
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ།

30 November 2004

As usual, adopt a good motivation, which is the motivation of bodhicitta.

3.2.2.3. *The emanation body*

We have said before that the nature truth body, the wisdom truth body, and the enjoyment body of a buddha abide until the end of cyclic existence. Then the question arises, 'What about the emanation body?' Is the emanation body finished after one lifetime? Shakyamuni Buddha, a supreme emanation body, completed the twelve deeds in this world, and since then there has not been another supreme emanation body in this world. So it is a fair enough question to ask, 'Is there only one supreme emanation body? Was that supreme emanation body then 'it', after that emanation body has passed away?'

Further, having ventured into the three worlds, you who hold the immoveable body

Show through emanations descending, birth, and the wheel of enlightenment's peace.

Thus you guide all worldly beings of diverse backgrounds, conceived by hope, copiously bound, with compassion to a state beyond sorrow.

This verse is saying there is not just one single emanation body performing the twelve deeds, but that there are infinite emanation bodies that are working in all the realms that fill the expanse of space.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'gifted buddhas gone beyond' - they wield various emanation bodies - ...

Here it is showing that a buddha such as Shakyamuni Buddha is empowered with many different types of emanation bodies. For example, Shakyamuni Buddha taught extensively to hearers, solitary realisers and bodhisattvas, but one shouldn't think that there were no other emanation bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha teaching other beings. Why?

Mirror:

...because *having ventured into the three worlds,*

The three worlds refers to the lower realms, the realms in the middle, and the higher realms.

Mirror:

...you who hold the immoveable body shows through emanation bodies descending from Tushita, birth, and the wheel of enlightenment's peace, and thus you guide all worldly beings of diverse background,...

The buddhas guide all the different disciples according to their different dispositions by manifesting the twelve

deeds of descending from Tushita and so forth.

Mirror:

...who are conceived by hope, and copiously bound, with compassion to a state beyond sorrow.

'Hope' refers to craving, 'copiously bound' refers to being copiously bound by affliction and karma. While guiding these beings to a state beyond sorrow with non-discriminating great compassion, the body is in immoveable equipoise on emptiness.

When it says:

Thus you guide all worldly beings of diverse backgrounds

this also includes the beings who are more inclined to follow the hearer's path, those who feel more inclined to follow the solitary realiser's path and those who that feel more inclined to follow the Mahayana path. The Buddha taught the three vehicles with compassion to those beings. That's how one arrives at the teaching of three final vehicles.

This naturally leads on to the question, 'Well, are there three final vehicles in Buddhism or is there only one final vehicle?' The answer is that there is only one vehicle. That three final vehicles were taught is an interpretive teaching, and not to be taken at its surface meaning.

3.2.2.4. *Establishing it into one path*

To eliminate all stains nothing is more important than knowing suchness.

Hence different expressions of phenomena's suchness are not taught.

Also, there is not a variety of wisdoms, its object possessor.

That is why you show migrators an unequalled non-dual vehicle.

First of all, what one has to consider is that even though on the surface, it looks as if the Buddha taught three final vehicles, those seemingly three final vehicles are actually one unequalled non-dual vehicle. The Buddha taught only one non-dual vehicle unequalled by other vehicles.

Mirror:

Why? Because *different expressions of phenomena's suchness are not taught*; and wisdom, the object possessor of that suchness, also does not have a *variety of* modes of apprehension. *To eliminate all stains, nothing is more important than knowing suchness* directly.

Here it explains the reasoning why there is only one final vehicle in Buddhism. First of all, the significance of suchness - only the knowledge of suchness eliminates the stains of true grasping, true appearance and inherent existence. Secondly, there aren't different types of suchness. There is only one suchness and the wisdom that apprehends suchness does not have different modes of apprehension. There aren't different modes of apprehension for the wisdom that realises suchness, but it is only one mode of apprehension, which shows also that there is only one suchness.

