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# Ornament for Clear Realisations

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Commentary by Venerable Geshe Lobsang Dorje

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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## Bodhicitta motivation

In the refuge prayer, we say, 'I wish to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.' This is a generation of bodhicitta mind. But the bodhicitta aspiration cannot be fulfilled simply by saying a prayer; we must also act, such as by studying the Dharma to understand how to achieve complete enlightenment and apply the knowledge we gain by meditating and deeds. We are here to learn the Dharma to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all beings. So, it is important that, even when you leave home to attend the teaching, you cultivate the bodhicitta motivation of wishing to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings; it is for this purpose that you are attending the teaching. By cultivating the bodhicitta motivation as you leave to come here for the teaching, every single footstep you take accumulates a great amount of merit.

### 1.2.3.9. Precepts which instruct on the path of seeing

As to the topic of our study, we are now up to the ninth precept which instructs on the path of seeing.

In last week's teaching, we learned about the general meaning of entering the path and the different levels of the path we have to go through to achieve complete enlightenment or buddhahood. We focused on the general introduction to the stages of the path to complete enlightenment, where there are five paths - accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation and no more learning. So, the first path is the path of accumulation and the next is the path of preparation. We will now focus on how you proceed from the path of preparation to the path of seeing.

### Meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment

Regarding the path of preparation, there are various stages of development, which we won't go through here, but all can be put into two periods: the period of meditative equipoise (*nyam-shak* in Tibetan) which is when you go into deep meditation on suchness or emptiness; and that of subsequent attainment (*je-tob* in Tibetan) which is when you arise from deep meditation to engage in other practices, or to attain spiritual qualities in the subsequent period of meditative equipoise. Essentially you need to complete the two accumulations of merit and transcendental wisdom to achieve the precious state of buddhahood. During meditative equipoise, you accumulate wisdom and during the subsequent period you accumulate merit through engaging in the bodhisattva deeds of giving and so forth. So, you alternately engage in these two periods to fully complete the accumulation of merit and wisdom for attaining the state of buddhahood.

### From the path of preparation to the path of seeing

You progress on the path of preparation through the alternating periods of meditative equipoise on emptiness and the subsequent attainment. The transition from the lower to

the higher path takes place during the period of meditative equipoise. So, while on the path of preparation in a last meditative equipoise session of the path of preparation, your insight into emptiness goes deeper, and becomes clearer and more vivid to the point where eventually you realise emptiness directly and nakedly, rather than conceptually through the generic meaning (*don-chi* in Tibetan), through the veil of conceptual thought.

At that moment you enter the initial path of seeing which is called **the path of seeing of the uninterrupted path** (*thonglam barche melam* in Tibetan). Those who are on or above the path of seeing are called *arya* in Sanskrit or superior being, or *pakpa* in Tibetan. They become a Sangha Jewel in a definitive sense in terms of the Three Jewels.

The path of seeing of the uninterrupted path which directly realises emptiness is the direct antidote to the imputed or intellectually acquired view of self-grasping and its seed. However, upon the abandonment of the imputed grasping and its seed, the path of seeing of the uninterrupted path becomes **the path of seeing of the path of release** and you have achieved the truth of the cessation of the imputed grasping at the self. This truth of cessation and the path of seeing are the true Dharma Jewel. In terms of the order, you attain the Dharma Jewel of the truth of the path when you first enter the path of seeing that is the uninterrupted path of seeing, and the Dharma Jewel of the truth of cessation is attained when you gain the release path of seeing.

The actual transition from the path of preparation to the uninterrupted path of seeing and hereafter to the release path of seeing all take place in the same meditative equipoise or meditational session. When you arise from the meditative equipoise of the release path of seeing, you go into the subsequent attainment period primarily to accumulate merit by engaging in the vast deeds of the perfection of giving and so forth. You need to accumulate more merit because you have not yet abandoned the innate view of self-grasping, even though you have abandoned the imputed view of self-grasping.

### From the path of seeing to the path of meditation

Arising from the meditative equipoise of the release path of seeing, you accumulate more merit during the subsequent attainment period of the path of seeing in order to abandon the innate view of the self-grasping of true existence. As to abandoning the innate self-grasping, there are nine levels of the **object of abandonment of the path of meditation** - three each of the big, the middling and the small objects of the abandonment of the path of meditation. The nine objects of abandonment of the path of meditation are as follows:

- the big big, the middling big, and the big small objects of abandonment of the path of meditation.
- the middling big, the middling middling, and the middling small objects of abandonment of the path of meditation.
- the small big, the small middling and the small small objects of abandonment of the path of meditation.

