

THE GATEWAY TO KNOWLEDGE

BY JAMGON MIPHAM RINPOCHE

- Part Two -

THE PATH AND THE RESULT

ADDITIONAL READINGS SOURCEBOOK

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Part Two

The Path and the Result

Readings Sourcebooks
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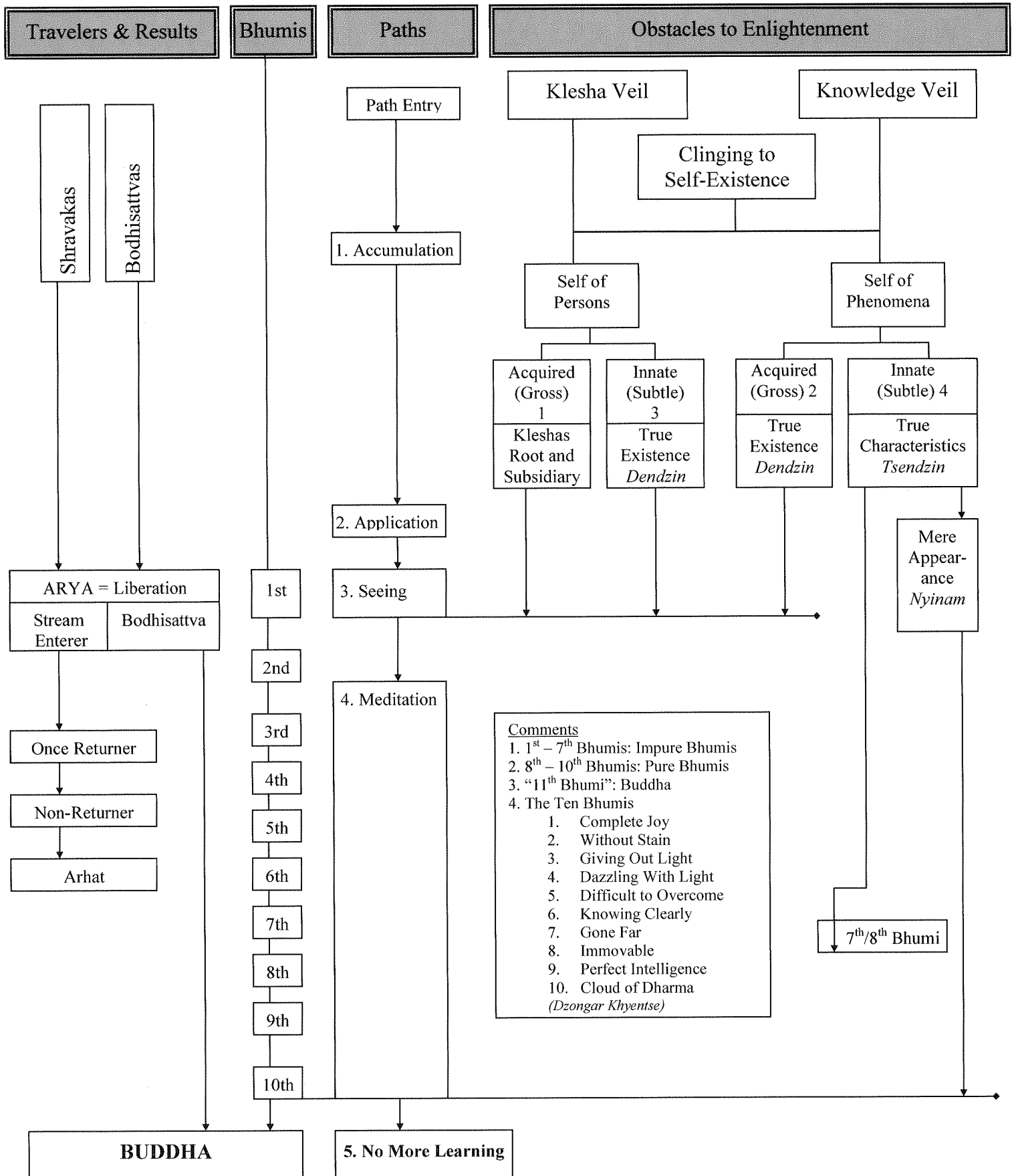
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3. The Aspects of the Five Paths, *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, Gampopa, Snow Lion, pp. 257-261
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5. The Training and Attainments of Five Paths of Mahayana, *Buddha Mind*, Tulku Thondrup Rinpoche, pp. 375-389
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11. How to Meditate on Suchness, *2000 Seminary Transcripts: Teachings from the Sutra Tradition – Book 2*, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Vajradhatu, pp. 74-81
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OBSTACLES, TRAVELERS, BHUMIS, & RESULTS



The Stages on the Path of Two-Fold Selflessness

1. **Course View of the Self of Persons** – Acquired obstructions to liberation. Based upon the clinging to the true existence (*denzin*) of a substantial self of persons. This fundamental level of ignorance, or wrong view, functions as the fundamental klesha and manifests further as the three root kleshas (passion, aggression and prejudice) and the numerous subsidiary ones. The course belief in a self is based upon the three types of coarse clinging: clinging to singularity, clinging to permanence and clinging to independence. This is not addressed directly in the Madhyamakavatara (unlike the other stages), but was covered in first course of the Radical Rejection series (and in *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness* by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso). This obstruction is eliminated by reason on the path of Accumulation, using the following antidotes:
 - The antidote to clinging to permanence/changelessness is contemplating impermanence.
 - The antidote to clinging to singularity is contemplating the multiplicity of our suffering, which is related to the multiplicity of causes and conditions.
 - The antidote to clinging to independence is contemplating selflessness and the fact that we are not in control, but rather, under the power of causes and conditions.
2. **Coarse View of the Self of Phenomena** - Acquired obstructions to omniscience. Based upon clinging to the true existence of an essence of phenomena (*dendzin*). This obstruction is eliminated by reason on the paths of Accumulation and Preparation, using primarily the reasoning that refutes production from the four alternatives – self, other, both or neither. This is covered in courses two (refutation of truly existent things) and three (refutation of truly existent mind or consciousness) of the Radical Rejection series.
3. **Subtle View of the Self of Persons** – Innate obstructions to liberation based upon clinging to true existence (*denzin*) of an innate or natural self of persons. This obstruction is eliminated by reason on the paths of Accumulation and Preparation, using the reasoning of the sevenfold analysis of the self and the skandhas (or the chariot). This is covered in course four of the Radical Rejection series.
4. **Subtle View of the Self of Phenomena** - Innate obstructions to omniscience, based upon clinging to characteristics (*tsemdzin*), caused by habitual or latent tendencies to view phenomena as possessing characteristics, which have been accumulated throughout beginningless time. This obstruction is eliminated on the Path of Meditation, not by reasoning. This is covered in course five of the Radical Rejection series.

Radical Rejection Outline of the Path of Meditation

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1. Mental Stability
2. Mental Pliancy

B. Mind Training – Mental Cultivation:

1. Developing Renunciation

- a) The Four Reminders

2. Developing Benevolence & Overcoming Complacency

- a) The Four Immeasurables

3. Developing Bodhicitta:

- a) Tonglen, sending and receiving
- b) Lojong, slogan practice

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(1) Classified in terms of entity

- (a) Non-Things
- (b) Things

(2) Classified in terms of function

- (a) Causes
- (b) Results

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(1) Types of Mind/consciousness

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- (b) Conceptual and non-conceptual
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- (d) Mental and sense

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(1) Valid cognition

- (a) Direct valid cognition
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 - (ii) Mental
 - (iii) Self awareness
 - (iv) Yogic
- (b) Inferential valid cognition

(2) Non-valid cognition

- (a) Doubting cognition
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- (c) Objects of engagement

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- (a) Contradictory phenomena
- (b) Connected phenomena
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3. Investigating:

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- (2) Things/Objects of inside and outside: synchronizing personal experience with the external situation
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A. Path of Application – 4 stages, 5 strengths and powers

B. Path of Seeing – 16 aspects of the Four Noble Truths; 7 wings of enlightenment

C. Path of Meditation – Transcending the form and formless realms; the Ten Bhūmis

2000
SEMINARY TRANSCRIPTS
Teachings from the Sutra Tradition ~ Book 2

The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

Edited by the Vajradhatu Editorial Group

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TRUE CESSATION

The four qualities of cessation are: **cessation**, **peace**, **auspiciousness**, and **having renounced**. These are different contemplations in terms of what cessation would be like.

In terms of what **cessation** means, what enlightenment means, what liberation means, what has ceased is *nyönmong*, *klesha*, the aspect of contamination, the obscurations. When we contemplate these, we are saying it is cessation.

The second quality of cessation is **peace**. We are at peace because we have seen through the conditioned quality of the five skandhas. In terms of the three kinds of suffering—suffering of suffering, suffering of change, and all-pervasive suffering—this refers to the all-pervasive quality of suffering. Sometimes we say that all-pervasive suffering is the notion of impermanence. The world is unstable, the mind is unstable, the environment is unstable, because it is continuously changing. Suffering is also all-pervasive because by its nature we have misunderstood the five skandhas to be an entity, a self. No matter what happens within that—happiness or unhappiness—there is suffering because it is impermanent. It is not the basis for bliss, or joy.

Auspiciousness is the third quality of cessation, in terms of being free from *klesha*. In particular it is said that when cessation is free from *klesha*, it is clean, it is free from suffering, and therefore it has a sense of well being, or *dewa*.

When our renunciation is complete, that is the fourth quality called **having renounced**. Because renunciation has come to fruition, one will never go back into *samsara*.

TRUE PATHS

So now we come to the fourth and final truth, **true paths**. It's taken a while to get here. We could go further into Vasubandu's text and so forth; but at this point I feel that we've had a thorough presentation of the four truths, which I want to emphasize in this particular seminary. Last year we went into depth in terms of the five skandhas. When those transcripts come out, if you have time you can take a look at them.

The Basic Nature of the Five Paths

Once we understand suffering and the origin of suffering and we realize that the way to overcome those is through realizing cessation, then we go about achieving cessation by means of true paths. What are true paths? True paths are genuine, completely reliable paths, practices, and views. What is the basic nature of the five paths? It is **understanding**: they thoroughly understand the nature of suffering. There are no half-truths or misunderstandings. Another aspect of their nature is **abandoning the origin of suffering**. So true paths are the antidote to the first two truths of suffering and origin. And finally, by their nature, the five paths, the true paths **actualize cessation**. They are the way that

the Buddhas and bodhisattvas realize cessation. Since their realization itself is the truth, these are the paths we follow to achieve that state.

In particular, we go further and actually make our path genuine through the five paths. *Lam* is “path,” and *lam nga* are the five paths. So true paths are the five paths. They are the complete outline and map that lead one towards enlightenment. They accommodate all the stages.

There are five paths of the hinayana and five paths of the mahayana. The first path is the **path of accumulation**, *tsog-lam*. *Tsog* is “to gather.” What one is gathering is gewa, in many ways. The second path is sometimes translated as the **path of preparation**, and sometimes as the **path of unification**. “Path of preparation” makes a certain amount of sense, but I feel that **path of joining** is more accurate. The path of preparation, or the path of joining is called *jorlam*. *Jor* has many meanings. It means “to join,” and it also has a sense of preparation and of a process of lifting. The third **path of seeing** is known as *thong-lam*. *Thong* is “to see.” The fourth is the **path of meditation**, and the fifth is the **path of no further learning**. When one gets to the path of no further learning, one achieves complete buddhahood, depending on whether one is a hinayana or mahayana practitioner—which would be interesting: no more notes. [Laughter]

How is it that shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas overcome the truths of suffering and the origin of suffering? Whether one is a shravaka, pratyekabuddha, or bodhisattva, one goes along the five paths. Before actually entering into the five paths, we go through a period of developing gewa. In addition, through the process of hearing, contemplating, and meditating, we develop an understanding of why we’re doing this. We’ve internalized what we’ve heard and realized, “Yes, I want to change. This is the true path to liberation. This is the process I’m going to use.” Then we set about going on the five paths corresponding to the hinayana or the mahayana, depending on which yana we’re practicing.

Today we’ll emphasize the first three paths—the path of accumulation, the path of joining, and the path of seeing—in terms of how to orient ourselves.

I. THE PATH OF ACCUMULATION

Small. The path of accumulation has three divisions: small, middle, and large. When one is beginning on the small path of accumulation, it isn’t simply that one knows nothing. Shamatha has been established, and one is bringing in vipashyana. They are mixed together; however, they are not completely united. Also, the vipashyana of the small path of accumulation is not the highest level of vipashyana: it is a mixture of worldly vipashyana and a little bit of transcendental vipashyana.

The Four Close Placements of Mindfulness

In the small path of accumulation the main practice is the **four close placements of mindfulness**, which we also call the four foundations of mindfulness, *trenpa nyewar shakpa shi*. *Trenpa* is “mindfulness.” *Nyewar* is “close.” *Shakpa* is “to place,” and *shi* is

“four.” What is it that we are placing mindfulness close to? We are placing mindfulness close to body, or form, in terms of the skandhas; to feeling; to mind; and to phenomena.

The meditator here is inspired to go forward, realizing that he has to try to understand and overcome *nyōnmong*, and so forth. He is practicing shamatha to stabilize the mind, and he is beginning to bring in vipashyana, but primarily the path of accumulation is about learning how to do shamatha *and* vipashyana. It is about the four close placements of mindfulness. Since we are placing our mindfulness as close as we can to body, feeling, mind, and phenomena, there is a slightly heavier emphasis on shamatha.

1. Mindfulness of Form

For the hinayana practitioner, what is going on here? First, the four close placements of mindfulness enable us to train our mind so we can hold it close to the notion of body, or form. We have to remember that mindfulness of body is not just mindfulness of *our body*; it means mindfulness of the skandha of form, as in the four elements: earth, water, wind, and fire. Everything else is feeling, mind, and phenomena, which are all consciousnesses. So the first mindfulness is having the ability, the strength of mind to understand form. Hinayana practitioners, if we go to the extreme, are able to see form as irreducible particles. But they will not necessarily associate irreducible particles with a sense of selflessness. They’re going to have an idea of selflessness, but they are not naturally going to just jump into seeing emptiness and selflessness. To do that requires bringing in *lhakthong*, or vipashyana. We have to bring in vipashyana, we have to bring *view* to that situation. So that is form.

2. Mindfulness of Feeling

The next one is mindfulness of feeling, *tsorwa*. In terms of the consciousnesses, the aspect of feeling—does it feel good, does it feel bad, does it feel neutral—is the basis of craving, which is how the *nidanas* are created. With practice the mind becomes subtle enough that we begin to actually experience feeling. How do we become mindful of feeling? We draw the mind in, and we begin to see how it responds. Does it like something, does it not like something? Where does that feeling come from? Generally, when we are meditating, holding our mind, the experience is either of something we like or don’t like. It feels good, it doesn’t feel good. I like this meditation, I don’t like this meditation. That is the notion of feeling. The mind is becoming subtle, subtle, and more subtle.

3. Mindfulness of Mind

Mindfulness of mind refers to the notion of the main mind. Main mind is what happens before conceptual mind arises. For that to happen, we need moments zero through three. I didn’t want to do this to you, [laughter] but I have to, a little bit. I know; some of you are already dreading it. [Laughter]

The Moments of Mind. We are talking about mindfulness of mind, how the mind comes about. From a meditative point of view, it is said that there is **moment zero**, when three things occur. There is the **object**, which is related to one of the consciousnesses. Those are inanimate objects, so to speak. There is the **sense power**—the eye, the ear, smell, taste, touch—seeing the color blue; hearing a sound; smelling fried chicken. And third, there is what we call the **immediately preceding consciousness**. So when I look at this, [holding up tube of lip balm] before I conceptualize it, there are this object, my eye, and the immediately preceding consciousness, whatever that was. That consciousness could have been looking at this fan [holding up fan]. The consciousness is ongoing, it's continuous, and in the previous moment of consciousness I was looking at the fan. So at moment zero I have this object [holds up tube of lip balm], I have my eye—the sense power—and I have the immediately preceding consciousness. That all happens within moment zero.

At **moment one** there is the first moment of, in this case, the eye consciousness. In **moment two** there is the second moment of eye consciousness, and the first *mental* moment of consciousness; and there is also what is called *rang-rik*, “self-knowing,” or “self-awareness.” All of those happen simultaneously. Those three are called “the three direct perceptions,” because at that moment there is a direct perception of the eye consciousness and a direct perception of the mental consciousness, which are relatively unobscured; and there is *rang rik*, which is considered to be unobscured. A level of conceptuality has really not come about yet.

Rang-rik is said to be **direct, nondual, and capable of knowing itself**. It is said that it is simply an aspect of the sixth consciousness. I'm going through this now because later, when you get into teachings on the mahamudra and maha ati and those things, it's very important to know this. If you don't know this then it is difficult to do those kinds of meditation. What is important, especially with the Kagyü and Nyingma view—the view that we are teaching here—is that the *rang-rik*, the self-knowing aspect, is fundamentally how the mind knows its own experience. We have to know the mind's experience. We have to know what the meditation is like. The mind at that point can see—if we are talking about a banner—it can see the banner. The sixth consciousness has a moment where it sees directly the object for the sight consciousness. The sight consciousness sees it as well. They see it and know that they are seeing it. Then we get to the level of concept: now a distinction has been made. After conceptualizing, we get into feeling: how do I feel about that? Do I like it or do I not like it?

Moment three of consciousness is conceptual mind. “Conceptual mind” here doesn't mean thinking; it's before thinking. Then at the **fourth moment**, you start thinking.

4. Mindfulness of Phenomena: *Semjung*

The fourth foundation, or the fourth close placement of mindfulness, is mindfulness of phenomena. Phenomena here are the same as *samskara*, or *semjung*—“what comes out of

mind," or "mind products." Vajrayogini wears fifty-one skulls—as do other deities—and those fifty-one skulls symbolize this fourth mindfulness. They are the fifty-one samskaras. What are some of the semjung? The six kleshas, the twenty secondary kleshas, the five omnipresents, the five ways of apprehending, and the four neutrals—which go one way or the other. They are different aspects of mind, but this is not the time to go into them. Last year in the mahayana talks, we went through all fifty-one, so you can read about them in those transcripts.

The point is that when we are doing this practice, our meditation is getting very, very refined. We are able to see the mind. That's why we have to draw the mind in so that it can become nondistracted: we need to actually see what it is doing. When we begin to *see* the mind, see what it is made of, we begin to see the source of feeling, the source of the mind arising and connecting with phenomena. We begin to see the kleshas and the secondary kleshas coming out.

On the small of the path of accumulation, both hinayana and mahayana practitioners practice trenpa nyewar shakpa shi, the four close placements of mindfulness. Although both are learning how to train their mind in shamatha by holding it to the notion of form, feeling, mind, and phenomena, they are each doing it in a different way. For example, as a way of developing shamatha, hinayana practitioners may use the four truths as the object of contemplation, while mahayana practitioners may use the two truths: relative truth and absolute truth. Or they may use bodhichitta. Hinayana practitioners can use the four close placements of mindfulness to develop nonattachment to the body, nonattachment to feelings, and so forth. Another way to look at how hinayana practitioners might use this training is as a way to understand the nature of suffering and impermanence. In holding our mind to form, feeling, mind, and phenomena, we see their impermanent nature. So ultimately the four foundations will enable the hinayana practitioner to see impermanence, the notion of contamination, and the notion of selflessness.

