

# **Meditation And the Progression of the Buddhist Path**

**Shamatha Vipashyana on the Paths of  
Accumulation and Preparation**

A SMCNY Advanced Buddhist Studies/Rime Shedra NYC Course

**Sourcebook**



## RIME SHEDRA CHANTS

### ASPIRATION

In order that all sentient beings may attain Buddhahood,  
From my heart I take refuge in the three jewels.

*This was composed by Mipham. Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee*

### MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATION

Whatever the virtues of the many fields of knowledge  
All are steps on the path of omniscience.  
May these arise in the clear mirror of intellect.  
O Manjushri, please accomplish this.

*This was specially composed by Mangala (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche). Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee*

### DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit may all obtain omniscience  
May it defeat the enemy, wrong doing.  
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,  
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east  
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom,  
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled.  
May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant glory.

*Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee*

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Ten Tuesdays from April 18<sup>th</sup> to June 27th, 2017, (Omitting June 20<sup>th</sup>) from 7-9:15 pm

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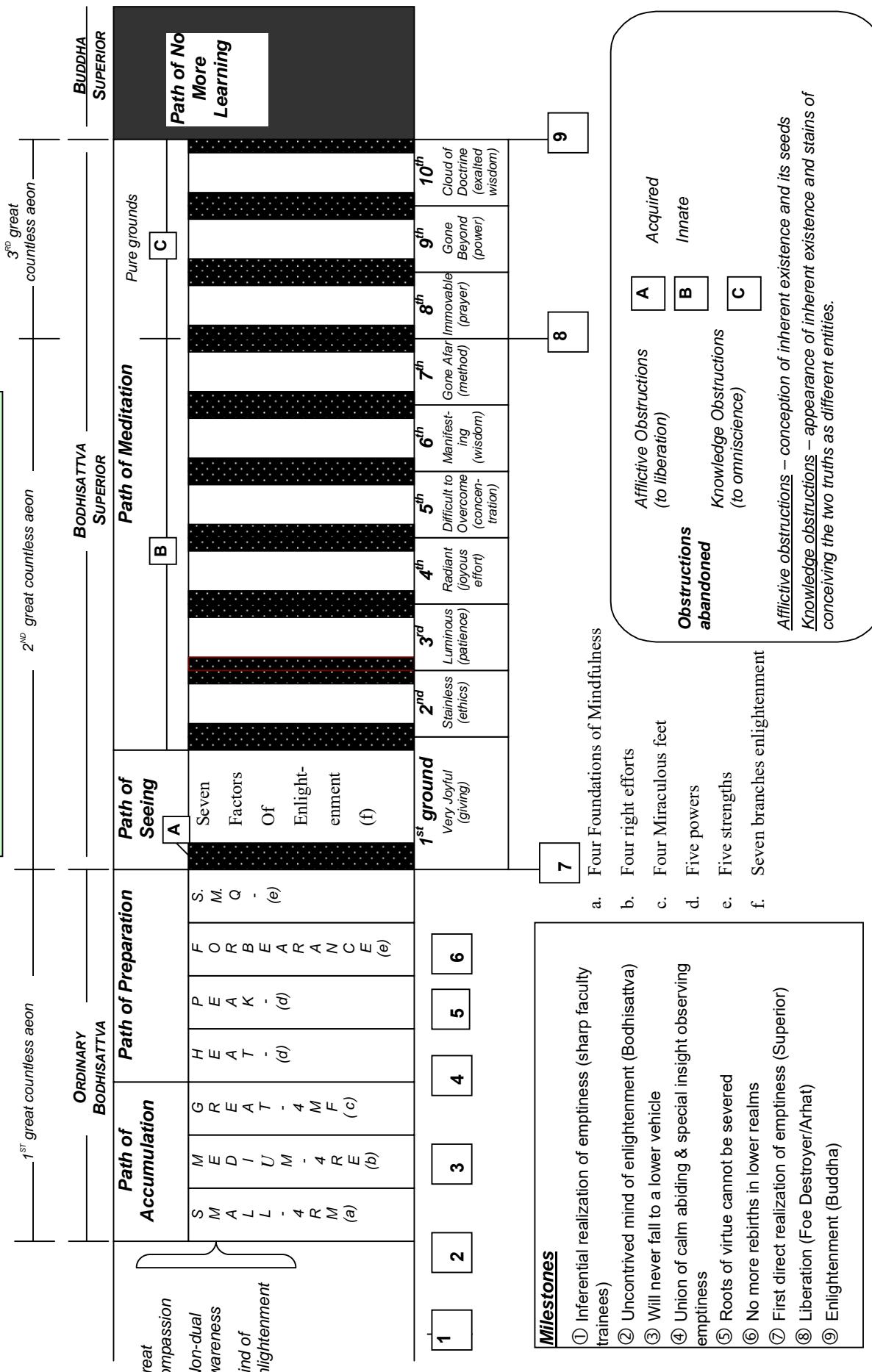
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**STAGES OF A BODHISATTVA'S DEVELOPMENT AND CORRESPONDING SIMILES**

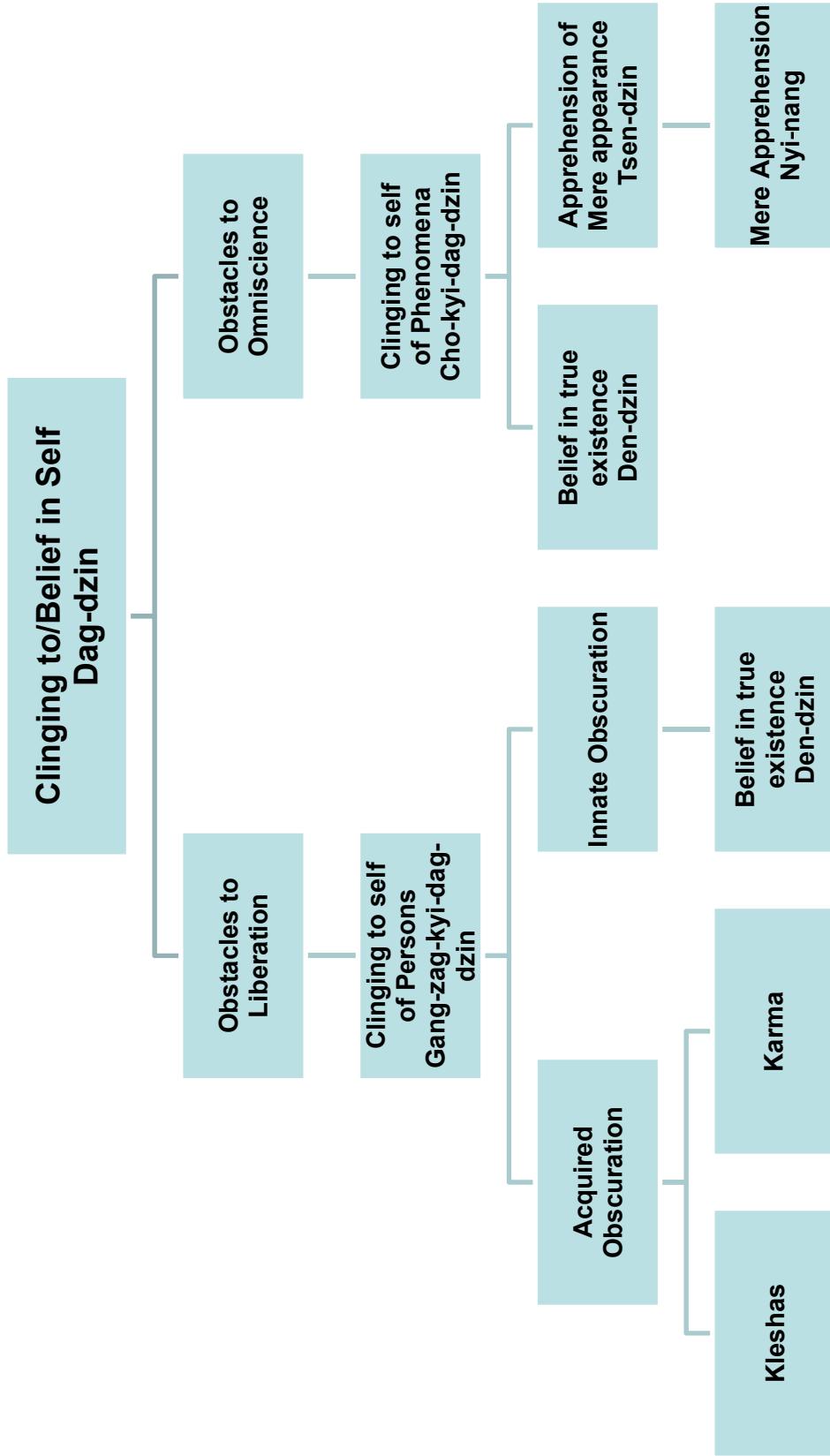
	<b>STAGES OF A BODHISATTVA'S DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>BHUMI</b>	<b>PATH</b>	<b>PARAMITA</b>	<b>SIMILE</b>
1.	Hinayana		Accumulation (lesser)		Earth
2.			Accumulation (medium)		Gold
3.			Accumulation (greater)		Moon
4.			Unification		Fire
5.	Mahayana	1. Very Joyful	Seeing	Generosity	Great Treasure
6.		2. Spotlessness	Meditation	Discipline	Jewel Mine
7.		3. Illuminating		Patience	Great Ocean
8.		4. Radiating light		Exertion	Diamond
9.		5. Difficult to accomplish		Meditation	King of Mountains
10.		6. Becoming manifest		Prajna	Medicine
11.		7. Far gone		Skillful Means	Spiritual Friend
12.		8. Immoveable		Aspiration	Wish-Fulfilling Gem
13.		9. Good intellect		Power	Sun
14.		10. Cloud of dharma		Wisdom / jnana	Dharma Song
15.	Buddhahood	II. Complete radiance	No more learning		King
16.					Treasury
17.					Highway
18.					Carriage
19.					Fountain
20.					Echo
21.					River
22.					Cloud

## Mahayana Path in Prasangika-Madhyamaka

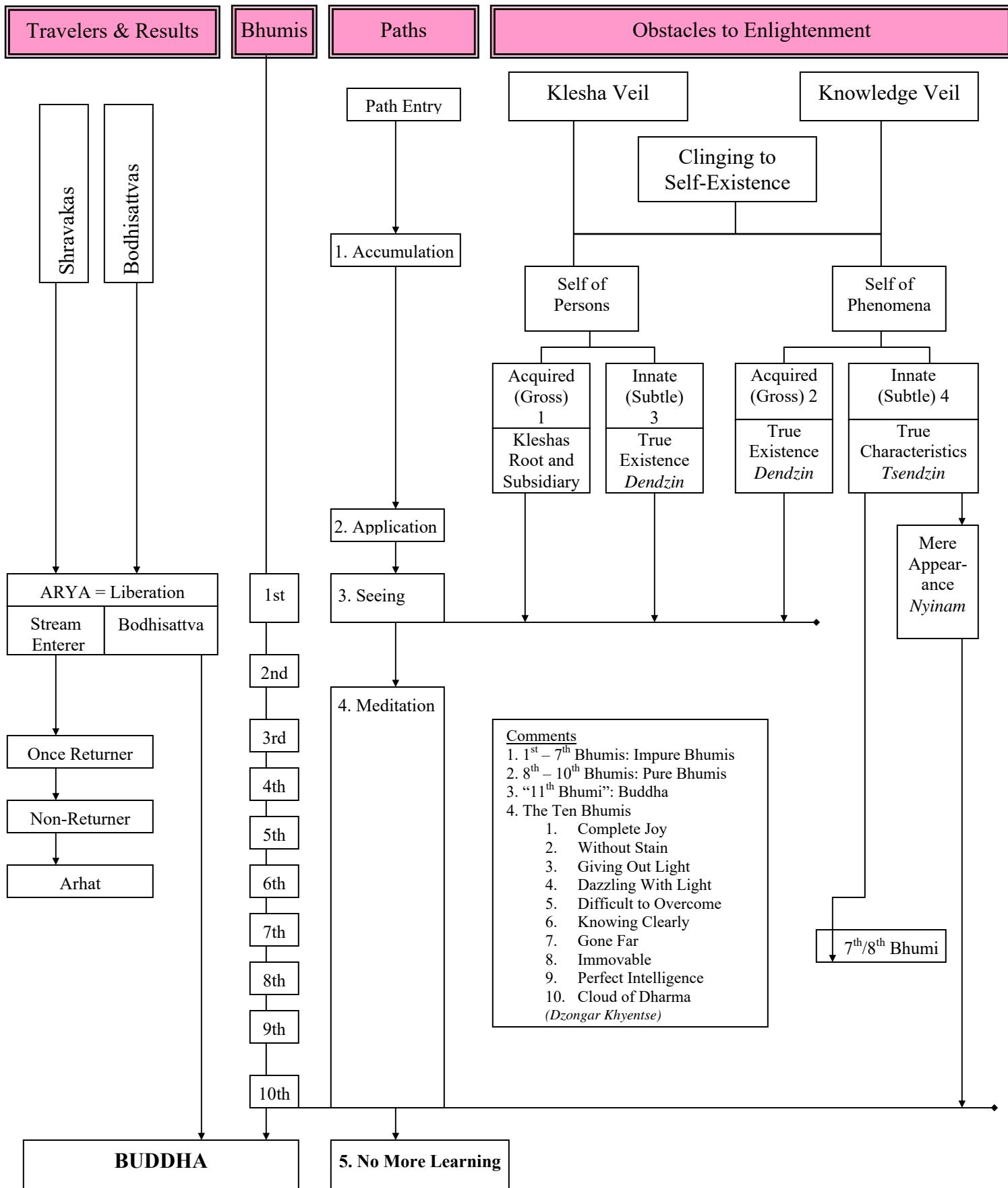


Afflictive obstructions – conception of inherent existence and its seeds  
Knowledge obstructions – appearance of inherent existence and stains of conceiving the two truths as different entities.

# Obstacles to Enlightenment



# OBSTACLES, TRAVELERS, BHUMIS, & RESULTS



## Key Qualities for the Path to Enlightenment

Area	Quality	English	4 Miraculous Feet	5 Powers & Strengths	7 Factors of Enlightenment	8 Fold Noble Path
Aspiration	Chanda	Strong Interest	॥			
	Shradha	Faith	॥			
Exertion	Virya	Exertion	॥			॥
	Vyayama	Effort				॥
Joy	Prasabdhi	Pliancy			॥	
	Priti	Joy		॥		
Mindfulness	Smrti	Mindfulness		॥		॥
	Citta	Attention	॥			
Meditation	Dhyana	Meditation	॥			
	Samadhi	Samadhi			॥	
	Upoksha	Equanimity			॥	
Wisdom	Prajna	Insight	॥			
	Pravisaya	Intellect			॥	
	Drsti	View			॥	
	Kalpa	Understanding			॥	
	Mimamsa	Investigation	॥			
Activity	Ajiva	Livelihood			॥	
	Vac	Speech			॥	
	Karmanta	Action			॥	

## THE 40 MEDITATION SUBJECTS

### Kasina - The ten 'things that one can behold directly' or 'as a whole'

**These four are called the essential-kasina.**

- 1) earth
- 2) water
- 3) fire
- 4) air, wind

**These four are called the color-kasina.**

- 5) blue, green
- 6) yellow
- 7) red
- 8) white

**These two are in addition:**

- 9) enclosed space
- 10) bright light.

### The objects of repulsion (asubha) or stages of decomposition of the body

- 11) A swollen corpse (Uddhumataka)
- 12) A blue-black corpse (Nilaka)
- 13) A festering corpse (Vipubbaka)
- 14) A dismembered corpse (Vicchiddaka)
- 15) A corpse hewed and scattered by animals (Vikkhayitaka)
- 16) A cut-up scattered corpse (Vikkhittaka)
- 17) A cut and dismembered corpse (Hatavikkhittaka)
- 18) A bleeding corpse (Lohitaka)
- 19) A worm-infested corpse (Puluvaka)
- 20) A skeleton (Atthika)

### The Ten Recollections (anussati)

**First, three recollections that are of the virtues of the Three Jewels:**

- 21) Recollection of Buddha
- 22) Recollection of Dharma
- 23) Recollection of Sangha

**Next, three that are recollections of the virtues of:**

- 24) Recollection of morality (*Sīla*)
- 25) Recollection of liberality or generosity (*cāga*)
- 26) Recollection of the wholesome attributes of Devas (Devatanussait)

**Lastly, four that are standalone recollections of:**

- 27) Recollection of Death (Maranasati)

- 28) Recollection of the Body (Kayagatasati)
- 29) Mindfulness of Breathing (Anapanasati)
- 30) Recollection of the Nirvana (Upasamanussati)

### **The Four are Stations of Brahma (Brahma-vihara)**

- 31) unconditional kindness and goodwill (mettā)
- 32) compassion (karuna)
- 33) sympathetic joy over another's success (mudita)
- 34) evenmindedness, equanimity (upekkha)

### **The Four are Formless States (four arūpajhānas)**

- 35) Infinity of space—attending to space as infinite (Akasanancayatana)
- 36) Infinity of consciousness— consciousness as infinite (Vinnanancayatana)
- 37) Nothingness—attending to formlessness (Akincannayatana)
- 38) Neither-perception-nor-not-perception— (Nevasannanasannayatana).

### **The Two Individual Ones**

- 39) Perception of disgust or repulsion of food (aharepatikulasanna).
- 40) The method of dividing the different parts of the body so as to see them as only these four elements (catudhatuvavatthana): earth (*pathavi*), water (*apo*), fire (*tejo*), air (*vayo*) and just seeing them as unattractive.

## **Chart 2: Objects of Observation**

**From Study and Practice of Meditation by Leah Zahler**

*(Objects of observation in italics are considered suitable for beginners)*

**Sources:** *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, Asaṅga's *Grounds of Hearers*, and  
Kamalashīla's *Stages of Meditation*

### **THE FOUR TYPES OF OBJECT OF OBSERVATION**

#### **1. Pervasive objects of observation**

- a. Non-analytical image
- b. Analytical image
- c. Observing the limits of phenomena
  - (1) the varieties (conventional phenomena)
  - (2) the mode (their emptiness)
- d. Thorough achievement of the purpose

#### **2. *Objects of observation for purifying behavior***

- a. The unpleasant: for persons in whom desire predominates
- b. Love: for persons in whom hatred predominates
- c. Dependent-arising: for persons in whom obscuration predominates
- d. The divisions of the constituents: for persons in whom pride predominates
- e. The exhalation and inhalation of the breath: for persons in whom discursiveness predominates

#### **3. Objects of observation for [developing] skill**

- a. The aggregates
- b. The constituents
- c. The twelve sources
- d. The twelve-linked dependent-arising
- e. The appropriate and the inappropriate

#### **4. Objects of observation for purifying afflictive emotions**

- a. Those having the aspect of grossness/peacefulness
- b. Those having the aspect of the truths

### **OTHER OBJECTS OF OBSERVATION**

A Buddha's body

One's own mind

### **OBJECTS OF OBSERVATION USED IN TANTRA**

A divine body (visualization of oneself as having a divine body)

Subtle drops

## Concentrations and Formless Absorptions

Peak of Cyclic Existence		Object of Abandonment	
		discrimination of nothingness /coarse discrimination (Discrimination not without discrimination)	
<b>Formless Realm</b>		<p><b>Nothingness</b>      discrimination of infinite consciousness</p> <p><b>Infinite Consciousness</b>      discrimination of infinite space</p> <p><b>Infinite Space</b>      discrimination of obstructive form</p>	
		<p><b>Freedom from:</b></p> <p>4th concentration      feeling that is faculty of happiness</p> <p>3rd concentration      feeling of bliss</p> <p>2nd concentration      feeling that is faculty of suffering</p> <p>1st concentration      feeling of mental unhappiness</p>	
<b>Form Realm</b>		<p><b>Antidote branch</b></p> <p>7 - final training (3 small) 6 - analysis 5 - joy-withdrawal (3 middling) 4 - isolation (3 great) 3 - belief (calm ab &amp; spec insight) 2 - individual knowledge of character 1 - mere beginner (Calm Abiding)</p> <p>*7 Preparations (mental contemplations)</p> <p>9 mental stages</p> <p>9) Setting in equipoise 8) Making one-pointed 7) Thorough Pacifying 6) Pacifying 5) Disciplining 4) Close setting 3) Resetting 2) Continuous setting 1) Setting the mind</p>	
		<p><b>Benefit branch</b></p> <p>*** completely pure mindfulness &amp; completely pure equanimity mindfulness, introspection &amp; equanimity internal clarity joy &amp; bliss investigation &amp; analysis joy &amp; bliss</p>	

\* Note: these seven preparations are required to attain all of the form realm concentrations and formless absorptions

\*\* Not Usable applies only to the 1st preparation of the 1st concentration

\*\*\*The basis branch of each of the four concentrations is meditative stabilization

**Chart 3: The five paths****GONE BEYOND**

ACCORDING TO THE ABHIDHARMASAMUCCAYA 1732

**The path of accumulation:** It consists of the delight in the ethics of ordinary beings, controlling the sense gates, moderation in food, not sleeping during the first and last parts of the night, but making effort in yoga, and dwelling in alertness. It also consists of other virtues that serve as causes for liberation as well as the prajñās that arise from study, reflection, and meditation. Through cultivating these, one becomes a vessel for clear realization and liberation.

**The path of preparation:** It consists of the roots of virtue that are the factors conducive to penetration (heat, peak, poised readiness, and the supreme dharma) and are based on gathering the accumulations. Heat is the samādhi (congruently associated with prajñā) of attaining the illumination of the four realities through personal experience. Peak is the samādhi (congruently associated with prajñā) of the increase of the illumination of the four realities through personal experience. Poised readiness is the samādhi (congruently associated with prajñā) of partially entering and following the four realities through personal experience. The supreme dharma is the samādhi (congruently associated with prajñā) of the state of mind immediately before directly seeing the four realities through personal experience.

**The path of seeing:** It consists of the nonreferential samādhi (congruently associated with prajñā) immediately after the supreme dharma. It is also what makes one realize, by virtue of the equality of what is to be observed and what observes it, that these two are equal. It is also the dharma cognition of focusing on the elimination of the designations of sentient beings and phenomena for these individually as well as the elimination of both designations for everything.

**The path of familiarization:** It consists of the mundane paths, the supramundane paths, the lesser paths, the medium paths, the great paths, the paths of preparation, the uninterrupted paths, the paths of liberation, and the special paths that are higher than the path of seeing. Among these, the supramundane path consists of the realizations (on the path of familiarization) of suffering, its origin, cessation, and the path. It consists of the dharma cognitions and the cognitions of subsequent realization that are congruently associated with samādhi and extends from the first dhvāna up through the āyatana of Nothing Whosoever (the āyatana of Neither Discrimination nor Nondiscrimination belongs to the mundane path since its flux of discrimination is very unclear). The meditative absorption of cessation is also supramundane.

**The path of nonlearning:** Through the vajiralike samādhi, the continuum of all impregnations of negative tendencies is severed, the continuum of the factors that are attained through encountering (that is, the obscurations) is severed, and the attainments of being free from them are attained. Therefore, based on this samādhi, immediately after it there is a total and comprehensive change of state, which consists of (1) the change of state of the mind of having attained nonlearning, (2) the change of state of the path, and (3) the change of state of the impregnations of negative tendencies.<sup>1733</sup> This change of state is the knowledge of the termination of the obscurations and the knowledge of their nonarising. The path of nonlearning also consists of the ten dharmas of nonlearning—the eight from the correct view on the level of nonlearning up through the correct samādhi on this level, the liberation of nonlearning, and the perfect wisdom of nonlearning (equivalent to the five uncontaminated skandhas; see Chart 12).

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**The Ornament of Clear Realization,  
and Its Commentaries in the Tibetan Kagyü Tradition**

**VOLUME ONE**

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**Karl Brunnhözl**

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## ACCORDING TO JNS

**The path of accumulation:** The special prajñā that opens the gate to merging with the levels of liberation and omniscience and does not have the nature of the [five] faculties of the path of preparation.

**The path of preparation:** The path that provides the opportunity for liberation, has the nature of the [five] faculties and not the nature of the [seven] branches of enlightenment, and is (prior to the path of seeing) approximately concordant with the direct realization of reality in terms of its focal objects and aspects.

**The path of seeing:** That which provides the opportunity for liberation, is the clear realization of the [four] realities, has the nature of the [seven] branches of enlightenment, and does not have the nature of the path of familiarization.

**The path of familiarization:** That which provides the opportunity for liberation, has the nature of the path of the noble ones who are learners, and does not have the nature of the path of seeing.

**The path of nonlearning:** The infinite relinquishment and realization of omniscience.

## ACCORDING TO CE

**The path of accumulation:** The study and reflection on the pitakas [of the respective yānas] and the cultivation of the four foundations of mindfulness, [the four correct efforts, and the four limbs of miraculous powers,] all by relying on the ethics [of the respective yānas].

**The path of preparation:** The clear realization of reality that arises from [mundane] meditation before the path of seeing arises.

**The path of seeing:** The clear realization of the [four] realities, which has the nature of the [seven] branches of enlightenment.

**The path of familiarization:** [The path] that has the nature of the [eightfold] path of the noble ones, on which one further enhances and familiarizes with clear realization.

**The (mahāyāna) path of nonlearning:** The final deliverance in terms of the knowledge of all aspects in which dhātu and wisdom have become of one taste.

## ACCORDING TO BOD RGYA TSHIG MDZOD CHEN MO

**The path of accumulation:** The path that is the basis for progressing toward nirvāna, on which one gathers the vast accumulation that consists of the virtues conducive to liberation; realizes identitylessness in the manner of term generalities and object generalities through study and reflection; and cultivates the four foundations of mindfulness, the four correct efforts, and the four limbs of miraculous powers. Through this, the very coarse factors to be relinquished that produce suffering in samsāra are relinquished in the manner of invalidating them and one attains the qualities of the visions, supernatural knowledges, and the samādhi of the stream of dharma.

**The path of preparation:** The path that is a stepping stone to liberation, on which one attains the roots of virtue that are conducive to penetration; prepares for [and eventually joins with] the clear realization of reality; through the prajñā that arises from meditation, realizes the lack of nature of the apprehended; and cultivates the five faculties and powers. Through this, the imputational factors to be relinquished are relinquished in the manner

of suppressing them and one attains the qualities of samādhis, dhāraṇīs, supernatural knowledges, and so on.

**The path of seeing:** The path that is a stepping stone to liberation, on which one newly sees true reality, which was not seen before; proceeds to the levels of the noble ones; directly realizes the nature of phenomena, just as it is (identitylessness); realizes the variety of the bearers of this nature, as is appropriate; and cultivates the seven branches of enlightenment. Through this, the afflictions that are the factors to be relinquished through seeing are relinquished in the manner of eradicating them at the root; one becomes free from the five fears,<sup>1735</sup> and attains the twelve sets of one hundred qualities, and so on.

**The path of familiarization:** The path that is a stepping stone to liberation, on which one becomes acquainted with what was seen on the path of seeing and cultivates the eightfold path of the noble ones. Through this, the factors to be relinquished through familiarization are relinquished in the manner of eradicating them at the root and uncontaminated qualities are increased.

**The path of nonlearning:** The ultimate qualities of realization and relinquishment of each one of the three yānas, respectively, that is, the attainments of śrāvaka arhathood, pratyekabuddha arhathood, and buddhahood.

ACCORDING TO TOK<sup>1736</sup>

**The path of accumulation:** That which is a basis for progressing towards nirvāna and consists of the virtuous actions that are conducive to liberation.

**The path of preparation:** That which is a stepping-stone for liberation and consists of the phase of clearly realizing the ultimate.

**The path of seeing:** That which is a basis for progressing towards nirvāna and consists of the phase of newly and clearly realizing true reality.

**The path of familiarization:** That which is a stepping-stone for liberation and consists of the phase of having to become familiar with special samādhis.

**The path of nonlearning (or completion):** That which is the basis for actualizing nirvāna and consists of the phase of clearly realizing the final object of familiarization.

# TREASURY of PRECIOUS QUALITIES

## *The Rain of Joy*

by JIGME LINGPA

WITH *The Quintessence of the Three Paths*  
*A Commentary by Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche*

BOOK ONE  
*Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group*  
*Forewords by H. H. the Dalai Lama*  
*and Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche*



APPENDIX 6 ☺  
*The five paths and the thirty-seven elements leading to enlightenment*

For people engaged in the path of liberation according to any of the Three Vehicles,\* the qualities of the three trainings may be presented in terms of a sequence of thirty-seven elements that gradually lead to enlightenment.

While on the path of accumulation, the practitioner mainly receives and studies the teachings and accumulates merit. On the basic level of this path, emphasis is placed on the practice of the “four close mindfullnesses” (*dran pa nyer bzagh bzhi*). This means mindfullness of body,† feelings, consciousness, and mental objects. If one practices according to the Hinayana, one meditates on the impurity of the body, on the feelings of sufferings, on the impermanence of consciousness, and on the fact that mental objects are “ownerless” (there is no self to which they belong). If one practices according to the Mahayana, during the meditation session one meditates on the same things as being spacelike, beyond all conceptual constructs. In the post-meditation period one considers them as illusory and dreamlike. Between the Hinayana and the Mahayana approach to this meditation, one may observe a threefold distinction. In the Hinayana, the focus is on one’s own body, feelings, and so forth, while in the Mahayana, the focus is also on the bodies, feelings, and so forth, of others. Again, in the Hinayana, the focus is on the impurity aspect and so on, while in the Mahayana the meditator concentrates on emptiness. Finally, with regard to the purpose of this meditation, in the Hinayana the practice is performed with a view to liberation from the impure body and so on, while in the Mahayana this meditation is performed in order to attain the nonabiding nirvana. This meditation is termed “close mindfullness” because the practitioner dis-

\* I.e., the Shravakayana, Pratyekabuddhaya, and Bodhisattvayana.

† There are three types of “body.” The first refers to the outer universe, the second is one’s own body, while the third refers to the bodies of other sentient beings.



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cerns the general and particular characteristics of the body and so forth with uninterrupted attention.

In the middle level of the path of accumulation, the Dharma of realization concerns the practice of the “four genuine restraints” (*yong dag par spong ba bzhi*). The first of these is the preemptive halting of negativities not yet generated. The second is the rejection of negativities already arisen. The third is the solicitation of positive states not yet present, and the fourth is the protection from decline of positive states already generated.

In the greater level of the path of accumulation, the Dharma of realization refers to the practice of the “four bases of miraculous powers” (sometimes known literally as the four miraculous legs, *rdzun phrul gyi thang pa bzhi*). These are like the root or foundation for the subsequent accomplishment of miraculous abilities, such as the five kinds of preternatural knowledge. The first consists in a concentration based on keenness or the power of the will (*'dun pa*). The second is a concentration based on endeavor (*brtson grus*). The third is a concentration based on one-pointed mindfulness (*sems*), and the fourth is a concentration based on analysis (*dbyod pa*).

As a result of meditation on the mundane level, nonconceptual wisdom will gradually gain in strength, and this will “join” the practitioner to the path of seeing. This phase is therefore called the path of joining and consists of four stages. According to the Mahayana, the first stage of this path, in which the understanding of phenomena as mere mental projections (*yid kyi snang ba*) acts as an antidote to clinging, is called meditative Warmth. When the wisdom perceptions\* increase, the practitioner reaches the stage called Peak. In both these stages, five powers are deployed focusing on the four truths. These are: Confidence with which one embraces the four truths, Diligence whereby one does this with enthusiasm, Mindfulness with which one does not forget the object of focus and the accompanying form or meditative attitude, Concentration with which one embraces the four truths one-pointedly, and finally Wisdom, with which one perfectly discerns them. These are

called powers (*dbhang po*) because they condition the development of enlightened qualities. When clinging to phenomena is eliminated, and the meditator acquires the wisdom of realizing that phenomena are but mind, the stage of Acceptance is reached. Here absolute reality is partially attained. As the meditator progresses, considering that since there is no object of perception there is no subject, but only nondual self-awareness, all clinging to phenomena is overcome, and the meditator is joined, without any hiatus, to the path of seeing. This stage is referred to as the Supreme Mundane Level and refers to the concentration immediately preceding entry into the path of seeing. In these last two stages, five irresistible forces (*stobs*) come into play. They are in fact the same as the previous five powers, but they are so called because they have gained in strength and are able to resist all countering factors.

When the practitioner understands that this nondual awareness is merely a dependent arising, ultimate reality is actualized, beyond all conceptual constructions, and this is called the path of seeing. On this path, seven elements may be discerned leading to enlightenment. They all share the same object of focus (*dmigs pa*), namely, the four truths, but are differentiated according to their form or accompanying attitude (*mam pa*), as follows. The first of these seven elements is mindfulness (*dran pa*), whereby the four truths are retained and not forgotten. The second is perfect discernment (*chos rab nam byed*), which is a decisive appraisal of the four truths and their nature. The third is diligence (*brtson 'grus*), whereby the meditator embraces the four truths with enthusiasm. The fourth is joy (*dgaa' ba*), a happiness that the nature of the four truths is now seen. The fifth is flexibility (*shin tu sbyangs*), whereby the body and mind are rendered supple and serviceable in the pursuit of goodness. The sixth is concentration (*ting nge 'dzin*), through which all distraction is eschewed. And the seventh is evenness (*bhlang snyoms*), which causes the mind to rest in its natural state free from torpor and excitement. The expression “the seven elements that lead to enlightenment” may be paraphrased as follows. “Enlightenment” is a reference to perfect discernment—in other words, the nonconceptual wisdom that realizes the four truths—whereas the six other elements are the means to this discernment.

\* I.e., perceptions that penetrate into the nature of phenomena.

Through steady familiarity with the wisdom that is a direct vision of ultimate reality, the perceptions of wisdom will continually intensify. This phase is called the path of meditation. Here, the meditator practices what is known as the Eightfold Noble Path. Its object of focus remains the four truths as in the path of seeing. With Right View, the nature of the four truths, which has been previously realized on the path of seeing, is definitively established. By virtue of Right Thought, this realization is understood through evidence and reasoning, and the practitioner is able to establish and nurture this understanding for others. With Right Speech, the realization of ultimate reality is expressed in words, on the relative level, and is taught to others by means of exegesis, debate, and writings, so that people may be inspired with confidence in the right view. Through Right Conduct, all behavior is cleansed of negativity and brought into line with Dharma, thus inspiring others with confidence in pure discipline. Right Livelihood preserves the meditator undefiled by inappropriate and wrong means of subsistence and encourages others to adopt a pure lifestyle. Through Right Effort, the practitioner tirelessly mediates on the ultimate reality already perceived. Right Effort is therefore the remedy to the obscurations eliminated by meditation. Through Right Mindfulness, the object of focus in shamatha and vipashyana meditation is never lost and an antidote is provided for forgetfulness, which is one of the lesser afflictions. By means of Right Concentration, a faultless absorption is accomplished, free from torpor and agitation, and every quality is developed. Right concentration thus acts as the remedy to all adverse conditions. The name “Eightfold Noble Path” may be glossed by saying that the Noble Path is the realization of ultimate reality, while the eight factors just enumerated are the aspects of this realization.

When the wisdom of realization is free from all obscurations, all the qualities of enlightenment are brought to perfect completion. When this happens, the path of no more learning is reached. This, then, is the manner in which an individual progresses by means of the thirty-seven elements leading to enlightenment, spread out as they are through the five paths.

For the sake of convenience, the thirty-seven elements may be listed as follows:

*On the path of accumulation:*

- a. the four close mindfullnesses
- b. the four genuine restraints
- c. the four bases of miraculous powers

*On the path of joining:*

- d. the five powers
- e. the five irresistible forces

*On the path of seeing:*

- f. the seven elements leading to enlightenment

*On the path of meditation:*

- g. the Eightfold Noble Path  
[Extracted from Khenpo Yönten Gyamtso's presentation, YG I, 508–515]

# GROUNDLESS PATHS

The Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras,  
*The Ornament of Clear Realization,*  
and Its Commentaries in the Tibetan Nyingma Tradition

## *Appendix I: A Concise Enumeration of the Paths and Bhūmis of Bodhisattvas, the Children of the Victors<sup>106</sup>*

I pay homage to the guru who is inseparable from the protector Mañjuśrī.

If one comments on a brief enumeration of the paths and bhūmis of bodhisattvas in an easily understandable way, [this consists of] the five paths and the ten bhūmis. The five paths are the path of accumulation, the path of preparation, the path of seeing, the path of familiarization, and the path of nonlearning. The ten bhūmis will be explained below in the context of the path of familiarization.

### 1) The path of accumulation

The excellent motivation of bodhisattvas, the children of the victors, is bodhicitta [in its] two [forms of] aspiration and application. Having generated this perfect bodhicitta on [the level of] seeming [reality], [bodhisattvas] take their aspiration for the ultimate bodhicitta—the nonconceptual wisdom of the path of seeing—as the path. Therefore, this is the level of engagement through aspiration. When divided, the path of accumulation is threefold—great, medium, and lesser. It is the phase of making great efforts in [gathering] the accumulation of merit. Since this is the beginning of gathering accumulations for many incalculable eons, {174} it is called “path of accumulation.”

Here the lesser path of accumulation [is lesser] because the time of the arising of the path of preparation in one’s own mind stream is uncertain. The medium path of accumulation [is medium] because it is certain that the path of preparation arises in one’s next life. The great path of accumulation [is great] because it is certain that the path of preparation arises in this lifetime.

As for the meaning of the root text<sup>106</sup> [saying], “May you engage in the foundations of mindfulness and so on,” during the lesser path of accumulation [bodhisattvas] mainly familiarize with the four foundations of mindfulness. First, in the foundation of mindfulness of the body, through prajñā they examine the triad of the outer body (the world as the container), the inner one (their own body), and the intermediate one (the bodies of other sentient beings). Then, through samādhi, they rest in meditative equipoise in

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the state of [said bodies] not being established—spacelike emptiness. During subsequent attainment they familiarize with [these bodies] being like illusions and dreams. In particular, as the remedy for desire, they familiarize with this body as being the vessel for impure [substances, such as] blood and lymph, the source of the 404 kinds of diseases and the six thousand evil spirits, the support of [various] kinds of bugs, and with seeing it as a rotten [corpse] and skeleton after its death, and so on.

As for the foundation of mindfulness of feelings, through prajñā [bodhisattvas] examine the three feelings of pleasure, suffering, and indifference, and then rest in meditative equipoise in the state of their being unarisen and without arising. {175} During subsequent attainment they familiarize with all feelings being without essence, just like a banana tree, and being of the nature of suffering.

As for the foundation of mindfulness of mind, through prajñā they analyze the three [types of] discrimination (vast, small, and intermediate) and then rest in meditative equipoise in the state of their natural emptiness. During subsequent attainment they should understand the nature of the mind as its mode of neither ceasing nor abiding.

As for the foundation of mindfulness of phenomena, through discriminating prajñā they analyze all phenomena that consist of conditioned formations and then rest in their nature—equality. During subsequent attainment they should regard all phenomena as the eight examples of being illusory, that is, being like dreams, illusions, mirages, optical illusions, [the reflection of] the moon in water, echoes, the cities of gandharvas, and magical creations.

Here, since the object that is analyzed through prajñā [in the first foundation of mindfulness] is the body, one speaks of “the body.” Through having analyzed the body through discriminating [prajñā], any really established nature of the body is done away with and the subsequent spacelike emptiness is called “the foundation of mindfulness.” The same applies to the other three [mindfulnesses]. As for the nature of practicing with the specific different focal objects of the four foundations of mindfulness here, there is nothing that is not included in the following two—the spacelike meditative equipoise and its illusionlike subsequent attainment. {176}

During the medium path of accumulation [bodhisattvas] mainly familiarize with the four correct efforts. The first one is to not give rise to nonvirtuous phenomena that have not [yet] arisen. The second one is to swiftly cut through nonvirtuous phenomena if they have arisen in one’s mind stream. The third one is to give rise to virtuous phenomena that have not [yet] arisen in one’s mind stream. The fourth one is to make efforts in further increasing those [virtuous phenomena] that have arisen [already]. These are called “the four relinquishments” because they relinquish all entities of nonvirtuous phenomena and

relinquish the factors that obstruct the virtuous ones. They primarily refer to the strong conduct of the three gates [of body, speech, and mind].

During the great path of accumulation [bodhisattvas] familiarize with the four limbs of miraculous powers. First, through the limb of miraculous powers that is striving, without the mind being agitated through a lack of confidence, wrong views, and so on, they aspire for, and delight in, samādhi and thus enter and cultivate it.

Secondly, through the limb of miraculous powers that is vigor, they make efforts in resting in meditative equipoise in the doors of samādhi. Through this they eliminate the flaws and obstacles of these [samādhis], make efforts in accomplishing their qualities, and do not let themselves come under the influence of [adverse] conditions. {177}

Thirdly, through the limb of miraculous powers that is mind, the mind abides one-pointedly, does not turn into the two factors of being conceptual and being influenced by something else and so on, and manifests dhyānas and samādhis.

Fourthly, through the limb of miraculous powers that is analysis, the continuity of said samādhi is sustained throughout all manners of conduct. Here the supernatural knowledges and so on are the miraculous powers—they are the means that make one attain [samādhi and realization] in one’s own mind stream. Samādhi refers to miraculously powering the dexterity in samādhi in many ways. Therefore, they are called “limbs.” On this great path of accumulation, through manifesting many miraculous powers, [bodhisattvas] travel with these miraculous powers to the realms in which buddhas actually reside, thus master listening to incalculable hundreds of thousands of dharma doors, and attain the samādhi of the stream of dharma, in which they are able to retain these [teachings] through their dexterity of prajñā. As explained above, since it is the gathering of accumulations that is mainly taught here, the path of accumulation is the first one among the five paths.

## 2) The path of preparation

It is the path of preparation since it prepares one for, [or joins one with], the direct seeing of the nonconceptual wisdom of the path of seeing. [On its levels of] heat and peak, the time of the arising of the path of seeing is uncertain. {178} [On its levels of] poised readiness and supreme dharma, it is certain that the path of seeing arises in this life. As for the meaning of the root text [saying], “May you engage in heat, peak, and so on,” the nonconceptual wisdom of the path of seeing burning the afflictive obscurations resembles a fire and the portent of its arising in one’s own mind stream resembles the following example. When one rubs a [wooden] support with a wooden stick, before the arising of fire there arises heat in the wood. Likewise, there arise signs of heat in one’s mind stream that are unlike [what happened] before and coarse afflictions are suppressed. Therefore, this is [the level of] heat of the path of

preparation. [Its level of] peak [is so called] because it represents the peak of mundane roots of virtue. [Its level of] poised readiness [is so called] because the poised readiness of not being afraid of the basic nature—the actuality of emptiness—is attained. [Its level of] supreme dharma [is so called] because it is the supreme of all dharmas that arise from mundane meditation. These make up the path of preparation as the four factors conducive to penetration. From among them, on the two [levels of] heat and peak, [bodhisattvas] familiarize with the five faculties. First, through the faculty of confidence, they greatly aspire for the wisdom of the path of seeing. Through the faculty of vigor, without being distracted, they make efforts in the means to give rise to the wisdom of the path of seeing in their own mind streams. Through the faculty of mindfulness they guard the training in superior ethics without deterioration. Through the faculty of samādhi they rest in meditative equipoise in the training in superior samādhi. {179} Through the training in superior prajñā by virtue of the faculty of prajñā they practice by giving rise to the view of the basic nature in their own mind streams. During the two levels of poised readiness and supreme dharma they practice the above five faculties in such a manner that they are free from their respective obscurations. Thus, the five [factors of] confidence, vigor, mindfulness, samādhi, and prajñā that can absolutely not be overwhelmed by their respective hindrances of lack of confidence, laziness, forgetfulness, distraction, and lack of alertness have become the five powers.

### 3) The path of seeing

It is called “the path of seeing” because the supramundane wisdom of the noble ones is seen for the first time. The root text [says], “May you attain the bhūmi of mindfulness, fully [discriminating] phenomena and so on.” This refers to the correct branch of enlightenment that is the full discrimination of phenomena. In general, prajñā is the full discrimination of the individual aspects of all phenomena. Here it refers to the respective dharma cognitions, dharma readinesses, subsequent cognitions, and subsequent readinesses of the four realities and so on. These are the sixteen moments of readiness and cognition with regard to not being afraid of, and being ready for, all individual characteristics of all phenomena being demonstrated as the nature of phenomena—the fundamental ground of the basic nature free from all reference points. The same goes {180} for [all] seven branches of enlightenment, that is, [also the remaining] branches of enlightenment that are correct mindfulness, correct vigor, joy, physical and mental suppleness, samādhi, and equanimity. As for “equanimity” here, bodhisattvas [have an] equal [mind], and are without attachment and hatred, toward either being anointed with sandalwood balm from the right or their flesh being cut with an axe from the left. Having

been introduced to, and having perfected, the correct view of such wisdom of the path of seeing, they are much more eminent than ordinary beings.

At this point, through having purified the latent tendencies of the obscuration of miserliness and having fully perfected the pāramitā of generosity, in a single moment [they possess] the twelve [qualities] of [being able to] enter, and rise from, one hundred samādhis, see the faces of one hundred buddhas, know the blessings of one hundred buddhas, go to one hundred buddha realms, shake one hundred realms, fill one hundred realms with light, mature one hundred sentient beings, display a single moment as one hundred eons, engage in the vision of wisdom during one hundred earlier and later limits, open one hundred doors of dharma, display one hundred of their own bodies, and display each of these bodies with one hundred excellent retinues. {181} At this stage they are able to take rebirth as a [cakravartin] king over Jambudvīpa.

Since this first bhūmi, one among the ten bhūmis of the noble ones, represents the seeing of the reality that is the nature of phenomena, it is the path of seeing. Since it is endowed with many joys that are unlike [what was experienced] before, it is [called] “Supreme Joy.”

### 4) The path of familiarization

It is the path of familiarization because, on it, [bodhisattvas] make themselves familiar with the wisdom of the path of seeing that they saw already. In this context they familiarize with the eightfold path of the noble ones. The root text [says], “May you progress through view, thought, speech, and so on.” As for the meaning of this, through having directly seen the nonconceptual wisdom of the path of seeing, [bodhisattvas] correctly realize the view of the basic nature. This is correct view. Through its power no afflictions arise in their mind streams and all their thoughts are automatically virtuous, which is correct thought. Correct speech means that physical and verbal nonvirtues do not arise from a virtuous mind and that everything they say is of benefit to beings. Correct aims of action means that, no matter what they do, it turns into the welfare of others. Correct livelihood is to always be content and not be tainted by the five wrong livelihoods. The five wrong livelihoods are flatery, corrupt ethics, indirect appeal, seeking gain, and evaluating what can be obtained. These five have been relinquished [by said bodhisattvas]. {182} Correct vigor is to make efforts for the welfare of others through relinquishing distractions without becoming weary or tired. Correct mindfulness is to always sustain the continuity of mindfulness. Correct samādhi is to rest in meditative equipoise in the dhyānas and so on and to enter many samādhis. In this way [bodhisattvas] familiarize with the eightfold path of the noble ones. As for progressively traveling through the nine bhūmis of the path of familiarization, at the time of the lesser of the lesser path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of ethics, purify the obscurations of

corrupt ethics, and [attain the qualities as they were] already explained at the time of the path of seeing, such as entering, and rising from, one thousand samādhis in each moment. The difference is that, here the [respective] aspects of said qualities are twelve times one thousand [each]. [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as a [cakravartin] king that reigns over the four continents. Since the second bhūmi is free from the stains of corrupt ethics, it is called “The Stainless.”

At the time of the medium of the lesser path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of patience, purify the obscurations of anger, enter, and rise from, one hundred thousand samādhis in each moment, and so on, just as before. Thus, here the twelvefold qualities increase to one hundred thousand each. [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as someone like Indra, the lord over the [gods in] The Thirty-Three. Since the third bhūmi eliminates the dense darkness of the negative latent tendencies of sentient beings {183} through the genuine dharma, it is called “The Illuminating.”

At the time of the great of the lesser path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of vigor, purify the obscurations of laziness, enter, and rise from, ten millions of samādhis in each moment, and so on, just as above. Thus, here [the twelve qualities] increase to ten million each. [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as a king over the twin [gods]. Since the fourth bhūmi radiates the firelike wisdom that completely burns all afflictive and cognitive obscurations, it is called “The Radiating.”

At the time of the lesser of the medium path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of dhyāna, purify the obscurations of distraction, and [attain] the twelve [qualities], such as entering, and rising from, one billion samādhis in each moment, just as above. Thus, here [these qualities] increase to one billion each. [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as a king over [the gods in] Enjoying Emanations.<sup>1067</sup> Since, at this stage, [bodhisattvas] simultaneously both dwell in samādhi for their own welfare and make efforts for the welfare of others, the fifth bhūmi is called “Difficult to Master.”

At the time of the medium of the medium path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of prajñā, purify the obscurations of ignorance and dullness, enter, and rise from, ten billions of samādhis in each moment, and so on (the same [principle of increase] as above applies). [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as a king over the gods in Tusita. Since, at this stage, [bodhisattvas] face all phenomena of samsāra and nirvāṇa, the sixth bhūmi is called “The Facing.”

At the time of the great of the medium path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of means, purify the obscurations of not being skilled in means, enter, and rise from, ten sixtillions of samādhis in

each moment, and so on (just as above). [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as a king over [the gods who have] Power over Others’ Emanations. Since [the bodhisattvas] here have gone far away from samsāra, the seventh bhūmi is called “Gone Afar.”

Up to here, these are the seven impure bhūmis because impure appearances appear directly.

At the time of the lesser of the great path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of power, purify the obscurations of being weak in power, enter, and rise from, samādhis in one moment that equal [the number of] the minutest particles in one hundred thousand of the greatest chilicosm, and so on (the twelve as above). Since the eighth bhūmi is not moved by discriminating notions about being with characteristics or being without characteristics, it is called “The Immovable.” At this stage the five [sense] doors and the afflicted mind [of bodhisattvas] change state, they gain mastery over pure realms, manifest the all-accomplishing and discriminating wisdoms, and are able to take rebirth as a king over the first chilicosm. {185}

At the time of the medium of the great path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of aspiration prayers and purify the obscurations of not accomplishing the goals they aspire for. At this point they enter, and rise from, samādhis that equal [the number of] the minutest particles in one million of countless greatest chilicosms, and so on (applying to the twelve qualities as above). [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as Brahmā, the lord over the second chilicosm. Since the ninth bhūmi is endowed with the discriminating awarenesses and so on, it is called “The Excellent.”

At the time of the great of the great path of familiarization [bodhisattvas] fully perfect the pāramitā of wisdom, are free from [all] cognitive obscurations, enter, and rise from, samādhis in one moment that equal the number of the minutest particles in realms [whose number] is even more inexpressible than that of the inexpressible [number of] buddha realms, and so on. [The latter] includes their being surrounded by excellent retinues that equal the number of the minutest particles in the pure realms, [whose number] is even more inexpressible than that of the inexpressible [number of buddha realms]. Since the cloudlike dhāranis and samādhis here shower down their rains on the realms of the sentient beings to be guided, the tenth bhūmi is called “Dharma Cloud.” [The bodhisattvas on this bhūmi] are able to take rebirth as a king over the gods in the [five] pure abodes, function as the regents of the buddhas, and promote the vast welfare of others. {186}

##### 5) The path of nonlearning

Through infinite light rays radiating from their own bodies, [at the last moment of the tenth bhūmi the bodhisattvas] offer to all buddhas in the three

times. By virtue of this, the [latter] bestow the empowerment of great light rays [the bodhisattvas] overcome the latencies of the most subtle cognitive obscurations through great remedial wisdom (the vajralike samādhi), and become fully perfect buddhas. Among the five paths, this is the one of non-learning. Since one does not train in any path again, the path of nonlearning is fully perfect buddhahood. Therefore, it is the bhūmi of All-Illumination, the eleventh one.

*Upon having been requested by many mighty scholars and, in particular, by Jigtar,<sup>1068</sup> this was compiled by Śri Nirm[ān]aka, who is free from action. May our own vajrayāna tradition of the early translations flourish and spread throughout all directions and times.*

*Virtue. Maṅgalam.*

## TIBETAN TRADITION OF MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

### THE FIVE PATHS OF THE MAHĀYĀNA

(*THEG-CHEN-GYI SA-LAM, T'EG-CH'EN-GY'I SA-LAM*)

THE Mahāyāna is called "great" for the following reasons:

1. The aim is great, because it is for the benefit of all sentient beings.
2. The purpose is great, for it leads to the omniscient state.
3. The effort is great.
4. The ultimate goal is great, because it is Buddhahood rather than mere freedom from Samsāra.
5. The concern is great, as it is for all sentient beings.
6. The enthusiasm is great, as the practice is not regarded as a hardship.

#### ORAL TEACHINGS OF TIBETAN LAMA GESHEY NGAWANG DHARGYEW

Bodhisattvas look for opportunities to help others, and take joy in doing so, whereas the Hinayānists are concerned primarily with their own attainment.

There are two ways of spiritual development within the Mahāyāna, called the Pāramitṛyāna and Mantrayāna (Tantra). Both of them follow the Five Paths of the Mahāyāna. The former is like taking a roundabout route to one's destination, and the latter is like taking all the short-cuts. Before practising Tantra, one must have a clear general understanding of the Pāramitā-yāna, the Five Paths and the Ten Bodhisattva Stages.

The Tibetan word for these paths is "sa-lam" (*sa-lam*), meaning "earth paths." They are called "earth" because each stage is a foundation of wisdom which gives support to all further growth of insight. "Path" here means the development of a state of consciousness which has been grasped by the force of renunciation. "Path", "earth" and "wisdom" all have the same meaning in this case. It is absolutely necessary to follow a path in one's Dharma practice.

### A. THE PATH OF MERIT (Tsogs-lam, Tsog-Jam)

During this initial path, one develops love and mercy by meditating on the suffering of all beings. Not being able to bear this suffering, one generates a strong wish to liberate all sentient beings and, by the time this path has been attained, one has a firm development of Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is then not a corrected motivation, but a natural one which accompanies one always. From this point until Enlightenment, Bodhicitta continues to grow in intensity and is the impetus for attaining ever greater wisdom by means of hearing, contemplation and meditation. The practice of collecting merit with this motivation is a true basis for all further development.

The Path of Merit is divided into three stages of development. Bodhicitta and the Four Objects of Close Contemplation are attained during the initial stage (tsogs-lam chung-ngu, tsogs-lam ch'ung-ngu). The four objects of contemplation are the body (lus, lü), feelings (tsor-ba, tsor-wa) the mind (semis, sem), and all phenomena (chos, ch'ö). One meditates on the body in order to realize its impurity, on feelings to realize that they are all unsatisfactory, on the mind to realize that it is a stream of momentary changes (thus changing the belief that it is permanent), and on all phenomena to realize their non-self-existence. The characteristics of impermanence, suffering, voidness, and non-self-existence are found to be true for each of these objects.

By meditating closely on the body, one gains a clear understanding of the first Noble Truth, the Truth of Suffering. Most people are attached to their present bodies and wish for permanent life, but with this meditation one develops a strong wish for Liberation.

This leads one to seek out the cause of suffering, and by meditating on the different feelings, one sees that suffering is caused by the desires which arise from them. The actual feeling itself is not the cause (Buddha, too, had feelings), but one needs to abandon any feeling of joy or sorrow which causes desire.

After recognizing this second Noble Truth, one meditates on the mind, and thus gains insight into the third Noble Truth

of the Cessation of suffering. One comes to realize that there is no permanent independent self to be grasped, but that there does exist a momentary, relative self.

The fourth object of contemplation includes all secondary consciousnesses except feeling. By meditating on the virtuous and non-virtuous states of secondary consciousness and weighing them in the mind, one sees the reasons for following virtue, and thus arrives at an understanding of the Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering.

There are many reasons for meditating on the body. When it is recognized as the source of suffering, the urge to sever the rope of Karma and be rid of the delusions which bind one to it grows. One may feel proud of one's pure physical form, but if each part of the body is examined, one realizes that beauty pertains only to the skin that covers it. If all the bodily matter were taken out of its bag of skin, one would be revolted by it. Only the skin, form and life are attractive; if one sees a corpse or skeleton, one feels disgusted. One should constantly be mindful of the points developed during these meditation.

The study of the Buddha Nature (sangs-rgyas-kyi rigs, sang-gyakyi rig) complements that of the Five Paths. The mind is temporarily clouded by a veil of delusion which can be removed. To do so, one needs to know what paths to follow. If it is not known that one possesses this Essence, one's Dharma practice is based on blind faith. There is always room for mental progress. At birth people cannot think or talk, but later they are almost like different beings—and the growth goes on. At death, one should at least be on this first path, enabling one to proceed in the next life.

All Teachings deal with the Three Principal Paths, the essence of the Dharma, and one needs relative understanding of these in order to attain the first Path. Only when one has developed pure renunciation and seeks either Liberation or Enlightenment, has one entered the Path. There are many methods of attaining prosperity, but only one's internal practice gives true happiness. For this one needs to rely on external teachings (oral and scriptural), the concepts of which must be embodied in one's own practice. One must develop understanding of the Three Principals of the Path and attain perfect

renunciation for the sake of all sentient beings. When this is accomplished, the Path of Merit is attained.

Contemplation of the Five Paths also helps one to understand the Three Refuges. While meditating on the qualities of the Aryas, one realizes that they first attained the Path of Merit, and in order to have deep faith in them, one needs to know what they attained and how they attained it. With understanding of the Five Paths and Ten Bodhisattva Stages one has a clear outline of what one will be doing in the future and what obstacles lie ahead. All the Paths and Stages are experienced by one stream of consciousness, i.e. there are no breaks from one level to the next.

When the medium stage of the Path of Merit has been completed, one no longer has selfishly-motivated thoughts (e.g. of seeking one's own Liberation) and the Four States of Complete Abandonment have been attained. These four include:

1. abandoning non-virtuous actions before they occur;
2. abandoning non-virtuous actions which occur to the mind;
3. developing virtuous actions which have not yet occurred to the mind;
4. cultivating virtuous actions that have already been developed.

Before attaining any of the Paths, one needs to be able to discriminate between virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts and actions. A simple guideline is "whatever non-virtues are committed result in unhappiness, and any action that causes happiness is virtue." By meditating on the effects of different actions, both virtuous and non-virtuous, one gains a clear understanding of virtue and non-virtue. By knowing its effects, one will avoid non-virtue just as one would avoid entering the car of a drunken driver.