Corresponding to the nine objects of abandonment of the path of meditation there are nine levels of the path of meditation which are the direct antidotes. These are in reverse order to the objects of abandonment to reflect the order in which they are realised on the path of meditation.

- the small small, the small middling and the small big of

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the path of meditation.

- the middling small, the middling middling and the middling big of the path of meditation.
- the big small, the big middling and the big big of the path of meditation.

The first of the nine objects of abandonment of the path of meditation to be abandoned is the biggest of the biggest object of abandonment because it is the coarsest of them and easier to abandon compared to all the others. If we give an example of cleaning dirt from a cloth, first you clean the dirt which is very obvious to you because it is easier to clean. After that, you work on cleaning that which is less obvious, and which is harder to clean. So, the first object of abandonment of the path of meditation is the biggest of the biggest objects of abandonment of the path of meditation. However, the first path of meditation to be gained is the smallest of the small path of meditation because the first excellent qualities to be gained are small ones.

Having abandoned the imputed self-grasping over the period of meditative equipoise of the uninterrupted and release path of seeing, you move to the subsequent attainment period of the path of seeing to accumulate merit and work on abandoning innate self-grasping. After accumulating the required merit, you go into meditative equipoise again to develop the exalted wisdom of emptiness to counteract the innate self-grasping. And when the wisdom of emptiness becomes a direct antidote to the first object of abandonment of the path of meditation, which is the biggest of the big objects of abandonment of the path of meditation, you enter the path of meditation of the first bodhisattva's bhumi or ground, called the smallest of the small path of meditation.

#### **From the path of meditation to the ground of a buddha**

As with the path of seeing, the first path of the meditation that you enter is called the uninterrupted path - the uninterrupted path of the smallest of the small path of meditation, but it is a direct antidote to the first layer of the objects of abandonment of the path of meditation - the biggest of the big objects of abandonment of the path of meditation. Upon the abandonment of the biggest of the big objects of abandonment of the path of meditation, the uninterrupted path of meditation becomes the release path of meditation because you have achieved the state of release or abandonment of the biggest of the big objects of abandonment of the path of meditation. Again, you will arise from meditative equipoise and go into the subsequent attainment period of the path of the meditation to gather the accumulation of merit.

Then, after having accumulated merit, you will enter into meditative equipoise on emptiness, and when it becomes the uninterrupted path of the smallest of the middling path of meditation it becomes a direct antidote to the biggest of the middling objects of abandonment of the path of meditation. Similarly, you alternate between the meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment periods and subsequently progress on the path of meditation. Finally, you enter the biggest of the biggest uninterrupted path of meditation which is a direct antidote to the smallest of the small objects of abandonment of the path of meditation.

This uninterrupted path of meditation is called the vajra-like concentration of the path of meditation and is the inner realisation in the last continuum of you as a sentient being. You go through this process and through all the stages of the

path of meditation, through all the nine stages of the uninterrupted path of uninterrupted seeing and the path of release of the path of meditation. In this way, you completely overcome the object of abandonment of meditation. This is because, when you fully abandon the smallest of the small objects of abandonment of the path of meditation by the biggest of the biggest uninterrupted path of meditation, you attain the path of release belonging to the ground or level of a buddha. So, then we have all reached the state of buddhahood! We might wish for that, but unfortunately, we haven't done that yet for we have not abandoned the grasping at true existence.

#### **Identifying self-grasping or the self to be negated**

Self-grasping represents an ignorance and a wrong view with respect to the way things are or exist. Self-grasping holds things to have true, independent and objective existence. There are two types of self-grasping; an imputed or intellectually acquired self-grasping, and an innate self-grasping. Firstly, an imputed or intellectually acquired self-grasping refers to a self-grasping view that you hold or assert on the ground of your reasoning or belief. It does not necessarily have to be a view that accords with any known school of tenets, such as the Sautrantika or Cittamatra and so on. You can have such a view either by following a school of tenets that posits self-grasping or simply through your own reasoning that things must truly exist otherwise they cannot exist. On the other hand, an innate self-grasping arises spontaneously and affects all our perceptions.

To negate the view of self-grasping, first, we must identify the self to be negated. That is to say, we must know how things would exist if things existed truly. In other words, we must recognise the object of negation, which is a truly existent thing. This is very important. Without recognising what is to be negated, and what is to be refuted, it is not possible to then refute or negate that object to be negated - which is the view of emptiness.

The aim of meditation on emptiness is to counteract, get rid of, or strike at this self-grasping. When an archer aims to hit the target, he must first identify the exact target in order to hit it. Likewise, those who want to realise emptiness and eliminate the grasping at true existence must first identify the grasping at true existence.