On the mahayana path of accumulation of the small, practitioners also use the four close placements of mindfulness to train the mind in shamatha, stabilization. What is it that they see in terms of body, feeling, mind, and mind products? They see everything as *gyuma tang milam*, "illusions and dreams." The mind itself is like an illusion, like a dream. When we meditate we see it appearing, and we can divide it into many categories. Our mind is strong enough to be able to see those, and at the same time we see their nature as being like an illusion, like a dream.

THE PATH OF ACCUMULATION: Middle

The Four Correct Abandonments

What has happened on the path of accumulation between the small and the middling? Shamatha and vipashyana have become even *more* joined together. The mind has become even stronger. One's understanding of virtue has strengthened. One's motivation is

becoming stronger, and it is increasing. Even though there are many practices one could do, the primary accomplishment is **the four correct abandonments**. Sometimes we refer to these as “what to accept and what to reject.”

At this point one is trying **not to gather nonvirtue**—and in particular, **not to gather nonvirtue that has not arisen**. The meditator now has enough strength of mind to look at cause and effect, and does so. Before, we didn’t have faith or motivation, or didn’t care. Now we’ve reached the point where we have enough strength of mind and enough vipashyana to know how *not* to gather migewa, how not to gather nonvirtue. We’re beginning to have enough strength of mind to know—before we do something—that we will regret it, or that it will cause problems. We also have the strength of mind not to do it, not to accumulate it.

The second abandonment is **restoring**, or **binding** ourselves, and **refraining from nonvirtue that has occurred**. Some migewa has occurred, but the mind is strong enough not to make it worse. Things have arisen, but one has a sense of refraining. We have bound ourselves.

The first two abandonments have to do with not doing what you shouldn’t do. The third one is **generating virtue that has not arisen**. In the middle of the path of accumulation we reach the point where we begin to understand gewa and are inspired and motivated towards generating virtue that has yet to arise.

The fourth abandonment is **increasing** that gewa. So doing something good and continuing to do it is the basic point.

THE PATH OF ACCUMULATION: Great

The Four Legs of Magical Emanation

This path is called the path of accumulation because we are trying to gather gewa. Gewa is also understanding; what we’re understanding is knowledge. What happens on the great of the path of accumulation is known as “the four legs of magical emanation.” This is not quite as fantastic as it sounds. [Laughter] It’s a fancy name for the same old stuff. These particular aspects enable one to move closer to the path of joining. They also refer to the fact that, at the path of accumulation of the great, it is said that one’s meditation is such that one can go to one hundred different world systems and hear teachings from different beings and Buddhas. That isn’t that magical, [laughter] but it’s good enough. One has that strength of mind, and one also has the clairvoyances.

The four legs of magical emanation are **aspiration**, **exertion**, **intention**, and **analysis**. The first three have to do with shamatha: building up the mind so that we have the fortitude to maintain our practice. There is the **aspiration** of wanting to maintain our practice, the **exertion** of keeping to that aspiration, and the **intention**, following through with the whole thing: taming the mind and bringing forth and actualizing stability and strength. **Analysis** refers to a mind that is able to see the superior, transcendental aspects of phenomena by means of vipashyana.

II. THE PATH OF JOINING, OR PREPARATION

Now we go to jorlam, the “path of joining,” or you can say “the path of preparation.” At the end of the great of the path of accumulation—in terms of the four legs of magical emanation—the fruition is that shamatha and vipashyana are bound together in a very potent way. *Sungjuk*—“inseparability” or “union”—has taken place. When shamatha and vipashyana are inseparable, we enter into the path of joining. We’ve learned how to do shamatha and how to apply vipashyana, and now we’re moving toward seeing the nature of reality; we’re trying to join ourselves to the path of seeing. There is a sense of preparation, but it’s really a joining. There’s a sense of coming up and joining the path of seeing. This is spoken about it in many different ways. I was talking with Khenpo Namdröl about this, and he definitely emphasized a sense of joining.

In the mahayana tradition, we usually talk about the path of joining in terms of what is called *peyi ösel*. *Peyi* means “to copy” or “mimic,” like drawing something. *Ösel* means “luminosity.” At the path of seeing, that luminosity is referring to emptiness. *Peyi ösel* means that we have a conceptual understanding. We’ve drawn an image, a picture. For example, we have heard about the stupa, seen pictures of the stupa, and seen videos of the stupa. To actually see the stupa is a direct experience—that would be the first bhumi of seeing the stupa. [Laughter]

The Four Stages of the Path of Joining

The path of joining has four stages: **heat**, **peak**, **forbearance**, and **supreme mundane quality**. Each of these orients us to the path of seeing, where we can have unobscured, direct perception—the first bhumi. Everything is now preparing us for that moment.

The first stage is **heat**. Heat means that one has joined together shamatha and vipashyana in such a way that one begins to feel the intensity of the realization of the path of seeing. The analogy is simple: before we get close to the fire, we feel the heat. If we’re hinayana practitioners, what is the heat we’re getting close to? It’s the heat of the four truths. If we are mahayana practitioners, we’re more or less getting close to the two truths, or emptiness.

The next stage is called **peak**. Here again, the union of shamatha and vipashyana is strengthening all the time. The stronger the mind is, the more vipashyana is able to understand what is happening. It is called “peak” because now one is at the peak of one’s ability to distinguish migewa. It is said that at this point one knows what migewa is—we can sight it a long way away. Also, at this point one begins to know what wrong view is. It is said that because one has the ability not to engage in migewa, therefore one cannot be harmed by wrong views. Before there is still a sense of not knowing exactly what migewa or gewa are, what nyönmong are, yet we go on, and so we can be harmed by wrong views and end up in the wrong place.

Heat and peak are associated with what are known as the **five qualities**. The five qualities are **faith**, **exertion**, **mindfulness**, **meditative stability**, and **knowledge**, or prajna,

sherpas. These qualities are not particularly sequential, and they increase. One's **faith** increases, because at this point one begins actually to be able to distinguish and understand the nature of karma. **Exertion** is now more an exertion of joy: practicing is becoming quite enjoyable. **Mindfulness** arises because the mind's ability to be steady enough for insight to occur continues. **Meditative stabilization** means that the quality of being able to go into deep meditative analysis and absorption keeps increasing. At the same time we have greater **knowledge**.

The third stage of the path of joining is **forbearance**, which is the same as *söpa*, "patience." Here, patience is not only patience in the sense of waiting; it is also the ability to have the necessary strength. One's mind becomes strong enough to bear handling reality. Reality could be the four truths, or in the mahayana, emptiness. In particular, one has no more fear. One has overcome wrong views. Sometimes when we meditate on emptiness or the four truths, we are fearful because we have a conceptual idea, and we perceive wrongly. We fear that everything is going to disappear, that everything is empty, or that there is no meaning to anything. There is a sense of going to the extreme views of eternalism or nihilism. Therefore our understanding is not quite right.

The fourth and final stage of the path of joining is known as **supreme mundane quality**. Our unification of shamatha and vipashyana has now come to its highest point, and we are now ever so close to a direct experience of emptiness. Why is this stage called the supreme of the mundane? Because so far, even though we can do tremendous things, we are still in the world system. We are still in samsara. In terms of shamatha, we now have a mind that is at its best ability and best sensitivity within the realm of samsara. It is the *finest* mind. It is so strong that it can forbear and handle emptiness and luminosity and all the things it has been contemplating. So it is the supreme, the best, within the mundane, within khorwa, or samsara, the three realms.

During the stages of forbearance and supreme mundane quality, the five qualities become the **five strengths**, or the **five powers**. They simply increase in their ability. It is also said that once we get to forbearance, we are no longer in jeopardy of falling into the lower realms. Does this mean that a bodhisattva on the first or second bhumi doesn't go to the lower realms, or into the six realms? Not particularly. It means that if they do it, doing so would be under their power and control. It is interesting here that, even on the path of accumulation and the two first stages of the path of joining, one can still fall into the lower realms. Again, this emphasizes the strength of samsara.

III. THE PATH OF SEEING

Now we come to the climax—the path of seeing. The path of seeing is the point where on either path, whatever the reality is, whatever it is that one is trying to realize, whatever one has been accumulating and preparing and joining together, happens. Whether we are doing vajrayana practice, mahayana practice, or hinayana practice, our

goal is the path of seeing. Once we get to the path of seeing, we have it made. It's clear sailing. I would say that most practices—a lot of the deep practices, the *sadhanas* and so forth—even though they deal with going from the first to the eighth *bhumi* and all these other things, are really about getting one to the path of seeing in the most potent way.

The path of seeing is the pivotal point. It is the first *bhumi*. After that the second *bhumi*, all the way up to the tenth *bhumi*, happen on the path of meditation. When you get to the eleventh *bhumi*, that is the path of no further learning, and that is buddhahood. *Bhumi* is Sanskrit; in Tibetan it is *sa*, which means "grounds of realization." You can think of the *bhumis* as a staircase: you start at the first stair, and you go to the next stair, and when you get to the eleventh stair, you're Buddha. Another way to look at it is as depths of purification, depths of overcoming *marikpa*, ignorance, and the *kleshas*. Another way to think about it is in terms of profundity. And yet another way to look at it is literally "grounds" in terms of realization. Our level of understanding is a certain ground. When we look around, we see things in a particular way, so we are at a certain ground of realization. As our understanding deepens, we understand and perceive everything from a different ground, because the basis of our understanding is different. This is known as *salam*, "grounds and paths." I think it's a fun topic, but I don't know about you—some people like *salam*, and some don't. That's the way the world is divided. [Laughter]

In particular, at the path of seeing there is *ngönsum*, or direct perception. It is said that on the paths of accumulation and joining one does not have direct experience; one has a conceptual understanding, which as we said is *jepak*, "inferential understanding." "Inferential" should not be considered a second-class experience; it's very, very intense in terms of the experiences that we have.

So the path of seeing is *ngönsum*, direct perception. This is a key point: one has transcended conventional mind, conceptual mind. We call it *sem-le depa*. *Sem* is "mind," "*de*" means "gone beyond," and *le* is grammatical. One has "gone beyond," one has "transcended the mind." This *sem* is the mind that we find in the three realms: the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. So whether we are talking about *hinayana* or *mahayana* practitioners, when they get to the path of seeing, they have transcended those three realms. They have transcended duality. They have gone beyond the four levels of the formless realms: *nam-she tha-ye*, limitless consciousness; *namkha tha-ye*, limitless space; *chiang me*, nothingness; and *sitse*, the peak of existence. In terms of the subtlety of the mind, first you're using *prajna*. And then at the first *bhumi*, the path of seeing, there is *lhakthong*, or *vipashyana*; and after that is *yeshe*.

The path of seeing is seeing either the two truths or the four truths, depending on what practice we're doing or what path we are on. Having done all the practices, we finally get to *ngönsum*, direct perception—direct experience beyond duality. In particular, we are overcoming what are known as "acquired afflictions." Acquired afflictions are misunderstood views of emptiness or of the four truths. We have been

conditioned, even through our meditation, to have ideas about emptiness or about the four truths. It is also said that in a worldly way, what is acquired is a sense that beings truly exist. We've been making various mistakes like this all along the way, and now finally we're working our way through them. When we get to the path of seeing, we see in a way that is pure and unadulterated. Therefore we overcome any wrong views that we have acquired, and they fall away. What happens when we experience the first bhumi? We have been working, working, and working, doing all this practice and so forth, and we finally see whatever it is we have been trying to see, and we see it in an unadulterated way. So if there is any obstacle whatsoever, we are throwing it out.

Nyamshak Yeshe

When we get to the path of seeing, something takes place in terms of how this realization comes about. Within the context of meditation, we are sitting down and contemplating, meditating. It is known as *nyamshak*, "meditative equipoise." That is when we have direct perception. At the path of seeing we call it *nyamshak yeshe* because it is meditative equipoise using wisdom.

The Uninterrupted Path and the Path of Release.

Within meditative equipoise, two things happen: one is known as the uninterrupted path, and the other is the path of release. In Tibetan we call them *par-che melam* and *namdröl lam*. I'm bringing this up now because these two paths are very important. The uninterrupted path and the path of release are mentioned again and again in many places. In the hinayana period we talked about the seven preparations, and about overcoming the large, middle, and small obscurations of the various *suk kham* and *sukme kham*, the form and formless realms. It is said that in the process of decreasing these obscurations, going from the large to the middle to the small, there is an uninterrupted path and a path of release between each stage. Here, for the hinayana practitioner they are found in the path of meditation; and for the mahayana practitioner in terms of the bhumis, for every bhumi there is an uninterrupted path and a path of release.

What happens in the uninterrupted path also relates to whatever meditation we are practicing. Within meditative equipoise, we have developed enough gewa, understanding, and so forth that we finally see emptiness. It is called the uninterrupted path because we finally get to the point where our realization is no longer disturbed. The uninterrupted path—the "path without obstacles"—is another way of saying it—is the path that has reached the other side. That experience in meditation destroys acquired ignorance and klesha. It's like throwing a robber out of the house. One has developed enough strength to have direct realization, and one has it. The uninterrupted path, the *par-che melam*, is the antidote to misunderstanding the four truths, to seeing things as permanent.

The next moment is known as "the path of release": we are released from affliction. At that point we *know* what we have just done. We *know* that we have just overcome that level of ignorance. We *know* that we have just experienced emptiness directly. And we sit

there, and we enjoy it. [Laughter] That is known as the path of release. It is said that, having thrown the robber out of the house, now you lock the door. [Laughter] There is a sense that you got rid of whatever you were trying to get rid of, and you sit and enjoy the comfort and peace of your home—essentially, you enjoy the lack of *fear*.

There is a little subplot here: what happens after the namdröl lam, the path of release? We finally get to the first bhumi, and wow! It's great. We are sitting there—it could be for a while. But how do we get to the next bhumi? It is said that at this point, the meditator—the bodhisattva if it is the five paths of the bodhisattvayana—*knows*—because there are signs—that he has reached the depths of what he can realize at that moment. However, the meditator cannot just go immediately to the next bhumi. He has to stop. Before he goes to the next bhumi, he has to accumulate more gewa and sönam. It is said that a bodhisattva might do this for many eons. It doesn't necessarily happen [snaps fingers] like that. It is said that each of the small, medium, and large stages of the path of accumulation could take many eons; even the path of seeing could take many eons.

That is why it is said that a bodhisattva gets to a certain level and then realizes that he doesn't have enough gewa and sönam. Therefore he may spend many lifetimes accumulating that. We have gone through the various ways one can collect gewa and sönam. Then, at a certain point the bodhisattva gets signs that help him realize that he has enough. There is enough gas. [Laughter] You know, a little here, and a little here, and he gets back in the car [makes sounds of starting a car and sees if it starts]. In the in-between stage, when the bodhisattvas go into meditation, their meditative equipoise is sometimes known as *mere meditative equipoise*. It is merely mimicking what the next meditative equipoise might be like.

Jethop Yeshe

Once we arise from meditative equipoise, once we get up from that meditation session as it were, we have what is called *jethop yeshe*. We have been translating this loosely as “post-meditation,” but more accurately it is “the post period from equipoise inundated with wisdom.” Jethop is not just a word for when the meditation has stopped; it is an actual *form* of meditation that happens in the post-period of absorption, though it is not as potent as the absorption itself. Jethop yeshe doesn't mean doing whatever we want in the post-meditation—we cannot call that post-meditation. Jethop yeshe brings wisdom to the experience of post-meditation.

Forbearance of Dharma and Knowledge of Dharma

The path of seeing is also associated with *chö so*, “forbearance of dharma,” and *chö she*, “knowledge of dharma.” Forbearance of dharma is associated with the uninterrupted path. It is the point where we actually see what is going on: we have the forbearance to see what the dharma is trying to tell us. We have enough strength of mind to actually see the dharma.

At the next moment, at the path of release, we relax into whatever the experience was, and this is known as *chö she*, or the knowledge of dharma, because now we *know* what the dharma is saying.

The Sixteen Phases of the Path of Seeing

When hinayana practitioners have accomplished the path of seeing, they also go through what are called the sixteen phases of the path of seeing. When they have completed those sixteen, then they are said to be on the first bhumi. What are those sixteen? They are the sixteen understandings of the four truths. That is why we went over the four truths so thoroughly—because getting to the first bhumi is really about understanding the four truths.

IV. THE PATH OF MEDITATION

Next is the path of meditation, which we'll discuss briefly. On the path of meditation we are overcoming the innate obstructions. For a hinayana practitioner, the innate obstructions are holding to the idea of the five skandhas being a self. In the mahayana, overcoming the innate obstructions would be seeing phenomena as being like dreams, like illusions—depending on what level of mahayana philosophy you like.

V. THE PATH OF NO FURTHER LEARNING

The path of no further learning is buddhahood itself, and one has now overcome acquired and innate obstructions, and one has completely acquired all the necessary *gewa* and *sönam*. That is why this path is known as “complete and perfect buddhahood.” One then has the adornments, and then one is called an *arhat*, a “foe-destroyer,” in the hinayana; or one can be called a buddha, in the mahayana.

So that, ladies and gentlemen, is the four truths. We made it! [Applause; cheers] Rest assured that you are among a very small group of people in North America who have done this. [Laughter] It is good that we are able to do it—it's a little slow at times, but later, if you want, you can go back and read through the talks and see what it all means. I tried to highlight the most important points and most useful lists so that at the next open house, when somebody thinks there should be a “beginning talk” on the four truths, we will be prepared. [Laughter] That is what we do at open houses—we just talk about the four noble truths—something nice and light to start out with, [laughter] that won't scare people away. You can sit in the back of the room and roll your eyes: “If they only knew.” [Laughter]

INTRODUCTION TO VIPASHYANA

At this point we have officially entered the mahayana period, because now we are moving into the discussion of vipashyana. Today, I'm just going to go through the definitions of vipashyana. I feel that we've laid enough ground in terms of what each one

*Meditative States
in Tibetan Buddhism*

The Concentrations and Formless Absorptions

Edited and annotated by Leah Zahler

Lati Rinbochay's Oral Presentation
Translated by Jeffrey Hopkins

Pan-chen Sö-nam-drak-ba's "Explanation
of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions"
Translated by Leah Zahler

Denma Lochö Rinbochay's Oral Commentary
Translated by Jeffrey Hopkins



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overcome all nine, it is necessary to investigate whether all afflictions with respect to the Desire Realm have actually been overcome or whether some still remain. Thus, a different factor of analysis is now needed. The meditator takes to mind — visualizes — some object that is an object of desire or hatred within the Desire Realm and in its presence analyzes whether any desire or hatred is left with respect to that object; the meditator knows from previous experience what objects aroused desire or hatred and tests himself or herself in that situation.

The path consciousness that engages in such investigation is called the mental contemplation of analysis and is the sixth of the seven preparations; this preparation has neither uninterrupted paths nor paths of release. Having investigated in this manner, the meditator understands that there are still afflictions to be overcome with respect to the Desire Realm and again engages in meditation.

The Mental Contemplation of Final Training

With the attainment, through repeated familiarity with and cultivation of the view of the Desire Realm as gross in nature and in number, of the capacity to overcome the great of the small afflictions, the meditator attains the uninterrupted path that is their antidote. This is the first of the three uninterrupted paths of the mental contemplation of final training, after which the first of the paths of release is attained. Then the meditator again investigates whether there are afflictions still to be abandoned. Seeing that there are afflictions still to be abandoned, he or she again enters into contemplation of the Desire Realm as gross in nature and in number. With the attainment, through repeated familiarity, of the capacity to suppress the middling of the small afflictions, the meditator attains the second uninterrupted path of the mental contemplation of final training. Afterward, when the middling of the small afflictions with respect to the Desire Realm have been suppressed, a path of release that views the First Concentration as peaceful is generated.