The understanding of the Four Noble Truths gained during the initial stage induces enthusiastic perseverance to attain the Four States of Abandonment. The Bodhicitta developed during the first stage is like the earth, the foundation of all further attainment, and that of the intermediate stage in

likened to pure gold. During the initial stage, if one meets with a very evil person and feels that one cannot in any way help him, one's Bodhicitta has been destroyed and one may fall back to the Hinayāna path. During the second stage, there is no longer any danger of this happening.

Someone once approached Śāriputra, one of the chief disciples of Buddha Sākyamuni, and asked him for his right hand. Śāriputra immediately cut it off and held it out to him with his other hand. The person, actually a manifestation of Māra, then refused to accept it since Śāriputra had been so discourteous as to give it to him with his left hand. Śāriputra then became very discouraged and wondered, "How can I ever develop Bodhicitta when there are such evil people in the world?" As soon as this attitude arose, his Bodhicitta faded and he took to the Hinayāna path. If it faded even for him, we must be all the more careful to guard our Bodhicitta at a time when the world is so full of evil men.

When the Pandit Dīnāga was beginning to write his great text on logic, he first wrote the salutation to the objects of Refuge, then went away for a short time. In the meantime a non-Buddhist erased what he had written, so when he returned, he wrote it again. And again the non-Buddhist erased it. Dīnāga then challenged him to come out in the open and debate with him. The challenge was accepted, but when Dīnāga defeated him, the non-Buddhist took revenge by producing fire from his mouth and burning his robes. In desperation, Dīnāga threw his slate up in the air, saying that if it fell to the earth, he would follow the Hinayāna path. Mañjuśrī then appeared, and held it aloft, while giving him words of guidance. One must especially follow Bodhisattva conduct when confronted with those who are rough and delight in evil.

During the final stage of the Path of Merit, the Four States of Samādhi, literally "the Four Legs of Miracle Action" are attained. These are the four main methods, or legs, which support the full attainment of single-pointed concentration, although there are many other factors involved besides. One may then go to the celestial spheres to make offerings and acquire merit, and all one's spiritual friends and statues of the Buddha are seen as actual Buddhas (not in their ordinary

form, but in the Nirmāṇakāya). One's Bodhicitta at this stage is like a new moon, which increases steadily until full Enlightenment.

While traversing all of the Five Paths, one needs the use of the power of Samādhi, and this is attained during this stage. The four kinds of Samādhi of which it is comprised are defined as "meditational knowledge having the eight powers of single-pointed concentration, being devoid of the five interferences." They include the following:

1. The Samādhi of intention. Like the wood needed for building a fire, this is a strong intention to attain Samādhi.
2. The Samādhi of enthusiastic perseverance.
3. The Samādhi of the mind. This is the realization of the inherent potential of the mind. Sakya Pandita wrote, "Even if you are going to die tomorrow, never stop meditating or acquiring new knowledge." Do not demand results in this life, but know that by meditating one will gain familiarity with the practice which will ensure fast progress in the next life.
4. The Samādhi of examination. With this ability one examines and tests the teachings on Samādhi given by the Guru. One also tests one's own level of attainment of Samādhi, watching for interferences and applying skillful opponents to aid progress.

Signs of the various stages are experienced as progress is made through them. With the attainment of the initial stage one has complete, almost instinctive, understanding of which acts are unskillful, and one firmly establishes oneself in those that are skillful. During the intermediate stage, one minutely follows the course of cause and effect and by being constantly aware of this, all one's actions become skillful. In the final stage, one attains the ability to remain in Samādhi at all times. Whenever one wishes to examine anything, the full power of concentration is there for use. One also has "the ability to remember all streams of knowledge" (chos-rgyun-gyi ting-nge-'dzin, ch'ö-gyünn-gyi' ting-nge-dzin), never forgetting any of the teachings one has received. Finally, one is able to listen to spiritual teachers and Buddhas while seeing them in their Enlightened forms. Two people who have both attained the Path of Merit can feel each other's physical vibrations and instinctively recognize each other's attainment, whereas one at a lower spiritual level cannot.

When this path has been fully attained, one should break meditation and acquire much merit by doing preliminary practices (e.g. prostrations, offering the mandala, and taking refuge). After this, one should begin meditating on Śūnyatā and thus enter the next path.

#### B. THE PATH OF PREPARATION

(sByor-lam, Jor-lam)

Just as love and mercy are called conquerors since those who attain them become conquerors, so do many terms, including the above four, refer both to the means and their fruit.

The reason for learning of these three stages on the Path of Merit is to become acquainted with the progress of one's future development. During the initial stage, one has the seeds for the attainments of all three stages, but lacks the powers needed to realize them. By developing close contemplation on the four objects, one gains understanding of the Four Noble Truths, and this leads to the attainment of the power of abandonment. The first two Noble Truths are to be abandoned and the latter two are to be accepted. The purpose of the four states of Samādhi is to attain the power to abandon gross Klesas and all attachment to samsaric pleasures.

The first two of the Five Paths are called the paths of ordinary individuals. The difference between the first and the second is like that between the earth and space. Although the practice remains the same, during the second path one develops much greater insight into Śūnyatā. The Path of Preparation includes all the levels of development from the attainment of the wisdom that is gained by means of psychic heat meditation to the understanding of the Supreme Dharma. The full development of samsaric meditational wisdom is completed during this path. As progress is made along the Path of Preparation, one's mental forces grow and the mind becomes purified. When this path is completed, the samsaric path comes to an end and that of the Āryas begins.

The Path of Preparation is made of up four stages, graded according to one's degree of insight into Śūnyatā.

1. The wisdom of psychic heat (drod, dr'ö). This wisdom aids in abandoning Klesas, but during this stage one may still hold wrong views. In the same way that a boxer takes on certain opponents that he can overcome but leaves others to fight with a stronger adversary, so are different Klesas combatted along the paths, depending on the strength of one's opponent forces.
2. The wisdom of the point (riz-e-mo, tze-mo). Having attained single-pointed wisdom, one totally abandons the extremes of nihilism and positivism and thus discards the seeds of wrong views.
3. The stage of patience (bzod-pa, zö-pa). At this stage one is assured of never again taking rebirth in any of the three lower states. All fears of losing one's self-identity are abandoned, and one has a great capacity to take on suffering.
4. The wisdom of the Supreme Dharma (chos-mchog, Ch'ö-Ch'og). The great value of having a human body is illustrated by the fact that this wisdom is attained solely by humans in the realm of desire. Other beings, such as Devas and those in the formless realms, cannot attain this fourth stage because they have little knowledge of suffering and thus a low potential for renunciation. Beings in the form and formless realms experience no suffering, but when their lives come to an end, they may take rebirth in any of the realms. The human form is the best for attaining Liberation.

During the first two stages, one attains the Five Powers needed for the development of the understanding of the Aryas. All people have these powers now, but their full potential does not become manifest until the attainment of this path. They include the following:

1. Faith (dad-pa'i dbang-po, dä-pä'i wang-po). This is a strong conviction in the truth of the Law of Cause and Effect and the Four Noble Truths.

2. Armour-like preservation (britzon'-grus-kyi dbang-po, tzön-drü-kyi wang-po). This is the perseverance of well-trained Bodhisattvas, who have the wish to remain for aeons in the three lower states of rebirth if this would benefit even one sentient being.
3. Keeping in mind the characteristics of the Four Noble Truths (dran-pa'i dbang-po, dr'an-pä'i wang-po).
4. The combination of Śamatha and Vipasyana (ting-nge-'dzin-gy'i dbang-po, ting-nge-dzin-gy'i wang-po).
5. The ability to examine the void nature of the Four Noble Truths (shes-rab-kyi dbang-po, she-rab-kyi-wang-po).

These Five Powers are developed during the Path of Preparation and are retained thereafter until the attainment of Enlightenment.

The Five Forces, which correspond directly with the Five Powers, are gained during the second two stages of this path. Once the Five Powers are developed, their opposites (faithlessness, laziness, etc.) may only arise during post-meditation periods. With the attainment of the Five Forces, they no longer arise at any time. The Five Forces include the Five Powers (but not vice versa) and are defined as kinds of wisdom which cannot be overcome by any of their opponents. They bring one to a quick attainment of the next path, which occurs during meditation at the end of the Path of Preparation, when one feels competent to attain full realization of Śūnyatā.

### C. THE PATH OF INSIGHT (Mthong-lam, Tong-lam)

The definition of this path is the actual understanding of Truth, or Śūnyatā. Before its attainment, Śūnyatā is confused with one's impression or image (don-spyi, dön-chi) of it. The difference is like that between recalling the visage of a friend and actually seeing him. From the Guru's teaching on Śūnyatā, one forms an impression of it which is mistaken for Śūnyatā itself. This is abandoned when Śūnyatā is experienced directly. According to the Prāśangikas, all states of consciousness of ordinary beings, including their sensual consciousness, are

deceptive, and this is due to their confusing Truth with their conception of it. The Aryas, or those who have attained the Path of Insight, have two states of consciousness. They have non-deceptive understanding of Śūnyatā, but deceptive consciousness of the five senses as well as instinctive Klesas.

Attaining the Path of Insight involves seeing the bare truth for the first time, and it is on this path that all intellectually-formed Klesas (kun-btags, kün-tag), which arise from invalid reasoning, are eliminated. For example, when one sees a table, one automatically thinks that it exists independently and this tendency is an inborn Klesa. Believing that it exists as such by relying on reasons is an intellectually-formed Klesa.

Upon attainment of the Path of Insight, one is for ever freed from throwing Karma, which is caused by self-grasping. After this, there is no chance of rebirth in any of the three lower realms. Since the force of throwing Karma has been destroyed, one has control over one's future rebirth.

During this path the Seven Causes of Enlightenment (byang-chub yan-lag bdun, j'ang-ch'ub yän-lag düin) are attained. The Tibetan term for "Enlightenment" (byang-chub, j'ang-ch'ub) is a composite of two terms meaning "freedom from both kinds of Klesas" and "the ability to encompass all that is to be known within one's wisdom." These seven characteristics are the exclusive attainments of Aryas.

1. Memory, as a pure cause of Enlightenment (dran-pa yang-dag, drän-pa yang-d'ag). This is the non-samsaric form of pure memory. One who attains it never forgets further goals or virtuous conduct.
  2. Discriminating wisdom and direct, fresh understanding of non-self-existence (chos rab-tu nman-'byed, ch'ö rab-tu nman-e).
  3. Pure enthusiastic perseverance (brzon-'grus yang-dag, tzön-drü yang-d'ag). This perseverance is more intense than that of earlier paths.
  4. A pure state of gladness (dga'-ba yang-dag, ga-wa yang-d'ag). This is both a mental and physical happiness which one never experiences until the attainment of this path.
- The word "pure" when applied to these terms means

"non-samsaric." That which is samsaric is stained by self-grasping, or the instincts of ignorance. For example, if one goes to a magic show and is taken in by the illustrations one's reaction is samsaric.

5. Pure ecstasy (shin-tu sbyangs-pa yang-dag, shin-tu j'ang-pa yang-d'ag). This is more intense than the ecstasy that results from the attainment of Śamatha.
6. Samādhi (ting-nge-'dzin, ting-nge-dzin).
7. A pure state of equanimity (btang-snyoms, tang-nyom). During this state one has relative freedom from obstacles. One of the signs of having attained this path is that one no longer experiences physical suffering. There is then no difficulty in giving away one's body or cutting off one's limbs if this would benefit other sentient beings. Freedom from the following five states of fear is also attained:

  - a. Fear of not obtaining food and clothing. These come naturally without effort.
  - b. Fear of expressing thoughts to large groups of people. One receives direct teachings from Buddhas and is able to establish close communication with other people.
  - c. Fear the death. One is able to choose one's own time of death, for this is no longer governed by the force of Karma or Kleśa.
  - d. Fear of birth in the three lower states. One has great confidence in the fact that all one's seeds for low birth have been destroyed.
  - e. Fear of teaching those who are very learned. One does so with complete relaxation, confidence and surety of one's understanding of Śūnyatā.

On the Path of Insight, one hundred and ten qualities are attained. A few of them include the ability to pass through concrete objects, to see one hundred Buddhas at one time and receive teachings from them, non-samsaric clairvoyance, and the ability to manifest oneself in a hundred forms at one time in order to help others.

D. THE PATH OF MEDITATION  
(sGom-lam, Gom-lam)

During this path, one develops greater acquaintance (sgom-gom) with Śūnyatā. The initial realization of it is like meeting a person for whom one has been waiting for a long time. Thereafter, one needs to live with him and come to know him well in order to be fully benefited by him. There is much to be attained on this path, including almost all the Bodhisattva Stages. Only the first Aryabodhisattva stage, or Bhūmi (literally meaning "earth" or "ground") is attained during the Path of Insight.

The following are the essential definitions of the Five Mahāyāna Paths, listed in order:

1. Direct understanding of the Dharma (chos mngon-rtogs, ch'ö ngön-tog).
2. Direct understanding of the profound meaning of the Dharma as opposed to the mere literal meaning (don mngon-rtogs, d'ön ngön-tog).
3. Direct understanding of Truth (bden-pa mngon-rtogs, den-pa ngön-tog).
4. Post-meditational direct understanding of Truth (rjes-la mngon-rtogs, je-la ngön-tog).
5. The wisdom of the abandonment of both types of mental obstacles (sgrib-gnyis spong-ba'i mkhyen-pa, dib-nyi póng-wä'i ky'en-pa). This is not a characteristic of the Hinayāna fifth path.

By following the Path of Meditation, fulfilment of the Eightfold Path ('phags-lam yan-lag brgyad, pag-lam yän-lag syä) is attained. This includes the following branches:

1. Perfect view (yang-dag-pa'i lta-ba, yang-d'ag-pä ta-wa), or the wisdom arising from the realization of Śūnyatā.
2. The intention of Bodhisattvas to express their understanding (specifically of Śūnyatā) to others (yang-dag-pa'i rtog-pa, yang-d'ag-päi tog-pa).

3. Giving precise teachings on Śūnyatā, presented in an orderly manner, free of contradictions (yang-dag-pa'i ngag, yang-d'ag-päi ngag).
4. Perfect physical action, including complete restraint from the Ten Non-Virtues (yang-dag-pa'i las-kyi-mtha', yang-d'ag-päi lä-kyi t'a).
5. Perfect livelihood (yang-dag-pa'i 'tsor-ba, yang-d'ag-päi tsor-wa). This is completely free of the following five wrong ways of acquiring things:
  - (a) putting on an act in order to impress others and thereby gain something;
  - (b) giving something in the hope of receiving more in return;
  - (c) flattering in order to gain some desired object;
  - (d) implying or hinting at a desire in the hope of its thereby being fulfilled;
  - (e) using an invalid excuse in order to exploit others.
6. The effort to abandon all inborn Kleśas (yang-dag-pa'i rtzol-ba, yang-d'ag-päi tzöl-wa).
7. Memory more highly developed than during the lower stages (yang-dag-pa'i dran-pa, yang-d'ag-päi dr'än-pa).
8. The use of Samādhi for the attainment of the full clairvoyance of the Buddhas (yang-dag-pa'i ting-nge-'dzin, yang-d'ag-päi ting-nge-dzün). With this attainment, one knows the thoughts of others as easily as seeing the reflection of a light shining on a mirror. The Buddhas never neglect to help those who are ripe, and their ability to know which beings can be helped is developed on this path.

Once the two types of mental obscurity have been eliminated, they never return. Intellectually-formed Kleśas and inborn Kleśas are called Kleśāvaraṇa (nyon-sgrub, nyön-drib). Instinctive mental obscurity, which is abandoned only by the Fully-Enlightened Ones is called Jñeyāvaraṇa (shes-sgrub, she-drib). This may be likened to the odor of a mothball which lingers on after the mothball (Kleśāvaraṇa) has been removed.

Only during the eight Bodhisattvabhūmi does one begin to eliminate Jñeyāvaraṇa.

There are two kinds of Bodhisattvas. The first completes all the Hinayāna stages of development, then goes on to start from the beginning of the Mahāyāna paths, and the second begins immediately with Mahāyāna practices. When the former attains just the first stage of the Mahāyāna Path of Merit, he is free of all coarse delusions, whereas the latter is not.

The branches of the Noble Eight-fold Path fall into the following four categories:

1. The method of cutting the root of ignorance (*gcad-pa byed-pa'i yan-lag, chä-pa j'e-päi yän-lag*). The first of the eight branches is included here.
2. The method of imparting understanding to others (*go-bar byed-pa'i yan-lag, g'o-war-j'e-päi yän-lag*). The second branch falls into this category.
3. The method of bringing others to a strong conviction about the truth of the Dharma, thereby causing them to mould their lives into perfect examples of the Teachings (*yid-ches-pa'i yan-lag, yi-ch'e-päi yän-lag*). The third, fourth and fifth branches are included here.
4. The method of applying opponent powers to Klesas (*gnyen-po'i yan-lag, nyen-pö yän-lag*). The remaining branches fall into this category.

The eight branches may also be divided into the Three Śikṣas of the Buddha's Teachings (*bslab-pa gsun, lab-pa sum*). There is no understanding of either the literal truth of the Teachings (*lung-gi bden-pa, lung-g'i den-pa*) or the truth apprehended through direct insight (*rtogs-pa'i bden-pa, tog-päi den-pa*) that is not included in these Three Śikṣas, or Trainings. The relationship between the Three Śikṣas is shown in the Wheel of the Cakra kings, a common symbol for the Buddha's Dharma. The fourth and fifth branches are aspects of the Śikṣa of Moral Discipline (*bslab-pa tsul-khrim-kyi bslab-pa, lab-pa tsül-trim-kyi lab-pa*), symbolized by the centre of the wheel. The eighth branch is the fulfilment of the Śikṣa of Concentration (*bslab-pa ting-nge-'dzin-gyi bslab-pa, lab-pa*

*ting-nge-dzin-gy'i lab-pa*), represented by the rim of the wheel (meaning that it encloses all attention). The remaining branches are aspects of the Śikṣa of Wisdom (*bslab-pa shes-rab-kyi bslab-pa, lab-pa shes-rab-kyi lab-pa*), represented by the spikes protruding from the wheel (showing that it destroys all its opponents). The eight branches are symbolized by the eight spokes.

The first four of the Five Paths are Bodhisattva paths, and the last is the path of the Buddhas. The first two paths are those of ordinary Bodhisattvas, and the next two are those of the Aryabodhisattvas. One who follows these latter two paths has the understanding with which one attains Enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. One's sole motivation is love and mercy for all sentient beings, and this is reinforced by the power of one's true understanding of Śūnyatā. All the types of wisdom of the Aryabodhisattvas (e.g. love and mercy) are not necessarily combined with true understanding of Śūnyatā, but they are grasped by the power of this understanding. At the beginning of the Path of Insight one becomes an Aryabodhisattva, and the first of the ten Bodhisattvabhūmis is attained.

## FOUR THE PATH OF PRACTICE

The second topic is the path of practice. This section concerns (1) the features of the path, (2) the phases of the path, and (3) the results of the path.

### FEATURES OF THE PATH

The first of these involves (1) a presentation of the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment and their relationship to the five paths, (2) a division of these factors into three phases, and (3) an explanation of the distinguishing features of the Bodhisattva's path.

### THE THIRTY-SEVEN FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The first topic includes explanations of (1) the four applications of mindfulness that occur on the lesser path of accumulation; (2) the four authentic eliminations that occur on the intermediate path of accumulation; (3) the four bases of miraculous power that occur on the greater path of accumulation; (4) the five faculties that occur on the first two stages of the path of joining, the stages of heat and summit; (5) the five powers that occur on the last two stages of the path of joining, the stages of acceptance and supreme quality; (6) the seven aspects of enlightenment that occur on the path of seeing; and (7) the eightfold noble path that occurs on the path of cultivation.

### THE FOUR APPLICATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

On the first topic, the treatise states:

By negative tendencies, the cause of craving,  
The basis, and no delusion—  
The applications of mindfulness  
Are cultivated to access the four truths. [IV.1]

The cultivation of remedies refers to the cultivation of the factors of enlightenment. Of these, the applications of mindfulness are presented first. (1) By investigating the body, which makes the **negative tendencies** fully evident, the truth of suffering can be accessed. (2) By thoroughly analyzing sensation, the main **cause of craving**, the truth of origin can be accessed. (3) By investigating the mind, the **basis for the apprehension of the self**, the truth of cessation can be accessed. (4) And, by thoroughly analyzing phenomena, there is **no delusion** about the thoroughly afflicted and completely purified. Through this, the truth of the path is accessed. Thus, the **applications of mindfulness** are cultivated to access the **four truths**.

The body is the basis for “negative tendencies,” insofar as this term refers to defiling formations. By being mindful of the body’s nature, which is the ripening of suffering, the truth of suffering can be accessed. Sensation is the cause of craving, the main factor involved in the origin of suffering. Therefore, thoroughly investigating sensation enables the truth of origin to be accessed. The ultimate basis for the view of the self is the mind. Investigating it allows the truth of cessation to be accessed. In other words, by comprehending the facts of selflessness and mere awareness, cessation can be accessed without any fear of the self being exterminated. By examining all phenomena, one becomes free of delusion regarding those that are thoroughly afflictive and those that are completely purificatory, and so accesses the truth of the path. In this way, training in the four applications of mindfulness is presented first so that one may access the four noble truths.

### THE FOUR AUTHENTIC ELIMINATIONS

On the second topic, the treatise states:

Once the conflicting factors and their remedies  
Are perfectly understood in every way,

**Four types of diligence arise  
That are directed towards eliminating these.** [IV.2]

The authentic eliminations are taught next. Once the conflicting factors and their remedies are perfectly understood in every way, which is brought about by cultivating the applications of mindfulness as shown above, **four types of diligence arise that are directed towards eliminating these conflicting factors and cultivating their remedies.** Individually, these are (1) preventing the arising of conflicting factors that have not yet occurred; (2) eliminating those that have occurred; (3) producing remedies that have not occurred; and (4) developing those that have.

By training in the four applications of mindfulness in the manner described above, the conflicting factors that are eliminated and the remedies that effect this elimination will be perfectly understood in every way. Once this occurs, four types of diligence will arise that are directed towards the elimination of conflicting factors: (1) striving to eliminate non-virtuous factors that have already occurred, (2) striving to prevent non-virtuous factors that have not yet occurred from arising, (3) striving to produce virtuous factors that have not yet occurred, and (4) striving to prevent virtuous factors that have already occurred from deteriorating.

#### THE FOUR BASES OF MIRACULOUS POWER

The third topic, the explanation of the four bases of miraculous power, includes (1) a brief presentation of the purpose of the four bases of miraculous power and the way in which they are produced, and (2) a detailed explanation of their nature.

#### DEVELOPING THE FOUR BASES OF MIRACULOUS POWER

On the first topic, the treatise states:

**Focus and flexibility  
Enable one to accomplish every goal.**

This comes about in reliance on its cause,  
The eight applications that eliminate the five flaws. [IV.3]

As one practices diligently to eliminate these factors, the mind remains focused and achieves **flexibility**. Consequently, one develops the four bases of miraculous power, which are causes that enable **one to accomplish every goal**. These four meditative absorptions are distinguished with reference to the factors that assist them—intention, diligence, vigilance, and discernment. In this way, the bases of miraculous power follow the authentic eliminations. This flexibility comes about in reliance on its cause, the eight applications that eliminate the five flaws.

By cultivating diligence in the manner described above, the mind will be able to remain in a state of one-pointed concentration and become extremely flexible. This allows one to accomplish the various types of superior knowledge, as well as every other goal. Meditative absorptions that possess this type of mental flexibility arise in dependence upon a specific cause, the eight applications that eliminate the five flaws.

#### DETAILED EXPLANATION

The second section presents (1) the five flaws that are eliminated, and (2) how to apply their remedy, the eight applications.

#### THE FIVE FLAWS

On the first topic, the treatise states:

**Being lazy, forgetting the instructions,  
Dullness and agitation,  
Non-application, and application—  
These are held to be the five flaws. [IV.4]**

What are the five flaws? They are (1) being *lazy* when it comes to the cultivation of meditative absorption; (2) *forgetting the instructions* on how to meditate; (3) *dullness and agitation*, which are counted as one flaw; (4) *non-application*, when it comes to pacifying these two; and (5) *over-application* once they have already been thoroughly pacified—these are held to be the five flaws.

What are the five flaws that hinder the accomplishment of meditative absorption? They are (1) falling under the sway of *laziness* and, conse-

quently, not exerting oneself, and (2) forgetting the instructions on meditative absorption; both of these hinder taking up the practice of meditative absorption. (3) Dullness and agitation hinder the actual practice of meditative absorption; the former is a state of inner withdrawal and the latter a proliferation of thought activity directed towards external objects. These two are counted as a single flaw. (4) When one is engaged in meditative absorption and dullness, agitation, or another flaw occurs, one should apply the appropriate remedy. Not applying the remedy in such a way is a hindrance. (5) On the other hand, once the remedies have been used to pacify dullness and agitation, to go on applying them in an excessive manner is also a hindrance, because that itself is a factor that creates turbulence. These last two flaws keep one's meditative absorption from developing. Laziness and the other four factors presented here are asserted to be the five flaws.

### THE EIGHT APPLICATIONS

On the second topic, the treatise states:

The basis and what is based on this,  
Cause and result,  
To not forget one's focal point and  
To notice dullness or agitation,  
To fully apply oneself to the elimination of these factors  
And rest naturally once pacified. [IV.5]

The eight applications that eliminate these flaws are classified as follows. (1) Intention, the basis for effort, and (2) effort, what is based on this intention; (3) faith, the cause, or basis, of intention; and (4) flexibility, the result that rests on [the basis of] effort. The four remaining applications that eliminate [their respective flaws] are as follows: (5) mindfulness, to not forget one's focal point and (6) alertness, to notice the presence of either dullness or agitation; (7) volition, which allows one to fully apply oneself to the elimination of these factors once they have been noticed; and (8) equanimity, the mind's resting naturally once dullness and agitation have been pacified.

There are four remedies that lead to the elimination of laziness: faith, intention, effort, and flexibility. If flexibility is attained laziness will not

occur. This flexibility, in turn, is achieved through effort, which is itself attained by having one's intent directed towards cultivating meditative absorption. Intention arises by having trust and faith in this [practice] at the outset. Therefore, effort is based on intention, the explicit desire to achieve meditative absorption, while intention forms the basis for effort. The cause of this intention is faith and the result of effort is the achievement of flexibility. Laziness is eliminated by means of these four remedies.

Similarly, there are four remedies associated with the remaining four flaws: mindfulness, alertness, volition, and equanimity. Mindfulness prevents one from forgetting the focal point of the instructions. Alertness notices and comprehends occurrences of dullness and agitation. Volition allows one to apply the remedies that eliminate the flaws of dullness and agitation, while equanimity settles the mind in a natural state of ease once they have been pacified.

### THE FIVE FACULTIES

On the fourth topic, the treatise states:

When the factors conducive to liberation have been developed,  
There is control over intention and application,  
The focal point is not forgotten,  
Discursiveness does not occur, and discernment is present.  
[IV.6]

What follows are the five faculties. When the four bases of miraculous power have made the mind flexible and the fundamental virtues that are factors conducive to liberation have been developed, there is control over [four factors]: (1) Faith leads to control over intention concerning the acceptance and rejection of the four truths, and (2) diligence brings control over the application of this [acceptance and rejection]. (3) Mindfulness leads to a control in which the focal point is not forgotten; (4) meditative absorption brings control over the mind, ensuring that discursiveness does not occur; and (5) knowledge allows for a control such that discernment is present.

Once the four bases of miraculous power have made the mind flexible and the fundamental virtues that are factors conducive to liberation have

been developed, one gains control [over four things]. Faith leads to control over intention concerning the acceptance and rejection of the four truths, while diligence brings control over application, i.e., putting [this intention] into practice. The word “control” that appears in the middle of this stanza is a so-called interspersed clarifier. It should be understood to apply throughout, to each of the remaining three faculties. Mindfulness brings a control that keeps one from forgetting one’s focal point, meditative absorption keeps the proliferation of irrelevant thoughts at bay, and knowledge allows for the discernment of phenomena. In this way, the five faculties usher in the qualities of complete purity.

### THE FIVE POWERS

The fifth topic explains the five powers. This section includes (1) the actual [presentation of the five powers], and (2) a summation demonstrating how the powers are linked with the path of joining.

### THE ACTUAL PRESENTATION

On the first division, the treatise states:

**Because the factors that conflict with them are weakened,  
They become powers. The latter are effects.** [IV.7a-b]

Once faith and the other faculties have gained strength, they are referred to as “powers.” Thus, because the factors that conflict with them are weakened, they become powers. What is the reason for presenting faith and the rest in this particular sequence? The latter are the effects of the former. Thus, due to faith one musters diligence. By being diligent one will come to be mindful. Being mindful will allow one to rest in equanimity. And by resting in equanimity one will come to the understanding of reality as it actually is.

Faith and the rest of the five faculties become powerful because the factors that conflict with them—lack of faith, laziness, forgetfulness, distraction, and bewilderment or distorted knowledge—are diminished and weakened. They are referred to as “powers,” such as the “power of faith,” because they cannot be overcome by the factors that conflict with them. Furthermore, of these faculties and powers, the latter are effects of the

former. Faith causes diligence, which in turn causes mindfulness. From mindfulness arises meditative absorption, the ability to rest in equanimity, which eventually results in knowledge of reality as it actually is.

### SUMMARY

On the second topic, the treatise states:

**For both the faculties and the powers  
There are two factors conducive to ascertainment.** [IV.7c-d]

For both the faculties and the powers there are two [sets of] factors conducive to ascertainment. These two are [the phases of] heat and summit, which are when the faculties occur, and [the phases of] acceptance and supreme property associated with the powers.

The phases of the five faculties and the five powers are factors conducive to ascertainment. These factors are posited with reference to the first two and latter two of the four stages of the path of joining. How so? The five faculties should be understood to be present on the two stages of heat and summit and the five powers on the two stages of acceptance and supreme property.

### THE SEVEN ASPECTS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

On the sixth topic, the treatise states:

**The aspect of nature, the aspect of basis,  
The third aspect of definitive emergence,  
And the fourth aspect of benefit;  
The three aspects of freedom from affliction** [IV.8]

**Are taught to be the foundation, state,  
And the essential nature.** [IV.9a-b]

The seven aspects of enlightenment come next on the path of seeing. How are these classified? Fully discerning phenomena is the aspect of nature and mindfulness is the enlightenment aspect of basis. Diligence is the third aspect of definitive emergence and joy is the fourth aspect,

**that of benefit.** The three aspects of freedom from thorough affliction are agility, meditative absorption, and equanimity. Of these, agility is taught to be the foundation for absence of thorough affliction because it is the remedy for negative tendencies. Meditative absorption is the state in which thorough affliction is absent and equanimity is the essential nature of absence of affliction.

The seven aspects of enlightenment are mindfulness, fully discerning phenomena, diligence, joy, agility, meditative absorption, and equanimity. The knowledge that fully discerns phenomena is referred to as the aspect of nature, owing to the fact that the knowledge that perceives the truth of the intrinsic nature is the essence of the path of seeing. Therefore, it is referred to as the essence, or nature, of enlightenment. Mindfulness is the aspect of the basis of enlightenment because it is the basis of good qualities. Diligence is the aspect of definitive emergence because it allows one to transcend the conflicting factors. Joy is the aspect of benefit, the desirable quality that is obtained by [practicing] the paths. Agility, meditative absorption, and equanimity are aspects that are free from affliction. To elaborate, agility is taught to be the foundation for freedom from affliction; meditative absorption, the state of freedom from affliction; and equanimity, the essential nature of freedom from affliction.

## THE EIGHTFOLD NOBLE PATH

On the seventh topic, the treatise states:

Determination, production of understanding,  
Three aspects that instill confidence in others, [IV.9c-d]

And the remedy for conflicting factors—

These are the eight aspects of the path.

It is held that others are made aware of  
The view, discipline, and few material needs. [IV.10]

Afflictions, subsidiary afflictions, and mastery—  
These remedy the conflicting factors. [IV.11a-b]

Next, there are eight aspects of the path that occur on the path of cultivation. Authentic view is the aspect that provides determination. It

is a mundane factor that is obtained subsequent to the supramundane and which determines one's own realization. Authentic thought and authentic speech are aspects that bring about an understanding in others; the production of understanding is brought about by intentional speech. Authentic speech, activity, and livelihood are three aspects that instill confidence in others, and authentic effort, mindfulness, and meditative absorption constitute the remedy for conflicting factors.

These are the eight aspects of the path.

Moreover, it is held that others are made aware of the view, discipline, and [the benefits of having] few material needs via, respectively, authentic speech, activity, and livelihood. Authentic effort functions as a remedy against the afflictions that are eliminated on the path of cultivation. Authentic mindfulness allows one to remain perfectly mindful of the reasons for calm abiding and so forth. Since it ensures the absence of dullness and agitation, it acts as a remedy against the subsidiary afflictions. In authentic meditative absorption, one rests in a state of concentration. This functions as a remedy for the factors that inhibit equilibrium and prevent mastery of the super-knowledges and other extraordinary qualities. Hence, these remedy the conflicting factors.

The eightfold noble path is taught to include authentic view, thought, speech, activity, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditative absorption. The nature of the authentic view is such that it determines the way objects really are. As the stainless knowledge that is attained subsequent to the direct perception of the intrinsic nature on the path of seeing, it manifests as a certainty that apprehends, or determines, the significance of the reality realized [in meditative equipoise]. Authentic thought and authentic speech elicit understanding in others. Authentic thought is the motivation to teach, others exactly what oneself has understood. To speak with such motivation is authentic speech. Both possess a stainless authenticity.

Authentic speech, activity, and livelihood are the three aspects that instill confidence in others. How so? It is held that authentic speech makes others aware of the [speaker's] pure view and so instills confidence in them. Authentic activity is the complete non-engagement in all that is evil and unvirtuous; it is discipline that pleases the noble ones, attained by power of the intrinsic nature. Through such activity, others are made aware of pure discipline. This instills confidence in them. Authentic livelihood is a noble being's complete disengagement from wrong livelihood,

that which is based on flattery and so forth. Authentic livelihood makes others aware that [the noble one] has few material needs. This too instills confidence.

Effort, meditative absorption, and mindfulness remedy the factors that conflict with the path. Effort eliminates those afflictions that are discarded via the path of cultivation. Mindfulness eliminates the subsidiary afflictions of dullness and agitation because it allows [the mind] to focus intensely on the causes for calm abiding and so forth. Because the superknowledges and other qualities are accomplished by abiding in meditative concentration, meditative absorption remedies the factors that conflict with the mastery of such extraordinary qualities. Thus, view and the remaining seven aspects are the eight aspects that constitute the path of the noble ones.

### THE THREE PHASES

On the second topic, the treatise states:

In accord, yet mistaken;  
Related, but opposed; [IV.11c-d]

Unmistaken and unrelated to error—  
These are the cultivations. [IV.12a-b]

In short, these remedies can be cultivated in three ways: (1) The cultivation that occurs on the paths of accumulation and joining is **in accord** with the **unmistaken, yet still mistaken**. (2) The cultivation of noble ones who are training is **related** to the errors that are eliminated via cultivation, **but in essence, opposed** to them. (3) The cultivation beyond training is **essentially unmistaken and unrelated to error**—these are the cultivations.

All of the five paths are contained within three phases. On the paths of accumulation and joining, the path is cultivated by means of the four applications of mindfulness and so forth. These are **unmistaken** in the sense that the understanding one cultivates through study and reflection accords with reality. However, they are also instances of being mistaken because one conceives of the object universal of the absence of the self as if it were the specific characteristics that pertain to the absence of

self.<sup>35</sup> In the context of the paths of seeing and cultivation, there is still a connection with errors that obscure. Nevertheless, since the meaning of selflessness is perceived directly, they are opposed to error. On the path beyond training the path has already been completed; the essence of the intrinsic nature is seen directly and all obscurations, including their habitual tendencies, have been eliminated. For this reason, here cultivation is unrelated to error.

### WHAT DISTINGUISHES THE BODHISATTVA PATH

On the third topic, the treatise states:

In the case of the Bodhisattvas,<sup>36</sup>  
Focus, directing the mind,  
And attainment are superior. [IV.12c-d]

The Listeners and Self-realized Buddhas focus only on the body and the other factors included in their own stream of being. **In the case of the Bodhisattvas**, however, the **focus** encompasses everything that which is included in their own stream of being, as well as that of others. The Listeners and Self-realized Buddhas direct their minds to the body and [the other foundations for mindfulness] as being impermanent and so forth. For the Bodhisattvas, in contrast, **directing the mind** does not involve focusing on anything. The Listeners and Self-realized Buddhas train to separate from the body and the other [aggregates] at all costs. The Bodhisattvas do not train to separate from the body, nor to do the opposite. Instead, they train to attain the non-abiding transcendence of suffering. And thus, their attainments as well are **superior**.

When Bodhisattvas train on the path using the four applications of mindfulness and so forth, there are three distinct qualities that make their path superior. What are they? (1) Their focus is vast. The Bodhisattvas focus on the entire range of phenomena contained within their own stream of being and that of others. In doing so, they view the nature of these phenomena as devoid of the two kinds of self. The focus of the Listeners and Self-realized Buddhas is narrow in comparison. In focusing primarily on the phenomena in their own streams of being, they observe only the absence of the personal self. (2) They direct their minds in a way that is beyond focus. The Listeners and Self-realized Buddhas direct their minds

to the marks of impermanence and so forth. The Bodhisattvas, in contrast, direct their minds in a way that is free from all exaggeration and denigration, free from [believing in] permanence, impermanence, and so forth. (3) They attain the non-abiding transcendence of suffering. TheListeners and Self-realized Buddhas [seek to] part with factors like the impure body. Consequently, they attain a lesser transcendence of suffering. The Bodhisattvas, however, do not practice to either separate or not separate from factors such as the body. Instead, they practice to attain the non-abiding transcendence of suffering. The practice of the Bodhisattvas is superior in these three ways.

### PHASES OF THE PATH

Second, the phases of the path are presented in two ways: (1) as nine phases, and (2) as three phases.

### NINE PHASES

The first of these divisions involves a discussion of (1) the actual phases, and (2) how they are classified.

### THE ACTUAL PHASES

On the first topic, the treatise states:

- Causal, entry,
- Preparation, so-called result,
- Action, non-action, distinction,
- The superior, and the unsurpassable, [IV.13]**

What states are associated with cultivating the remedies? The causal state is when an individual has the potential [to practice one of the three vehicles]. The state of entry is when one gives rise to the enlightened mind. The state of preparation begins with the manifestation of the enlightened mind and continues until the fruition has been attained. The so-called resultant state is the attainment of this fruition. The state that involves action is the stage of training, while the state of non-action is the stage beyond training. The state of distinction is

when one possesses the super-knowledges and other such special qualities. The superior state is that of the Bodhisattva and the unsurpassable state is that of perfect buddhahood.

The path is explained to involve nine different phases: (1) The causal state refers to a person who has the potential [to practice one of the vehicles]. (2) The state of entry is when, in the manner of any one of the three vehicles, one gives rise to the enlightened mind. (3) Preparation begins when the enlightened mind has been developed and ends when the first ground is attained. (4) The so-called fruition is the attainment of the first ground. (5) The second ground up to and including the seventh are states that involve activity, concerted effort on the path. (6) The effortless state, the state of non-training, is the eighth ground. (7) The ninth ground is the state in which one possesses distinct qualities, such as correct discrimination and the various types of super-knowledge. (8) The superior ground of training is the tenth. (9) The unsurpassable state is the path beyond training, the ground of buddhahood.

### THE CLASSIFICATION OF THESE PHASES

On the second topic, the treatise states:

- These are taught to be
- Inspiration, engagement,
- Definitive emergence, prophecy,
- Expression, empowerment, [IV.14]

Arrival, benefits, and active accomplishment. [IV.15a]

These [states] are taught to be as follows: The state of inspiration is taught to include all grounds of the Bodhisattva's inspired conduct and the state of engagement, the first ground. The state of definitive emergence is taught to include the next six grounds, the state of prophecy, the eighth ground, and the state of expression, the ninth ground. The state of empowerment is the tenth ground. The state of arrival refers to the body of qualities, while the state of benefits is the body of perfect enjoyment and the state of active accomplishment is taught to be the emanation body.

What follows is an additional way of classifying the nine states, different from the one explained above: (1) The paths of accumulation and joining are referred to as the “phase of inspired conduct.” This includes the states of potential, entry, and preparation. (2) The first ground is when one has actually set out on the transcendent path. (3) The second to the seventh grounds are states of definitive emergence, in which one actively strives to eliminate [the discards]. (4) On the eighth ground, prophecy is obtained. (5) On the ninth ground, the Dharma is expressed to disciples via the fourfold correct discrimination. (6) On the tenth ground, one is empowered with the great rays of light. (7) The body of qualities is the arrival at the ground of buddhahood, while (8) possessing great benefit is the body of perfect enjoyment, and (9) accomplishing activities for the welfare of disciples is the emanation body. Thus, the nine phases are also taught to be classified in this way.

### THREE PHASES

On the third topic, the treatise states:

The basic field of phenomena has three aspects:  
The impure, impure and pure,  
And the perfectly pure. [IV.15b-d]

It is held that individuals  
Can be appropriately classified through these. [IV.16a-b]

The basic field of phenomena has three aspects. The impure state begins with the causal state and continues throughout the state of preparation. The state that is both impure and pure is the path of training, and the perfectly pure state refers to the path beyond training. It is held that individuals can be appropriately classified as, for instance, “one with potential” or “one who has entered,” through these divisions of the states.

Individuals who are present to the basic field of phenomena go through three phases: (1) The “phase of sentient beings” refers to the period in which impurities have not been purified. (2) The “phase of the Bodhisattva” is when some of the obscurations have been purified, but

not all of them. (3) The stage at which they have all been completely purified is the “phase of buddhahood.”

These conventions are applied in a precise way from the perspective of how things appear. How so? It is held that three types of persons, or three phases, can be set forth based on the two sets of nine phases explained above. To elaborate, being at the “causal phase,” as well as those of “entry,” “preparation,” and “inspiration,” is the phase of becoming an impure sentient being. The phase that is both pure and impure is comprised of the five phases that start with “result” and end with “the superior” and the five that begin with “engagement” and proceed through “empowerment.” These are all included in the grounds of the Bodhisattvas. The four remaining phases, the “unsurpassable,” and also “arrival,” “benefits,” and “active accomplishment,” comprise the phase of complete purity. These four are within the ground of buddhahood, the path beyond training.

Vasubandhu explains what is referred to here as “non-action” using the term “beyond training.” He also states that “the superior” refers to “Bodhisattvas who have entered the grounds superior to those of the Listeners and so forth.” When expounding on Vasubandhu’s commentary, Sthiramati interprets the former to mean the [path] beyond training, the ground of buddhahood. The latter he associates with those who, in completely realizing both types of selflessness, are superior to the Listeners and so forth and abide on the grounds of the Great Vehicle’s noble ones. Thus, in his reading, “the unsurpassable” applies to the ground of buddhahood and “the superior” to all [of the ten grounds], rather than to the tenth ground [alone].

This poses some difficulties, however, because with this reading there is no specific explanation of two phases, the tenth and the eighth grounds, while the explanations of that which is “beyond training” and “the unsurpassable” become repetitive. The individual divisions of the two sets of nine phases cannot be linked with one another in order and, furthermore, [the explanation of] the phase associated with having entered the grounds ends up being a repetition of what was already taught.

Therefore, I suggest that the phrase “beyond training” in Vasubandhu’s commentary be taken to refer to the transcendence of efforts that occurs when training on the path, not to the ground of buddhahood. Likewise, the reference to those who abide on noble grounds above those of the Listeners and the Self-realized Buddhas could be understood to refer to those on the tenth ground, those who are above not only the Listeners,

Self-realized Buddhas, and so forth, but also superior to Bodhisattvas who are training on the nine grounds below.

Not only are there no problems with such an interpretation, it also contains clear points for properly understanding the structure of the two enumerations and the relationship between them. It appears, however, that I am the only one to have proposed such a reading. I therefore request intelligent individuals to examine this further.

## RESULTS OF THE PATH

The third topic involves (1) a general presentation of the five results, and (2) a detailed explanation from the perspective of the path.

### THE FIVE RESULTS

On the first topic, the treatise states:

Successive, initial,  
Familiarization, perfection, [IV.17c-d]

Concordant, conflicting,  
Separation, special,  
Superior, and unsurpassable—  
This is a summary of different fruitions. [IV.18]

These stanzas on the cultivation of remedies constitute the fourth chapter of the treatise *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes*.

What results are attained? There are five: (1) Becoming a vessel, which is taught to be ripening that accords with virtue; (2) strength, the prevalence of virtue that ensues from that (i.e., having become a vessel); (3) desiring virtue, which is due to having familiarized oneself with virtue in the past; (4) the development of virtue that comes from familiarizing oneself with virtue in the present, and (5) purity, the elimination of obscurations. This is the sequence of the five fruitions.

In general, all fruitions of the path can be grouped into five categories: (1) As a result of practicing virtue, one will attain a [physical] support that makes one a vessel for virtue in all of one's lives. This is explained to be the “ripened result.” One who is a vessel for virtue has gained an excellent physical support free from the eight states that lack freedom.<sup>37</sup> When the mind applies itself to virtue, it functions as a vessel or medium that enables virtuous qualities to arise. This is the “ripened

result” of virtue that has been engendered in the past. (2) Once one has already become a vessel, possessing the strength to practice purification is the “predominant effect.” (3) Wanting to practice virtue again and again is the “effect that accords with its cause.” (4) The unprecedented increase and flourishing of virtue in this lifetime by the power of prior habituation to virtue is the “effect of individual effort.” (5) The purification of conflicting factors is the “effect of separation.” The effects explained here are the fruitions of the path. They are sequential because the latter develop from the former.

## THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PATH

On the second topic, the treatise states:

“Successive fruition” refers to “developing the enlightened mind based on one’s potential” and the rest [of the nine states mentioned above]. The “initial fruition” is when supramundane qualities are obtained for the first time. The “fruition that occurs via familiarization” refers to all [subsequent supramundane stages of] training. The “fruition of perfection” is the stage beyond training. The “concordant fruition” refers to the causal sequence of entities. The “conflicting fruition” refers to the path of elimination, the initial fruition. The “fruition of separation” from the afflictions refers to the “fruition of familiarization” and the “fruition of perfection.” The “special fruition” refers to the special qualities, the super-knowledges and so forth. The “superior fruition” refers to the grounds of the Bodhisattvas, and the “unsurpassable fruition” refers to the ground of the Buddha. This is a summary of different fruitions. When elaborated, they are infinite.

The cultivation of remedies can be summarized as follows: the training in purifying, the training in diminishing, the training in thoroughly purifying, the training in authentically initiating the superior, the training in merging (i.e., merging with the path of seeing), the training of entry, the supreme training, the initial training, the intermediate training, the final training, the training that involves a superior and the unsurpassable training (i.e., that which is superior with respect to its focal point, directing of the mind and attainment).

The states can be summarized as the fortunate state of having potential; the state of initiating (from developing the enlightened mind through the preparation); the states of impurity, purity, and utter purity; the ornamented state; the pervasive state (because it pervades the ten grounds); and the unsurpassable state.

The fruktions can be summarized as the condensation, its particulars, prior familiarization, evolving accomplishment, presentation, and explanation. The condensation refers to the five fruktions. The remaining fruktions are the particular instances of these five. Prior familiarization is the ripened effect. The remaining four are accomplishments related to the steady development of this ripened effect. Presentation refers to successive fruktion and the rest of the four in that category. Explanation refers to concordant fruktion and so forth, as these explain the [earlier four fruktions].

“Successive fruktion” refers to a sequence of results, each component of which is itself a causal event, such as developing the enlightened mind based on one’s potential. The “initial fruktion” is the path of seeing, which is the first supramundane path to be reached. Becoming familiar with what one has seen is [also a fruktion], the path of cultivation, as is the perfection of that familiarity, the final path. The first of these results is the path of inspired conduct, while the latter three results pertain to the supramundane path. The entire range of the path’s results are contained within these four.

“Successive fruktion” is referred to as a “concordant fruktion” because its qualities accord with what preceded them and because all its stages are aspects of engaging with suchness. The path of seeing is referred to as the “conflicting fruktion” because it consists of factors that conflict with the afflictions that are eliminated when [suchness] is seen. The fruktions of “familiarization” and its “perfection” are both referred to as the “fruktion of separation” because they are stages of separation

from factors that obscure the grounds. The attainment of special qualities, such as the various types of super-knowledge, is referred to as the “special fruktion.” The “fruktion of superiority” refers to the Bodhisattva grounds because those on these grounds are superior to the Listeners and Self-realized Buddhas. The ground of buddhahood is referred to as the “unsurpassable fruktion.”

This way of enumerating the fruktions differs from the enumeration given above, which explained “becoming a vessel” and four other categories. The fruktions explained in these two sections summarize and provide general categories for the fruktions of the entire range of paths. When divided extensively, however, the results of the three vehicles are limitless.

This was the commentary to the fourth chapter of the treatise *Distinguishing the Middle from Extremes*, the stanzas on the cultivation of remedies.

# The Path of Individual Liberation

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*The path does not really exist unless you are available. It is as if you are the road worker, the surveyor, and the traveler, all at once. As you go along, the road gets built, the survey's done, and you become a traveler.*

FROM THE practitioner's point of view, there's an interesting link between the first noble truth and the last noble truth: the first noble truth could be described as the ground on which the fourth noble truth is founded. That is, the realization of suffering brings an understanding and discovery of the path. The problem with the word *path* is that we automatically think that the road has been built and the highway is open, so we can drive nonstop. There's a possibility of taking too much comfort in having a path, thinking that since the path has already been laid down, you do not have to choose which path to take—there's simply *the path*. That attitude seems to be the product of misunderstanding or cowardliness on the part of the student. In fact, the path does not really exist unless you are available. It is as if you are the road worker, the surveyor, and the traveler, all at once. As you go along, the road gets built, the survey's done, and you become a traveler.

There is another kind of path that *has* already been built for you, which you should know about, called the "general path," or the "common path." In the general path, value judgments and morals have already been developed, such as the virtues of democracy, the idea of a good man or good woman, or the purity of the social worker—you just enlist, become a member, and go to work. The common-sense path tells you that it's

nice to be polite, that good manners always work, and that kindhearted people are constantly loved. It might also include Buddhist teachings such as "Control your senses, control your mind, get to know yourself." On the common spiritual path, there is an emphasis on getting psychologically high, becoming an accomplished meditator. By concentrating on a burning candle, you could develop your concentration, attain a state of samadhi, and experience the One, the realm of the gods.

The common path is not as accurate or profound as the Buddhist path, but it is not by any means the object of mockery. As Buddhists, we too follow common rules and regulations. For instance, we don't shoplift, but we pay for the things we buy. However, in terms of dharma, such norms are just sidelines, not what we concentrate on. Many scriptures, and even sutras, talk about the common path as the starting point for students who are beginning at the beginning. For students who see the world in a very naive way and have naive attitudes toward spirituality, goodness is the issue, peace is the issue, euphoric states of samadhi are the issue; therefore, they try to cultivate those things. However, from the Buddhist point of view, that is dwelling in the *devaloka*, the god realm. In cultivating meditative absorptions, or jhana states, you are appreciating the advertisement, rather than wholeheartedly getting into the path itself.

The extraordinary thing about the Buddhist approach is that such conventionality is regarded as unnecessary. On the Buddhist path, instead of trying to cultivate the jhana states, you come directly to the mind—a mind that is developing its awareness, openness, painlessness, or whatever it may be.

The path has many stages. At first, it is a series of steps, then it becomes a county road, and finally a highway. At the beginning, the path is just a footpath, a trail. We have to cut down and tame ourselves much more at the beginning than at the end. We have to develop renunciation. If we simply stepped out of our house into a luxurious limousine and drove along the road, there would be no sense of journey, no sense of giving. Therefore, renunciation is extremely important. We have to renounce our home—our snug, comfortable samsaric world. There are two types of renunciation: genuine becoming and contentment. The first type of renunciation in Tibetan is *ngejung*: "*nge* means 'real,' or 'genuine,' and *jung* means 'becoming,' or 'happening'; so *ngejung* is 'real becoming.'" Renunciation is true, real, definite. We are disgusted and put off by the

samsaric world we have been living in. The second type of renunciation is contentment, or *chok-she* in Tibetan. *Chok* means "contentment," "satisfaction," or "enough," and *she* means "knowledge," so *chok-she* means "contentment-knowledge." We know that things are enough as they are. We do not make further demands and we don't insist on having all the local conveniences, but we are satisfied to live in poverty. This does not refer to psychological poverty, however, for practitioners are supposed to have a quality of generosity and richness.

Traditionally there are said to be five paths: the path of accumulation, the path of unification,\* the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning.<sup>†</sup>

### I. THE PATH OF ACCUMULATION

The path of accumulation is based on getting acquainted with the teachings and the teacher. You are putting in a lot of hard work in order to learn the teachings. It is the layperson's or beginner's level. You are new to the teachings and not yet an accomplished meditator, so you start the whole path right from the beginning—but it is a good way of beginning at the beginning. You do not have to go back to the common path, but this does not mean that you act against common law or that you become a criminal, or anything of that nature. Instead, your attitude is very direct and simple. Although you are a beginner, your approach to the path is not based on the conventional law of goodness and badness. On the path of dharma, behaving well or becoming a good person is not the point. The issue of goodness or wickedness does not particularly belong to the realm of dharma. Dharma has to do with sanity, with issues of clarity and confusion. Dharma is more psychologically oriented than behavior-pattern-oriented.

\* This path is commonly referred to as the path of application.

† This ancient division of the path into five stages is discussed by Atisha Dipankara (990–1055) in his work *Lamp on the Way to Enlightenment* (Skt.: *Bodhipathapradipika*). Geshe Sonam Rinchen, trans. Ruth Sonam (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1997). It is also discussed in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, Gampopa (1079–1153), ed. Ani K. Trinlay Chuoedron, trans. Khenpo Konchog Gyaltse Rinpoche (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1998). For more on the path of accumulation, see chapter 63, "The Lesser Path of Accumulation"; chapter 64, "The Middle Path of Accumulation"; and chapter 65, "The Greater Path of Accumulation."

The first path, the path of accumulation, is finding your foothold in the teachings as a layperson. Having found that foothold in the teachings, you begin to make the journey upward. In Tibetan, the path of accumulation is *tsoglam*. *Tsog* means “group,” “collection,” or “gathering”; *lam* means “path,” so *tsoglam* means “path of accumulation.” On the path of accumulation, we are working with ourselves and we are inspired to make sacrifices. We accumulate good merit by developing a good attitude and performing good deeds. We cultivate simplicity and sacrifice.

On the path of accumulation we also learn to sacrifice our mind; that is, we don’t indulge in our thought process or our subconscious gossip. We give that up by means of the very basic and ordinary discipline of shamatha practice. Usually, whenever we have a bright idea of how to go about something, whenever we have any kind of desire, we automatically try to follow it up. We would like to raid the refrigerator, so to speak. We would like apple juice, orange juice, cottage cheese, ice water—anything to avoid boredom. Through shamatha, we discover that we do not need to jump to conclusions or act purely out of impulse. All those impulses are canceled out by the process of mental discipline.

When we practice shamatha discipline, we begin to see that our mind is full of stuff. But when we examine our passion, our attachments, and our desires for all sorts of things, we see that they are basically a bad job—purely thought patterns, sand castles, paper tigers. We see that if we wallow in our own lethargy and stupidity, there is no shelter or comfort in that either. By not buying our own habitual thought-patterns, we begin to develop discipline and mindfulness.

### *Joining Relative and Ultimate Truth*

On the path of accumulation, our experience of mental processes is becoming very real. Passion, aggression, ignorance, and all the subconscious mental activities that take place in our mind become very ordinary and understandable. This leads to a realization of *kiridzop*, or relative truth. When we relate with relative truth, we are no longer shocked by our mind. We begin to see the simplicity and the reality of things. When we sit on our cushions and practice, we come across all sorts of thought patterns and desires. Whether we are rereading our autobiography, so to speak, discovering all sorts of choices, thinking we should leave, and or

thinking we should stay—all of that is included in the relative truth of our thought patterns.

When we sit and practice, we begin to realize what is known as the transparency and impermanence of time and space. We realize how much we are dwelling on our little things and that we cannot catch any of it and build a house on it. We cannot even lay the foundation. The whole thing keeps shifting under our feet and under our seat. The rug is being pulled out from under us completely, simply from that experience of working with ourselves. Nobody is pulling it, but we find that the rug constantly moves. We begin to feel that we ourselves are moving.

When we realize that we cannot catch hold of phenomena at all, that is what is known as *töndam*, or “absolute truth.” There is an absolute quality to the fact that we cannot fool ourselves. We can try to fool our teacher, who tells us to sit; and we might think that we can fool the dharma, which says, “Go sit. That is the only way.” But we cannot fool ourselves. We cannot fool our essence. The ground we are sitting on cannot be fooled. That is the twofold truth of *kündzop* and *töndam*.

When you put *kündzop* and *töndam* together and they become one unit, it becomes possible to make things workable. You are not too much on the side of *töndam*, or you would become too theoretical; you are not too much on the side of *kündzop*, or you would become too precise. When you put them together, you begin to realize that there is no problem. The combination of *kündzop* and *töndam* works because it is simple and dynamic. You have hot and cold water together, so you can take a really good shower. So *kündzop* and *töndam* are both very important; you can’t stick with either one separately. Ultimately, through the experience of combining *kündzop* and *töndam* on the path of accumulation, you develop renunciation, simplicity, satisfaction, and contentment in the practice. That is the first of the five paths, the path of accumulation.

## 2. THE PATH OF UNIFICATION

The second path is the path of unification, in which your actions and your psychological state are beginning to work together. When you sit in meditation, you begin to develop a glimpse of sanity, a glimpse of the bodhisattva path. The second path is called the path of unification (*jorlam* in Tibetan) because we join our mind and body and all our efforts together.

It has five categories: faith, exertion, recollection, one-pointedness, and intellect.

