
Ornament for Clear Realisations

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We are studying the topic Twenty Types of Sangha, which is part of our study of *Ornament for Clear Realisations*.

This is an extension of the teaching on the Precepts that Instruct on the Three Objects of Refuge. The reason for the further elaboration of the Sangha Jewel is because we find a large number of types of Sangha in the sutras and understanding all of them can be very confusing and difficult. To make it easier to understand, *Ornament of Clear Realisations* summarises all the enumerations of Sangha into twenty types. Even with this assistance, we may still be quite confused. So, we will focus on the eightfold Sangha groups that subsume all the Sangha. It is important to remember these eight groups of Sangha.

Why do we study the twenty types of Sangha?

Studying the twenty types of Sangha is regarded as very auspicious. We should therefore think that we are very fortunate to have this opportunity. In our monastery, there is a tradition whereby the final year Geshe Lharampa students compile lists of Sangha from their studies, and then share it by sticking the lists to the main entrance door of the monastery prayer hall. These lists end up showing thousands of different types of Sangha. The monastic community considers this tradition as an auspicious cause of dependent arising for the flourishing of the Sangha members and the Buddhadharma in the future.

Eight types of Sangha

As mentioned last week, these eight are presented in two sets of four.

Approacher to stream enterer	Abider in the fruit of stream enterer
Approacher to returner	Abider in the fruit of returner
Approacher to never returner	Abider in the fruit of never returner
Approacher to foe destroyer	Abider in the fruit of foe destroyer

Approacher to Stream Enterer (cont.)

We have completed part of the description of an approacher to stream enterer. There are two types of approachers to stream enterer in terms of their mental capacity: those with a high or great mental capacity, and those with a lower or dull mental capacity. Those with a sharp mental capacity achieve the state of approacher to stream enterer primarily from their own efforts in studying and contemplating the Dharma; they gain knowledge and progress primarily through their own intellect and reasoning. Whereas those with dull or lesser mental capacities enter the path and make progress primarily by depending on others, such as listening to their spiritual teacher. The main scriptural sources relating to these divisions of Sangha are the *Compendium of Knowledge* or

Abhidharma-samuccaya by Asanga and the *Treasury of Knowledge* or *Abhidharmakosha* by Vasubandhu.

Another twofold division of approachers to stream enterer is the way they abandon the object to be abandoned. We touched on this last week. There are those who abandon the object sequentially and those who abandon it simultaneously.

A third type of division is made based on the number of mental afflictions that are overcome before becoming an approacher to stream enterer. The duration of the approacher to stream enterer is from the last leg of the meditative equipoise of the path of preparation, to the end of the uninterrupted path of seeing. The last leg of the path of preparation - the path of uninterrupted and the release of the path of seeing - occurs in the same period of meditative equipoise.

Approachers to stream enterer can also be categorised according to how many of the first five of the nine mental afflictions of desire realm that the respective approachers have abandoned before becoming an approacher to stream enterer. So, you can have one who has abandoned none of the five afflictions, one who has abandoned just one of the five, or just two or three or four or all five. Although there are nine levels of mental afflictions of the desire realm, this division of the approacher to stream enterer is made based on abandoning the first five of the nine mental afflictions of the desire realm. Here we are talking about abandoning the afflictions by the mundane path which observes the coarseness and the subtlety with respect to lower and higher levels of existence. From the point of view of the mundane path, the word 'abandonment' doesn't indicate abandonment from the root cause; rather it means preventing the mental affliction from manifesting.

There is another division of approachers to stream enterer in terms of the number of the rebirths that they take due to the force of karma and mental affliction. Here, throwing karma refers to the karma created prior to becoming an approacher to stream enterer. Based on their past throwing karma, there are approachers who will take rebirth once, twice, three times; up to a maximum of seven times. After reaching the state of an approacher to stream enterer they will never create a new throwing karma because they have had a direct realisation of selflessness, which weakens the ignorance to be able to accumulate the throwing karma.

The boundary of an approacher to stream enterer is from the last meditative equipoise session of the path of preparation to the end of the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing. This means an approacher to stream enterer can be an ordinary being, such as the one on the path of preparation, and an arya or a superior being upon entering the path of seeing.

Abider in the fruit of the stream enterer

When the approacher to stream enterer fully abandons the three thorough entanglements to be abandoned by the path of seeing, they enter the path of release of the path of seeing, at which time they become an abider in the fruit of stream enterer. We can find the same divisions of an abider in the fruit of stream enterer as we found in approachers to stream enterer, such as a division in terms of their mental capacity and so forth.

Approacher to returner

An approacher to returner is one who continuously strives to counteract the sixth of the nine types of mental afflictions of

the desire realm. The basis of the division is the same as those of the approacher to stream enterer.

