisattva's path, which is enlightenment, then those activities have become perfected to such an extent that they will continue, even though there is no motivational thought.

### 3.2.2.2. Presentation of the bodies and qualities

Next there is a presentation of the different buddha bodies. It is perfectly understandable. If you just read through *Mirror*, there is nothing that you won't be able understand.

On 9 December I go to India, so we have only two classes left this year. Instead of having the discussion group and the exam, we can have two more classes. It's a good sign that we don't have to align our classes to fall in with Lama Tsong Khapa day, as this year Lama Tsong Khapa day falls naturally into the rhythm of our classes.

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