
Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual please generate the motivation of bodhicitta.

The Path of the Mahayana Practitioner

Last time we talked about the way the Bodhisattva who abides from the beginning within the Mahayana lineage progresses along the path and abandons the various levels of obscurations.

The Path of Accumulation

We said that the practitioner who abides in the Mahayana lineage generates spontaneous bodhicitta, then enters the Mahayana path of accumulation, and becomes a Bodhisattva.

That Mahayana practitioner can be a practitioner of sharp faculty, or a practitioner of dull faculty. Of the two types of bodhicitta, ultimate bodhicitta and conventional bodhicitta, the practitioner of sharp faculty will generate ultimate bodhicitta first. That is, they will first realise emptiness and then generate conventional bodhicitta. The practitioner of dull faculty will first generate conventional bodhicitta. However, whatever kind of faculty the bodhisattva has, once they reach the greater path of accumulation, then they have definitely attained calm abiding focussing on emptiness.

While the bodhisattva is on the **medium path of accumulation**, there is still a possibility that he or she has not realised emptiness. However once the bodhisattva has reached the **greater path of accumulation** he/she definitely has attained calm abiding focussing on emptiness. When through the force of their meditation, that realisation becomes what is called the union of calm-abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness, or special insight focussing on emptiness the practitioner progresses from the path of accumulation to the path of preparation.

Path of Preparation

Then deepening this realisation of the union of calm-abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness during the path of preparation the bodhisattva will go through the four paths of preparation.

Uninterrupted Path of Seeing

First Bodhisattva Bhumi

When the bodhisattva realises emptiness directly for the first time, then they have attained the Mahayana path of seeing and attained the first bodhisattva ground. That first instant of the non-dual wisdom realising emptiness directly is the uninterrupted path of seeing.

This uninterrupted path of seeing is the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired obscurations to liberation, and to the abandonments of the path of seeing.

Liberated Path of Seeing

When the bodhisattva progresses from the uninterrupted path of seeing to the liberated path of seeing then they will have abandoned the intellectually acquired obscurations.

You will recall that there are three instances of the path of seeing: meditative equipoise, the path of seeing that is post-meditational wisdom, and the path of seeing that is neither.

The path of seeing that is meditative equipoise refers to

both the uninterrupted and the liberated path of seeing. The bodhisattva arises out of the liberated path of seeing, and goes into the post-meditational period, during which he or she accumulates the various merits. When the bodhisattva has accumulated merits for a certain time, then he or she will again go into meditation. This meditation is called the path of seeing that is neither meditative equipoise nor post-meditational wisdom.

Uninterrupted Path of Meditation

When during this session the bodhisattva's meditation becomes the first instance of the path of meditation that is the first uninterrupted path of meditation. This happens at the very end of the first bodhisattva ground. The bodhisattva has now attained the direct antidote to coarse great great innate self-grasping.

Out of subtle and coarse great great self-grasping, the first uninterrupted path of meditation is the direct antidote to coarse great great self-grasping.

Second Bodhisattva Bhumi

When the bodhisattva progresses from the uninterrupted path of meditation to the first liberated path of meditation, then they have progressed to the second bodhisattva bhumi and have abandoned coarse great great innate self-grasping. That is where we finished last week.

The first uninterrupted path of meditation is attained at the end of the first bodhisattva bhumi. If one distinguishes between coarse and subtle great great self-grasping, one can talk about the uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva bhumi, which is the direct antidote to coarse great great self-grasping. If one doesn't make this distinction, then one would just say it becomes the antidote to great great self-grasping. Either is acceptable.

When this uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva ground has induced its resultant liberated path of meditation, then the bodhisattva has progressed to the second bodhisattva bhumi, and he or she will have abandoned coarse great great innate self-grasping.

Then, the sequence is the same as before. The bodhisattva will arise out of meditative equipoise, and go into the post-meditational period where merit is accumulated. Then having accumulated merits the bodhisattva again goes into meditation, which is the path of meditation that is neither post-meditational nor equipoise.

When the bodhisattva attains the uninterrupted path of meditation of the second bodhisattva bhumi they have attained the direct antidote to subtle great great innate self-grasping. When he or she attains the **liberated path of meditation**, which was induced by the uninterrupted path of meditation of the second bodhisattva bhumi, then they have abandoned subtle great great innate self-grasping. That is simultaneous with the attainment of the liberated path of meditation of the third bodhisattva bhumi.

