
Ornament for Clear Realisations

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I am very happy that we have come here together again to study Maitreya's text, *Ornament for Clear Realisations*. We began the teaching on this text online during the Covid19 lockdown period. So, it's really great that we are now able to do this face-to-face. When the teaching was delivered online I had no idea of who and how many people were attending. But tonight, I can see who is attending. As this text is very profound and precious, we should think, that indeed we are extremely fortunate we are here to study it and have this opportunity. You also need to understand that if you are really interested in furthering your knowledge of the Dharma you need to think, 'I must study this text'.

In order to study *Ornament for Clear Realisations*, students must have a good knowledge of the basic teachings of the Lord Buddha. I am confident that all of you here have that basic knowledge of Buddhism. In studying this text, however, you should not expect to fully understand everything right from the beginning. Sometimes you will get confused and face difficulty in your study – this is normal. But, by hearing the teaching and contemplating it over and over again, you will gain knowledge of it.

Ornament for Clear Realisations is one of the five major topics in the monastic curriculum. The main subject matter in this text is the Prajnaparamita or Perfection of Wisdom. The other four major topics are Madhyamaka or the middle way view, Abhidharmakosha or the treasury of knowledge, Vinaya or moral ethics and pramana or the science of Valid Cognition (or logic).

It is said that of all the wheels of Dharma that are taught to suit the predisposition, faculties and aspiration of sentient beings, the best and most supreme are the precious prajnaparamita sutras. According to the oral teachings of our masters and scholars, among the five major classes of scriptures, the Prajnaparamita scripture serves the basis or root for spiritual practice – all the other scriptures are like its branches. The Madhyamaka is the scripture of the view of Prajnaparamita which is the view of emptiness; Abhidharma is the enumerating scripture of the Prajnaparamita; Vinaya is the scripture of the conduct of Prajnaparamita, and Pramana is the scripture of the logic of Prajnaparamita.

Furthermore, in the *Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty Thousand Verses* sutra, the Buddha says, 'Ananda, after I pass away, you should rely on this Prajnaparamita. I entrust it to you twice, thrice and more. you must ensure at all costs that it is not lost. As long as the Prajnaparamita sutras remain, you should consider that the Tathagatha also remains. In the Je Tsongkhapa's *Golden Rosary Of Good Explanation*, there is a quote of the sutra which says, 'Ananda, hence I entrust this profound mother to you. Other than the profound mother,

whatever the Dharma I have taught, if you hold and fully understood it all, but if you later you lose it, Ananda, I won't regard you as having made a mistake just because of that. However, Ananda, if after holding and fully understanding this profound mother, you forget and lose even a single word, I would consider that you have made a mistake.'

So, the topic of Prajnaparamita which is the main subject matter of the Ornament text is very profound and precious. As I have said before, every one of us, including myself, truly have a great purpose and reason to study this text and we should really feel how fortunate we are to have had such a golden opportunity to be able to study and practice this text as part of our Dharma pursuit.

In the monastic curriculum, *Ornament for Clear Realisations* is the main text for the study of the Prajnaparamita. The lam rim texts are not studied as part of the monastic Dharma courses. This indicates that if you study and understand *Ornament for Clear Realisations* or the Perfection of Wisdom scriptures then you will easily and automatically understand the meaning of all other Dharma scriptures.

The main subject matter of this text is contained in eight topics or eight types of inner or clear realisations: the three knowers, the four applications and the resultant dharmakaya or truth body. Thus the heading sequence is:

2.2.2. The three knowers and four applications

2.2.2.1. The three knowers

2.2.2.1.1. Exalted knower of all aspects

2.2.2.1.2. Knower of paths

2.2.2.1.3. Knower of bases

2.2.2.2. The four applications

2.2.2.2.1. Complete aspects application

2.2.2.2.2. Peak application

2.2.2.2.3. Serial application

2.2.2.2.4. Momentary application

2.2.3. The dharmakaya or the truth body¹

Accordingly, *Ornament for Clear Realisations* has eight chapters concerning the eight topics respectively. The first chapter concerns the exalted knower of all aspects or the omniscient mind of the Buddha, and this chapter presents ten dharmas that symbolise or characterise the knower of all aspects.

By understanding these ten dharmas we can gain an understanding of the exalted knower of all aspects or the omniscient mind. For example, if there is a nice tourist place, simply saying that there is a nice place is not enough to motivate others to go there, as that doesn't provide any information about the place. However, if you provide some information such as its location, how to get there and the landscape it sits in, the others will gain some knowledge about the place and then they can decide whether or not to go there.

Of the ten dharmas that characterise the omniscient mind or the exalted knower of all aspects, we have finished the first one, Bodhicitta. The second dharma is Precept which we are studying at the moment.

¹ The numbering of these headings refer to the condensed explanation. Each of the ten topics begins with a roman numeral. A progressive list of headings is available from Amelia.

I. Exalted knower of all aspects

I.2.Precept

In the preceding teachings, we covered the definition of precepts or instructions. In this context, 'precept' refers to the Mahayana precept.