Again, analysis is needed — a mental contemplation of analysis; it is necessary to investigate whether any of the afflictions of the

Desire Realm remain. The mode of analysis is as before. Then, seeing that some afflictions still remain, the meditator again enters into the contemplation of the Desire Realm as gross in nature and in number and, with the attainment, through repeated familiarity, of the capacity to suppress the small of the small afflictions with respect to the Desire Realm, he or she attains the third of the three uninterrupted paths of the mental contemplation of final training.

These three uninterrupted paths and the paths of release that follow the first two constitute the mental contemplation of final training. It is so called because it is the last of the preparations and because it is a training. (See chart, page 116. For a complete layout of the preparations, see chart, page 117.)

THE FIRST CONCENTRATION

After the last uninterrupted path, the meditator generates the last of the paths of release; it is the path of release that is a state of having overcome the small of the small afflictions with respect to the Desire Realm, and it views the First Concentration as peaceful and auspicious. That path itself is the actual first concentration.

There are various ways of referring to the first concentration. It is also called the absorption (*samāpatti*, *snayoms 'jug*) — or the actual absorption (*maulasamāpatti*, *drigos gzhi'i snayoms 'jug*) — of the first concentration. It is called an *actual* absorption because it is not a preparation. It is called an absorption because the mind and mental factors are all equally operating on the object.⁵ It is also called an absorption, or equalization, because the four elements — earth, water, fire, and wind — have become balanced. It is called a concentration because the yogi is holding the mind inside,⁶ and because it is the first of the four actual absorptions of the four concentrations, it is called the *first* concentration.

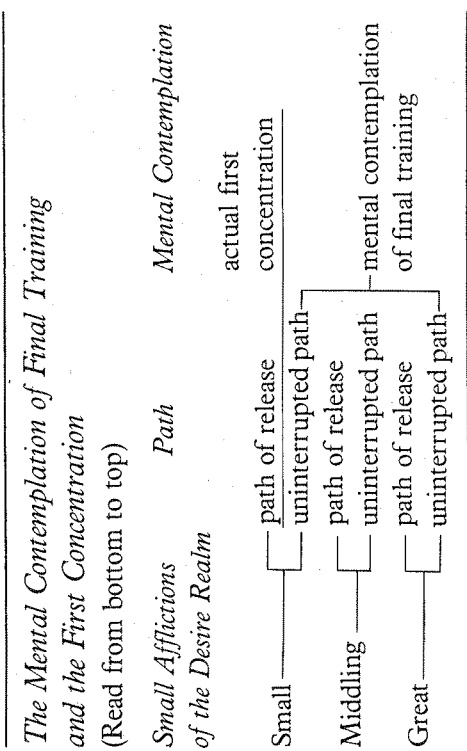
Branches of the First Concentration

The first concentration has five branches (*aiga*, *yan lag*), which are considered in three groups — *antidote* (*pratipakṣha*, *gnyen po*), *benefit* (*anushaṃsa*, *phan yon*), and *basis* (*āshraya*, *gnas*). In the

category of antidote, there are two branches — *investigation* (*vitarka, rlog pa*) and *analysis* (*vicāra, dpyod pa*). In the category of benefit are joy (*prīti, dga' ba*) and bliss (*sukha, bde ba*). The basis is *meditative stabilization* (*śamādhi, ting nge 'dzin*).

The antidotal branches. Investigation and analysis are the antidotal branches. They are called antidotal because they cause separation from the faults of the Desire Realm. Since, in the first concentration itself, the meditator is beyond attachment to the Desire Realm, these branches do not actually *cause* non-attachment with regard to the Desire Realm. However, they are the continuation of the investigation and analysis that took place during the preparations for the first concentration. Therefore, investigation and analysis within the composite of the factors included in the first concentration are posited as antidotes, and indeed, they are antidotes in the sense of causing the meditator to become more distant from attachment to the Desire Realm.

The mental factor of investigation engages its object in a slightly coarse way. It merely investigates roughly the entity of the object under consideration, whereas analysis is a more detailed investigation of the object. Analysis involves searching out and analyzing the attributes of the object rather than its general entity; it also involves searching out the reason.



Preparations for the First Concentration (Read from bottom to top)

Afflictions of the Desire Realm

Mental Contemplation

of final training
mental contemplation of analysis
of withdrawal or joy
mental contemplation of thorough isolation

small
middling
great

path of release
uninterrupted path

9. small
8. middling
7. great

path of release
uninterrupted path

6. small
5. middling
4. great

path of release
uninterrupted path

3. small
2. middling
1. great

path of release
uninterrupted path

mental contemplation arisen from belief
mental contemplation of individual knowledge of the character
mental contemplation of a mere beginner (= calm abiding)

The benefit branches. There are two branches that are benefits — joy and bliss. Though they are counted as two, they are actually one thing — mental bliss (*saumanasya*, *yiḍ bde*) — seen from two points of view. Because the mental bliss that accompanies the first concentration performs two functions, two benefits are enumerated. (For example, one person within a family may be both a husband and a father.) Bliss is so called because mental bliss helps the body and the sense organs; “help,” in this context, means that mental bliss causes a sense of bliss in the body as well. The meditator becomes somewhat lighter. For example, if we are very happy, the body can sustain itself well even without much food, and if we have a great deal of mental suffering, we can become thin even when we eat a great deal; this is how mental bliss helps the body. Mental bliss also causes the other factors that accompany the mental consciousness to be joyful; that is its other function, and from that point of view the mental bliss is called joy. Thus, because mental bliss has these two functions, it is designated with the two names “joy” and “bliss.”

The mental bliss of the first concentration is the mental feeling of bliss that accompanies the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*, *yiḍ kyi nam shes*) of a being in the first concentration. Joy and bliss are called benefits because they are produced as a result of separation, by way of investigation and analysis, from attachment to the Desire Realm.

The basis branch. Meditative stabilization is the branch called basis; meditative stabilization means that the mind abides one-pointedly on an object. It is posited as the branch called basis because the two antidotes and the two benefits exist in dependence on meditative stabilization; it is the basis, or source, of the antidotes and benefits.

The composite of these five branches is called the meditative absorption of the first concentration. There are many other factors present in this composite, but these five — investigation, analysis, joy, bliss, and meditative stabilization — are the main ones and are therefore cited.

Types of Meditative Absorption of the First Concentration

The meditative absorption of the first concentration has two types — *causal* (*kāraṇa*, *rgyu*) and *resultant-birth* (*kārya*, *bras bu skye ba*). A meditative absorption of the first concentration cultivated during this lifetime would be causal; if, in dependence upon having cultivated the meditative absorption of the first concentration in this lifetime, a practitioner were born in the next lifetime in one of the lands of the First Concentration, he or she would have a resultant-birth meditative absorption of the first concentration. A causal meditative absorption of the first concentration is an actual first concentration; the yogi is not merely working on its causes. Rather, it is causal in the sense that it can cause a rebirth in the First Concentration. The mental and physical aggregates that are a fruition of that action — that is, of that causal meditative absorption — are a resultant meditative absorption of the first concentration — a resultant birth.

The factors posited as a resultant birth are the fruitional (*vipāka*, *nam smin*) mental and physical aggregates — that is, mind and body — and causally concordant effects (*nishyan-daphala*, *rgyu mthun gyi 'bras bu*). Whereas the causal meditative absorption of the first concentration is mainly the five branches, the mind and body of a being born in the First Concentration are called a resultant-birth type of meditative absorption of the first concentration, though the five branches are also present in a resultant birth. The causally concordant effects are to have a soft mental continuum, to have fewer afflictions than are present in the Desire Realm, and to have peacefulness, stability, and mindfulness. There are many types of causally concordant effect. For example, when a being is born in the First Concentration, a house and a land with groves and parks are produced along with that being's mind and body; these are also included in the resultant-birth type of meditative absorption of the first concentration. As was stated earlier, there are three areas in the First Concentration — Brahmā Type, In Front of Brahmā, and Great Brahmā; a resultant-birth type of meditative absorption of the first concentration can occur in any of these.

The causal meditative absorption of the first concentration has

two more types — a mere first concentration (*bsam gtan dang po'i dngos gzhi'i snyoms 'jug tsam po ba*) and a special first concentration (*bsam gtan dang po'i dngos gzhi'i snyoms 'jug khyad par chen*). Since investigation is slightly coarser than analysis, the first concentration of a person who has separated from investigation and has only the other four branches is a special first concentration. The first concentration of a person who has all five branches is called a mere first concentration.

It is only for the first concentration, not for the second, third, or fourth, that these two types are posited. The reason is that there is a difference in degree of coarseness and subtlety between investigation and analysis. Because investigation is coarser than the other branches, it is possible to separate from investigation and not from the others; a special first concentration is posited from this point of view. However, for the second, third, and fourth concentrations there is no such difference of coarseness and subtlety in the branches; therefore, mere and special concentrations are not posited.

The causal meditative absorption of the first concentration, and probably the resultant-birth type as well, has yet another division into three types.⁷ The first is *pure* (*shuddha, dag pa*); the second is *uncontaminated* (*anāsrava, zag med*), and the third is *afflicted* (*kliṣṭa, nyon mongs can*). In the first concentration, the meditator is separated from the afflictions (*klesha, nyon mongs*) with respect to the Desire Realm; if the meditator is also free of all the afflictions with respect to the First Concentration, he or she is said to have a pure meditative absorption of the first concentration. Pure meditative absorptions of the first concentration are contaminated (*sāsrava, zag bcas*). Uncontaminated meditative absorptions of the first concentration, in brief, are those used by Superiors (*ārya, 'phags pa*) as a mental basis for their path consciousnesses. An afflicted meditative absorption of the first concentration is a meditative absorption that is polluted by the afflictions with respect to the First Concentration.

How can a first concentration be polluted by afflictions with respect to the First Concentration itself? The First Concentration has five types of affliction. The first is attachment (*rtshnā, sred pa*) with respect to the First Concentration; the second is view (*dr̥ṣṭi,*

lta ba); the third is pride (*māna, nga rgyal*); the fourth is ignorance (*avidyā, ma rig pa*), and the fifth is doubt (*vichikitsā, the tshom*).

The first concentration can become polluted by attachment with respect to the First Concentration — that is, by attachment to the bliss of the first concentration. The meditator experiences its taste and becomes attached to it, and through that attachment the first concentration becomes afflicted.

How can view pollute the first concentration? In dependence upon the first concentration, clairvoyance can be achieved; upon attaining this clairvoyance, the meditator sees his or her past and future lifetimes and assumes that the self is permanent. This is a mistaken view, and through the generation of this mistaken view, the first concentration becomes afflicted.

The first concentration becomes polluted by pride if the meditator gets puffed up and thinks, "Who except me could have attained this meditative absorption?" Through the generation of this pride, the first concentration becomes afflicted.

Ignorance and doubt are explained together. Through the power of ignorance, the meditator generates doubt wondering whether the first concentration itself is a path of liberation. Since the first concentration is not a path of liberation, this doubt is mistaken and is a means by which the first concentration becomes afflicted.

Achievement of the Clairvoyances

As I said earlier, one can achieve many meditative absorptions and many clairvoyances on the basis of calm abiding. It is through the first concentration that the clairvoyances are actually achieved.

The Mundane Path

I have already explained that there are nine uninterrupted paths and nine paths of release and that the ninth path of release is the meditative absorption of the first concentration itself. This is the path of release that is the state of having abandoned the afflictions with respect to the Desire Realm. Here, abandonment of the afflictions with respect to the Desire Realm does not mean abandonment from the root. What, then, is the mode of abandonment? It is the suppression of the manifest form, not the seed

character again has as its mental basis the mind of calm abiding — that is, the mental contemplation of a mere beginner;⁸ in dependence upon this mental contemplation of a mere beginner, the meditator now views the First Concentration as gross and the Second Concentration as peaceful. The First Concentration is gross in nature because it is low and has a short lifespan; though the beings in the First Concentration have a long lifespan compared to ours, they have a short lifespan compared to that of the beings in the Second Concentration. The beings in the First Concentration also have less light and a worse colour than the beings in the Second Concentration. The First Concentration is gross in number because it has more faults than the Second Concentration; the First Concentration has investigation and analysis and can involve deceit and dissimulation. An example of deceit and dissimulation in the First Concentration is the false claim of Brahmā that he created the world. A Hearer (*śrāvaka*, *nyan thos*) asked him, "From what do the four elements originally arise? How do the four elements eventually cease?" Brahmā did not want to say he did not know and therefore answered, "I am the Great Brahmā." Thus, the First Concentration has more faults than the Second Concentration.

Through hearing and thinking, the meditator reflects on the grossness of the First Concentration, and, as in the preparations for the first concentration, passes through the nine mental abidings during the mental contemplation of individual knowledge of the character. It is necessary to pass through the nine mental abidings again in order to achieve the special insight included within the second concentration. However, it will be easier than it was in preparation for the first concentration. Again, the meditator alternates analytical meditation and stabilizing meditation. Gradually, he or she advances over the nine mental abidings and eventually is able to engage in analytical meditation, within a stabilized mind, spontaneously and without exertion. Through repeated familiarity with this process, the meditator attains mental and physical pliancy and, at that point, attains the special insight that is included within the level of the second concentration, though it is not the second concentration.

Simultaneously, the meditator also attains the mental contem-

form, of the coarse afflictions, not of the subtle afflictions. This suppression is like the control of a chronic illness. Through misuse of food and drink and through inappropriate behaviour, a chronic illness can develop. When we rely on a doctor, some of the pain of the disease will diminish, and if we do not encounter unfavorable circumstances, we can control the symptoms. However, we have not overcome the basic disease. The preparations for the first concentration overcome afflictions in a similar way.

To generate an affliction, we first have to conceive of ourselves as substantially existing (*dhavyasat*, *rdzas yod*). With that conception of substantial existence, there is a mental factor of desire. This conception that the person substantially exists and the desire that accompanies it are like a disease. When we meet with a pleasant object and good circumstances, we think about the various beautiful qualities of the object and, impelled by improper mental application, generate great desire. When we meet with an unpleasant object, we engage in and feed on many mistaken reasons for considering the object unpleasant; through improper mental application, we superimpose these reasons and generate great hatred. This form of great desire and great hatred is what is temporarily suppressed through the preparations. However, the basic disease remains. This process is called diminishing the coarse afflictions or suppressing the manifest form of the coarse afflictions.

The nine uninterrupted paths that overcome these afflictions and the nine paths of release that are states of having overcome them are called mundane paths. They are so called because a mundane path of meditation acts as an antidote to these afflictions. From another point of view, they are called mundane paths because the meditator is familiarizing himself or herself with a higher mundane consciousness. This explanation also applies to the remaining levels.

THE SECOND CONCENTRATION

Preparations

Like the first concentration, the second has seven preparations. The mental contemplation of individual knowledge of the

plation arisen from belief. Through renewed familiarity with this union of calm abiding and special insight, he or she attains the capacity to overcome the great of the great afflictions with respect to the First Concentration and, at that point, attains the first of the three uninterrupted paths of the mental contemplation of thorough isolation. Then he or she attains a path of release that is the state of having become freed from the great of the great afflictions with respect to the First Concentration.

The process of overcoming the afflictions is the same for the second concentration as for the first. There are nine levels of afflictions with respect to the First Concentration, and to overcome them, nine uninterrupted paths and nine paths of release are generated. There are three uninterrupted paths and three paths of release in the mental contemplation of thorough isolation, and there are three uninterrupted paths and three paths of release in the mental contemplation of withdrawal or joy. This is followed by the mental contemplation of analysis, after which the remaining afflictions are overcome in the mental contemplation of final training. With the attainment of the path of release that is the state of having overcome the small of the small afflictions with respect to the First Concentration, the meditator has attained the second concentration.

Branches of the Second Concentration

The second concentration has four branches — one antidotal branch, two that are benefits, and one that is the basis. The antidotal branch is called internal clarity (*adhyātmāsamprasāda*, *nang rab tu dang ba*). This name is applied to the factors of mindfulness (*smṛti*, *dran pa*), introspection (*samprajanya*, *shes bzhin*), and equanimity (*upekṣhā*, *biang snyoms*). Mindfulness here is non-forgetfulness of the objects of observation and the aspects included within the composite called the second concentration. Introspection is a discrimination that analyzes whether the mind is abiding on its object or not. In general, equanimity is a mental factor that causes the mind and its accompanying mental factors to engage equally in its object. The equanimity that exists in the second concentration is that which frees the mind from the

fluctuation caused by investigation and analysis during the first concentration; it is a relinquishing of the factors of investigation and analysis and an equalizing of the mind. These three are called internal clarity. It is said that the reason these three are not mentioned openly with regard to the second concentration is that the second concentration still has the fault of joy (*prīti*, *dga' ba*). Therefore, the antidote that separates one from the faults of the first concentration is called internal clarity.

The benefits and the basis are the same as for the first concentration, and joy and bliss (*sukha*, *bde ba*) are similarly explained as two ways of positing one factor, mental bliss (*saumanasya*, *yid bde*), in view of its performing two functions.

Types of Meditative Absorption of the Second Concentration

As with the first concentration, there are two types of meditative absorption of the second concentration — a causal type and a resultant-birth type. These, again, are of three types — pure, uncontaminated, and afflicted — and the way of positing the meaning of all three is the same.

THE THIRD CONCENTRATION

Preparations

The third concentration, like the first two, is attained by means of the seven preparations. The mental contemplation of individual knowledge of the character views the Second Concentration as gross and the Third Concentration as peaceful, and in dependence upon calm abiding, the meditator engages in this analysis. As before, the meditator overcomes the afflictions with respect to the Second Concentration by way of the nine uninterrupted paths and the nine paths of release; the ninth path of release is the third concentration.

Branches of the Third Concentration

The third concentration has five branches. There are three antidotal branches, one that is a benefit, and one that is the basis. The three antidotal branches are mindfulness (*smṛti*, *dran pa*), introspection (*samprajanya*, *shes bzhin*), and equanimity (*upekṣhā*,

biang snyoms). These are the path consciousnesses that cause separation from attachment to the second concentration — mainly from the joy and bliss of the second concentration. Thus, since there is a disturbance of the mind due to joy in the second concentration, the equanimity of the third concentration is the factor that relinquishes or pacifies the joy of the second concentration; in this sense, it causes the mind and mental factors to be equal. After giving up attachment to the joy and bliss of the second concentration, the meditator has only the single branch, bliss (*sukha*, *bde ba*). The feeling of mental bliss that accompanies the mental consciousness of the third concentration is called the branch of bliss. This is the benefit that is produced through the separation brought about by mindfulness, introspection, and equanimity. As before, the basis is meditative stabilization.

Types of Meditative Absorption of the Third Concentration

Like the first two concentrations, the third concentration has a causal and a resultant-birth type of meditative absorption, and these are of three types — pure, uncontaminated, and afflicted.

THE FOURTH CONCENTRATION

Preparations

The fourth concentration also has the seven preparations. Here the mental contemplation of individual knowledge of the character views the Third Concentration as gross in the sense of having the fluctuation of bliss and the Fourth Concentration as peaceful; again, in dependence upon calm abiding, the meditator engages in analysis. The meditator separates from attachment to the third concentration by way of the nine uninterrupted paths and the nine paths of release, as before.