Third Bodhisattva Bhumi

If we go through it again, the first uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva ground was at the end of the first bodhisattva ground. This uninterrupted path of meditation of the first bodhisattva ground acted as the antidote to coarse great great innate self-grasping. Then the attainment of the liberated path of meditation, which was induced by that uninterrupted path of meditation, occurred simultaneously with the attainment the second bodhisattva bhumi.

The uninterrupted path of meditation at the end of the second bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote to

subtle great great innate self-grasping. Then the bodhisattva progresses to the third bodhisattva bhumi. The system is the same as we explained before. The uninterrupted path of meditation at the end of the third bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote to the middling great innate self-grasping, (because the great great self grasping has already been overcome).

In summarised form, the uninterrupted path of meditation of the third bodhisattva bhumi acts as the antidote to middling great innate self-grasping.

Fourth Bodhisattva Bhumi

The uninterrupted path of meditation of the fourth bodhisattva bhumi acts as the antidote to small great innate self-grasping.

Fifth Bodhisattva Bhumi

The uninterrupted path of meditation on the fifth bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote to the great middling innate self-grasping

Sixth Bodhisattva Bhumi

The uninterrupted path of meditation of the sixth bodhisattva bhumi acts as the antidote to middling middling innate self-grasping. That is the point that we have reached. The bodhisattva still needs to attain the antidote to the small middling and the three small innate self-graspings.

Seventh Bodhisattva Bhumi

We said that the uninterrupted path of meditation of the sixth bodhisattva bhumi is the direct antidote to middling middling innate self-grasping.

The bodhisattva has abandoned the middling middling innate self-grasping when the first liberated path of meditation of the seventh bodhisattva bhumi, which is induced by that uninterrupted path, is attained. Thus the seventh bodhisattva bhumi is attained.

At the seventh bodhisattva bhumi there are two instances of uninterrupted paths.

- The uninterrupted path that acts as the direct antidote to small middling innate self-grasping
- The uninterrupted path that acts as the direct antidote to all three small innate self-graspings simultaneously

The way it happens is that first the bodhisattva progresses to the seventh bodhisattva bhumi, when he or she abandons middling middling innate self-grasping, and attains the first liberated path of meditation of the seventh bodhisattva bhumi. Then the bodhisattva again arises out of that meditative equipoise, engages in the accumulation of merit, and then again goes into meditation on emptiness. Then the first uninterrupted path of meditation on the seventh bodhisattva bhumi is attained, which is the direct antidote to small middling innate self-grasping.

The bodhisattva then attains the liberated path of meditation, which is induced by that uninterrupted path. The bodhisattva again arises out of meditation, again accumulates merits, again goes into meditation on emptiness and then attains the second uninterrupted path of meditation on the seventh bodhisattva bhumi, which simultaneously acts as the direct antidote to all three small innate self-graspings.

Eighth Bodhisattva Bhumi

When the bodhisattva attains the liberated path of meditation, which is induced by that uninterrupted path, then they have progressed to the eighth bodhisattva bhumi,

and completely abandoned all obscurations to liberation. So when he or she attains the first liberated path of meditation of the eighth bodhisattva bhumi they have abandoned the obscurations to liberation.

Attaining the first instance of the liberated path of meditation of the eighth bodhisattva bhumi occurs simultaneously with abandoning the obscurations to liberation. Only from this point onwards will the bodhisattva begin to abandon the obscurations to omniscience.

This is a special feature of the Prasangika system - that the abandonment of the obscurations to omniscience doesn't start before the abandonment of the obscurations to liberation. Thus it doesn't start before the attainment of the eighth bodhisattva bhumi. In the Svatantrika Madhyamika it is different - one starts to abandon the obscurations to omniscience, even while one is still abandoning the obscurations to liberation.

By now, having attained the eighth bodhisattva ground, the bodhisattva has abandoned innate self-grasping. Some people may wonder if the bodhisattva has now become an arhat. They have not become an arhat, because in order to do so they would have to have attained the path of no-more-learning. This has not been achieved, so they are not an arhat.

The Prasangika do not posit intellectually acquired obscurations to omniscience. We only have this division into intellectually acquired and innate obscurations with regard to obscurations to liberation. Intellectually acquired true-grasping is the intellectually acquired obscuration to liberation, and innate true-grasping is the innate obscuration to liberation.