Prior to this topic, we learnt about bodhicitta, which is the first of the ten dharmas, characterising the omniscient mind. Bodhicitta refers to an intention or aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit other sentient beings. The connection of the precept to bodhicitta is the precept is a means to realise the goal that you seek and strive to achieve with the bodhicitta mind. This we will understand from the definition of the Mahayana precept.

As we learnt before, *the Mahayana precept is defined as the Mahayana speech that teaches a method for attaining the object that Mahayana mind generation strives for.* The term 'Mahayana mind-generation' is another term for 'bodhicitta'. The precept here is an instruction or a method for attaining the objective of bodhicitta.

In relation to the definition of the Mahayana precept, we previously raised the question: Is a speech on bodhicitta by a Lesser Vehicle arhat such as a sravaka or pratyekabuddha necessarily a Mahayana precept? Furthermore, if we consider the definitions of 'word', and 'treatise', then a teaching on bodhicitta by arhats of the Lesser Vehicle, even though it expresses the Mahayana theme of bodhicitta, is not considered as Mahayana speech or words. The reason is that it doesn't come from a Mahayanist. So, how can it be a Mahayana precept? It is a Mahayana precept because when we talk about the Mahayana precept or instruction, we are talking about the expressed subject matter of the speech being Mahayana speech, not whether the speaker is following the Mahayana or not. So, if the subject matter concerns achieving a Mahayana goal such as the state of Buddhahood, then regardless of who the speaker is the speech becomes a Mahayana precept or Mahayana instruction. On the other hand, if the content or subject matter of the teaching concerns the Lesser Vehicle then it becomes a precept of the Lesser Vehicle.

To return to the topic of precepts, verse I.21 of the root text says:

- I.21. Concerning achieving, the truths,
The three jewels – Buddha and so forth,
Non-attachment, thorough non-wearying,
Thoroughly maintaining the paths,

There are ten Mahayana precepts listed here.

I.2.3.1. The words *concerning achieving* indicate the first precept, **precepts which instruct on achieving its own entity.**

This precept investigates the nature or entity of the Mahayana state of achievement or, as termed here, achieving its own entity. So here we find about the two types of truth – ultimate and conventional truth. Understanding the two truths is indispensable for realising the state of an omniscient mind.

I.2.3.2. Precepts which instruct on the object of observation, the four truths

The second precept is the precept that instructs on the object of observation. In the root text, it simply says *the truths*. Here the object of observation or truths refers to the four noble

truths. The truth of the origin shows the source cause of suffering; likewise, the truth of the path is the cause for the attainment of the truth of cessation. Understanding the cause and effect of the four noble truths is also essential for attaining the omniscient mind.

I.2.3.3. Precepts that instruct on the basis, the Three Jewels

When the root text refers to *The three jewels – Buddha and so forth* it is indicating the third precept. In order to achieve the state of an omniscient mind, we must find reliable protection. Then, having found that it is essential for us to have unwavering faith in the refuge object, such as the Buddha as the perfect guide and teacher, the Dharma as the perfect protection, and the Sangha as the perfect companion.

So the first three lines of the verse concern Mahayana precepts, giving instructions on achieving its own entity; on the object of observation, which is the four truths; and on the three bases – the Three Jewels.

Tonight we continue with the fourth, fifth and sixth precepts:

I.2.3.4. Precepts which instruct on effort in non-attachment

I.2.3.5. Precepts which instruct on tireless effort

I.2.3.6. Precepts that thoroughly uphold the path

In verse I21 of the root text, the word *non-attachment* refers to the fourth precept, which presents a joyful effort as a remedy to the laziness of utilising our time in meaningless activities about which we are passionate. It implies here that we need to have a joyful effort in order to develop wisdom knowledge of the two truths, the four noble truths and the Three Jewels. So, we find here various factors for engaging in the practice.

Let's look into the meaning of the word 'joyful effort'. In the scripture, the definition of joyful effort is a mental factor that delightfully engages in virtue. We normally say students must make an effort in their chosen course of study. In Tibetan, the word for 'effort' in this general context is *tsowa* which refers to an effort or enthusiasm that we need to complete or succeed in any tasks we undertake. But, the term joyful effort in Tibetan is *tsundu*, which means that it is an effort that takes delight in engaging in virtue.

We need to generate joyful effort in order to cultivate virtues that we have not yet cultivated. So to cultivate any new virtues we need to have joyful effort. Furthermore, to sustain, and further develop any virtues that we have already cultivated, we need to have joyful effort. We also need to have joyful effort to see the successful completion of our practices.

These three precepts on non-clinging, tireless effort, and upholding the path correspond with the three types of effort – the effort of non-attachment, tireless effort and the effort that thoroughly upholds the path. Each of these three types of effort respectively remedies three types of laziness.

I.2.3.4. Precepts which instruct on effort in non-attachment

The first effort, the effort of non-attachment is the remedy to the laziness of attachment to meaningless activities. We fall under the influence of this type of laziness because we opt to indulge ourselves in sensual objects, foods, drinks and other worldly pleasures or the pursuit of wealth and reputation. To be more specific, the cause of this laziness is the lack of renunciation or dissatisfaction with samsara. To overcome this form of laziness, it is good to reflect on the benefits or advantages of seeking higher goals and a higher purpose in life.