Branches of the Fourth Concentration

The fourth concentration has four branches. There are two antidotal branches — mindfulness (*smṛti*, *dran pa*) and equanimity (*upekṣā*, *biang snyoms*). The benefit branch is neutral feeling (*upekṣā*, *biang snyoms*; *aduhkṣasukhavedanā*, *sdug bsgal ma yin bde ba yang ma yin*). The basis branch, again, is meditative

stabilization. The first three are all called thoroughly pure (*parishuddha*, *yongs su dag pa*) — thoroughly pure mindfulness, equanimity, and neutral feeling — because the meditator has separated from eight faults (*apākṣhāla*, *skyon*) — investigation (*vitarka*, *rtog pa*), analysis (*vicāra*, *dpyod pa*), inhalation (*śvāsa*, *dbugs ngub pa*), exhalation (*prashvāsa*, *dbugs 'byung pa*), the feeling of pleasure (*sukha*, *bde ba*), the feeling of pain (*duḥkha*, *sdug bsgal*), the feeling of mental discomfort (*daurmanasya*, *yid mi bde*), and the feeling of mental bliss (*saumanasya*, *yid bde*). The last is not merely mental bliss but the feeling of bliss itself. The equanimity of the fourth concentration is that which causes the relinquishing or pacification of these eight faults and the consequent equalizing of the mind. Because the meditator has separated from these eight faults, the mindfulness, equanimity, and neutral feeling of the fourth concentration are said to be pure.

Although the fourth concentration has introspection, it is not counted as a branch because there is no fluctuation in the fourth concentration. Just as it is not necessary to send out spies when a country has no enemies, similarly there is no need for introspection to analyze whether or not faults are present because there is no fluctuation due to the presence of a fault.

Types of Meditative Absorption of the Fourth Concentration

As in the other concentrations, there are causal and resultant-birth types of meditative absorption of the fourth concentration. The resultant-birth meditative absorptions of the Fourth Concentration are those explained earlier. As before, the causal meditative absorption of the fourth concentration is the ninth path of release, and there are pure, uncontaminated, and afflicted forms of it.

COMPARISON OF THE CONCENTRATIONS

The difference between the first and second concentrations is that there is a non-completion of meditative stabilization in the first; although the meditative stabilization of the first concentration is both clear and stable, its power has not been completed. The reason is that the first concentration has investigation and analysis, which prevent the power of meditative stabilization from

reaching its peak. In the second concentration, because investigation and analysis are no longer present, the power of meditative stabilization becomes complete.

The difference between the second and third concentrations is that there is a non-completion of benefit in the second. The reason is that both joy and bliss are present in the second; therefore, the factor of benefit is not complete. Because this fault does not exist in the third concentration, the factor of benefit is complete in the third.

The difference between the third and fourth concentrations is posited from the point of view of non-completion and completion of thorough purity. In the third concentration, the meditator still has some of the eight faults — those of inhalation, exhalation, and the feeling of bliss. Since all eight faults are absent in the fourth concentration, the fourth concentration has the completion of thorough purity (*parishuddhi, yongs su dag pa*).

6 The Four Formless Absorptions

The four formless absorptions are called limitless space, limitless consciousness, nothingness, and the peak of cyclic existence. They are posited from the point of view of their objects of observation (*ālambana, dmigs pa*) and aspects (*ākāra, nam pa*). Whereas a practitioner passes into the first concentration or from one concentration to the next by way of the presence or absence of branches, he or she passes beyond the fourth concentration or from one formless absorption to the next by way of the object of observation and aspect; no branches are posited for any of the formless absorptions. In the four concentrations, the main meditative activity is that of analytical meditation; in the formless absorptions, however, the main meditative activity is that of stabilizing meditation.¹ The sign of having attained any of the actual four concentrations is the sense that the body is sinking under the ground, whereas the sign of having attained any of the four formless absorptions is the sense that the body is flying off into space.

LIMITLESS SPACE

Preparations

Like the concentrations, the formless absorption of limitless space has the seven preparations; within a mind of calm abiding, the

meditator engages in analysis. The mental contemplation of individual knowledge of the character views the Fourth Concentration as gross and the discrimination that space is limitless as peaceful; nevertheless, though the meditator is analyzing, he or she now engages mainly in stabilizing meditation by means of calm abiding; through viewing the Fourth Concentration as gross and through repeatedly taking to mind the thought, "Space is limitless; space is limitless," the meditator gradually develops the meditative absorption of limitless space and, within focusing on the discrimination that space is limitless, generates the nine uninterrupted paths and the nine paths of release.

The Actual Absorption

With the generation of the actual absorption (*maulasamāpatti*, *dingos gzhi'i snyoms 'jug*) of limitless space, discrimination (*saṃjñā*, 'du shes) of forms — the appearance of forms to the mind — completely disappears. The meditator loses the perception of obstruction and variety. "Obstruction" refers to such things as walls; a grove is an example of variety, as are colours such as red or white. These disappear. What is cultivated here is the non-appearance of obstructive and various forms to the mind; one is not meditating that they do not exist. The object of observation is the mental aggregates of the meditator; "limitless space" means that for the meditator's mind, space pervades everywhere. Thus, though obstructive and various forms do not exist for the mind of the meditator, the meditator is not meditating that things do not exist at all.

Types of Meditative Absorption of Limitless Space

Like the concentrations, the meditative absorption of limitless space has both the causal and the resultant-birth types. Through cultivating the meditative absorption of limitless space now and achieving it in this lifetime, a practitioner has the causal meditative absorption of limitless space; if, at death, he or she is reborn in the level of Limitless Space, he or she would have a

resultant-birth type of meditative absorption of limitless space. Again, there are pure, uncontaminated, and afflicted types.

LIMITLESS CONSCIOUSNESS

To attain the meditative absorption of limitless consciousness, someone who has attained the discrimination of limitless space begins to view that discrimination as gross and to view the discrimination that consciousness is limitless as peaceful. At the beginning, in dependence upon calm abiding, the person engages in some analysis but mainly in stabilizing meditation. There are seven preparations, as before. There are nine afflictions to be overcome with respect to Limitless Space and, therefore, nine uninterrupted paths and nine paths of release. The ninth path of release is the meditative absorption of limitless consciousness. Its object of observation, again, is the meditator's mental aggregates. Like the other concentrations and formless absorptions, it has causal and resultant-birth types, and again, there are pure, uncontaminated, and afflicted varieties.

NOTHINGNESS

To attain the meditative absorption of nothingness, the person who has attained the meditative absorption of limitless consciousness begins to view the discrimination that consciousness is limitless as gross and to view as peaceful the discrimination that there is nothing formed or formless to be apprehended. As before, the person analyzes a little at the beginning in dependence on calm abiding and views the lower absorption as gross and the higher as peaceful but then mainly engages in stabilizing meditation. Again, there are nine afflictions posited with respect to Limitless Consciousness, as well as nine uninterrupted paths and nine paths of release; with the attainment of the ninth path of release, the meditator attains the meditative absorption of nothingness. In the meditative absorption of nothingness, the meditator engages in the discrimination that there is nothing formed or formless to be apprehended. As before, there are the

causal and resultant-birth types, as well as the pure, uncontaminated, and afflicted types.

THE PEAK OF CYCLIC EXISTENCE

To attain the meditative absorption of the peak of cyclic existence, the person who has attained the meditative absorption of nothingness begins to view as gross the discrimination that there is nothing formed or formless to be apprehended. The meditator then begins to think, "Coarse discrimination does not exist; subtle discrimination is not non-existent." "Coarse discrimination does not exist" means that the gross, or coarse, discrimination called nothingness which the meditator is now viewing does not exist; in other words, the meditator lets it go, and subtle discrimination is left.

The meditator cultivates the meditative absorption of the peak of cyclic existence by way of the seven preparations. Again, there are nine afflictions with respect to the level of Nothingness, and there are nine uninterrupted paths and nine paths of release; the ninth path of release is the actual meditative absorption of the peak of cyclic existence.

In general, only pure and afflicted types of the meditative absorption of the peak of cyclic existence are posited. However, there is also a system that posits an uncontaminated type. As before, there are causal and resultant-birth types. The peak of cyclic existence (*bhavāgāra, srid rtse*) is so called because it is the highest state within cyclic existence (*bhava, srid pa*).² Beings born at this level have the longest lifespan in the three realms.

I have explained the mode of cultivating the four concentrations and the four formless absorptions having the aspect of grossness and peacefulness. These meditative absorptions can be used in many ways; in dependence upon them, a practitioner can achieve various clairvoyances. These absorptions can also be used as the basis for path consciousnesses. If they are not used for these purposes, the practitioner achieves only the causes for resultant births in these levels. It is like having a roomful of dollars; we

could either use the money or not use it. We could buy a house or an aeroplane or anything we wanted, but if we did not use the money, it would be only paper. Similarly, if the concentrations and formless absorptions are not used, they lead only to resultant-birth types of meditative absorption in those levels of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra, 'khor ba*).

The Stages of Meditation

By Kamalashila

*Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell
(Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, NY)*

Chapter Nine: Actualizing Special Insight

The Motivation:

After realizing calm abiding, meditate on special insight, thinking as follows: ‘All the teachings of the Buddha are perfect teachings, and they directly or indirectly reveal and lead to suchness with utmost clarity. If you understand suchness with utmost, you will be free of all the nets of wrong views, just as darkness is dispelled when light appears. Mere calm abiding meditation cannot purify pristine awareness, nor can it eliminate the darkness of obscurations. When I meditate properly on suchness with wisdom, pristine awareness will be purified. Only with wisdom can I realize suchness. Only with wisdom can I effectively eradicate obscurations. Therefore, engaging in calm abiding meditation, I shall search for suchness with wisdom. And I shall not remain content with calm abiding alone.’

What is suchness like? It is the nature of all phenomena that ultimately they are empty of the self of persons and the self of phenomena. This is realized through the perfection of wisdom and not otherwise. *The Unraveling of the Thought Sutra* reads, “O Tathagatha, by which perfection do Bodhisattvas apprehend the identitylessness of phenomena?” “Avalokiteshvara, it is apprehended by the perfection of wisdom.” Therefore, meditate on wisdom while engaging in calm abiding.

Meditation on the Selflessness of Persons:

Yogis should analyze in the following manner: a person is not observed as separate from the mental and physical aggregates, the elements and sense powers. Nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent. Others have imputed the person as permanent and single. The person as a phenomena cannot exist except as one or many, because there is no other way of existing. Therefore, we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly “I” and “mine” is wholly mistaken.

Meditation on the Selflessness of Phenomena:

Discriminating the Identity of Things: Meditation on the selflessness of phenomena should also be done in the following manner: phenomena, in short, are included under the five aggregates, the twelve sources of perception, and the eighteen elements. The physical aspects of the aggregates, sources of perception, and elements are, in the ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is because when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity can be found.

Discriminating the Identity of the Mind: In the ultimate sense, the mind too cannot be real. How can the mind that apprehends only the false nature of physical form and so forth, and appears in various aspects, be real? Just as physical forms and so forth are false, since the

mind does not exist separately from physical forms and so forth, which are false, it too is false. Just as physical forms and so forth possess various aspects, and their identities are neither one nor many, similarly, since the mind is not different from them, its identity too is neither one nor many. Therefore, the mind by nature is like an illusion.

Investigating their Nature: Analyze that, just like the mind, the nature of all phenomena, too, is like an illusion. In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense [1] it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. [2] Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor that of the present, is perceived. [3] When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical.

Resting in Not Finding:

If you ask, "What is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical?" *The Heap of Jewels* states: "O Kashyapa, when the mind is thoroughly sought, it cannot be found. What is not found cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present." Through such analysis, the beginning of the mind is ultimately not seen, the end of the mind is ultimately not seen, and the middle of the mind is ultimately not seen. All phenomena should be understood as lacking an end and a middle, just as the mind does not have an end or a middle. With the knowledge that the mind is without an end or a middle, no identity of the mind is perceived. What is thoroughly realized by the mind, too, is realized as being empty. By realizing that, the very identity, which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, and so forth, is also ultimately not perceived.

Conclusion: In this way, when the person does not ultimately see the identity of all phenomena through wisdom, he will not analyze whether physical form is permanent or impermanent, empty or not empty, contaminated or not contaminated, produced or non-produced, and existent or non-existent. Just as physical form is not examined, similarly feeling, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness are not examined. When the object does not exist, its characteristics also cannot exist. So how can they be examined? In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized.

The Necessity of this Meditation:

Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way.

The Cloud of Jewels also states, "One skilled in discerning the faults engages in the yoga of meditation on emptiness in order to get rid of all conceptual elaborations. Such a person, due to his repeated meditation on emptiness, when he thoroughly searches for the object and the identity of the object, which delights the mind and distracts it, realizes them to be empty. When that very mind is also examined, it is realized to be empty. When the identity of what

is realized by this mind is thoroughly sought, this too is realized as empty. Realizing in this way one enters into the yoga of signlessness." This shows that only those who have engaged in complete analysis can enter into the yoga of signlessness.

It has been explained very clearly that through mere elimination of mental activity, without examining the identity of things with wisdom, it is not possible to engage in non-conceptual meditation. Thus, concentration is done after the actual identify of things like physical form and so forth has been perfectly analyzed with wisdom, and not by concentrating on physical forms and so forth. Concentration is also not done by abiding between this world and the world beyond, because physical forms and so forth are not perceived. It is thus called the non-abiding concentration.

[Such a practitioner] is then called a meditator of supreme wisdom, because by specifically examining the identity of all things with wisdom he has perceived nothing. This is as stated in *The Space Treasure Sutra* and *The Jewel in the Crown Sutra*, and so forth.

Working with Obstacles to this Meditation:

In this way, by entering into the suchness of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, you are free from concepts and analysis because there is nothing to be thoroughly examined and observed. You are free from expression, and with single-pointed mental engagement you automatically enter into meditation without exertion. Thus, you very clearly meditate on suchness and abide in it. While abiding in that meditation, the continuity of the mind should not be distracted. When the mind is distracted to external objects due to attachment, and so forth, such distraction should be noted. Quickly pacify the distraction by meditating on the repulsive aspect of such objects and swiftly replace the mind on suchness. If the mind appears to be disinclined to do that, reflecting on the advantages of single pointed concentration, meditate with delight. The disinclination should be pacified by also seeing the defects of distraction.

If the function of the mind becomes unclear and starts sinking, or when there is a risk of it sinking due to being overpowered by mental torpor or sleep, then as before, quickly attempt to overcome such dullness by focusing the mind on supremely delightful things. Then the object suchness should be held in very tight focus. At times when the mind is observed to be excited or tempted to become distracted by the memory of past events of laughter and play, then as in the earlier cases, pacify the distractions by reflecting on such things as impermanence, and so forth, which will help subdue the mind. Then, again endeavor to engage the mind on suchness without applying counter forces.

If and when the mind spontaneously engages in meditation on suchness, free of sinking and mental agitation, it should be left naturally and your efforts should be relaxed. If effort is applied when the mind is in meditative equipoise, it will distract the mind. But if effort is not applied when the mind becomes dull, it will become like a blind man due to extreme dullness and you will not achieve special insight. So, when the mind becomes dull, apply effort, and when in absorption, effort should be relaxed. When, by meditating on special insight, excessive wisdom is generated and calm abiding is weak, the mind will waver like a butter lamp in the wind and you will not perceive suchness very clearly. Therefore, at that time meditate on calm abiding. When calm abiding meditation becomes excessive, meditate on wisdom.

(All headings in italics have been added for further clarity)

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SEMINARY TRANSCRIPTS
Teachings from the Sutra Tradition ~ Book 2

The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

Edited by the Vajradhatu Editorial Group

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It is seeing the four truths. In particular, on the path of seeing, it is seeing the sixteen moments of the four truths.

Vipashyana of the Mahayana and the Vajrayana

Moving right along, the vipashyana of the *paramitayana*, the mahayana, would be seeing emptiness: seeing *all* phenomena and their emptiness, seeing their suchness. We'll get back to that. And then in the vajrayana vipashyana would be seeing the bliss quality of suchness and emptiness. We call bliss *dewa*, or *dechen*, as in "Dechen Chöling."

Now we see that there are many kinds of vipashyana: worldly vipashyana, vipashyana of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha, vipashyana of the mahayana, and vipashyana of the vajrayana. When we're sitting, first we need to realize what kind of vipashyana we are doing. We can't just do "general vipashyana." That's difficult. We could say, "I am trying to practice the worldly vipashyana of understanding the coarse and subtle qualities of samsara, and the aspects of treading on the path." Or we could be looking at the coarse mindset of the form realm and the advantageous qualities of beings in a higher concentration. Are we doing that kind of meditation—which in itself is very helpful? Or are we trying to practice the insight of seeing the four truths, realizing the implications of suffering, origin, cessation, and true paths? Or are we in the mahayana, trying to see the nature of phenomena as emptiness? Or are we trying to look even further at the notion of emptiness, and seeing its bliss and luminosity as presented in the vajrayana? Before we start doing vipashyana, we have to at least know what direction we are facing. We have to know what the view is. We need to make it very clear: when we begin the session, what is it that we're trying to do?

Work with one kind of vipashyana at a time, if you can. If you're contemplating the four reminders, the point of contemplating samsara is to bring about *ngejung*—renunciation, definite emergence. Looking at the qualities of samsara, you realize something. If you get bored halfway through and want to see the emptiness, just go back and stay with the first one. Don't wander all over the map. If you find your mind wandering and think, "I'd like to do a different vipashyana," probably it is better to do shamatha to stabilize the mind again so that you can control it, so that mind is under your own power.

So that was a brief overview of how insight happens in the various stages of the path.

HOW TO MEDITATE ON SUCHNESS

Now we will look at **how to meditate on suchness**. Here, there are two main points, both of which have to do with view and meditation. Which happens first—meditation or view? There is a whole debate on this, and we could go on about it, but basically, we are asking what is better to do. Some texts say that it's better to meditate first. Others say that it's better to first establish the view—to study and understand what's going on.

In this case, the view that we are following is the Kagyü and Nyingma view, whether we are following Jamgön Kongtrül, or Jamgön Mipham, or for that matter, Kamalashila. This view says that if we meditate without the view, we can meditate as much as we want, but we will never even get in the vicinity of suchness. In fact, we will be straying from emptiness. Therefore, we need to bring in the view, the understanding of what we are doing. This is what we've been talking about all along.

Obviously, we need both the view and meditation. Even though this is a no-brainer, we still tend to get stuck one way or the other, in meditating or studying. We start meditating and think, "All I have to do is meditate, and that will solve my problems." At other times we get into studying, thinking that will solve all the problems. In fact, we have to do both. We progress along the path through making a happy union. We can't just sit down and start meditating on suchness, on emptiness. We have to receive instruction and have a basic idea of what is going on. Otherwise, we will be endlessly confused and bewildered. If we feel that we can study, read, and contemplate, but not do the meditation, it's the same: the realization that we read about will never come to us.

So how we meditate on suchness or emptiness in the mahayana incorporates a nice balance between view and meditation, constantly going back and forth. Doing that will balance our understanding of selflessness, emptiness. Sherap will be born in us. At that point, when we have sherap, when we actually see or experience emptiness, then we have what is called *thashi trödral*, "freedom from the four extremes." Being free of the elaborations of being existent, nonexistent, neither, or both, is the best way of unifying shamatha and vipashyana.

If we're practicing vipashyana and we analyze too much, our meditation becomes destabilized. If we're doing the meditation, but we keep looking at it analytically, trying to understand what it is, the stability that we worked so hard for in shamatha decreases. The *ne*—the abiding quality of the mind—diminishes. In vipashyana practice, we have to keep bringing our mind back to the object, but that doesn't mean analyzing too much.

