



because of their lineage. On the seventh ground however the bodhisattvas obtain the state where they particularly outshine the hearers and solitary realisers through the power of their mind. Although not mentioned here, the perfection of method is surpassed on the seventh ground.

Then the next verse explains the results:

*454 Through the maturation of those [good qualities]  
They become masters of the gods [in the land] of  
Control over Others' Emanations.  
They become great leaders of teachers  
Who know direct realisation of the [four] noble  
truths.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

*Through the maturation of those good qualities they become masters of the gods in the land of Control over Other's Emanations. They become great leaders of teachers who know direct realisation of the four noble truths.*

These are the qualities that bodhisattvas obtain on this ground.

8. We come now to the eighth ground, which is called **Immovable**<sup>3</sup>. The relevant verse reads:

*455 The eighth is the immovable, the youthful  
ground.  
Through non-conceptuality they are  
immovable,  
And the spheres of activity  
Of their body, speech, and mind are  
inconceivable.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

*The eighth is the Immovable, the youthful ground. Because they have thoroughly abandoned the conception of true existence through non-conceptuality, they are immovable, i.e. they cannot be moved by grasping at signs. Likewise the spheres of activity of their body, speech and mind are inconceivable.*

As explained here, one of the particular features of this ground is *that they have thoroughly abandoned the conception of true existence*. Of the ten perfections, they have surpassed the perfection of aspirational prayers. This verse explains why they are called immovable.

The next verse explains the maturation of those qualities:

*456 Through the maturation of those [good qualities]  
They become a Brahma, master of a thousand  
worlds.  
Foe destroyers, solitary realisers, and so forth  
Cannot surpass them in positing the meaning  
[of doctrines].*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of this verse:

*Through the maturation of those good qualities they become Brahma, master of a thousand worlds. Foe destroyers of hearers and solitary realisers and so forth cannot surpass them in positing the meaning of doctrines.*

As explained here, through the maturation of those qualities, they become Brahma, a god who, within the three thousand world systems, is master of a thousand worlds. The main point of these qualities is that bodhisattvas have the majesty and ability to rule over the

beings in vast number of worlds within the three thousand world systems, and thus provide them with the benefit of the Dharma. Furthermore, the *foe destroyers, hearers and solitary realisers and so forth cannot surpass them in positing the meaning of the doctrines*. This means that they have obtained the ability to distinguish the subtle meanings of the doctrines, which surpasses that of hearers and solitary realisers including the foe destroyers.

It is good to keep in mind that in terms of the qualities of the ten perfections, bodhisattvas on this ground surpass the perfection of aspirational prayers. The text *Commentary to the Awakening Mind* explains that bodhisattvas have great might, and the ability to manifest as celestial beings such as *Brahma*, Shiva and Vishnu. Through manifesting as these celestial beings, they are able to benefit vast numbers of other sentient beings through their might and power, which is why they take those forms.

One needs to understand how, on each ground, qualities are surpassed in comparison to the earlier grounds. Thus on the eighth ground, particular qualities are obtained that surpass those of the seventh ground.

9. The ninth ground is **Excellent Intelligence**, which is explained in the following verse:

*457 The ninth ground is called Excellent  
Intelligence.  
Like a regent they have attained  
Correct individual realisation  
And therefore have good intelligence.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

*The ninth ground is called Excellent Intelligence. Just like a king's son that is bestowed with the role of becoming a regent, they have been bestowed with great illumination and have attained correct individual realisation of the four specific perfect understandings and so forth, and therefore have good intelligence.*

So within the ten perfections bodhisattvas on this ground surpass the perfection of power or might.

In the presentation of *Madhyamakavatara*<sup>4</sup> there was an explanation of *the four specific perfect understandings*, which are:

- the specific perfect understanding of Dharma;
- the specific perfect understanding of meaning;
- the specific perfect understanding of definite words, and
- the specific perfect understanding of confidence.

Next is the maturation of the qualities:

*458 Through the maturation of those [good qualities]  
They become a Brahma, master of a million  
worlds<sup>5</sup>.  
Foe destroyers and so forth cannot surpass  
them  
In [responding to] questions in the thoughts of  
sentient beings.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

*Through the maturation of those good qualities they become Brahma, master of two thousand worlds. Foe destroyers and so forth cannot surpass them, in responding*

<sup>3</sup> *Madhyamakavatara* teachings of 2 November 2004 and 9 November 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Teaching of 9 November 2004.

<sup>5</sup> The correct translation is two thousand worlds.

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without any mistake and contradictions *to questions in the thoughts of sentient beings.*

While the English text uses *master of a million worlds*, the Tibetan text reads *master of two thousand worlds*. This is in comparison to being master of one thousand worlds on the previous ground. Thus one of the qualities the bodhisattvas obtain on this ground that surpasses the earlier ground is becoming master of two thousand worlds of the three thousand world system.