#### *Faith*

The first category is *tepa*, which means “faith.” We feel very steady and confident in what we have done so far. We appreciate what we have done. We realize what should be avoided and what should be cultivated. That is, subconscious gossip and grasping should be avoided; steadiness of mind should be cultivated. *Tepa* also involves delightfulness. We realize that we are not in the dark as far as our practice is concerned. We know our directions, roughly speaking, where we are and where we are going.

#### *Exertion*

The second category is *tsöndrü*, or “exertion.” When we have realized what we are doing, we develop confidence. We realize the isness or the suchness of the truth that we have been told. We experience upliftedness as a result of shamatha discipline, and from that we develop further exertion. If we are served a dish that we like, and if we like the cook and the restaurant, we don’t mind eating that dish a second, third, or fourth time because we know that it is going to be good. There is delight in going back again and again to the same restaurant. Similarly, exertion does not mean taking pains; it means appreciation. Appreciation makes things more and more enjoyable; and when we enjoy something, we do it over and over, even though there is tremendous effort involved. On the path of unification, our shamatha practice is becoming enjoyable, so we do it again and again, eternally.

#### *Recollection*

The third category of the path of unification is *trempa*, which literally means “recollection.” Recollection means that what you have done and what you have experienced are not forgotten, but remain as part of your awareness and mindfulness. There is a sense of respect and genuine appreciation for what you have received and what you are doing. Recollection means experiencing what you have done, which is your practice; and what you are, which is your state of mind. Recollection is very awake

and precise. If somebody tells you that you have a chore in the kitchen at five o’clock, it is very simple: you just do it. There are no hang-ups involved.

Memory, in contrast, could be based on nostalgia for samsara. For instance, you might have had a bad fight, and by remembering it, in some perverted way you are able to maintain your whole being. You also might indulge in nostalgia for goodness, as a sort of psychological orgy. Such memories begin to have no gap, so you have no chance to be precise and clear.

#### *One-Pointedness*

The fourth category, *tingdzin*, meaning “meditation,” or “samadhi,” in this case refers to one-pointedness. You never lose track of anything; you develop tremendous awareness. Your mind becomes very focused, very accurate. You appreciate sense perceptions, but you are not trapped by them, and they do not create samsaric, karmic problems. Because you are able to perceive, to appreciate, and to focus your mind one-pointedly, you develop composure.

#### *Intellect*

The fifth category is *sheraq*, or *prajna* in Sanskrit, which in this context means “intellect.” You understand how to see things, how to separate various experiences. There might still be occasional upheavals—both experiences of satisfaction or achievement, and experiences of obstacles and doubts—but you can clearly separate what should be avoided from what should be cultivated. There is both clarity and discrimination.

Through those five categories of the path of unification, we are able to hold things together, as though we were holding the fort. We do not experience any chaos; instead, we begin to feel that everything hangs together. That is why this path is known as the path of unification.

### 3. THE PATH OF SEEING

In this path you develop further clarity in distinguishing or discriminating the different approaches to reality according to the buddhadharma.

The path of seeing is *thonglam* in Tibetan. *Thong* means “seeing,” and *lam*, again, is “path,” so *thonglam* means the “path of seeing.” The path of seeing is at a much more advanced level than the path of unification. You begin to see how the path operates and how it could be applicable to yourself.

### *The Seven Limbs of Enlightenment*

There are seven categories in the path of seeing, known as the seven limbs of enlightenment, or *bodhi*: recollection, separating dharmas, exertion, joy, being thoroughly trained, samadhi, and equilibrium. In Tibetan this is called *changchup yenlak dün*. *Changchup* is “enlightenment,” *yenlak* is “limb,” and *dün* is “seven,” so *changchup yenlak dün* means the “seven limbs of enlightenment.”

**RECOLLECTION.** The first of the seven limbs is *trenpa*, or recollection (which came up previously as the third category of the path of unification). Recollection means not forgetting the path of seeing, the sense of forward vision. You do not stay in one place, trying to be a faithful old person. Instead, you develop further ambition, not in the negative sense, but in the sense of going forward. That ambition is triggered by memory, or recollection.

**SEPARATING DHARMAS.** The second limb is connected with *sherap*, or intellect. As in the previous path, there is a quality of discrimination, of separating dharmas and realizing the isness of things. There is no uncertainty about experience. In each of the paths you need *sherap*, which is connected with actually being able to open up. On the path of unification, *prajna* was partial, somewhat embryonic, but on the path of seeing it is closer to complete *prajna*.\*

**EXERTION.** The third limb is *tsöndrü*, exertion, which in this case has a slightly different meaning than previously. In cultivating a constant furthering of vision on the path of seeing, you never give up, you never settle down to the situation at hand. You have the positive ambition of forward vision.

**Joy.** The fourth limb is *gawa*, which means “joy.” You are able to take care of both body and mind. This is not a situation where your mind is highly developed but your body is rotting, or your body is well-cared-for but your mind is rotting. Instead, your body and mind are synchronized, well connected. The samsaric hassles of dealing with your mind and body begin to subside. You are able to handle your body and mind completely, so you develop good health. You know how to avoid unnecessary hassles; you don’t collect further garbage in the interest of either mind or body. The joy of simplicity begins to develop, along with a sense of precision, genuineness, and obviousness.

**BEING THOROUGHLY TRAINED.** The fifth limb, *shinjang*, means being thoroughly soothed or trained. Your body and mind are totally relaxed. As a result of shamatha practice, your mind and body are tamed, trained, developed. There is a tremendous sense of humor and relaxation, and openness, gentleness, and goodness. You are beginning to feel the effect of your practice. It is beginning to work, and you feel positive. It is like coming out of a steam bath: your muscles have relaxed; you feel so healthy.

**SAMADHI.** The sixth limb is *tingdzin*, which means *samadhi*, or “one-pointedness.” You are focused, one-pointed, and at the same time, you are humble. In spite of your achievements, you never get puffed up.

**EQUILIBRIUM.** The seventh and final limb is *tang-nyom*, which means “equilibrium.” You are not subject to sluggishness or laziness, and you are also free from wandering and excitable mind. A quality of evenness is taking place all the time. You are neither disturbed nor completely asleep. It should be quite clear that equilibrium does not mean becoming a jellyfish or an even-tempered ape. In this case, you have command of the whole world. You have tremendous confidence in dealing with your world; therefore, you don’t have to push anything either positively or negatively. You don’t have to dwell on anything or exaggerate anything.

\* In the 1973 Seminary Transcripts: *Hinayana / Mahayana* (Halifax: Vajradhatu Publications, 1974), in reference to *prajna* and the five paths, Trungpa Rinpoche places the complete expression of *prajnaparamita* on the fourth path, the path of meditation, which includes levels two to ten of the traditional stages, or *bhumis*, of the bodhisattva path. An ordinary student begins with the path of accumulation; catches a glimpse of mahayana possibilities on the path of unification; enters the first *bhumi* on the path of seeing; practices *bhumis* two to ten on the path of meditation; and attains complete enlightenment on the path of no more learning.

That concludes the seven limbs of enlightenment, or bodhi, the seven categories of the path of seeing.

#### 4. THE PATH OF MEDITATION

The fourth path is called the path of meditation, or *gomlam*. Traditionally, *gom* means “to think about”; in Buddhist terms, it means “to meditate.” In the nontheistic tradition, meditation means just meditation, rather than meditation on anything, and *lam*, again, means “path,” so *gomlam* means the “path of meditation.” On the path of meditation, your sense of style begins to be closer to an enlightened style rather than a neurotic style.

On the path of meditation, you begin to cut karma. Karma is based on fundamental ignorance. Whenever there are two, you and other, that is already the beginning of a karmic situation. When you not only have “you” and “other,” but you begin to elaborate on that, you are at the level of the second *nidana*, or *samskara* (formation or concept). You have begun to roll the wheel of karma.

Fundamental ignorance is pre-dual. In the phrase “I am,” pre-dual ignorance is pre-“am”—it is the “I” stage. Duality does not yet exist, so calling it “nondual” would be jumping the gun. Although there is no duality, however, there is still a false sense of suchness, or isness. There is a kind of anti-shunyata sense of existence or fullness, which has to be cut. Although fundamental ignorance begins to be cut on the path of meditation, it is not thoroughly cut at this point. You have cut the consequences of karma, but not the causes. When you cut both the consequences and the causes—the karmic situation altogether—that is the path of no more learning, which is enlightenment.

are able to make something of it. Your whole being has been thoroughly trained physically, psychologically, and in terms of working with others.

**PERFECT VIEW.** The first limb of the noble path is *yang-dak-pe tawa*, or “perfect view.” Perfect view means that you are able to cut through the absorptions and fixed views of your previous experiences, which may have made you somewhat sleepy and theoretical. At the level of the path of seeing, you might have been able to gaze at the ultimate truth, but *yang-dak-pe tawa* enables you actually to see through.

“View” does not mean good view or bad view, but simply understanding things as they are. You are able to cut through and you are able to analyze and to theorize in the positive sense. This does not mean that you are scholastic or that you psychologize, but you are able to see the differences between the first, second, and third paths. You are able to see how things work geographically and chronologically. Because you can see through things at this point, you are becoming less dependent on your teacher, or elder. Your elder is wise and scholarly, brilliant and compassionate, but you don’t have to depend on him or her. You are able to see through by yourself; therefore, you are becoming somewhat independent.

**PERFECT UNDERSTANDING.** The second limb is *yang-dak-pe tokpa*, “perfect understanding,” or “perfect realization.” You have learned how to relax. Based on what you have experienced, there is no questioning and no doubt. You have understood, and you appreciate what you have understood; therefore, you learn how to relax and let yourself go.

**PERFECT SPEECH.** The third limb is *yang-dak-pe ngak*, “perfect speech.” You have found a way of declaring yourself fully and thoroughly—how you are, why you are, what you are—without being arrogant, aggressive, or too humble. You have learned how to be moderate in presenting yourself. Ngak, “speech,” does not refer simply to how you speak, but also to how you reflect yourself to the world—your general demeanor, or decorum. You can become reasonable, decent, and enlightened.

**PERFECT END OF KARMA.** The fourth limb is *yang-dak-pe lekyi tha*, which means, the “perfect end of karma.” You begin to understand how to prevent karmic cause and effects suddenly, precisely, and thoroughly. The end of karma means that you might return once or twice to the world because

#### The Noble Eightfold Path

There are eight categories of the path of meditation, which are collectively known as the noble eightfold path.\* The eight limbs of the noble path are perfect view, perfect understanding, perfect speech, perfect end of karma, perfect livelihood, perfect effort, perfect recollection, and perfect meditation. At the level of the path of seeing, you began to see, and now you

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\* Trungpa Rinpoche also discusses the eightfold path in *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation* (Boston: Shambhala, 1978).

your immediate karmic situation has not yet been cut through; however, your previous karma has been cut through already by means of perfect view, perfect understanding, and perfect speech. Your habitual patterns and your whole behavior begin to be more accurate, more enlightened. By behaving naturally, you are able to cut through karma and karmic consequences.

In cutting through karma, you are constantly dealing with ignorance, the first *nidana*. Since volitional action is driven by ignorance, if you are able to cut through that ignorance, you stop the course of volitional action. You can do so, because at the level of the path of meditation, your style of relating with the dharma becomes very natural and instinctive. In contrast, the style of volitional action is that you are always looking forward to the next carrot. You see the carrot as somewhat distant from you, and you work yourself up to run from here to there, from yourself to the carrot. In doing so, you crank up more karma; and when you get there, you end up with the next karmic cause. So you end up with a lot more karma—and you have created the carrot, as well! We never say that in the samsaric world, but in the enlightened world we can say it.

In cutting karma, disgust and renunciation are regarded as important. Although it is a neat, ugly trick for you to put the carrot in front of yourself, you know you shouldn't be doing that. By renouncing that, you are able to cut the second *nidana*, which is formation, or impulsive accumulation. At this point, you are becoming so accomplished in this that even if you plant a karmic promise in other people, you are able to cut through their karmic cause and effect as well.

**PERFECT LIVELIHOOD.** Number five is *yang-dak-pe tsowa*, which means "perfect livelihood." Because you are able to handle karmic cause and effect, you can also relate with your own life and livelihood. You do not have to depend on others. You have enough skill to be able to handle your livelihood thoroughly and fully.

**PERFECT EFFORT.** The sixth limb is *yang-dak-pe tsöläwa*, which means "perfect effort." This has the sense of not holding back, but exerting yourself. You have tremendous energy. You cultivate genuine energy in both working with yourself and working with others. As you go from path to path, you develop more and more effort, more and more industry. You begin to become a decent person, no longer a nuisance.

**PERFECT RECOLLECTION.** The seventh limb is *yang-dak-pe trenpa*, "perfect recollection." As before, *trenpa* refers to mindfulness, or one-pointed mind, and to the recollection of your previous experiences.

**PERFECT MEDITATION.** The eighth and last limb of the noble path is *yang-dak-pe tingdzin*, or "perfect meditation." In this context, *tingdzin* means that you are able to enter into certain samadhis. You begin to look ahead toward the notion of enlightenment. At this point, you might be able to completely cut through twofold ego fixation (ego of self and ego of dharmas).\*

### 5. THE PATH OF NO MORE LEARNING

The final path is the path of no more learning, which is the attainment of enlightenment. In Tibetan it is *mi-lab-lam*. *Mi* is a negation, *lob* is "learning," and *lam* is "path," so *mi-lab-lam* is the "path of no more learning." Since at the hinayana level, you have only a very rough idea about how enlightenment takes place, the fifth path includes the remainder of the mahayana path and the attainment of enlightenment.

### PROGRESSING ON THE PATH

The five paths, which are very complicated and complex, have been briefly described to give you an idea of a student's psychological development through the practice of meditation. In that way, you can have guidelines on the path, not only from your teacher, or your friends, or neighbors, but from yourself. There is a journey taking place, and if you ask who is the judge, I think that you yourself are the best judge of the level of pain and confusion you are experiencing.

When we discuss the path, or Buddhism in general, we have to face the fact that there is something corny taking place. We say that we are not striving for the result of enlightenment, that we are not interested in that, that we don't have an ego, so we are free of all that. But at the same time, we do talk about enlightenment. We say we are going to attain enlightenment, that we are going to become better people. We have to

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\* The belief in an "I" and the belief in an "other" are both cut through. Neither the self nor external phenomena are seen to be independently existing.

face that obvious fact. There is no point trying to make ourselves more sophisticated than everybody else on earth who has followed a spiritual path. It may be disturbing to realize that you have fallen back into the common logic; to realize that everybody is searching for pleasure and so are you. However, that is the fact. In Buddhism, we talk about decreasing neurosis, which automatically means decreasing ego-oriented pain. We talk about attaining enlightenment—a state in which there is no need for security, but ultimate security develops. Without such logic, the Buddha could not truly teach human beings at all.

The teaching exists in order for you to get better, in order for you to develop; that's a known fact. You could say that you're not interested in any such thing, thinking that's the best thing to say, but if you're not interested in anything like that, you've caught yourself already. You think you're very smart, but you are fooling yourself. You have to become stupid, dumb, and simpleminded, in a sense, in order to commit yourself to the teachings and the path. And whether you like it or not, Buddhism is a doctrine of some kind. Even though it may be a transcendental doctrine, it is still a doctrine. So let us not try to be too sophisticated. There is no such thing as "cool dharma" or "hip truth." If it's the truth, it's the truth.

On the Buddhist path you are expected to develop certain states of mind; you are expected to show certain signs. You are also expected to share these things with the rest of your brothers and sisters on earth and to work with them as well. But none of this is regarded as a good thing to do—it's just ordinary flow, like a river. If a river flowed backward or a waterfall went upstream, we would think either that we were hallucinating or that something was wrong with the landscape. Similarly, the logic of the path has to flow, just like water is always expected to flow down and slowly make its journey to the ocean. Such norms are obvious. The sun is expected to rise in the east and set in the west—we can't be very hip and unconventional; we can't change the direction of the sun.

In terms of signs on the path, you are not particularly waiting for something to happen, but when it happens, it happens—and it is sure to happen sooner or later. However, there is not the expectation that once you get to the next level, you are going to be okay. In fact, it is quite possible that at each new level you discover more problems. For instance, attaining arhatship sounds good, but once you get there, you might find more problems and troubles. As you progress along the path, you are in

a constant process of becoming more and more intelligent. The more intelligent you become and the more aware you are of all the details of the overall vision, the more things you find wrong with yourself.

You don't particularly expect happiness out of the path. However, you do expect sophistication and the relief or confidence that something is actually happening. You don't have to know where you are on the path, but you need to know that you are moving and that you are going to get to your destination. However, if you are too concerned with getting from here to there as fast as possible, you find yourself in a lot of pain. It is not how fast you can get there but the movement that matters. On the path, you are not stuck, but you are constantly moving. As soon as you switch on the stove, the food is cooking.

The whole path may seem to be at the folk level, but the teachings are not particularly folksy—nor, for that matter, are they for scholars, magicians, royalty, or monks and nuns. The teachings are not designed for anything. The dharma is straightforward teaching. It contains certain common, basic truths; otherwise, you could not communicate it and you could not appreciate it. No matter how many restaurants you might eat in, or how fancy they may be, you still eat by putting food in your mouth; there's no other way to eat. No restaurant offers food to consume in any other way.

In working with the five paths, you begin with the first path and the practice of shamatha. As you go on, you begin to evolve, and there is some sort of progress report. The five paths might seem hard to relate to, but they are real and you could aspire to them. There is nothing unreasonable about them: they are both reasonable and possible. If you aspire to joy, you can attain it, because you have joy in you. Similarly, you also have exertion, concentration, and prajna. Those things are all household terms, nothing exotic or primitive. So the message is very simple: it is possible and you can do it. You can work with the four noble truths.

Because suffering is fundamental, there is a fundamental cure for it as well. That cure is saddharma: real dharma. Real dharma can actually cure fundamental pain; that is why it is known as *sad*, or "truth." It is genuine dharma. Fundamental suffering is based on a basic karmic mishap, arising from ignorance. However, when you begin to work with your state of mind, you realize the consequences of your ignorance, and you see how you can correct it. Your fundamental ignorance is the cause of all karmic coincidence, but instead of stupidly going along with that, you begin to

wake up by means of meditation practice. You are aware of trying to cut through twofold ego fixation—the ego of dharmas and the ego of self—and you are beginning to knock the guts out of the whole thing. You are putting lots of effort and energy into that. It is very straightforward.

Practice is fundamental. It is a genuine cure. You have a genuine ego and genuine suffering, with cures to match. It has been said that dharma is medicine, the teacher is a physician, and you are the patient. If you have a sickness that medicine can cure, the teacher can diagnose you and treat it. And as you go on through the yantras, from the hinayana to the vajrayana, that cure becomes much tougher and more accurate. That is the notion of saddharma. Saddharma is the ultimate cure because it deals not only with the symptoms, but with the sickness itself.

# The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

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## The Paths and Bhumiś

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Altogether on the bodhisattva path, there are ten stages, or bhumiś.  
At each of the ten stages you are loosening up and getting more inspired, because there is less bondage of samsaric confusion or aggression. However, there is more to the bodhisattva path than purely engaging in peaceful activities or being a “goody-goody.”

### THE TEN BHUMIS: STAGES OF THE BODHISATTVA PATH

Having practiced mahayana meditation and understood mahayana philosophy in terms of the shunyata experience, as you go through the process of the mahayana path you get to various spiritual levels, which are called bhumiś in Sanskrit. Such states of being are permanent. They are not just temporary experiences, or nyam.\* Altogether on the bodhisattva path, there are ten stages, or bhumiś. Each stage has various attributes, virtues, and styles of dealing with the world.<sup>†</sup> The Tibetan word for bhumi is *sa*, which means “level,” “earth,” or “ground.” At each of the ten stages you

\* For a discussion of temporary meditative experiences called nyam, see volume 1 of the *Profound Treasury*, chapter 42, “Mindfulness of Mind.”

† The ten bhumiś are (1) very joyful, (2) spotless, (3) illuminating, (4) radiating light, (5) difficult to accomplish, (6) becoming manifest, (7) far gone, (8) immovable, (9) good intellect, and (10) cloud of dharma. The birth of enlightenment is referred to as the eleventh bhumi, complete radiance.

are loosening up and getting more inspired, because there is less bondage of samsaric confusion or aggression. However, there is more to the bodhisattva path than purely engaging in peaceful activities or being a "good-goody."

The paramitas are the contents of the bhumis. Each of the ten bhumis is associated with a particular paramita. The paramitas are what you practice, and the bhumis are what you get out of that practice. It is like going through the educational system: first you learn how to spell, how to read, and how to do math, and later those skills become the basis of your business or profession. It is very simple.

### THE FIVE PATHS

The mahayana journey can also be described in terms of the five paths: the paths of accumulation, unification, seeing, meditation, and no more learning. The first two paths—the path of accumulation and the path of unification—are usually associated with the hinayana. The last three paths—the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning—are usually associated with the mahayana.\*

#### *The Path of Accumulation*

From the mahayana perspective, the path of accumulation, which is the first path, establishes your journey on the enlightened path of the bodhisattva right from the beginning. The background of egolessness, compassion, and trust provides a starting point and a general motivation. With that starting point, and on the basis of the evolution of your practice experience through an understanding of shila, samadhi, and prajna, you can enter onto the path of the bodhisattva very simply and directly. The path of accumulation itself is divided into three stages: the lesser, medium, and greater paths of accumulation.

**ATTITUDE LIKE THE EARTH.** On the first stage of the path of accumulation, which is the lesser path of accumulation, your attitude is very respectful.

\* For a discussion of the five paths from a hinayana perspective, see volume 1 of the *Profound Treasury*, part 5, "The Hinayana Journey," chapters 63 to 66.

You would like to enter the path. You begin to experience the sacredness of your world, and whatever you perceive or do becomes trustworthy and ordinary. You have respect for reality, and you do not confuse things. You work with your life in accord with the four elements of fire, earth, water, and air. There is a quality of rightness about interacting with your world in this way. You are not upset by the sunrise and sunset, by shadows, by snow falling, by raindrops, or by gusts of wind. Changing weather conditions do not affect your state of mind. The analogy for such an attitude is the earth. You are like the earth, which is very solid, sits through the four seasons, and has evolved for millions of years.

**INTENTION LIKE GOLD.** On the second stage of the path of accumulation, which is the medium path of accumulation, your intention is like gold. As a decent person, a good citizen of the bodhi path, you trust the process of the path. Because of that, you never change your mind, but remain solid in your practice. The analogy for intention is gold: gold remains pure, and that quality never changes, even over millions of years. Likewise, until the attainment of enlightenment, the quality of good intention never changes. It is like a trustworthy friend who never gives up on you.

**WHOLESAFENESS LIKE THE FULL MOON.** On the third stage of the path of accumulation, which is the greater path of accumulation, your wholesomeness is like the full moon. Your intentions are clear and your attitude is good, and you are not trying to be devious or tricky in order to escape. You develop generosity, discipline, and all the rest of the paramitas on a small scale, and you feel that you can act appropriately. The analogy for wholesomeness is the full moon: wholesomeness is like the full moon because you accumulate and expand various good dharmas.\*

\* The Jewel Ornament of Liberation lists twenty-two similes for bodhicitta, which are related to the paramitas and to the stages of the bodhisattva path: (1) the earth, (2) gold, (3) the moon, (4) fire, (5) a treasure, (6) a jewel mine, (7) the ocean, (8) a diamond, (9) a mountain, (10) medicine, (11) a teacher, (12) a wish-fulfilling jewel, (13) the sun, (14) a song, (15) a king, (16) a treasury, (17) a highway, (18) a carriage, (19) a fountain, (20) a lute, (21) a river, and (22) a cloud. The first three—the earth, gold, and the moon—apply to the three stages of the path of accumulation. For a list of similes and their relationship to the paths and bhumis, see the chart on page 396, "Stages of a Bodhisattva's Development and Corresponding Similes."

### The Path of Unification

On the second path, the path of unification, your willingness is like a burning fire. Having already experienced the three stages of the path of accumulation, you are looking forward to the possibility of entering the mahayana. At this stage, you see that obstacles to the path of dharma can be burnt. You regard them as fuel rather than as barricades.

The meditation experience of the path of unification is called *nampar mitokpa*. *Mitokpa* is “nonconceptualization,” and *nampar* means “completely” or “properly”; so *nampar mitokpa* is “complete nonconceptualization.” It is the final realization of the desolateness of the meditative state. Based on your shamatha-vipashyana experience, you begin to enter into shunyata practice and realization.

**FOUR STAGES OF DISCRIMINATION.** It is also said that on the path of unification, you develop four stages of discrimination: heat, crest, patience, and higher dharma.

*Heat: a hint of mahayana.* The path of unification is complete preparation for the mahayana. It is not the mahayana as such, but you get a hint of mahayana, a hint of shunyata. This is called *trö*, or “heat.” It is like getting a fever before becoming seriously ill. With *trö*, you sense the possibility of treading on the path of the bodhisattva, and being a mahayanist who is fully dedicated to working with sentient beings. You are excited that you might attain the first bhumi at some point.<sup>†</sup>

*Crest: terrifying sharpness and conviction.* With crest, or *tsemo*, you develop terrifying sharpness and conviction. *Tsemo* means “peak,” or “crest,” as in the growing tip of a tree or plant. You are beginning to touch a sensitive point of your development, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. *Tsemo* is very penetrating. You feel a sharpness inside you, as if you had swallowed a razor blade. There is the possibility for the first time of becoming superhuman. But that cannot be achieved unless you relate with that insight and are willing to live with it.

The combination of heat and crest leads into a further process, the development of five perceptions and five powers.

The first perception is *faith* in your discovery.

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\* *Fire* is the fourth of the twenty-two similes for bodhichitta (see previous footnote).

† The first stage of the mahayana path. See chapter 45, “Very Joyful: The First Bhumi.”

The second perception is *energy*. You are not tired of what you are trying to do, but you are highly energized and interested. The third perception is *mindfulness*, or *trempa*. Mindfulness is twenty-four-hour work; you are completely at the mercy of the dharma. *Trempa* brings egolessness because your only interest is in awakening bodhichitta. You have no personal interest in anything else.

The fourth perception is *samadhi*, or meditative absorption. With *samadhi*, even ordinary thoughts such as fantasies of aggression or sex become sources of inspiration on the bodhisattva path.

The fifth perception is *prajna*, or knowledge. You begin to discover all kinds of subtleties in the world—subtleties of colors and shapes, and implications of energy exchange—and whatever happens in your life becomes tremendously sharp. Life reveals itself on its own, not according to your own preconceived ideas, or ego’s version of things.

All five perceptions are based on selflessness and the recognition that you are advancing on the path.

Along with the five perceptions, five powers develop at this point. The five powers are that faith never needs to be sought; energy never needs to be sought; mindfulness never needs to be sought; meditative absorption never needs to be sought; and prajna, or knowledge, never needs to be sought. With the five powers, you have complete command. You have developed the five perceptions, and you are confident about those abilities.

*Patience: complete identification with the teachings.* With patience, the teachings are a part of your system, so you are not impatiently looking forward to the next excitement, but you are willing to wait. Because you have identified with the teachings completely and thoroughly, you feel that you have the right to expound the teachings. The result of patience is that you develop the mental power to memorize the words you read or hear from the teacher. Forgetfulness is based on trying to preserve things for yourself. In contrast, an egoless approach toward sentient beings brings a tremendously sharp memory and powerful recollection.

*Higher dharma: becoming a part of the lineage.* Having developed conviction and powerful mental recollection, you begin to have the idea that you are a holder of the dharma. Although you may not yet have become a teacher, you feel that you are becoming a part of the lineage.

On the path of unification, you realize that your mind and body can be synchronized independent of the kleshas, or conflicting emotions. You

have begun to take on an attitude that allows you to burn up the fuel of the kleshas. This change of attitude is based on joining mind and body; it is based on joining the very tranquil and the very active. You accumulate physical merit at the level of the ayatas, or sense perceptions, and you join that with a pure state of mind, achieved by shamatha-vipashyana. By joining together the very tranquil and the very active, you are joining your intention and your action. That is what you do when you take the bodhisattva vow. Combining skillful means and prajna comes much later on the path, although it could happen even at this point, since it is a natural tendency already.

The path of unification links the past, or the path of accumulation, with the future, or the path of seeing. The path of seeing is forward vision, the fever of what you might do, and the path of accumulation is what you have already done. So on the path of unification, forward vision and what you have already experienced are joined.

### *The Path of Seeing*

Traditionally it is said that the mahayana journey begins with the third path, the path of seeing, which is connected with the first bhumi. But that is not completely accurate, because each of the ten bhumis is a mixture of the path of seeing and the path of meditation. The mahayana begins with the path of seeing because you begin to have constant forward vision. Because you have forward vision, you begin to be pensive and have a quality of reserve.

### *The Path of Meditation*

On bhumis two through ten, you are said to be on the fourth path, the path of meditation. So as you evolve through the paramitas to the level of jnana, you are on the path of meditation.

### *The Path of No More Learning*

Finally, with the attainment of enlightenment, you are on the fifth and last path, the path of no more learning.

# The Path of Individual Liberation

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*As a student who has no idea of dharma and no mind training, you decide to commit to the path and to train yourself. As you train your mind, you begin to see all kinds of things. What you see is not so much the inspiration of a glimpse of enlightenment, or bud-dha nature. Instead, the first thing you see is what is wrong with samsara.*

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### *The Lesser Path of Accumulation*

THE SPIRITUAL journey could be looked at in terms of yanas or in terms of the five paths. In terms of the yanas, the journey begins with the hinayana, and in terms of the five paths, it begins with the path of accumulation. The path of accumulation is divided into three levels: lesser, middle, and greater. It is designed for ordinary people. For that reason, it is worth looking at in some detail. The path of accumulation is referred to as "accumulation" because you are gathering knowledge that is congenial to the path. You are accumulating dharmas of all kinds, and by doing so, you are also heightening the sophistication of the community.

On the lesser path of accumulation, you are predominantly working with the four foundations of mindfulness and with shamatha-vipashyana practice. Meditation practice at this level is a way of developing greater mental and psychological sharpness, so that dharmas could be perceived properly. You are becoming aware of your psychological hang-ups and confusions, and discovering all kinds of insights into the teachings. The analogy for a person who has developed such psychological sophistication



is that of a well-polished mirror: the more dirt you remove from the mirror, the greater its capacity to reflect objects. So as you polish your mirror mind, you are learning to see the subtlest of the subtlest of dharmas.

The path of accumulation is about accumulating dharmas, as well as educating the accumulator. As a student who has no idea of dharmas and no mind training, you decide to commit to the path and to train yourself. As you train your mind, you begin to see all kinds of things. What you see is not so much the inspiration of a glimpse of enlightenment, or buddha nature. Instead, the first thing you see is what is wrong with samsara. With vipashyana, you begin to see the dharmas of samsara very clearly and precisely. This experience is by no means sammadhi or higher prajna. It is simply that you are becoming more and more educated; therefore, you have more facility to handle the information coming into your mind. As a product of your training, you also begin to develop artistic talent and sensitivity. You begin to appreciate beauty and the subtleties of the sensorial world. But in particular, you discover the nature of samsara. You discover the secrets and functions of the samsaric manifestation.

In making the journey slowly along the noble path of the arhat, there is a need for faith or devotion to begin with. Such faith is partly blind and partly intelligent. It is blind because you are uncertain as to what you are going to get into, and it is intelligent because you know what you are getting out of. Faith and renunciation go together, for although you want to get out of samsaric imprisonment, you have no idea of the world outside. You feel so nauseated that you try to get out, but what is outside of that prison is uncertain, and your experience and information about it are both vague and incomplete. You realize that samsaric imprisonment is the worst of the worst, so if there is anything other than that, it must be better. But insomuch as the alternative is unknown to you, you are taking a chance. Therefore, faith becomes extremely important.

Faith in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha inspires you to take refuge. You have to turn to somebody who has much greater scope and wisdom, and the only outsider you know is the lineage holder. So you take refuge in the lineage holder as the manifestation of the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. Devotion to the lineage of the past gives you a feeling of the richness of that particular lineage, and devotion to the present teacher gives you the feeling that those riches you have read about are not mythical, but reality.

### THE THREE WAYS OF LEARNING

A person on the level of the path of accumulation has to develop simultaneously the three ways of learning: hearing, contemplating, and meditating.\* “Hearing” is *thöpa*. *Thö* means “to hear,” as in to hear intellectual studies, to hear the dharma. “Contemplating” is *sampa*. *Sam* means “to think or contemplate.” You are pondering a subject you have learned, such as the nature of impermanence—and since such information is received from a teacher in the beginning, you are also working with *thöpa*. “Meditation” is *gompa*. *Gom* means “meditation.” In all three terms, the suffix *pa* makes the term into a noun. On the path of accumulation, you have to go through *thöpa*, *sampa*, and *gompa*—all of them simultaneously. You hear a message from your teacher, you contemplate that message, and you meditate all at the same time. That prepares you for further *thöpa*. Because your mind is more readied, you are able to hear more teachings. So it is a constant, ongoing process. That is how it works on the path of accumulation.

### UNDERSTANDING THE THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE

One outstanding discovery at the first level of the path of accumulation is the understanding of the three marks of existence.<sup>†</sup> This is by no means the result of ordinary speculative mind—it is definitely a product of the sitting practice of meditation, which is the highest way of learning about the dharma. By means of sitting practice, the student on the path of accumulation develops a greater vision and knowledge of the three marks than someone purely learning from books without such mental and psychological preparation. Therefore, the path of accumulation

\* These three ways of learning are also discussed in chapter 69, “Taking the Teachings to Heart.”

† For the third time, and in a new context, Trungpa Rinpoche returns to a discussion of the characteristics of samsaric existence uncovered through meditative practice. In previous chapters, these three marks—impermanence, suffering, and egolessness—were joined by a fourth, that of nirvana or peace. See chapter 1, “Beginning at the Beginning,” and chapter 6, “Achieving Sanity Here on Earth.” In this instance, Trungpa Rinpoche focuses on the first three marks, examining how the recognition of impermanence leads to the experience of egolessness, and how that combination produces suffering.

is considered to be the first stage of the ordinary person's conversion into the dharma. It is the first time you apply ordinary patience and ordinary discipline. There is nothing *paramita*, or "transcendental," about it—you just practice bare attention to breathing, and bare attention to mental activities. You develop a patient attitude to pain as you sit and practice, whether alone in retreat, in daily life, or in group practice.

### *Impermanence*

Understanding the nature of impermanence and egolessness and how that combination leads to suffering is a central part of the contemplative practice of the path of accumulation. The realization of impermanence usually begins with a sense of appreciation. In order to realize the impermanence of something, you first need to see its value and to appreciate it. When you begin to appreciate the teachings, the opportunity to practice, the teacher, and the unique circumstances that brought you to the teachings, you also realize you might lose these precious things, and you begin to get paranoid. So the psychological pattern of appreciating the greatness of the practice, the teaching, and the teacher brings the first notion of impermanence. You realize that all kinds of obstacles could occur, that your learning could be interrupted by physical sickness, death, commitments, and the demands of relatives and friends. Basically, you see that you might not be able to hold on to this opportunity. Once you have realized the unique situation that you are in, rather than either competing with the teacher or having an inferiority complex, you simply experience the rare occasion that you have.

Such an approach to impermanence may be simple, even crude, but it is extremely important. It is a simplistic approach, but it is effective. This approach is called the style of *kusulu*, or "simpleton." The Sanskrit term *kusulu* refers to a simple yogi who does only three necessary things: eating, shitting, and sleeping. It does not refer to a person so wealthy that he or she doesn't have to work, but a person quite satisfied with a simple existence. Kusulu-type practice is called *joggom*. In Tibetan, *jokpa* means "rest," *gompa* means "meditation." *Jog* and *gom* are combined to form *joggom*, which means "resting meditation." You are simply following your instinct, so to speak. Another approach is more subtle, more metaphysical. It is called the style of the pundit. The pundit approach is called

*chegom*: *chepa* means "to analyze," and *gom* means "meditation"; therefore, *chegom* is analytical meditative practice.

Once you are able to relate with the impermanence of the crude world, seeing that time flies so there is no time to relax, you begin to realize a more subtle form of impermanence. You realize that you cannot hold on to anything psychologically or experientially. Whenever you try to hold on to solid ground, the ground itself shifts. It is like holding a pot by the handle, and having the handle break off and the pot fall on the floor and break. You cannot hold on to anything because things are constantly and fundamentally changing. There is no place for real rest or security. In order to develop security, you sit down and try to figure out some scheme, but there is not even a place to sit down. The rug moves under your feet before you can sit down. The shiftiness or slipperiness of psychological existence is a more fundamental level of impermanence. In order to realize this more subtle form of impermanence, some traditions have a formula about impermanence that you repeat again and again, in an attempt to let it seep into your subconscious mind that you cannot cling or hold on to anything.\*

Once you begin to realize that psychologically you cannot hold on to anything, seemingly solid phenomenal objects also cease to be solid, because these objects have to be confirmed by conscious analysis. In order to solidify an object, one's thoughts have to be solidified, one's being has to be solidified, but you cannot solidify your basic existence in any way at all. It is like a rushing river; you have nothing to hold on to. We could call this experience "developing an empty heart." The whole thing is horrifically, frighteningly empty—and trying to hold on to any of it breeds further empty heart. It is as if you are a person who is highly susceptible to heart attacks who must be very attentive to whatever you do. Even lifting a cup of tea and sipping is uncertain. You do not know whether you will last long enough to finish the cup of tea. So there is a tremendous sense of groundlessness. You are fully and utterly haunted. In that state, even fear could be said to be security, for if you could develop real fear, real panic, you would have something to hold on to. But you are not even

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\* One example of such a contemplation is the practice called the four reminders. In this practice you contemplate over and over again (1) the preciousness of a human birth, (2) the reality of impermanence and death, (3) the inescapability of karma, and (4) the ocean of suffering.

capable of experiencing fear, because you have nothing to be fearful of, and because everything is moving so fast that nothing sticks and there is nothing to hold on to. At this level, the experience of impermanence is so fundamental that it is almost mystical.

### Egolessness

An understanding of impermanence is preparation for the experience of egolessness. As a practitioner, you have to develop a feeling for egolessness, as you did for impermanence. In the contemplative tradition, we do not talk about ego as consisting of the five skandhas or eight types of consciousness. We do not approach ego philosophically—it is our immediate experience.

Basically, ego is a psychological bank, or pool, in which we store memories and ideas so that whenever we are running out of external entertainment, we could churn them out and entertain ourselves. It's like an animal with no food to eat who burns out the food from its stomach and begins to chew it all over again. Predominantly, the purpose of ego is to entertain us, to create the simple pleasure of occupying ourselves when we are bored, frightened, or unhappy. It gives us something we could stick to, something we could work with, which makes us relatively happy. We have someone else to keep us company. As the proverb says, "Misery loves company." That somebody who keeps company with your misery is the ego.

However, having realized impermanence, the experience of no ground, you see that the idea of having somebody to keep company with your misery, someone to cheer you up or entertain you, is a gigantic hoax. You think you are being entertained, but actually you are creating your own illusion. There is really no such thing. Psychologically, when you experience ego, you experience it as other than yourself. Philosophers say this is your ego, that is your ego; but in experiential terms, in your immediate experience, you begin to realize that there is no one to keep you company, and you have no hold on anything. This may be a very simpleminded approach to egolessness, but that kind of simplemindedness is absolutely necessary at this point.

Egolessness, from a contemplative point of view, is the alarm created by the experience of empty heart, the double take created from the realization of impermanence. You see that everything is impermanent, and

you become empty-hearted. Then you say, "Wait a minute, what about this?" And then: "Nothing! It's all about nothing!" The whole thing is completely gone. At this point, you may get angry. You may feel deprived or cheated, and you might try to blame your parents for bringing you into this world, or blame your minister, guru, or schoolteacher.

When you discover egolessness, there is a faint sense of anger. It is so alarming, so bad, like a distasteful joke that one is playing on oneself. You lose your temper in the same way as when you realize someone has been playing a practical joke on you. The discovery of egolessness is a further sense of "lost." You are utterly lost; there's no ground to hold on to; there is a total sense of poverty. And the slight aggression or anger you experience perpetuates that notion of the nonexistence of oneself. It worsens the experience.

The experience of egolessness is very real. We could say that the experience of impermanence is one of discontinuity, and with the experience of egolessness, there is nothing to continue the discontinuity since the moderator is also nonexistent. This is an actual emotional experience very close to the heart and very desperate. You are constantly looking for confirmation, for a moderator to qualify your existence, but you discover none. That is the notion of egolessness.

### Suffering

The experience of impermanence and egolessness leads to suffering. Although nothing is permanent and nothing is functioning in the realm of ego, if you really look at yourself fully, you see that there is still anger. You might think that if the whole thing is nonexistent, you should feel relief, or that you should not have to experience any more pain. You might think that if everything is gone, it could be a kind of honorable suicide. But the fact that those expectations are not met, that things don't happen in that way, creates even more pain. The logic that says, "Because ego does not exist, therefore you should not suffer," does not work. In fact, the reason suffering is so acute, so oppressive, and so painful is because suffering has no root. If there were a root, if there were a case history, you could follow it back. Suffering would become vulnerable. But suffering is, in fact, indestructible and self-existent. Therefore, it happens to be real, unlike the nonexistence of ego. Suffering is the most real thing in one's realm of experience.

Suffering is the only solid thing there is; otherwise we would not suffer. The idea of the path is that you don't fight back at the suffering, but you learn to make yourself at home with the suffering. Reality is suffering. Even at the tantric level, we talk about *maha duhkha*, or great suffering. Suffering is what made the Buddha turn the wheel of the dharma. And when he opened his mouth, the first word he spoke was *dukkha*. In the sutras, it is said that we survive in suffering; we work in suffering; we dwell in suffering, in a state of woe. The realization of suffering is the starting point. It is the seed of awakening. That is why it is called the first noble truth: it is for ordinary folks, people on the path of accumulation, people from the street, so to speak.

There are different kinds of suffering. There is physical suffering that is not psychosomatic pain, and there is physical suffering that is psychosomatic by nature. There is psychological suffering and pain. There is restlessness, discomfort, and uneasiness. As practitioners begin to discover that there is no permanent experience and no ego, they realize that the whole world is made only out of suffering. They enjoy in the suffering; they suffer in the suffering; they function in the suffering. This is the definition of samsara, going around and around in the ocean of pain. Even seemingly pleasurable things are actually pain. Not only do they bring pain later, but they are actually painful by nature. The reason the nature of pleasure is suffering is because pleasure is so claustrophobic; as a result, pleasure has an element of imprisonment in it. Maybe your bars are ornamented with flowers; nevertheless, it is a prison.

There is a bodhisattva called Tag-ngu who is eternally crying. Tag means "eternally," "ngu" means "cry"; so Tag-ngu is "He who cries eternally." Tag-ngu is the example of a bodhisattva who sees the truth of suffering in the samsaric world. So the realization of suffering is real. It should be very real and most outstanding. The only reality in the samsaric world is pain and suffering—and suffering becomes more real if there is no ego, no permanence, and no eternity. Transitoriness and egolessness bring more suffering, crystallizing the liveliness of the suffering and the energies around it.

Suffering is so full, and egolessness is so desolate. Whenever you find suffering to be too oppressive and claustrophobic, you go to the other extreme, egolessness, which is too spacious. So you can't really enjoy the spaciousness—and if you do try to hold on to it, the impermanence begins to wipe you out completely. But you cannot step out of that. As

far as the real dharma, the root dharma, the foundation of the dharma is concerned, there is no other alternative than the three marks of existence. You don't need inspiration or entertainment. You have no choice other than to experience pain. But then, somehow or other, you begin to become involved in the *realness* of the pain. That is how you begin to go on to the four noble truths. The reality of egolessness becomes apparent, and because of that, the experience of pain is immediate, like putting your hand on burning metal without wearing gloves. It is too immediate. That is how the practitioner sees the world at the first stage of the path of accumulation. It is the *vipashyana* experience of seeing impermanence, egolessness, and suffering in the fullest sense.

As far as Buddhism is concerned, that is the total picture of the samsaric world, which is why it is called the three marks of existence. The three marks are a synopsis of the nature of the world. It is important to remember that the world we are referring to here is the phenomenological world. It is the world we perceive, according to our phenomenal experience. If we were not here, there would not be a world, as far as we are concerned. However, that doesn't mean that when we die, the world will disappear. However, our version of the world will not be there anymore, so as far as we are concerned, we create our own world. That is our experience, and at this point it is important to stick with experience and not become too philosophical.

The practitioner's view of the world should derive from the experience of meditation. Without the practice of meditation—both sitting practice and meditation in everyday life—one is not moving at all on the path. Purely learning on the intellectual level alone is like revving the engine but not shifting it into gear: your truck only begins to move when meditation is engaged in everyday life. The whole point of the path of accumulation is that the knowable, or dharmas, cannot be known unless there is a knower who is fully trained by means of the practice of meditation. That is the point of shamatha and *vipashyana*. *Vipashyana*, in particular, becomes very prominent. It brings you into a full human being, so to speak, a complete human being who is worthy of following the path. It sharpens the intellect and heightens the awareness.

The experiential approach to the three marks of existence comes from the tradition of contemplative practice rather than the tradition of scholars. As far as mahayana Buddhism is concerned, there are two schools of

thought: the school of intellect and the school of contemplative practice. Asanga (the founder of the Yogachara school) is said to have introduced the contemplative practice of mahayana, and Nagarjuna (the founder of the Madhyamaka school) is said to have introduced the intellectual aspect. Those are the two means and methods that developed for training students. Nevertheless, it seems that the intellectual aspect also should have a contemplative aspect, and vice versa. If you begin with the contemplative approach, the student's insight will slowly be turned toward intellectual understanding; and if you begin with metaphysical understanding, that slowly turns back into contemplative practice.

The Kagyü and Nyingma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism are within the contemplative tradition, which first introduced the simpleminded approach to understanding things like impermanence and egolessness. They take a simple approach to life, meditation, and the path, almost on the level of being stupid. They use the layperson's, rather than the scholar's, approach to reality. From that simple layperson's approach to reality, you can build a good foundation. And from that, you begin to be more and more sophisticated and subtle. It is like the story of how the tradition of roast pork began in China. There was a pigsty that caught fire and all the pigs were roasted. When the fire died down, people decided to taste the pigs, and when they did so, they found them to be extremely delicious. Later on, an exquisite cuisine developed from that experience.

Having developed a true understanding of the four noble truths and the three marks of existence, a student may be inspired to renounce the samsaric world. You have no comparison to samsara, no world other than the samsaric world—yet the samsaric world you live in is nauseating and unpleasant. At this point, we could say that the whole approach becomes somewhat goal oriented. On the path of accumulation, a goal exists and a journey exists. There is a direction. You are choosing nirvana as opposed to samsara. Such a choice is based on becoming disillusioned with samsaric fascinations and somewhat revolted. Samsara not only feels bad, but it hits the basic core of your existence and makes you throw up. However, although the samsaric world is not very attractive, and renunciation seems to be necessary, you should not take renunciation too literally. If you try to run away from samsara, the very act of running away becomes in itself a samsaric act. Renunciation has to be unconditional renunciation.

## *The Middle Path of Accumulation*

[On the middle level of the path of accumulation,] you begin to realize the virtues and faults of your behavior. Your neurosis and sanity are clearly seen. . . [But] you first need inspiration. You need to identify with the teaching and feel that you are a part of the lineage—that it is your family wealth, your heirloom. . . From that conviction, and with tremendous faith and directness, you then automatically behave in an ethical way.

**B**EGINNING WITH the first of the five paths, the path of accumulation, we are directing our journey toward the mahayana. So an ordinary hinayana practitioner on the path of accumulation is already on a journey toward the mahayana. The second, or middle, path of accumulation is inspired by the lesser path of accumulation. As an ordinary practitioner, you enter the second stage of the path of accumulation when you have managed to cut the cause of being born in the lower realms—the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, and the animal realm. In Tibetan what you are cutting is called *ne-n-gen len-gyi gyu*. *Ne* means “dwelling place,” *n-gen* means “lower,” *len* means “entering into a life,” *gyi* means “of,” and *gyu* means the “seed”; so *ne-n-gen len-gyi gyu* means the “seed of entering into a life in a lower dwelling place.”

On the middle level of the path of accumulation, you are slowly and surely moving away from ordinary religious or spiritual practices of purely saving yourself and reaching a higher level of spirituality. You are slowly moving away from the theistic approach with its notion of a savior. The lesser level of the path of accumulation is the common yana, one which

theistic traditions that believe in an external deity could also follow. In theistic religions, you also see the foolishness of egohood and the foolishness of looking for security, but there is no notion of egolessness. The idea of renunciation is also not at all unfamiliar. In fact, renunciation is one of the highlights of the theistic approach. So the change from the lesser to the middle path of accumulation is that you cease to have the idea of a savior. You are actually moving away from theism. The second level of the path of accumulation marks that point extremely clearly, whereas in the first level of the path of accumulation, it is still questionable.

At this point, you are finally becoming independent from theistic dogma. However, there is still the possibility that you could end up in the god realm by means of meditation. The saving grace is Prajna. Vipashyana allows you to develop the insight and intelligence to be able to sort fish from fowl, that which is ego-centered from that which is not. That is one of the outstanding qualities of Buddhism—it sows the seed of intelligence in students' minds so that they know how to separate those two approaches to the spiritual path.

### THE MANTRA OF EXPERIENCE

In the middle path of accumulation, you practice what is called the “sixteen incantations,” or the “mantra of experience.” In reciting this incantation, you are shifting your conceptualization much closer to the truth. By doing so, you begin to get a glimpse of clarity and sanity so that your conceptualizations become much more sophisticated. One of the beauties of the hinayana teaching is that you are not looking for a higher goal, but you are simply manipulating your confusion in a wiser way. In that way, you begin to find yourself closer to freedom. So the hinayana is a very ground-level approach.

The mantra of experience is not particularly spectacular. In fact, it seems to be quite ordinary. It is the repeating of the four noble truths in four different ways. This formula is said to cut the root of being born in the lower realms, and as such it is very important and profound. Reciting the mantra of experience has nothing to do with magic or with calming the mind; it is simply that you are more convinced the more you ponder it. It is a form of brainwashing, but the brain that you wash out is the ego. You begin to have second thoughts about your previous commitment to your confusion, and you develop a lot of doubts, which begins to shatter

the foundation of ego. You shatter ego's foundation by mocking it with the notion that it is not valid or secure. But you do not try to destroy the whole thing completely, for the hinayana path is a gradual process.

In reciting the mantra, you begin to become more aware of the totality, as an organic thing, and you no longer look for one particular highlight. You actually begin to see an alternative to samsara. By reciting the four noble truths in this way, the whole of existence becomes a manifestation of truth or liberation, and you could identify with it as a totality.

### *The Sixteen Incantations*

The first set of incantations is:

- Suffering should be seen.
- The origin of the suffering should be avoided.
- The goal should be attained.
- The path should be actualized.

The second set of incantations is:

- Suffering should be realized as impermanent.
- The origin of suffering should be realized as impermanent.
- The goal should be realized as impermanent.
- The path should be realized as impermanent.

The third set of incantations is:

- Suffering should be seen clearly.
- The origin of suffering should be seen clearly.
- The goal should be seen clearly.
- The path should be seen clearly.

The fourth set of incantations is:

- No suffering.
- No origin of suffering.
- No goal.
- No path.

The first set familiarizes you with the basic logic of the four noble truths. With the second set, you discover that the four noble truths do not provide security because they are all just transitory experiences. With the third set, having seen the transitory nature of those experiences, you should develop some personal identification with these truths. They should be seen clearly and properly. The fourth set of incantations points out that, in actual fact, the only requirement is to cut the karmic root of suffering, the origin of suffering, the goal, and the path. Therefore, there is no suffering, no origin, no goal, and no path. That is the final statement of *vipashyana* experience—that we should cut the root of confusion altogether.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CONVICTION

How is it possible that by knowing those four ways of seeing the four noble truths, you can cut the cause and effect of being born in the lower samsaric realms? It is because you have become completely and thoroughly identified with the teaching, so the teaching is no longer a myth. The reason we should repeat these four noble truths four times is to increase the sense of identification with the practice and the teaching that we have learned. It is to build “real conviction,” *ngesar shepa*. *Ngepar shepa* is not just ordinary conviction, but real conviction, knowing completely and thoroughly.

If you do not have enough pride in the teachings, you will be unable to cut the karmic umbilical cord. In the mahayana, you are proud of yourself because you have buddha nature. At the hinayana level of the path of accumulation, you are proud because for the first time you are able to relate to the teachings. You have heard the four noble truths in their absolute meaning. You develop tremendous excitement because you have taken refuge in the dharma and you can identify with the dharma. That is why you are proud. But although there is pride, it is still underdeveloped. So the idea of reciting sixteen incantations is to build up your identification with the real teaching.

of the path, and you develop dompa, or binding. Identifying with the teachings is the factor that binds you together with the practice. That is the definition of shila, or morality: that which binds you to the practice and the teachings. But you cannot develop a very powerful binding force unless there is some kind of pride.

One of the problems with the ethical approach is that there is a tendency to feel guilty or fearful of punishment. You become afraid of the consequences, feeling that you might get punished in purgatory or hell unless you keep your rules. In this case, it is quite the opposite: the reason you keep your discipline is that you are inspired by your understanding of the sixteen incantations of the four noble truths. That realization brings you much closer to the teachings. You have something to live for, rather than just living a myth.

Having identified with the teaching and been inspired by its implications, you begin to realize the virtues and faults of your behavior. Your neurosis and sanity are clearly seen. That is the ethical guideline. Cutting the karmic root of entering the lower realms is not dependent on behaving in a moralistic, ethical way, or being good. You first need inspiration. You need to identify with the teaching and feel that you are a part of the lineage—that it is your family wealth, your heirloom. So first you have that conviction, and from that conviction, and with tremendous faith and directness, you then automatically behave in an ethical way. Such conviction rouses you to relate with the teaching and pull yourself together.

We could say that the middle path of accumulation is a way to make yourself more intelligent. The first level, or lesser path of accumulation, is a training process. At that level, we are uncertain whether we are intelligent or not. We are simply following certain rules and regulations and recommendations from a person we trust, teachings we trust, and a tradition we trust—but it is still based on devotion and guesswork. That is the only way to convert ordinary people to the path: to first give a set of disciplines, rules, and regulations that are seemingly workable and roughly logical. At the same time, the teachings are also experientially logical, in that you have experienced the reality of death, impermanence, egolessness, pain, and so forth. On the lesser path of accumulation, you have understood the teaching somewhat roughly. But it doesn't quite click in the fundamental sense until you identify with the real teaching of the four noble truths by repeating these sixteen incantations.

### ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The middle level of the path of accumulation is very ethically oriented, with an emphasis on behaving properly, in accordance with the practice. You exclude what is undesirable and include what is desirable in terms

A basic point of the middle path of accumulation is to rouse yourself to the drum of the dharma, the trumpet of the teachings. The proclamation of the four noble truths is heard four times, and each time it is clearer and clearer. The ability to identify yourself with that teaching is a kind of heroism. It is how you bring yourself into the path. If you join the army, first you have security. Your house, your uniform, and your food have been prepared for you. Then you have the heroism of being in the army—the flags, bugles, horses, and whatnot—and you make yourself very loud, convincing, and colorful. That seems to be the quality of the middle path of accumulation.

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## The Greater Path of Accumulation

*We need both devotional virya and ongoing virya. Those two viryas seem to be important. They are the basic core of the shamatha-vipashyana marriage—and shamatha-vipashyana is recommended as the vanguard of the mahayana practice of shunyata.*

At the level of the greater path of accumulation, a person begins to develop not only isolated awareness or mindfulness practice, but the practice of being aware and mindful at the same time, or shamatha-vipashyana. Having started with shamatha, you may have begun to place more emphasis on vipashyana—but you then begin to realize the limitation of dwelling on vipashyana alone, so you go a step further, and you happen to rediscover shamatha.

### TWO TYPES OF EFFORT

In joining together shamatha and vipashyana, the scriptures talk about two types of effort: the practice of surrendering and the practice of continuity. The Sanskrit word *virya* (Tib.: tsöndri) means “effort,” “diligence,” or “working hard.” The practice of surrendering, or devotional *virya*, is called *kijor*—*kii* meaning “respect,” or “devotion,” and *jorwa* meaning “application” or “practice,” so *kijor* means the “practice of devotion.” The practice of continuity or ongoing *virya*, is *tagjor*. *Tag* means “continuity,” and *jorwa* again means “practice,” so *tagjor* means “the practice of continuity.” With *tagjor*, your practice is ongoing. You have engaged with

the practice, and your practice is diligent and devoted—and you are willing to go along with that for the rest of your life.

The two viryas balance one another. Devotional virya could become impulsive, and ongoing virya could be without devotion or inspiration, just dragging along. So we need both devotional virya and ongoing virya. The two viryas seem to be important. They are the basic core of the shamatha-vipashyana marriage—and shamatha-vipashyana is recommended as the vanguard of the mahayana practice of shunyata. Shamatha-vipashyana is the way you step out of the path of accumulation onto the path of unification, the second of the five paths. The combination of shamatha with vipashyana is the leverage.

In shamatha-vipashyana practice, when you sit you have an awareness of your surroundings. Your sense perceptions have been taken into account in developing vipashyana awareness, and you also have the shamatha practice of deliberateness, of getting into things directly. Bringing together those two types of practice is said by the Kagyü lineage father Gampopa to be one of the most enlightening and promising techniques ever developed in the dharma.

In the Burmese Theravada tradition, the late Burmese meditation master Mahasi Sayadaw was a great revolutionary in the meditation field. He reintroduced meditation practice into the Theravada world with a particular emphasis on the combination of shamatha-vipashyana. It is an important point that having already accomplished shamatha and vipashyana independent of each other, we can combine them together by application of the two types of virya. This approach is highly recommended by all kinds of great teachers.