At the other extreme, if we have too much placement in terms of shamatha, then we won't be able to do vipashyana. It feels so good to stabilize our mind that we don't want to start poking around, applying our mind and so forth. We need to balance shamatha and vipashyana so that we have some stability, but at the same time, we aren't too sedated within our shamatha. We have enough vipashyana. Ideally, both would happen.

We've discussed how by using shamatha as the base, we have prajna. We hold our mind to the meaning and the words dissolve. What is observed and what is observing begin to dissolve, and we rest there with the meaning. Resting there with the meaning is prajna. If we're sitting and meditating, holding a certain image in our mind, and we experience insight or deepening, that is prajna, lhakthong. We're beginning to have a special sort of insight, a special way of observing. This will lead to more profound things, but in the beginning we shouldn't make it anything more complicated than that. The

process is based on shamatha—on our clearly defining and establishing the object of meditation and having real familiarity with it.

If we're bringing compassion to mind, thinking about suffering, it isn't simply that we have a heavy emotion. It's not that we feel sad, and that's compassion. Having begun to open our eyes and look at suffering, we have a response: what can we do about it? When we begin to contemplate this, we realize that suffering comes about because beings are continuously inundated with *nyönmong* and with the misunderstandings that arise from *nyönmong*. We realize that those beings could be liberated from their suffering if they could recognize the emptiness of those afflicted emotions. That is compassion, *nyingje*. *Nyingje* is noble heart. It's noble because it's willing to do something about the suffering. It isn't just going to sit there and contemplate the sadness of the situation.

Initially, this practice is just the ability to hold our mind to the word, to a phrase. Many of us find this difficult because we've been using breathing as a focus, but now we are bringing in a sentence—a sentence about compassion, for example. We realize that compassion is not just a word, but it involves the ability, the motivation to want to do something. We are trying to develop and generate a reason to act. But initially, it's going to be difficult, because we're just trying to figure out how to keep a phrase in mind. That is the shamatha part.

So we memorize the phrase, something short, and it resounds in our mind like a mantra. It keeps coming, coming, coming. It's pulsates. Mind begins to want to think about something else. It goes here and there. It begins to think, "What is compassion anyway? I'm not sure I have compassion. My mother doesn't like me." [Laughter] It goes on and on and on. Those thoughts are a distraction—whether they are true doesn't matter. We need to bring our minds back to the phrase and try to stay with the subject.

A useful traditional analogy is that of a butter lamp. The wind is blowing the flame here and there. The flame flickers, and we can't see very far. As soon as the wind stops, the flame stops flickering and illuminates a much larger space. Shamatha is stabilizing the flame, and *vipashyana* is seeing what the flame illuminates. The steadier and stronger the flame, the more clearly we can see. In the same way, if we're contemplating a phrase but our mind can't quite stay on it because it keeps moving about, then our ability to have *lhakthong* or *prajna* is going to diminish. We can experience this very straightforwardly: we bring an image to mind, but because the mind isn't stable, we can't get beyond the words. As we've said before, the breathing isn't the only thing we can use for stabilization. We can use contemplation as a way of stabilizing the mind. Developing *prajna* is based on the object of observation, whether it's internal or external.

It's all a matter of learning how to stabilize the mind. When we first sit down to practice shamatha, we notice tremendous movement in our mind. We experience this movement as discursiveness, like waves on the ocean, tossing us to and fro. The surface is in turmoil, so we can't see very deeply or far. Movement can be seen in many ways—the winds in the body are not in balance, for example. To counter movement is to bring the

mind together, to collect the mind. When the wind begins to die down, the mind becomes calmer and brighter. The brighter the mind, the more stable the mind. We have more ability to see what is going on. That's why in the first of the nine stages, the primary experience that we are trying to overcome by means of *necha*, or stability, is movement. The first act in *shamatha*, the primary act, is to have a level of stability. Stability counters movement. The less movement of mind, the stronger our *vipashyana* will be. If our mind is scattered, no matter what kind of *prajna* we try to develop, there is not a lot of light by which to see.

We have to realize that gathering the mind together and seeing with *prajna* are interdependent. *Shamatha* provides the means for the mind to be still, to have a sense of natural radiance. Within that stabilization, the mind naturally has *rang-rik*, "self-awareness." When the mind is gathered, we experience a sense of joy, wisdom, and stability. Within that experience, *prajna* arises. When the mind becomes still and gathered, *prajna* says, "Guess what I can see? I see the best thing." And what is the best thing? Depending on what kind of *vipashyana* we want to do, it could be the coarse and the subtle; it could be selflessness; it could be emptiness; it could be great bliss.

The reason for this discussion about *shamatha* being the basis, and why the mind has to be still, is that the mind itself—its own radiance, its own ability to be strong—provides the vehicle through which *prajna* can act. *Prajna* is an innate aspect of our mind that we are nurturing. There is relative *prajna* and absolute *prajna*. Absolute *prajna* is *sem-le depa*, "beyond the mind."

When we understand the view, we know what we are looking for. The more we understand, the more we read, the more we know the qualities of emptiness. We realize that emptiness is not this, not that, it's not this or this or that—on and on through the sixteen different kinds of emptiness, or the 100,000 kinds of emptiness. Within that, *prajna* tells us, "That's it," because *prajna* has enough light to be able to see: "This aspect suits the element that I've been looking for." Just looking for one element is fine. In the beginning, trying to recognize the complete emptiness, nonduality, the inseparability of form and emptiness, is too much.

It isn't just that we've become distracted, and that if we weren't distracted we would have *vipashyana*. The mind has been dissipated, and we need to gather it back. Within this context, what consciousness are we using for *sherap*, or what consciousness are we using for *vipashyana*? We are using the sixth consciousness. There are the five sense consciousnesses and the sixth consciousness. The seventh and eighth are the basis of those other consciousnesses. How does one develop *sherap*, or *lhakthong*? Is it through sight consciousness? Is it through smell consciousness? Is it through feeling consciousness? Through taste, sound, smell, touch? When we're sitting, we tend to be visually oriented. So when we think *vipashyana*, *lhakthong*, *sherap*, we think, "Oh, I've got to look around the room. [Laughter] Then I'm really going to see emptiness." [Picks up fan and examines it closely] "Oh, there it is! It's hiding in there!" [Laughter] That's not it.

How does one develop a higher seeing based on the strength of the mind developed in calm abiding, in shi-ne? How does one develop this transcendental knowledge? Where does that mind come from? Does it come from the five sense consciousnesses? No. Does it come from the external consciousness? No. It comes from the sixth consciousness, the mind consciousness. The most important aspect of prajna is the sixth consciousness. However, when we are experiencing emptiness, we may use the eye consciousness as a base. Sometimes it's helpful to look at a flower or a tree, or to do an exercise of pulling things apart and observing, "I know it's there, but when I pull away the parts, they're just parts. Yet they make a whole," and so forth. In that case, the visual object is just like a word transmitting a certain message and meaning to the sixth consciousness, to our mind. It is the mind that is going to see, but not in terms of our eyes. The bodhisattva on the first bhumi doesn't use his eyes. In nyamshak, meditative equipoise on the first bhumi, the eyes are not engaged at all.

It's important to learn how to use the eyes in meditation. In shamatha, having the eyes open while the gaze is directed downward is important. One of the main reasons for keeping the eyes open is so that we don't fall asleep. You almost have to be able to *not look* and still have your eyes open. Often we talk about the eyes looking back at themselves. If you can do that, then you can maintain mindfulness. Otherwise, [snaps fingers] it's very easy to get distracted. So in this case there is nothing particularly profound about having the eyes open. It prevents us from falling asleep. Sometimes that doesn't work either. [Laughter] That's why, if we're doing shamatha and we're sleepy, we can raise our gaze, open our eyes wider, or pinch ourselves—whatever it takes.

However, sometimes it's helpful to close your eyes, especially if you're meditating on compassion or the four reminders, because we tend to get visually distracted. You can gather your mind, close your eyes, and bring that thought in, as long as you maintain your mindfulness and don't fall asleep.

How do kleshas begin to happen? One of the ways is *immediacy*. What is immediate? The senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, so forth. They are immediate because mind has habituated itself so that any sensory stimulus *immediately* leads to nyönmong. Leading to nyönmong means leading to distraction and weakening of the mind. Unless we are incredible meditators, with such mastery over our sense consciousnesses that they do not affect us in any way, our sense consciousnesses naturally get stimulated into producing passion, aggression, ignorance, and bewilderment just by contact. For most of us, just by contact, ignorance is born immediately, and the other kleshas come right along. Knowing that this is the case is the importance of understanding the nidanas. Even if we have our eyes open, we're fighting an uphill battle, we are swimming upstream.

In the process of shamatha, once we find the sixth consciousness, we gather all the other consciousnesses and bind them. We're binding them so that they aren't distracted externally. We're reducing the stimuli. It's the same as going into retreat so you're not distracted. If we're "retreating" in a house with all our friends running around, it's

going to be hard to practice. We see something, we smell something, or we overhear a conversation, and we want to jump up and engage. If we're removed from distractions, it's easier to begin to settle into ourselves.

Pulling in the mind is not so much retreating from the world but binding the consciousnesses together. This is the same notion as *dompa*—"vow" or "binding." When we take a vow, we bind our mind to something. If we are not killing or not stealing—any of the precepts—that is what we bind our mind to. What does that mean? We have gathered our mind, and it is *bound* to that situation, so that it becomes the way our mind works, the road our mind follows. The sixth consciousness is there, and sherap is there; higher knowledge is taking place. So it is within the mind consciousness that sherap and lhakthong begin to see. Seeing here has to do with personal, direct experience—which also emphasizes meaning. Meaning and seeing are the same thing. As we discussed in the four close placements of mindfulness, rang-rik is able, simultaneously and without duality, to experience the same thing that the sense consciousness sees. The gathered mind is not an isolated mind; it knows what's going on.

We are able to bind the consciousnesses when we hold the mind in an unwavering way. In the mahayana, when we begin to do this in suchness or emptiness meditation, we bring an object to mind. For example, if we visualize Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche appears to our mind. That appearance—the colors, the shapes and so forth—is developing mindfulness. It is an object on which our mind is based. The clarity of the visualization and its strength, stability, and power all have to do with shamatha.

If we are progressing in our vipashyana discipline, then that visualization is very potent. It feels as though the image is literally in front of us. It's not flickering. Again, we are not seeing it with our eyes, which are probably closed. It appears to the mind vividly, as in a dream. We have to bring that level of clarity to the visualization. Within that, we apply vipashyana, and what does vipashyana see? In *nyamshak*, or meditative equipoise, it looks at that visualization and sees it as inherently empty. It is apparent, yet it is empty.

So we have stability of mind and we have our mikpa—our object of observation, which is Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava. We are bringing that to the mind. The details of the imagery all represent something. The inner garment of Padmasambhava is white, which represents the inner armor, or protection of bodhichitta. That is mindfulness, simply knowing what we are observing. That is known as *dag-dren*—*dag* meaning "purity," and *dren* meaning "mindfulness." *Dag-dren* is "mindfulness of purity," mindfulness of the *true meaning* of the visualization.

As you recall, a quality of mindfulness is *familiarity*. "Familiarity" here means that the mind knows intimately what it is visualizing. Familiarity doesn't think, "It's just some eighth century Indian guy wearing robes. It's very clear, but I'm not sure what I'm doing here meditating on him!" [Laughter] Familiarity means, "This represents something. I'm meditating in this way." Familiarity has the ability to know what the vajra means, what the skull cup means, what the different garments mean, and even the posture

TALK THREE

and the gestures—whether the hand is high or low. All these things have meaning. It is symbolism, and there is a meaning behind it. By holding our mind to the image, we eventually get to the meaning. We realize, “Bodhichitta, the sun, the moon, everything—symbolizes tongpanyi, emptiness. It all represents dharmata.”

With our eyes closed, Padmasambhava literally appears before us, and we know what every single thing means, we know their implications. Sherap looks at that and says: “The meaning of the whole thing is emptiness.” Right then we connect, because we have been doing this for a while, and we understand sherap—the highest quality, the most profound quality, the best quality—of this particular visualization. What is that? It is emptiness. What is the purpose of Guru Rinpoche being present? To understand the nature of phenomena as tongpanyi, emptiness. The visualization is very clear and present. However, now the visualization—the appearance—and the meaning are coming together. This point is known as **appearance-emptiness**, or “apparent emptiness.” This is a stage in developing sherap, or prajna. The visualization is apparent in the sense that we can see it, and we get the meaning, too. The words and the meaning are coming together, and we hold our mind to that. We hold our mind and remain with the visualization, and we are in nyamshak. At that point—we are moving along quickly here in terms of our experience—we’ve gone through the nine stages. This is all in accordance with Asanga’s text, *Ngönpa Köndü, The Compendium of Knowledge*. I want to make clear that this is just mahayana—and I do not say “just” lightly; we should be so “just.”

What happens next? At a certain point, the visualization dissolves. The apparent nature vanishes, and we are left with is raw emptiness. This is not jethop, or postmeditation; this is within meditative equipoise. At that point our mind enters into emptiness. It is like entering space, a spacelike yoga.

In terms of the path, where are we? We are not at the path of seeing. We are probably at the path of accumulation, or somewhere near there. Even though this has a magical quality, what is taking place is simply the further strengthening of shamatha and vipashyana. The mind is becoming even *more* stable, and prajna can see even more—far beyond the image that was brought to mind. So what is happening is that first it was the words, then came the meaning, and then the words and meaning were together. Then the words disappeared. But the *essence* of the word, which is emptiness, remains. Sometimes we talk about this as “nonconceptuality.”

It is said that when you reach a certain level of shamatha, all of a sudden things disappear. That vanishing happens in the context of duality. The mind is so calm, stable, and precise that it can see intrinsically and materially that things aren’t as solid as they appear. That seeing is prajna. It almost seems as if things disappear because we are now a little more in accordance with the way things appear. They appear because there is a movement of energy, and when we bind that movement of energy together, we get seemingly solid form. When the mind is stable, it begins to see irreducible particles, physical entities at their most basic level. And things disappear. At that stage of

meditation we see the nature of those things, we see the nature of thoughts, and therefore the misconception of things appearing dissolves or vanishes.

The notion of emptiness here is **like space**. There is no infringement, no impediment in terms of motion. When we experience emptiness directly, we begin to feel that *everything* is empty. If I experience the emptiness of the Chapstick, then can I see the emptiness of the cup lid? Of course, because the emptiness in this and that is the same. Otherwise it would be a long journey, [laughter] and as we know it's already pretty long! [Laughter] So the notion of space is a lack of infringement. We are no longer bound. We are no longer seeing the individual character of things. When I see the individual character of this [holds up fan], I see its shape and color. I also realize that its most important quality is emptiness. Then I look at the individual character of this [holds up cup lid], and I see the shapes of this and this [holds fan in one hand and lid in other hand]. It's going to take time for me to become familiar with the individual characters of this and that, and then something else. But we are going for the emptiness quality.

From the meditative point of view we're observing something—the Guru Rinpoche visualization—and at some point whatever was apprehended is no longer apprehended. We see its nature as emptiness. More and more we begin to see that as a quality of being free, in terms of space. We have the object, we use sherap to see the appearance nature, and all of a sudden the image dissolves, and we are naked in terms of emptiness. The next stage is that the individual who is meditating on the emptiness begins to dissolve. The object dissolves; the meditator dissolves; and what's more, the sherap itself dissolves.

Our practice of vipashyana—the notion of application and engagement—warms up our sherap. It's like taking two sticks and rubbing them together. When enough friction builds up, we have heat, then fire, which consumes the sticks. The fire is prajna, which consumes both the meditator and the object of meditation. The whole thing burns, and what we're left with is sherap, higher knowledge. Eventually, the fire dies down, and there is just smoke. Then the smoke dissolves, and we don't have anything at all.

It's a stage-by-stage process. First we stabilize our mind; therefore we can bring these images to mind and get to the point where we can see the emptiness beyond the form. Then *that* begins to dissolve. The prajna turns in on itself. Prajna asks, "Who is this individual, and where does this mind come from that's having this experience of emptiness? Where does this wisdom reside?" In that sense, prajna itself is liberated. That's why it's important to understand the nature of the practice we're doing, no matter what it is. If we understand the nature of one deity practice, we will understand them all. We don't have to practice every single one.

Understanding this process isn't that difficult, but doing it is another thing. So at this point, we'll do a series of contemplations. We can start with any of the kleshas. If we bring up anger or hatred, thinking, "I'm angry," we think, "Where is that thought coming from?" We could say, "I already know that it comes from nowhere and goes nowhere and resides nowhere." But that would be like knowing the directions to get to RMSC but never

Full-Stop Mind



The late Burmese teacher Mahasi Sayadaw helped to revitalize the Vipassana tradition with his precise teachings on meditation. His student **Bhante Bodhidhamma** presents Mahasi's simple and direct method for slowing down and ultimately halting conceptual thinking.

CHLOROPHYLL PRINTS BY BINH DANH

IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN 2,500 YEARS since the Buddha first expounded the teachings. Throughout history, the teachings, the dhamma,

BHANTE BODHIDHAMMA IS A BRITISH THERAVADIN MONK TRAINED IN THE TRADITION OF MAHASI SAYADAW. HE IS A FORMER RESIDENT TEACHER OF GAIA HOUSE MEDITATION CENTRE IN DEVON, ENGLAND, AND CURRENTLY THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR OF SATIPANYA BUDDHIST TRUST, WHICH IS IN THE PROCESS OF RAISING FUNDS TO SET UP A MAHASI MEDITATION CENTER IN WALES.

have at times lost their vitality. But reformation movements—some large, some small—have always helped to revive them. In Theravadan Buddhist countries, the Burmese teacher Mahasi Sayadaw has been credited widely with bringing new insight to the practice of vipassana. His system demands a total dedication to keeping the attention inward, from the moment of waking until the end of the day. The three characteristics of Mahasi's technique are observing the breath at the abdomen, noting, and going very slowly.

The Mahasi vipassana technique has the power to guide a meditator through the classic stages of the insight knowledges, which lead to the first direct experience of nibbana, known as stream-entry.

OBSERVING THE BREATH AT THE ABDOMEN

In vipassana meditation we observe the breath, or rather the sensations caused by breathing, in order to concentrate moment to moment. Because the breath is a neutral object, this practice effectively calms the heart-mind. There are several places where meditators feel the sensation of breathing, and they vary from person to person. Some feel it more at the nostrils or upper lip, others in the rising and falling of the chest, and still others in the abdomen. In terms of vipassana meditation, observing the breath at any of these places is a valid practice.

Mahasi, however, favored observing the sensations of the breath at the abdomen, in part because it is related to slow walking. Just as we observe and experience the foot rising and falling, so we experience the abdomen rising and falling. With awareness of the breath in the abdomen, for the better part of the day a meditator can observe the characteristic of transience in a very obvious way. Observing transience or impermanence (*anicca*) is one of the ways in which the Buddha asks us to investigate ourselves. Is there anything we experience that is not impermanent? The other two avenues of investigation are observing dissatisfaction (*dukkha*) and not-self (*anatta*). According to the Buddha, our insights into these three characteristics of existence can lead to liberation from all suffering.

The second reason Mahasi favored focusing on sensations at the abdomen is that when we concentrate on the breath at the nostrils, we tend to lose contact with the body. That is why observing the breath at the nostrils is a popular and effective way of achieving those higher states of concentration known as the absorptions, or *jhanas*. But in absorption, there is a danger. When concentration

locks one-pointedly on a single object, the effect is to suppress everything else. Such focus stops the process of purifying the heart, which is our emotional life. This is not to say that deep concentration practice cannot go hand-in-hand with vipassana. Indeed, such practice is well supported in the Buddha's *Discourse on How to Establish Mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 10)*. But Mahasi espoused the direct path of vipassana only (*ekayano maggo*).