Chandrakirti uses this reasoning to show that there is only one final vehicle, implying that if there were to be three final vehicles, then there would have to be three

different types of suchness, which there aren't.

To sum it up, one can say that there are not three final vehicles because:

- a. Every sentient being has the capacity to be free from all stains;
- b. There are no different appearances of suchness – there is only one.

*Because migrators are degenerate, which causes them to generate faults,
They, the worldly beings, aren't interested in the deep and profound objects of a buddha.
Tathagata, you possess the method of compassion simultaneously with exalted knowledge,
And you stated directly 'I will liberate sentient beings'.*

Even though there is one final vehicle, it is still valid for the Buddha to teach three final vehicles. One has to look into the reason why the Buddha taught three final vehicles.

Why would the Buddha induce some of his disciples into the Hinayana path, such as the hearer's path, and not try to induce all of his disciples directly into the Mahayana path? The Mahayana teachings are extremely deep and profound and as such, it is extremely difficult for sentient beings to become interested in those teachings. The reason why it is difficult to induce sentient beings into the deep and profound Mahayana vehicle is because now is a time when the five degenerations are flourishing and running wild, which causes sentient beings to generate many faults.

The five degenerations

1. The degeneration of sentient beings. This degeneration refers to us. Even though there have been limitless, countless buddhas who have become enlightened, there are so many sentient beings for whom simply the karma to meet buddhas, and to be ripened themselves has not ripened.
2. The degeneration of afflictions. Afflictions arise very intensely and strongly in the continuum of sentient beings through the cause of just a tiny condition. Mental states that make the mind inflexible and unworkable arise very easily and strongly through small conditions.
3. The degeneration of view. Sentient beings very easily grasp as correct that which is incorrect.
4. The degeneration of life. On the whole, the life span of sentient is becoming shorter.
5. The degeneration of time or the degeneration of the eon. This refers simply the time that one is living in. The time is degenerated. Why? Because of all these other degenerations.

Because sentient beings experience these many faults, it is extremely difficult for a buddha to induce a sentient being immediately into the Mahayana path. However, a buddha does not give up on sentient beings just because of not being able to induce them directly into the Mahayana path. As it says he uses:

'...the method of compassion simultaneously with exalted knowledge...'

Also because of having made this promise at the learner stage, while practicing the bodhisattva's path,

'...I will liberate sentient beings.'

a buddha does not give up on sentient beings because of not being able to induce them directly into the Mahayana path. Instead, a buddha teaches other different paths with which sentient beings feel more comfortable at first, and then later, slowly introduces them into the Mahayana path. That is the reason why the Buddha taught three final vehicles, even though ultimately there is only one final vehicle. Because of the promise made during the learner's stage, and because of his great compassion and exalted knowledge, a buddha teaches the three final vehicles in order to make disciples more comfortable at the beginning. It is good for you to keep this in mind. Plan that in the future you will be able to teach sentient beings likewise. These are the reasons for teaching three final vehicles.

Apart from the Mahayana vehicle why did the Buddha also teach the hearer and the solitary realiser vehicles? It was in order to place the mind of trainees who cannot be induced directly into the Mahayana path, but who can be taught the hearer's path and solitary realiser's path, within the method of purification, so that they can achieve the happiness of cessation. In this the Buddha was very skilful.

*Therefore, like the skilled, who established a pleasant town to overcome boredom
For the people travelling to the continent of jewels,
You taught this vehicle to place the mind of trainees within the method of pacification.
Those with a purified isolated mind you taught separately.*

The root text gives this analogy of a captain who is ferrying a boatload of people on a long journey to a continent with many jewels. In order to avoid having the passengers becoming bored, depressed and so forth due to the long journey, the captain establishes with magical powers a nice illusory town for the passengers. While they are on the journey they have the impression of being in this very nice town, and so they don't mind the long journey. This is an analogy for why the Buddha taught the hearer vehicle and the solitary realiser vehicle for those who cannot be induced directly into the Mahayana path. However this ascertainment of the bliss of liberation is not enough to complete the path. That's why the hearer and the solitary realiser vehicles are not final vehicles. Those who abide within the peace of having pacified the afflictions, still have to be guided up to complete enlightenment along the Mahayana path.