Abider in the fruit of returner

When you fully abandon the sixth mental affliction of the desire realm you become an abider in the fruit of returner, whereupon you enter the path of meditation.

Approacher to never returner

An approacher to never returner is one who is striving to abandon the ninth mental affliction of the desire realm or the five lower (desire realm) concordant aspects, which is called *ta-mey cha-tun-nga* in Tibetan. There are the five types of mental afflictions of the desire realm which are essentially included within the nine levels of afflictions of the desire realm.

Three of the five lower concordant aspects or mental afflictions of the desire realm are called the three thorough entanglements (*tong-pang kun-jor sum* in Tibetan) which we listed in the last teaching. The fourth is called *do-pa-la dun-pa* in Tibetan, meaning aspiring to the desire realm or an attachment to the desire realm, and the fifth is *noe-sem* in Tibetan, or harmful thought. So, the never returner is striving to abandon these five lower concordant aspects or five mental afflictions of the desire realm.

Abider in the fruit of never returner

The abider in the fruit of never returner is one who has fully abandoned the nine afflictions of the desire realm.

Approacher to foe destroyer and abider in the fruit of foe destroyer

An approacher to foe destroyer is one who is striving to completely eliminate or uproot the five higher concordant aspects (*gong-me cha-tun-nga* in Tibetan) or the five mental afflictions of a higher realm. Here we are talking about the five kinds of afflictions that are a property of the higher form and formless realms. These five higher concordant aspects include: some form of attachment to the higher realms; sleepiness (*nyi* in Tibetan) and mental distraction or excitement (*goe-pa* in Tibetan), which is one of the main obstacles to calm abiding. The fourth and fifth are, respectively, pride and afflictive ignorance.

If you have heard of this before it may not be too confusing, but if you are new to all of this, tonight's teaching might be somewhat confusing for you. So here is a summary of the meaning of all the Sangha we have just discussed. I hope this will make it easier for you to understand the difference between them.

- The approacher to stream enterer and the abider in the fruit of stream enterer are based on whether you have abandoned the three thorough entanglements that are to be abandoned by the path of seeing.
- The approacher to returner and the abider in the fruit of returner relate to whether you have abandoned the six mental afflictions of the desire realm.
- The approacher to never returner and the abider in the fruit of never returner relates to whether you have abandoned the nine types of afflictions of the desire realm.
- The approacher to foe destroyer and the abider in the fruit of foe destroyer relates to whether you have abandoned the five higher concordant aspects or the mental afflictions of the higher realm.

Having even a vague idea of this is very beneficial. If you familiarise yourself with the names of the different types of Sangha and brief descriptions of each of them this will make a huge difference in your comprehension of the various Buddhist texts that you study. As I said before, in the monasteries they have time to go into it in great detail, and monks study together. So, they are expected to learn a lot. But you don't have the same opportunity to learn, so it is sufficient if you can just remember the eight types of Sangha and their general differences. Anyway, after delving into this topic of Sangha a bit, at least you now have an idea why the three objects of refuge and further study on the Sangha object is necessary.

Student: It is often mentioned that there are 84,000 afflictions or delusions. Are there actually 84,000? I also wonder if they relate to the delusions of the desire realm.

As mentioned in the scriptures, there are indeed 84,000 types of afflictions making up 28,000 of each of the three poisonous states of mind. All the mental afflictions we have discussed in the topic of Sangha are included within them.

Student: After becoming the approacher to stream enterer why do you stop accumulating a new throwing karma?

The approacher to stream enterer who is on the path of preparation is an ordinary or common being but on the same meditative equipoise of the path of uninterrupted and release of the path of seeing. Once you gain the direct realisation of selflessness on the path of seeing, whatever karma you accumulate will not be forceful enough to lead to rebirth. In other words, after that, you don't accumulate any throwing karma. From the point of view of the twelve links, the second of which is throwing karma, it is dependent on the first link of ignorance. The direct realisation of selflessness counteracts the intellectually acquired ignorance of self-grasping.

Student: Do the types of Sangha we have been talking about belong to the Lesser Vehicle?

The presentation of these eight types of Sangha is implicitly concerned with the Sravaka Lesser Vehicle. All these titles - stream enterer, once returner and never returner and so forth - refer to sravaka Sangha, although we can also find the same types of Sangha among the pratyekabuddhas or solitary realisers. However, we don't use any of these titles for bodhisattvas. So, while presenting the types of sravaka Sangha, the *Abhisamayalamkara* is also presenting the corresponding Mahayana Sangha which in fact is our primary subject matter.

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Edited Version*

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