The Mahasi technique does not preclude observing the breath at the nostrils. Although Mahasi preferred the abdomen as a place of primary observation, he did not ban anyone from observing sensations at the nostrils. However, when we center our attention instead on the abdomen or chest (when the breath is shallow), we remain in closer contact with body. This is an important element, as our emotions, moods, and other mental states express themselves through the body, often as blocks or aches and pains or even as raw emotion. Allowing mental turbulence to express itself within consciousness and bearing it patiently in meditation is how we burn it off. This is the psychotherapeutic effect of vipassana.

NOTING

Noting is the second component of the vipassana technique that Mahasi Sayadaw taught. Paradoxically, the result of noting is that it takes a meditator beyond thinking. It is not an end in itself. The Buddha taught that there are two stages of concentrated thought before full concentration is established. The first is a simple noting or naming of the object. This act of labeling, *vitakka*, whereby the attention is pointed at the object, is

(Opposite) *Burning Leaf*, 2002
Chlorophyll print and resin

When thinking stops,
true vipassana
consciousness, right
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Our intuitive intelligence,
free of the distortion
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understand and see
things as they are.

likened to a bee flying toward a flower. The label encapsulates the whole experience. In children just beginning to speak, this process is very obvious and simplistic. They rejoice at being able to name an object—“Car! Car!” At their level of linguistic development, the word “car” simply points to the object. There’s not much thought around the word, since language itself, which allows us to think about an object, is not that developed yet.

For adults, the word “car” conjures up a host of memories and desires. We are thinking *about* an object, which is known as proliferation (*papañca*). Thinking and daydreaming serve to keep our attention off the presenting object and distract the mind. The Buddha likened this thinking mind to a monkey that jumps from branch to branch. We have to rein the monkey in. Shrinking thought down to a single word is the preliminary effort. At this stage the meditator has to keep pulling the attention out of wandering and into observing. That’s what training with a technique is all about: reconditioning consciousness to be present and attentive to what’s happening now.

Noting is an acknowledgement of what the body, heart, and mind are doing. For it to be effective, it has to be practiced with precision. For example, on waking from a fantasy, there is the first note: we recognize that we are arguing, planning, or lusting. Then there is further noting, which acknowledges what we are obsessing about. In the same way, if a sensation or feeling arises in the body, the first note is recognition, and the second and all subsequent notes are acknowledgements of what is really happening now. The attention is placed not on the word but on the experience: the feeling of a sensation, the feeling of an emotion. It is as though the intuitive intelligence sees *through* the word, experiencing the sensation or emotion directly. In this way conceptual thinking is brought into the service of intuitive intelligence, rather than continuing to obscure it.

We tend to be confused about this original intuitive intelligence. The activities of our body, mind, and heart—sensations, thoughts, and emotions—make us think there is a “me.” This mistaken identity, which the Buddha referred to as the self, *atta* (*atman* in Sanskrit), is the root of our problem. The Buddha’s teaching of not-self, *anatta* (*anatman*), encourages us to develop the understanding that anything we experience that arises

and passes away cannot be a “me.” Nor can it be possessed or made “mine.” Recognizing that our experience is neither me nor mine allows our intuitive intelligence to realize its own true nature.

Thought itself can be split into two categories, conceptualizing and image-making. For example, with our attention on the breath, as we practice noting, we have a concept of rising and falling and also a mental image of the abdomen. We do not try to destroy or obliterate the concept or the image. We just keep pointing our attention to the feeling of movement. As our attention to the sensation grows in strength, eventually it will take all the energy out of thinking until all that remains is the noting word.

Now we have reached the second stage of development, *vicara*. We are still noting, but instead of wandering off, our attention stays on the object. This second stage of developing right concentration is likened to a bee landing on a flower and gathering the pollen. If we continue to note, increasing our attention on the object and really feeling those sensations as they arise and pass away, all the energy will be drawn out of the thinking mind. It will stop.

Thinking is an attempt to categorize. We see what we experience in light of what has happened in the past. And what we have experienced in the past is filtered through the way we look at things now, our dispositions (*sankhara*). That is why conceptual thought will not allow us to see things anew. If we want to experience things as they are, conceptual thinking about those things must come to an end. When thinking stops, we are right there with what is happening. It is at that point that true vipassana consciousness, *samma sati*, right awareness, arises. Our intuitive intelligence, *pañña*, free of the distortion of thought and image, can finally begin to understand and see things as they are (*ñānadassana-yatha-bhutam*).

We don’t have to worry about when to stop the noting. Once we have arrived at a high enough level of awareness and concentration, it will just stop. Such moments of pure vipassana, known as *khanika samadhi*, are usually of very short duration, but they have great potential for insight. With consistent practice, our experience eventually lengthens into a moment-to-moment concentrated awareness. Unlike absorption concentration (*arambana samadhi*), this state does not depend on



a single object. It takes anything that arises within the mind—sensation, emotion, or thought—as its object, but for the purpose of seeing the three characteristics of existence (*lakkhana samadhi*). In other words, the concentration in vipassana is only there to support awareness (*sati*) and intuitive intelligence (*pañña*). This steady focus on and exploration of impermanence, dissatisfaction, and not-self are what finally lead us to liberation.

Some meditators have difficulty with noting. For instance, they might experience the word as very loud, which dominates their practice. This is simply a symptom that conceptual thinking is blocking intuitive intelligence. By patiently placing the attention on feelings, that intelligence will extricate itself from the conceptual mind. This new way of experiencing the world is often quite a discovery. Another common difficulty is finding the right word. We get caught in looking for just the word, as if we are writing a poem. But the simplest word, such as “feeling,” will do.

The activity of noting, of course, is not limited to the sitting posture. In the Mahasi technique we practice it continuously, from the moment we wake up until the moment we fall asleep. We abandon all hierarchy, thinking that sitting is more important than walking, which is more important than eating, and so on. The practice requires noting the day’s most seemingly insignificant actions, such as opening a door.

Not only do we note sensations, emotions, wandering mind, and actions but also that category of thought that we experience as intention. An intention is thought laced with desire. It is the instigator of all actions of body, speech, and thought. Not all

MAHASI SAYADAW'S MISSION

The teachings of the revolutionary Burmese teacher Mahasi Sayadaw influenced people throughout the world to take up Buddhist meditation and helped to revive the tradition in his own country. Born U Sobhana Mahathera in 1904 in Upper Burma, he became a monk as a youth and completed the traditional studies with notable diligence and skill. Upon returning to his hometown, Seikkhun, he became the abbot of the monastery known as Mahasi, “The Big Drum.” In Burma (Myanmar), monks are often referred to by the name of the place where they were born or where they live. *Sayadaw* is an honorific that means “royal teacher.”

After World War II, some high-ranking figures, including the prime minister, U Nu, went looking for a teacher to start a meditation center in Rangoon (Yangon). The center was to be not just a monastery but also a place where laypeople would be able to practice vipassana. This was somewhat revolutionary, since it had been generally presumed that only monastics could gain anything from meditation. Indeed, a special quality of today’s Mahasi centers is that there are lay teachers and lay practitioners. Also, since many of the centers are within the city or town boundaries, they are easily accessible to laypeople.

In 1947, Mahasi Sayadaw began to teach a technique that he had developed through his own renowned teacher, U Narada, who was known as the Mingun Jetawun Sayadaw. The technique has three main characteristics: observing the breath at the abdomen, noting, and going very slowly.

Mahasi was a highly respected scholar. As a young man he had passed *dhammacariya* (“teacher of the dhamma”) examination with distinction. At the Sixth Buddhist Council in 1945, when all the texts were reviewed and for the first time all the commentaries were edited, Mahasi Sayadaw was chosen as the *pucchaka* (questioner) and *osana* (final editor) of the texts.

Although he was a scholar, he was not one to confuse intellectual understanding with true experiential insight, and he put his insight to work in the service of the dhamma. He wrote many books on dhamma, but his opening talk to beginners, “Satipatthana Vipassana: Discourse on the Basic Practice of the Application of Mindfulness,” remains the best introduction to his system. A more detailed description of the practice can be found in his book *Practical Insight Meditation*.

During his lifetime (he died in 1982), Mahasi toured and taught in Southeast Asia, the United States, and Europe. In Britain, he taught courses at the Oakenholt center near Oxford, owned by a Burmese family, the Saws. His chief disciples, Sayadaw U Janaka and Sayadaw U Pandita, also taught there. Unfortunately, when the Saw family had to sell Oakenholt due to the passing of Mr. Saw, the impetus faded. However, there are now city viharas in London and Manchester where Mahasi monks live and teach this system. The Satipanya Buddhist Trust is hoping to generate enough support to establish a Mahasi meditation center and carry on Mahasi Sayadaw’s work.

—Bhante Bodhidhamma

NOW APPEARING, NOW VANISHING

Selected teachings by Mahasi Sayadaw

INITIAL DOUBT

Some people who have never meditated may have some doubt, and no wonder! For only seeing is believing, and their scepticism is due to their lack of experience. I myself was a sceptic at one time. I did not then like the Satipatthana method as it makes no mention of *nama* (mind), *rupa* (body), *anicca* (impermanence), *anatta* (no-self), and so forth. But the Sayadaw who taught the method was a learned monk, and so I decided to give it a trial. At first I made little progress because I still had a lingering doubt about the method, which in my view had nothing to do with ultimate reality.

It was only later on when I had followed the method seriously that its significance dawned on me. I realized then that it is the best method of meditation since it calls for attentiveness to everything that is to be known, leaving no room for absent-mindedness. So the Buddha describes the Satipatthana method as the only way.

—Discourse on *The Dwellings of the Noble Ones* (Ariyavasa Sutta)

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MEDITATOR

To develop mindfulness and gain insight-knowledge, the following points must be borne in mind:

Recognize correctly all physical behaviour as it arises.

Recognize correctly all mental behaviour as it arises.

Recognize every feeling, pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent, as it arises.

Know, with an analytical mind, every mental object as it arises.

—Discourse on *To Nibbana via the Noble Eightfold Path*

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING

Watch a flash of lightning. If you watch it at the moment lightning strikes, you will see it for yourself. If you are imagining in your mind how lightning strikes before or after the event, you may not be regarded as having seen the flash of lightning. So try to know things for yourself by actual observation of things as they happen.

—Discourse on *To Nibbana via the Noble Eightfold Path*

BECOMING AND DISSOLUTION

A bubble bursts soon after it has been formed. A mirage conjures up an image of reality that disappears on close examination. There is absolutely no substance in either of them. This is common knowledge. As we know their true nature, so also must we know the true nature of phenomena. When a meditator acquires knowledge of concentration through the observance of the dissolution of the aggregates (*khandha*), he will discover that the known object and the knowing mind are all in a state of flux, now appearing, now vanishing. They are transitory. There is no essence or substance in them worthy to be named “mine.” They signify only the processes of becoming and dissolution.

—Discourse on *The Burden* (Bhara Sutta)

desires are unskillful. To note an intention gives us the time to acknowledge it as either wholesome or unwholesome. It gives us the opportunity to let go of those intentions that we discern as leading to dissatisfaction and empower those that will lead to contentment, such as the desire to meditate.

Our discernment is rooted in the understanding of *kamma* (karma). The Buddha calls *kamma* the will (*cetana*). Will is the power to take something out of the realm of the potential and to actualize it. To realize an intention, we have to empower it. If we stand up and note our intention to walk, the foot will move, because will has translated that intention into an action, committing an act of *kamma*. When repeated, these actions create our habits. What we consider to be our personality is only a collection of habits that are driving us to our destiny. That is why noting intentions is such an essential component of progress toward liberation.

The technique of noting, then, is a contrivance we use to begin to train the attention to stay on the presenting object and, more importantly, to trick the intellect into coming to a full stop. All that conceptual thinking is distorting the way the intuitive mind sees. Intellect knows only by way of categories, memory, and concepts. When we halt that process of conceiving and keep perception in its simplest form at the point of contact, this intuitive intelligence sees everything again as a child but with a meditator's understanding. Because we have primed that intelligence to observe the three characteristics, it can liberate itself from the delusion of mistaken identity and its possession of the psychophysical organism. This body, this heart, this mind, is not me, not mine, and do not in themselves constitute a self.

GOING SLOWLY

In the *Discourse on How to Establish Mindfulness*, the Buddha discusses mindfully doing such things as looking, dressing, grooming, eating, and so on. Performing these actions slowly and deliberately sharpens our attentiveness and makes "the



The technique of noting is a contrivance we use to train the attention to stay on the presenting object and trick the intellect into coming to a full stop.

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Chlorophyll print and resin

way things are" easier to perceive, much like slowing down a film. As we slow down a film, we see things we don't usually see, like the flick of a frog's tongue as it catches a fly. In the same way, the more we slow down movement, the more easily we perceive how the body, heart, and mind interact.

PROGRESS OF INSIGHT

The Mahasi vipassana technique has the power to guide a meditator through the classic stages of the insight knowledges (*vipassana ñāṇa*). These are the insights that lead to the first direct experience of *nibbana*, known as stream-entry (*sotapanna*). In the Theravada system, the whole process is repeated four times to attain the path and fruit of the once-returner (*sakadagami*), the non-returner (*anagami*), and the *arahat*, or enlightened being. Mahasi explains this process in clear detail in his book *The Progress of Insight*. **BD**

TREASURY of PRECIOUS QUALITIES

A COMMENTARY ON THE ROOT TEXT
OF JIGME LINGPA
ENTITLED

The Quintessence of the Three Paths

by Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche
Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group
Forewords by H. H. the Dalai Lama
and Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche



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ible faith: the commitment not to forsake the object of refuge even at the cost of one's life.⁶⁶

The causes of faith

There are many factors able to instill faith in the mind or to intensify it where it already exists. All, however, may be summarized in four crucial circumstances. First is attendance on an authentic spiritual master; second is association with wholesome friends; third is mindfulness of the qualities of the Three Jewels; and fourth is reflection on the miseries of the round of existence, so bereft of meaning and sense, and the ruin of this and future lives. Thoughts like these give rise to a determination to leave samsara, and a natural and authentic faith comes into being.

The qualities of the Buddha

The qualities of the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Buddhas are like an inexhaustible array of ornaments. It is said in the *Samadhiraja-sutra* that if one were to live for as many kalpas as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, one would still not have sufficient time to praise the wisdom qualities of a single hair of a Buddha's body.

THE QUALITIES OF ELIMINATION

The ultimate qualities of elimination are attained when the emotional and cognitive obscurations are overcome by the two kinds of wisdom generated on the paths of seeing and meditation.

The one hundred and twelve obscurations eliminated on the path of seeing

The different categories of obscurations to be thus eliminated may be outlined as follows. As it is said in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*:

One hundred and twelve things are driven out by seeing.

Desire and wrath, pride, ignorance and doubt,

The transitory composite, the extreme and the false,

To hold one's view as best, to hold one's discipline as best—

Of these root obscurations driven out by seeing,
Five are views, the other five are not.

These ten run counter to the noble truths,

Five directly so:

The view of "transitory composite,"

The "extreme" and "false" views,

And with them, ignorance and doubt.

The conditioning power of anger undermines the noble truths

And four things indirectly counter them.

Though all these ten are found in regions of desire,

There is no anger in the form and formless realms.

One hundred and twelve things we therefore count.

This may be explained as follows. One hundred and twelve obscurations are eliminated by seeing. Ten of these are root obscurations, and of these, five are views and five are not views. Those that are not views are the emotions of attachment, anger, pride, confusion, and doubt. Those that are views, or opinions, are the view of the transitory composite (the belief in an "I"), the view of extremes, wrong views, the view of doctrinal superiority, and the view of ethical superiority.* In the realm of desire, these ten factors are detrimental to each of the four truths, thus making forty factors to be eliminated. In the form and formless realms, anger does not occur, with the result that here only nine factors run counter to the four truths. This makes twice thirty-six, or seventy-two items. Add to this the previous forty elements and the total comes to one hundred and twelve obscurations eliminated through seeing.

How the obscurations militate against the understanding of the four truths

The three views and the two nonviews that run directly counter to an understanding of the four truths act in the following way. The *view of the transitory composite* asserts the four truths in terms of "I" and "mine."⁶⁷ The *view of extremes* is the belief that this self is either permanently existent or completely annihilated at death. *Wrong view* will simply deny the law of karma (among other things). The "nonview" of *ignorance* will

* See appendix 4, p. 291

simply not know what the four truths signify, while *doubt* will hesitate over them and question their veracity. All these factors jeopardize a proper understanding of the four truths, and because they do so, unless prevented by other extraneous factors, they are regarded as directly running counter to them.

Two nonviews and two views are indirectly injurious. Of the former, *attachment* clings to the mistaken views mentioned in the previous paragraph, and through *pride* the mind arrogantly persists in its erroneous opinion. The *view of doctrinal superiority* regards false teachings as superior, while the *view of ethical superiority* will consider these erroneous ideas, together with all connected disciplines, as effective means to liberation. Running counter to an understanding of the four truths, these four factors are based on *wrong view*, and the latter is therefore seen as interposing itself between the truths and the factors themselves. It is for this reason that these factors are said to run counter to the four truths indirectly.

Anger, as the verse says, is generally detrimental on account of its conditioning power. For in addition to holding erroneous views, people may well be irritated when others disagree with them. When this happens, their anger is not, of course, directed at the four truths or their own view. Consequently, anger is regarded as inimical to the four truths only by its conditioning power.*

There are a few subtle differences in the way these factors run counter to the truths of cessation and path.⁶⁸ One should, moreover, be familiar with the systems† that teach that cessation involves the complete destruction of the mindstream and that the path is the process that brings this about.

The four hundred and fourteen obscurations eliminated on the path of meditation

It is said:

Craving, anger, pride, stupidity,
The transitory composite,

* In other words, by the negative effect it has on the general situation and the process of understanding.

† I.e., the Hinayana.

And extreme views: these six

Are driven out by meditation.

Within Desire all six are found,

While Form and Formless realms have only five.

Arranged by level and intensity,

Four hundred and fourteen obscurations thus are numbered.

As this quotation shows, there are six root obscurations eliminated by meditation. These are attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, the view of the transitory composite, and the view of extremes. If these are calculated according to the three realms of existence, they come to a total of sixteen—in the desire realm, there are six obscurations, while in the form and formless realms, where anger does not occur, there are five apiece. Alternatively, if these obscurations are categorized according to the levels of mundane existence, there are six for the desire realm, five in each of the four levels of samadhi in the form realm (i.e., twenty all together), and five in each of the four levels of the formless realm (again twenty). By adding them together, this comes to forty-six obscurations. According to intensity, each of these forty-six can be further broken down into nine subdivisions. This comes to a grand total of four hundred and fourteen obscurations. Moreover, the five obscurations, discounting anger, can be categorized according to a system of nine mundane levels and nine degrees of intensity. This comes to four hundred and five, and, with the nine degrees of anger in the desire realm, we again have a total of four hundred and fourteen.

Within the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness, there are nine mundane levels. The first of these levels corresponds to the whole of the desire realm, while the remaining eight comprise the four samadhis of the form realm and the four levels of the formless realms (Infinite Space, Infinite Consciousness, Utter Nothingness, and Neither Existence nor Nonexistence). There are also nine levels of intensity. For example, attachment in the desire realm may be broken down into nine degrees: great, middle, and small of the great; great, middle, and small of the middle; and great, middle, and small of the small. All told, this comes to nine levels of intensity for each obscuration.