When we combine shamatha and vipashyana, we feel the verge of the breath, or the touch of the breath going out, rather than being heavily-handled in it. At the same time, there is a feeling of completeness around us everywhere, in all directions, an environmental feeling. We sense that when the breathing dissolves, it is an expanding process—dissolving at this point, dissolving at that point, and further points, and further, further points. That dissolving is taking place in the whole universe, and you are, in a sense, nowhere. Finally, you lose the reference point as to who is breathing and where the breathing is dissolving. But that sense of complete desolation cannot take place unless the precision and accuracy of the breathing is happening at the same time. The accuracy of shamatha happens to be independent of the particular department that perpetuates

the sense of reference point. But even if there is no point of reference with shamatha, as the breathing goes out, it is real and complete breathing going out.

The sense of reference point is connected to the psychosomatic body, which is the source of security. If you lose that reference point, you may feel that you have at last freed yourself from the world of desire, and your psychosomatic sickness has no control over you anymore. But you still have a long way to go. You have not yet touched shunyata. Although it may be subtle, there is still a sense of self. Although the heaviest part of the neurosis has been removed, there is still a feeling of duality. For the practitioner, the sense of self abides in the teachings and the practice itself. That is the only security there is: trusting in the truth of the teachings. With practice, there is definitely a change, because you experience the desolation of things being not all that solid and definite. Your belief in physical existence is being pulled apart, but you still believe in the discontinuity. There is the abstract belief that what pulls you apart is a form of security. There is still some kind of trust that you are going to continue, and you have a practice to work with. So although you lose your body, you can still practice.

In shamatha-vipashyana, mind and space mix together. That mixing of mind and space comes from the two types of virya. The virya of devotion, kūjor, leans toward the practice of precision, of bending one's fantasies to the simple breath. It is the shamatha aspect. The virya of continuity, or tagjor, is related with vipashyana. In shamatha-vipashyana, you need kūjor and tagjor happening together simultaneously.

#### THE FOUR LEGS OF MIRACLE

On the third or greater level of the path of accumulation, we approach shamatha-vipashyana in terms of what are called the “four legs of miracle”: strong interest, effort, recollection, and investigation.

##### *Strong Interest*

The first leg is called *dūmpa*, or “strong interest.” It is the attitude that you are going to apply yourself to shamatha-vipashyana practice. There is a quality of conviction connected with the fact that developing shamatha-vipashyana is the way to cut not only the three lowest realms, but the

world of passion altogether. Before, at the lesser and middle levels of the path of accumulation, you were just cutting the animal, hungry ghost, and hell realms; but at the greater level of the path of accumulation, the root of the world of desire is cut.

It is important to know which particular world we are conquering in the various stages of meditative development. There are three world-realms: the formless realm, the world of form, and the world of passion or desire. The world of desire includes the jealous god realm, the human realm, the animal realm, the hungry ghost realm, and the hell realm, plus a portion of the god realm. So a portion of the god realm is considered to be within the realm of desire, and the remainder of the god realm is considered to be within the form and formless world realms—heavenly realms of progressively more subtle states of meditative absorption. In the realm of desire, you have not only the existence of form, but you experience a heavy demand on your body, speech, and mind. Mind is related with the formless world, speech with the world of form, and body with the world of desire. Very refined desire is related with the formless god realm, subtle desire with the world of form, and crude desire with the world of desire. From the world of desire to the world of form to the formless world, the quality of desire is progressively more refined and subtle.

Meditative development is one of first conquering crude desire, then subtle desire, and finally very refined desire. Shamatha-vipashyana practice is extraordinarily important because it is the only way you can cut the realm of desire. Of the three world-realms, the desire realm is the heaviest realm, and at this point the root of this realm has been cut.

### Effort

The second leg of miracle is effort, or tsöndrü. It is strenuousness. Much stronger obstacles occur when you involve yourself in shamatha-vipashyana practice. Quite possibly you are putting many eggs in one basket, because you are trying to collect your span of attention into one-pointedness, and at the same time you are increasing your span of awareness. Putting those two into one basket at the same time is highly demanding. You cannot practice shamatha-vipashyana unless you have gone through shamatha first and vipashyana afterward. You need to have training in both practices separately before coming to shamatha-vipashyana practice, because combining the two takes a lot of effort.

### Recollection

The third leg is *trenpa\**, or recollection (Skt.: *smṛti*). Recollection is used greatly by the contemplative traditions of the West, particularly by the Catholic tradition of monasticism and the mystical schools. The *satipatthana* practice of the Theravadins and the *smṛtiyupashchana* practice of Sarvastivadins are also practices of recollection. Recollection doesn't mean capturing experiences, but being awake in a different way. You are totally awake and free from any unnecessary commitments. Recollection has nothing to do with memory—it is entirely different. Trenpa could refer to "recalling the past," but tren also means "to think."

Trenpa does not mean recalling past details, like digging up old things from the attic; but it is based on habitual mind, which automatically has reference points. The indoctrination of reference points is implanted in your mind. For instance, you could not suddenly say, "There is a car" without any reference to the past. You could not say, "There is a car" if you had not remembered that it was a car before you experienced it. So trenpa ceases to be a reference point, in that we do not have to dig up all our memories and love and hate from the past; and at the same time, it is a reference point. Even a simple statement such as "There is a car" is not quite free from the past.

Even our awareness practice is a product of the past. You have been told that it is good to develop awareness, to sit and do it, so you do it because you have been told to. However, when you are doing it, you do not have to go back and check on it. You just flash it. If someone is going to hit you, you cover your head with your hand. In part, that is the result of indoctrination—but it is a spontaneous act, nevertheless. So immediate experience, or seemingly immediate experience, has its root in the habitual thinking of the past. Nevertheless, such habitual patterns also have subconscious, clear, resourceful, and present intelligence.

Reacting to confusion and hassles takes place in the present. You have no time to go back. With the five skandhas, for example, you have no chance to go back step-by-step. You may be on the brink of the fifth skandha, but you have all five of them simultaneously. All hands on deck at one moment! There is a taste of looseness, stillness, and desolation. You have no chance to relate with your case history anymore—you are right there.

\* Most sources associate the third leg with "mind" (Tib.: sem; Skt.: chitta).

Animals instinctively react to any attack. They decide to make a move, whether it is logical or illogical. When a cat sees cars coming, it might decide to cross the road or try to go back. There is no logic, particularly, it is an expression of freedom.

Trenpa is the sense of perspective. You are aware of your meditative practice being an entirely different approach than your ordinary way of relating with your life. You are aware that you are just about to give up your lovable world, the world of desire. You begin to have all kinds of panic and fear, feeling that the good old days were beautiful but now there is a threat. You realize that practice is very threatening.

#### *Investigation*

The last leg of miracle is called *chöpa*, or “investigation.” When you are in a state of shamatha-vipashyana practice, you have to examine yourself constantly. A lot of investigation needs to be done. Unless there is a continual reexamining of yourself, quite likely the hassles involved with the practice would put you off. Because it is so strenuous, you would not want to get into it. Unless you are able to get inspired by strenuous investigation, you will no longer be able to identify yourself with the teachings.

This third stage of the path of accumulation is extremely important. It is the last possibility for an ordinary person to be able to transform himself or herself into a higher person, a noble person. That is why it is called the greater path of accumulation. It is the only way that you—as an ordinary layperson, who is neither an arhat nor a bodhisattva nor a buddha—could become one of the noble ones.

The beginning of the hinayana path, the shravakayana, is the level of an ordinary student. The specialities of shravakayana are following monastic rules, listening, and talking. It is the level of the four foundations of mindfulness and the four noble truths. In the third stage of the path of accumulation, you are approaching the pratyekabuddhaya. You have a sense of freedom, liberation, and emancipation. You discover that you are about to cut the realm of desire and enter the desireless realms. Shamatha-vipashyana practice is the only one that could bring you to that supernormal, superhuman level—there is no other way.

*The path of unification is complete preparation for the mahayana, but it is not the mahayana as such. On the path of unification, you have sensed the possibility of treading on the path of the bodhisattva and becoming a mahayanist who is fully dedicated to working with sentient beings, so tremendous conviction comes up. You are excited by the possibility that you might enter into the mahayana at some point.*

**W**HEN A person has developed shamatha-vipashyana practice not only in the meditative state alone, but on the meditation-in-action level as well, that person has begun to approach the second of the five paths, which is the path of unification. The path of unification, or jorlam, connects or unites the ordinary samsaric person with the level of higher beings who are able to turn the wheel of dharma dispassionately. You begin to get a sense of accomplishment as you go from the greater level of the path of accumulation into the first level of the path of unification. You realize that the idea of shunyata and the idea of losing one’s concept of self, or ego, is no longer fearful. In other words, you begin to realize that you have nothing to lose and nothing to gain. That is the first hint of shunyata experience.

#### MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCE

The meditation experience of the path of unification is *nampar mitokpa*. *Mitokpa* is “nonconceptualization,” and *nampar* means “completely,” or

“properly”; so *nampar mitokpa* is a “completely, properly nonconceptualized state.” It is the final realization of the desolateness of the meditative state. You begin to have very solid and tangible feelings of the three marks of existence. Suffering, impermanence, and egolessness are completely understood and actualized in your own practice. So shamatha-vipashyana plays a very important part. It is the only way you could enter into shunyata practice and realization. It is the only way that you could transform yourself from a subhuman or subsentient being to a supersentient being—an arhat or bodhisattva.

## DEVELOPING DISCRIMINATION

On the path of unification you develop what are known as the four stages of discrimination: heat, peak, patience, and higher dharma.

### 1. Heat / Trö

The first stage of discrimination is referred to as *trö*, which means “heat.” *Trö* is like rubbing sticks together to produce fire; before you produce fire, you feel heat. *Trö* has nothing to do with yogic practices. It is more like heat in the sense of an animal going into heat in the mating season. There is a possibility of mating with somebody; you have a whiff of that. Likewise, you get a hint of the shunyata possibilities because you no longer are afraid of your possible involvement with the non-ego realm, non-ego doctrine, and non-ego livelihood. You have given up all your desires—they have already gone away—so you no longer feel the desolation, loneliness, and pain of the three marks of existence. They are no longer a problem, but a reality. You are benefiting, again and again, by the three marks of existence. That is the particular hint of heat you begin to catch. Since you have begun to get a glimpse of the mahayana, you have a feeling of delightedness.

### 2. Peak / Tsemo

The second stage of discrimination is referred to as *tsemo*, which means “peak,” or “crest,” as in the tip of a tree or plant. In this case, it has the sense of once in a lifetime. It is like the tip of a tree, because you are just

beginning to touch a sensitive point of your development. It is once in a lifetime because it cannot be achieved unless you are able to relate with that particular insight as potentially explosive, and you are willing to live with it. It is potentially explosive because there is the possibility for the first time of becoming superhuman. You feel you have swallowed an atom bomb and at any minute it’s going to burst. With *tsemo*, there is a sense of penetratingness as well as heat. You feel a sharpness happening inside you, as if you had swallowed a razor blade and it’s just about to cut you from inside out. There is a sense of a magnificent and somewhat terrifying sharpness taking place within your being—an enormous conviction.

### 3. Patience / Söpa

Having developed conviction, and having gone through heat and peak, *trö* and *tsemo*, the third type of discrimination is *söpa*, or patience. You develop patience, for nothing has been censored in the teachings. This type of patience is an entirely different kind of patience—it is not just forbearance of pain, it is that you are willing to wait to receive the teachings. The teachings are a part of your system, and you are not impatiently looking forward to the next excitement. The result of such patience is that you develop enormous mental power to memorize the words you heard from the teacher and read in the teachings. Part of the egoless approach toward sentient beings is that it brings unforgetfulness. The mental hang-up of forgetfulness occurs because you would like to preserve things for yourself. You would like to treat yourself well and never let anybody else see what you have. Such selfishness brings forgetfulness. When there is no selfishness, that brings a tremendously sharp memory and powerful recollection. That is the element of patience.

### 4. Higher Dharma / Tamchö

The fourth type of discrimination is called the higher dharma (*Tib.: tam-chö*, *damchos*; *Skt.: saddharma*). Having developed conviction and powerful mental recollection, you begin to have the idea that you are a holder of the dharma. Although you have not yet become a teacher, you have a sense that you are becoming part of the lineage. There is a hint of that, a sense of identifying with the higher dharma.

The four stages of discrimination—heat, peak, patience, and higher dharma—are the last development in the path of unification, the second path.

### FIVE PERCEPTIONS

The combination of heat and peak, trö and tsemo, leads into a further process: a development of energies of perceptions known in Tibetan as *wangpo nga*. *Wangpo* means “sense organs,” and *nga* means “five,” so *wangponga* means “five sense organs.” These five are the meditative equivalent of the sense organs. These psychological sense-organs are developed through the practice of sharnatha and vipashyana and the realization of the three marks of existence. Having developed such senses, you have reached the level of direct application. You know how to bring together the teachings, the teacher, the student, and the practitioner’s means and methods into one unity. Without these five organs, you will have no way to bring those together as personal experience. You will still view the teachings as a foreign element, something that you cannot actually relate with.

The reason you may find it very difficult to practice and to put into effect whatever you have learned and studied is not because you are stupid and unable to comprehend. It is not that you are lazy, slow, or pleasure oriented. None of those reasons apply. The only reason you are not able to relate with the teachings is that you are unable to identify with them as personal experience. If you are able to identify with the teachings as personal experience, your intellect naturally flows out, and your meditation experience and awareness flow out as well. Energy and joy in practicing flow out because there is devotion to the path, which has become an integral part of your existence. In order to create an effective marriage, a couple has to develop love for one another. Similarly, you need to personalize the teachings in order to unite with them and bring them into your system, into your whole being. The teachings are based on personal experience, personally applied to individuals, rather than on theoretical speculation or metaphysics. When you identify with the teachings as personal experience, there is well-being and ultimate security. The teachings are alive, and they apply to your day-to-day living.

The first perception is *faith* in your discovery (Tib.: *tepa*). The second perception is *exertion* (Tib.: *tsöndrü*). It is diligence, perseverance, work-

ing hard. The good news that there is an alternative to samsaric existence brings both discipline and delight. You are not tired of what you are trying to do, but highly energized. It takes energy to renounce the samsaric world, so diligence is absolutely necessary.

The third perception is *recollection*, or awareness (Tib.: *trenpa*). The practice of meditation and other techniques is kept very vigorous by the combination of awareness and diligence. You are relating with the teachings, with vipashyana as the basis of both meditation in action and sitting meditation. Awareness is twenty-four-hour work. You are completely at the mercy of the dharma. *Trenpa* also brings an experience of egolessness. Your only interest is in awakening your mind of enlightenment, or *bodhichitta*. You have no personal interest in anything else.

The fourth perception is *one-pointedness*, or meditation (Tib.: *ting-nge-dzir*). It is almost at the level of obsession. Even ordinary thoughts, such as fantasies of aggression or fantasies of sex, become part of the inspiration of the path. Ordinary thoughts become workable as part of the complete conviction of absorption. Since you have a personal understanding and relationship with practice, there is a feeling of well-being. That plays an extremely important part, for without that, the simplicity of sharnatha and the clarity of vipashyana—the very idea of meditation—become pure myth.

The fifth perception is *intellect*, knowledge, or *prajna* (Tib.: *shera*). *Prajna* is the complete experience of vipashyana. You begin to discover all kinds of subtleties in the world, subtleties of colors and shapes and implications of energy exchange. Whatever happens in your life becomes tremendously sharp and fantastically revealing by its own condition, rather than according to your own preconceived ideas, or ego’s version of things. There is a tremendous selflessness, and the notion that you are actually advancing on the path. At this level, *prajna* is an intellectual understanding and appreciation of the subtleties of the dharma. You are not bound by emotions or intuition alone, but you have an intellectual understanding of the whole path.

### FIVE POWERS

Along with the five perceptions, five powers or strengths develop at this point. The five powers are as follows: faith never needs to be sought; exertion never needs to be sought; recollection never needs to be sought;

one-pointedness never needs to be sought; and intellect never needs to be sought. With the five powers, you have complete command. So first you develop the five perceptions or abilities. Then, as a further development, you become confident about those abilities.

The path of unification is complete preparation for the mahayana, but it is not the mahayana as such. On the path of unification, you have sensed the possibility of treading on the path of the bodhisattva and becoming a mahayanist who is fully dedicated to working with sentient beings, so tremendous conviction comes up. You are excited by the possibility that you might enter into the mahayana at some point.

A STUDY OF GROUNDS AND PATHS ACCORDING TO THE MIDDLE WAY  
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one disassembles is based on misunderstanding and has led to indifference, hostility, and attachment of a variety that tends to confine others rather than nourish their development. Through imagining oneself as the friend, enemy, parent, and so forth to each and every sentient being innumerable times over the course of beginningless births in cyclic existence, one dissolves the ground of bias on which the inappropriate hierarchy of emotions depended. Based on a more accurate understanding of the implications of beginningless rebirth, one can establish an appropriate hierarchy of emotions in the place of an ill-constructed one.

The hierarchy is in both cases one of cause and effect. Not recognizing others as the friends, enemies, parents, and so on of other lifetimes, one feels attachment, hatred, or indifference based solely on the circumstances of the present lifetime. In that case, ignorance serves as the cause and partiality evolves as the effect. Having recognized others as those who have been kind and well-loved through innumerable lifetimes, one feels gratitude, love, and compassion for close friends who have wandered beginninglessly from one painful situation to another. Impelled by such love and compassion, one resolves to lead others from suffering and show them the route to happiness. In this latter case, knowledge serves as the cause, and love, aspiration, and determination serve as the effects.

PATHS OF ACCUMULATION

*Names and Etymologies*  
The name of this first path, "path of accumulation," refers to the collections of merit and wisdom. Because these paths are the first of those on which practitioners accumu-

late the collections of merit<sup>a</sup> and wisdom<sup>b</sup> that enable them to achieve the liberation and enlightenment of their own vehicles, they are called paths of accumulation.<sup>160</sup> On these paths, practitioners accumulate the collection of wisdom by listening to explanations of selflessness and thinking about their meaning. These activities give rise to the wisdoms that arise from hearing<sup>c</sup> and contemplating.<sup>d</sup> When those are conjoined with a stable mind known as calm abiding,<sup>e</sup> they allow wisdom to arise from meditation.<sup>f</sup> We will consider this meditative stabilizations and these wisdoms later in this chapter.

Merit is a somewhat more elusive notion. Despite the central role of merit in any presentation of hinayāna and mahāyāna grounds and paths, the literature on grounds and paths leaves it to the student to figure out what merit is. This may be accomplished through studying the illustrations of merit, reading more widely, and asking a qualified teacher for an explanation. Ye-shay-up-den identified merit as virtue, a principle that issues forth pleasure and happiness as its effect.<sup>g</sup> In that light, merit, which has also a sense of wealth, might be understood as a power to attract

favorable situations. Particular attitudes and actions tend to increase that power. We will be able to illustrate this clearly when, in the context of presenting the ten grounds of a bodhisattva superior, we discuss the ten perfections<sup>h</sup> of giving, ethics, and so forth. In the context of the five paths, merit is important chiefly for its effect upon and cooperation with wisdom. Their interaction becomes a prominent topic for discussion when one considers paths of seeing and meditation, and we will attend to it there. On paths of accumulation, practitioners accumulate merit by aspiring to liberation and by abandoning nonvirtuous action in favor of virtue.

Paths of accumulation are known by three other names.<sup>161</sup> Each name illuminates a particular facet of the consciousnesses that are collectively referred to as the paths of accumulation. First, these consciousnesses are called “grounds of faith.”<sup>b</sup> They are called that because on this path five qualities, the first of which is faith, develop to the point that one can be said to have become skilled in them. The five are faith, exertion, mindfulness, meditative stabilization, and wisdom.<sup>162</sup> Another reason why they are called grounds of faith is that on these paths one’s belief in the three jewels—the Buddha, his doctrine, and his spiritual community—and in emptiness becomes powerful.<sup>163</sup>

Paths of accumulation are also known as “partial concordances with liberation.”<sup>d</sup> “Liberation” refers to the true cessation of having abandoned the afflictive

- <sup>a</sup> *bsod nams puma*
- <sup>b</sup> *ye shes, jñāna*
- <sup>c</sup> *thos pa las byung ba'i shes rab, śrūdamayaprajña*
- <sup>d</sup> *bsram pa las byung ba'i shes rab, cintamayaprajña*
- <sup>e</sup> *zhi gnas, samatha*
- <sup>f</sup> *sgom pa las byung ba'i shes rab, biavandmayaprajña*
- <sup>g</sup> *ting nge 'dzin, samadhi*
- <sup>h</sup> *rang 'bras bde ba 'byin byed kyi rigs su nges pa*

<sup>a</sup> *pha rol nu phyin pa, paramita*

<sup>b</sup> *dad pa'i sa, strophabhami*

<sup>c</sup> *dka' mchog gsum, trirama*

<sup>d</sup> *thar pa cha miñun*

obstructions. The true cessation of having abandoned the acquired afflictive obstructions,<sup>a</sup> which are a portion of the afflictive obstructions, is a portion of liberation.

Paths of accumulation are concordant with the partial liberations that will be achieved later and, from that point of view, are said to be partially concordant with liberation.<sup>164</sup>

Paths of accumulation are also known by the name, “clear realization of the doctrine,”<sup>b</sup> which is in fact their definition. In “clear realization,”<sup>c</sup> “clear”<sup>d</sup> means “liberation”<sup>e</sup> and “realize”<sup>f</sup> means “achieve.”<sup>g</sup> Thus, “clear realization”<sup>h</sup> means “achiever of liberation” or “path that causes one to achieve liberation.”<sup>i</sup> Thus, the term “clear realization” refers to paths that cause practitioners to achieve liberation.<sup>165</sup> Also, “doctrine” refers to the twelve branches of scripture, which are methods of liberation taught by the Buddha and organized in terms of different objects of expression.

“ion” and different expressive terms.<sup>b,166</sup> Through listening to and thinking about the twelve branches of scripture, students develop a decisive understanding of the selflessness that is the meaning of the scriptures. For that reason, the paths on which one develops this understanding are called clear realizations of the doctrine.<sup>167</sup>

These four names—path of accumulation, ground of faith, partial concordance with liberation, and clear realization of the doctrine—give a general portrait of the path of accumulation. On that path, practitioners begin to accumulate the merit and wisdom that will enable them to achieve liberation. They proceed by way of faith in the three jewels and in selflessness, and their faith becomes more powerful. The qualities of exertion, mindfulness, meditative stabilization, and wisdom also become stronger. Practitioners are definitely moving in the direction of liberation and on this path come to understand the selflessness that is the main point of the Buddha’s teaching.

- <sup>a</sup> *nyon sgrib kan brags*
- <sup>b</sup> *chos mngon rrogs*
- <sup>c</sup> *mngon rrogs, abhisamaya*
- <sup>d</sup> *mngon*
- <sup>e</sup> *thar pa*
- <sup>f</sup> *rrogs pa*
- <sup>g</sup> *thob pa*
- <sup>h</sup> *mngon par rrogs pa*
- <sup>i</sup> *thar pa thob hyed gvi lam*

#### *Divisions of Paths of Accumulation*

The path of accumulation is divided into three parts, called “small,” “medium,” and “great.”<sup>c</sup> Both the hinayāna and mahāyāna paths of accumulation are described by way of the four-branched practice in which a student at that level engages. The mahāyāna paths of accumulation are described also by the type of mind-generation<sup>d</sup>

- <sup>a</sup> *bijod bya*
- <sup>b</sup> *tjod byed kyi tshig*
- <sup>c</sup> *chung ngu 'bring chen po*
- <sup>d</sup> *sems bsktyed, cinonpada*

that accompanies them and through comparison with different stages of recovery from an illness.

At the level of the small path of accumulation, a student practices the four establishments in mindfulness.<sup>a</sup> The four are: *mindfulness of body*,<sup>b</sup> *mindfulness of feeling*,<sup>c</sup> *mindfulness of mind*,<sup>d</sup> and *mindfulness of phenomena*.<sup>e</sup><sup>f</sup> These show an emphasis upon developing skill in meditation through developing the faculties related with meditation, such as mindfulness and precision.

The mind-generation of the mahāyāna small path of accumulation is said to be “like earth.”<sup>g</sup><sup>169</sup> At the same time, the mahāyāna small path of accumulation itself is said to be like an occasion when appropriate medicine has been taken but recovery from illness is still in doubt.<sup>170</sup> The two metaphors are related, though not materially.

To have generated a mahāyāna small path of accumulation resembles having taken appropriate medicine in that one has achieved the mind of enlightenment. Just as medicines overcome illnesses and restore health, so the mind of enlightenment overcomes ignorance and restores freedom. The allusion to medicine underscores a fundamental principle of Buddhist traditions, which hold that the afflictions of desire,

<sup>a</sup> *dran pa nyé bar bzhang pa, smṛtyupasthana*

<sup>b</sup> *lus dran pa nyé bar bzhang pa, kayaśmṛtyupasthana*

<sup>c</sup> *tshor ba dran pa nyé bar bzhang pa, vedaśmṛtyupasthana*

<sup>d</sup> *sems dran pa nyé bar bzhang pa, cittasmṛtyupasthana*

<sup>e</sup> *chos dran pa nyé bar bzhang pa, dharmaśmṛtyupasthana*

<sup>f</sup> *sa lta bu*

hatred, ignorance, and so forth are adventitious<sup>g</sup> rather than native to the mind. From that point of view, achieving complete liberation is more like reclaiming one’s native health than it is like acquiring something foreign. Still, if one is to recover, one must ingest this medicine completely, and at the level of the small path of accumulation it is not certain that one will do so. Perhaps one’s aspiration to enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings will flourish, whereupon oneself and eventually all others will recover from the maladies of ignorance, or perhaps it will degenerate, in which case one will tumble back into the recesses of cyclic existence, depriving both oneself and others of an opportunity to achieve liberation from the pain of birth and death. From that perspective, the mind of enlightenment that is associated with the mahāyāna small path of accumulation represents a basis for further development rather than an agent that will solve one’s problems, and in that sense it resembles earth. If the earth is properly tended, nourishing food can arise from it. Similarly, if the mind of enlightenment is cared for properly, all the good qualities of the mahāyāna will arise in dependence upon it. Thus, this path embodies a potential whose promise may or may not be fulfilled, depending upon the practitioner’s exertion.<sup>171</sup>

At the level of the medium path of accumulation, a student practices the four correct abandonments.<sup>h</sup> These four are (1) abandoning ill-deeds that one has already generated, (2) not generating those that one has not generated, (3) generating newly the good qualities that one has not yet generated, and (4) increasing to a higher level the good qualities that one has already generated.<sup>172</sup> At the previous level of the path

<sup>g</sup> *glo bur ba*

<sup>h</sup> *yang dag par spong ba bzhi*

of accumulation, the emphasis fell upon developing mindfulness. Here it lands upon ethics.

The mind-generation of the medium path of accumulation is said to be like gold.<sup>a</sup> In regard to recovery from an illness, Lo-sang-dā-yāng says that at this point it is certain that one will recover, but that it would be difficult to recover quickly.<sup>173</sup> He comments that recovery is certain because, just as gold that has been placed under the ground for a long time does not rot or turn into something other than gold, so the mind of enlightenment of a student at this level cannot degenerate. That is to say, like gold, it neither deteriorates nor alters due to its company. However, the practitioner cannot move quickly to the path of preparation.<sup>174</sup>

At the level of the great path of accumulation, a student practices the four legs of magical emanation.<sup>b</sup> The four are the meditative stabilizations of (1) aspiration,<sup>c</sup> (2) effort,<sup>d</sup> (3) thought,<sup>e</sup> and (4) analysis.<sup>f</sup><sup>175</sup> Having previously established a good foundation in mindfulness and ethics, at this level a practitioner can actually meditate well.

<sup>a</sup> *gsar lta bu*

<sup>b</sup> *ratsu phrul gyi rkang pa, reddipada*

<sup>c</sup> *'dun pa, chanda*

<sup>d</sup> *brison 'grus, virya*

<sup>e</sup> *sems, citta*

<sup>f</sup> *dpayod pa, vicara*

The mind-generation of the great path of accumulation is said to be “like the moon.”<sup>g</sup> Lo-sang-dā-yāng compares this level to the point at which it will be easy to recover quickly from an illness.<sup>176</sup> This is because practitioners at this level have achieved the meditative stabilization that is known as the “stream of doctrine,”<sup>h</sup> which enables practitioners to go by way of magical emanations before the buddhas of the ten directions and receive instructions from them directly. When they have done so, their good qualities steadily increase to a higher level, just as the moon waxes daily toward fullness. Because their good qualities increase, they reach the path of preparation quickly.<sup>177</sup>

#### *Union of Calm Abiding and Special Insight*

To achieve a path of preparation, a practitioner must unite calm abiding and special insight observing emptiness.<sup>i</sup><sup>178</sup> Therefore, on the path of accumulation, practitioners develop calm abiding and unite it with inferential realization of emptiness. These topics have been discussed in detail by other scholars and are mentioned only in passing within the literature on grounds and paths, for which reasons it seems unnecessary to say much about them here. To put it briefly, through eliminating five faults by means of eight antidotes, meditators cultivate nine states of mind in a serial manner by means of six powers and four mental engagements. Those nine states have their fruition in calm abiding, a clear, stable, and intense meditative stabilization in

<sup>g</sup> *zla ba lta bu*

<sup>h</sup> *chos reyun gyi ning nge 'dzin*

<sup>i</sup> *strong nyid la dmigs pa'i lhag mthong*

which both body and mind have been rendered pliant and serviceable. To generate inferential realization of the lack of inherent existence, practitioners study and apply reasonings such as those that show all phenomena to be mere dependent arisings, to be neither truly single nor truly multiple, and to be neither truly the same as the parts of which they are composed nor truly different from them. Having realized emptiness in the manner of a meaning-generality, practitioners must then integrate calm abiding and special insight such that analysis, rather than disturbing the mind's stability, enhances it. When practitioners conjoin calm abiding with special insight observing the meaning-generality of emptiness, they simultaneously achieve the paths of preparation of their respective vehicles. Let us turn our attention to the paths of preparation of hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas.<sup>179</sup>

#### PATHS OF PREPARATION

##### *Names and Etymologies*

Paths of preparation or, more literally, paths of connection, are called that because of connecting practitioners to the paths of seeing of their respective vehicles. Paths of preparation are also called "partial concordances with definite discrimination."<sup>a</sup> In this context, "definite discrimination" refers to paths of seeing, which have definite discrimination of the four truths. Since paths of preparation assist one to arrive at definite discrimination, they are said to be partially concordant with it. Also, because paths of preparation are branches of achieving the paths of seeing that are their effects, they are called "branches of definite discrimination."<sup>b</sup> Third, paths of

preparation are known as "clear realization of the meaning,"<sup>a</sup> which is also their definition. In that context, "meaning" refers to selflessness, which is the meaning of the scriptures. On paths of preparation, experience of selflessness arises in meditation, due to which these paths are called by that name. Considering all of the names by which the paths of preparation are known, we could say that they prepare practitioners to achieve paths of seeing by enabling them to discriminate selflessness in a clear and definite manner.<sup>180</sup>

Ĝön-chok-jik-may-wāng-bo remarks that the meanings realized clearly by paths of preparation may be either the coarse or the subtle selflessnesses. This is because his text presents the point of view of the Yogic Practice Middle Way Autonomy School, which holds that the selflessness realized by hearers and solitary realizers is less subtle than the selflessness realized by bodhisattvas, in that hearers meditate principally upon the person's lack of substantial existence, solitary realizers meditate principally upon the lack of a difference of nature between the apprehended object and the apprehending consciousness, and bodhisattvas meditate principally upon the lack of true existence in all phenomena.<sup>181</sup> According to a Consequence School presentation of paths, however, the coarser selflessnesses would not suffice as the meaning that is realized by paths of preparation because, according to the Consequence School, all three types of practitioners must realize the most subtle of selflessnesses, the absence of inherent existence in all phenomena.

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<sup>a</sup> *don mngon nags*

<sup>a</sup> *nges 'byed cha mathun*

<sup>b</sup> *nges 'byed yan lag*

*Divisions of Paths of Preparation*

Ān-chok-jik-may-Wang-ŵo divides paths of preparation both in terms of their capacity<sup>a</sup> and in terms of their entity.<sup>b</sup> When paths of preparation are divided by way of their capacity, they are classified as small, medium, and great.<sup>c</sup> The differences among the three are figured in terms of a path's capacity to destroy its discordant class,<sup>d</sup> but the particular referent of the designation depends upon whether the paths are those in the continuum of one person or those in the continua of different persons. When the paths are those of one person, the paths of preparation generated initially are small, the intermediate paths of preparation are medium, and the final paths of preparation are great. When the paths of preparation are those of different practitioners, the paths of practitioners whose faculties are dull<sup>e</sup> are small, the paths of practitioners whose faculties are medium<sup>f</sup> are also medium, and the paths of practitioners whose faculties are sharp<sup>g</sup> are great. The designations are flexible rather than fixed; for instance, the final paths of preparation of practitioners of small faculties would be their great paths of preparation but, in relation to the paths of preparation of practitioners of sharp faculties, would still be small. Similarly, the ini-

tial paths of preparation of practitioners of sharp faculties would be their small paths of preparation but, in relation to the paths of preparation of practitioners of dull faculties, would still be great.<sup>182</sup>

Jam-gon-ŵong-đrûl-îo-drô-ta-yay classifies paths of preparation as small, medium, or great not in regard to their capacity to overcome their discordant class but in regard to the definiteness of the time when the paths of seeing that are their result will be generated. When the paths of preparation are small, the time at which paths of seeing will be generated is not definite. When the paths of preparation are medium, the time at which paths of seeing will be generated is definite. When the paths of preparation are great, it is definite that paths of seeing will be generated in those lifetimes.<sup>183</sup>

*Division by Entity.* When paths of preparation are divided in terms of their entities, they are divided into a sequence of four types of paths called heat,<sup>a</sup> peak,<sup>b</sup> forbearance,<sup>c</sup> and supreme mundane quality.<sup>d</sup> The first two names are metaphors and the latter two are to be understood more literally. The names refer to distinctive features of the various paths of preparation, which they highlight.<sup>184</sup>

When wood is rubbed against wood, heat arises prior to and as a sign of the fire that will arise later. In a similar manner, carefully reasoned analysis of the

- 
- a      *nus pa*
  - b      *ngo bo*
  - c      *chung 'bring chen po gsum*
  - d      *mi miñun phyogs*
  - e      *dbang rul*
  - f      *dbang 'bring*
  - g      *dbang man*

<sup>a</sup>      *drod, usmagata*

<sup>b</sup>      *rse mo, mardhan*

<sup>c</sup>      *brod pa, kṣamitī*

<sup>d</sup>      *jig rten pa'i chos kyi mchog, laukikagryadharma*

appearances of truly existent persons and phenomena can yield a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight observing emptiness. Because that meditative intelligence presages the nonconceptual wisdom that, like fire, burns up the conception of an inherently existent self, it is compared to the heat that arises prior to actual fire. The fire of actual wisdom will not ignite until the path of seeing is achieved, but the dry wood of conceptions and misconceptions has become warm, and for that reason these paths that prepare a practitioner to give birth to nonconceptual wisdom are called “heat.”

On heat paths of preparation and below, roots of virtue can be cut by the force of anger and other afflictions. After practitioners have achieved peak paths of preparation, their roots of virtue cannot be cut.<sup>185</sup> In that sense, these practitioners have arrived at the high point where roots of virtue do not fluctuate. For that reason, these paths are called “peak,” which metaphorically suggests the best<sup>a</sup> or supreme<sup>b</sup> position. It is also said that practitioners at this level have achieved a partial nirvāna in the sense of having passed beyond the misery<sup>c</sup> of severing their own roots of virtue.

The third type of path of preparation is called “forbearance” because, at that point, practitioners achieve newly a forbearance that does not fear the profound, which is to say, does not fear emptiness and selflessness.<sup>186</sup> Having achieved this level, practitioners might take birth in bad transmigrations through the power of compassion, but they will never again be compelled to do so by the force of karmas and

afflictions. For that reason, it is said that practitioners at this level have achieved a further partial nirvāna in the sense of having passed beyond the misery of bad transmigrations. Both this and the previous partial nirvāna are regarded as nonanalytical<sup>d</sup> rather than analytical cessations<sup>b</sup> in that a particular form and degree of pain has ceased, but the cessation has come about not through direct realization of emptiness but through noncompletion of the conditions that would allow roots of virtue to be severed or powerless rebirth in bad transmigrations to occur.

The fourth rank among paths of preparation is called “supreme mundane quality” because these paths are supreme among worldly phenomena. That is to say, to develop further, practitioners would have to move to the levels of superior beings. Moreover, since these paths serve as the condition through whose power the path of seeing, which is not contaminated by ignorance, can be born, they are spoken of as the empowering condition<sup>c</sup> for the noncontaminated path of seeing.<sup>d</sup>

In sum, we might say that at the level of the heat paths of preparation, practitioners have achieved definite signs of progress, such that they know they are moving in the direction of wisdom; at the level of peak paths of preparation, practitioners have achieved a stability in which they have ceased to undermine their own progress; at the level of the forbearance paths of preparation, practitioners have become familiar enough with emptiness to stop fearing it; and at the level of the

<sup>a</sup> *so sor brtieg min gyi 'gog pa, apratisamñhyanirotha*

<sup>b</sup> *so sor brtieg 'gog, pratismñhyanirotha*

<sup>c</sup> *bdag rkyen, adhipatipravaya*

<sup>d</sup> *mthong lam zog med*

supreme mundane quality paths of preparation, practitioners are poised at the apex of worldly experience. Further steps will take them beyond the world in the sense of bringing direct, nonconceptual, nondual realization of the lack of inherent existence of the world and all that it contains.

The four levels of the paths of preparation can be divided again into the small, the medium, and the great. For instance, heat paths of preparation are divided into small heat paths of preparation, medium heat paths of preparation, and great heat paths of preparation. The same is true both for hinayāna and for mahāyāna peak and forbearance paths of preparation, and also for mahāyāna supreme mundane quality paths of preparation. However, hinayāna supreme mundane quality paths of preparation are not divided into small, medium, and great because they last no longer than the briefest period of time in which an action can be accomplished.<sup>a</sup> Jam-đel-shen-pen commented that this means something like the length of time it takes to snap your fingers. As there is no practical purpose in positing further subdivisions, none are posited. In short, hearers and solitary realizers achieve the supreme mundane quality paths of preparation of their respective vehicles and then pass immediately to the paths of seeing that are the effects of those final paths of preparation. On each of the four divisions of the mahāyāna path of preparation, bodhisattvas go before the buddhas and accumulate merit by prostrating, making offerings, exposing ill-deeds, and so on. Without accumulating merit in that way, they would not achieve the higher qualities of the mahāyāna paths of preparation. Because bodhisattvas accumulate merit on each of the four divisions of the paths of preparation, not only their heat, peak,

and forbearance paths of preparation but also their supreme mundane quality paths of preparation are divided into small, medium, and great.<sup>188</sup>

#### Clear Appearance

ĀGön-chok-jik-may-wāng-ŵō also explains the division of the paths of preparation into four levels by way of the clear appearance in meditative stabilization of a meaning-generality with respect to reality.<sup>a</sup><sup>189</sup> The initial meditative stabilizations in which the meaning-generality of reality appears clearly are heat paths of preparation. The subsequent meditative stabilizations in which that appearance has increased in clarity are peak paths of preparation. Meditative stabilizations in which a superior level of clarity has been achieved, such that meditation focuses upon the apprehending consciousness rather than upon the apprehended object, are forbearance paths of preparation.

Meditative stabilizations that will quickly give rise to unobstructed meditative stabilizations that are paths of seeing are supreme mundane quality paths of preparation. Notice that ĀGön-chok-jik-may-wāng-ŵō has spoken about “clear appearance of a meaning-generality with respect to reality”<sup>b</sup> rather than just “clear appearance with respect to reality.”<sup>c</sup> He explains his phrasing by citing a hypothetical interlocutor who would object that it is not logically well-founded to describe paths of preparation as consciousnesses for which reality appears clearly. The fault with proposing clear appearance of reality itself would be that clear appearance<sup>d</sup> is a quality of *non-*

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<sup>a</sup> *chos nyid, dharmaata*

<sup>b</sup> *chos nyid la don snyi'i gsal smang* (emphasis added)

<sup>c</sup> *chos nyid la gsal smang*

<sup>d</sup> *gsal smang*

*conceptual* consciousnesses and the four paths of preparation with which we are concerned at this point are *conceptual* consciousnesses.

The objector's critique is based upon a passage from Dhammadhīra's *Comimentary upon (Dignāga's) "Compendium of Valid Cognition."* The passage says:

Whatever awareness has clear appearance,  
That is asserted to be nonconceptual.

According to Dhammadhīra, an awareness\* that has clear appearance *must* be nonconceptual. At this juncture, we are considering the paths of preparation of practitioners who have yet to realize emptiness directly and who are familiarizing with emptiness through the medium of a meaning-generality, a mentally constructed image of emptiness. Their meditative consciousnesses are conceptual in nature and for that reason the objects of those consciousnesses do not appear "clearly".<sup>b</sup> It would not make sense to say that reality—a synonym for emptiness—appears clearly to paths of preparation that take mental images of reality as their appearing objects.

It turns out that the objector is Paṭṭachen Śō-nam-drak-ḥā. In objecting to the suggestion that reality appears clearly to the meditative stabilizations of the paths of preparation, he is arguing for clear appearance mixed with a meaning-generality and against clear appearance unmixed with a meaning-generality. That is to say, clear appearance is of two varieties: that which is mixed with a meaning-generality and that which is not mixed with a meaning-generality. Since clear appearance unmixed with a

meaning-generality would necessarily be appearance for nonconceptual awareness and since the paths of preparation in which we are interested at this point are conceptual consciousnesses, we may speak about clear appearance, but we must understand this to mean clear appearance mixed with a meaning-generality, or, as Ĝon-chok-jik-may-ŵang-ḥō has phrased it, "clear appearance of a meaning-generality with respect to reality." If we understand "clear appearance" in this way, we may use it to posit and measure the gradual approach to direct realization of emptiness.

The general and important point being made in this discussion of "clear appearance" is that for the perspective of the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight observing emptiness through the medium of a meaning-generality, emptiness and the mentally constructed image of emptiness appear to be mixed. Practitioners *do* realize emptiness on the paths of preparation and emptiness *does* appear to their meditative consciousnesses. However, on the paths of preparation, emptiness itself is obscured by an overlay that, however helpful, does prevent emptiness from appearing as clearly as it will later, when it is realized directly. Through continuing to meditate upon emptiness on the paths of preparation, practitioners become more familiar with it and the power of their realization increases. Gradually, they can dispense with the meaning-generality of emptiness that previously served as necessary supports for their meditation. When the meaning-generality have faded away, only emptiness remains. In that way, inferential realization of emptiness through the medium of a mental image gives way to direct realization of emptiness itself.<sup>190</sup>

\* *blo, buddhi*

<sup>b</sup> *gsal bar*

### Dualistic Appearance

The approach to direct, nonconceptual realization over the four levels of the paths of preparation can also be described as the “gradual diminishment of the elaborations of dualistic appearance.”<sup>a</sup> Jam-bell-shen-pen explained that, in this context, “dualistic appearance” means the appearance of emptiness and one’s mind as separate,<sup>c</sup> as object and subject,<sup>d</sup> as that which is imputed and that which imputes.<sup>e</sup> Over the four levels of the paths of preparation, dualistic appearance decreases steadily until, on paths of seeing, the mind and emptiness are mixed like water poured into water, such that they seem to be undifferentiable.<sup>191</sup> Jang-ŷga and Lo-sang-ða-ŷang agree that the diminishment of the elaborations of dualistic appearance serves as a criterion in terms of which paths of preparation can be divided into heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme mundane quality, but neither scholar unequivocally ties a particular manner of appearance to a particular path. Jang-ŷga does mention a description of the serial disintegration of dualistic appearance on the four paths of preparation, but attributes it to “earlier guru”<sup>f</sup> and says that he is not certain whether or not this is the same thing as the gradual diminishment of dualistic appearance that is set forth by the Consequence School. Thus, except for the mere assertion that the four stages of the paths

of preparation can be posited in terms of the gradual diminishment of the elaborations of dualistic appearance, there appears to be no clear definition of how this would be done.<sup>192</sup>

### Four Manifest Conceptions

Both Õõn-chok-jik-may-wang-ðo and Lo-sang-ða-ŷang present a division of the paths of preparation into four levels according to “stages of achieving newly a special capacity to overcome the four manifest conceptions of apprehended and apprehender.”<sup>a</sup> These four are all conceptions of inherent existence. Moreover, they are acquired<sup>b</sup> misconceptions rather than innate ones. Let us first consider the meaning of “acquired” and “innate” in this context, then identify the four manifest conceptions of apprehended<sup>d</sup> and apprehender,<sup>e</sup> and finally correlate those misconceptions with the paths of preparation.

Conceptions of inherent existence are said to be of two varieties: acquired conceptions of inherent existence and innate conceptions of inherent existence.<sup>194</sup> Here, “acquired” means those at which one has arrived through investigation and analysis, subsequent to which one consciously affirms the inherent existence of persons or other

<sup>a</sup> *gzung 'dzin gyi rrog pa mangon gyur pa bzhi 'joms pa'i nus pa khyad par can gear du thob pa; rim pa*

<sup>b</sup> *kun blaag, patrikapita*  
<sup>c</sup> *than shyes, sahaja*  
<sup>d</sup> *gzung ba, gninya*  
<sup>e</sup> *'dzin pa, gnihaka*  
<sup>f</sup> *bla ma snga ma*

phenomena. For instance, if one were to investigate the appearance of objects to sense consciousnesses as truly existent and conclude that the objects are established in the way that they appear, one would have acquired a conception of true or inherent existence.<sup>195</sup> “Innate” conceptions of inherent existence are those that all sentient beings have without having thought about it, and in particular without having investigated, analyzed, and adopted a system of tenets. Humans have them, animals have them, hungry ghosts have them, gods have them, and so on. In short, *all* sentient beings of the three realms of cyclic existence innately conceive persons and phenomena to exist inherently.

Although these misconceptions are innate, they are also superfluous. It may be difficult to understand how ignorance can be both innate and adventitious,<sup>a</sup> but this point brings us to the heart of view and practice in the Buddhist tradition. If ignorance were not innate—if it were acquired only subsequent to birth in cyclic existence—something other than ignorance would be origin of cyclic existence. Lo-sang-dā-ŷang makes this point emphatically by saying,

Dzong-ka-ŷa said again and again that all sentient beings are bound in cyclic existence because of innate ignorance and that, since acquired ignorance occurs only in proponents of tenets, for [acquired ignorance] to be the root of cyclic existence is not logically founded.<sup>196</sup>

If ignorance were not the root of cyclic existence, overcoming it would neither uproot the afflicted states, such as desire and hatred, that are said to depend upon it, nor

<sup>a</sup> *glo bur ba*

break the chains of dependent arising that shackle sentient beings throughout the three realms. In short, if ignorance were only acquired, overcoming it would not grant liberation. Since overcoming ignorance does grant liberation from cyclic existence, ignorance must be innate rather than acquired. Let me state this with a metaphor of my own: if realization of selflessness opens the door to freedom from the prison of cyclic existence, then ignorance must be the lock on the door. Moreover, the door must have been locked from the start. If not, opening it would not make any difference, since some other, more fundamental lock would still be stiffly latched.

If, in addition to being innate, ignorance were of the nature of the mind, to destroy ignorance would require destroying the mind altogether. In that case, so-called “liberation” would be merely another name for annihilation. Some scholars have argued that annihilation is the goal that Buddhists seek, and indeed there is good reason for construing the Buddhist *nirvāna* to be an annihilation of body and mind, since that is precisely how some hinayāna traditions have represented it.<sup>197</sup> The mahayāna schools, however, regard this as a misunderstanding of the Buddha’s intentions and consider the Buddha’s literal statements to that effect as meaning that cyclic existence is so horrible that annihilation would be preferable. The explicit teaching is refuted by the knowledge that mind depends for its continuity neither upon the body nor upon afflictions, such as craving for existence, but rather upon its own former moments alone. Thus, it would not be possible to annihilate one’s mind even if one wished to do so.

According to the Consequence School, neither hinayānists nor mahayānists aim to annihilate themselves. Rather than annihilation, hinayānists seek a peaceful existence beyond cyclic existence, and mahayānists seek an entirely different sort of

existence, one that is described as the complete perfection of body, speech, and mind. It is precisely because they either know or merely accept on faith that ignorance and the other afflictions are only adventitious stains that practitioners of the hinayāna and mahāyāna can sensibly aspire to achieve liberation and then work hard over a long period of time to achieve it. Since ignorance is innate, it will accompany sentient beings in every lifetime until they have finally become rid of it. However, “innate” does not mean “inseparable” and exertion will indeed bring liberation.

Through seeing that it is not necessary to misconceive the nature of persons and other phenomena, Buddhists see also that it is not necessary to suffer, for they understand that suffering depends upon ignorance. The logic is simple: if it is possible to dispense with the cause, it is not necessary to endure the effect. This straightforward insight supplies the ground not only for the hinayāna aspiration to mere liberation for one's own sake alone but also for the mahāyāna aspiration to complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, for the knowledge that even innate ignorance is alien to the mind arouses strong compassion for those who are suffering not just horribly but also unnecessarily and impels bodhisattvas to awaken sentient beings from their nightmares. Because it is conjoined with the knowledge that beginningless ignorance can end, the compassion of bodhisattvas becomes a source of joy rather than a source of despair.<sup>198</sup>

Through achieving freedom from the constraints of acquired and innate ignorance, practitioners of both the hinayāna and the mahāyāna discard the activities of body, speech, and mind that bring painful rebirths as their fruit, and practitioners of the mahāyāna also acquire generosity, exertion, compassion, wisdom, and other qualities of a nature and to a degree that is difficult to imagine properly. The pattern

of this development is documented with considerable care in the literature on grounds and paths, as we will see in the remainder of this chapter and in the chapters to follow. The presentations of grounds and paths may, from that point of view, be thought of as precise yet visionary indications of the qualities and realizations that hinayāna and mahāyāna practitioners achieve through overcoming ignorance—both acquired and innate—together with its residue.

In his *Golden Rosary of Good Explanation*, Dzong-ka-ba says that “acquired” and “innate” refer to “one's mind having or not having been affected by non-Buddhist tenets.<sup>199</sup> In fact, since many Buddhist schools mistakenly affirm the inherent existence of persons and phenomena, the tenets need not be those of non-Buddhists. Still, whether they are Buddhist or non-Buddhist, “tenets” are the problem. That is to say, so far as Dzong-ka-ba is concerned, acquired ignorance is a disease of philosophers. Does this mean that language and culture do not necessarily bring notions of inherent existence along with them? So it would appear, but it would be interesting to reconsider the traditional Indian and Tibetan Buddhist notions of acquired and innate conceptions in the light of knowledge that developmental psychologists and others have gathered in more recent times.

To describe ignorance as consisting in acquired and innate forms suggests a hierarchical structure within the afflicted mind, in which innate and acquired ignorance are related as a series of layers. The two forms of ignorance are similar in that both observe persons and phenomena and consider them to exist inherently. However, they are not equal, for one is the foundation upon which the other is built.

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\* *legs bshad gər 'phren*

Thus, the relationship between the two varieties of ignorance is neither random nor dynamic. Rather, it is structural. Furthermore, since acquired ignorance can be overcome more easily than innate ignorance, the two varieties of ignorance are abandoned serially. The process of destroying the acquired misconceptions of inherent existence begins in earnest on the paths of preparation, where the four manifest conceptions of apprehended and apprehender are overcome. Let us identify those now.

As mentioned previously, the four manifest conceptions of apprehended and apprehender are acquired conceptions of inherent existence. Two of those are conceptions of apprehended objects and two are conceptions of apprehending consciousnesses. The two conceptions of apprehended objects are related with the four truths of which the Buddha spoke in his initial presentation of the doctrines that lead to liberation. Among the four truths, two—true sufferings<sup>a</sup> and true origins<sup>b</sup> of suffering—are regarded as thoroughly afflicted phenomena.<sup>c</sup> To conceive thoroughly afflicted phenomena to exist inherently is the first of the two conceptions of apprehended objects, called “the conception of thoroughly afflicted objects.”<sup>d</sup> These would be illustrated by conceptions of one’s own or another sentient being’s physical or mental aggregates as inherently existent. The latter two truths—true cessations<sup>e</sup>

and true paths<sup>a</sup>—are regarded as thoroughly pure phenomena.<sup>b</sup> To conceive thoroughly pure phenomena to exist inherently is the second of the two conceptions of apprehended objects, called “the conception of thoroughly pure objects.”<sup>c</sup> These would be illustrated by conceptions of a buddha’s physical or mental aggregates as inherently existent.<sup>200</sup>

The two conceptions of apprehending consciousnesses are related with conceptual consciousnesses. Conceptual consciousnesses may conceive their objects to exist substantially or, on the other hand, they may conceive their objects to exist as mere imputations. What about the consciousnesses themselves? Having determined the object to exist either substantially or imputedly, what status does one assign to the consciousnesses that conceive objects as either substantially existent or imputedly existent? To conceive those consciousnesses as inherently existent or imputedly apprehenders.<sup>d</sup> If the apprehending consciousnesses that conceive objects to exist substantially are themselves conceived to exist inherently, those misconceptions fall within the first of the two types of conceptions of apprehending consciousnesses, which are called “conceptions conceiving substantial existence.”<sup>d</sup> For instance, although persons are phenomena imputed in dependence upon the aggregates, ignorance conceives persons to exist substantially rather than as mere imputations. What about the ignorance itself? Conceiving that ignorance itself to be inherently

<sup>a</sup> *sdug bsgal bdem pa, duññhasaya*

<sup>b</sup> *kun 'byung bdem pa, samudayasaya*

<sup>c</sup> *kun nas nyon mongs kyi chos*

<sup>d</sup> *kun nas nyon mongs gzung nog*

<sup>e</sup> *'gog bdem, niruddhasaya*<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *lam bdem, mārgasaya*

<sup>b</sup> *mam par shyang ba'i chos*

<sup>c</sup> *mam byang gzung nog*

<sup>d</sup> *rdeas 'dzin nog pa*

existent is a “conception conceiving substantial existence.” Second, if the apprehending consciousnesses that conceive objects to exist imputedly are themselves conceived to exist inherently, those misconceptions belong to the second from among the two types of conceptions of apprehending consciousnesses, which are called “conceptions conceiving imputed existence.”<sup>4</sup> For instance, having realized that persons do not exist substantially, one could then correctly conceive persons to be mere imputations to the aggregates upon which they depend. If one then regarded that accurate and intelligent knowledge as itself inherently existent, one would have generated a “conception conceiving imputed existence.”

However dry the outline may appear to be at first, as practitioners apply these categories to their own experience, they may find something instructive, amusing, and perhaps terrifying in the progression from one point to the next, for they will notice the ground upon which ignorance attempts to establish itself steadily eroding. It may be delightful to imagine realizing that cyclic existence does not truly exist, but initially it may be less than a source of delight to discover that buddhas do not truly exist either. Yogins and yoginis may fearlessly enjoy uprooting conceptions of substantial existence through discovering their lack of inherent existence. Will they also enjoy the supreme among worldly realizations, which sees clearly that the recognition of mere imputed existence provides no place to nest either, since it lacks even a shred of independent existence? In somewhat the way that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, so the conception of consciousnesses conceiving phenomena to be merely imputedly existent as themselves inherently existent appears to be the last desperate

gesture of ignorance struggling to delay its own execution. To state this with a metaphor of my own, I would say that ignorance has, in effect, attempted to graft itself upon the correct view of emptiness but will soon be pruned by the sharp blade of wisdom.

These four conceptions are “destroyed”<sup>5</sup> by the four paths of preparation in a serial manner. First, the heat paths of preparation destroy manifest acquired conceptions of afflicted phenomena as inherently existent. Second, the peak paths of preparation destroy manifest acquired conceptions of pure phenomena as inherently existent. Third, the forbearance paths of preparation destroy manifest acquired conceptions of subjects apprehending phenomena as substantially existent as themselves inherently existent. Fourth, the supreme mundane quality paths of preparation destroy manifest acquired conceptions of subjects apprehending phenomena as imputedly existent as themselves inherently existent. Because these conceptions of apprehended and apprehender are the manifest form of acquired ignorance, to say that they have been “destroyed” does not mean that these conceptions have been completely subdued by the four paths of preparation. Neither the seeds of the acquired conceptions nor the innate possibilities of misconceiving apprehended objects and apprehending consciousnesses in these four ways have been overcome. That will not occur until more powerful paths have been generated. Thus, “destroyed” means only that the manifest form of these conceptions will not be generated again.

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<sup>4</sup> *joms*

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<sup>5</sup> *brags 'dzin nog pa*

#### Multiple Perspectives

The division of the paths of preparation into three—small, medium, and great—and into four—heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme mundane quality—create many different perspectives from which to view and understand paths of preparation. For instance, one may consider them in terms of the certainty of a practitioner’s progress toward the generation of wisdom, clear signs of such progress, the varied powers of different practitioners, the gradual subsiding of dualistic appearance, the concomitant clarity of realization, and the capacity to overcome manifest acquired conceptions of inherently existent objects and subjects. These criteria define hierarchies in which the superior level surpasses the inferior level in terms of the subtlety of the manner of realization and encompasses it in terms of the capacity of the consciousnesses that are related hierarchically. They also make it clear that a moment of insight is not sufficient to overcome the habits of innumerable lifetimes, a point that will be developed more fully by the presentation of the paths of seeing and paths of meditation.

*Hinayāna and Mahayāna.* The various ways of dividing and classifying the paths of preparation apply both to hinayāna paths and to mahayāna paths. That is to say, both hinayāna practitioners and mahayāna practitioners approach realization of emptiness by way of reasoned analysis that exposes the lack of inherent existence in persons and phenomena—if we speak from the point of view of the Consequence School—insight into which they then work to join with the stability of calm abiding at the end of the path of accumulation. When that union of calm abiding and special insight is attained, they achieve also the initial path of preparation of their respective vehicles. Subsequently, they proceed by continuing to meditate upon emptiness by way of a meaning-generality and, in postmeditation, by accumulating merit in the manner that

is appropriate to the vehicle in which they travel. As the practitioners become more familiar with emptiness, the conceptual aspect of realization gradually vanishes until, at the conclusion of the paths of preparation, emptiness dawns in a nondual and nonconceptual fashion. Unlike the Yogic Practice Middle Way Autonomy School, which maintains that the three types of practitioners—hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas—mediate upon different selflessnesses, the Consequence School holds that the hinayāna and mahayāna paths of preparation resemble one another not only in their mode of procedure but also in regard to the selflessness realized by those paths, for the Consequence School argues forcefully that even the modest liberations of hearers and solitary realizers requires that aspirants realize the most subtle of emptinesses, as we have seen. However, there are differences in the way that hinayānists and mahayānists cultivate the realization of selflessness, and these differences produce a further difference. Let us look at this more closely.