1.2.3.5. Precepts which instruct on tireless effort

This precept is about a tireless joyful effort to counteract the second type of laziness which is procrastination and indolence. We may have all the right conditions, opportunities, and resources yet we fall under influence of laziness by thinking 'I will do it later or I am too tired now.' If, for example, we keep putting off engaging in our Dharma practice, then we end up never even starting our practice. To counteract this type of laziness, we need to meditate on the stages of the path common to the person of small scope. For example, meditating on the recognition, the rarity, the meaning and impermanence of a precious human rebirth and so on. By reflecting on and habituating ourselves with the meditation on the stages of the small scope path, you can counteract the second type of laziness.

1.2.3.6. Precepts which instruct on thoroughly upholding the path

This counteracts the laziness of low self-esteem or belittling oneself by thinking, 'I can't do it.' or 'I am not good enough, I don't have the capacity.' This type of laziness of low self-esteem specifically arises when we engage in the Mahayana practice. We may be able to overcome the first two types of laziness and direct ourselves towards some spiritual practice. But if the practice that we engage in is the Mahayana path, which is very vast and profound, we can easily become discouraged by thinking we do not have the capacity to engage in such practice. Therefore, the third precept instructs us to make an effort to thoroughly uphold the path.

To overcome this laziness and uplift our spirit and courage, we should think of how we are no different from all other beings who have successfully achieved enlightenment, we too have the same potential as them. Although the Lord Buddha is now a fully enlightened being, he was once an ordinary being like us. But he worked hard, and as a result, reached complete enlightenment. In fact, in past lives, some enlightened beings were even less fortunate than ourselves. However, through their consistent effort, they were able to reach complete enlightenment. A reflection such as this can help motivate us in the Mahayana path.

Our discussion on joyful effort is only a very brief one – just simply mentioning the word 'effort' and describing its meaning. We can find more details about it in the section in the lam rim text on the perfection of joyful effort. I encourage you to study that.

We will go over the next two precepts next week. They are:

1.2.3.7. Precepts which instruct on the five eyes: eye of flesh, divine eye, eye of wisdom, eye of Dharma, and eye of Buddha

1.2.3.8. Precepts which instruct on the six clairvoyances: the clairvoyance of magical emanations, the clairvoyance of divine ear, the clairvoyance of knowing others' minds, the clairvoyance of remembering previous states, the clairvoyance of divine eye, and the clairvoyance of the extinction of contaminations

I suggest that you memorise the five eyes and six clairvoyances before next week's teaching, which will make it easier for you to follow the teaching.

Before we finish, does anyone have a question?

As part of our study program, you are encouraged to bring up any questions or doubts, or any areas of the teaching that

you don't understand, or which is not clear. By raising your questions and sharing your thoughts, others can also derive benefits as they may have the same questions or doubts.

Question: Is achieving complete enlightenment too far away for us?

To find the remedy, we first have to know the problem and the cause of the problem. For example, we might feel discouraged by looking at where we are now and how far away complete enlightenment seems. Such a high goal is the reason we feel discouraged. But we have to understand that we do have the potential and capacity to achieve full enlightenment. What is to stop us from achieving that?

As we have said before, the Buddha was once like us but he was able to reach complete enlightenment. We certainly do have the potential to reach complete enlightenment, but we can easily become discouraged thinking, 'Oh, in order to create the causes to achieve complete enlightenment, we have to engage in the bodhisattva deeds i.e. the six perfections, such as the perfection of giving, even giving away limbs of our body. Thinking this is too hard and way beyond our reach, we get discouraged. How can we do that?'

On the other hand, we must also be realistic in our approach. Although we are not ready to give away our organs to others, we can still give away something to others. So, we still engage in the practice of giving. We need to begin by engaging in giving what we can give, however small it may be. Essentially, we have to start our practice with something we can do and slowly, slowly develop that practice.

We hear the term habituation which in Tibetan is *gompa*. What we can and can't do is a matter of what we are habituated with. It's very difficult to do something when we are not habituated to it. But we can habituate ourselves with things. First, we start with taking a small step that we can complete and then slowly take the next step and the next. That's how we can make a progress.

For example, what drives a bodhisattva to engage in such a vast practice as the spirit of bodhicitta – which is rooted in unconditional and incredible compassion and love for other beings. Likewise, if we too can cultivate compassion and love we then will engage in bodhisattva deeds. Let's say you have a very special object that is so expensive and precious that you don't even dare to use it. However, when your beloved child uses it and enjoys it greatly, you won't mind. In fact, you might rather feel good when you see the child playing with that object. The reason we feel good and find joy in the child playing with that precious object is because we love the child so much.

The Buddha said that even a lesser form of life, like animals, or even a tiny ant, has the potential to achieve complete enlightenment. We should think that if that is the case then we as human beings definitely have the potential to achieve buddhahood and that gives us hope.

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