We can talk of the true existence of other phenomena and the true existence of a person or self. Of the two, it is said that focussing on identifying the true existence of a person or self is more meaningful and effective in terms of realising selflessness. So, in order to identify the object of negation with respect to grasping at the self of a person, we should try to identify how the 'I' or the self seems to appear and exist to our mind when that grasping arises within.

If we observe and investigate how the self or the 'I' exists, sometimes we identify the self with the aggregate upon which it is imputed. For example, when our body is sick we say, 'I am sick', in which context we are identifying the self with our body. But then when we say, 'I am a Buddhist', or 'I am a Christian', we are identifying it with our mind because when we talk about our belief systems, we are talking about what view we hold in our mind. Because our mind follows Buddhism or Christianity, we are saying we are Buddhist or Christian. The 'I' or the self exists by depending on the aggregates but is not to be found in the aggregates as a whole or as a unit.

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Generally, we tend to assume and believe that the self or the 'I' exists within our aggregates. However, we don't consider or investigate how it exists, rather we simply grasp at it as having a true existence. Even if we observe how the 'I' or self seems to exist under our normal state of being, we will find it very difficult to recognise the mode of true existence of our self.

Nevertheless, if, under the state of a strong emotional experience such as strong feelings of hatred, we investigate our sense of 'I' which is deeply hurt, then how do the 'I' or self seem to appear and exist? At that moment, we get a clear notion that the 'I' or self has its own independent and true existence within our aggregates. Similarly, if we observe and investigate our sense of 'I' when we face danger, such as when we're about to fall off a cliff, we will note that the 'I' seems to have a very vivid true and real existence. This mode of true existence of the 'I' or person is the self to be negated.

The 'I' does not have a true and independent existence. So, by negating the 'I' or the person as having true and independent existence, we can gain knowledge of emptiness. In understanding the emptiness of the true existence of a person, the self, the 'I', we are not negating the conventional existence of a person, the self, or the 'I'. What we are negating is the mode of true existence of the person or the self. Since our experience of the conventionally existent 'I' and this 'I' having an independent and self-existence are closely mixed, when we negate or dismantle the truly existent 'I' we feel a loss of ourselves as well, and hence fear arises. Of course, a fear of losing our self-identify will arise, and we will fall into the extreme of nihilism if we negate our self which conventionally exists.

### **Pervasion of the object of negation being too small or too large**

In the scriptures, we find two types of the object of negation – the too small pervasive object of negation and the too large pervasive object of negation. The too small pervasive object of negation means not negating enough or not identifying the object of negation at all to posit the view of emptiness.

An example is the case of someone who, having heard about emptiness, and on an imaginary level thinks 'things are lacking true existence'. They have no idea of the view of emptiness or the object of negation, so what is being negated is just some sort of mental fabrication, following the word emptiness. Hence, the object being negated is too small or not pervasive enough to understand emptiness. It is essential to identify the object of negation precisely to understand emptiness.

Whereas another person, in his or her pursuit of understanding emptiness, may negate the conventional existence of things. For example, they negate the existence of the person itself while negating the self or true existence of a person. This is a case of negating too much or the negated object being too large pervasive, the result of which is falling into the extreme of nihilism.

*Question: How would someone who has abandoned the big of the big object of abandonment of the path of meditation know they have abandoned it so they can then move on to abandoning the next object of abandonment?*

It is similar to cleaning the stains on clothes; the cleaner will know whether the stains are removed or not. You can have different types of stains, from the very obvious to the very

small. Similarly, the objects of abandonment of the path of meditation are categorised into nine in terms of their coarseness and subtlety. When a meditator abandons a particular layer of the object of abandonment, as we found in our discussion, they enter the path of release and attain the truth of cessation. We are not able to know that, but the meditator who has experienced the state of attainment of the abandonment of particular afflictions or a particular object of abandonment would know that because the state of abandonment is like a form of the qualities that you gain in yourself. This is also like someone who is trying to overcome an addiction to alcohol; the person cannot completely overcome it overnight, but they can overcome it gradually. Eventually, it is possible for the person to feel full confidence in having conquered the addiction to the point that, even if someone offered him his favourite drink or drug, he would have no urge and would not accept it. Even the sight or smell of the object of addiction could cause the person to feel like vomiting.

Next week is discussion night. Geshe-la suggests that you discuss whether the ten precepts encompass what one person needs to reach complete enlightenment.

*Transcript prepared by Gaye Lewis  
Edit 1 by Llysse Velez  
Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering  
Edited Version*

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