#### Selflessnesses

Like the other mahayāna schools, the Consequence School maintains that bodhisattvas accomplish something unusual. If the selflessness that hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas realize is the same, what accounts for the difference in the paths that they travel and the fruits that they achieve? If bodhisattvas were to realize a selflessness of which hinayānists remained ignorant, it would be reasonable to imagine that a bodhisattva’s more telling realization would create a different journey and a different conclusion. In different ways, the Mind Only Schools and the Middle Way Autonomy Schools say just that. The most elaborate design is traced by the Yogic Practice Middle Way Autonomy School, which identifies four distinct conceptions of self, four corresponding selflessnesses, and three spiritual journeys whose character hinges sig-

taneous clear realization) appear as ignorance about the presentation of the two realities.

# GONE BEYOND

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Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras,

*The Ornament of Clear Realization,  
and Its Commentaries in the Tibetan Kagyü Tradition*

## VOLUME ONE

Translated and introduced by

Karl Brunnhözl

### D) The path of preparation

#### 1) The four stages of the path of preparation<sup>1227</sup>

The definition of the path of preparation is “the path that provides the opportunity for liberation, has the nature of the five faculties and not the nature of the seven branches of enlightenment, and is (prior to the path of seeing) approximately concordant with the direct realization of reality in terms of its focal objects and aspects.” The mahayana path of preparation includes the prajñās of studying, reflecting, and meditating that make up the nature of this path as well as the generation of bodhicitta and great compassion in the mind stream. The nature of the path of preparation is the mundane wisdom that arises from meditation (*Abhidharmakosha* VI.20ab).

The AA explains the four levels of the path of preparation—what is conducive to penetration—(such as heat) as the progressive stages during which the respective ones among the four manifest and potent conceptions about apprehender and apprehended are relinquished through the power of their remedies being produced. *Mahāyānasūtrālambhāra* XIV.23–27 says:

Then, having become such,  
Bodhisattvas in meditative equipoise,  
Except for mental discourse,  
Do not see any referents.

In order to increase the illumination of phenomena,  
They make stable efforts.  
Through the increase of the illumination of phenomena,  
They abide in mere mind.

Through this, they see all appearances  
Of referents as being mind.  
At this point, they relinquish  
The distraction of the apprehended.

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Then, solely the distraction  
Of the apprehender remains.  
At that point, they swiftly  
Touch upon the uninterrupted samādhi.

Thus, immediately upon that,  
The distraction of the apprehender is relinquished.  
In due order, these [phases]  
Should be known as being heat and so on.

Accordingly, the four stages of the path of preparation are explained as follows. The first stage of the path of preparation is called (a) “heat” since it is a portent for the arising of the fire of supramundane wisdom. The second (b) represents the peak among the *flux* of mundane roots of virtue. The third (c) is called “poised readiness” since one is not afraid of the actuality of the profound nature of phenomena. The fourth (d) is the supreme one among all mundane dharmas. During (a), bodhisattvas attain the illumination of the aid that is the *prajñā* of realizing the nature of phenomena. Through this, their wisdom of heat sees that what appear as generally and specifically characterized phenomena are nothing but mental discourse, whereas there are no actual outer referents to be perceived. (b) During peak, in the manner of that illumination increasing, they familiarize with not dwelling upon apprehended referents. (c) In the manner of entering the sphere of true reality, they realize that mere appearances are mind and familiarize with that. However, they do not get stuck in the sole existence or remaining of conceptions about an apprehender either since they (d) realize that what appears as the referent of the samādhi of the imminence of the path of seeing does not exist as the nature of mere mind either and familiarize with that. In brief, (a)–(c) represent increasingly subtler degrees of relinquishing the distraction of something apprehended, while (d) performs the function of relinquishing only the distraction of an apprehender.

In the system of Maitreya, there are two reasonings here to relinquish conceptions about the apprehended. (1) Through proving with the reason of the “invariable co-observation” of appearances and mind that appearances are merely mind, one realizes that outer referents do not exist. (2) Through proving with the reason of being lucid and aware that mere appearances are mind, one also realizes that outer referents do not exist.<sup>1228</sup> In addition, there is one reasoning to relinquish conceptions about the apprehender—proving with the reason of the nonexistence of the apprehended that a mind to apprehend it does not exist either. After having proven this, it is then realized directly.<sup>1229</sup> The point of directly realizing the freedom from all characteristics of apprehender and apprehended in this way is the path of seeing, whose character is yogic valid perception. As for the meditative equipoises of the path of preparation, they consist of *unmistaken self-aware valid perceptions* that are approximately concordant with the actual *unmistaken wisdom* that lacks the duality of apprehender and apprehended. This is just as what

*Madhyāntavibhāga* IV.12a teaches: “Approximately concordant yet mis-taken.”<sup>1230</sup> The meditative equipoises during the path of preparation are not something other than self-aware valid perception because both what is aware and what it is aware of arise as the nature of a single lucid and aware experience.<sup>1231</sup> As for the manner in which such wisdom without the duality of apprehender and apprehended is more eminent than the view of the pratyekabuddhas, the earlier Tibetan masters say, “It has to be explained that pratyekabuddhas merely realize that apprehender and apprehended are empty of being different in substance. However, they do not realize the true reality of being empty of any kind of duality of apprehender and apprehended.”

Some people claim that Āryavimuktisena explains the four levels of the path of preparation as *being* the four kinds of conceptions, but this is not justified since it contradicts the intention of Maitreya. However, Āryavimuktisena just explains that these four conceptions are congruently associated with the four levels of the path of preparation.<sup>1232</sup> If these conceptions had to *be* the four levels of the path of preparation merely through being congruently associated with them, by the same token it would very absurdly follow that the factors to be relinquished through seeing *are* the path of seeing.

The meaning of the term “what is partially concordant with definite distinction” (the Tibetan version of “factors conducive to penetration”) for the path of preparation is as follows. One speaks of “definite distinction” because, through the direct and definite certainty about the nature of phenomena on the path of seeing, the person’s mind stream and the factors to be relinquished through seeing are distinguished from each other. Since the path of preparation serves as a part of this and concords with the path of seeing as the latter’s cause, it is called “what is partially concordant with it.”<sup>1233</sup> As for the reason for the fourfold division of the path of preparation, it is so divided by virtue of the certainty of there being four different degrees in terms of the distinctive feature of being more distant from or closer to realizing the actuality of the nature of phenomena.

Furthermore, in terms of the manner of the path of preparation “being associated with the four kinds of conceptions” (AA I.25cd), you may wonder whether the conceptions in this context here are conceptions in terms of being affirmed or negated. They exist as both parts—during the preparation for meditative equipoise and meditative equipoise itself, in a potent manner, these conceptions have the aspect of something to be negated. They are also presented as conceptions in terms of being affirmed because the subsequent attainment of such meditative equipoise is the phase during which no efforts are made to relinquish these conceptions about apprehender and apprehended.<sup>1234</sup> In the context of the path of preparation of the mahāyāna, the four conceptions (for details, see below) that have the nature of cognitive

obscurations are referred to as the primary factors to be relinquished, while the hinayāna emphasizes the conceptions that have the nature of afflictive obscurations. This is the difference between the factors to be relinquished on the path of preparation in the mahayāna and the hinayāna.<sup>1235</sup>

## 2) The focal objects and aspects of the path of preparation<sup>1236</sup>

As for the focal objects and aspects in this text here, it is taught that, from among the twelve levels of the path of preparation, the focal objects on the levels of lesser and great heat as well as those on the lesser and medium supreme dharma pertain to seeming reality. On the other eight levels, they pertain to ultimate reality. As for the aspects, on the levels of great peak, medium poised readiness, and the lesser and great supreme dharma, they pertain to seeming reality. On the other eight levels, they relate to ultimate reality. According to the Vidyāti's explicit explanation, the difference between focal object and aspect is one in terms of certain features and what possesses these features. In brief, the focal objects taught here refer to the main objects on which to focus. These must be explained as AA I.40a says:

The focal object consists of all phenomena.

The aspects must be asserted as the distinct modes of apprehending these objects to be focused on, which must be explained as the aspects as they are described in AA IV.1ab:

The specific instances of cognizing entities  
Represent the defining characteristic of "aspects."

Other Tibetans explain that all focal objects are seeming reality and all aspects are ultimate reality. This means to be mistaken about the meaning of the two realities and the meanings of focal objects and aspects in this context. By mistaking the latter two for just being the generalities and particulars that are known in dialectics, these people explain that the meaning of particulars refers to ultimate specifically characterized phenomena and that generalities that are imputed as conventional terms are seeming reality. But in this context here, the apprehended part of consciousness consists of both generally characterized and specifically characterized phenomena as two different objects. For each one of these there is a distinct focal object and aspect. Therefore, those people's matching of these two knowable objects with focal object and aspect, respectively, is not justified and they conflate "aspect" and "specifically characterized referent" as the same terminological category. Since such a claim is not even found in the system of dialectics, it is not suitable in that

system either. In the present context, anything that pertains to the ultimate, be it a focal object or an aspect, is something that exists during the actual meditative equipoise, whereas the focal objects and aspects that pertain to seeming reality exist during the preparatory stages of the actual meditative equipoise. This is the teaching transmission by Pāṇḍita Trīlakṣa that is found in the notes recorded by Ar Jangchub Yeshé, but it does not accord with the explanations that are well known in Tibet at present.

As for the question of which type of mind these meditative equipoises of the path of preparation, which are distinguished by the focal objects and aspects just explained, belong to, many earlier Tibetans assert them to be yogic valid perceptions. Others assert them to be realizations by way of object generalities and thus say that they represent inferential cognitions, repetitive cognitions,<sup>1237</sup> or correct assumptions.<sup>1238</sup> But some genuine beings have stated that these assertions are not tenable. As it is said:

Yogic valid perception occurs in the mind streams of noble ones, but not in ordinary beings. [If the meditative equipoises of the path of preparation were] inferential valid cognitions, they would be mental states that newly realize something, but then it would also follow that they are nothing but consciousnesses [that result] from studying and reflecting. If one claims that they are subsequent cognitions, it follows that they are claimed to be conceptions that apprehend by conflating terms and their referents. If one claims that they are correct assumptions, they are nothing other than mental states of nonrealization. Therefore, these mental states on the path of preparation are not included within any of the two types of valid cognition or the three mental states that are nonvalid cognitions.<sup>1239</sup> Not only are they not included within these, but they are not nonconceptual consciousnesses either.

As for the mental states of the path of preparation not being conceptions, AA I.27c says:

"Their aspects are to refrain from clinging and so on.

AA I.33b declares:

And the nonconceptuality of samādhi.

Haribhadra's *Vidyāti* on this says, "Since all conceptions are not tenable . . ."<sup>1240</sup> The meaning of what is taught in this way is that the meditative equipoises

of the path of preparation are not conceptual for the following reason. The path of seeing is devoid of the characteristics of all conceptions and the path of preparation must be approximately concordant with the former in terms of its focal objects and aspects. However, if the path of preparation entailed conceptions, it would not be suitable in this way.

As for those meditative equipoises not being nonconceptual consciousnesses either, AA I.25cd says that they are

Based on being associated  
With the four conceptions in due order.

In their commentaries on this passage, Aryavimuktisena and Haribhadra explain these meditative equipoises as being associated with the four conceptions that have the aspect of being to be negated. The gist of this explanation is that whatever is a nonconceptual consciousness must clearly realize a specifically characterized phenomenon. However, these meditative equipoises here lack the clear realization of the specifically characterized phenomenon of identitylessness. Therefore, *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* XI.31 says:

False imagination; neither correct  
Nor false; nonimagination;  
And neither imagination nor nonimagination—  
This expresses all knowable objects.

“False imagination” refers to the conceptions that are not approximately concordant with supramundane wisdom. Those that are “neither correct nor false” are those that approximately concord with supramundane wisdom (up through the factors conducive to penetration). “Nonimagination” refers to suchness and supramundane wisdom. “Neither imagination nor nonimagination” represents mundane wisdom—the subsequent attainment of supramundane wisdom. “All knowable objects” are included in nothing but these. I do not elaborate on the disputes and their answers in this context for fear of becoming too verbose.

As for whether the bearers of the nature of phenomena appear or not during the meditative equipoises of the path of preparation, some Tibetan masters say, “During the meditative equipoises of the path of preparation bearers of the nature of phenomena that are nonentities appear in an unclear manner. Such an appearance cannot be anything but an appearance under the influence of conceptions that apprehend by conflating terms and their referents.” In the system of those who assert that the meditative equipoises of the path of preparation consist of conceptions, it is indeed true that this

statement has to be made in such a way. However, a cognition that apprehends by conflating terms and their referents, for which bearers of the nature of phenomena that are nonentities appear in an unclear manner, and the type of conception that represents the nature of the meditative equipoises of the path of preparation are established to be mutually exclusive in terms of their focal objects and aspects for the following reasons. False imagination and the cognition that consists of the proper mental engagement which is not false are mutually exclusive in terms of their own natures. It is impossible for the nature of this proper mental engagement to take as its object a despicable mental state of nonvalid cognition to which nonentities appear in an unclear manner because there is absolutely no purpose for something like that.

### 3) The four conceptions in the context of the path of preparation<sup>1241</sup>

The conceptions in this context consist of the mind clinging to characteristics of its specific objects—the distractions of the apprehending conceptions that function as obstructions to omniscience. Since such cognitive obscurations, which have the nature of conceptions, exist in the mind streams of śravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the latter do not attain the nirvāṇa that actually fulfills this function. As the *Uttaratantra* says:

Therefore, without attaining buddhahood,  
Nirvāṇa is not attained,  
Just as you cannot see the sun  
Once you take away its light and its rays.<sup>1242</sup>

When conception is identified in general, according to *Madhyāntavibhāga* I.8ab, the false imagination that consists of the minds and mental factors in the three realms is presented as conception. According to the *Abhidharmaśāstra* II.33a, that which takes coarse referents as its objects is conception, which does not contradict the reasonings of Dharmakīrti either. His *Pramāṇaviviniscaya* says:

Conception is the cognition to which what is suitable to be mixed with expressions appears.<sup>1243</sup>

In this context, the object of expression is an object generality and the means of expression is a term generality.<sup>1244</sup> Thus, there are two types of conceptions that represent obstructions to attaining omniscience—(a) the conceptions that obscure the direct seeing of true reality are the obstructions to analyzing suchness and (b) the conceptions that obscure karmic actions and their results are the obstructions to analyzing the variety of phenomena. Among these, the first are relinquished solely during meditative equipoise,

while the latter are the factors to be relinquished through the wisdom of subsequent attainment.

In this context, these conceptions can be further divided into

1) the conceptions that apprehend substantiality

2) the conceptions that apprehend imputations

The first are equivalent to the clinging to real existence and are twofold:

1a) the conceptions about the apprehended

1b) the conceptions about the apprehender

1a) The conceptions about the apprehended are twofold:

1aa) the conceptions about afflicted phenomena

1ab) the conceptions about purified phenomena

The conceptions about purified phenomena are classified as two:

1ab1) those in terms of the mahāyāna (the conceptions about the apprehended that see their respective apprehended objects as flawed and put an end to the mental states that cling to these objects)

1ab2) those in terms of the hinayāna (the conceptions about the apprehended that see their apprehended objects as possessing qualities and engage in the mental states that cling to them)

1b) The conceptions about the apprehender are also twofold:

1ba) the conceptions about phenomena (knowable objects and the cognitions that know them)

1bb) the conceptions about persons (the bases for imputing the person and the factor that is imputed as the person)

In this context, the conceptions about substantiality arise in dependence on (prior) conceptions about the cause of these conceptions being something substantially existent. Thus, the object taken by the mode of apprehension of these conceptions is the notion of some self-sufficient substance.

2) The conceptions that apprehend imputations are the mental states in which the superimpositions of clinging to the real existence of some referent have been severed, but which still cling to this referent in an imputational manner. As for the objects of such mental states, they cling to (a) apprehended and (b) apprehender as being mere imputations.

2a) The conceptions about the apprehended as an imputation are twofold:

2aa) the conceptions that apprehend the factors that are afflicted phenomena

2ab) the conceptions that apprehend the factors that are purified phenomena (again twofold in terms of mahāyāna and hinayāna)

2b) The conceptions about the apprehender as an imputation are also twofold:

2ba) the conceptions about phenomena

2bb) the conceptions about the person

2ba) The conceptions about phenomena are again twofold:

2ba1) the conceptions about the bases for imputing ordinary beings (mind and mental factors)

2ba2) the conceptions about the bases for imputing noble ones (the wisdoms of meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment)

That the just-explained division of the two conceptions about the apprehender also applies to the two conceptions about the apprehended is evident from what is written down in a clear manner in the progressive stages of meditation on the dharmas of Maitreya, which were transmitted from Dsen Kawoché. However, some later great Tibetans speak of “finding solely through the dexterity of insight (*blo gros*)”; say that “such finding is also the pith of what is explained in the Madhyamaka scriptural system and there is no way to explain it other than in this manner”; and claim that “there is no flaw of such a distinction not being explained in the AA and its commentaries.” Through explaining this kind of distinction, they dispute about whether the modes of apprehension of the conceptions about apprehender and apprehended accord with the facts or not, but all such disputes just betray their flaws of not understanding the meaning as explained above.

As for the basis of mistakeness that triggered such disputes, the *Vṛtti* presents four possibilities in terms of the relationship between conceptions about the apprehender and conceptions about the apprehended (being the one but not the other, being both, and being neither). On this, some Tibetan masters say, “Here, these four possibilities are not counted on the basis of a single object, but in terms of different objects. If such is presented, it very absurdly follows that a third type of valid cognition is possible because then inferential valid cognition conceives of outer objects and, in its own nature, is perception.” Such a flaw does not apply to Āryavimuktisena because his intention in presenting the above four possibilities is not in terms of whether there would or would not be very absurd consequences by virtue of analyzing these possibilities well through reasoning. Rather, he just adduced the merely general explanation on said four possibilities with regard to the conceptions about the apprehender and the apprehended that is given in the abhidharma. Furthermore, some people say that the author of the *Vṛtti* is not Āryavimuktisena, but this is completely out of the question because an unbroken lineage of disciples of Āryavimuktisena (such as Pandita Vairocana) had

arrived in Tibet at the time of the kings of Samyé and they all agreed that this *Vṛtti* composed by Āryavimuktisena is as well known as the sun and the moon. The above conceptions that apprehend substantiality (1) exist in the mind streams of ordinary beings and during the subsequent attainments of noble śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas for the following reasons. Ordinary beings conceive of every entity as solely something that is real by virtue of its own specific characteristics—they do not conceive of it as anything else. During the subsequent attainments of noble śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, mental states of clinging to real existence have not been put to an end. During both the meditative equipoise and the subsequent attainment of mahāyāna noble ones, conceptions that apprehend substantiality do not arise because they are endowed with the continuum of the uninterrupted direct realization of the lack of real existence.

As for the conceptions that apprehend imputations (2), during both the meditative equipoise and the subsequent attainment of the mahāyāna path of preparation, by virtue of mentally engaging in aspiring for true reality, they exist in a manifest way. During the subsequent attainments of the seven impure bhūmis, by virtue of mentally engaging in true reality, the manifestation of conceptions that apprehend imputations is possible. On the pure bhūmis, there are no manifest conceptions at all because one has gained mastery over nonconceptual wisdom. As the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* says:

Due to the change of mentation, perception,  
And conception, there is fourfold command  
Over nonconceptuality . . .<sup>1245</sup>

In the noble ones of both mahāyāna and hinayāna, manifest conceptions that apprehend imputations and focus on persons are possible. For during the subsequent attainment of noble ones there is the apprehension that “all these persons are illusionlike, dreamlike, and mere designations.”

The practice on the stage of the path of preparation is as follows. From among the conceptions mentioned, first one needs to put an end to the conceptions that apprehend the substantiality which is taken as the object of the mode of apprehension of one’s innate conceptions. Thereafter, through explaining the reasonings that negate the conceptions that apprehend imputations, in due order, one puts an end to the conceptions about apprehended and apprehender in terms of both substantiality and imputation. When practicing in this way on the path of preparation, one rests in meditative equipoise in such a way that one becomes familiar with and extends the clear illumination of prajñā about the following modes of lacking a nature. During the meditative equipoise of heat, this means seeing that the apprehended in

terms of afflicted phenomena is without nature. During the level of peak, it is seen that the apprehended in terms of purified phenomena is without nature. During the level of poised readiness, it is seen that substantial apprehending is without nature. During the level of the supreme dharma, it is seen that imputational apprehending is without nature. Thus, during the first level, three kinds of conceptions are relinquished; during the second, two kinds; during the third, one kind; and during the fourth, also one kind.<sup>1246</sup> Since all of these are relinquished during meditative equipoise, this is the manner in which the path of preparation is associated with conceptions.

This explanation of the manner of relinquishing those conceptions is the unmistakable explanation of the intention of Āryavimuktisena and Haribhadra.<sup>1247</sup> Nowadays, however, some people here give presentations such as the path of preparation “being associated with the conceptions in terms of affirmation as the factors to be relinquished and its being associated with the conceptions in terms of negation as its nature.” Such mistaken statements without having critically analyzed the meaning explained above are then passed on from one to the other.

As for this topic, Ratnākarasānti and Abhayākaraṇupta assert the following. When the nine conceptions about the apprehended in terms of afflicted phenomena are thinned out, but not yet relinquished through the level of heat, the path of preparation is still associated with them. When the nine conceptions about the apprehended in terms of purified phenomena are thinned out, but not yet relinquished through peak, the path of preparation is still associated with them, whereas the former nine conceptions are relinquished. Likewise, when the two types of conceptions about the apprehender are thinned out, but not yet relinquished through the levels of poised readiness and supreme dharma, respectively, the path of preparation is still associated with both or one of these, whereas the conceptions about the apprehended in terms of purified phenomena are relinquished.

The four conceptions that are taught in the context of the path of preparation here contain portions of both the factors to be relinquished through seeing and familiarization.<sup>1248</sup> However, some say that the conceptions in this context here represent the portion of the conceptions that are solely factors to be relinquished through seeing because the path of seeing arises right at the end of the path of preparation, whereas the conceptions on the path of familiarization are not referred to here.

some kind of skin disease, while for those who follow the Mahāyāna approach it involves the view that these aggregates have no independent nature.

# The Treasury of Knowledge

*Books Nine and Ten*

## Journey and Goal

*An Analysis of the Spiritual Paths and Levels to Be Traversed and the Consummate Fruition State*

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### *The Path of Linkage [2]*

The explanation of the path of linkage is also in eight topics: a presentation of its characteristics; an identification of the basis being characterized; a detailed analysis; a definitive statement about its nature; its distinctive processes of elimination and realization; a description of its qualities; a statement about what its function is; and a demonstration of the derivation of the terms.

#### *Characteristics [a]*

The path of linkage provides the context for the direct realization of what is ultimate.

The path of linkage, in essence, constitutes that which is the passage to complete freedom. It is made up of situations in which one directly realizes what is truly meaningful.<sup>68</sup>

#### *Basis [b]*

It is the sublime intelligence that derives from meditation in a mundane framework.

The basis of what is characterized as this path constitutes the antidote that involves the elimination of negative factors,<sup>69</sup> that is, the sublime intelligence that derives from mundane meditation, from the onset of meditative warmth up to the point just prior to the onset of the path of seeing. [4.106.b]

#### *Analysis [c]*

While there are many ways to analyze this path (such as the natural progression of dedicated intent),

once timeless awareness is experienced as the onset of meditative warmth, with the stirring of fundamentally positive factors, one gains patient acceptance of the profound nature of phenomena and the highest mundane experience.

These four phases involve the cultivation of five governing powers and five strengths, one group for each pair of phases.<sup>73</sup>

As for an analysis of this path, it can be analyzed according to the natural progression involved, into such divisions as the “level of engagement with dedicated intent,”<sup>74</sup> the “corruptible path of meditation,”<sup>75</sup> the “phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough,” and the “accomplishment that brings engagement.”<sup>76</sup>

Concerning the distinction between the paths of accumulation and linkage, there is an aspect of the path of linkage that also pertains to that of accumulation, and an aspect that pertains to the path of linkage but not to that of accumulation. The first aspect is the continuity of experience gained on the path of accumulation, which is still present on the path of linkage. The latter aspect is that which “links” one to the Four Truths (or the two implications of the lack of identity),<sup>77</sup> as the case may be, which therefore pertains to linkage but is not the actual path of accumulation, and so does not pertain to that path.

If we analyze it into lesser and greater degrees, the path of linkage can be divided into three degrees: initial, intermediate, and final. Of these, with the initial degree it is uncertain whether one will eventually experience the path of seeing; with the intermediate degree, there is certainty that one will; and with the final degree, it is certain that one will experience the path of seeing in this lifetime.

While there are many ways to analyze this path, the most well-known of these is that of analyzing the path on the basis of how realization occurs:

(1) In this regard, there is the phase of meditative warmth.<sup>74</sup> Just as there is warmth when two sticks are rubbed together, as a foreshadowing of the fire that will come about, so there comes a foreshadowing that one will experience the path of seeing (that is, nonconceptual timeless awareness), which is comparable to the fire in the analogy.

(2) Then there is the phase of the peak experience, when the fundamentally positive factors that are still volatile<sup>75</sup> reach their climax (that is, their highest or most sublime degree).<sup>76</sup> An equivalent Sanskrit term for “peak experience” is *mūrti*,<sup>77</sup> which can be translated as “a momentary

occurrence,” and so this is also referred to as the peak (in the sense of transitory) experience because it does not last for long.

(3) Next, one gains the phase of a patient acceptance of the profound nature of phenomena, an acceptance that parallels the path of seeing the truth in an unwavering manner. This constitutes patient acceptance in the sense that one is not daunted by emptiness.<sup>78</sup>

(4) The phase of the highest mundane experience is so called because it constitutes the most sublime experience within the context of this world, for it is capable of ushering in the paths of the spiritually advanced beings,<sup>79</sup> (although it is not the congruent cause<sup>80</sup> of these paths).<sup>81</sup> [4.10.7.a] It serves as the governing condition<sup>82</sup> for the path of seeing, which is incorruptible. The *Ornament of Manifest Realization* states:

... involving lower, intermediate, and highest degrees ...<sup>83</sup>

Thus, there are three degrees to all of the above phases,<sup>84</sup> so that some Mahāyāna commentators consider the path of linkage to be divided into a total of twelve degrees. This model is as follows:

#### *Meditative Warmth [ii]*

Using one’s individual self-knowledge of timeless awareness, one meditates by focusing on the topics of the Four Truths.<sup>85</sup> This brings about the realization that objects that are reified externally have no independent nature, being nothing more than mere descriptions imposed by the inner perceiving mind. The attainment of a lesser degree of mental clarity concerning this realization involves both meditative absorption (that is, calm abiding) and sublime intelligence (that is, deeper insight), as well as their corresponding states of mind and mental events. Three degrees of meditative warmth (lesser, intermediate, and greater) are assigned on the basis of whether this experience of clarity (concerning emptiness or the absence of independent nature) is intermittent, fairly predominant, or even more prevalent and evident. The timeless awareness associated with meditative warmth is sometimes referred to as being “aroused on the lesser path of seeing,”<sup>86</sup> since to a slight extent one sees something meaningful that one has not seen before. Nevertheless, in comparison to the peak experience and other phases, in this phase one is experiencing the lowest level of this clarity concerning emptiness or the absence of independent nature.

### *Peak Experience [ii]*

One exerts oneself as before with constant diligence, so that the foregoing perception (that is, the realization that reified objects have no independent nature) increases and develops beyond the previous phase, leading to the meditative absorption and sublime intelligence associated with the attainment of the intermediate level of this experience of clarity, together with the corresponding accompanying factors. There are three degrees of this phase (lesser, intermediate, and greater) on the basis of whether the realization that things lack any independent nature is clearly recalled only intermittently during the dream state, or fairly predominantly, or even more frequently.

### *Patient Acceptance [iii]*

One continues to meditate as before, so that all that appears as meaningful objects in one's perception manifests solely as expressions of mind. One attains this experience of clarity to a great degree, having done away with distractions caused by one's reifying objects, and also gains the lesser degree of another experience of clarity (the realization that even the subjective perceiving mind is empty and lacks any independent nature), with its attendant meditative absorption and sublime intelligence, [4.107.b] together with their corresponding factors. There are three degrees of this phase (lesser, intermediate, and greater) due to there being the three alternatives of one's being undaunted by emptiness occasionally, for the most part, or at all times.

### *Highest Mundane Experience [iv]*

One continues to meditate as before, coming to the realization that the subjective perceiving mind has no independent nature, so that the path of seeing ensues immediately in the wake of this realization. With respect to the mundane path,<sup>97</sup> one has attained the greatest degree of the experience of clarity concerning the fact that the perceiving mind has no independent nature, while with respect to the transcendent path<sup>98</sup> one has attained the middling degree of the experience of suchness; these entail meditative absorption and sublime intelligence, together with their corresponding factors. There are three degrees of this phase (lesser, intermediate, and

greater) due to this state of clarity (that is, the experience that the subjective perceiving mind has no independent nature) being realized to a lesser, a middling, or an excellent degree.

The higher and lower schools of the Abhidharma<sup>99</sup> are in accord in that they both classify the phase of patient acceptance into three degrees (lesser, intermediate, and greater) but not the other phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough.<sup>100</sup> As for the essential mode of consciousness experienced during these phases, it is conceptual when compared to the nonconceptual timeless awareness of the path of seeing but can be seen as a nonconceptual mode of direct perception when compared to ordinary consciousness (which ascertains words and meanings); for the former is explained as involving the attainment of an experience of clarity concerning that fact that reified objects have no independent nature).<sup>91</sup>

During these four phases, one cultivates in meditation the five governing powers<sup>92</sup> and the five strengths<sup>93</sup> in turn. One cultivates the powers during the two phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience, and the five strengths during the two phases of patient acceptance and the highest mundane experience.

### *Nature [d]*

The distinctive features are: those in whom it awakens, what level it entails, and what one focuses on.

In order for one to come to a definitive conclusion concerning the nature of this path, there are three points: those whose experience serves as the basis for the onset of this path; the levels of attainment on which it is dependent; and the context on which one focuses. As for the first of these, it is said that the path of linkage can be experienced only by men and women of three continents,<sup>94</sup> or by gods in any of the six states within the realm of desire<sup>95</sup> (that is, it can be experienced by someone who formerly, while a human being, gained an experience of the path of linkage and then was reborn in one of the states of the gods of the realm of desire). In certain Mahāyāna sources that adopt an extraordinary perspective,<sup>96</sup> it is also explained that it can be experienced by nāgas and certain other kinds of animals. [4.108.a]

The second feature concerns the levels of attainment on which the path of linkage is dependent. The path of linkage in the śrāvaka approach

is dependent on the six levels of meditative stability: that is, the entirely sufficient preparatory phase of the first level of meditative stability, the actual level per se, the distinctive aspect of this level, and the three actual remaining levels.<sup>97</sup> Those who have not previously become free of desire depend on the preparatory phase of the first level of meditative stability, while those who still have intention but are free of desire depend on the actual level. The path of linkage in the approach of pratyekabuddhas who participate in groups is dependent on any of these six levels of meditative stability; in the approach of those who are said to be “like a rhinoceros,” it is dependent on the actual stage of the fourth level of stability.<sup>98</sup> As for a bodhisattva,<sup>99</sup> a Vaibhāṣika source states:<sup>100</sup>

The Teacher and those who are like rhinoceroses, when they become enlightened, attain all in a single, final state of meditative stability.<sup>101</sup>

That is to say, the Vaibhāṣikas hold that this path is dependent on the fourth level of meditative stability. Alternatively, some Māhāyāna authorities maintain that it is dependent on the actual stage of any one of the four levels of meditative stability.

As for the third feature, the context on which one focuses, the Saṃṭāṇikas hold that during the three phases of meditative warmth, peak experience, and patient acceptance one focuses on the lack of any independent nature in perceived objects, while during that of the highest mundane experience one focuses on the lack of any independent nature of the perceiving mind. Concerning the realization that perceived objects have no independent nature, the Saṃṭāṇikas further state that the phase of meditative warmth entails one’s gaining this experience to a slight degree, the phase of the peak experience entails this increasing to a middling degree, and the phase of patient acceptance entails a great degree of stable realization.

Certain Māhāyāna authorities hold that with the phase of meditative warmth one realizes that perceived objects have no independent nature, while with the phases of patient acceptance and the highest mundane experience one realizes that the perceiving mind has no independent nature. That is to say, they maintain the following: The phase of meditative warmth entails the realization that those perceived objects connected with deeply ingrained afflictive states<sup>102</sup> have no independent nature,

while the phase of the peak experience entails the realization that those perceived objects connected with the completely refined state of enlightenment have no independent nature. Concerning the realization that the perceiving mind has no independent nature, they maintain that the phase of patient acceptance entails the realization that the perceiving mind, as it constitutes the basis for the substantial existence of the individual,<sup>103</sup> has no independent nature; the phase of the highest mundane experience entails the same realization regarding the perceiving mind [4.108.b.] as it constitutes the basis for the imputed existence of the individual.<sup>104</sup> As the *Ornament of Manifest Realization* states:

Due to the ground of being and the antidotes it entails, there are two ways in which perceived objects are conceptualized; through the specific points of delusion, the mind-body aggregates, and so forth, these have nine distinct implications.

On the basis of what is, in essence, a seemingly autonomous self, for example, as well as such factors as the mind-body aggregates, it is also held that there are two ways in which the perceiving mind is experienced: as the basis for substantial existence and that of imputed existence.<sup>105</sup>

“In what kind of mind,” one might wonder, “are the experiences of the anticipatory phases to be found?” They are found primarily in the reflexive consciousness<sup>106</sup> that has become familiarized with them through the three kinds of sublime intelligence;<sup>107</sup> for example, the reflexive consciousness that is familiar with desire and other afflictive states.<sup>108</sup>

### *Distinctive Processes [e]*

There is elimination since the obscuring layer of conceptual labeling is done away with; and there is involvement through a process of realizing the two ways in which any independent nature is lacking.<sup>109</sup>

Elimination takes place through a process of completely doing away with the conceptual labeling that is associated with the afflictive and cognitive obscurations.<sup>110</sup> With respect to the Truths, realization concerns the lack of any independent nature in perceived objects (that is, one-half of the equation that constitutes the seeming identity of phenomena).<sup>111</sup>

Alternatively, some Mahāyāna authorities hold that the respective paths of linkage in the three spiritual approaches entail the following states of realization:

(1) For the śrāvaka approach, the phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience bring realization of the lack of any independent nature in the seeming identity of the individual personality, while the phases of patient acceptance and the highest mundane experience bring this realization as it relates to the perceiving mind associated with the individual personality.

(2) For the pratyekabuddha approach, the phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience bring a partial degree of realization that perceived objects (that is, both the seeming identity of the individual personality and that of phenomena) lack any independent nature, while the phases of patient acceptance and the highest mundane experience bring a partial degree of this realization as it relates to the perceiving mind associated with both kinds of seeming identity.

(3) For the bodhisattva approach, the phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience bring realization that perceived objects (that is, both the seeming identity of the individual personality and that of phenomena) lack any independent nature, while the phases of patient acceptance and the highest mundane experience bring this realization as it relates to the perceiving mind associated with both kinds of seeming identity.

Concerning the path of linkage in these three approaches, the exalted Nāgārjuna states that, aside from differences in the methods used and differences in the precision of one's focus during each of the four anticipatory phases, [4..109.a] there is no difference with respect to the realization of the lack of identity in things.<sup>112</sup> This is also the enlightened intention found in extensive and middle-length sources of the Buddha's word,<sup>113</sup> such as in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, in which it is stated:

Those who wish to train on the levels of the śrāvakas, moreover, should . . . train in this transcendent perfection of sublime intelligence, . . .<sup>114</sup>

and the *Compendium*, which remarks:

Those who intend to become śrāvaka followers of the Sugata, or who wish to become pratyekabuddhas, or likewise rulers of the dharma,<sup>115</sup>  
cannot attain these states without relying on this acceptance.<sup>116</sup>

### *Qualities [f]*

One is endowed with qualities such as experiencing no interruption and no falling.

That is to say, as the *Ornament of the Sūtras* states:

Through the attainment of the peak experience, there is no interruption;<sup>117</sup>  
through the attainment of patient acceptance, one does not fall into lower states of rebirth<sup>118</sup> and the like.<sup>119</sup>

And the sūtra the *Cloud of the Rare and Excellent* states that one is free of the deterioration experienced by an ordinary individual and is endowed with many qualities, such as meditative absorption, the power of complete recall,<sup>120</sup> complete liberation, and levels of deeper discernment.<sup>121</sup> As well, the "Mother" and the *Ornament*,<sup>122</sup> state that those of keen acumen experience incontrovertible signs that they will attain perfect enlightenment.

### *Function [g]*

The misperception of things having identity is eliminated, and there is the onset of the first level.

Though still aspects of sublime intelligence born of mundane states of meditation, these four phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough<sup>123</sup> ensure that the four erroneous perceptions concerning the seeming identity of the individual personality and phenomena<sup>124</sup> are eliminated and awaken in one the realization of the first level of realization, that is, the path of seeing.

### *Derivation of the Terms [h]*

As for the derivation of the terms, these are “phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough,” “engagement through firm conviction,” and “linkage” to the direct realization of ultimate reality.

The terms are derived in the following ways:

- Completely nonconceptual timeless awareness associated with the path of seeing, which is comparable to a fire, utterly eradicates all the erroneous concepts of ordinary individuals and so constitutes a decisive breakthrough. If the path of seeing is taken to be the actual breakthrough, these are “phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough” because they are in accord with it.
- Through the influence of one’s firm conviction concerning the actual nature of phenomena, [4.109b] one experiences patient acceptance, and so this is referred to as “the level of engagement through firm conviction.”<sup>1125</sup>
- This is a process whereby the sublime intelligence born of mundane states of meditation eradicates the seemingly self-justifying concepts based on dualistic perception, and links one to the path of seeing, that is, the direct realization of ultimate reality, the basic space of phenomena. Therefore, it is called “the path of linkage.”
- “Engagement through firm conviction” is in fact a term that is explained as applying to both the path of accumulation and that of linkage.

### *The Path of Seeing [3]*

The explanation of the path of seeing also has eight topics: a definition of its characteristics; an identification of what is so characterized; a detailed analysis; a definitive statement about its nature; its distinctive processes of elimination and realization; a description of its qualities; a statement about what its function is; and a demonstration of the derivation of the term.

Commentary on the  
**THE PRESENTATION OF**  
**BHŪMIS, PATHS & RESULTS**  
*in the Causal Vehicle of Characteristics from the*  
Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye

Āchārya Lama Tenpa Gyaltsen

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## *Presentation of the Paths*

### MEANING OF PATH

What is the meaning of the word “path”? The *Four Dharmas of Gampopa* says:

Grant your blessings so that dharma may progress along the path.

We want dharma to progress along the path, but what is this path? The path is a process of removing confusion from our minds. It is a process of working with our minds and ridding ourselves of mental afflictions. We remove confusion from our minds and liberate our minds. Along with that, we bring benefit to other sentient beings through our power once we are liberated. Briefly, the path is a process of completely taming our minds, as it said of the Buddha.

Taming the mind is essential to the Kadampa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. There is a story of a relationship between a teacher and his student. The student had very good motivation and wanted to practice the dharma in a genuine way. He had an excellent motivation, but his *prajñā* was not so strong. He wondered how to go about practicing the dharma. He said, “I want to practice the genuine path of dharma. How is it that you do that?” So he looked at how other people practiced. He saw a lot of people circumambulating and thought that was the way to practice the dharma. He engaged in a circumambulation practice. Throughout the day, he circumambulated stūpas and temples. His lama saw him doing this, came up to him, and said, “Your circumambulations are really good, and it’s excellent that you’re doing this, but what would be even better is if you were to truly practice the dharma.”

The student said, “Oh, circumambulations of stūpas don’t make it as the genuine practice of dharma. I need to think about what genuine practice really is. A lot of people are studying in the shedras.” So he decided to take up the path of study. He started learning about the dharma sūtras and treatises, and he engaged in debate. One day, the student met up with his lama, who said, “Your study is very good. It’s great that you’re studying, but what would be even better is if you were to truly practice the dharma.”

Again, he was left to contemplate the genuine practice of dharma. Again, he thought about what other people were doing. He knew lots of people were meditating up in caves, so he thought that

must be the genuine path. He went up into a cave and engaged in intensive meditation. He met with his teacher again, and his teacher told him, “Your meditation practice is very good. It’s very good that you’re practicing in a cave and doing so much meditation, but what would be even better is if you were to truly practice the dharma.”

He was flabbergasted at this point. He didn’t make it when he was circumambulating stūpas, his study wasn’t the genuine practice of dharma, and his meditation practice didn’t make it as the genuine dharma practice. What the heck was genuine dharma practice?

At this point, his teacher told him that the true practice of dharma was to tame his mind to look at his mind. Therefore, it does not matter what you do in terms of external appearances. It does not matter how it appears on the outside. The main practice of dharma is looking at your mind. The path is a process of removing your confusion. As it says in the *Four Dharmas of Gampopa*:

Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify confusion.

Confusion exists in no other place than in our minds. For this reason, the path in Buddhism is a process of taming your mind.

## NATURE OF THE PATH

The text says, “The nature of the path is that which, once one has entered it, serves as a stepping-stone for progressing towards a more superior state.” In this context, it seems that the nature of the path and the definition of the path are the same thing. In Buddhist philosophical texts, we run into these two things, the nature and the definition, and both explain the meaning of a term. The entity is a broader explanation of the basic meaning of the term, and the definition is an exact description that precisely correlates with the definiendum. In this context, however, the nature of the path and the definition of the path are the same. Therefore, one can posit the definition of the path or what the text calls “the nature of the path” as: “Once one has entered it, it serves as a stepping-stone for progressing towards a more superior mundane or supramundane state.” What is being posited here is a general definition of path. We have not yet separated path into the two classifications. This is a general category of path, and it is to be understood to include the two kinds of mundane results.

We need to have certainty and stability in our minds about the definition of path. Definitions are important. Again, the definition of path is: “Once one has entered it, it serves as a stepping-stone for progressing towards a more superior mundane or supramundane state.”

### *First Incorrect Definition*

According to the intention of Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye, the first definition, “the virtuous actions that serve as the causes of liberation,” is not acceptable as a definition of path. If it were acceptable as a definition of path, it would absurdly follow that bhūmis, the subject, are paths because they are virtuous actions that serve as causes for liberation. You would not be able to say that the reason does not apply to the subject because bhūmis are virtuous actions that serve as causes for liberation. And if you simply said, “I accept,” what fault is there in that? One fault is that you would not need to separate bhūmis and paths because bhūmis would be paths. Therefore,

from Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye's perspective, these conditions do not apply because bhūmis and paths are two different things.

Another fault in presenting "the virtuous actions that serve as causes for liberation" as the definition of path is the following absurd consequence: Given the wisdom of the Buddha, the subject, it follows that it is a path because it is a virtuous action that serves as a cause for liberation. What would you say in response to this consequence? Would you say, "The reason does not apply to the subject?" Would you say, "I accept?" Or would you say, "The reason is not included in the predicate?" You do not need to give an answer right now, just think about what you would say.

According to Jamgön Kongtrul, if something is a virtuous action that serves as a cause for liberation, it does not necessarily mean that it is a path. Therefore, we need to come up with examples of things that are virtuous actions that serve as causes for liberation but are not paths. In the text, the example of a ground is given, and I gave the example of the Buddha's wisdom. Now you should think of other examples.

### *Second Incorrect Definition*

The second definition is also not acceptable. The second definition is "what is able to relinquish the factors to be relinquished." It is not acceptable because the following absurd consequence would apply: Antidotes, the subject, it follows that they are paths because they are able to relinquish the factors to be relinquished.

If we put forth that consequence, we need to present an example of something that is an antidote but not a path. It is *not* being said here that antidotes and paths are mutually exclusive. They are not *gelwa*. What is being proposed here is that there are antidotes that are not paths. The pervasion is not that antidotes necessarily have to be paths. There are things that are antidotes and at the same time are not paths. The best example one can give here is the resultant stage of arhathood. Arhathood is an antidote but it is not a path. It is an antidote because arhathood is a final result, but it is not a path because once the hearers and solitary realizers have entered the realization of arhats, they need to enter the Mahāyāna path to progress further. They cannot progress on the basis of the state they are in.

But just because you can progress toward buddhahood, is that a path? Just because there is room for improvement and a higher place to proceed towards, is that a path? The reason given here for something to be a path is that there is something to improve upon. However, that there is room for improvement does not make something a path. We are talking about being able to enter something that serves as a stepping-stone to progress towards a superior state. Simply because there is a room for improvement does not make it a path.

From the perspective of the hearers and solitary realizers, the state of arhathood is an example of something that is an antidote but is not a path, and from the perspective of Mahāyāna, the point of going beyond the end of the continuum of the tenth bhūmi is an antidote but not a path. So the point when one transcends the ten bhūmis and enters the state of buddhahood is an antidote but not a path. From the Mahāyāna perspective, arhats have not perfected the path. After having attained the state of arhathood, they still need to engage upon a path. The state of arhathood itself

is not a path. Therefore, for these reasons, Jamgön Kongtrul says it is unacceptable to present “that which is able to relinquish the factors to be relinquished” as a definition of the path.

### ***Third Incorrect Definition***

Others say the definition is the isolate of path is “what causes progressing.” Jamgön Kongtrul also says that this definition is not justified. If that which causes progressing is posited as the definition or isolate of path, the following absurd consequence would apply: An individual traveling on a path, the subject, it follows that he or she is the path because he or she is something that causes proceeding. Is someone who enters a path something that causes progressing or not? Sometimes, translating these things into English is problematic. In Tibetan, it can simply apply to “the act of progressing,” or it can also mean “that which causes progressing.” We might change the translation to “the act of progressing” here.

### ***Summary of the Three Incorrect Definitions***

To summarize, from the perspective of our own tradition, we first established the definition to be: “By having entered upon it, it serves as a stepping-stone for progressing toward a more superior mundane or supramundane state.” Then we looked at three definitions from other systems that have been shown to be untenable. The definition “the virtuous actions that serve as causes for liberation” is untenable because it would follow that bhūmis are paths. The definition “what is able to relinquish the factors to be relinquished” is not justified because it would follow all antidotes are paths, and the definition “what causes progressing” is not acceptable because it would follow that individuals who proceed or travel on the path are paths.

## **CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE PATHS**

In general, one can travel on limitless paths. The Buddha taught eighty-four thousand classes of dharma, and they are all paths because they all serve as antidotes for the eighty-four thousand mental afflictions. Even if we abbreviate the number of paths, there are still many ways to classify them. We can classify them into the three vehicles: the hearers, the solitary realizers, and the bodhisattvas. We can classify them into the two paths to higher states of liberation or definite excellence: the mundane and supramundane paths or the contaminated and uncontaminated paths. There is the fourfold classification of path: the path of training, the uninterrupted path, the path of complete release, and the special path. We can also classify the paths in terms of being swift, slow, difficult, and easy. There are the two paths of learning and no more learning and the two paths of meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment. There are many categories. The most well-known outline of all supramundane paths, or paths leading to definite excellence, is the five paths: the path accumulation, the path of preparation, the path of seeing, the path of familiarization, and the final path.

### ***Five Paths, One Practice***

In terms of realizing the nature of phenomena, the five paths are traversed by individuals who need to progress in a gradual manner. Individuals who need to progress in a gradual manner will do so through the five paths. However, even though one travels five paths, one engages in one practice. The paths are five, but the practice is one. What is the practice one engages in? One engages in the practice of emptiness. But if there is only one thing to practice, why are there five paths? We need

to resolve our doubts about this question through hearing and contemplation. Emptiness is a hidden object to us. Since emptiness is hidden from us, we need to approach the realization of emptiness through stages. If emptiness were something obvious, then we would not need a path to go about realizing it. The thing that is practiced or realized is the same whatever path you are on, but the level of profundity is different.

One progresses through the paths in a manner in which later paths are more profound than preceding paths. The path of preparation is more profound than the path of accumulation. The path of seeing is more profound than the path of preparation. The path of familiarization, also called the path of meditation, is more profound than the path of seeing, and the final path is more profound than the path of familiarization. What is practiced is the same in each case, but the level of profundity or depth with which one practices is greater at each stage.

We first engage in hearing and contemplation. The time when we attain the knowledge that arises from hearing and contemplation is the path of accumulation. To extend our practice of hearing and meditation and make it more profound, we engage in meditation. The time when we attain the knowledge that arises from meditation is the path of preparation. The attainment of direct realization is the path of seeing. The path of seeing is when we attain a state of knowledge that arises from the highest peak of wisdom born from meditation. After the path of seeing, when we get to the path of familiarization, we then continually familiarize ourselves with what has already been seen or what has already been realized. The Tibetan word *gompa*<sup>1</sup> is translated as “meditation,” and it literally means “to familiarize with.” Thus, on the path of familiarization or meditation, we continually familiarize ourselves with what we have already seen or realized. The fifth path is the final path, and this is simply a name given to the resultant stage that occurs after having traversed the four paths. It is given the name of a path, but it is not an actual path because it is a result.

In brief, the thing to be practiced is the same, but we engage in that practice in varying stages of subtlety. At the first stage, we need to gain certainty in the true nature of things by way of hearing and contemplation, which is the path of accumulation. Then after that, we meditate on the true nature of things during the path of preparation. At the path of seeing, we attain a direct realization of the true nature of reality, and then we continually familiarize ourselves with that realization during the path of familiarization. The final path completion is the name we give to the ultimate result of traveling through these four paths.

It is important to understand that the thing being practiced is the same thing, but we go through different levels of subtlety. It would be erroneous to think that what is practiced at the time of the path of accumulation, for example, is different than what is practiced at the time of the path of seeing.

## ETYMOLOGY OF PATH

That which you enter and leads you to higher states in the world or beyond the world is called “the path.” Similar to this is “vehicle” or “carrier.”

<sup>1</sup> Tib. *gom pa*

## NOMINAL & ACTUAL PATHS

The main point of difference is the debate as to whether the final path is an actual path or not. There is a difference of opinion between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. The Hīnayāna says that the final path is an actual path and a nominal result, a result just in name. The Mahāyāna says the final path is a nominal path and an actual result.

## DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE FIVE PATHS

Up to this point in the text, it has been a general discussion. The actual discussion is about the five paths in particular. If you ask, “What is the actual path in Buddhism?” It is the vipashyanā that realizes the nonexistence of self. When the prajñā that realizes the nonexistence of self has loving kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta as its aides, it is the path of Mahāyāna, the great vehicle. If it lacks these aides, it is the path of the Hīnayāna. The different stages of the prajñā that realizes the nonexistence of self are reflected by the five paths.

The five paths are the path of accumulation, the path of preparation, the path of seeing, the path of familiarization, and the final path. The final path is also called the path of no-more-learning.

The presentation of the paths is classified in two general ways: in terms of entity and the terminological classification. Up to now, we have been classifying in terms of entity. The terminological classification is the presentation of the five paths. It refers to the power of the remedy of prajñā becoming clearer and stronger and the corresponding practice to be relinquished becoming weaker and weaker. If we illustrate the five paths as the moon in the sky, it is not that the five paths correspond to five different moons in the sky; rather, they correspond to the different phases of the waxing moon.▲

The first path is the path of accumulation, and it is treated in eight points: presenting its definition, identifying its instances, classification, determining its nature, features of relinquishment and realization, stating its qualities, function, and hermeneutical etymology.

#### PRESENTING ITS DEFINITION

The text says, “The path of accumulation consists of the virtuous actions that are conducive to liberation.” The definition of the path of accumulation accords with the general definition of the path, which is “that which is a basis for progressing towards nirvāṇa,” and the specific feature of the path of accumulation is that it is in partial concordance with liberation. Thus, the path of accumulation is that which makes you proceed toward nirvāṇa and is conducive to liberation. Or, as it says here, it is positive or virtuous actions that are conducive to liberation. This means that the path of accumulation itself is not liberation as such, but it is something that is in accord with liberation. The first part of the definition, “a basis for progressing toward nirvāṇa,” is general and applies to all five paths. The specific part of the definition of the path of accumulation is that it “consists of the virtuous actions that are conducive to liberation.” This pattern of establishing the definition will be the same for all five paths.

#### IDENTIFYING ITS INSTANCES

The second point is the illustration by example. The text says, “Its instances are the efforts in studying, meditating and so on.” So it is illustrated by the remedies that mature one’s mind-stream from the time of generating the mind of enlightenment until the arising of the primordial awareness of heat. This is the first part of the path of preparation, the next step on the path. Before that starts, everything that comes from generating the mind of enlightenment, all the efforts of listening, reflecting, and meditating, are the path of accumulation.

Other illustrations of the limits of the path, or where it starts and ends, are the efforts of listening, reflecting, and meditating from the time of taking refuge up to the moment when primordial

awareness heat arises, or from the time when you have developed renunciation for samsāra, or from the time when you have developed inspiration of yogic interests for the three jewels.

## CLASSIFICATION

The path of accumulation can be classified into three levels of lesser, medium, and great, respectively, the cultivations of the foundations of mindfulness, the correct exertions, and the limbs of miraculous powers. The path of accumulation can be also classified into a fourfold classification: the level of beginners, the level of confidence, partial concordance with liberation, and armorlike practice.

### *Threefold Classification of Lesser, Medium & Greater*

Again, the lesser, medium, and greater paths of accumulation refer to the increasing refinement of the prajñā that realizes the nonexistence of self. The lesser path of accumulation specifically refers to the practice of the four intense applications of mindfulness. The medium path of accumulations specifically refers to the four types of perfect relinquishments, and the greater path of accumulation specifically refers to the four limbs of miraculous powers.

#### **Lesser Path of Accumulation: Cultivations of the Foundations of Mindfulness**

The four cultivations of the foundations of mindfulness are the lesser path of accumulation. They are the application of intense mindfulness on the body, the application of intense mindfulness on feelings, the application of intense mindfulness on mind, and the application of intense mindfulness on phenomena. They are the objects of meditation and objects of the prajñā that realizes the nonexistence of self. Your prajñā focuses on the four intense applications of mindfulness, and you learn the lesser path of accumulation.

The specific focus of the four intense applications of mindfulness is presented differently in the prajñāpāramitā teachings of the greater vehicle and in general Buddhism. The way it is presented in the *Treasury of Knowledge* is the general presentation. Here, the intense application of mindfulness on the body is to see that the body is impermanent, the intense application of mindfulness on feelings is to see that feelings are suffering, the intense application of mindfulness on the mind is to see that the mind is without a self, and the intense application of mindfulness on phenomena is to realize that all phenomena are empty.

The reason one starts out by meditating on the four intense applications of mindfulness on the lesser path of accumulation is because these four misconceptions—seeing our bodies as permanent, our feelings as pleasure, and so on—are the root of samsāra, and they have to be remedied to uproot the root of samsāra. On the lesser path of accumulation, when we meditate on the fourfold intense applications of mindfulness, we start at the root of cyclic existence, and in that way, working with the fourfold misconceptions, we remedy it.

#### **Medium Path of Accumulation: Correct Exertions**

On the medium path of accumulation, one tries to relinquish all adverse or unfavorable conditions and tries to increase favorable conditions that enable one to uproot the four misconceptions. Adverse conditions are the committal of negative actions. On one hand, we try to relinquish the negative actions that we have already committed and prevent further negative actions from arising

or occurring. On the other hand, we try to increase and accumulate actions that are more positive. This is called the fourfold relinquishment, but it actually refers to the two aspects that are relinquished and the two aspects that are accomplished.

#### **Greater Path of Accumulation: Limbs of Miraculous Powers**

On the greater path of accumulation, one engages in the four limbs of miraculous powers. These are the means to enhance one's skill and dexterity in samādhi, or meditative concentration. Here, one trains in different kinds of samādhi and increases the ability to engage in samādhi. This training is called the four limbs of miraculous powers. The first limb is striving, the second limb is joyous effort or vigor, the third limb is examination or reflection, and the fourth limb is analysis. The main obstacles or hindrances to developing a workable mind that can easily rest in samādhi are things such as laziness and a lack of proper analysis of what is going on in the mind. To overcome such obstacles, one meditates on these four remedies. In this case, striving and vigor are the remedies for laziness, and examination and analysis are remedies for the lack of proper examination.

#### **Two Reasons for the Threefold Classification**

The path of accumulation is divided into the three stages of lesser, medium, and great for two reasons. The first reason is that during the phase of the lesser path of accumulation, the four applications of intense mindfulness, it is not certain that the following paths will arise in one's mind-stream or that one will develop them. However, during the medium path of accumulation, the four kinds of perfect relinquishment, it is certain that the path of preparation and the following paths will eventually arise in one's mind-stream. The time is not certain, but they will arise at some point. During the first stage of the greater path of accumulation, the four limbs of miraculous powers, it is certain that the first phase of the path of preparation, the phase of heat, will arise in one's mind-stream, which means it will happen very soon. Thus, the threefold division of the path of accumulation depends on whether the time is certain that the following paths will arise in one's mind-stream. The second reason is that this refers to the three degrees of intensity of practices being relinquished and to the remedies increasing in strength.

Student: What distinction happens, for example, when one enters from the lesser to the medium path?

ALTG: It is hard to give an exact borderline. It is not a distinction in terms of entity, like saying, "It's up to here, and the next one goes up to there." Rather, it is a progression. With a progression or continuum, it is hard to identify an exact point. It is not like you have one job in the beginning, and when you finish it, you get another job, and then do that. For example, the four foundations of mindfulness go all the way to the end of the seventh bhūmi. It is a matter of increasing refinement. At each stage, you add something, and then that becomes refined up to a certain point. It is the same as trying to learn a language. You have different levels of language classes, and, for example, when you finish the book for the first class, then the first class is finished, and when you finish the book for the second class, then the second class is finished, but in terms of knowing the language, it is impossible to say when the first class finishes and the second class begins.