The difference between the Hinayana and the Mahayana

approaches to the removal of obscurations

The obscurations eliminated on the path of seeing are the mind's incorrect imputations.⁶⁹ These are eliminated by the simple "seeing" or realization of the four truths. By contrast, the obscurations eliminated on the path of meditation are coemergent or innate.⁷⁰ These cannot be annihilated by the mere realization of the four truths. They can only be removed gradually by dint of an increasing immersion in this realization.

The practitioners of the Hinayana claim that the obscurations eliminated by seeing are only to be removed on the transmundane path.* On the other hand, they say that the obscurations eliminated by meditation can be removed even on the mundane path. In their opinion, it is thus possible to rid oneself of the obscurations eliminated by meditation while still in the desire realm, in other words, prior to the elimination of obscurations by seeing. They call this the path of "leap over" and assert that there are two kinds of Shravakas abiding on this path: candidates for the stages of Once Returner and of Nonreturner.⁷¹

It was, however, only for the sake of encouraging his disciples, and in order to inspire them with interest for the path, that the Buddha skillfully taught this doctrine. In point of fact, nothing on the mundane path can counteract obscurations to be eliminated by meditation. These obscurations can only be *removed* on the superior, or supramundane, level. According to the Mahayana, this kind of obscuration is not eradicated but only suppressed on the mundane path. And by "mundane path" is meant the concentrations of the form and formless realms. These are concentrations that lack the wisdom of *vipashyana*. By contrast, the transmundane path is the union of *shamatha* and *vipashyana*, linked with the wisdom of realizing the nonexistence of the personal and phenomenal self.

The Hinayana and Mahayana ways of removing the obscurations by seeing

Taken all together, the path of seeing comprises sixteen instants, four for each of the four truths. They are called acceptance, understanding,

* I.e., the Hinayana path of seeing.

subsequent acceptance, and subsequent understanding.* The realization of the truth of suffering thus comprises four instants. At the first instant, when there occurs a fearless *acceptance* of the nature of suffering,† ten obscurations eliminated by seeing (related to the truth of suffering of the desire realm) are discarded.⁷² At the second instant, there occurs an *understanding* of the nature of suffering, and here wisdom arises as the antidote.⁷³ At the third moment, that of *subsequent acceptance*, eighteen obscurations eliminated by seeing (related to the truth of suffering of the form and formless realms) are discarded. At the fourth moment, that of *subsequent understanding*, the wisdom again arises as the antidote. If these same four moments are applied to the other three truths, we have all together four groups of twenty-eight obscurations. Thus, we arrive once again at a total of one hundred and twelve eliminated obscurations. The Mahayana teaches, on the other hand, that the obscurations eliminated by seeing that are related to the three realms (desire, form, and formless) are abandoned totally all at the same time. It is believed that they are abandoned at the very moment when the nature of each of the four truths is understood.⁷⁴

The eighteen shravaka schools⁷⁵ of Hinayana Buddhism are said to have explained the sixteen instants of the path of seeing in many different ways. And in the Mahayana also, the master Haribhadra says that there are two distinct ways of setting them forth. First, it is said that with regard to the moment of discernment, these sixteen instants arise successively, while from the point of view of the moment of absolute reality, these sixteen are but one single instant. Second, there is the opinion of those who believe that an instant of discernment and an instant of absolute reality are in fact a single instant.⁷⁶ Haribhadra himself adopts the first alternative, that the sixteen instants arise successively. It is impossible for one so-called instant of discernment to destroy all misconceptions concerning the four truths. Therefore, taking each of the truths into consideration, the gradual eradication of misconceptions passes through sixteen instants. Nevertheless, the so-called instant of absolute reality is regarded as the single instant in which the

* The Tibetan terms are, respectively, *chos shes byi bzod pa*, *chos shes*, *rjes bzod*, *rjes shes*.

† This means the acceptance of the four aspects of the truth of suffering. See appendix 3.

absence of self is seen directly. It is a single instant because the ultimate nature cannot be divided (into a succession of categories).⁷⁷

In one of his writings, the noble Asanga explains the sixteen instants of the four truths as follows. First, at the time of acceptance of the knowledge of the nature of suffering, everything eliminated by seeing falls away. At the moment of understanding the nature of suffering, the wisdom antidote arises. Through subsequent acceptance, an understanding dawns that the wisdom of accepting and the wisdom of understanding the nature of suffering constitute the ground of the noble path of meditation. Through subsequent understanding, there is the realization that subsequent acceptance is the ground of the noble path. Acceptance and understanding of the nature of the four truths pertain more to the object apprehended, namely, the truths themselves. By contrast, subsequent acceptance and subsequent understanding refer to the wisdom, namely, the apprehending agent in the inquiry. In Asanga's tradition, the system of sixteen instants⁷⁸ is drawn up to describe how incontrovertible knowledge is achieved in the post-meditation period. This is regarded as a scholastic classification for the sake of those inclined to an intellectual approach. On the other hand, from the point of view of the state beyond all conceptual constructions, as experienced in meditation, these sixteen instants occur at once.

The master Nagarjuna likewise says in his writings that the system of sixteen instants is merely an analytical procedure describing the destruction of misconceptions of the four truths. Acceptance consists in a confidence in the four truths that bestows a fearless assent, and through understanding their nature, one realizes them directly. Through subsequent acceptance, fearlessness regarding the nature of the four truths is obtained even during post-meditation. Finally, through subsequent understanding, a perfect knowledge of the four truths arises even in the post-meditation state. It is in this context that the division into sixteen instants is made. In point of fact, however, the instant in which one sees all phenomena as unborn and beyond all conceptual constructs is indivisible (into sixteen). As it is said in the *Lankavatara-sutra*:

The unborn nature is the only truth,
While "four truths" is the talk of mere children.

For those abiding in the essence of enlightenment
Not one is found; why speak of four?

In conclusion, therefore, these sixteen instants are merely a schematic description of a single meditative instant.*

How the obscurations are eliminated on the path of meditation

Turning now to the obscurations eliminated by meditation, it is said that through familiarity with the practice, the antidotes to these obscurations, which in fact constitute the path of meditation itself, will gradually develop, beginning from the most general and progressing to the most penetrating. As a result, the obscurations will disappear in the same order, starting from the most gross and proceeding to the most subtle.

As we have said, the obscurations eliminated by seeing are imputed misconceptions, whereas the obscurations eliminated by meditation are innate thought patterns. Imputation refers to the view of the transitory composite (the belief in "I"), the extreme views of eternalism, nihilism, and so forth. They are the conceptions imputed newly (in each existence) under the influence of mistaken theories. People who take up a philosophical position maintain these false doctrines openly; on the other hand, even those who are "innocent" of philosophy are nevertheless always liable to entertain such mistaken views.⁷⁹ The expression "innate thought patterns" refers, by contrast, to the fact that the mind is already "configured" in a self-oriented way. This configuration, which thinks "I am," is accompanied by desire and other afflictive thought patterns, which turn outward toward objects. The mind has been oriented in this way from beginningless time.

Thus, the obscurations eliminated by seeing⁸⁰ run counter to the nature of the four truths. The obscurations eliminated by meditation run counter to the sense objects such as form and so on.⁸¹

Even though the obscuration of strong anger is completely eliminated only on the path of meditation, it is already attenuated by the powerful sun of wisdom arising on the path of seeing, which withers it

* *mnyam bzang skad rig*. See the definition of "instant" given in note 76.

like a rotting shoot. This is why it is said that the Aryas are free from such afflictions once they have attained the noble path, even though these same afflictions are said to be fully eliminated only on the path of meditation.

The obscurations eliminated by seeing are the misconceptions newly imputed in every lifetime under the influence of false tenet systems. This is why non-Buddhist tenets are unable to influence someone in whom the path of seeing has arisen. And this will remain true throughout all subsequent lives.

THE QUALITIES OF A BUDDHA'S REALIZATION

In addition to the qualities of elimination, Buddhas possess qualities arising from their realization.* These are: the five kinds of eye (powers of vision), which are the fully ripened effect of positive action; the six kinds of preternatural knowledge accomplished through concentration, such as the knowledge and ability to perform wonders; and the ten powers owing to which no intended action is impeded (as in the case of the power of Buddhas over their own lifespan). Buddhas also possess the four dharanis, all of which are grounded in extraordinary memory and supreme intelligence. The first dharani is the power of understanding that all phenomena are unborn. The second is the mantric dharani accomplished through concentration and wisdom. The third is the word dharani, which is the ability to hold in unforgetting memory every word of the Doctrine. The fourth is the meaning dharani, which is the power to remember infallibly the sense of all the teachings. Buddhas have the ten strengths, defined as an unobstructed cognition of all objects of knowledge, such as the strength of knowing the different aspirations of beings. They have the four fearlessnesses in the face of all opposition to the assertions they make about themselves and others, and the four perfect knowledges of all the ways of helping beings.

Buddhas possess eighteen distinctive qualities that are not shared by the Shravakas and Arhats. Six of these refer to the way Buddhas behave. (1) Their physical conduct is without delusion. (2) Their voices are not strident or inconsiderate. (3) Their mindfulness is unimpaired and seamless. (4) Their minds are always in meditative equipoise. (5) They

* See appendix 5, p. 297.

tively. Time in itself has no intrinsic existence of its own. Just as when dreaming, the mind arranges temporal sequences of different length, in the same way it assigns events to the past, present and future in the waking state. On the ultimate level, however, in the fundamental state of things, no phenomena terminate in the 'past', no phenomena occur in the 'present' and no events supervene in the 'future.' To be 'learned in the three times' means to understand their 'equality.' With this in mind, one can then go on to posit the so-called 'inconceivable fourth time' in addition to the past, present and future. For one understands that the temporary and spatial categories are mere imputations and one integrates the ultimate reality, the equality of everything." [K], 67]

62 One should perhaps be aware of a tendency to interpret refuge in a "theistic" sense, involving a reliance on a kind of supernatural power. The idea of taking refuge in the Buddha naturally involves an expectancy that the Buddha will bestow protection. He does indeed. But this is not some sort of ready-made liberation, handed down as a reward. The Buddha does not grant salvation. He explains suffering and the causes of suffering and expounds the path to freedom. It is for the disciples to follow. They in turn are liberated from suffering by understanding its nature and themselves uprooting its causes. Thus, rather than being an appeal to divine grace, the true taking of refuge is the commitment to undertake the path whereby the disciples liberate themselves.

63 Obviously, the English word "faith" has connotations deriving from the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is used here to translate the Tibetan word *dad pa*, which certainly shares some of these connotations but extends beyond them, as is explained in the text.

64 *'phags pa'i rigs*. This is a reference to the Arya lineage. According to the Hinayana, it indicates persons who have few desires; who are content with what they have in the way of food, clothing, and dwelling places; and who persevere in purifying negativities and gaining realization. This lineage (or proclivity) is so called because it brings beings to the level of the Aryas.

65 Shuracharya, otherwise known as Ashvaghosha, was an Indian Brahmin very much opposed to the Buddhadharmas. He challenged the great pandita Aryadeva in debate, the stakes being that the loser would embrace the tradition of the winner. Ashvaghosha was summarily defeated and was so ashamed that he decided to commit suicide by throwing himself into the Ganges. Aryadeva discovered this and, sending some monks to capture him, had him locked up in the monastery library. Eventually, Ashvaghosha calmed down, and becoming a trifle bored, set about reading the texts. After a time, he was so impressed and moved by the expositions of the Dharma that he underwent a wholehearted conversion. In the course of his reading, he discovered a prophecy about himself, to the effect that he was to write a life story of the Buddha. Ashvaghosha was in fact an important poet in the history of Sanskrit

literature, and the *Buddhacharita*, a biography of the Buddha in verse, was composed by him.

66 It is easy for Western readers to interpret this kind of formulation as an "exhortation to martyrdom," which is in fact quite at odds with the Buddhist spirit. The notion of orthodoxy, in the sense of an ideology commanding notional assent, is of no importance in Buddhism, where all the emphasis is placed on inner conviction as the motivating force of genuine spiritual transformation. Thus, the meaning of irreversible faith is to be found not in expressions of belief adhered to doggedly in a confessional sense, but in an inner conviction that is so profound as to be ineradicable, irrespective of whatever verbal formulations might be wrung from unwilling lips. This point is best illustrated by the story, quoted in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* (pp. 185-186), of an Indian lay practitioner who was threatened with death if he did not repudiate his refuge in the Three Jewels. "I can only renounce taking refuge with my mouth. I am incapable of doing so with my heart." The man was executed and accepted death willingly, even though "dying for the faith" was not his principal objective.

67 In this context, the four truths must be understood not as general principles but as classes of phenomena. Thus, one speaks not of the truth of suffering but rather of true sufferings, true origins, and so on, referring thereby to the phenomenal world. In this particular instance, the focus is on the five aggregates. See appendix 3.

68 It is, however, enough to understand the points just explained, which apply mainly to the first two truths of suffering and origins. According to Khenpo Pema Sherab, some authorities maintain that these ten factors cannot truly militate against the truth of path, because the latter is the wisdom of no-self and therefore the very antidote to the ten factors.

69 "There are innumerable kinds of thought that veil the essential nature of the mind. All, however, can be grouped under two general headings: (1) misconceptions superimposed on 'what is the case' (*sgro btags*) and (2) innate or coemergent thought patterns (*ban skyas*) of clinging to a supposed 'I' and 'mine.' The conceived objects (*zhen yul*) of both these ways of thinking (i.e., superimpositions and innate thought patterns) are the two 'selves': the 'self' of persons and the 'self' of phenomena. These two selves are apprehended and clung to by these two kinds of thought. All artificially impured conceptions of self are eliminated by the wisdom of the path of seeing, the direct understanding of reality. The conceptions of self that are the object of the innate thought patterns are eliminated by the wisdom of the path of meditation, which is the sustained training and familiarization of the mind in the wisdom gained on the path of seeing. The wisdom of the Mahayana paths of seeing and meditation destroys emotional obscurations such as avarice, as well as the cognitive obscurations, which are the notions of a truly existent subject, object, and action, together with their connected tendencies. This,

then, is how the qualities of elimination are perfected. Thus, the term *spangs pa* in the root verse may be interpreted as referring to both the superimpositions and the innate thought patterns that are eliminated. Alternatively, the *spangs pa* may be understood not as what is to be eliminated but as the eliminator, namely, wisdom. Just as the banishing of the miseries of samsara can be understood as the positive state of deliverance, liberation, or nirvana, in the same way, the wisdoms of seeing and meditation may be understood not merely as antidotes to their corresponding defects, but as the wisdom or freedom in which such defects have no place. It is therefore correct to interpret the root verse by saying that emotional and cognitive obscurations are destroyed by two kinds of wisdom." [YG I, 482]

70 Care should be taken with the word "innate," the translation of *lhan skyes*. It is used here to refer to contents, or rather proclivities, that are already present in the mind at birth and which are to be distinguished from the false imputations or ideas that are freshly made or entertained in each new lifetime (under the influence of false tenet systems). Both artificial imputations (*kun brags*) and innate thought patterns (*lhan skyes*) are kinds of emotional obscuration (*nyon grib*). Artificial imputations are relatively shallow. They arise conceptually and are comparatively easy to remove. On the other hand, innate thought patterns are much stronger, being a conditioning from previous existences (an example would be an aggressive tendency already deep-rooted in the temperament of a small child). The cognitive obscurations (*shes grib*) also consist of artificial imputations and innate thought patterns, but in this context they are usually referred to as gross and subtle obscurations, respectively. The former are eliminated on the path of seeing, while the latter disappear only in the course of the path of meditation.

71 The Hinayana path of meditation consists of the progressive stages of the development of meditative absorption. Obviously, these absorptions, which correspond to the form and formless realms, can be cultivated before the (supramundane) path of seeing is reached. For they can be attained by non-Buddhist meditators, although in their case, since the wisdom of emptiness (i.e., the path of seeing) is absent, such accomplishments do not result in liberation from samsara. This is why it is said in the Hinayana that practitioners may cultivate the higher absorptions while at the same time working toward the path of seeing and before they achieve this. Those who do this are said to be on the path of "leap over," the implication being that, when they attain the path of seeing, they leap over the stages of the path of meditation that they have already accomplished. Those on the path of "leap over" are either Once Returners or Nonreturners. Thus it can be said that the second and third Hinayana levels can be attained by the worldly path, while the first and fourth are attained only by the transmundane path.

72 "This is the 'Path without obstacles.'" [DKR]

73 "This is the 'Path of liberation.'" [DKR]

74 "This is the 'Path without obstacles.'" [DKR]

75 In the early phase of Buddhism in India, distinct communities had developed in culturally diverse regions. At the time of the king Ashoka there were four main traditions: Sarvastivada, Mahasanghika, Shavira, and Sammitiya (see note 179). These further divided into eighteen schools, which were asserted as valid Dharma traditions by the council held under the king Kanishka's patronage. For a detailed treatment of the subject, see Tarthang Tulku, *Light of Liberation, Crystal Mirror*, vol. 8.

76 The term "instant" may be understood in two senses. It may refer to the smallest unit of time (*das mtha'i skad rig*) or to the period of time required for the accomplishment of a given action (*bya ba rdzogs pa'i skad rig*). The latter is necessarily variable. It may correspond to something as brief as a finger-snap, or it may encompass the period extending from the first generation of bodhicitta to the full attainment of buddhahood. In the *grib mtha' midzod*, the omniscient Longchenpa says that the four truths are realized in sixteen instants of the second kind. In other words, they are realized in the course of sixteen successive occasions (of varying length). In this context, "instants of discernment" (*so sor rlog pa'i skad rig*) are the instants necessary for the cognition of each of the sixteen aspects of the four truths. The "instant of absolute reality" (*de kbo na nyid kyi skad rig*) is the moment in which absolute reality is realized.

77 "Nagarjuna's tradition states that the system of sixteen instants is used to describe how wisdom arises in meditation, while Asanga's tradition uses it to show how incontrovertible knowledge arises in the post-meditation period. These two ways do not in fact contradict each other; both should be upheld by the followers of the Mahayana." [DKR]

78 "As reported by practitioners of meditation." [DKR]

79 This potential is, of course, innate. It is on the basis of innate thought tendencies that false imputations can develop. Indeed, there is something predictable about false tenet systems in the sense that they exhibit certain common features, which are in turn coordinated with the inveterate self-clinging of the ordinary mind.

80 "Namely, the assertions of mistaken tenets regarding the causal relationships that underpin samsara and nirvana." [DKR]

81 "All other thoughts (i.e., other than the tenets of mistaken systems) derive from the misapprehension of sense data." [DKR]

82 "There are ten meanings of the word 'dharma' (*chos*). Six apply to phenomena; four apply to the sacred Doctrine. The first six are: (1) phenomenon or knowledge object; (2) mental object; (3) life span; (4) future time; (5) certainty; and (6) religion (religious tradition). The four that apply to the sacred tradition are: (1) scriptures, or the Dharma of transmission; (2) meritorious

Introduction to the Middle Way

Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*
With commentary by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche

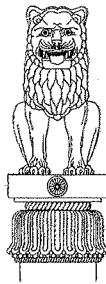
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[H10]

[H11]

The shravakas' realisation of emptiness: the analogy of the space inside the mustard seed

Two types of defilement: dendzin and tsendzin

(b) The actual meaning stated in that quote (540)

(i) The sutra's statement that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas understand phenomena to have no true nature

Generally, the view that needs to be realised by the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas is identical. But their realisation is not the same, as is illustrated by an image. Sometimes a tiny insect eats away the inside of a mustard seed, and creates a space inside the seed. The realisation of emptiness of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is as big as that space inside the mustard seed. Notice that I did not say 'as small as' – it is a big place! By contrast, the bodhisattva's understanding of emptiness is as big as the sky, or perhaps I should say as small as the sky. Here we are talking about the intelligence of the bodhisattva. Even the first bhumi bodhisattva's understanding of emptiness is greater than that of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, so the question is, why does he not outshine them even on the first bhumi?