The unique quality of this ground is having the ability to respond to any questions that sentient beings may ask, without any mistake or contradiction. It is in this respect as well, that bodhisattvas on this ground surpass hearers, solitary realisers, and foe destroyers.

It is important for us to keep in mind how essential it is to be able to respond to questions without mistakes or contradictions. We need to understand that unique qualities such as this are obtained sequentially. It is not as if these qualities are obtained spontaneously, all at once! Rather, every quality that is obtained is based on qualities that have been obtained on previous grounds and paths.

We need to acknowledge the great significance of all the effort that we have made in gaining whatever understanding we have now. Each time we recall and refresh the understanding we had gained previously, we add more depth to our understanding of the meaning of the teachings. Thus, the great qualities that are obtained on the high bodhisattva grounds are based on the meagre qualities that were obtained on the trainee's path, and before that as an ordinary being like us.

In some situations our understanding of the Dharma derived from our daily practice and study, can be quite apparent. For example, if we have some familiarity with death and impermanence then, whenever we encounter some one's death it can immediately reinforce the sense of impermanence and the transient nature of one's life. When someone of status with fame or wealth passes away, then, as explained in the teachings, when they leave their body, there is nothing they can take along with them, no matter how minute. This is a clear indication that, as explained in the teachings, at the time of death wealth and possessions cannot help; one's family and friends cannot help; and even one's own body is of no help. Thus nothing but the Dharma can help at that crucial moment.

When we encounter the death of others it is a clear reminder to us that we too will have to face death. At that time, as there is nothing whatsoever that we can take with us, practising Dharma is most essential. If we don't familiarise ourselves with impermanence and don't think much about its significance, then the death of another might affect us for a while, but then the impact fades away until it no longer affects us at all. If, however, we have devoted some time to contemplating the nature of death and impermanence, it can actually move us and become an impetus for our own practice.

We need to pay attention and really reflect upon the great conditions that we have now, and put the Dharma into practice as much as we can. These conditions include the great good fortune of having access to the teachings and the teachers. Of course this would be quite irrelevant if

the teachings didn't really suit our disposition or if we were not capable of comprehending them. But as I see it, you not only have the conditions, but you also have the capacity to comprehend and understand the Dharma.

Since we enjoy these perfect conditions of having the Dharma and not being deprived of the mental capacity to comprehend and understand the Dharma we need to apply our understanding of the Dharma and put it into practice. If we don't utilise these good conditions now we will be wasting a wonderful opportunity. Sometimes it seems that rather than utilising these good conditions, it is as if we are intentionally placing obstacles in our own way; preventing ourselves from putting the teachings and the Dharma into practice! It seems we are looking for every opportunity to find an excuse to avoid practising Dharma, which is a great pity and shame.

As some lamas have indicated, while we have the perfect conditions of enjoying the eight leasures, which means that we are free from the eight adverse conditions, we bind ourselves to a ninth condition. This is a very meaningful point about how we create for ourselves the condition of not being able to practice the Dharma.

We also need to reflect on the Buddha's saying that 'Liberation is possible, even for a householder'. We must reflect on these words otherwise we might find excuses like, 'Oh, I'm a lay person so I cannot practise as well as those who are ordained!' The Buddha's words explain that if you are really keen, then liberation is possible, even in a lay life.

More specifically, from the tantric point of view, you would recall from initiations, that there are three categories of Vajra holders: fully ordained Vajra holders, novice Vajra holders and lay Vajra holders. In other words, regardless of your ordination status, you can still be a Vajra holder. With respect to the lay persons vows, although one commitment is to refrain from sexual misconduct, that does not mean refraining from sexual activity entirely. The vow of celibacy is not expected of a lay person, but one can take the precept of refraining from sexual misconduct. This is a significant point to consider.

I'm mentioning all of this as a way to encourage you to not fall victim to your own lazy state of mind, thinking, 'Oh, because I am a lay person, I don't have the opportunity to practise and so forth'. In fact, if so inclined, one can find the time and energy to practise the Dharma as much as possible. Now in sharing this, I am not implying that I am a great practitioner myself! However what I can say with certainty is that I really don't waste my time; I try to utilise my time daily as best as I can.

Regarding having a significant state of mind, I went to visit the late Caryn Clarke at the hospice a few weeks before her passing. On seeing me she was moved to tears. She then confided in me that she didn't really have much fear about death itself, but her only real concern was not being able to meet with a spiritual friend in the next life. She said that she had derived a lot of meaning and purpose in her life in the seven years since she had encountered the Dharma, with me as her guide. She was basically concerned that she would not see me again.