Simply put, the beginning of the small path of accumulation is when you start the four cultivations of the foundations of mindfulness. The medium path of accumulation is when you start the four correct exertions, and the greater path of accumulation is when you start the four limbs of

miraculous powers. The exact details of when each phase starts and ends depend specifically on when the practices to be relinquished are relinquished. Once they are relinquished, you can clearly say that the phase is over. But that is not what we are talking about here. That comes later. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* gives the detailed presentation of what is relinquished.

#### *Alternative Fourfold Classification*

There is also a fourfold classification: the level of beginners, the level of confidence, partial concordance with liberation, and armorlike practice. The level of confidence corresponds to the medium path of accumulation, and the levels of partial concordance with liberation and armorlike practice correspond to the greater path of accumulation. Partial concordance with liberation is the plain or ordinary attainment of the greater path of accumulation, and armorlike practice is the special greater path of accumulation.

This presentation of the path of accumulation is also explained in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* in the first chapter on the knowledge of all aspects. The *Treasury of Knowledge* presentation is a condensed version, and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is a detailed version. Both presentations support each other.

### DETERMINING ITS NATURE

The fourth point, determining its nature, is explained through three features of the path of accumulation: arising, relying, and what it focuses on, or in other words, the supports in which it arises, the grounds on which it relies, and the objects on which it focuses.

#### *Supports in Which It Arises*

The first feature discusses in whom the path of accumulation can be developed and in whom it cannot. The path of accumulation can only arise in three of the four continents. It is said that the people in the northern continent of Uttarakuru cannot give rise to the path of accumulation because they are without shame or embarrassment in terms of committing negative actions and they have very strong afflictions. Because of these factors, they cannot give rise to the path of accumulation. For human beings in general, it is said that beings who are neuters or hermaphrodites cannot give rise to the path of accumulation. The reason why they cannot give rise to the path of accumulation is the same. Hermaphrodites supposedly have no embarrassment or shame and have strong afflictions.

#### *Grounds on Which It Relies*

However, just being a human as the support for the arising of the path of accumulation is not enough. You also have to rely on the proper grounds, or internal supports, which are called the six grounds of meditative stability. Based on the six grounds of meditative stability, you develop the one-pointed reflection of the desire realm. This is the accomplishment of shamatha meditation.

#### *Objects on Which It Focuses*

The third feature is the object on which it focuses, or what the person on the path of accumulation focuses on. Primarily, one focuses on the ethics of ordinary sentient beings, that is, the proper engagement and avoidance of physical and verbal actions. That is one's main focus. One also engages in yoga, which means meditation. This is done to purify one's conduct. One

meditates, for example, on repulsiveness. Other focuses are the intense applications of mindfulness and the words and meanings of enlightened speech.

## FEATURES OF RELINQUISHMENT & REALIZATION

The fifth point is the features of relinquishment and realization. What is relinquished are the coarse factors to be relinquished that produce suffering in cyclic existence, and what is realized are the two identitylessnesses in the form of object generalities.

There are different levels of factors to be relinquished. Coarse factors to be relinquished, in general, are afflicted obscurations. Within afflicted obscurations, there are innate ones and imputed ones. Imputed afflicted obscurations are coarser, and again, within coarse imputed afflicted obscurations, there are coarse and subtle ones. On the path of accumulation, the coarsest imputed afflicted obscurations are relinquished and the two types of identitylessnesses are realized. They are not realized in a direct way, but conceptually, through inferential recognition. This means they are realized in the form of object generalities, or mental images, by way of the three types *prajñā* that result from hearing, reflecting, and meditating.

The coarser notion of personal identitylessness, or lack of personal self, is that some god or entity creates the world. When one relinquishes that notion, one gains the insight that the world is not created by such a being but by the karma of all beings who live in the world. One does not gain irreversible certainty about this insight. One is still in the process of fully understanding it. One starts thinking about it but still has doubts whether, in terms of karma, it is really true or not. One thinks, "Well, probably it is like that. Probably the world is made up by karma only. So probably there is no such thing as a creator." This is called doubt that tends in the right direction. It is not yet a full-fledged certainty. It is important to keep in mind that this does not mean that one rejects the notion of a creator god out of hatred or aversion for that god, and out of anger, dumps that god somewhere.

What does "relinquishment" mean in a Buddhist context? The word "relinquish" or the idea of getting rid of something may entertain the notion of aversion. You might want to get rid of something because you do not like it, because it is bad, or because you consider it to be rubbish. That is not what is meant here. What "relinquishment" means here is that we do not hold on to certain things. It has more to do with letting go of the mental grasping. Some people say that they accept karma and do not accept a creator god, but at the same time, they say there is no need to expel that creator god. They say it is simply a matter of personally accepting that notion or not. This kind of talk confuses me because it does not really make any sense. They do not accept a creator god, but they do not have to relinquish this creator god. However, after thinking about it, I see how not clinging to something and not getting rid of something at the same time makes sense. Certainly in Tibetan, if you say it the other way, it does not make sense at all.

Student: I have trouble teaching my twenty-year-old American students about karma because they say there has to be a god that judges what kind of good karma you get and what kind of bad karma you get. As much as I try to teach them about karma, that notion stays in their minds. Do you have

any suggestions about how to teach karma, so that they do not feel there has to be a god that makes karma work?

ALTG: Actually, many Buddhists also think this way. They do not accept the notion of a creator god, but they still think that there must be somebody who keeps track of good and bad karma. There is the notion of Yama, the god of death. He is the one who keeps track. He has all the records of the good and bad deeds, and when you die you are doomed. This is not in the Buddhist scriptures. It is folk tradition. It is something you tell little children to educate them (laughter). I will think more about your question, and we will talk later.

### STATING ITS QUALITIES

The sixth point states the qualities. There are five ordinary or common attributes, five visions, and five supernatural knowledges or supercognitions.

### ITS FUNCTION

The seventh point is the function of the path of accumulation. This is again presented in terms of lesser, medium, and greater levels of the path. The text says, "During its lesser, medium and great levels, one mentally engages in the four or two realities and turns away from the four mistakes or reification. One relinquishes antagonistic factors, and generates and increases virtuous dharmas. The eight conceptions are relinquished and one-pointed samādhi is performed."

On the lesser path of accumulation, the function of the four cultivations of the foundations of mindfulness is that the hearers mentally engage in the four realities of the noble ones and turn their minds away from the four mistakes. The four mistakes are the four misconceptions. This is the function of focusing on the four realities of the noble ones.

Here, the followers of the great vehicle engage in the two realities and turn their minds away from all types of reification, or really existing things. In general, there are many different types of reification, but what is specifically referred to at this stage is clinging to the permanence of things. Again, when I say that one turns one's mind away from clinging to permanence, it does not mean that one has given up all clinging to permanence; otherwise, none of us would be on the path of accumulation. At this point, we start engaging in letting go of clinging to permanence and really existing things. We start with relinquishing our reifications and our hanging on to permanence. We hold the hope of being able to relinquish it, so we make some effort to get to that point.

On the medium path of accumulation, the function of four perfect relinquishments is the same as before. We try to relinquish the negative actions we have already committed, and we try not to commit further negative actions by relinquishing discordant or adverse conditions, and by generating and increasing virtuous actions, we further favorable or conducive conditions.

On the greater path of accumulation, one relinquishes the eight mistaken worldly conceptions and gains mastery of one-pointed mind. The eight mistaken worldly conceptions are the eight worldly dharmas: praise and blame, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, fame and infamy. This means that one is not attached to minor expressions or words that one hears and does not get angry or aroused

depending on them. The eight mistaken worldly conceptions refer to even tiny events or words that we make a big deal about and to our faults.

### TEACHING ITS HERMENEUTICAL ETYMOLOGY

The eighth and last point teaches the hermeneutical etymology. This point explains the different names of the path of accumulation. The text says, “The hermeneutical etymology is that it is the path of gathering the accumulation of virtue for being a suitable vessel, is conducive to liberation, and represents confidence and invalidation.”

First, it is “the path that gathers vast positive accumulations to make one a suitable vessel for the arising of realization of heat on the path of preparation.” In other words, the means to make you into a suitable vessel for the next path is to gather vast accumulations of virtuous actions.

Second, it is “the path that is conducive to liberation.” It is called this because one engages in this path in a way that is conducive to liberation. Liberation is *nirvāṇa*, and the virtuous actions accumulated on that path are in partial concordance with *nirvāṇa*.

Third, it “represents confidence” because one’s conviction or devoted interests in the three jewels and emptiness is powerful.

Fourth, it is the level of “invalidation,” since in terms of the hearers, one regards the five skandhas as a defect, or something to be invalidated, just like a disease or an abscess and so on. In terms of the great vehicle, one regards the five skandhas to be without nature.▲

## 4

# *Path of Preparation*

The second path is the path of preparation, and it is again explained under eight points: presenting its definition, identifying its instances, classification, determining its nature, the features of relinquishment and realization, stating its qualities, its function, and teaching its hermeneutical etymology.

### PRESENTING ITS DEFINITION

The first point sets up the definition. The text says, “The path of preparation is the phase of clearly realizing the ultimate.”

The entity of the path of preparation is defined as “that which is the stepping-stone for complete release and consists of the phase of clearly realizing the meaning of identitylessness.”<sup>2</sup> The first part of the definition is “that which is the stepping-stone for complete release.” It is a general statement about all these paths. The second part of the definition is “consists of the phase of clearly realizing the meaning of identitylessness.” Does that sound okay to you?

Student: It does not sound very definitive.

ALTG: It sounds like it could be the path of seeing, the path of familiarization, or the final path. For the sake of debate, one could say, “The paths of seeing and meditation as the subject, it follows that they are also the path of preparation because they are also stepping-stones for complete release and consist of phases of clearly realizing meaning.” This debate, of course, centers on the Tibetan word *dön*.<sup>3</sup> One of its meanings is “meaning.” The paths of seeing and meditation are also phases when one clearly realizes *dön*. But it depends on how you understand *dön*. You can understand it as “meaning,” or you can understand it as “the ultimate,” “the actual truth,” or “true reality.” All these interpretations are possible. To differentiate what is realized here, we have to analyze the way one realizes. Generally, there are three levels of realization. The first realization is simply understanding something. The second level of realization is experience, and the third level of realization is direct, immediate realization. What is meant here is clear realization through

<sup>2</sup> The root text was originally translated as “clearly realizing the meaning of identitylessness.” It was changed to “clearly realizing the ultimate” as a result of this discussion.

<sup>3</sup> Tib. don

certainty and experience. Therefore, when one debates, to make this definition waterproof, one would say, “The definition of the path of preparation is that it is a stepping-stone for complete release and consists of the phase of clearly realizing *through certainty and experience*.” That makes it clear which level of realization one is addressing.

Translator: We should change the Tibetan word *dön* in the translation from “meaning” to “ultimate reality.”

Student: But what distinguishes “experience” from “direct realization” is not whether it is direct, because nonconceptual experience is direct. What distinguishes it is whether the experience is temporary or stable.

ALTG: Although every experience is direct, it depends on what exactly appears in that experience, and ultimate reality does not directly appear to you in that experience. For example, if you are very thirsty and somebody talks to you about water, you might then have a vivid experience of drinking fresh water. This is a valid experience, but it is not the same as if you actually had water and drank it. There is no actual object of water. It is just a vivid experience that is nothing but a mental image. The appearance in itself, subjectively speaking, is nonconceptual, but the object that it refers to is not the actual object. We will come to this point in more detail when we talk about the different levels of vivid or clear mental appearances on the path of preparation.

It is sometimes said that the way one realizes on the path of preparation is the phase of realization through reflection. When you look at it this way, the level of realization you have left behind is a mere, conceptual understanding. But you have not yet reached the level of direct, immediate realization. You are somewhat in between. Here, “reflection” means that you have attained some certainty and experience already. You are close to direct realization, but you are not yet there.

This phase is also called the phase of conduct through devoted interest. This is another name for the path of preparation that will come up later. If you distinguish the Hīnayāna path of preparation, the Mahāyāna path of preparation, and the Vajrayāna path of preparation, each is dependent on the mental aides that accompany the realization described here through certainty and experience. On the Hīnayāna path of preparation, the realization through certainty and experience is supported by the notion of renunciation, the main phase on the Hīnayāna path. The realization through certainty and experience on the path of preparation accompanied by loving kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta is the realization of the greater vehicle of bodhisattvas. When the realization of the greater vehicle is accompanied by great bliss as the means, then it is the Vajrayāna path of preparation. In other words, the primary consciousness that realizes the relative is the same in all three paths because it is the prajñā that realizes identitylessness. This realization is then accompanied by different methods, such as the mental events listed above, and that is what determines the different realizations in the three vehicles.

The definition of the path of preparation that we have here is a general definition that covers all three vehicles. If you want to talk about a specific vehicle, then you have to add the mental events I explained above. Thus, for the Hīnayāna path of preparation definition, you have to add that it is accompanied by the mental event of renunciation, for the Mahāyāna path of preparation definition, you have to add that it is aided by the mental events of loving kindness, compassion, and

bodhichitta, and for the Vajrayāna path of preparation definition, you have to add that it is aided by the mental event of great bliss.

## IDENTIFYING ITS INSTANCES

The text says, “It is the prajñā that arises from mundane meditation.” The supreme knowledge that originates from mundane meditation is sometimes called the wisdom of heat. What is the function of the supreme knowledge that originates from meditation? It serves as the remedy to relinquish all the obscurations that prevent one from attaining the path of seeing. These obscurations are imputed obscurations. They have an imputed nature. Thus, the supreme knowledge that eliminates all imputed obscurations that prevent you from attaining the path of seeing is what exemplifies the path of preparation.

## CLASSIFICATION

The third point is the classification. The text says, “There are many classifications, such as in terms of its nature, that is, engagement through aspiration and so on. However, the arising of the heat of wisdom, the peak of the flux of roots of virtue, The attainment of the poised readiness for the profound, and the supreme of mundane dharmas are its four levels. During two of these, respectively, the five faculties and powers are cultivated.” The classifications made here are not classifications in terms of entity. It is not like when we classify form into visible form, sound, smell, taste, and so on. We are looking at the same thing in terms of the different functions the path of preparation performs. The different functions are given different names.

### *Classification Through Nature*

First is the classification through its nature, and it is fourfold: the level of engagement through aspiration, the contaminated path of familiarization, what is conducive to penetration, and the practice of engagement.

The contaminated path of familiarization is conceptual. It is not stable. That is why it is called contaminated. The term “contaminated” has two main meanings. It often refers to afflicted kleshas. But for the progressive stages of the path, it refers to whether concepts are involved or not, whether it is a conceptual or nonconceptual path. Here, “contaminated” simply means “with concepts,” and “uncontaminated” simply means “without concepts.” For example, in many cases, meditative equipoise is without concepts and the phase of subsequent attainment is with concepts.

### *Classification in Terms of Accumulation and Preparation*

The second classification is a bit funny. It looks at the four possibilities, *tönchik*, *musum*, *mushi*, and *gelwa*,<sup>4</sup> between the path of accumulation and the path of preparation, such as the phase that is both accumulation and preparation, the phase that is not accumulation but is preparation, and so on. The phase that is not accumulation but is preparation refers to when one directly engages in the analysis of objects, such as the four realities of the noble ones and the two identitylessnesses without engaging in the accumulation of merit beforehand. It does not necessarily depend on merit. You just engage in this kind of analysis.

<sup>4</sup> Tib. *don gcig*. “Synonymous” or “mutually inclusive.” Tib. *mu gsum*. “Three possibilities” or “three relationships,” one is a subset of the other. Tib. *mu bzhi*. “Four possibilities” or “four relationships,” two overlapping sets. Tib. *gal ba*. “Contradictory” or “mutually exclusive.”

Student: Is it still considered the path of preparation?

ALTG: It refers to someone who is on the path of preparation. That is the basic context. Within the context of someone who is on the path of preparation, this person directly engages in such an analysis. That is the phase of the path that does not involve accumulation but is directly preparation.

The text only mentions the first two possibilities, so you will have to think about the other possibilities, for example, the phase that is accumulation but not preparation.

#### *Classification in Terms of Lesser and Greater*

The next classification has three parts: the lesser, medium, and greater parts of preparation. During the lesser phase, there is no certainty about the time when the path of seeing will arise. In the medium phase, there is certainty about the time. The path of seeing will definitely arise in the mind-stream of that person, but in a later lifetime. The greater phase indicates that the path of seeing will arise in this lifetime.

Student: Does this classification correspond to the Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna?

ALTG: It is the same for each vehicle. There is also an extended classification of twelve aspects or phases in relation to the different vehicles. It is first classified into four vehicles: shravaka, pratyekabuddha, bodhisattva, and Vajrayāna. Then each vehicle is multiplied by three, the lesser, medium and greater, which makes twelve.

#### *Classification by Way of Realization*

There are many classifications, but the most common is the fourfold classification by way of realization, or in other words, through the progression of clear appearances. The four phases are: heat, peak, endurance, and supreme dharma. The text explains the four phases twice. First is the short explanation, and second is the detailed explanation.

To understand the four phases, one has to know what the term “clear appearance” or “vivid appearance” means. On the path of preparation, one does not realize ultimate reality directly in an immediate fashion; rather, one has a related vivid appearance in one’s mind. Again, for the vivid appearance related to ultimate reality, there are different degrees of vividness.

The vivid appearance related to ultimate reality does not appear on the path of accumulation. It starts on the path of preparation. That is what marks the beginning of the path of preparation, the first level of heat. That is why they say that when one attains the level of heat on the path of preparation, one has attained the small path of seeing. When one has such a vivid appearance, there is no conceptual thinking in which one mixes the term and the referent. That is absent in this phase and all the way through the path of preparation. From that point of view, it is nonconceptual. But from the level of actual nonconceptual wisdom, some residue or remainder of subtle conceptual flow in the experience still remains. Thus, from that point of view, it is still conceptual.

What is the object on the path of preparation? Generally speaking, it is all phenomena. Specifically, on the Hīnayāna path, it is the four realities of the noble ones. On the Mahāyāna path, it is all phenomena, including the four realities of the noble ones. What is the subject? What is it that realizes these objects? The subject is called individually self-aware wisdom. When individually self-aware

wisdom focuses on all phenomena, there are two stages of realization. Thus, the realization that all phenomena are empty or without nature has two categories: first, realizing that the apprehended aspect is empty or without nature, and second, realizing that the apprehending aspect is empty or without nature.

Student: Why is it called individually self-aware wisdom?

ALTG: The term “individual” refers to the point of actual realization that does not depend on any other condition except for one’s mind. Each individual has to realize what is going on in his or her mind. It is an individual case, so to speak. Everybody has to realize this for himself or herself. You cannot rely on any other conditions. In general, you rely on many different conditions, such as different means, techniques, practices, your guru’s instructions, and so on. But when it comes to actual realization, it happens in your individual mind, nowhere else. You have to do the job yourself.

That is one interpretation of “individual,” but you can also interpret it to mean that you realize each object individually and distinctly. They are not mixed with other objects. Each object is clearly and distinctly realized. The first interpretation is mainly emphasized in Madhyamaka and Dzogchen traditions.

#### **Phase of Heat**

The realization that the apprehended aspect is without nature is the level of heat. Why is it called heat? It is like when one rubs two sticks together to make fire. Before the fire springs forth, the two sticks get very warm. There is not a fire yet, but the sticks are hot, which is a sign that fire will come forth. In the same way, this phase is called heat because one is close to the actual blaze of wisdom appearing.

In general, for meditation, one usually starts out doing shamatha meditation, and on that basis, clarity of mind, or vivid, crisp awareness, evolves. Then you start vipashyanā meditation. When you practice vipashyanā meditation, there is a momentum of realization called clear appearance or vivid appearance. But it only starts when you have actually applied the vipashyanā aspect. It is based on and supported by the calm and clear mind you achieved in shamatha. That mind is the support for vipashyanā. Then when you do vipashyanā, what appears as experience is the vivid, clear appearance in your mind. An appearance of what? It is a clear appearance of emptiness or identitylessness. The heat phase of the path of preparation is when the clear appearance that the apprehended aspect is empty appears in your mind. The heat phase can be divided into three degrees of clear appearance: the lesser, medium, and greater phases of heat, depending on vividness of the appearance of the apprehended aspect without nature.

#### **Phase of Peak**

The second phase is called peak. The Sanskrit equivalent of peak is *mārdha*, which means “brief.” Thus, this path is something brief or a peak, since it does not remain for a long time.

Again, it is a matter of the degree of the clear appearance. Here, it increases and expands. The vividness of the appearance as it appears in the first phase of peak is still not clear. What you do in terms of meditation is the same as before. You start with shamatha. When you are finished with

that you again take the four realities of the noble ones as your object and focus on them with a subjective aspect of identitylessness, emptiness, and so on. Then you have the clear appearance that the apprehended aspect is without nature or empty, but it is more vivid than before.

One of the major signs that the peak phase has a more vivid quality of clear appearance than the heat phase is that not only does vivid appearance appear in meditation; it can even appear in your dreams. This indicates that it is stronger than before.

Student: Does one need pointing out instructions to have this experience?

ALTG: One has to differentiate the actual experience of what is pointed out in the instructions: whether one is having an actual experience of the contents, or whether one is just dreaming of someone giving pointing out instructions. If you have an actual experience of what is pointed out in your dreams, it is a sign that you are on the path of preparation. So it can happen, but not before the path of preparation. It is a matter of whether it is pointed out or not. Whether someone points it out, or even without pointing out, if you have an experience of pointing out instructions in your dreams, then in terms of your own experience, that is a clear sign. When the lama points something out and you do not get it, nothing will happen.

Student: That makes sense because earlier it was said that the person had to experience it for himself or herself, rather than from the power of the lama.

ALTG: Yes, that is what it means. If it appears in a dream, it is an actual experience that indicates you are on the path of preparation. A direct realization of the nature of mind, not just an experience, would indicate the path of seeing.

Student: I thought that pointing out instructions was under the power of the lama and did not have anything to do with one's realization.

ALTG: Whatever the lama does, whatever pointing out techniques he or she uses, they are just methods. The actual realization still has to happen in your own mind. You have to realize it yourself. You have to point out your own mind to yourself. Whatever the lama does, whether it is different arrangements, the environment, the blessing of the lama, or any other condition, it provides the setting for your experience, but the pointing out actually happens in your own mind. Your own mind has to recognize itself. That is why one has to meditate on and cultivate the experience. When you have received actual pointing out instructions, and you realize what was pointed out in your own mind, it is normal not to be able to always reproduce or sustain the experience. Sustaining the insight of what was pointed out is meditation.

A lot can be said about pointing out instructions. It depends on the connection between the disciple and the teacher. If certain conditions come together, it can even happen that you attain the path of seeing, not just the path of preparation, but a direct realization of the nature of mind. For a person with the sharpest faculties, it can happen that realization and liberation is simultaneous. Then you're through. You do not have to go through any paths. You sustain the experience. But pointing out also develops in degrees. The first degree is simultaneously having realization and liberation. The second degree is the path of seeing, and you still have to go through meditation and

completion. The lesser degree is a very vivid appearance in response to the path of preparation. King Indrabhūti was a person with the sharpest faculties, and when he received instructions, he attained realization and liberation on the spot. Someone who realizes without seeing, like Tilopa, does not attain realization and liberation at the same time and has to go through the paths. When someone receives pointing out instructions and has an experience that is not the direct seeing of the nature of mind but is a vivid experience that is inferential and uncertain, this corresponds to the path of preparation.

The last type of pointing out instructions is like a show, you could say. There is something happening, like a blessing or a ceremony where you bring conditions together and supplicate the lama, and you receive a blessing from the lineage, but it is not like other three experiences of pointing out. Most pointing out instructions given these days are the last type, because nobody achieves the path of seeing or attains realization and liberation on the spot. You receive a blessing, and you have some kind of experience, but that does not mean you are on the path of preparation or the path of seeing. It is more like you are seeking the blessing of the lineage. Maybe you are on the path of accumulation, but that would have to be examined.

When we were on retreat, we anxiously waited for pointing out instructions. When would we get pointing out instructions? But it is not important to get pointing out instructions. It is more important to go through the proper preparations for pointing out instructions. If you do not properly prepare, however many pointing out instructions you receive, nothing will happen. Everything will be the same as before. However, if one has accumulated the proper conditions and made the auspicious connection for receiving pointing out instructions, it will come naturally. It will be easy for the lama to bestow it because it will be right to give it, and it will be successful. But if the conditions I described are not present, it will be difficult. There are many kinds of pointing out instructions. It is not restricted to a few methods. There are different methods or situations how it can happen. It all depends on proper preparation. In fact, everything we do here falls under the category making proper preparations for pointing out instructions. Studying is good preparation, and it accumulates merit. Other preparations are meditating and accumulating wisdom and making a connection with a lama. All this is the proper preparation for receiving actual pointing out instructions.

When one is ready to receive pointing out instructions, there is no certainty of how that will happen, when that will happen, where that will happen, or what the method will be. We can look at the stories of the past siddhas, and it is obvious that it is not certain. There many possibilities of how, where, and when.

Student: You said that you could receive pointing out instructions and attain the path of seeing but not the path of liberation. I thought the path of seeing was liberation because you were free from samsāra, and liberation meant that you did not have to come back to samsāra.

ALTG: In this case, it does not only mean liberation from samsāra. When liberation and realization occur simultaneously, it refers to nonabiding nirvāṇa.

### **Phase of Endurance**

The third phase of the path of preparation is endurance. Again, the clear appearance that outer objects are without nature or empty increases even more. There are, again, three degrees of clear appearance, the lesser, medium, and great phases of endurance. It is called endurance because at this point one does not fear emptiness or identitylessness. Rather, one is joyful at the experience of the vivid appearance of emptiness. During the heat and peak phases, there is still a slight uneasiness or fear of the clear, vivid appearance of emptiness. But at this point, one is unswaying, so there is no fear.

It might be difficult to study emptiness and go through all the reasonings and so on, but when you come across the vivid appearance of emptiness in meditation, you will not be utterly shocked. You will be somewhat prepared. If you do not study emptiness and all the reasonings, and you have an experience of emptiness come up in meditation, you will likely be in utter shock because you are unprepared and it is so intense.

### **Phase of Supreme Dharma**

The fourth phase is supreme dharma. In this phase, one not only has the most vivid appearance of the apprehended object without nature, but one has the vivid appearance of the apprehender without nature. Why is it called supreme dharma? Because it is the supreme dharma or empowering condition that brings you as close as possible to the path of seeing. Strictly speaking, the path of seeing does not have a congruent cause. Instead, the last phase of the path of preparation functions as the dominant condition for the attainment of the path seeing. It is beneficial for that attainment. Still, it is not a valid realization. It is just a very clear appearance.

## **DETERMINING ITS NATURE**

The text says, "It has the distinctive features of that in which it arises, on which it relies, and what it focuses on." So determining the nature of the path of preparation has three parts: the psychophysical supports in which it arises, the bhūmis on which it relies, and the object on which it focuses.

### ***Psychophysical Supports in Which It Arises***

As with the first path, the path of preparation can only arise in men and women in three of the four continents, and, of course, the poor hermaphrodites are excluded again. It can also arise in the six types of gods of the desire realm. In general, in the continuum of such beings, whether gods or humans, the arising of the path of accumulation has to precede the arising of the path of preparation. Naturally, without the arising of the path of accumulation, the path of preparation cannot arise.

When a being has given rise to the path of accumulation in a former life, a human body is given. However, it is possible that the path of preparation can arise in that being even if the rebirth is in nāga form. It is said that the path of preparation can even arise in some animals, such as nāgas. In general, the supports of body and mind in which the path of preparation can arise are pretty much the same as for the path of accumulation, but there are a few exceptions, such as the nāgas. It is said that the path of accumulation cannot arise in a nāga, but if that nāga was a human being in a

former life who had developed the path of accumulation, then it is possible that the path of preparation can arise in that nāga.

#### *Grounds on Which It Relies*

As with the path of accumulation, the path of preparation relies on the six grounds of meditative stability. The six grounds of meditative stability refer to shamatha meditation. There are different grounds or supports for developing calm abiding. Why are there six grounds? The differences lie in whether there are more or less subtle reference points or more or less subtle objects of focus. For example, the first ground is the effective preparatory stage of the first meditative stability. Then there is ordinary main part and the special main part. All three phases belong to the first samādhi.

During the first samādhi of the form realm, one still has a certain form of mental examination and analysis going on in one's mind, and this is said to be like fire. When one reaches the second samādhi, examination, which is considered to be a coarse mental event, is relinquished. Analysis is left, as well as the mental events of joy and bliss. The example given for this is water. When one reaches the third samādhi, one relinquishes analysis, and joy and bliss are left. When one reaches the fourth samādhi, joy is relinquished, which is relatively coarser than bliss, and bliss is left. Thus, the different mental events or reference points in the four samādhis are extinguished here.

Student: You mentioned that these meditative samādhis are shamatha practices, but if they have factors of examination and analysis, wouldn't they be vipashyanā?

ALTG: There is a gradual progression to the completion of shamatha meditation. Full completion, which can only be reached after these stages, is the one-pointed mind of the desire realm. Everything before that is shamatha meditation because of its nature, but it is not fully accomplished. It is said that this shamatha meditation focuses on specific objects, such as the five skandhas, the twelve āyatanas, and the eighteen dhātus. One goes through them one by one. There is an object and a degree of examination and analysis involved, but not a subtle type. In the stages of meditation by Kamalashila, this type of meditation is called the shamatha meditation of scholars.

In the Mahāyāna tradition, it is said that one does not have to go through all six grounds to develop the path of preparation. One can just take any of the six as a basis for training in calm abiding. Once one has developed the one-pointed mind of the desire realm, which is the full completion of shamatha meditation, one can then take that as the ground for the actual path of preparation.

The point is that when you develop shamatha meditation, which is what is meant here by "the grounds on which it relies," it is the path of preparation, and it specifically refers to the union of shamatha and vipashyanā meditation. For it to be the path of preparation, it must have the aspect of vipashyanā meditation that analyzes the true nature of phenomena. It is not ever said to be the direct realization of the true nature phenomena. One still analyzes it in a conceptual way that is in accordance with the true nature of phenomena. The union of calm abiding developed on the basis of one of the six stages of meditative stability and the vipashyanā that realizes identitylessness is the actual path of preparation.

Student: If I understand this correctly, the six stages of meditative stability are the preparation for the path of preparation, and when that shamatha is joined with the vipashyanā that examines the apprehended and apprehender, it is the actual path of preparation.

ALTG: The six grounds are not really a preparation. Rather, they are the support or foundation upon which you develop vipashyanā. You have to have the proper mental support of calm abiding to cultivate vipashyanā meditation. In principle, it is possible for vipashyanā to arise in people on the path of preparation who have not had stable shamatha meditation. However, to enhance or stabilize it, at least one of the six grounds are needed. The six grounds of meditative stability are not a cause for the path of preparation, or something that precedes it, and they are not a cause for the arising of vipashyanā in terms of cause and effect. Rather, they are the support for one to abide in the path of preparation.

In principle, there are two possibilities. The majority of people first cultivate shamatha meditation and then develop vipashyanā meditation on that basis. First you practice calm abiding, then you develop vipashyanā on that basis, and then, in the context of the path of preparation, your actual practice is the union of calm abiding and vipashyanā. But there are other people in the minority for whom vipashyanā first arises in their minds due to various conditions, such as a special accumulation of merit. On the basis of that vipashyanā, they have to develop a stable state of shamatha and cultivate the union of shamatha and vipashyanā. The first one is called vipashyanā that is preceded by shamatha, and the second one is called shamatha that is endowed with vipashyanā.

### *Objects on Which It Focuses*

The Sūtra Followers<sup>5</sup> say that during the three phases of heat, peak, and endurance, one focuses on “that the apprehended is without nature.” During the phase of supreme dharma, one focuses on “that the appprehender is without nature.” Thus, the type of vipashyanā practiced on this path of preparation is called discriminating awareness or discriminating knowledge. What does this discriminating knowledge analyze? It analyzes identitylessness. There are two aspects to identitylessness: the identitylessness of the apprehended and the identitylessness of the appprehender. On the first three phases of the path of preparation, one mainly focuses on the apprehended and realizes that it is without nature or empty. On the fourth phase of supreme dharma, one also focuses on the appprehender being without nature.

Sometimes one also distinguishes between coarse identitylessness and subtle identitylessness. Coarse identitylessness is the emptiness of the apprehended, and subtle identitylessness is the emptiness of the appprehender. During the first three phases, one focuses on coarse identitylessness of the apprehended, and during the fourth phase of supreme dharma, one focuses on the identitylessness of the appprehender. As was said before, the realization that the apprehended is without nature is not a direct, nonconceptual realization. There is a clear appearance that accords with such a direct realization. Again, this can be divided into degrees: a lesser degree, a medium degree, and a greater degree.

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<sup>5</sup> The Sautrāntikas.

### *Other Assertions*

Some followers of the great vehicle assert something slightly different. They say that the realization that the apprehender and apprehended are without nature is divided differently among the four phases of the path of preparation. They say that during the first two phases of heat and peak, one realizes that the apprehended is without nature, and during the third and fourth phases of endurance and supreme dharma, one realizes that the apprehender is without nature. The realization that the apprehended is without nature refers only to the class called thoroughly afflicted phenomena,” which is another term for *samsara*, and this is the phase of heat. During the phase of heat, one realizes that all the apprehended aspects within *samsara* are without nature. During the phase of peak, one realizes that the apprehended aspects within the class of completely purified phenomena are without nature. The term “completely purified phenomena” refers to *nirvana*. In brief, during heat and peak, one realizes that the apprehended aspects within *samsara* and *nirvana* are without nature. The same twofold classification applies to the third and fourth phases, but in relation to the apprehender.

The third and fourth phases of endurance and supreme dharma refer to the realization that the apprehender is without nature, but their focus is slightly different. Endurance is the realization that the apprehender which involves the support of the substantially existent person is without nature. The focus here is on the notion of seeing the substantially existent person as empty or as nonexistent. In that sense, the apprehender does not exist. During supreme dharma, one focuses on the notion of an imputedly existent individual and realizes that an apprehender does not exist in that sense.

## FEATURES OF RELINQUISHMENT & REALIZATION

We have seen that the actual nature of the path of preparation is discriminating wisdom or awareness. This point explains what is relinquished by discriminating wisdom and what is realized by it. In brief, the two types of obscurations are relinquished, and the two types of identitylessness are realized.

### *What Is Relinquished*

The two obscurations are the afflictive and cognitive obscurations. The afflictive obscuration is any type of clinging to real existence, and the cognitive obscuration is any type of clinging to characteristics. There are two types of afflictive obscurations, or two types of clinging to real existence. We can cling to the real existence of the apprehended, or we can cling to the real existence of the apprehender. That is what is relinquished here.

Clinging to the real existence of the apprehended has two parts: clinging to the real existence of the apprehended in *samsara* and clinging to the real existence of the apprehended in *nirvana*. Each of these has two divisions. They can be imputed or they can be innate. For imputed obscurations, there are coarse imputed obscurations and subtle imputed obscurations. What is relinquished on the path of preparation is the coarse form of imputed afflictive obscurations.

Clinging to the real existence of the apprehender has two parts: one with respect to the substantially existing person and one with respect to the imputably existent person. These divisions also

have imputed aspects and innate aspects. The imputed aspects have coarse and subtle aspects. From among these, the coarse aspects of the imputed afflictive obscuration with respect to the apprehender are relinquished on the path of preparation.

In brief, from among the afflictive obscurations, in both cases with respect to apprehended and apprehender, the coarse imputed portion is relinquished. Here, “relinquished” does not mean they are completely eliminated; rather, it means they are suppressed or undermined.

**Student:** What is the difference between the coarse and subtle divisions?

**ALTG:** In general, they refer to those that are easier to relinquish and those that are more difficult to relinquish.

In summary, if we go through the tree, the basis for division is afflictive obscurations. So afflictive obscurations are on the top of the tree. This is divided into two: conceptions about the apprehended and conceptions about the appprehender. Then conceptions about the apprehended is divided into two: conceptions about the apprehended in samsāra and conceptions about the apprehended in nirvāṇa. Each of these divisions has an imputed portion and an innate portion. Then there are coarse and subtle imputed and innate portions. On the other side of the tree, conceptions about the appprehender has a twofold classification: substantially existent persons and imputably existent individuals. The rest is the same as on the other side. Each one has imputed and innate aspects, and each of those has coarse and subtle aspects. You can, of course, extend it onto the path of seeing, and then further extend it onto the path of familiarization.

### ***What Is Realized***

In general, the two identitylessnesses are realized, but it is different for each of the three vehicles.

The hearers realize personal identitylessness. Through the first two phases of heat and peak, the hearers realize that the apprehended aspect is without nature, and through the third and fourth phases of endurance and supreme dharma, they realize the apprehending aspect is without nature. Both realizations are in terms of personal identity only.

Through heat and peak, solitary realizers realize that the apprehended aspects of personal identity and phenomenal identity are without nature. Through endurance and supreme dharma, they realize that the apprehending aspects of personal identity and phenomenal identity are without nature. So they realize the emptiness of the apprehended and apprehending aspects of both identities, personal and phenomenal.

Bodhisattvas, at least as it is presented here, seem to be the same as solitary realizers. Through heat and peak, they realize that the apprehended aspects of personal identity and phenomenal identity are without nature, and through endurance and supreme dharma, they realize that the apprehending aspects of personal identity and phenomenal identity are without nature. This is the position of some followers of the great vehicle.

However, in the Prāsaṅgika tradition, or the tradition of Nāgārjuna, there is no difference in the realization of identitylessness on the path of preparation. In other words, hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas all have the same objects of focus, which are the four realities, or in other words,

the two types of identitylessness. During the four phases of the path of preparation, there is a clear appearance of identitylessness, and so the difference is the degree of clarity. Thus, in the tradition of Nāgārjuna, there is no difference with respect to the divisions of the apprehended and apprehending aspects.

All other Buddhist traditions, at least in the Mahāyāna, except for the Prāsaṅgikas, say the difference between the realizations of hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas is as follows: First, hearers only realize personal identitylessness. In other words, they realize that the apprehended and apprehending aspects in terms of personal identitylessness are empty. They fully realize personal identitylessness. Second, solitary realizers fully realize personal identitylessness and half of phenomenal identitylessness. In terms of personal identitylessness, they realize that the apprehended and apprehending aspects are empty. But in terms of phenomenal identitylessness, they only realize that the apprehended aspect is empty. That is why it is said the solitary realizers realize one and a half of the two identitylessnesses. Third, bodhisattvas fully realize both aspects of apprehender and apprehended for both identitylessnesses.

The conceptions that the apprehender and apprehended are without nature are related to the two types of identitylessness, not just to one of them. Both identitylessnesses have an apprehended and apprehending aspect without nature. Some people present it a little differently. They say that the apprehended aspect without nature is the same as personal identitylessness and the apprehending aspect without nature is phenomenal identitylessness. But this is wrong. You have to link them to both identitylessnesses. The apprehending and apprehended aspects also apply to the two obscurations, the afflictive and cognitive obscurations. Each one has an apprehending aspect and an apprehended aspect.

It is different in Nāgārjuna's tradition because he says that the realization of the three types of noble ones, the hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas, is the same. The only difference is in how clearly the realization subjectively appears to the three types of beings. Why is there no difference in what is realized? It is said that the actual true reality is just one. Ultimate reality is always ultimate reality, and the shrāvakas, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas all realize ultimate reality. The difference is in how clearly it is realized. Therefore, the stages of the paths and bhūmis in the Prāsaṅgika system are not presented from the point of view of the different things to be realized on the paths and bhūmis. They are presented in terms of how clear or not clear ultimate reality subjectively appears to different practitioners. There is a quotation from the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* that serves as a support for this point. It says:

Also those who train in the path of the hearers should train in this perfection of supreme knowledge.

This is explained in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* when Chandrakīrti says that the realization of the two types of noble beings is one and the same.

Student: In Chandrakīrti's presentation, is it correct that the realization of identitylessness by the pratyekabuddhas is superior to that of the bodhisattvas until they reach the eighth bhūmi?

ALTG: You cannot say that the realization of the pratyekabuddhas is better than the realization of the bodhisattvas, but it is temporarily more powerful. It is said that realization of the

pratyekabuddha and the realization of a bodhisattva on the first bhūmi is not different in terms of the way that object is realized. The difference lies in how familiar they are with the object, and pratyekabuddhas are more familiar with the object at this point, since they have practiced more meditation on it.

Student: Instead of saying that true reality is one, don't you have to say that it's not two?

ALTG: Of course, we have to go beyond all notions of ultimate reality being one or many. However, since the notion of being a single unit is very strong on the relative level, we have to work with things being a single unit on the relative level. But when that is counteracted, then we have the idea that ultimate reality is manifold. To counteract the clinging to ultimate reality as being many or a variety, it is said that ultimate reality is single or one. But that is only said to counteract this type of misconception. In fact, all things, including ultimate reality, are beyond being one and many. From each side of the two realities, when we say that everything is beyond being one and many, it means that ultimate reality is beyond being many and relative reality is beyond being one. When it is said that a single phenomenon like this glass is beyond being one and many, from the perspective of the two realities, the glass is beyond one and many because it is beyond an ultimate multiplicity, and it is beyond a relative singularity.

## STATING ITS QUALITIES

In general, there are many different qualities. The text says, "It is endowed with the qualities of not being severed, not falling, and so on." The main quality is that the path of preparation, as its name says, joins one to the supramundane path of seeing. As for specific qualities, it says here that the continuum of virtue or quality of actions is not cut off once one is on the path of preparation. As soon as one has attained the level of endurance, the third phase of the path of preparation, one cannot fall back into the lower realms.

## ITS FUNCTION

The text says, "It relinquishes clinging to identity and generates the realization of the first bhūmi." The prajñā that one cultivates on the path of preparation is called the fourfold partial concordance with the definite distinction. It is called partial concordance because it is in partial concordance with the actual realization on the path of seeing, which is a nonconceptual, direct realization of ultimate reality. It has not yet happened on the path of preparation; it is in partial concordance with it. In that way, it is the dominant condition for the realization on the path of seeing, the direct realization of ultimate reality.

What is relinquished on the path of preparation is the fourfold mistakenness of clinging to personal and phenomenal identities. Why is it fourfold? It again refers to the apprehended and appre-hender for each of the two identities: the apprehended aspect with regard to personal identity and phenomenal identity, and the apprehending aspect with regard to personal identity and phenomenal identity.

The term “fourfold mistakenness” usually refers to something different, seeing impermanent things as permanent, seeing suffering as happiness, and so on, but here, it is the apprehending and apprehended aspects of the two identities.

### TEACHING ITS HERMENEUTICAL ETYMOLOGY

The text says, “The hermeneutical etymologies are what is conducive to penetration, engagement through aspiration, and preparing for the direct realization of the ultimate.” The first name is “what is conducive to penetration.” Penetration—also sometimes called definite differentiation—is nothing but another name for the path of seeing, and the path of preparation is what is conducive to the path of seeing. This is not the actual realization of true reality that is penetration, but it precedes that realization and is concordant with that realization.

The second name is “engagement through aspiration” or “engagement through devoted interest.” This means that one does not have the direct realization of ultimate reality yet, but one engages on the path through aspiration. Through the power of aspiration, one engages in enduring the nature of phenomena. Since one does not have the direct realization of the nature of phenomena, one needs a lot of endurance and patience to engage the path and get used to the real nature of phenomena. In a general sense, the name “engagement through devoted interest” refers to the path of accumulation and the path of preparation. One could say that the path of accumulation also complies with the principle of engaging through devoted interest and not through direct realization. In that sense, this name is a general term for the first two paths. One could say that the paths of preparation and accumulation are not *gelwa*, in case you want to debate this point.

The last name is “path of preparation” or “preparing for direct realization of the ultimate.” It is called the path of preparation because the supreme knowledge that originates from mundane meditation joins one to the first supramundane ground, the path of seeing, which is the direct realization of the ultimate expanse of dharmas. Since this happens on this path, it is called the path of preparation.▲

# The Treasury of Knowledge

*Book Seven and Book Eight, Parts One and Two*

## Foundations of Buddhist Study and Practice

*The Higher Trainings in Sublime Intelligence  
and Meditative Absorption*

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé

KALU RINPOCHÉ TRANSLATION GROUP  
under the direction of Khenpo Lodrö Dönyö Rinpoché

This volume translated, introduced, and annotated  
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## PART 2. MEDITATION IN THE CAUSE-BASED DIALECTICAL APPROACH

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## Part 2. Meditation in the Cause-Based Dialectical Approach

The second part, a presentation of the specific stages of meditation in the cause-based dialectical approach, is twofold: an explanation of the preliminaries to meditation and a presentation of the actual process of meditation.

### Preliminaries to Meditation [I]

The source verses state:

As preliminaries to meditation, one observes discipline and develops sublime intelligence, is capable of both mental and physical isolation, rejects the eight concerns, maintains the twelve disciplines of spiritual training, and abandons the five kinds of wrong lifestyle. . . .

In the context of meditation, there are five indispensable factors that are the preliminaries at the outset, serving as the foundation, or root, of all meditation. One engages in meditation through the following:

(1) the underlying basis, which is the observance of discipline and development of the three kinds of sublime intelligence;<sup>751</sup>  
 (2) the circumstance that promotes meditation, which is the fact that one is capable of both physical and mental isolation;<sup>752</sup>  
 (3) the eschewing of counterproductive circumstances, that is, the eight mundane concerns;<sup>753</sup>

(4) the supportive circumstances, that is, the twelve disciplines one maintains in one's spiritual training; and  
 (5) the circumstance of a pure lifestyle, that is, the complete abandonment of the five kinds of wrong lifestyle.

(1) As to the first of these preliminaries, one observes any of the seven kinds of ordination for individual liberation,<sup>754</sup> [3,18ob] thus avoiding all manner of harmful actions of body, speech, and mind. Following that, one hears teachings by listening to scriptures that accord with the actual realization of what is true. One uses reasoning to thoroughly investigate the meaning of what one has heard, developing the sublime intelligence that derives from contemplation (which is to say, the correct functioning of the thinking process). In this way, one proceeds to apply oneself to meditation

by focusing one's attention one-pointedly on the meaning of what one has contemplated.

One might wonder, “What is sublime intelligence that derives from hearing teachings, contemplating, and meditating?” The Particularist school holds that the sublime intelligence that derives from hearing teachings has only the words as its objects; that which derives from contemplation has both the words and their meaning as its objects; and that which derives from meditation has only the meaning as its object. But Vasubandhu points out that a single state of sublime intelligence cannot focus on both the words and the meaning at once; thus, while that which derives from hearing teachings constitutes the aspect of sublime intelligence that focuses on the words and that which derives from meditation constitutes the aspect that focuses on the meaning, it is impossible for there to be sublime intelligence deriving from contemplation that focuses on both the words and the meaning at the same time.<sup>755</sup>

Therefore, it is logical that hearing teachings involves listening to authoritative and reliable scriptural sources; sublime intelligence that derives from contemplation constitutes that which comes from using reasoning to arrive at a definitive conclusion concerning the meaning of what one has heard; and sublime intelligence that derives from meditation constitutes that which comes from meditating one-pointedly on the meaning of what one has contemplated. Therefore, these are aspects of sublime intelligence that involve, respectively, gaining certainty concerning the meaning on the basis simply of the language employed; gaining this on the basis of lines of reasoning; and gaining this certainty concerning the meaning on the strength of meditation, without relying on language or concepts.

(2) One might wonder, “What is the working basis on which these aspects of sublime intelligence that derive from hearing teachings, contemplating, and meditating can be developed?” In order for these aspects of a deep immersion in spiritual practice to develop, people, whether they are lay or monastic practitioners, must physically distance themselves from the busyness of societal ties and mentally distance themselves from inappropriate trains of thought and other distractions. But for those who are not content with monastic robes and the simple fare obtained through begging, [3,181a] and who are very covetous, desiring fine things and many possessions, these aspects of deep immersion in the spiritual path—deriving from hearing teachings, contemplating, and meditating—will not develop.

(3) Given that the path of a spiritually advanced being will not develop

for someone who is caught up in the eight mundane concerns, one should eschew these concerns in order to promote access to that path. As one reads in *Letter to a Friend*:

You who are wise in the ways of the world, the eight mundane concerns  
are those called gain and loss, pleasure and pain,  
fame and notoriety, and praise and blame.

Please treat these as equally unworthy objects of your attention.<sup>756</sup>

concerns

are those called gain and loss, pleasure and pain,  
fame and notoriety, and praise and blame.

Please treat these as equally unworthy objects of your attention.<sup>756</sup>

#### (4) Of these disciplines:

(a) Three are remedies to attachment to food:

(i) living on alms (that is, keeping only enough food for one day and not hoarding any extra);

(ii) eating at one sitting (that is, having sat down to eat, eating one's fill without eating anything further once having arisen from one's seat); and  
(iii) not eating after midday (that is, having first eaten one's fill of what food has been given one, not eating later even if more should be given).

(b) Three are remedies to attachment to clothing:

(iv) wearing only the three monastic robes (that is, wearing only the three garments of vest, skirt, and shawl and not hoarding anything extra);  
(v) wearing only coarse wool (that is, wearing only robes fashioned entirely from rough wool); and

(vi) wearing inferior clothing (that is, wearing older clothing, not newer clothing that is less than a year old, and wearing robes made from inferior cloth discarded by others).

(c) Four of these disciplines are remedies to an attachment to a dwelling place:

(vii) living in solitude (that is, building oneself a hut out of earshot from the nearest village and not staying in any other dwelling, whether in a community or a temple);  
(viii) frequenting charnel grounds (that is, staying in charnel grounds and using shrouds for clothing and living solely off the food offered to the dead); [3,18(b)]

(ix) dwelling in the forest (that is, living at the foot of a tree in a solitary place); and  
(x) living without a roof over one's head (that is, living in a simple hut without any more permanent structure protecting one).

(d) Two of these disciplines are remedies to an attachment to a comfortable bed:

(xi) making do with whatever bed is available (that is, refraining from fashioning one's sleeping quarters over and over); and

(xii) sleeping sitting up (that is, passing the night in an upright position).

(5) As is said in a sūtra:

It is difficult for householders to train in the view  
when they always have so many opinions;  
it is difficult to maintain a spiritual practice  
when one is dependent on other lifestyles.<sup>757</sup>

This means that, for those who have taken monastic ordination, there is the danger of them adopting five kinds of wrong lifestyle, and so they should take care and avoid these. The five are lifestyles that involve the following:

(a) ingratiation (that is, speaking sweetly to others in order later to receive gain and honors);  
(b) flattery (that is, praising something owned by another because one wishes to obtain it);  
(c) self-promotion (that is, speaking of one's qualities in order to advance one's own interests);  
(d) profiteering (that is, using one's gain to seek further gain by boasting about one's previous gains or giving a little to receive a lot in return); and  
(e) hypocrisy (that is, pretending to control one's senses and be restrained in order to receive gain and honors).

In addition, engaging in agriculture, trading, or the selling of religious articles and texts are wrong kinds of lifestyle that incur a heavy burden.<sup>758</sup> Thus, if one pursues them, the manifest states of realization associated with the spiritual path that have not arisen in one will not arise, while those that may have arisen will swiftly fade. So avoid these lifestyles completely and adopt a lifestyle that is completely pure.

#### Actual Process of Meditation [II]

A discussion of the actual process of meditation is twofold: the stages of meditation in the Hīnayāna approaches of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, and the stages of meditation in the Mahāyāna approach of the transcendent perfections.

### Hīnayāna Approaches [A]

This discussion is also twofold: the stages of meditation in the śrāvaka approach and the stages of meditation in the pratyekabuddha approach.

#### Śrāvaka Approach [1]

This discussion involves two topics—a brief discussion continuing from the preceding remarks and an extensive explanation of the significance of these stages.

##### Brief Discussion [a]

The source verses state:

...then, the process of meditation  
consists of seven stages for those who follow the śrāvaka  
schools.  
These are subsumed within five points—focus, content,  
essence, result, and context.

The first of the successive discussions of the process of meditation in the more common and extraordinary approaches [3.182a] concerns those who follow the śrāvaka schools. They meditate on the first four paths<sup>759</sup> in seven stages. According to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*:

The seven stages, in order, are thoroughly analyzed as follows:  
those of beginning practitioners,  
those of the phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough,  
that of meditation, and that of seeing.<sup>760</sup>

That is to say: on the path of accumulation, (1) in the initial phase, one cultivates the four applications of mindfulness; (2) in the intermediate phase, one cultivates the four aspects of authentic renunciation; (3) and in the final phase, one cultivates the four bases of supernormal powers. On the path of linkage, (4) during the anticipatory phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience, one cultivates the five governing powers; (5) during the phases of patient acceptance and the highest state of mundane

experience, one cultivates the five strengths. (6) On the path of seeing, one cultivates the seven aids to enlightenment. (7) On the path of meditation, one cultivates the eightfold path of spiritually advanced beings.<sup>761</sup>

All of these stages should be understood to be subsumed within five points—(A) the scope of one's focus, (B) the content (or process of meditation involved), (C) the essence, (D) the result, and (E) the context that delineates when one engages in the respective meditations.<sup>762</sup>

##### Extensive Explanation [b]

This explanation is fourfold: the stages of meditation for beginning practitioners, in the four anticipatory phases, on the path of seeing, and on the path of meditation.

##### Beginning Practitioners [i]

The source verses state:

Those who are beginners meditate on the general and specific  
remedies to desire  
(that is, skeletons and the eight mental images); they examine  
their bodies;  
they see sensations to be productive of suffering and without any  
true substance, like hollow reeds;  
they focus their attention on the breath, and they meditate  
on the ultimate fact that no identity exists;  
and they see mental states and aspects of consciousness to be  
like illusions.

For beginning practitioners in the śrāvaka approach:

(A) The *scope of their focus* is that of meditation that focuses on four top-  
ics: the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena. In this regard, as the gen-  
eral remedy for desire, they meditate on their own and others' bodies—and,  
in fact, all sensory appearances—as being skeletons, and thus neutralize  
their desire. As the *Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

skeletons in all situations that involve attachment.<sup>763</sup>

As specific remedies, they meditate on eight mental images, such as a decomposing corpse, a swollen corpse, a maggott-ridden corpse, and so forth.<sup>764</sup> [3.182b] Once they are free of desire, from time to time they use the application of mindfulness that scrutinizes the body to meditate on their bodies as being, for example, like hollow reeds.

They next meditate on the idea that regards sensations—whether pleasurable, painful, or neutral—as being productive of suffering, and the idea that these are like hollow reeds, without any real substance.

Then these practitioners calm their thought processes by focusing their attention on the coming and going of the breath; and while the usual flow of thoughts in the mind constitutes the relative level of truth, when they examine this, the ultimate level of truth lies, for these śrāvaka practitioners, in indivisible moments of consciousness,<sup>765</sup> and so within that context they meditate on the fact that nothing has identity.

Next, they meditate on everything subsumed within the categories of mental states and aspects of consciousness—everything that seems to embody something either internally or externally—to determine that the nature of all of these is such that they have no true identity, are impermanent, are like illusions, and forth.

“Why,” one might ask, “do they take these topics as their focus?” It is in order to undermine the following concepts in the minds of those whose thinking is erroneous: that the body is the actual abode of the personal self; that sensations are the basis for the self’s experiences; that the mind is the actual self; and that phenomena are the basis for the self’s experience of either deeply ingrained afflictive states of mind or the totally refined state of enlightenment.

In this regard, there are three aspects to what constitutes one’s “body”: the inner aspect, the outer aspect, and the aspect that partakes of both. The first aspect consists of the eyes and other corporeal sense organs that are the internal components of one’s perceptual field. The second aspect consists of visual forms and other tangible sense objects that are the external components of one’s perceptual field. The third aspect consists of the bases for one’s own sense organs and the corporeal sense organs of others, for causes and perceptual fields interact in a way that effects change in both.

Each of the remaining three topics<sup>766</sup> also has three aspects; one can understand these through consideration of the bases and the scopes of focus that apply in their respective cases.

The term “phenomena” here includes all mental events other than sen-

sations, as well as distinct formative factors<sup>767</sup> and forms that fall within the sense field of one’s subjective consciousness,<sup>768</sup> as well as unconditioned phenomena.<sup>769</sup> [3.183a]

The source verses state:

They employ the applications of mindfulness, using sublime intelligence to examine the fourfold characteristics that are specific and general.

They engage the Four Truths, cultivating the initial phase of the path of accumulation.

This model serves for the remaining stages.

(B) As to the *content* of their meditation, they focus on the specific characteristics of the body and the other topics (what any given thing essentially is, of what elements it is composed, what derives from these elements, and so forth) and the general characteristics of things (that they are impermanent, productive of suffering, empty, without true identity, and so forth). Alternatively, they focus on four topics: that the body is unclean, that sensations produce suffering, that the mind is impermanent, and that phenomena have no true identity.

(C) In its *essence* this meditation brings an understanding due to one’s sublime intelligence (which discerns both the general and specific characteristics of the body and the other topics) and one’s mindfulness (which ensures one does not forget the scope on which one is focusing or the content). The term “application of mindfulness” is used because one thus considers the general and specific characteristics with sublime intelligence, while mindfulness keeps one’s mind directed again and again toward its focus.

(D) The *result* (or alternatively, the purpose) of this meditation is that of causing one to come to terms with the Four Truths. The first topic<sup>770</sup> causes one to come to terms with the truth of suffering because through precise analysis one gains a thorough appreciation of the body as a subliminal state of suffering that perpetuates ignoble states of existence. The second topic<sup>771</sup> causes one to come to terms with the truth of the all-pervasive origin of suffering because one realizes that the primary factor in this all-pervasive origin—compulsion<sup>772</sup>—is the cause and condition for the three kinds of sensations (pleasurable and so forth), and so one wishes to eliminate that factor. The third topic<sup>773</sup> causes one to come to terms with the truth of the

cessation of suffering because one determines that consciousness (which is devoid of personal identity) disintegrates moment by moment, and so one wishes to make that cessation fully evident, for there is no fear of any “self” being annihilated with the attainment of nirvāna. The fourth topic<sup>74</sup> causes one to come to terms with the truth of the spiritual path [3.183b] because one determines that afflictive states (such as attachment) are factors to be eliminated, while aspects of the totally refined state of enlightenment (such as faith) are factors to be relied upon, and so one wishes to follow the path. This is what is meant in *Distinguishing Center and Limit*:

Because of the perpetuation of ignoble states, because of the causes of craving,  
because of the ground of being, and because of the absence of delusion,

one come to terms with the Four Truths, and so . . .<sup>75</sup>

(E) As to the *context* in which one engages in these meditations, it is during the initial phase of the path of accumulation when—having completed the process of hearing teachings and contemplating—one meditates on what is unattractive and follows the coming and going of the breath with mindfulness, thus rendering one’s mind flexible through the process of calm abiding and meditating in order to initiate the process of developing profound insight.