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

3.2.2.5.1. From the point of view of the time of becoming enlightened

*For as many times as there are particles found in all the worlds
Of the ten directions that are the Buddha's objects,
The Tathagata went to supreme superior enlightenment.
However, this secret of yours should not be told.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'gifted buddhas gone beyond' - the number of times they became enlightened and went forth to the essence of enlightenment is inconceivable - because you *the Tathagata went to supreme superior enlightenment for as many times as there are particles found in all the worlds of the ten direction Buddha fields.*

However, this secret of yours should not be told to divisive students, because it is difficult to believe for those who haven't accumulated merits previously.

This secret of yours should not be told to those of a lesser mind because they lack the merits to believe it.

Shakyamuni Buddha did not just manifest enlightenment once; he did not show the twelve deeds just once. Any buddha doesn't just show the twelve deeds - the deed of descending from Tushita-heaven; the deed of taking a place in the mother's womb; the deed of manifesting enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and so forth - just once. They are shown repeatedly over and over again, limitlessly in the many, many different places for the benefit of sentient beings.

3.2.2.5.2. From the point of view of the time of remaining

If a buddha manifests the twelve deeds time and again, then for how long will this continue? For how long will emanation bodies be around?

*As long as not all transitory beings have gone to supreme thorough peace,
And as long as space has not disintegrated,
Why would you, the Conqueror who nurses like a second mother,
Born from the mother of wisdom, go into extreme peace?*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'Gifted Buddha Gone Beyond' - *why would you go into extreme solitary peace, you won't - because as long as not all transitory beings have gone to supreme thorough peace, and as long as space has not disintegrated, you, the Conqueror born from the mother of wisdom nurses sentient beings like a second mother, until cyclic existence is empty.*

For as long as transitory beings have not gone to supreme thorough peace themselves the Gifted Buddha Gone Beyond does not go into extreme solitary peace. Why? Because the Buddha has non-discriminatory great compassion.

*Transitory beings eat poisoned food due to the fault of ignorance.
The anguish of a mother for her suffering sick son who ate poison
Does not equal your affection for the family members of a person who ate poison.
Hence, the protector doesn't go into supreme and thorough peace.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'Gifted Buddha Gone Beyond' - you, the *protector, don't go into supreme and thorough solitary peace - because the mental anguish of a mother*

for her suffering sick son who ate poison does not equal your affection for the family members of a person who ate the poisoned food of the sensory inputs due to the fault of ignorance

Unskilled sentient beings grasping at phenomena and non-phenomena as truly existent generate suffering during generation and disintegration, through separating from and meeting with beauty and ugliness; and experience becoming evildoers. Therefore transitory beings become the urgent object of great compassion, Tathagata, since your greatly compassionate mind has rejected peace, you don't go beyond misery.

3.3. THE WAY OF COMPOSING THE COMMENTARY

*I, the bikkhu Chandrakirti, expounded this school,
In accordance with scriptural reference
And oral instructions,
Extracting it from the treatise on the Middle Way*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*this school*' of the 'Introduction to the *Middle Way*', - it is free from the fault of having been invented by *the bikkhu Chandrakirti - because it is* expressed in accordance with *definitive* scriptural reference, and *the* oral instructions *of Nagarjuna*, extracting it from the treatise on the Middle Way, **Root Wisdom**.

When Chandrakirti wrote *Introduction to the Middle Way*, he relied upon scriptural references, he relied upon all the instructions of Nagarjuna and also he relied upon valid reasoning. By relying on these three he could compose this commentary, extracting it from the treatises on the Middle Way by Nagarjuna. As such, it is not something that has been invented by Chandrakirti. It is a valid commentary on the Buddha's teachings.