From the first to the sixth bhumis, a bodhisattva cannot irreversibly remove his *tsendzin* (*mtshan 'dzin*), what we are calling 'fixation towards characteristics'. It continues to grow, and he cannot block it so that it will not return. Here we need to distinguish two types of defilement:

- *Dendzin* (*bden 'dzin*): When you look at this pen, you cling to it as a truly existent pen. If someone says it is spaghetti, you will say, "No, it is a pen". This is *dendzin*.
- *Tsendzin* (*mtshan 'dzin*) is fixation towards characteristics. As long as there is an object and a subject, there is *tsendzin*. There are no details like whether it is truly existing or not. But this is a very rough explanation.

Let me give you a bad example. If you are dreaming about a cup of coffee, and in the dream, somebody asks you if you are drinking coffee, then if you do not know that you are dreaming, you will say, "Yes, I am drinking coffee". If they ask if you are sure, you will say, "Yes, definitely, I'm sure". And if they ask whether your coffee is satisfying you, you will say that it is. Then when you wake up and someone asks whether the coffee you drank really existed, you will say, "No, it was just a dream". It was not a truly existent cup of coffee.

For now, for simplicity, you can say that *dendzin*, the belief in things being truly existent, is the cause of samsara. Shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and first bhumi bodhisattvas have already abandoned this belief. And, as I just said, the understanding of emptiness of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is as big as the space inside a mustard seed, whereas the bodhisattvas' understanding is like the sky. So, why can't the first bhumi bodhisattva outshine the shravakas, given that he has a greater understanding? It is because none of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas or bodhisattvas has managed to make their fixation towards characteristics irreversible. Here we are talking about their progress in terms of *dreldré*, the result of absence.

Let us say that Gérard and I are both looking at that mountain. Gérard is a few feet closer, so he has a better view; but both Gérard and I have a problem with our eyes, so we are equal to each other in that sense. Likewise, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and first to sixth bhumi bodhisattvas are all equal. One equal cannot outshine another equal, as you have to be greater than another person in order to outshine them. Therefore, the bodhisattvas cannot outshine the shravakas with their understanding.

As we have seen, the two ways in which a bodhisattva can outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are his noble aspiration and his superior understanding of his own object. The noble aspiration is compassion, which creates merit and makes the first bhumi bodhisattva outshine the shravakas, whereas the superior understanding of his own object is what the bodhisattva has on the seventh bhumi 'Far Gone'.

Why the first bhumi bodhisattva cannot outshine the shravakas

The two ways in which a bodhisattva outshines shravakas and pratyekabuddhas

If we look at the framework for the whole of the Madhyamika, there are two things to be realised:

- Absence of existence of the individual self: *gang zag gi bdag med*
- Absence of existence of phenomena: *chos kyi bdag med*

And there are two defilements to be eliminated:

- Clinging to/belief in the individual self *bdag 'dzin*
- Clinging to/belief in existence of phenomena *chos kyi bdag 'dzin*

If you want to talk about ignorance, defilements and obstructions to enlightenment, all these are included in the bottom two. The top two, understanding the absence of existence of the individual self and of phenomena, are wisdom. When we talk in terms of what has to be eliminated, we talk about the two types of clinging, and when we talk of what is to be realised, we talk about the two types of wisdom.

How can the two defilements be separate?

You might ask how these two defilements could be separate. This is a good question. It depends on your interest. If you want enlightenment, *moksha*, liberation, then you should get rid of the first. Once you have done that, that's it – you are in *moksha*! That is what shravakas and pratyekabuddhas want, so that is what they do.

Dagdzin: Clinging to the self

Now we will talk about *bdag 'dzin* (*chos kyi bdag 'dzin*) and *bden 'dzin*.

Dagdzin (*bdag 'dzin*) means clinging to the self, which also includes clinging to the self of phenomena. The characteristics of a phenomenon are the things that can be perceived by the six senses. The self is also included there. *Chos* means phenomena, and *bdag* means something like

identity or true self, the thing that identifies something, or makes something what it is. For example, when we identify something, as in “this is a glass of water” or “this is a piece of apple”, that is *bdag*.

Dendzin: thinking something is truly existent

Similarly, when Jakob thinks his girlfriend is beautiful, that is also *dagdzin*. When he is very much in love, he thinks her smell is good, her looks are good, her taste is good – all of that. But this is baseless, because if there were a truly existent base, then he should always think she smells good and so on. But one day, when he hates her, her smell is bad and she is no longer beautiful! This shows that there is no base to her beauty – it is a ‘baseless assumption’.

Then we come to *dendzin* (*bden 'dzin*), thinking that something is truly existent. This is a more gross defilement, because something can be *dagdzin* without necessarily also being *dendzin*. This is because *tsendzin*, fixation towards characteristics, is *chos kyi bdag 'dzin*, but it is not *dendzin*.

We have seen that, in order to understand the selflessness of the person, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas must understand the selflessness, or non-substantiality, of the five aggregates. Indeed, the Buddha taught them about the second selflessness, the selflessness of phenomena, as we can see from the following quotation. He said that “form is like a bubble and feeling is like a bubble”, meaning they are essenceless, that they have no substantial existence. There is no true existence, no reality in there. The Buddha also said that “perception is like a mirage, and karmic formation is like a banana tree”. A banana tree has many layers, and when you look at it from outside, it looks very solid. But it is all just layers of skin. As you peel layer after layer of skin, you end up finding that there is nothing inside. There is no real solid substance, as it is all made out of skin. This quotation also says that consciousness is like a magical illusion.

[H5]

6. The Sixth Bhumi, Advancing / Knowing Clearly

[H6]

a) Attaining cessation by emphasising the paramita of wisdom, 6:1

6:1 *In 'Advancing' his mind dwells in meditation,
Advancing towards the dharma of perfect buddhahood.
Seeing the suchness of dependent arising,
[The bodhisattva] dwells in wisdom, thereby reaching cessation.*

*The qualities of the sixth
bhumi bodhisattva*

*He attains cessation of
the four extremes, and
understands that
everything is illusion*

*All bodhisattvas look at
the same object, wisdom,
but see it differently even
in their meditation*

*Bodhisattvas have
tsemdzin during their
post-meditation time*

In the first sloka, the first two lines talk about the sixth bhumi bodhisattva's quality of *shamatha*, and the last two lines talk about the qualities of his *vipashyana*. When he was on the fifth bhumi, this bodhisattva placed great emphasis on *samadhi*, meditation. Because of that, now that he has reached the sixth bhumi, he is advancing towards the unique qualities of the Buddha, such as the ten powers. Do not forget that here we are talking about the bodhisattva's qualities during post-meditation time. But as you can see, on the sixth bhumi, his post-meditation qualities now resemble meditation qualities.

By the power of his *vipashyana*, he sees the reality of dependent arising, and with this wisdom, he attains cessation. In this case, cessation is not nirvana, but cessation of the four extremes. He understands everything as illusion, much more completely than on the five previous bhumis. For example, his understanding of the third noble truth, the truth of path, is much more pure and perfect.

Here I want to stress something important. All bodhisattvas are looking at the same object, wisdom, but even during their meditation, there is a difference of distance. The tenth bhumi bodhisattva is much closer than the first. A bodhisattva can see no difference between his wisdom and the wisdom of a higher bodhisattva. However, a bodhisattva on a higher bhumi, using his clairvoyance, can see differences during the meditation time between his wisdom and that of a lower bhumi bodhisattva.

However, although bodhisattvas can remain in meditation for a long time, they cannot remain there forever. The strength of their meditation exhausts, and they have to rise from their meditation state. Then they enter what we call post-meditation time. During this post-meditation time, bodhisattvas see things and discriminate between them, for example between man and woman, or black and blue. This is what we call *tsemdzin*, the apprehension of mere appearance.

I will now add another defilement to our list, which is part of *tsemdzin*. The first seven bhumis are referred to as the 'impure seven bhumis of the bodhisattva path', and the three last bhumis are referred to as the pure stages of the bodhisattva. The last three bhumis are very special stages. From a very ordinary point of view like ours, we cannot tell the difference between such bodhisattvas and the Buddha. From the eighth bhumi onwards, bodhisattvas do not receive teachings from the Nirmanakaya any more. But they have still a defilement, which is part of the *tsemdzin*, called *nyinang* (*gnyis snang*) 'mere apprehension'. There is no more appearance, no more perception. I think that this is probably why only these bodhisattvas have access to the Sambhogakaya. We will go through this later, but I am introducing the name now so you will be prepared (for a discussion of *tsemdzin*, *dendzin* and *dagdzin*, see diagram below, and p.44)

(d) Negating Explanations Based on Conceptual Analysis (545)

Although shravakas and pratyekabuddhas do practise the selflessness of phenomena, there are three reasons why the Mahayana teaching on this subject is greater:

The three reasons why the Mahayana teaching on the selflessness of phenomena is greater

1. It is clearer
2. It is vaster
3. It is complete

How is it clearer? To the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the Buddha only said that form is like a bubble, perception is like a mirage, and so on. He did not clarify this. But in the Mahayana, he said that form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. This is much more clear and direct. Although the Buddha said this to Shariputra, as in the *Heart Sutra*, Shariputra does not practice it. He just repeats it, which is why he is *nyentō* (shravaka).

How is it vaster? When the Buddha teaches shravakas and pratyekabuddhas the selflessness of phenomena and of the person, he only negates one aspect: existence. But in the Mahayana, he not only negates the first aspect, existence, but also the other three: non-existence, existence and non-existence, and neither existence nor non-existence. There is a classification of either 16 or 20 types of emptiness, which we will come to when we discuss the 6th bhumi. When we say 'vaster', it refers to the quantity of emptiness. For shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, only one type is taught, but in the Mahayana, all 20 types are taught.

Why is it complete? Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas only understand the first of the four extremes and a little of the second. In the Mahayana, all four extremes are taught – it is complete.

There are several different explanations here. Although I will skip over the debates here, they are good. Nobody is wrong; all are great. The debates are not about winning. If there is anything to gain, it is wisdom.

In particular, Tsong Khapa says that from the first to the seventh bhumis, a bodhisattva still has to purify the first defilement, which is *tsendzin* (fixation towards characteristics), although his purification of *dagdzin* (clinging to the self) is finished. Remember that we were talking about

The 1st bhumi bodhisattva has crossed the border between samsara and nirvana

When you cross the border between samsara and nirvana, you become a first bhumi bodhisattva. According to the Hinayana, you would be called an *Enterer Stream-Winner*. Upon reaching the first bhumi, the bodhisattva has abandoned clinging to the self of the person and *dendzin*, the type of clinging that we have called 'apprehending things as truly existent'.

The 10th bhumi is the borderline between path and no more path

The tenth bhumi is the borderline between the path and no more path. Enlightenment has two meanings: no more returning to samsara, and omniscience. You could also call the 1st bhumi enlightenment, since there is no more returning to samsara. But at the bottom of the diagram, is complete omniscience, *dzokpé sangyé* (*rdzogs pa'i sang rgyas*).

The 7th bhumi bodhisattva no longer creates the causes of tsendzin

There is another borderline at the 7th bhumi. As we discussed earlier, the first bhumi bodhisattva can outshine shravakas and pratyekabuddhas with his merit, but not with his intelligence. Bodhisattvas have a greater view, a superior understanding of their own object, because they are looking at all four extremes, whereas shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are only looking at one and a half. But 1st to 6th bhumi bodhisattvas cannot outshine them with intelligence, because they still create the causes of *tsendzin*, 'apprehending things as mere appearance'. The 7th bhumi bodhisattva outshines shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, as he no longer creates the causes of apprehension of mere appearance. But until he has omniscience, he is still suffering because of his apprehension of mere appearance, so he is still an object of compassion. This is the third type of compassion that we talked about earlier (on p. 19).

TAKING REFUGE	Ordinary Beings		
	Beings on the Path		
		OBSCURATIONS	
SAMSARA		- Clinging to both ideas of self	- Path of Accumulation - Path of Joining
NIRVANA	Enterer Stream- Winner (for shravaka/ pratyekabuddha path)	- No more clinging to self of person - No more <i>dendzin</i> (solid belief in true existence of phenomena) - Still create causes of <i>tsendzin</i>	- 1 st to 6 th bhumis (for bodhisattva path)
		- Still cling to self of phenomena - <i>tsendzin</i> still present - 7 th to 10 th bhumis bodhisattvas no longer create causes of <i>tsendzin</i>	- 7 th to 10 th bhumis
ENLIGHTENMENT		- No more clinging to self of phenomena	

Mere relative truth

Bodhisattvas and arhats also perceive mere relative truth

Dendzin: ordinary beings grasp onto phenomena as being truly existent

Tsendzin: even bodhisattvas grasp onto characteristics

A buddha has no dendzin, tsendzin or nyinang. A buddha has no perception at all

Ignorance with and without afflictive emotions

If the buddhas do not have perception, how do they benefit sentient beings?

The last line introduces the conventional truth again, which is sometimes referred to as *mere relative truth*. Here we are talking about the object. It is the same object that is being perceived by the ignorant being, but now we are not talking about the subject, only the mere object, which is perceived by sentient beings as mere relative.

The mere relative truth is something that is perceived by arhats and bodhisattvas from the 1st to 10th bhumis during their post-meditation time, but not as something truly existent. Arhats and bodhisattvas perceive it as something fabricated and artificial, which is why we call it 'mere relative'. This object of the perceiver stained by ignorance is not only an object for ignorant beings; arhats and bodhisattvas also perceive it.

Now, we have *dendzin*. *Dzin* is 'grasping'; *den* is 'truly'. Ordinary beings like us have the kind of grasping mind that thinks these phenomena are truly existent. In the Mahayana path, bodhisattvas from the 1st to 7th bhumis during their post meditation time do not have *dendzin*, but they still have *tsendzin*, a mind that grasps characteristics. *Tsenma* (*mthsan ma*) is like a 'mark'. They would not confuse a table for a chair, but they still think that blue is blue, yellow is yellow, and so on. They have a mind that grasps such characteristics, and these characteristics are what we call 'mere relative'. However, it is hard to speak about this, because I am not on the first bhumis, and I am guessing that you are not on the first bhumis either! Now, from the 8th to 10th bhumis, bodhisattvas during their post meditation time have what we call *namshe* (*rnam shes*) or *nyinang* (*gnyis snang*), which is 'perception'. They still have perception during their post meditation time, and the object of that perception is again this mere relative truth, the conventional truth. A buddha, someone completely enlightened, does not have *dendzin*, *tsendzin* or even *nyinang*. He does not have perception. For the Buddha, all continuity of the mind has stopped (See diagram on p.44).

This is quite a good introduction to two kinds of ignorance:

- ***Ignorance with afflictive emotion*** is something like looking at form, feeling, karmic formation, and so on, and thinking 'this is me, this is I'. This is what we call *gangsag gi dak* (*gang zag gi bdag*) the self or ego. Meditating on the selflessness of the person purifies this type of ignorance.
- ***Ignorance without afflictive emotion*** is merely grasping to form, feeling and so on, without making any labels like 'self'. Meditating on the selflessness of phenomena purifies this type of ignorance.

What we are now studying is thoroughly taking us through the second meditation, the theory of the wisdom that understands the selflessness of phenomena.

Now we may ask, if the buddhas do not have perception, how do they benefit sentient beings? This is discussed during the last chapter, but I will answer it briefly now. The beneficial activity of a buddha, which is the manifestation of the buddha, is something perceived by sentient beings. For sentient beings that have devotion, good karma and the good fortune to perceive such a manifestation, they have the notion of the buddha benefiting sentient beings. You might still think that enlightenment would be almost like nothingness, like the death of candlelight when no wax remains. But enlightenment is not like extinction. This is going to be thoroughly explained later.

*The three characteristics
of giver, gift, and receiver*

*On the seventh bhumi, the
bodhisattva begins to
defeat tsendzin in his
post-meditation, hence
outshining shravakas*

This is what we call *tsendzin*, as we have said many times, and it invokes three aspects. When you give something, there is still a notion of 'giver', an 'object' such as money to give, and a 'receiver'. That kind of concept is what we call grasping to the innate self, not as truly existent, but as *tsema*, as characteristics. These are the characteristic of giver, characteristic of something to give, and characteristic of receiver. If you don't have these three, there is no act of giving, but the bodhisattva still has them. During his meditation time the first bhumi bodhisattva has complete realisation that there are no characteristics such as giver, object to give and subject to give to. But during the post-meditation time, such kinds of concepts or notions still occur. Now when he reaches the seventh bhumi, he begins to defeat this during the post-meditation time. This is the main reason why he can outshine the shravakas.

*The wisdom of the
dharmakaya and the
wisdom of bodhisattvas
on the path*

*Phenomena of meditation
and post-meditation do
not exist on the 11th
bhumi, so Buddha does
not have time*

We can compare the wisdom of the dharmakaya with the wisdom of bodhisattvas on the path as follows: firstly, they don't completely have the wisdom of knowing things as they are, *ji tawa*. Therefore, they see so-called meditation time and post-meditation time. If we ask why bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas and all these people have meditation and post-meditation – not just that they have this distinction, but that they have to have it – it is because they have not yet managed to realise "what it is" and "things in their multiplicity" in one taste. In addition, they do not the second kind of wisdom, *ji nyépa*, completely. Shravakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas of the 1st bhumi and beyond don't have *dendzin* (*bden 'dzin*): when they look at and experience phenomena during their post-meditation time, they don't grasp to them as truly existent. Instead they experience phenomena as inherently non-existent, like a mirage, illusion or dream. However, they still see the extremes of birth, exhaustion, existence, non-existence, black, white and so on. They have *ji nyépa* only to this extent.

Buddha, on the other hand, while never departing from understanding the essence of phenomena, simultaneously sees all phenomena in their multiplicity. Therefore, the phenomena of meditation and post-meditation do not exist on the 11th bhumi. This is why the Buddha does not have time, the discrimination of time, because there is no birth and exhaustion. But on a conventional level we can still talk in terms of time. For example, we can say that Buddha Shakyamuni was meditating, for example 'during' the time of the Heart Sutra. And we can say that 'after' the discussion between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, he rose from the meditation and said: "you did well". On the conventional level, we can still say this, based on Buddha's wisdom of understanding things as they are and things in their multiplicity. On the 11th bhumi, the Buddha understands *chönyi* (*chos nyid*), the true nature of phenomena: he understands their one essence, which is emptiness. Yet at the same time, he can still see *chö chen* (*chos can*), their phenomenal quality: he can still see all the multiple aspects of phenomena without any confusion. He can still see them in all their multiplicity of different times, states, colours, shapes, languages, and so on: he can see everything. This makes his meditation time far superior to that of all other *aryas*, such as bodhisattvas on the 1st bhumi to 10th bhumi. Yet, although he sees all phenomena in their diversity without any confusion, he does not see them as having arising, exhaustion or any other dualistic qualities. This makes his post-meditation superior to that of the other *aryas*. Now, in reality, he does not have meditation and post-meditation time, but on the conventional level we can say that he does, such as when he was teaching the Heart Sutra. And even on the conventional level, his meditation and post-meditation time are still far superior to that of the other *aryas*. Now we will do the 18th stanza, which is the sambhogakaya.