These five points just discussed serve as the model for the remaining sections in the explanation that follows.<sup>76</sup>

The source verses state:

Nonvirtue is prevented from arising or guarded against, while the opposite applies to virtue.

One employs meditative absorption that involves intention, exertion, attention, and investigation.

Once a state of meditative absorption has been achieved, one cultivates the four aspects of authentic renunciation.

(A) The *scope of one’s focus* includes those factors that are to be eliminated (that is, deeply ingrained afflictive states of mind), those factors to be encouraged (that is, aspects of the totally refined state of enlightenment)

that have already developed, and the development of those positive factors that have not yet developed.

(B) The *content* is that of ensuring that harmful, nonvirtuous factors that have not yet developed do not develop, while those that have developed are eliminated and their recurrence guarded against; and, in opposite fashion, of ensuring that virtuous factors that have not yet developed do develop, while those that have developed flourish. To these ends, one arouses one’s intention, brings exertion to bear, focuses one’s attention intently, and immerses oneself thoroughly in the process.

(C) These aspects, in their *essence*, constitute the diligence that ensures that factors to be eliminated decline, while the remedies to these factors gain in strength.

(D) The purpose, or *result*, of these aspects is that all factors to be eliminated decline without exception, and one avails oneself of all the remedies without exception.

(E) As for the *context* demarcating this process, one cultivates these aspects of authentic renunciation during the intermediate phase of the path of accumulation. This is due to the fact that, having meditated by relying in the appropriate manner on the topics for the application of mindfulness, [3.184a] one sees the flaw of those factors that are to be eliminated and the advantages of their remedies, and so arouses the diligence to begin making choices, rejecting the former and embracing the latter.

One might wonder why the term “aspect of authentic renunciation” is employed. It is because it signifies that these aspects eliminate all that is spiritually counterproductive.

Once these aspects are in place:

(A) The *scope of one’s focus* in cultivating the four bases of supernormal powers includes creating emanations and other powers of transformation that are achieved through meditative absorption. The process of meditation is described in *Distinguishing Center and Limit*:

This comes about due to the causes on which it depends—  
eliminating five flaws and using eight remedial techniques.<sup>77</sup>

That is to say, one meditates as discussed earlier, employing the eight remedial techniques.<sup>78</sup>

(C) As for what these constitute in their *essence*, they are in general states

of meditative absorption that are fourfold from the point of view of being supportive factors. Meditative absorption that involves *intention* is carried out on the basis of *exertion* as a dedicated application, due to which one reaches a state of one-pointed *attention*; while due to another aspect of meditative absorption that involves *investigation*, thoroughly analyzing in detail the spiritual teachings given by others, one reaches that same state of one-pointed mind.

(D) The purpose, or *result*, of these bases is that one wishes to make any given supernormal power fully evident, and brings it into full evidence by directing one's mind accordingly.

(E) As for the *context*, one cultivates these bases during the final phase of the path of accumulation.

One might ask why meditative absorption is referred to here as a “basis of supernormal powers.” The term signifies that this absorption serves as a support for one to acquire all spiritual qualities.

#### Four Anticipatory Phases [ii]

As for the stages of meditation in the four anticipatory phases, the source verses state:

During the four phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough,  
one applies two groups of five factors—confidence, diligence,  
mindfulness, meditative absorption, and sublime intelligence—  
to the sixteen topics pertaining to the Four Truths.

The foregoing meditative absorption brings one to the path of linkage, which anticipates the decisive breakthrough<sup>779</sup> and has four phases: warmth, the peak experience, patient acceptance, and the highest state of mundane experience. During these four phases, one focuses on the sixteen topics that pertain to the Four Truths (those of impermanence and so forth),<sup>780</sup> applying two groups of five factors: the five governing powers—confidence, diligence, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and sublime intelligence—and the five strengths that are the transmutation of these.<sup>781</sup> [3:184b]

In this regard:

(A) The *scope of one's focus* in cultivating the five governing powers is that of the Four Truths, because these topics constitute aspects of those truths insofar as they link one to the path of spiritually advanced beings.<sup>782</sup>

(B) As for the *process of meditation*,<sup>783</sup> one mediates with *confidence*, such that this gives one the conviction that these truths address what is to be understood and what is to be eliminated; with *diligence*, such that one's enthusiasm is aroused in order for one to come to a realization of what these truths actually entail; with *mindfulness*, such that one does not forget the topics on which to focus (that is, what these truths actually entail); with *meditative absorption*, such that one's attention is focused in a one-pointed manner; and with *sublime intelligence*, such that the topics of these truths are individually and precisely analyzed.

(C) This process, in its *essence*, consists of the five governing powers of confidence, diligence, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and sublime intelligence.

(D) The *result* is the swift attainment of the path of seeing and the accomplishment of the four steps in the path of meditation.

(E) As for the *context*, one cultivates these powers during the two phases of warmth and the peak experience.

If one wonders why the term “governing power” is used, it is because these factors give one governance over that which supports the state of definitive excellence—that is, over the mundane factors associated with the completely refined state of enlightenment.

Next, in the cultivation of the five strengths:

(A) The *scope for one's focus* and (B) the *content* employed are similar to the foregoing case.

(C) In their *essence*, these strengths constitute an increase in the force of confidence and the rest of the five powers, such that they become solely remedial, without any admixture of a lack of confidence of any of the counterproductive factors; this is what the term “strength” signifies.

(D) Their *result* is the onset of the phases of patient acceptance and the highest state of mundane experience, and the accomplishment of the path of seeing.

(E) As to the *context*, one cultivates these strengths during the phases of patient acceptance and the highest mundane state. As *Distinguishing Center and Limit* states:

For the governing powers and the five strengths  
there are two pairs of anticipatory phases.<sup>784</sup>

The meaning of the term has just been discussed in the discussion of their essence.

### Path of Seeing [iii]

As to the stages of meditation on the path of seeing, the source verses state:

**On the path of seeing, there are seven aids to enlightenment:**  
**mindfulness, thorough analysis of phenomena,**  
**diligence, joy, thorough pliancy, meditative absorption, and**  
**impartiality.**

(A) The *scope of one's focus* in cultivating the seven aids to enlightenment (which are the factors to be cultivated on the path of seeing) is that of what the Four Truths of spiritually advanced beings actually entail. [3.189a]

(B) As for the *process of meditation*,<sup>785</sup> authentic *mindfulness* as an aid to enlightenment ensures that, when one focuses on suffering, one seeks to remove it; when one focuses on the all-pervasive origin of suffering, one seeks to be free of desire and attachment for it; when one focuses on the cessation of suffering, one seeks to experience that fully; and when one focuses on the path that leads to the cessation of suffering, one seeks to cultivate it. The process for the remaining six aids is similar.

(B) In their *essence*, these aids are as follows: (1) *mindfulness* is not forgetting the scope of the path of seeing; sublime intelligence is (2) a *thorough analysis* of the suchness of phenomena; (3) *diligence* is enthusiasm for what is virtuous; (4) incorruptible *joy* is a beneficial influence on the mind and body; (5) *thorough pliancy* is flexibility of mind and body; (6) *meditative absorption* is a one-pointed state of attention; and (7) *impartiality* is the mind's engagement without the fluctuation due to mental lethargy or agitation.

(C) As to the way in which these function as aids,<sup>786</sup> *mindfulness* is an aid that provides a sense of abiding because its influence is one of ensuring that the other aids do not stray from their focus. A thorough analysis of phenomena is an aid by its very nature because it is, in essence, the non-conceptual state that constitutes the nature of the path of seeing. Diligence is an aid to one's will to be free of *samsāra*, for through relying on it, one feels a certainty about one's release from suffering. Joy is an aid that constitutes a benefit and advantage, for it comes about as the result of the other

aids. The remaining three aids (thorough pliancy and the rest) are aids in negating afflictive states because it is thorough pliancy that brings about the absence those states, meditative absorption that constitutes the absence of those states, and impartiality that is, in its essence, the absence of those states. The foregoing is referred to in the following lines from *Distinguishing Center and Limit*:

An aid by nature, an aid providing a sense of abiding,  
the third an aid to the will to be free,  
the fourth an aid that is a benefit and advantage,  
and three that are aids in negating afflictive states.<sup>787</sup> [3.185b]

(D) The purpose and *result* of these aids is one of bringing about the removal of all factors without exception that are to be eliminated on the path of seeing.

(E) As for the *context*, once one attains the path of seeing, the nature of that state itself is that of these seven aids to enlightenment.

### Path of Meditation [iv]

As to the stages of meditation on the path of meditation, the source verses state:

**The path of meditation is explained as eightfold: authentic view, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditative absorption.**

(A) The *scope of one's focus* and (B) the *content* involved in cultivation of the eightfold path of spiritually advanced beings (which is the factor that is to be cultivated on the path of meditation) are as described previously.

(C) The branches of this path are, in their *essence*, as follows:

(1) *authentic view* is the thorough determination, in postmeditation, of what characterizes the realization one gains during formal meditative equipoise;

(2) *authentic thought* is the motivation to speak so as to convey to others what one has oneself realized;

(3) *authentic speech* is the verbal ability, on the basis of that motivation, to actually convey to others what one has realized;

(4) *authentic action* is action that is totally purified of such acts as the taking of life;  
 (5) *authentic livelihood* is mental and verbal activity that is totally pure of such activities as ingratiating or hypocrisy;

(6) *authentic effort* is diligence in applying remedies in order to remove all the factors without exception that are to be eliminated on the path of meditation;

(7) *authentic mindfulness* consists of not forgetting the purpose of calm abiding, of holding one's attention intently, and of impartiality;  
 (8) *authentic meditative absorption* is meditation for the purpose of dispelling obscurations that impede one's experience of supernormal states of perception and other special spiritual qualities.

These branches are considered to be present on the path of seeing insofar as they are attained on the basis of the potential of formal meditative equipoise of that path; they are considered in their essence to constitute the path of seeing in that they become fully evident on that path.  
 These eight branches function as four kinds of aids. That is to say, *authentic view* is the aid that involves thorough determination; [3.186a] it constitutes the investigation “This is what has been realized during formal meditative equipoise.” *Thought* is the aid that promotes understanding because it constitutes the motivation to speak in ways that completely define what one has realized. *Speech, action, and livelihood* are aids that inspire conviction, for they inspire confidence concerning view, discipline, and a completely pure livelihood, respectively. The three branches of *effort, mindfulness, and meditative absorption* are aids that are remedies to counterproductive influences because they function as remedies to the afflictive states that are to be eliminated on the path of seeing, to the afflictive states that contribute to mental laxity and agitation, and to influences that are counterproductive to the attainment of such special spiritual qualities as supernormal states of perception, respectively. As is said:

Involving thorough determination, promoting understanding, bringing conviction (in the case of three branches) in the minds of others,

and serving as remedies to counterproductive influences—these are the eight branches of the path. It is held that others are made aware of view, discipline, and few material needs.<sup>788</sup>

There are remedies to counterproductive influences that involve afflictive states, secondary afflictive states, and mastery.<sup>789</sup>

(D) The *result* of these branches is that, due to one's cultivating them, all possible factors to be eliminated are removed.  
 (E) As to the *context*, they are cultivated at the point that one has attained the path of meditation.

In this regard, proponents of the Particularist school explain that the seven aids to enlightenment constitute the path of meditation since they are associated with what derives from meditation. For this school, the eightfold path of spiritually advanced beings constitutes the path of seeing because the path of seeing is the “wheel of dharma,” and the eightfold path (due to its facilitating swift progress and so forth) can be likened to a precious wheel.<sup>790</sup>

On the path of no more training,<sup>791</sup> one has the incorruptible knowledge that suffering has been understood, its all-pervasive origin eliminated, its cessation made fully evident, and the path cultivated. As well, one has the incorruptible knowledge: “Suffering has been understood; now there is nothing more to understand” and so forth, [3.186b] up to “The path has been cultivated; now there is nothing more to cultivate.” But other than these successive states of knowledge, that negative factors have been exhausted, and that suffering will not occur again, there is nothing upon which to meditate as some additional focus with a specific object or structure.<sup>792</sup>

#### Pratyekabuddha Approach [2]

As for the stages of meditation in the pratyekabuddha approach, the source verses state:

Pratyekabuddhas employ the foregoing and, in addition, the process of interdependent connection, and focus their attention on the three avenues to complete liberation.

Pratyekabuddhas, having traversed their path by relying on the aspects of the totally refined state of enlightenment that were just discussed and on the process by which things occur through interdependent connection, maintain the focus of their attention on the three avenues to complete liberation.

In this regard, speaking generally, there are three ways in which pratyekabuddhas train in their path:

(1) Some of those who belong to the pratyekabuddha type serve the buddhas who appear during one hundred eons. Having thus matured themselves for the state of a pratyekabuddha's enlightenment, they then become learned in six topics<sup>793</sup> in order to attain that state.

(2) Some serve the buddhas that appear over an indeterminate period of time and listen to spiritual teachings by relying on holy masters. Having reflected on these teachings accurately, in the presence of spiritual masters, they undergo the experiences of the anticipatory phases of the path of linkage. However, unable in that lifetime to gain full realization of these teachings or the fruition of their spiritual practice, they become learned in the six topics in order to attain that state in a future lifetime.

(3) While similar to the foregoing on other points, some gain full realization of these teachings in the presence of spiritual masters and fully experience one or the other of the first two stages of fruition. However, unable to fully experience the latter two stages of fruition, they become learned in the six topics in order to experience these stages fully in a future lifetime.

Of these three models, the first are those who are solitary like a rhinoceros,<sup>794</sup> while the latter two are those who participate in groups.<sup>795</sup> [3.187a]

In any of these cases, in the lifetime following that one, they are reborn in worlds in which there are no buddhas or śrāvakas. Upon going to cemeteries and seeing the bones there, they immediately feel disenchanted with samsāra. They think “Alas! Where did these bones come from? They came from aging and death. Where did aging and death come from? They came from birth . . .” and so forth, examining in succession the twelve links in the process of interdependent connection. Wondering “How can I become liberated from this?” they then cut through the root of those twelve links, undermining the process of interdependent connection by arresting ignorance, karmic patterning, and so on, through the arresting of aging and death. Once they understand that all phenomena occur merely through a process of interdependent connection, they meditate on the twelve links of interdependence and the sixteen topics pertaining to the Four Truths. They thus fully experience the five paths in a single session, and so maintain an ongoing focus on the process of interdependence and complete liberation. In this regard, the following explanation is given:

(1) Of the three avenues to complete liberation that concern the knowable, emptiness is the lack of identity; the absence of subtle traits is the non-existence of anything the self takes to be its own; and the absence of naïve

speculation is the lack of any fixed frame of reference.

(2) In terms of the path, of the three avenues to complete liberation, emptiness is the cessation of suffering; the absence of subtle traits is the path; and the absence of naïve speculation constitutes suffering and its all-pervasive origin.

(3) In terms of the fruition, of the three avenues to complete liberation, emptiness and the absence of subtle traits pertain to the state in which there are no residual traces, whereas the absence of naïve speculation pertains to the state that still involves residual traces.<sup>796</sup>

### Mahāyāna Approach [B]

An explanation of the stages of meditation in the Mahāyāna approach of the transcendent perfections is threefold: the individual who engages in such meditation, the preliminaries to such meditation, and the actual stages to be carried out in meditation.

#### Individual Meditator [1]

The source verses state:

Those who have awakened their affinity for the Mahāyāna  
uphold the two aspects of bodhicitta.

An individual who is an aspirant for following the Mahāyāna path of the transcendent perfections is someone in whom the affinity for the Mahāyāna approach has awakened and who upholds the training involved in the two aspects of bodhicitta—relative and ultimate. [3.187b]

As for the nature of that spiritual affinity, the sūtra *Discourse of Queen Śrīmālā* states:

The potential for attaining the state of suchness permeates all beings.<sup>797</sup>

And the *Highest Continuum* says:

Because the kāya of perfect buddhahood is pervasive,  
because the state of suchness is indivisible,

and because all beings possess spiritual affinity,  
beings are forever endowed with buddha nature.<sup>798</sup>  
As these passages demonstrate, this affinity abides innately and pervasively in all beings.

If one analyzes this spiritual affinity, it is twofold: that which is naturally abiding and that which is perfectly developed. As to what these constitute in essence, the incomparable Dakpo has the following to say:

First, as to the naturally abiding aspect of spiritual affinity, it is the capacity to develop the qualities of buddhahood, partakes of a timeless quality, and is obtained by the true nature of reality.  
As to the perfectly developed aspect of that affinity, it is that capacity to develop the qualities of buddhahood that is attained by one's having become familiar with fundamentally positive qualities.

Thus, these two aspects provide the good fortune for one to awaken to buddhahood.<sup>799</sup>

Synonymous terms are “spiritual affinity,” “potential,” “natural state,” and “fundamental being.”<sup>800</sup>

In considering specific situations, the *Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras* discusses five alternatives,<sup>801</sup> which is to say:

(1) the fact that someone has the spiritual affinity for the Mahāyāna approach is the proximate cause of buddhahood;  
(2) given that the spiritual affinities of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas eventually lead to the attainment of buddhahood, they are the more long-term causes;

(3) of those whose affinity is uncertain, for some it is the more direct cause, (4) for others the more long-term cause;<sup>802</sup> and  
(5) even in the case of those whose spiritual affinity is said to be “cut off,” this is only in consideration of the length of time required, not that they will somehow never attain enlightenment; for them, then, it is the extremely long-term cause.<sup>803</sup>

Therefore, because beings have these kinds of spiritual affinity, this scripture states that ordinary beings are endowed with the quintessential potential for buddhahood.

Nevertheless, the affinities for both the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha approaches are more rudimentary, whereas that for the Mahāyāna is far more sublime than all the others; in the former cases, the affinity is fully expressed by the refining away of the afflictive obscurations alone, while the latter is only fully expressed with the refining away of both levels of obscuration.<sup>804</sup> [3.188a]

The Mahāyāna affinity can be either awakened or remain unawakened; how these situations are to be understood is discussed in the sūtra *Discourse on the Ten Attributes*:

The affinity of intelligent bodhisattvas  
can be known from indications,  
just as fire can be known from the presence of smoke,  
or water from that of water fowl.<sup>805</sup>

As this source states, one can know these situations from the signs or indications. The signs that this affinity has been awakened are that one's actions and speech are naturally gentle, without one's having had to rely on remedies; that one's mind holds little hypocrisy or deceit; and that one is loving and sincere toward beings. Again, from the sūtra *Discourse on the Ten Attributes*:

Not being a rough or crude person,  
completely rejecting hypocrisy and deceit,  
and being utterly sincere toward all beings—  
such is a bodhisattva.<sup>806</sup>

In addition, one feels compassion for beings before undertaking any activity; is inspired by the Mahāyāna teachings; has forbearance, not being daunted by undertaking difficult challenges; and engages wholeheartedly in the fundamentally positive attributes entailed in the transcendent perfections. This is stated in the *Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*:

Even before one undertakes training,  
to have compassion, inspiration, and forbearance,  
and to pursue what is positive wholeheartedly,  
are to be known as the indications of spiritual affinity.<sup>807</sup>

The signs that one's spiritual affinity, although latently present, has not yet been awakened are described in the *Highest Continuum*:

If one lacks sensitivity to one's fundamental being, one's buddha nature,  
one will never be sufficiently dissatisfied with suffering,  
or desire nirvāna,  
or strive for it, or even aspire to it.<sup>808</sup>

That is to say, this is like the situation of the vast majority of ordinary people.

As to the circumstances under which one's spiritual affinity is awakened, it is awakened when one is free of counterproductive conditions and influenced by conducive ones; as long as the opposite is the case, one's affinity will remain unawakened. [3.188b] There are four conditions that are counterproductive: to be reborn in a state devoid of spiritual freedom;<sup>809</sup> to be heedless;<sup>810</sup> to engage in morally wrong actions; and to be subject to the harm caused by obscurations. There are two conditions that are conducive: the external condition of others teaching one the sacred dharma; and the internal condition of one's reflecting on these teachings correctly and being inspired by what is spiritually positive.

Hence, this affinity is crucial since individuals in whom it has awakened are capable of following the Mahāyāna path and applying it in their ongoing experience.

#### Preliminaries to Meditation [2]

The explanation of the preliminaries to meditation is twofold: the training of one's mind in the four immeasurable attitudes and the process of gaining ongoing experience through the ordinary path of accumulation.

#### Four Immeasurable Attitudes [a]

The source verses state:

The initial step is that of the four immeasurable attitudes (loving-kindness and so forth).  
Beginning practitioners focus on beings; those who are advanced in practice

focus on phenomena; those who have gained patient acceptance have no fixed frame of reference.

For those who wish to train on the path of the transcendent perfections, the initial step is to train in the four immeasurable attitudes (loving-kindness and so forth), which constitute the training for bodhicitta as aspiration. According to the *Intermediate Length "Mother"*:

O Subhūti, thus a great and heroic bodhisattva should cultivate supreme loving-kindness, supreme compassion, supreme joy, and supreme impartiality.<sup>811</sup>

And from the *Sublime Heart Essence*:

O Śāriputra, thus there are four pure states—those of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality that are not preceded by the authentic arousal of bodhicitta and that do not entail such arousal. These states entail the overt formative patterns that contribute to conditioned existence.

There are four immeasurable attitudes—those of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality that are preceded by the authentic arousal of bodhicitta and that do entail such arousal. These states entail the formative patterns that contribute to the path to nirvāṇa.<sup>812</sup>

In this tradition, the distinction is simply one of the immeasurability entailed.<sup>813</sup> And as the *Categories of the Levels* states: [3.189a]

The four immeasurable attitudes develop both with a conceptual frame of reference (whether that of beings or the true nature of reality) or without a frame of reference.<sup>814</sup>

That is to say, having understood the distinction between there being a conceptual frame of reference or not, one trains either within the scope of such a framework or within the scope of the immeasurable attitude in itself.<sup>815</sup>

These attitudes are developed through four conditions:

(i) the causal condition is that of one's naturally abiding spiritual affinity—that is, one's fundamental being;

(2) the governing condition is a spiritual mentor who instructs one in the teachings concerning the four immeasurable attitudes;

(3) the referential condition is the scope of the respective attitude that has become fully evident;<sup>816</sup> and

(4) the immediate condition is one's prior familiarity with the benefits and advantages of cultivating these four immeasurable attitudes and the shortcomings of not doing so.

The processes by which these attitudes develop are explained as being threefold, depending on the specific scope of the focus:

(1) those who are beginning practitioners, who have not realized the absence of identity in things, develop the four immeasurable attitudes by focusing on beings;

(2) those who are advanced in practice—who have realized 75 per cent of that absence<sup>817</sup>—develop these attitudes by focusing on phenomena; and

(3) those who have gained patient acceptance, who have realized both aspects of that absence, develop these attitudes through a process that involves no frame of reference.

With respect to the foregoing processes, the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* says:

To have beings as the frame of reference is a process held in common with non-Buddhist holders of extreme views. To have phenomena as the frame of reference is a process held in common with all śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. To have no fixed frame of reference is a process that has nothing in common with any of the foregoing.<sup>818</sup>

#### Path of Accumulation [b]

The source verses state:

As preliminaries, one maintains discipline, controls the senses, exercises moderation in eating, exerts oneself in spiritual practice in the late evening and early morning, takes joy in maintaining alertness, is enthusiastic without regret, enjoys the seven riches of spiritually advanced beings, engages in the ten kinds of spiritual activity, and relies on inspiration and other positive causes of liberation; . . .

From the point that they first embark on the Mahāyāna path of accumulation [3.189b] until they reach the path of linkage, beginning practitioners—completely motivated by the wish to attain enlightenment—maintain completely pure discipline; control their senses; exercise moderation in eating, exert themselves in spiritual practice, foregoing sleep in the late evening and early morning; take joy in maintaining alertness in issues requiring moral choices; and are extremely enthusiastic and have no regret at their positive actions.<sup>819</sup>

The seven riches are as stated:

*Faith* in the basis of truth, pure ethical discipline, hearing of many teachings, familiarity with giving, knowing modesty concerning others, having great self-respect concerning oneself, and having sublime intelligence in abundance; these are the seven riches of spiritually advanced beings.<sup>820</sup>

The ten kinds of spiritual activity are spoken of in *Distinguishing Center and Limit*:

Copying texts, making offerings, giving generously, listening to teachings, reading them, memorizing them, explaining them, reciting texts aloud, contemplating and meditating—these embody the ten kinds of activity, the qualities of which are incalculable.<sup>821</sup>

The practical application of these is discussed, for example, in the excellent writings of Situ Rinpoche Chökyi Gyaltse.<sup>822</sup>

In addition, the preliminaries involve one's efforts to increase one's spiritual progress through any and all positive acts—such as arousing one's inspiration and other positive factors that serve as causes of one's liberation—without any bias or prejudice. One then can embark on the stages of the path in the actual practice of meditation.

#### Actual Stages of Meditation [3]

The actual stages to be cultivated in meditation are threefold: the stages for training one's mind in general, the specific processes of meditation in

formal practice and postmeditation, and a summary that simply mentions four applications.

### General Stages of Mental Training [a]

The source verses state:

**One trains one's mind with the four axioms, the five factors  
conducive to liberation,  
recollection of the Victorious One and so forth, the nine  
perceptions of impurity,  
the eight thoughts of a superior spiritual practitioner,  
and the thorough purification of one's sphere of activity.**

For those on the path of accumulation, in general it is the four axioms that denote the Buddha's words and other similar topics that are to be cultivated in meditation. [3.190a] Of these, the way in which one meditates on the four axioms is to arouse bodhicitta; to then meditate (1) on all that is conditioned being impermanent, (2) on the nature of what entails corruptibility being that of saṃsāra and suffering, (3) on all phenomena as lacking identity, and (4) on nirvāṇa as a state of peace; one then concludes with dedication.<sup>823</sup>

As for “recollection of the Victorious One and so forth,” this refers to one’s recollection of the Buddha, dharma, saṅgha, one’s ethical discipline, giving, one’s body, death, birth, and the inhalation and exhalation of one’s breath.

The nine perceptions of impurity are of a corpse decomposing, ridden with maggots, mottled with dark blotches, rotting, purifying, being devoured by wild animals, scattered in pieces, being cremated, and disintegrating.<sup>824</sup>

The eight thoughts of a superior spiritual practitioner are to think as follows:

- (1) “At some point, may I be capable of removing the suffering of beings!”
- (2) “At some point, may I be capable of bringing great wealth to beings who are afflicted by poverty!”
- (3) “At some point, may I be capable of ensuring benefit for beings with this flesh-and-blood body!”

(4) “At some point, may I be capable of ensuring benefit for beings, even if it means my remaining in a hell realm for a long time!”

(5) “At some point, may I be capable of fulfilling the hopes of beings with great wealth, both mundane and transcendent!”

(6) “At some point, having awakened to buddhahood, may I truly be capable of bringing beings out of their suffering!”

(7) “In all my lifetimes, may I never take a rebirth that does not benefit beings, or engage solely in experiencing the ultimate,<sup>825</sup> or speak words that do not satisfy all beings, or adopt a livelihood (or a body or intelligence or wealth or power) that does not benefit others, or take any joy in what harms others!” [3.190b]

(8) “May the fruits of beings’ harmful actions ripen for me, while the fruits of my positive actions ripen for them!”

As for the thorough purification of one’s sphere of activity, the *Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras* states:

When heirs of the victorious ones act in any way whatsoever, their perceptions<sup>826</sup> functioning in a variety of ways, they are aware of things as they are and, with appropriate words, make this evident in their ideas in order to benefit beings.<sup>827</sup>

This passage should be understood to mean that which accords with a thorough purification of the sphere of one’s ordinary activity. When bodhisattvas enter a building, they arouse bodhicitta and think, “May all beings gain the citadel of liberation!” Using this as a model, when they lie down to sleep, they think, “May beings attain the kāyas of buddhahood!” If they dream, they think, “May beings realize all phenomena to be like dream images!” Once they awaken, they think, “May beings awaken from their ignorance!” As they arise, they think, “May beings gain the enlightened forms of buddhas!” When they don clothing, they think, “May beings don the raiment of modesty and self-respect!” As they tie their sashes,<sup>828</sup> they think, “May beings unite themselves with fundamentally positive qualities!” If they sit on seats, they think, “May beings attain the vajra seat!”<sup>829</sup> Thinking in such ways, they feel, “I arouse bodhicitta!” Practicing in such ways, one trains one’s mind.<sup>830</sup>

### Formal Meditation Sessions and in Postmeditation [b]

As for the specific processes of meditation in formal practice and postmeditation, there are two considerations: the specific phases of formal practice vis-à-vis postmeditation and a general discussion of the postmeditation phase.

#### Formal Meditation vis-à-vis Postmeditation [i]

The source verses state:

In the specific phase of formal practice, the significance of the Middle Way is paramount,

and that involves investigation as a preliminary.

Autonomists rest in the significance of an unqualified negation, comparable to space.

For Consequentialists, the basic space of phenomena (as what to become familiar with) and the mind that becomes familiar are inseparable, like water poured into water.

For those who profess qualified emptiness, the state is nonconceptual and utterly lucid.

They all agree on the key point of there simply being a freedom from elaboration.

In the specific case of the meditation that is unique to those who follow the Mahāyāna approach, during the phase of formal practice, it is the significance itself of the profound Middle Way (concerning which they have come to a definitive conclusion through hearing and contemplating teachings) that is their paramount concern in meditation. [3.19.1a]

In this regard, those who profess the Autonomist interpretation begin by arousing bodhicitta and pursuing an investigation with the discerning function of their sublime intelligence. They then rest in equipoise, in a mode of “one taste” within the essence of emptiness comparable to space, an unqualified negation in which all extremes due to conceptual elaboration have been removed, so that there is no concept even of whether or not the very mind that is becoming familiar with the practice has anything with which to become familiar. Given that the conventional designation of “primordial union”<sup>831</sup> is not used in this interpretation, the postmedita-

tion phase in this context is one of not blocking what manifests in light of ordinary awareness, while overtly conceiving of developing one’s merit within a state in which, in light of timeless awareness, there is no fixed frame of reference whatsoever. It is this that they term the “primordial union of the two levels of truth”; they also term it the “development of merit that is imbued with sublime intelligence that does not conceive of the three focal points.”<sup>832</sup>

Those who profess the Consequentialist interpretation begin with the arousal of bodhicitta and an investigation with sublime intelligence. They then arrive at a nondual state, like that of water poured into water, without the mind that becomes familiar and the basic space of phenomena with which it becomes familiar being separate and distinct. Although they use the conventional designation of “sublime intelligence that realizes the basic space of phenomena,” in actuality they have no classification of something to be known versus that which knows it, and so they do not employ even the conventional designation of “primordial union.” As for the postmeditation phase, their way of thinking about it is like that in the context of the Autonomists.

As for those who profess qualified emptiness [*gzhan stong*], they begin with the arousal of bodhicitta and a brief investigation in which there is no frame of reference of things having any inherent nature. They then abide in the state of supreme utter lucidity, spontaneously present without involving any conceptual thinking. They rest in equipoise of that naturally lucid self-knowledge awareness—timeless awareness that is devoid of the duality of perceived object and perceiving subject—and this by way of not thinking in terms of, or fixating in any way whatsoever on, ordinary distinctions of such elaborations as “exists,” “does not exist,” “is,” or “is not.” As for the postmeditation phase, they take as many tangible phenomena as there are as objects but do not fixate on any of the ordinary distinctions of conceptual elaboration whatsoever. This they term the “primordial union of the manifold and emptiness,” [3.19.1b] and it is within this context that they engage in the development of merit on a vast scale. The phase of formal practice they refer to as the “primordial union of lucidity and emptiness” because it is empty of any conceptual thinking, while not straying from what is, in its essence, lucid pure awareness.

The foregoing three interpretations agree on the key point of simply resting in equipoise within basic space, which is a freedom from conceptual elaboration.

### General Discussion of Postmeditation [ii]

The source verses state:

In the postmeditation phase one meditates successively on the thirty-seven factors that contribute to enlightenment; their significance has extraordinary dimensions of vastness and profundity.

In the phases of postmeditation, once one has arisen from that of formal practice, on the lesser degree of the path of accumulation, one practices the applications of mindfulness by regarding the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena as having no inherent nature in any authentic sense, meditating on their very essence without conceiving of them individually; this is the aspect of *profundity*. And one meditates on the body as being like an illusion, sensations as being like dream images, the mind as being like utterly lucid space, and phenomena as being adventitious like clouds; this is the aspect of *vastness*.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, one meditates successively on the thirty-seven factors that contribute to enlightenment.<sup>84</sup> These are enumerated here just as they are in the context of the śāvaka approach; however, their significance as factors that contribute to enlightenment in the Mahāyāna approach is such that, as the immediately preceding discussion illustrates, there are extraordinary dimensions with respect to the profundity of their scope and the vastness with which that scope is applied.

### Summary [c]

As for a summary that simply mentions the four applications,<sup>85</sup> the source verses state:

In summary, through four applications—perfecting all aspects, culminating, sequential, and instantaneous—  
one gains accomplishment of the “mother,” the unsurpassable  
and transcendent perfection.

If we condense all the limitless stages of the paths of the Mahāyāna approach into a summary, the consummate fruition to be attained is that of omniscience; the means to attain that is knowledge of the path; and as an

auxiliary entailed in the moral choices one makes in that context, knowledge of the ground (that is, knowledge of counterproductive factors in one's existing situation and of a detailed analysis of remedies). These three aspects of knowledge constitute the context within which one puts an end to erroneous assumptions. [3.192a]

The four applications involved in spiritual practice are:

- (1) the “application that perfects all aspects” is one of meditation in turn on some 173 topics, which subsume within them the significance of the definitive conclusions that one has reached through hearing and contemplating teachings concerning the foregoing aspects of knowledge;
- (2) the “culminating application” is one of developing one's realization (based upon meditation that summarizes the foregoing aspects of knowledge) to a consummate level;
- (3) the “sequential application” is one of meditating as before but on all topics at once, in order to gain stability from the foregoing application, and
- (4) once that stability has been gained, the “instantaneous application” is one of meditating on the topics of the three aspects of knowledge in a single instant of timeless awareness, so that it is certain that immediately following this the fruition state will become fully evident.

Once one has pursued spiritual practice in the foregoing manner, one will straightforwardly accomplish what is renowned as the unsurpassable Prajñāpāramitā (the transcendent perfection of sublime intelligence), the supreme mother, dharmakāya—that is, the three kāyas and their attendant enlightened deeds.

*The foregoing constitutes the commentary on the second part,  
concerning a presentation of the specific stages in meditation  
in the cause-based dialectical approach.*

*This concludes the commentary on [the first two parts of] the eighth book,  
a developmental analysis of the higher training in meditative absorption,  
from The Encompassing of All Knowledge,  
also entitled The Precious Treasury of Sublime Teachings:*

*The Compendium of the Methods of All Spiritual Approaches  
and A Treatise That Thoroughly Presents the Three Higher Trainings.*

# THE INNER SCIENCE OF BUDDHIST PRACTICE

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Vasubandhu's *Summary of the Five Heaps*  
with Commentary by Sthiramati

Artemus B. Engle

belly, (5) wind resting in the back, (6) wind that produces a hard swelling in the abdomen, (7) wind that produces a swelling [of the spleen or causes gout (?)], (8) wind that produces razor-like pain, (9) wind that produces pain like a pinprick, (10) wind that produces a pain like a knife-cut, (11) wind that produces a sharp needle-like pain, (12) inhalation of the breath, (13) exhalation of the breath, and (14) wind associated with movement of the limbs and appendages.

Finally, as the practitioner develops a more intimate understanding of his or her physical body, this awareness can become the basis for reflecting on the body's general attributes of being impermanent, having a suffering nature, and lacking a controlling self. In short, this last passage from the *Twenty-five-Thousand-Line Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* indicates how to meditate on closely placed recollection of the body in a manner that conforms with the Noble Truth of Suffering.

## ACHIEVING QUIESCEENCE

Any of the forms of meditation associated with the four closely placed recollections can serve as the basis for cultivating the type of one-pointed concentration known as "quiescence." Je Tsongkapa's *Great Treatise* contains a detailed presentation of how to cultivate quiescence that is based on a range of Buddhist works, including *The Treatise That Distinguishes the Middle Way from Extreme Views*, *The Ornament of Mahāyāna Sutras*, Asaṅga's *Listener's Level*, and Kamalaśīla's trilogy entitled *The Stages of Meditation*.

Quiescence is a state of meditative composure that must be achieved before one can develop the higher forms of insight meditation. The entire system that explains its method of cultivation is too complex to be presented here. However, the essence of this process involves developing nine levels of mental stability by cultivating eight factors that bring about the abandonment of five faults. This is described in the following verse from *The Treatise That Distinguishes the Middle Way from Extreme Views*:

The fitness of [mental] stability that occurs then  
For the sake of prosperity in all the [spiritual] aims  
Results from the cultivation of eight factors  
And the abandonment of five faults.<sup>601</sup>

The term "fitness"<sup>602</sup> here refers to the essential characteristic of the particular forms of mental and physical agility that define the attainment of

quiescence. This agility<sup>603</sup> is the eighth of eleven virtuous mental factors presented in Vasubandhu's *Summary*. Its significance is largely associated with the cultivation of quiescence and insight. The next verse from *The Treatise That Distinguishes the Middle Way from Extreme Views* identifies the five faults:

Laziness, forgetting the instruction,  
Languor and excitation, lack of application,

And, likewise, application—

These are regarded as the five faults.<sup>604</sup>

“Laziness” here means the disinclination to pursue the developing of quiescence. “Forgetting the instruction” refers principally to the fault of allowing the meditation object to escape from one's attention. “Langor and excitation,” which taken together constitute a single fault, are the main obstacles to one-pointed concentration. Langor is a lack of clarity that occurs when the mind relaxes its grip on the meditation object. Sthiramati describes excitation as “a form of desire that causes a lack of calmness in the mind through recalling previous [experiences] that are consistent with desire, such as [occasions of] laughter, amusement, and the like.”<sup>605</sup> “Lack of application” is the failure to generate the antidote to languor and excitation when either of them occurs. The last fault, “application,” is the failure to allow the mind to remain in a state of equanimity when the obstacles are no longer active.

There are four factors that counteract the fault of laziness: faith, aspiration, effort, and agility. Each of the four remaining faults has one factor that serves as its antidote. They are (1) the recollection that enables you to keep from losing hold of the meditation object; (2) the vigilance that becomes aware of languor or excitation as soon as either one arises; (3) the volition that applies the antidote to languor or excitation in whatever manner is appropriate; and (4) the equanimity that effortlessly maintains an evenness of mind when languor and excitation no longer occur.

Cultivation of these eight factors gradually brings the attainment of nine states of mental stability. Learning how to do this correctly and in sufficient detail is something that should be pursued under the guidance of a meditation teacher. Nevertheless, a concise summary of these levels can be found in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation in Our Hands*.<sup>606</sup> They are called (1) placement, (2) continued placement, (3) renewed placement, (4) close placement, (5) subduing, (6) pacification, (7) heightened pacification, (8)

one-pointedness, and (9) equipoise.<sup>607</sup> The main characteristic of each of the nine is briefly indicated in the following verses from *The Ornament of Mahāyāna Sutras*:

Having fixed the mind on an object,

He [or she] should not let that momentum slip away.

Having quickly become aware of distraction,

He [or she] should return [the mind] to that [object] once again.

More and more, the intelligent one

Should concentrate the mind inward.

Then he [or she] should also gladden the mind  
Toward meditative composure by seeing its virtues.

He [or she] should quell displeasure toward it

By seeing the faults of distraction.

Likewise, he [or she] should quell the arising  
Of such states as yearning and dejection.

After that, the ascetic should attain a natural flowing

In the mind that is accomplished by application [of an antidote];  
[And], after repeated practice of that, [he or she should attain  
A natural flowing] that is free of application.<sup>608</sup>

The first of these verses identifies the initial three levels. In the level called “placement,” the practitioner begins to fix the mind on a suitable meditation object, but is not able to keep it there for any length of time. During the second level, “continued placement,” the practitioner is periodically able to preserve the “momentum” of placing the mind on its object, even if only for a short period. The main characteristic of the third level, called “renewed placement,” is that one becomes more adept at returning the mind to the meditation object whenever it slips away.

The second verse addresses the next two levels. On the fourth level, “close placement,” a strengthened recollection enables the practitioner to keep the mind's attention focused inward. As a result, a higher degree of concentration begins to develop gradually. During the level of “subduing,” one needs to “gladden” or invigorate the mind by recalling the benefits of one-pointed concentration in order to counteract the inclination to generate more subtle forms of languor and excitation.

The next two levels are identified in the third verse. During “pacification,” the main obstacle is subtle excitation, which is controlled by reflecting on its disadvantages and developing a strong form of vigilance. “Heightened pacification” marks the level on which the practitioner continues to reject all forms of the secondary mental afflictions whenever they occur.

The last verse describes the final two levels. “One-pointedness” marks the stage at which the practitioner only needs to apply a small amount of effort in order to maintain uninterrupted one-pointed concentration. The expression “natural flowing” refers to the condition in which the attention is able to be conveyed to the meditation object without the arising of any obstruction. As this practice is further cultivated, the meditator finally develops the ability to maintain such a state of one-pointed concentration without the need to apply any effort. This marks the attainment of the ninth level, called “equipoise.” Even though this form of concentration is flawless, it still does not represent quiescence. In the following passage from *Liberation in Our Hands*, Pabongka Rinpoche describes how that state is achieved:

After the ninth level of mental stability has been achieved, it is possible to maintain, effortlessly and for long periods of time, a type of one-pointed concentration that is free of any subtle languor or subtle excitation. However, while this state has certain qualities that are similar to those of quiescence, it is not actual quiescence. In order to achieve genuine quiescence, you must continue to practice one-pointed concentration until you gain the extraordinary ease and joy of physical and mental agility.

Of these two types of agility, mental agility arises first. And of the two types of ease, the ease of physical agility arises first. When the wind element associated with indisposition<sup>609</sup> of the body ceases to be active, a pronounced feeling of ease is experienced. In addition, a special kind of heaviness is felt inside the top of the head. This latter sensation is similar to what it feels like when you press your warm hands on your newly shaven head. Right after this, you develop a unique mental agility because you are no longer subject to the indisposition that previously kept your mind in an afflicted state and prevented you from directing your mind at will to a virtuous object.

This mental agility causes your body to become filled with a type of wind element that brings great suppleness and eliminates all physical indisposition. It also produces a physical agility that makes

your body feel as light as cotton and allows you to apply yourself physically to any virtuous activity without hesitation. This physical agility is followed by an intense and extremely pleasurable bodily sensation that is known as the ease of physical agility.

As you continue to practice one-pointed concentration, your mental agility will cause you to develop a feeling of extreme joy and rapture; this is the ease of mental agility. When this happens, you lose all awareness of any other objects including your own body. It is as if they have all dissolved into the meditation object. The joy is so overwhelming that you feel as though you won’t be able to keep your mind fixed on the meditation object.

After a short while, the extreme joy brought on by this mental agility subsides and your mental agility acquires an especially strong steadiness that enhances one-pointed concentration and keeps the mind fixed unshakably on its meditation object. The arising of this agility marks the attainment of quiescence—a state of one-pointed concentration that precedes the first meditative absorption level of the form realm and is known as the all-powerful.<sup>610</sup> It is called “all-powerful” because it is a path that is essential to the attainment of many mundane and transcendent realizations.<sup>611</sup>

#### THE SECOND OBJECT OF CLOSELY PLACED RECOLLECTION: FEELINGS

Vasubandhu’s *Summary of the Five Heaps* states that feelings are classified according to three types of experience: (1) that which is pleasant, (2) that which is unpleasant, and (3) that which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. As noted earlier, these three types of feeling have an important and direct correlation with the explanation of the three types of suffering. Thus, one of the main forms of practicing closely placed recollection of feelings is for the practitioner to reflect on and recognize the meaning of the three types of suffering in relation to the range of experiences that make up his or her own feeling heap. This exercise corresponds to Asanga’s remark that “closely placed recollection of feelings was formulated as an antidote for the error that regards what is unsatisfactory as a state of well-being.” Asanga further notes that such a practice will enable one to “correctly realize [the meaning of the phrase] ‘anything whatsoever that is experienced here is a state of suffering.’”

In his *Commentary to Vasubandhu's root text*, Sthiramati introduces several additional classifications of feelings. Without mentioning the phrase directly, he describes in a very brief manner what canonical literature refers to as “the six collections of feelings.”<sup>612</sup> This expression differentiates the three types of feeling in terms of whether they arise through contact with the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind faculty. A second classification combines these same six categories into two: “corporeal”<sup>613</sup> and “mental.”<sup>614</sup> The former includes all the feelings that arise through contact with any of the five sense faculties. These feelings are said to be corporeal because the faculties from which they arise reside within the body and are composed of physical atoms. By contrast, the three types of feeling that arise through contact with the mind faculty are said to be mental because that faculty is exclusively mental in nature.

When a practitioner reflects introspectively in order to isolate each of these eighteen types of feeling and to identify the faculty through which it arises, this constitutes a form of closely placed recollection that examines feelings in terms of both their essential nature<sup>615</sup> and their cause. This type of exercise can also form the basis for overcoming the mistaken notion that feelings are experienced by a real personal self. One should recall, for example, Asanga's earlier description of how to reflect on the two points called “nondiscernment” and “lack of self-determination” that were part of the discussion on the Truth of Suffering.<sup>616</sup>

Sthiramati's final point about the feeling heap involves four somewhat technical expressions. He introduces them by saying that “each experience can also be classified into two pairs of categories that describe them either as obstacles or as antidotes.”<sup>617</sup> The four types are (1) feelings that are associated with corporeal desire<sup>618</sup>; (2) feelings that are free of corporeal desire<sup>619</sup>; (3) feelings that are related to greed<sup>620</sup>; and (4) feelings that are related to departure.<sup>621</sup>

Asanga identifies these same four categories in his *Listeners' Level* as the last group of objects to be contemplated when practicing closely placed recollection of feelings. He adds that each category includes all three of the basic types of feeling, noting that there are (1) pleasant feelings associated with corporeal desire, (2) unpleasant feelings associated with corporeal desire, and (3) feelings associated with corporeal desire that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. A similar distinction applies to each of the other three categories. Several lines later, Asanga offers this description of the nature of these types of feeling:

A feeling that is free of corporeal desire is one that is derived from penetrating insight,<sup>622</sup> and is consistent with nirvana; it is conducive to absolute fulfillment, absolute purity, and absolute completion of a spiritual life. A feeling that is associated with corporeal desire is one that is connected with [any of] the [three] realms and with [samsaric] existence.

A feeling that is related to departure is one that is associated with either the form or the formless realm, or that is consistent with absence of attachment. A feeling that is related to greed is one that is associated with [the] desire [realm] and is not consistent with absence of attachment.<sup>623</sup>

Gyeltsab Darma Rinchen states in his commentary to Asanga's *Compendium of Higher Learning* that the first pair of terms relates to the transcendent path<sup>624</sup> while the second pair relates to the mundane path.<sup>625</sup> As Sthiramati notes, “the expressions ‘related to greed’ and ‘related to departure’ are defined in terms of their connection with the process of freeing oneself from attachment [to the desire realm, for example] through the mundane path.” Thus, “feelings that are related to greed” are any of the three kinds of experience that either provoke further desire for sensory pleasures and the like, or that arise as a result of our having indulged the desire to enjoy sensory pleasures and the like. Thus, one form of closely placed recollection of feelings would consist of developing greater awareness of this connection between feelings and desire, and of trying to counteract it.

The feelings associated with our effort to counteract the tendency to remain under the control of our attachment to sensory pleasure represent the elements of the category of feelings that are said to be “related to departure.” The culmination of this process is the detachment that is achieved through cultivating the insight meditation of the mundane path. The nature of those feelings as well as the specific form of detachment associated with them is identified below in the descriptions of the four meditative absorptions and the four formless states of composure.

The pair of categories known as “feelings associated with corporeal desire” and “feelings that are free of corporeal desire” are related to the transcendent path in that they are defined by whether or not the practitioner has attained a direct realization of the absence of any real personal self. As long as this realization has not been achieved and an individual's understanding remains subject to the “perishable collection view,”<sup>626</sup> his or her feelings will automatically be associated with and influenced by craving for continued samsaric

existence, which Sthiramati describes as “craving for one’s individual existence.”<sup>627</sup> Only the transendent path has the ability to irreversibly overcome this form of desire. Thus, the antithesis of this category, “feelings that are free of corporal desire,” only occur after one has reached the Seeing Path and developed the pure feelings that are described as being “unrelated to the outflows.” Cultivating an awareness of this aspect of one’s feeling heap represents the most profound form of closely placed recollection of feelings.

### THE MUNDANE PATH

We conclude our review of this second form of closely placed recollection with an overview of the mundane and the transcendent paths. These terms reflect the Buddhist view that there are two principal methods of abandoning the mental afflictions.

The mundane path is a form of insight meditation in which a lower level of consciousness is regarded as coarse and a higher level as tranquil.<sup>628</sup> This coarseness is described in brief as being twofold: (1) the condition of dwelling in a state of great unsatisfactoriness and lack of tranquility and (2) the condition of dwelling in a state where one’s lifespan is shorter. Asaṅga explains this form of meditation in terms of progressively cultivating these seven forms of attention:<sup>629</sup> (1) that which repeatedly analyzes properties, (2) that which is accompanied by conviction,<sup>630</sup> (3) that which brings separation,<sup>631</sup> (4) that which promotes delight,<sup>632</sup> (5) that which examines,<sup>634</sup> (6) that which completes the practice,<sup>635</sup> and (7) the fruit of having completed the practice.<sup>636</sup>

A detailed account of how these seven forms of attention are cultivated can be found in *Listeners’ Level*. This forms the basis for Je Tsongkapa’s discussion in his *Great Treatise*. Here is the abridged description of them that Jinaputra presents in his commentary to Asaṅga’s *Compendium of Higher Learning*:

How, then, does the practitioner who is pursuing the first meditative absorption develop the seven forms of attention?

The attention known as “that which repeatedly analyzes properties” is a mental application present in a level of mental composure<sup>637</sup> that clearly recognizes both the properties of coarseness [associated with the desire realm], through perceiving the disadvantages, etc.,<sup>638</sup> of sensory pleasures, and the properties of tranquility associated with the first meditative absorption, because [those disadvantages]

are absent [there]. This [form of attention] is also understood to be one in which a combination of [the wisdom derived from] listening and [the wisdom derived from] reflection are present.

Following that, after [the practitioner] has developed beyond [the activities of] listening and reflection, he [or she] exclusively practices a form of meditation in which both quiescence and insight are cultivated using the marks of those properties of coarseness and tranquility as a meditation object. In doing so, close attention is directed toward the previously investigated coarseness and tranquility again and again. This is referred to as the [the form of attention] “that is accompanied by conviction.”

The form of attention that, through repeated practice of that [second form of attention], initially develops an “abandoning path”<sup>639</sup> is [known as] “that which brings separation” because it brings about the abandonment of the [three] great forms of the mental afflictions and the removal of the indisposition that is related [to those mental afflictions].

Following that, the practitioner generates delight for abandoning [the mental afflictions] and perceives the benefits of abandoning [them]. Having attained a limited form of the joy and ease that is born from separation,<sup>640</sup> he [or she] periodically becomes greatly exhilarated by a mental application characterized by a deep serenity that has the express purpose of removing torpor, drowsiness, or excitation. This [form of attention] is referred to as “that which promotes delight.”

Because [the practitioner] who is fully absorbed in this manner<sup>641</sup> is firmly established in a virtuous sphere of thought, the perturbations of the desire realm’s mental afflictions become inactive. Therefore, in order to determine whether they have been [completely] abandoned or not, he makes an investigation by means of a form of attention that brings to mind the marks of attractive objects that are conducive to the arising of those [perturbations]. [This investigation constitutes the essence of] the form of attention referred to as “that which examines.”<sup>642</sup>

As [the practitioner] continues to meditate with this investigative antidote in a systematic manner for the purpose of achieving detachment from all the mental afflictions that are operative in the desire realm, [he or she develops] the corrective form of attention

that brings to a conclusion the path that leads to the first meditative absorption, and which, therefore, is known as “that which completes the practice.”

Immediately following that, one attains the main level of the first meditative absorption, [which is the form of attention referred to as] “the fruit of having completed the practice.”

[The form of attention] that repeatedly analyzes properties [first] brings about a comprehensive understanding of what is to be abandoned and what is to be attained, and then directs the mind toward their respective abandonment and attainment. Following that, [the form of attention] that applies conviction takes up the correct practice. [The form of attention] that brings separation abandons the great forms of the mental afflictions. [The form of attention] that promotes delight abandons the middling forms of the mental afflictions. [The form of attention] that engages in an examination places the mind in a state that is free of the exaggerated pride<sup>643</sup> that believes [the goal] has been attained. [The form of attention] that completes the practice abandons the small forms of the mental afflictions. [The form of attention that is] the fruit of having completed the practice experiences the fruit of having mediated effectively on those [preceding six] forms of attention.

In a manner that conforms to each specific instance, it should be understood that a description similar to the one that explains the seven forms of attention that bring about the attainment of the first meditative absorption applies to all the other meditative levels up to the Sphere in Which There Is Neither Conception nor Absence of Conception.<sup>644</sup>

In short, a practitioner achieves the first meditative absorption of the form realm by gradually overcoming all attachment toward the sensory pleasures of the desire realm. A similar effort is carried out in order to achieve the remaining three meditative states of the form realm, as well as the four absorptions of the formless realm. This type of practice is nominally described as resulting in “freedom from attachment”<sup>645</sup> toward any of eight<sup>646</sup> levels of samsaric existence. However, it is only a temporary suspension of those mental afflictions in that their overt form is prevented from arising through the power of one-pointed concentration. Asanga describes this as a “suppression”<sup>647</sup> of the mental afflictions:

What is cessation in the conventional sense? It is a cessation that is achieved through supressing the seeds [of the mental afflictions] by means of the mundane paths.<sup>648</sup>

Though not unique to Buddhism, this type of meditation is certainly made use of by Buddhist practitioners. For instance, the Hinayāna path is described as bringing the attainment of four fruits of asceticism:<sup>649</sup> (1) Stream Enterer, (2) Once Returner, (3) Nonreturner, and (4) Arhat. While each of these fruits is achieved exclusively through a form of the transcendent path, a practitioner can gain them by different routes, so to speak. For instance, individuals who have not abandoned the mental afflictions of the desire realm through the mundane path will only achieve the fruit of a Stream Enterer when they attain the Seeing Path. However, some practitioners gain freedom from attachment toward most of the desire realm or freedom from attachment toward the entire desire realm through the mundane path before they attain the transcendent path for the first time. This allows the latter two types of individuals immediately to become a Once Returner and a Nonreturner, respectively. Asanga describes this in his *Compendium of Higher Learning*:

What is a Stream Enterer?

It is a person who has reached the sixteenth moment of the Seeing Path. The Seeing Path is entry into the complete certainty of ultimate correctness.<sup>650</sup> It is also the clear realization of [the true nature of] entities.<sup>651</sup>

A person who has not [previously] achieved freedom from attachment toward the [five] sense objects<sup>652</sup> becomes a Stream Enterer upon attaining entry into the complete certainty of ultimate correctness. A person who has achieved freedom from attachment toward most [of the desire realm] becomes a Once Returner upon attaining entry into the complete certainty of ultimate correctness. A person who has achieved [complete] freedom from attachment toward the [five] sense objects becomes a Nonreturner upon attaining entry into the complete certainty of ultimate correctness.<sup>653</sup>

Thus, the term “departure” in the phrase “feelings that are related to departure” should be understood to mean principally the “freedom from attachment” for the five sense objects of the desire realm, or a freedom from

attachment relating to all the other states of the form and formless realms excluding the Peak of Existence. Secondly, “departure” also refers to the mundane path that brings about the attainment of any of these states. The feelings that are related to departure are those that accompany that state or are conducive to its attainment. Yásomitra gives three examples of this type of mental feeling:

Some [persons] develop a happiness of mind when they think, “I shall attain departure.” Some develop unhappiness of mind when they think, “I failed to exert myself for the sake of departure.” Through careful analytic reflection, some develop equanimity toward [the sense objects of] visible form and the rest.<sup>654</sup>

Happiness of mind,<sup>655</sup> “unhappiness of mind”<sup>656</sup> and “equanimity”<sup>657</sup> are synonyms for the three main types of feeling that can accompany mind consciousness—that is, a pleasant feeling, an unpleasant feeling, and a feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. All three of the examples mentioned here can be understood as describing a specific feeling that is conducive to developing, in particular, the first meditative absorption of the form realm and, thereafter, the other higher forms of the mundane path as well.

Happiness of mind, for instance, describes the feeling that accompanies the faith and aspiration necessary to develop the initial determination to pursue any of the eight principal states of mental composure. Similarly, the unhappiness that stems from recognizing one has not made sufficient effort is a feeling associated with a virtuous form of regret. This reaction is a positive one in that it will help renew one’s resolve to continue practicing. Finally, the equanimity that arises from having cultivated analytic reflection should be understood as referring to a feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, and therefore is to be distinguished from the equanimity that is one of the four immeasurables as well as the equanimity that is one of the eleven virtuous mental formations.<sup>658</sup> More specifically, the equanimity that arises from analytic reflection describes the effect of having cultivated the insight meditation of the mundane path. This form of wisdom gradually overcomes attachment toward the five sense objects of the desire realm. Thus, in this example, equanimity describes the neutral mental feeling that is generated in that process. With the experience gained through study and reflection, as well as through formal efforts to achieve one-pointed concentration, one can discover numerous other forms of virtuous mental feelings that, in Asanga’s words, are “consistent with absence of attachment.”