When you think about it, this is a very profound way of thinking in terms of a Dharma point of view. I don't know if you also have such concerns of not meeting gurus in the next life?

She also said that she much preferred the hospice environment, because at home her mind seemed to be a bit more agitated and disturbed because of visiting relatives and so forth. Whereas in the hospice she felt more in tune with engaging in the practice of Dharma, in particular reciting Tara mantras. When she did the Tara mantras, even the nurses, who were not Buddhists, seemed to have felt a very calm and nice atmosphere in her presence. She confided in me that the nurses mentioned when they came to her room they felt very good and very calm. So this definitely shows the great significance of sincere practice; when such practice is done, the good atmosphere is felt by those around.

In relation to the ninth ground, the reason it is called *Excellent Intelligence* was explained in the earlier verse, and the particular qualities to be obtained and so forth was explained in the second one.

10. Now we come to the tenth ground which is **Cloud of Doctrine**.

The relevant verse reads:

*459 The tenth is the Cloud of Doctrine  
Because the rain of holy doctrine falls.  
The bodhisattva is bestowed empowerment  
With light rays by the buddhas.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse thus:

*The tenth is called the Cloud of Doctrine, because just as a great amount of rain falls from rain-bearing-clouds, similarly to increase the crops of virtue within sentient beings mental continuum, the rain of holy doctrine falls. When this ground is obtained, at the end of obtaining hundreds of thousands countless various concentrations, the bodhisattva is bestowed with the empowerment called light rays by the buddhas, which is no different to the wisdom of omniscience.*

In relation to the qualities on the tenth ground, having obtained various concentrations, bodhisattvas are bestowed with *empowerment with light rays by the Buddhas*. As explained here, being *no different* doesn't mean being exactly the same, but it is very similar to that. In terms of the state of mind of the wisdom of the Buddha, it is a similitude of the Buddha's omniscient mind.

This reminds me of a time when I was staying at Kopan Monastery. During one of his courses, Lama Yeshe was teaching about the different bodhisattva grounds. After one session, as Lama Yeshe and I were having lunch together, he mentioned to me that he was explaining the ten grounds and that one of the students, (an American who later I found was called John Landau) asked, 'What is the difference between the tenth ground bodhisattva and a buddha?' This question arose from the words 'which is no different to the wisdom of omniscience'. Lama Yeshe said that this question was quite a significant one, and then he said to me. 'How would you have answered that?', but at the time I didn't really say anything.

When the explanation of the tenth ground bodhisattva's wisdom says, it *is no different to the wisdom of omniscience*, the implication is that it refers to the understanding of the 'objects to be known', or 'existence'. So bodhisattvas on this ground actually have the wisdom of knowing everything, however their mind could not be referred to being as an omniscient mind, because they have not yet overcome the subtlest level of obscurations.

In terms of knowledge, they are almost equal to the Buddha's omniscient mind, but they are not referred to as having an omniscient mind, because there remains a very subtle level of obscuration that is yet to be completely abandoned. The qualities of an omniscient mind, and how it understands all phenomena has been explained previously, so it is good to refer to that to understand what an omniscient mind is.

One example would be, perceiving an object such as a clock. Our eye consciousness perceives the clock, and likewise the Buddha's eye consciousness perceives the clock. So in terms of being unmistakable in perceiving the clock, the perception would be the same. However our eye consciousness perceiving the clock is not an omniscient consciousness perceiving the clock. Whereas the Buddha's eye consciousness perceiving the clock, is an omniscient consciousness. The difference has been previously explained with an analogy.

Our eye consciousness, even at the grossest level, would not perceive the impermanence and transient nature of the clock, let alone perceiving the emptiness of the clock, or each and every atom of the clock. Whereas in the single moment of perceiving a clock, the Buddha is able to perceive the impermanence of the clock as well as its ultimate reality, which is the emptiness of the clock. In terms of the substances which make up the clock, the Buddha would perceive every single atom of the clock simultaneously. He would also perceive the derivation of each and every atom, where it came from, and how the atoms were gathered together to make up the clock and so forth. This perception would also include the person who actually made the clock, along with each and every individual who contributed to making the clock. Thus a Buddha's eye consciousness perceiving a clock will simultaneously perceive each and every aspect, up to the finest detail that relates to the clock.

This shows the unique and incredible feature of the eye consciousness of the Buddha, which is made possible by removing and completely abandoning all defilements. Without abandoning all defilements, it is not possible for the eye consciousness of ordinary beings (even at an advanced bodhisattva level) to perceive the finest details to the same extent as the Buddha's eye consciousness. This is how it is to be understood.

The qualities of the tenth ground surpass the qualities of the earlier grounds, particularly the ninth ground. In relation to the ten perfections; the perfection of primordial wisdom is surpassed on the tenth ground.

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