We do not have but this division with regard to the obscurations to omniscience. If it is an obscuration to omniscience there is a pervasion that it is never awareness. So obscurations to omniscience don't have common basis with awareness. The two types of obscurations to liberation have a common basis with awareness, but the obscurations to omniscience do not have that common basis.

When one has abandoned the obscurations to liberation then one has completely abandoned true-grasping, and one has completely abandoned the seeds of true-grasping.

Obscurations to omniscience have a two-fold division into the manifest obscurations to omniscience, and the part of the obscurations to omniscience that is the seed.

- 'The seed' refers to the karmic latencies which can produce the part that is mistaken with regard to dualistic appearance.
- The manifest obscurations to omniscience is that part which is mistaken with regard to dualistic appearance. There is actually quite a long definition, but this short one will suffice.

Obscurations to omniscience are again divided into three groups of small, middling and great. The great obscurations to omniscience again have two parts, a subtle and a coarse part.

The uninterrupted path of the eighth bodhisattva ground is the direct antidote to the coarse great obscurations to omniscience.

Ninth Bodhisattva Bhumi

The uninterrupted path of the ninth bodhisattva ground is the antidote to the subtle great obscurations to omniscience.

The system of progress is the same as before. The

uninterrupted path of meditation of the eighth bodhisattva ground acts as the direct antidote to the coarse great obscurations to omniscience. Then when the liberated path of meditation at the beginning of the ninth bodhisattva bhumi is attained, the bodhisattva has abandoned the coarse great obscurations to omniscience. The uninterrupted path of the ninth bodhisattva bhumi is the direct antidote to the subtle great obscurations to omniscience.

Tenth Bodhisattva Bhumi

The first liberated path of meditation of the tenth bodhisattva bhumi, which was induced by that uninterrupted path of the ninth bhumi, has abandoned the subtle great obscurations to omniscience. So the liberated path of the ninth bodhisattva bhumi has abandoned the coarse great obscurations to omniscience, and the first liberated path of the tenth bodhisattva bhumi has abandoned the subtle great obscurations to omniscience.

The uninterrupted path of the eighth and ninth bodhisattva grounds acted as the antidotes to the coarse and subtle great obscurations to omniscience. What we have left are the middling and small obscurations to omniscience. Those two levels are both abandoned on the tenth bodhisattva ground.

It is the same as at the time of the seventh bodhisattva ground - there are two stages of uninterrupted path within the one bodhisattva ground. After having attained the liberated path at the beginning of the tenth bodhisattva bhumi, the bodhisattva again arises out of meditation, accumulates merits, and then again goes into meditation and attains the first uninterrupted path of meditation of the tenth bodhisattva ground. This acts as the antidote to the middling obscurations to omniscience. Then the liberated path of meditation, which is induced by that uninterrupted path is attained, and the middling obscurations to omniscience are abandoned. Then, as before, the bodhisattva arises out of meditation, accumulates merits and again goes into meditation and attains the final uninterrupted path of bodhisattva practice.

This final uninterrupted path of meditation is the antidote to all obscurations - the antidote to everything. It is the direct antidote to the small obscurations to omniscience. It is also called the vajra-like concentration.

In the moment after that path has been attained then the bodhisattva has abandoned the obscurations to omniscience. They have attained the omniscient consciousness that can see all phenomena as clearly as one can see the medicinal nut *guyura* in the palm of one's hand. So we can see that having attained the final liberated path the bodhisattva becomes enlightened, and attains the omniscient mind that can see all phenomena as clearly as a *guyura* in the palm of one's hand. We have already talked about that example before.

Thinking about this progression along the path places very profound imprints on our mind. Just thinking about it, and imagining it in one's mind places very powerful imprints on one's mental continuum.

Then you have become enlightened!

This explanation is according to Jetsun Chokyi Gyalsten, which is actually in accordance with the explanation given by Lama Tsong Khapa in his *Illumination of the Thought*.

There is another explanation where there is no division into coarse and subtle obscurations. That is not necessarily a problem. There you have:

- The first uninterrupted path of meditation acting as the

direct antidote to great great innate self-grasping;

- The uninterrupted path of the sixth bodhisattva ground acting as the direct antidote to small middling innate self-grasping;
- The uninterrupted path of the eighth bodhisattva ground acting as the antidote to the great obscurations to omniscience.
- That concludes the explanation of how the bodhisattva abandons the various levels of obscurations and proceeds along the path.