*Just like this dharma
Does not exist apart,
The school arising here also does not exist elsewhere.
Scholars, endeavour to ascertain this statement.*

This next verse deals with the purpose of composing this commentary. The ultimate purpose is of course to lead sentient beings to enlightenment.

*Afraid of the extremely vast colour of
Nagarjuna's awareness ocean
Beings distance themselves from any pure tenet.
Now Chandrakirti fulfils hopes completely with the water
That has opened the petals of the blossoming utpala
that is its composition.*

Profound, potentially frightening, suchness elucidated, beings realise decisively only through previous habituation. Others won't comprehend it, despite extensive listening. Therefore, having seen these fictional approaches, like scholarly systems asserting self, give up fondness for texts asserted by other systems, different from this.

A more immediate reason for composing this commentary is to show the validity of having a total lack of inherent existence, while on the other hand having the possibility of action and result, cause, effect and action. To show that while on the one hand it is correct to say

that there is not even one atom of inherent existence, it is still possible on the other hand to have the valid presentation of conventional and ultimate truth, and the presentation of cause, effect and action.

Certain students, such as Bhavaviveka, started to assert that actually Nagarjuna's *Root Wisdom* supported the Vaibhashika and Svatantrika assertions of the inherent existence of conventional and ultimate truth. *Entering the Middle Way* was written in order to refute that.

3.4. DEDICATING THE MERITS OF COMPOSING THE TREATISE

Merits from explaining master Nagarjuna's pure school, white like an autumn star in the gloom of the afflictions in the mind's sky, or like the jewel of the crown ornament of the snake of the mind, pervade to the edge of existence. From attaining these may all transitory beings, having realised suchness, quickly ascend to the Tathagata's ground.

Mirror:

The *merits* that arise *from explaining master Nagarjuna's pure school*, are *white like an autumn star* in the midst of *the gloom of the afflictions in the mind's sky*, or are *like the jewel of the crown ornament of the snake of the mind*, and *pervade to the edge of existence...*

First of all, Chandrakirti is saying there are no limits to the merits gained from explaining master Nagarjuna's school. They are infinite. Then he says:

'...white like an autumn star in the gloom of the afflictions in the mind's sky,...

Here, Chandrakirti refers to his own mind as 'the mind's sky'. Basically he says that the sky of his mind is very gloomy, because of all the afflictions present there. However despite having such an afflicted mind, the merits that are gained from explaining master Nagarjuna's school are like 'an autumn star', shining in the gloom of the afflictions in his mind. Despite having an afflicted mind, there is some white virtue that was created by composing this commentary.

Chandrakirti also likens the merits that are gained from explaining master Nagarjuna's pure school to the crown ornament of a snake, 'the snake of the mind.' He likens his mind to an angry snake, the snake of anger, saying, 'Despite having such a mind, I still gained merits from explaining Nagarjuna's school, and these merits are like a crown ornament that this snake is wearing'. Then he dedicates these merits saying, 'Having realised emptiness directly may all sentient beings quickly ascend to the buddha ground'.

Then we have the Colophon, which deals with who composed the commentary and who translated it and so forth. So there is not really much need for explanation.

4. COLOPHON

4.1. Composer's colophon

This completes the Introduction to the Middle Way, which clarifies the extensive And the profound, by master Chandrakirti, whose mind entered the supreme vehicle; Who holds irreversible exalted knowledge and compassion; And who opposed true grasping by milking the drawing of a cow with plenty of milk.

When Chandrakirti was in Nalanda, at one point he was made the manager of the monastery. As such he also became responsible for the monastery's livestock. Part of the responsibility of the manager was to supply milk on a regular basis to the monks. When the time came for him to give milk to the monks, the cows were in a far off field. So in order to illustrate the nature of mere imputation, he drew a cow on a wall and then milked the drawing of the cow.

We have created a lot of merit by going through this text, which you should dedicate well.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

Edited Version

© Tara Institute