Next week we will probably finish with the tenets. There is not much left, so we will probably finish in one session. In this round of teachings we have only three sessions on the tenets and then we finish. Then I will just start again with a little bit from the beginning. I don't know yet what we will do for the rest of the session.

Maybe on the fourth Tuesday I can teach you how to do the mudras during the Tara Puja, how to do the blessing of the offerings, how to perform the offerings and so forth. Since we are doing the Tara Puja I thought that would be a good idea. So everyone has to bring a vajra and bell.

When they do the mudras some people wave their hands around a lot, which is actually not allowed. It is a secret practice that you do it just in front of you - you are not allowed beyond the boundary of your knees. You should keep it secret and do it in your lap, even though some people do it a more upward.

While they do the mudras, some people look at others, and how they do their mudras. There was one person who realised that another person was looking at him. He touched his nose with the dorje, and then the other person thought that was how it was done, so he started to do the same thing.

It happened once that a tantric monk, who was performing a fire puja, [accidentally] threw his vajra into the fire [when it slipped out of his hand]. One of those looking on thought that, since he was a tantric monk, he would know how it should be done - that throwing the dorje into the fire was the correct way. He went back to his smaller monastery and said that's how it has to be done. Actually when you do the fire puja you bind your vajra to your hand; otherwise it becomes a little bit difficult.

What is the first of the five paths?

Path of Accumulation

What do you have to do to acquire the great path of accumulation?

Acquire Bodhicitta

When we talk about a bodhisattva who follows the Mind Only tenet, then that bodhisattva will most likely find only the small path of accumulation. Likewise for the bodhisattva who is a Svatantrika Madhyamika. What do you have to do in order to attain the great path of accumulation?

Attain the four states of samadhi.

You have to attain calm abiding focussing on emptiness, so then when that realisation becomes the union of calm-abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness, then the bodhisattva progresses to the path of preparation. At that time the bodhisattva hasn't yet realised emptiness directly. That sequence is in relation to a bodhisattva who abides in the Mahayana lineage from the beginning.

What do you need to attain in order to progress from the path of preparation to the path of seeing?

inaudible

When you attain the path of seeing first then what do you attain?

Inaudible.

Yes so how is that called?

Uninterrupted path of

At that time has the bodhisattva already attained the truth of cessation?

No.

Then what happens in the second moment?

Inaudible

After the uninterrupted path of seeing then you go to the liberated path. You also attain the truth of cessation. The type of cessation you attain is the cessation that has abandoned the obscurations to the path of seeing. You have attained that liberated path of seeing, and then the bodhisattva arises out of meditative equipoise into the post-meditational period. He or she then accumulates merits and again goes into meditation and then attains the final uninterrupted path at the end of the first bodhisattva bhumi. That final uninterrupted path at the end of the first bodhisattva bhumi acts as the direct antidote against which obscuration?

Coarse great great self grasping

At this point Ross Moore made an offering of flowers to Geshe Doga "on the occasion of this auspicious day of hearing the completion of the stages to enlightenment". Geshe-la blessed Ross with the khatag saying,

White signifies the good pure relationship between the teacher and the student. With it the student is saying "I shall make my mind as pure as the lama's mind.

The khatag should be folded lengthwise and presented with the opening to the front, and the fold towards oneself. It should not be used as a scarf

What about the use of coloured khatags?

It happened that during an initiation somebody couldn't find a red cloth, so he used a yellow eye blind. That is okay because of the relationship with Lama Tsong Khapa, because Lama Tsong Khapa did that once when he couldn't find a red cloth. So he used a yellow eye blind.

The Mongolians use red and blue khatags.

Generally the five colours signify the five types of transcendental wisdom. When you offer the mandala, there are five colours in the cloth or brocade that is attached, which signifies the five transcendental wisdoms. Also the Buddhist flag has five colours. Whether or not it's done these days, the Buddhist flag actually has five colours.

The red colour of the eye blinds at the time of initiation signifies that the lama is following compassion and bliss. Because the eye blind is thin, that signifies the profoundness of the teaching. So you don't make thick eye blinds. Putting on the eye blind is just symbolic.

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Edited Version

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