Developing such an awareness of “feelings that are related to departure” constitutes an important aspect of closely placed recollection of feelings.

### *The First Meditative Absorption*

The quintessential examples of “feelings that are related to departure” are the feelings that accompany the actual levels of mental composure achieved through the mundane path. These forms of one-pointed concentration include mainly the four meditative absorptions of the form realm and the four states of composure of the formless realm. Asanga glosses the term “meditative absorption” in the following manner:

The term “meditative absorption” refers to [a state in which the mind] mediates correctly on an object and recollection holds fast [to an object] one-pointedly.<sup>659</sup>

The sutras describe each of the four meditative absorptions with a formulaic statement. Asanga glosses each expression that appears in these statements in his *Listeners’ Level*. The canonical description of the first meditative absorption is as follows:

Separated from the objects of desire, separated from evil and non-virtuous qualities, [the practitioner] achieves and then remains in the first meditative absorption, which is characterized by the joy and ease that are born of separation and is accompanied by deliberation and reflection.<sup>660</sup>

Commentarial literature defines the meditative absorptions in terms of their main components or limbs.<sup>661</sup> The first meditative absorption consists of these five limbs: (1) deliberation, (2) reflection, (3) joy, (4) ease, and (5) one-pointedness of mind. Of these, deliberation and reflection are corrective limbs, in that they enable the practitioner to abandon the faults of the desire realm, including desire for sensory pleasures, malice,<sup>662</sup> harmfulness,<sup>663</sup> and [nonvirtuous] deliberative thoughts. Joy and pleasure are beneficial limbs, because the practitioner experiences the joy and ease that arise through having attained separation from the coarseness of the desire realm. One-pointedness of mind is the supporting limb in that the power of concentration enables the other limbs to take effect. Joy<sup>664</sup> is a pleasant mental feeling also described as mental well-being or

happiness of mind.<sup>665</sup> There is some disagreement in the commentarial literature regarding the limb called “ease.”<sup>666</sup> Je Tsongkapa explains that, according to the philosophical tradition associated with Asaṅga’s *Compendium of Higher Learning*, joy and ease refer to separate elements of one and the same pleasant feeling that accompanies the primary mind consciousness. It is called “joy” in that it is a mental feeling and “ease” in that it also benefits the sense faculties and the coarse physical body in which those faculties reside. However, *The Treasury of Higher Learning* states that, according to Vaibhāṣika School, the “ease” of both the first and second meditative absorptions does not refer to a feeling at all, but rather to the mental factor called “agility.”<sup>667</sup> Following the first interpretation, the joy and ease of the first meditative absorption represent feelings that are related to departure in that they are associated with a state of separation from the unhappiness of the desire realm.

### *The Second Meditative Absorption*

The canonical description of the second meditative absorption states:

Through having quelled deliberation and reflection, through [having attained] inner tranquility, and through [having reached] a state in which there is uniform attention of the mind, [the practitioner] achieves and then remains in the second meditative absorption, which is characterized by the joy and ease that are born of concentration and is free of deliberation and reflection.<sup>668</sup>

Vasubandhu describes the “inner tranquility” mentioned here as a kind of faith:

Through having attained the second meditative absorption, there arises in [the practitioner] a [strong sense of] confidence<sup>669</sup> toward the condition of having escaped from [the relative coarseness of a lower] state of mental composure. That is referred to here as “inner tranquility.”<sup>670</sup>

In contrast with this, Asaṅga’s *Collection of Determinations* identifies the essence of inner tranquility as [a combination of] recollection, vigilance, and [the] equanimity [that is a mental formation].<sup>671</sup> Asaṅga also describes the third characteristic, “through [having reached]

a state in which there is uniform attention of the mind,” as follows:

Through repeated cultivation of meditation, [the practitioner’s] one-pointed concentration that is free of both deliberation and reflection transcends the state in which it is [occasionally] broken and interrupted by a form of one-pointed concentration that includes deliberation and reflection, and reaches a state in which it is no longer broken or interrupted [by such one-pointed concentration].<sup>672</sup>

The second meditative absorption is described as being made up of these four limbs: (1) inner tranquility, (2) joy, (3) ease, and (4) one-pointedness of mind. “Inner tranquility” is the corrective limb because it removes the unsettling effect that deliberation and reflection continue to have upon the mind after the first meditative absorption has been achieved. The descriptions of the remaining three limbs are similar to those that were given for the first meditative absorption. The main difference is that here joy, ease, and one-pointed concentration have a greater depth and strength due to the absence of deliberation, reflection, and the mental afflictions that are specific to the first meditative absorption. The joy and ease of the second meditative absorption again represent feelings related to departure. The departure of this level constitutes separation from the discomfort caused by the indisposition that is present in the first meditative absorption.

### *The Third Meditative Absorption*

The canonical description of the third meditative absorption states:

Free of attachment to joy, [the practitioner] abides possessed of equanimity, recollection, and vigilance. He [or she] is also caused to experience pleasure with the body. [In this way,] he [or she] achieves and then remains in the third meditative absorption, [a state] in which joy is absent and about which the Āryas declare, “Possessed of recollection and equanimity, he [or she] dwells in [a state of] pleasure.”<sup>673</sup>

The third meditative absorption is made up of five limbs: (1) recollection, (2) vigilance, (3) equanimity, (4) pleasure, and (5) one-pointedness of mind. The principal obstacles to attainment of the third meditative absorption are joy and the mental afflictions that pertain to the second meditative

absorption. Joy, in particular, has an exciting effect upon the mind that prevents the practitioner from maintaining a state of continuous equanimity.<sup>674</sup> This equanimity is developed through cultivating recollection and vigilance. Hence, these three mental factors represent the corrective limbs of the third meditative absorption.

Asanga describes the fourth limb, called “pleasure,” in the following manner:

At that time, [the practitioner] is caused to experience with his physical and his mental body both a pleasant feeling and a pleasurable form of agility. Below the third meditative absorption, there exists neither such a form of pleasure nor uninterrupted equanimity. And while [uninterrupted] equanimity is possessed above the third meditative absorption, no pleasure exists there. Thus, because pleasure and equanimity do not exist together below this [level] and pleasure is not found above it, while this [level]—that is to say, the third meditative absorption—does support [both of these qualities], the Aryas declare in relation to a person who is abiding in such a state of attainment, “Possessed of recollection and equanimity, he dwells in [a state of] pleasure.”<sup>675</sup>

The pleasure of the third meditative absorption is a feeling related to departure in that the third meditative absorption is a state in which joy—also called happiness of mind<sup>676</sup>—has been transcended.

#### *The Fourth Meditative Absorption*

The canonical description of the fourth meditative absorption states:

With the abandonment of pleasure as well as the earlier abandonment of discomfort, and with the disappearance of both happiness and unhappiness of mind, [the practitioner] achieves and then remains in the fourth meditative absorption, which is characterized by the absence of any pleasant or unpleasant feeling, as well as by the purity of equanimity and recollection.<sup>677</sup>

The fourth meditative absorption is made up of four limbs: (1) purity of equanimity, (2) purity of recollection, (3) a feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, and (4) one-pointedness of mind. The purity of the first

two limbs stems from having overcome any and all movement or instability of the mind that is caused by the principal flaws associated with the first three meditative absorptions—that is, deliberation, reflection, joy, and the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. The third limb—a feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant—refers to the fact that in the fourth meditative absorption there are no pleasant or unpleasant physical or mental feelings. This limb also represents a feeling related to departure in that the fourth meditative absorption constitutes a state of separation from the pleasant feelings of the third meditative absorption.

#### *The Formless States of Composure*

The following passage presents language found in the sutras describing all four of the states of mental composure that are associated with the formless realm:

Through having completely transcended conceptions of form, through the disappearance of conceptions of resistance, and through not attending to conceptions of the multiplicity [of physical things], [the practitioner] develops a perception of unlimited space. By doing so, he [or she] achieves and then remains in the Sphere of Unlimited Space.<sup>678</sup>

Having completely transcended the Sphere of Unlimited Space, [the practitioner] develops a perception of unlimited consciousness. By doing so, he [or she] achieves and then remains in the Sphere of Unlimited Consciousness.<sup>679</sup>

Having completely transcended the Sphere of Unlimited Consciousness, [the practitioner] develops a perception that nothing at all exists. By doing so, he [or she] achieves and then remains in the Sphere of Nothingness.<sup>680</sup>

Having completely transcended the Sphere of Nothingness, [the practitioner] achieves and then remains in the Sphere in Which There Is Neither Conception nor Absence of Conception.<sup>681</sup>

Unlike the meditative absorptions of the form realm, these states of composure are not differentiated on the basis of limbs.

## THE TRANSCENDENT PATH

In *Listeners' Level*, Asaṅga introduces his discussion of the transcendent path with the following statement:

Now, [the practitioner] who is desirous of proceeding by means of the transcendent path should progressively develop, in relation to the Four Noble Truths, the seven forms of attention, beginning with that which repeatedly analyzes properties, etc., and ending with the fruit of having completed the practice, until he [or she] has attained the status of an Arhat.<sup>682</sup>

### *The form of attention that repeatedly analyzes properties*

The first form of attention consists of learning and reflecting on the meaning of the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths. Asaṅga presents an extensive account of the four aspects of the Noble Truth of Suffering on the basis of ten points. These points were discussed earlier in relation to the topic of the suffering of conditioned existence.<sup>683</sup> Following this, he also presents an explanation of the four aspects that relate to each of the remaining three Truths. He closes this discussion by saying: “This [analysis of the sixteen aspects by the practitioner] is referred to as ‘the form of attention that repeatedly analyzes properties internally and individually with regard to the Four Noble Truths.’” The practitioner not only analyzes his own five heaps that exist in the desire realm; he or she must also recognize through inference that the heaps that occur in the form and formless realms, which are not directly evident, must also exhibit the same nature as those of his or her own actual heaps. As was stated in the case of the mundane path, this first form of attention of the transcendent path is also one in which the practitioner practices a combination of the wisdom derived from listening and the wisdom derived from reflection.

### *The form of attention that is accompanied by conviction*

The second form of attention is achieved when the practitioner’s analysis results in a sure and definite certainty<sup>684</sup> concerning the Four Noble Truths on the basis of their sixteen aspects, which is to say that he or she gains a realization of the full extent of their range as well as the true nature of their being.<sup>685</sup> Having transcended the form of attention in which the main practice comprises a combination of listening wisdom and reflective wisdom, one begins to cultivate this thoroughgoing comprehension by applying a

form of conviction that exclusively cultivates the type of wisdom that is derived from meditation. In short, it is a stage in which the practitioner remains absorbed in a state of meditative composure with the Four Noble Truths as his or her meditation object.

Asaṅga notes that continuous practice of this form of attention brings about an “awareness of boundlessness”<sup>686</sup> in relation to the Truths of suffering and origination. This is an understanding that recognizes with deep conviction the limitless nature of such conditions as impermanence, suffering, selflessness, affliction, misdeeds, going to the lower states, the loss of prosperity, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation and the rest. The boundlessness of this awareness refers to the recognition that there will be no end or limit to these conditions, unless one is able to terminate the samsaric condition of continuous death and rebirth.

Despite the aversion and fear evoked by the understanding developed toward the first two of the Four Noble Truths, there remains in the practitioner’s mind an innate disinclination toward the peacefulness represented by nirvana. Asaṅga attributes this resistance to the habitual and deep-rooted preoccupation that one has had toward sensory pleasures throughout beginningless time; however, he identifies its ultimate source as a coarse form of egoistic pride<sup>687</sup> that, in the present context, is referred to as an “obstruction to spiritual realization.”<sup>688</sup> While absorbed in the current form of attention, the practitioner periodically manifests this pride through a variety of thoughts, such as these: “I exist as one who wanders in samsara”; “I exist as one who shall [for some time continue to] wander in samsara”; “I exist as one who shall attain nirvana [at some time in the future]”; “I exist as one who cultivates virtuous qualities, so that I may achieve complete nirvana”; “I exist as one who [correctly] perceives suffering, origination as origination, and cessation as cessation”; “I exist as one who perceives the path as the path”; “I exist as one who perceives the empty as being empty, that which is not to be desired as not worthy of being desired, and the signless as being free of signs”;<sup>689</sup> and “These are my [virtuous] attributes.” These are the causes and conditions that keep the practitioner’s mind from surging toward nirvana, even when his or her intense resolve is directed toward that goal.

Realizing the obstructive nature of this egoistic pride, the practitioner rejects the form of attention that permits the mind to follow its natural inclination and undertakes to examine the Truths anew with a more disciplined form of attention. This leads to the recognition that, as each instance of consciousness arises and then disappears, its perishing nature is perceived

with the succeeding instance of consciousness, and, in this manner, the mind forms an uninterrupted series.

The practitioner then directs his or her attention to the mind as the meditation object and grasps it firmly with the mind, in order to prevent that obstructive form of egoistic pride from having any opportunity to reappear. As one continues to meditate in this manner, the various aspects of the Four Noble Truths are perceived successively while observing the nature of the mind continuum. By means of this exercise, the practitioner is said to become “well established in the Noble Truths.”<sup>690</sup> As this understanding is cultivated continuously, the practitioner develops an awareness in which the apprehending mind is recognized as having the very same nature as the meditation object that is being apprehended.<sup>691</sup> With the arising of this awareness, the egoistic pride that obstructs the mind from engaging nirvana with delight is abandoned, in the sense that it no longer becomes active. This awareness is further described as being “accompanied by a weak form of forbearance.”<sup>692</sup> This represents the first of the four main levels of the Preparation Path. It is called “heat,” because at this level one experiences the first sign of the eventual transcendent path whose fire will consume the kindling of the mental afflictions. This is followed by a moderate form of forbearance, called “the summits,”<sup>693</sup> because it represents the highest point at which one’s virtue roots remain unsteady—which means that there is still a possibility of either falling back or developing further. The third level is called “forbearance,”<sup>694</sup> because one accepts the Truths in a strong manner and because there is no longer any possibility of suffering a downfall.

This progressive spiritual development is accomplished by a form of exertion in which the practitioner continuously analyzes and examines the nature of the mind continuum. Eventually, he or she is able to establish himself or herself in a nondiscriminating state of mind<sup>695</sup> that does not recognize the need for any mental exertion. At that point, the practitioner experiences a sensation in which the mind seems to have ceased functioning, although it has not done so. The mind also seems to lack any object, although it is not devoid of an object; and the mind seems as if it might disappear into a state of peace, although it does not actually disappear. Although the mediator has not yet actually reached the direct realization of the Seeing Path, he or she is on the verge of doing so. Thus, he or she is not far from achieving entry into the complete certainty of ultimate correctness.<sup>696</sup> The fourth and final level of the Preparation Path, which is called “the supreme mundane entities,”<sup>697</sup> is the last phase of this nondiscriminating state of mind. Immediately following this, the practitioner initiates a new mental exertion

in relation to the Truths that he or she has previously analyzed. It is called “the supreme mundane entities” because, subsequent to this, the practitioner will develop a transcendent mind for the first time. Thus, it represents the final boundary or limit of mundane conditioned entities. This entire range of practice comprises the stage in which the form of attention is one that is accompanied by conviction.

*The form of attention that brings separation*

Following the stage of the supreme worldly entities, the practitioner initiates yet another mental exertion with regard to the previously examined Truths. As soon as this exertion is made, there arises a certain knowledge that is a direct perception of the true nature of the Four Noble Truths. It arises sequentially and in the same order as that in which the Truths were previously examined, both with regard to those forms of entities that occur in the desire realm and those of the higher two realms. The arising of these realizations brings about the destruction of the mental afflictions of the three realms that are abandoned by the Seeing Path. This stage of the path represents the form of attention that brings separation. The Abhidharma literature in general and Asaṅga’s writings in particular have much to say about the nature of the mental afflictions as well as how and when they are abandoned; however, it would be too much of a digression to consider those details further here.

As noted earlier, Asaṅga describes feelings that are free of corporeal desire as those that are “derived from penetrating insight.” The phrase “penetrating insight” is a synonym for the Seeing Path. Therefore, the qualities associated with this type of feeling are not achieved until the practitioner reaches the status of an Ārya. By extension, it also follows that all the feelings of an ordinary person, who still possesses the seeds of all the three realms’ mental afflictions, represent feelings that are associated with corporeal desire.

*The form of attention that examines*

The next three forms of attention are all cultivated during the Meditation Path. During this stage of the path, the practitioner sets about abandoning all the remaining “innate” forms of the mental afflictions. Asaṅga describes this process in *Listeners’ Level* as consisting of eight activities and eleven types of meditation.<sup>698</sup> Although they are not identified by number or addressed in exactly the same manner, Asaṅga also discusses these activities and forms of meditation in the second chapter of his *Compendium of Higher Learning*, as part of the presentation on the Noble Truth of the Path.

With regard to the form of attention that examines, Asaṅga states:

The entire Meditation Path is characterized by the fact that, whatever [level of the] path has been reached and is being cultivated, the form of attention that examines is continually applied to investigate what [obstacles] have been abandoned and what [obstacles] have yet to be abandoned.<sup>699</sup>

*The form of attention that promotes delight*

With regard to this form of attention, Asaṅga states:

As [the practitioner] engages in meditation [during this portion of the path], the form of attention that promotes delight consists of (1) periodically investigating what [obstacles] have or have not been abandoned, (2) periodically instilling aversion in the mind toward those entities for which one should feel aversion, and (3) periodically instilling great delight toward those entities for which one should feel great delight.<sup>700</sup>

*The form of attention that completes the practice*

Asaṅga continues:

As a consequence of cultivating, meditating upon, and repeatedly practicing the form of attention that promotes delight, there [eventually] arises the final stage of training, called “the diamond-like concentration,”<sup>701</sup> whose purpose is to abandon all the remaining forms of the mental afflictions that are abandoned by the Meditation Path.<sup>702</sup>

*The form of attention that is the fruit of having completed the practice*  
After several pages of remarks, Asaṅga concludes:

This diamond-like concentration represents the form of attention that completes the practice.<sup>703</sup>

Asaṅga closes the work *Listeners’ Level* with this statement:

Moreover, the form of attention that is the fruit of having completed the practice is the attention that embodies the paramount

fruit of the Arhat’s state. On the basis of the transcendent path and through employing these seven forms of attention, [a practitioner] achieves the state of absolute completion.<sup>704</sup>

THE THIRD OBJECT OF CLOSELY PLACED RECOLLECTION: THE MIND

Asaṅga lists twenty types of mind that make up the range of objects that relate to the third form of closely placed recollection. These are divided into two categories: the first six are states of mind that can occur while one is moving about,<sup>705</sup> and the next fourteen occur while one is engaged in meditative practice.<sup>706</sup>

Those that relate to occasions when one is moving about are (1) a mind that is associated with desire, (2) a mind that is free of desire, (3) a mind that is associated with hatred, (4) a mind that is free of hatred, (5) a mind that is associated with ignorance, and (6) a mind that is free of ignorance. Clearly, the purpose of this distinction is to emphasize the need for the practitioner to prevent objects from afflicting his or her mind. The principal exercise for accomplishing this is to cultivate the activity called “restraint of the faculties.” As mentioned earlier,<sup>707</sup> this involves developing and maintaining a state of equanimity that enables the practitioner to prevent any of the root and secondary mental afflictions from entering his or her mind. Here is Asaṅga’s description of the qualities that are central to this exercise:

How does [the practitioner] become one who has developed well-guarded recollection?<sup>708</sup>

With the specific aim here of keeping the doors of the senses restrained, [the practitioner] completes the activities of taking up learning, reflection, or repeated meditation. On the strength of this learning, reflection, and meditation, one becomes endowed with regard to this very recollection that one has developed, or damaging it, or having it completely disappear, [the practitioner] periodically applies himself [or herself] to the cultivation of that same learning, reflection, or meditation. He [or she] does not relax this exercise or allow it to be abandoned. In this way, through the periodic exercise of learning, reflection, and meditation, there is accomplished a preservation of the recollection that has been attained through

learning and reflection. And thus, one develops a recollection that is well guarded.

How does [the practitioner] become one who has developed diligent recollection?<sup>709</sup>

[The practitioner does so by becoming] one who perpetually and zealously engages in that very recollection. In this context, perpetual engagement is referred to as “continual engagement” and zealous engagement is referred to as “attentive engagement.” In this way, [the practitioner] who continually and attentively engages in [recollection] is said to be one who has developed diligent recollection. To the extent that [the practitioner] develops well-guarded recollection, he [or she] will not become inattentive regarding that form of recollection. To the extent that [the practitioner] develops diligent recollection, he [or she] will become endowed with the strength to maintain a recollection that is unclouded. With this strength, [the practitioner] gains the power and ability to maintain control over visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and objects of the mind.

How does one develop a mind that is protected by means of recollection?<sup>710</sup>

Eye consciousness arises in dependence on the eye and visible forms. Immediately following the occurrence of this eye consciousness, there arises a mind consciousness that engages in deliberative thoughts. This deliberative mind consciousness generates desire toward those visible forms that have an attractive nature and generates aversion toward those visible objects that have an unattractive nature. On the strength of the very recollection [that was just described], [the practitioner] protects himself [or herself] from those improper deliberative thoughts that generate an afflicted state of mind to insure that he [or she] does not give rise to any of the mental afflictions.

Similarly, [all the other forms of consciousness up to] mind consciousness arise in dependence on the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, as well as [sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and] objects of the mind. Similarly, [the remaining forms of consciousness, including] that mind consciousness, are accompanied by improper deliberative thoughts that cause [various] mental afflictions to be generated. This occurs when [these improper deliberative thoughts] generate

desire toward those objects that have an attractive nature and generate aversion toward those that have an unattractive nature.

Therefore, [on the strength of the very recollection that was just described, the practitioner] protects his [or her] mind from those improper deliberative thoughts that generate an afflicted state of mind [in order to insure that he or she does not give rise to any of the mental afflictions]. In this way, one develops a mind that is protected by means of recollection.<sup>711</sup>

How does one become settled into a balanced state?<sup>712</sup>

A “balanced state” refers to a form of equanimity that is either virtuous or [morally] indeterminate. Having protected his [or her] mind from those improper deliberative thoughts that generate mental afflictions, [the practitioner] settles himself [or herself] into a state of equanimity that is either virtuous or [morally] indeterminate. This is referred to as “being settled into a balanced state,” and this is how one becomes settled into a balanced state.

How does one guard the mind from those improper deliberative thoughts that generate the mental afflictions?

This is accomplished by not being one who grasps at signs<sup>713</sup> or one who grasps at secondary marks<sup>713</sup> in relation to those objects of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and the mind, such that they might cause evil and nonvirtuous entities to flow subsequently into the mind. If, however, due to inattentive recollection or an abundance of mental afflictions, the activities of grasping at signs and grasping at secondary marks should occur despite one’s effort to avoid them, and this results in one being taken over by evil and nonvirtuous entities such that they do flow subsequently into one’s mind, one should strive to put a stop to them. Through these two forms [of practice], one guards the mind from those improper deliberative thoughts that generate the mental afflictions.<sup>714</sup>

The fourteen remaining states of mind consist of seven pairs that relate to aspects of meditation practice. Asanga provides the following brief description of these states:

Regarding [the fourteen states of mind that relate to contemplative practice], (1) a contracted mind<sup>715</sup> is one that, by means of a form of quiescence, has been fastened inwardly to a meditation object; (2) a distracted mind<sup>716</sup> is one that has become dispersed outwardly

toward the five sense objects; (3) a languid mind<sup>717</sup> is one that is accompanied by torpor and drowsiness; (4) a recained mind<sup>718</sup> is one that has been invigorated by means of an object that instills clarity; (5) an excited mind<sup>719</sup> is one that, because of having been overtly invigorated, has become perturbed by excitation<sup>720</sup>; (6) an unexcited mind<sup>721</sup> is one in which equanimity is achieved when efforts are being made either to invigorate [the mind] or draw it inward; (7) a pacified mind<sup>722</sup> is one that has been freed of the hindrances<sup>723</sup>; (8) an unpacified mind<sup>724</sup> is one that has not been freed [of the hindrances]; (9) a composed mind<sup>725</sup> is one that, through having been freed of the hindrances, has entered any of the main levels of meditative absorption; (10) an uncomposed mind<sup>726</sup> is one that has not entered [any of the main levels of meditative absorption]; (11) a well-cultivated mind<sup>727</sup> is one that, through having developed a familiarity with one-pointed concentration over a long period of time, has acquired the ability to enter a state of composure quickly, effortlessly, and whenever desired; (12) a mind that has not been well cultivated<sup>728</sup> should be understood as being the opposite of that [previous] mind; (13) a thoroughly liberated mind<sup>729</sup> is one that has been completely and absolutely liberated; (14) a mind that is not thoroughly liberated<sup>730</sup> is one that has not been completely and absolutely liberated.<sup>731</sup>

Of these fourteen states, Asaṅga further identifies the first eight as “contemplative mental states that relate to the stage of purifying oneself of the hindrances,”<sup>732</sup> and the last six as “contemplative mental states that relate to purification of the mental afflictions.”<sup>733</sup> Put differently, the first eight states have a direct correlation with the effort to develop quiescence through overcoming the five hindrances to meditative composure, and the last six have a direct correlation with developing and perfecting the practice of insight through either the mundane or the transendent paths, in order to bring about the permanent abandonment of the mental afflictions.

#### THE FOURTH OBJECT OF CLOSELY PLACED RECLECTION: ENTITIES

Asaṅga’s list of objects that are the focus for closely placed recollection of entities is directly related to the twenty states of mind that were identified in the previous form of this practice. The only difference is that here the

individual mental factors and states that are associated with the preceding twenty types of mind are presented in isolation from consciousness. Thus, Asaṅga lists these objects in the following manner:

What are entities? They are (1) desire, (2) the subdual of desire, (3) hatred, (4) the subdual of hatred, (5) ignorance, (6) the subdual of ignorance, (7) contraction, (8) distraction, (9) languor,<sup>734</sup> (10) retention,<sup>735</sup> (11) excitation,<sup>736</sup> (12) absence of excitation, (13) pacification, (14) absence of pacification, (15) the state of being well composed, (16) the state of not being well composed, (17) the state of having cultivated the path well, (18) the state of not having cultivated the path well, (19) the state of having cultivated liberation well, and (20) the state of not having cultivated liberation well. These twenty entities should be understood as a presentation of the negative qualities that relate to the process of affliction and the positive ones that relate to the process of purification.<sup>737</sup>

In short, these twenty entities represent the mental factors and states that obstruct or promote the pursuit of quiescence and insight. Asaṅga does not explain them further, since they can be understood by referring to the descriptions of the twenty states of mind that represent the objects for the practice of closely placed recollection of the mind.

As for the practice of closely placed recollection of entities, it is described initially as consisting mainly of recognizing any of the five hindrances when they occur, understanding the causes that will engender them, and cultivating their antidotes as needed. Paraphrasing canonical literature, Asaṅga describes this process as follows:

Whenever a hindrance is present internally, [the practitioner] knows this, [realizing to himself or herself] “A hindrance is present in me.” Whenever a hindrance is not present, [the practitioner] knows this, [realizing to himself or herself] “A hindrance is not present in me.” [The practitioner] also realizes both the manner in which a hindrance that has not arisen could arise and the manner in which one that has arisen can be removed.<sup>738</sup>

Similarly, an understanding of how the twelve inner and outer bases<sup>739</sup> have the potential to generate a variety of mental afflictions is also part of

this form of closely placed recollection. More specifically, this is described as developing an awareness of how each pair of inner and outer factors that cause the six types of consciousness to arise may evoke any of a group of nine fetters, and applying the appropriate antidote when needed. The nine fetters<sup>740</sup> are (1) attachment, (2) hatred, (3) pride, (4) ignorance, (5) views, (6) supreme considerations, (7) doubt, (8) jealousy, and (9) stinginess. Asaṅga provides the following brief description of this aspect of the practice:

Whenever [any of the fetters ranging from] a fetter related to the eye up to a fetter related to the mind is present, [the practitioner] knows this, [realizing to himself or herself], “[A fetter ranging from those related to the eye, etc.] up to a fetter related to the mind is present in me.” Whenever [a fetter ranging from those related to the eye, etc.] up to a fetter related to the mind is not present, [the practitioner] knows this, [realizing to himself or herself], “[A fetter ranging from those related to the eye, etc.] up to a fetter related to the mind is not present in me.” [The practitioner] also realizes both the manner in which [a fetter ranging from those related to the eye, etc.] up to a fetter related to the mind that has not arisen could arise and the manner in which one that has arisen can be made to cease.<sup>741</sup>

The final point that Asaṅga makes with regard to closely placed recollection of entities concerns how the culmination of this practice ultimately leads to a state of transcendent realization. This is suggested in a reference to another group of the thirty-seven factors conductive to enlightenment called “the seven limbs of enlightenment.”<sup>742</sup>

Whenever the enlightenment limb of recollection is present internally, [the practitioner] knows this, [realizing to himself or herself], “[The enlightenment limb of recollection is present in me.” Whenever it is not present, [the practitioner] knows this, [realizing to himself or herself], “It is not present in me.” [The practitioner] also realizes both the manner in which the enlightenment limb of recollection that has not arisen can be made to arise and the manner in which that which has arisen can be maintained, how one can avoid being inattentive regarding it, as well as how one’s meditation on it

can be accomplished and brought to a state in which it is further developed, increased, and expanded. As with the inner presence of the enlightenment limb of recollection, the same should be understood for the enlightenment limbs of discrimination of entities, joy, effort, agility, concentration, and equanimity.<sup>743</sup>

Asaṅga’s discussion of the fourth closely placed recollection concludes with this observation:

The overall subject of closely placed recollection of entities consists of this thorough knowledge of impure afflicted entities from the perspective of their essential nature, causes, disadvantages, and antidotes.<sup>744</sup>

In short, when the practitioner of the Listeners’ Vehicle succeeds in overcoming the hindrances and achieves quiescence, he or she continues to meditate on the nature of the five heaps and the Four Noble Truths within the structure of the transcient path in order to achieve, successively, the Preparation Path, the Seeing Path, the Meditation Path, and ultimately the fruit of becoming an Arhat. While the Mahāyāna practitioner does not seek to attain the goal of a Hinayāna Arhat, it is important to recognize that a Bodhisattva does need to practice and be well versed in the forms of spiritual training taught in the Hinayāna scriptures. As Je Tsongkapa explains in his *Great Treatise*:

The aim of the Bodhisattvas is to accomplish the welfare of the world. Moreover, since they must look after and instruct those beings who are associated with all three types of spiritual lineage,<sup>745</sup> they must also train themselves in each of those respective paths; because, if they themselves lack an accurate understanding [of those paths], they cannot possibly teach them to others. This is indicated in the *Commentary on Bodhicittta*, which states:

Desirous of instilling in others  
The same knowledge as that  
Which they themselves have gained,  
The wise strive continually and without error.<sup>746</sup>

The *Extensive Treatise on Knowledge* also states:

Without knowing the aim and its cause,  
It is difficult to explain them.<sup>747</sup>

Likewise, the Invincible One<sup>748</sup> declares in the following line of verse that knowledge of the paths associated with all three vehicles is the means by which Bodhisattvas can accomplish their aim:

... which, through the Knowledge of the path, accomplishes  
the aim of the world for those who aid beings.<sup>749</sup>

It is also stated in the *Mother of the Conquerors*:<sup>750</sup>

The Bodhisattva, [the Great Being,] should generate all the paths and cognize all the paths. Moreover, he [or she] should perfect these paths—which include the Listeners' path, the Solitary Realizers' path, and the path to Buddhahood. [The Bodhisattva] should also carry out, by means of these [paths], the activities of the path that are to be carried out...<sup>751</sup>

Therefore, to assert that one should not train oneself in the Hinayāna collection of scriptures because one is a Mahayanist is an argument in which the reason supports the opposite of what is being claimed. The pursuit of the Mahāyāna path includes two aspects: a common path and an uncommon path. Since the common path is that which is found in the Hinayāna collection of scriptures, how could that be something that one should discard? Thus, except for a few unique elements such as the aspiration to achieve the happiness of [Hinayāna] Peace for oneself alone, all the practices found there must also be practiced by Mahayanists. This is the reason that all three vehicles are taught at length in the very extensive collection of Bodhisattva scriptures.<sup>752</sup>

The first point that Je Tsongkapa stresses in this passage is the fact that a Mahayanist must be proficient in the Hinayāna path so that he or she can teach beings of that spiritual lineage the practices that must be cultivated in order to pursue and attain the goal of personal liberation. However, a person who possesses the Mahāyāna spiritual lineage must also develop the fundamental knowledges that are common to all the Buddhist vehicles in order to further his or her own spiritual development. This includes, in particular,

the attitude of renunciation and knowledge of the insubstantiality of the person. We have already examined the manner in which an understanding of the five heaps is essential to developing a more refined understanding of these two topics. In the final chapter of this study we will address how these fundamental teachings are also critical to a practitioner's ability to generate the kind of spiritual knowledge that is unique to the Mahāyāna path.

# Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice

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## Śamathavipasyanāyuganaddha: The Two Leading Principles of Buddhist Meditation

Geshe Sopa

Meditation<sup>1</sup> is one of the indispensables for the practice of Buddhism, as it is one of the three disciplines (*triṇiśikṣāni*)—lawful conduct, meditation, and understanding (*sīla*, *saṃādhi*, and *prajñā*)—in which the entire practice of Buddhism is contained. The aim of this discussion, then, is to attempt to explicate somewhat the subject of meditation as set forth in the Buddhist sūtras and the commentarial works of major Indian *ācāryas* and of Tibetan scholars, in particular the *Lam rīns* of Tsong kha pa.

At the outset, we meet a problem which ought to be noted, namely, the terminology by which the subject of meditation is traditionally explained. Meditation and the procedure of learning how to meditate is a matter at least as technical and as little innate as learning, say to play a piano or to perform surgery. Nonetheless, classical exposition of meditation, although in fact highly technical, makes use of words having a variety of common meanings and connotations which, if taken literally, can easily be misleading and consequently betray the actual subject. For instance, a key term such as *śamathavipasyanāyuganaddha* might fairly literally be rendered as “tranquility coupled with insight” or “calming joined with insight,” and so on, but if such expressions

should conjure up in a hearer an image of a man sitting peacefully thinking or intuiting a philosophical concept, the true meaning will have been lost. Such misinterpretation does in fact occur, since *vipasyanā* has also been characterized by some as “an intense contemplation of philosophical propositions”; similarly, others having a like notion speak therefore of a “dry *vipasyanā*,” in other words, a *vipasyanā* without *śamatha*, even though the presence of *śamatha* is held to be an indispensable condition for all *vipasyanā*. The same problem exists for many other key meditative terms such as *layauddhatya*, *karmaṇyata*, *cittaprasrabha*, *nābhisaṃskāra*, and so on. In attempting to cope with this problem, we hope that in looking at some of the classical descriptions of the meditative procedure, the actual sense of such terms may become more apparent by way of grasping the psychological processes entailed in the actual act of meditating, rather than the etymological derivations of the terminology which describes them.

Notwithstanding the great importance of meditation to the practice of Buddhism, there is not, as far as I can determine, a *locus classicus* in the work of any Indian or Tibetan *ācārya* which seeks to set forth a definition of meditation. The reason for this is probably that there is not possible a single definition of meditation that will be all-inclusive of the literally thousands of meditations which Buddhism espoused and practiced. Yet in spite of the obvious complexity of these various details, all of these meditations are reducible to two types, fixative and analytic, and these may be defined and discussed separately.

The division of meditation into fixative and analytic is probably the simplest all-inclusive division of meditation possible, and thus it includes the more familiar division of meditation into *śamatha* and *vipasyanā*, which will tentatively be rendered as “(mental) stabilization” and “higher vision,” respectively. The perfect union of these two, mental stabilization and higher vision (*śamathavipasyanāyuganaddha*), is the immediate aim of Buddhist meditative practice, for all the

paths of Buddhism—whether Hinayāna or Mahayāna including Vajrayāna—depend upon this coupling.

The nature of (mental) stabilization (*samatha*) is just a one-pointedness of mind (*cittakāgratā*) on a meditative object (*alambana*). Whatever the object may be, and whether it is actually present or imagined merely, concrete or abstract, and so on, if the mind can remain upon its object one-pointedly spontaneously without effort (*nābhisamskāra*), and for as long a period of time as the meditator likes, it is approaching the attainment of mental stabilization. Actual stabilization in addition to the foregoing, however, is a particular state of mental focus (*saṃādhi*) which is possessed also of a dexterity (*cittaprasrabha* = *karmayatā*) elicited by the power of the mind's remaining one-pointedly on its meditative object. Here, the key word is dexterity, for this mental stabilization is a special kind of mental dexterity which can perform a wide variety of functions which the mind would be incapable of doing without it. All such mental stabilization on an object is fixative meditation. However, the term "fixative meditation" is somewhat broader, for prior to and preparatory to the achievement of actual stabilization, there are a variety of states of mental focusing which aim at, but do not completely reach, the dexterity of actual mental stabilization, and these also may be designated as fixative meditations.

These states of mental focusing (*saṃādhi*) occurring before the actual achievement of mental stabilization which are included within fixative meditation are variously explained. One of the most important methods of explanation is from the point of view of nine mental fixations, beginning with the initial efforts to fix the mind one-pointedly on an object of meditation, up to the attainment of the capacity of the mind to remain effortlessly one-pointed on the meditative object. These are a schematization of nine steps leading up to the attainment of mental stabilization.

The first mental fixation is called "interiorization" and signifies the sporadic concentration which is constantly being

interrupted by thoughts and which is achieved at the beginning only by withdrawing the mind again and again from the flow of ideation and fixing it again and again on the object of meditation. The second, called "duration fixation," is an advance in the ability of the mind to remain focused longer on the meditative object. The third, "refixation," means that the mind when it leaves the meditative object is forced back again, as at this stage the mind remains focused on the object more of the time than it is distracted as was the case with the first two mental fixations. The fourth is called "close fixation" because at this point the mind, because of the development of a great power of attention, no longer loses the object of meditation. During this fourth fixation, the mind is held forcibly on the meditative object by a strong power of attention. Consequently, there is a danger of the mental concentration's giving way to a subtle lethargy or torpor (*laya*). The fifth, called "the disciplined," marks an advance in control over the mind's succumbing to lethargy, for at the time of the fifth fixation, the mind is under a constant surveillance by means of an introspective awareness which watches out for the danger of the mind's becoming lethargic or sinking. When the danger of the mind's becoming lethargic is spotted, the meditator must heighten the mind again by considering the beneficial results of the attainment of mental focus (*saṃādhi*) or by meditating on a perception of bright light, and so on. As a consequence of too much heightening of the mind, on the other hand, there arises the opposite danger of the mind's becoming overstimulated or excited (*audhṛtīya*), and during the sixth fixation, called "the pacified," this is brought under control by watching out with introspective awareness for the danger of arising excitement, and suppressing it by means of reflection on death, the bad results of mental distraction, and so on. At this point, both the power of attentiveness and introspective awareness have been highly developed. Then, during the seventh mental fixation, called "the completely pacified," the meditator especially cultivates the power of effort by means of which he keeps getting rid of

even the subtlest lethargy or excitement. When, by the power of such effort, the meditator can extend the duration of the mind's remaining one-pointedly on the meditative object for as long a time as he likes without a trace of even a subtle lethargy or excitement, this becomes the eighth mental fixation, called "the one-pointed." Finally, during the ninth, called "even fixation," the mind remains on the meditative object spontaneously, without effort, and for as long a time as the meditator desires.

With the attainment of the ninth mental fixation, the mind can remain spontaneously and without effort on the meditative object, and at this point the mind has become so completely acclimatized to meditative concentration that all traces of physical sluggishness and mental uneasiness in meditation have been eliminated. As a consequence, there arises a particular sense of felicity of mind and body called "the pleasure of the mind and body tempered for use" (*karmanyatā*). At this sense of felicity, which is at first a possible danger to meditative concentration, becomes slighter and slighter, there arises finally a particularly flawless state of concentration in which even a sense of a subtle physical or mental pleasure is no longer noticed, and this is the attainment of actual mental stabilization (*śamatha*).

The process of cultivating mental stabilization through recourse to the foregoing nine mental fixations is sometimes condensed into four placements of the thought, and there are other methods of explanation as well. These steps leading to the attainment of a perfect one-pointedness of mind which is the characteristic of all *śamatha* are all within the category of fixative meditation.

It ought to be fairly apparent that such one-pointedness of mind *per se* is devoid of reflection, or analysis, or discursive thought, and the power to think discursively without losing thereby the clarity of the meditative object which mental stabilization effects is a subsequent development resulting from an additional training of the mind. This power to reflect discursively on the nature of the meditative object at the

time when the previously mentioned mental stabilization is present is called *vipāṣyānā* or "higher vision." Here, by the "nature" of the meditative object is meant, of course, its final or ultimate reality in the sense at least of a limit of cognizability—but not only that. Objects around us potentially present us with a variety of true qualities which are not at all apparent to simple, naïve observation—for example, impermanence, continuous flux, the Four Noble Truths, and so on. Consequently, a wide variety of true qualities, as well as the ultimate reality, of the meditative object may be said to constitute the nature of the object. More specifically, then, higher vision is a particular understanding (*prajñā*) which is possessed of a dexterity which is elicited by the power of analyzing the meditative object while *mental stabilization is present*. Here again, the key word is dexterity, for superior vision is a quite special kind of mental dexterity, having its own particular properties and uses. All higher vision is analytic meditation, which, as in the instance of fixative meditation, is the somewhat broader term; for here also, prior to the preparatory to the attainment of higher vision, there are a variety of meditations which aim at, but do not reach, the dexterity of actual higher vision, and these, too, are analytic meditations.

Inasmuch as the full attainment of mental stabilization is the condition *sine qua non* for all higher vision, the attainment of higher vision, which is a process quite distinct from stabilization itself, is also called the union of stabilization and higher vision. On the attainment of the union of these two kinds of mental dexterity depend all the paths of purification of the passions (*klesā*). The word "passions" here ought to be taken in its wider and etymological sense, in which it denotes not just a strong attraction to objects but includes all the afflictions characterizable as impediments to emancipation, such as hatred, anger, and conceit as well as lust, greed, covetousness, and so on. The word, derived from the Latin *passus*, "to suffer," ought also to carry here its etymological meaning of suffering. For Buddhists, as for

many other ancient ethical philosophers, the passions are sufferings, and both the Sanskrit *klesā* and the Tibetan *nyon-mongs*, which we are rendering here as "the passions," carry very strongly this connotation of suffering.

These paths of purifying the passions, in turn, are either mundane (*laukika*) or transmundane (*lokottara*), and the elimination of the passions which they effect are, respectively, temporary or lasting. The mundane path brings about a temporary suppression of the passions, whereas the transmundane path causes their complete uprooting or extirpation. In the Buddhist sense, the mundane or world order is a condition which is characterized from top to bottom by impermanence and perpetual flux under the sway of action (*karma*) and the passions, and the consequent vicissitudes of all its inhabitants as, under the sway of action and the passions, the most superior conditions in the world give way in time to the most inferior. Thus, the highest good cannot be sought in terms of a condition constantly fluctuating under the power of action and the passions, for, as noted often by philosophy, men do not merely wish to possess the good, but to possess it always. Such being the Buddhist view of the instability of the highest good which the mundane condition affords, the specifically Buddhist paths aim therefore at the transmundane where karmic destruction and the like have no foothold.

This path, which we render here as the mundane path for the elimination of the passions, is not a practice peculiar to Buddhism, but has been shared by such non-Buddhist systems of meditation and yoga as Sāṃkhya. It is this system of yoga practice which the Buddha Śākyamuni learned from the Sāṃkhya philosopher and yogin, Udrako Rāmaputra, and the followers of the Hīnayāna cultivate it especially to bring about a fairly rapid alleviation of the passions by means of their temporary suppression. Subsequently, upon the completion of this path they initiate the transmundane path and recapitulate their obliteration of the passions; by this latter path, however, they bring about complete extirpation of true cessation. The followers of the Mahāyāna likewise cultivate

the mundane part, less, however, for its value in suppressing the passions as for gaining the kinds of knowledge which its mastery affords, as well as for improving the technical mastery of meditation or yoga, terms which, incidentally, are synonymous.

The mundane path for the elimination of the passions is the yoga practice of the four trances (*caturārī dhyāṇā*) and the four formless absorptions (*arūpyasamāpatti*). Here, the process is fundamentally one of a sublimation of the consciousness by means of the progressive reduction of attachment, "attachment" denoting specifically an attraction to an object which is accompanied by a wrong mental activity, such as being ignorant of the nature and qualities of the object. Thus, the principal method of this practice is the reduction of attachment itself, and since the other passions—jealousy, anger, and the like—depend ultimately upon attachment, this path cuts off their arising as well by the progressive elimination of the arising of attachment. Mastery of each higher trance and absorption has the power of controlling the one immediately below it up to the highest of the absorptions, called variously "the mundane summit" or "neither perception nor nonperception" (*nāvāsamajñā-nāśamajñā*). As this is the climax of the path, there is no position above it which can control the residuum of attachment belonging to the "summit." The elimination of this residuum can only be achieved by recourse to the transmundane path.

As for the actual practice of the four trances and the four formless absorptions, the attainment of mental stabilization is the threshold of the first trance. Actual mastery of the first trance, however, also needs the higher vision which has as its object the superiority of the first trance mentality to the ordinary mentalities of the world of desire. Here, the yogin reviews instead the faults and bad effects arising from attachment to objects of attraction to the five senses and contemplates the comparative superiority and serenity of the qualities of the first trance as they have been learned from study and reflection. Subsequently, he obliterates successively

the nonvirtues and the most gross attachments belonging to the world of desire, then the middling, and finally even the smallest. With the eradication of even the smallest attachments, the first trance mentality is fully attained, and the mastery of the first trance is the basis for the development of the five kinds of paranormal cognition (*abhijñā*), clairvoyance, clairaudience, and so on, each of which has its own particular preparation and mastery. As for the second trance, the yogin now begins to contemplate the comparative superiority and serenity of the qualities of the second trance mentality to that of the first trance, and again he removes successively the most gross, middling, and finest attachments to qualities belonging to the first trance, and the same procedure is repeated for the remaining two trances and the four formless absorptions, each taking the immediately preceding as the basis.

Through each succeeding trance and absorption, the consciousness has become more and more subtle, as fewer and fewer of the sense consciousnesses continue to operate. At the postclimax of the formless absorptions, there is one more absorption not properly belonging to the mundane path, but accessible (to the Āryan individual), that is, one who has attained the "path of vision" (*darsñā-mārga*) only by way of mastery (*maula*) of the highest of the four formless absorptions. In this absorption, called the "cessation trance" (*nirodha-samāpatti*), the consciousness is so attenuated and subtle as to be tantamount to unconsciousness, since all sense and mental consciousness seem to cease to function. Similarly, at the time of the fourth trance, there is another trance called "no-perception" (*asamjñā-samāpatti*) resembling this one, but on a lower and less profound level. The subject of these two trances would require an essay of its own for a full treatment, for some non-Buddhist yogins have held the "no-perception trance" to be the condition of emancipation; some schools of the Hīnayāna have held that consciousness is in fact suspended during the "no-perception" and "cessation" trances; such Mahāyāna schools as the Yogācāra have used

these trance conditions as an argument to support their theory of an *ālaya*-consciousness, to explain the continuity of an individual consciousness before and after these trances; others, such as the Mādhyamikas, have opined that a very subtle form of mental consciousness remains active during these trances; and so on. However one explains the psycho-physical workings of the "no-perception" and "cessation" trances, though, at the point of the absorptions called "the mundane summit," the mundane path of purifying the passions is completed, and the arisen passions which can be removed by a mundane path are completely effaced. Their seeds, however, are not effaced and, for that matter, not even all of the arisen attachments, for, as explained earlier, there is no higher point from which it is possible to establish control over the attachments belonging to the "summit." Hence, the residuum of arisen attachment which cannot be removed remains as a seed or root from which the lower attachments may again ripen. Therefore, it is said in the *First Bhavāṅkrama* (T.T., Vol. 108, p. 26 [fol. 34b]): "Even though one has developed trance through meditation, this does not destroy the perception of a self. The passions will ripen again for him, for it is like the trance cultivated by Rāmaputra."

Almost everything discussed up to this point does not belong specifically to Buddhist meditation, for the attainment of mental stabilization, higher vision, the union of stabilization and higher vision, the mundane path of the four trances and the four formless absorptions, the five kinds of paramonmental cognition, and so on are attainments shared by non-Buddhist systems of *yoga*. Therefore, in the following discussion, we shall try to set forth briefly the specifically Buddhist paths of meditation not shared by the non-Buddhists.

At the beginning of the previous brief discussion of the mundane path, it was said that the attainment of stabilization is the threshold of the first trance. To speak more precisely, it is the preparation (*sāmantaka*) for the first trance, for each of the four trances and the four formless absorptions has its own particular preparations. This prepara-

tion for the first trance, however, is so distinctive that it has been given a special name, "the potential" (*anāgama*), for unlike the other preparations it is uncommitted *per se*, like a fork in the road, it can lead in one direction or in another, and it is the necessary point of departure for either direction. With the attainment of the first trance preparation, "the potential," the yogin may develop first the mundane path and subsequently the transmundane, or he may straightaway begin the development of the transmundane path. It is taught that the Hinayāna followers of sharp intelligence do generally uproot the passions directly by recourse to the transmundane path alone without prior development of the mundane. Likewise, the followers of the Mahāyāna may elect either course of development, although the purposes for cultivating the mundane path are quite different for Hinayāna and Mahāyāna. Moreover, the reason why "the potential" is the necessary point of departure for either path is that the development of either path depends upon higher vision, and higher vision is only possible through recourse to some mentality belonging to one of the four trances or the four formless absorptions. Given a choice, the fourth trance mentality would be the most serviceable, because it is free of certain undesirable gross qualities of the first three trance mentalities, and it is not so attenuated as the mentalities belonging to the four formless absorptions. The minimal requirement for the practice of higher vision is the attainment of at least the outer limit of the first trance mentality, that is, the full attainment of mental stabilization coupled with enough attainment of the power of higher vision to be capable of developing the specific preparations for either the mundane or the transmundane path. This is the general preparation called "the potential."

The development of the transmundane path, then, is by means of a higher vision which has as its object some kind of no-self (*nairātmya*). *Nairātmya* theory, whether in its simplest form of the no-self of the individual or in its more developed form of the two *nairātmyas*, i.e., both the no-self of the in-

dividual and the no-self of all existents, is a distinctively Buddhist viewpoint which is not shared by non-Buddhists. According to this viewpoint, self is neither a *bona fide* phenomenon nor any other kind of actual or real, and it is just this false apprehension of a self which is the ultimate basis or ground on which the passions depend. Consequently, the specifically Buddhist paths for elimination of the passions are by way of removing this final ground of apprehension of a self through the direct perception of things as they in fact are, i.e., devoid of selfhood. The production of this kind of direct perception is the immediate aim of Buddhist yoga.

In preparation for the transmundane path, the yogin reviews the truths, the four truths (*cattvārāryā-satyāni*) or the two truths (*satya dvaya*), and in the presence of mental stabilization upon a meditative object begins to analyze the object from the point of view of the truths. The objective of this analysis is a definitive ascertainment of the reality limit of the meditative object. The results of this kind of analytical search for the reality limit of the meditative object in the presence of mental stabilization is a progressive series of penetrations which begin to approach more and more a true perception of the reality of the meditative object. These steps of penetration, which are preparatory to direct perception of the ultimate reality of the object, are known traditionally as "the approximations of the definitive separation" (*nirvedha-bhāgiya*), because they approximate more and more closely separation from the passions and nescience, which are eliminated by seeing the truth. They are schematized as fourfold, beginning with the approximation called "heat" (*ūṣman*) and ending with the approximation called "highest worldly qualities" (*lāukikāgryā-dharma*). Immediately following the penetration called "highest worldly qualities," there ensues an ascertainment by direct perception (*pratyākṣa*) of the highest reality limit attainable upon a given path, and this moment marks the beginning of the kind of path which we are rendering as the transmundane. For the Hinayāna, this is a direct, unperverted perception of the four truths; for the Mahāyāna,

this is a direct, unperverted perception of emptiness (śūnyatā). Although this perception arises from the course of analytic thinking, it is itself devoid of all discursiveness or reflection, like all other kinds of direct perception.

For Buddhism this attainment of a direct, unperverted perception of the highest truth is the moment dividing the Āryan from the ordinary individual, and subsequently there is nothing further to see by way of seeing the truth. Nonetheless, the final goal of the path is far from attained at this point, for, although with the attainment of the power of direct, unperverted perception of the truth, certain kinds of passions and nescience are easily eliminated, there is still a host of deeply ingrained, inveterate, and difficult-to-erase passions still to be uprooted. The uprooting of these is effected, subsequently, by degrees, beginning with the gross and ending with the fine, through a constant application and recourse to this meditation which directly perceives the truth. When even the smallest of these passions has been uprooted along with its seeds, the final goal of the path is obtained, the condition of emancipation (*vimokṣa*) or freedom from the miseries of the round of existences (*samsāra*), the perfect purification of Arhantship.

The path as we have briefly outlined it is frequently subdivided into five parts or subpaths, the path of accumulation (*sambhāra-mārga*), the path of reaching (*prayoga-mārga*), the path of vision (*darśana-mārga*), the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-mārga*), and the path of no further training (*asākṣa-mārga*). The first two subdivisions, the paths of accumulation and of reaching, belong to the ordinary individuality (*prithagjana*), whereas the last three subdivisions are those of the Āryan individuality. The first moment of the path of vision is, in the Buddhist sense, the point dividing these two kinds of individuality, since the first two paths are stages of practice by means of adhesion through faith whereas the practice of the remaining stages is by means of one's own firsthand perception of the real.

The path of accumulation commences with a devoted at-

tention to the Buddhist teaching and climaxes with the full attainment of mental stabilization. When mental stabilization has been obtained, the yogin commences the practice of the path of reaching, which is primarily the development of higher vision having the truths as its object. The path of reaching is subdivided into four yogic levels which are coextensive with the four "approximations of real separation" already mentioned. At the climax of the highest approximation, called "highest worldly qualities," there ensues the first moment of a direct, unperverted perception of the truths, and this marks the first moment of the path of vision. With the attainment of the path of vision, there begins the actual uprooting of the passions and nesciences, commencing with the most gross and easiest to eliminate. These uprootings are called "riddances by means of seeing" or "seeing riddances," and they are schematized as eightfold, or two seeing riddances for each of the four truths. These two seeing riddances for each of the four truths derive from whether they belong to the mentality of the realm of desire or the mentalities of the four trances and the four formless absorptions. With the extirpation of these eight, there commences the difficult training to remove the subtler and more difficult-to-eradicate passions and nesciences belonging to the mentalities of the desire realm and the realms of the trances and absorptions. This training constitutes the practice of the path of cultivation, and the passions and nesciences eliminated here are called "riddances by cultivation" or "cultivation riddances." These cultivation riddances are schematized as ninefold, from the nine divisions of the foregoing realms, i.e., the mentality of the desire realm, the mentalities of the four trances, and the mentalities of the four formless absorptions. These again are further schematized as eighty-one-fold, i.e., great-great, middle-great, small-great, great-middling, middle-middling, small-middling, great-small, middle-small, small-small, belonging to each of the nine subdivisions of the three realms. With the eradication of the smallest of the small belonging to the "world summit," the path of cultivation is completed,

and with the final completion of all the seeing riddances and cultivation riddances, there is obtained the final level and fruition of the path, the path of no further training.

What has been sketched quite briefly is the specifically Buddhist path of purifying the passions by recourse to meditation on *nairātmya*, and is principally delineated negatively by way of the manifold of cessation of the passions and of conscience which is achieved by the cultivation of the path.

This manifold of cessation achieved by recourse to meditation on *nairātmya* is shared by both the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna. The specifically Mahāyāna path, however, in addition to removing the passion obscurations which are the main obstacles to personal deliverance from the ills of the world, aims also and primarily at the full removal of the knowledge obscurations, which are the chief obstacles to the perfect enlightenment of the Buddha himself, who in addition to accomplishing the path of purification resulting in his own deliverance has acquired a host of noble qualities of great benefit to others as well. Thus, since the goal of the Mahāyāna path is considerably more comprehensive than that of the Hinayāna, its path is considerably more comprehensive as well, for inasmuch as perfect enlightenment is possessed of these many qualities which benefit others, the path bringing about perfect enlightenment needs also to cultivate the methods of producing these qualities.

Consequently, to bring about the kind of mentality capable of striving for the obtainment of full perfect enlightenment for the sake of others, i.e., the mind to enlightenment or *bodhicitta*, the Mahāyāna path takes as its basis the development of great love and compassion, or the wish to see all living creatures possessed of happiness and free from ills. This attitude of great love and compassion is cultivated at the very start by a variety of methods so that the activity on the path may be properly and efficaciously motivated and thus not fall short of the final goal.

The bare schematization of the Mahāyāna path is like the system of five paths already discussed: development of mental

stabilization on the path of accumulation, the steps of higher vision on the path of reaching, the eight seeing riddances on the path of vision, the nine and eighty-one-fold cultivation riddances on the path of cultivation, and so on. However, the actual course of development of the Mahāyāna path cannot easily be generalized in some areas because they have been explained with important variations by the Mahāyāna systems, i.e., the Yogācāra and the two varieties of Mādhyamika, the Svātantrika and the Prāsaṅgika, and each has provided its own specific variation of the details of the Mahāyāna path.

The Yogācāra, for example, distinguishes between the kind of understanding which is produced on the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna paths of vision, and holds that the Hinayāna achieves a direct understanding of the no-self of individuals (*pudgala-nairātmya*), whereas the Mahāyāna achieves an understanding of the no-self of all existents (*dharma-nairātmya*) as well, *dharma-nairātmya* signifying nonduality for the Yogācāra. The Yogācāra Svātantrika Mādhyamika also makes a distinction between the objects of understanding developed by the paths and holds that one kind of Hinayāna path, called the Śravaka-vehicle, obtains understanding of *pudgala-nairātmya*; that another kind of Hinayāna path, called the Pratyekabuddha-vehicle, also reaches an understanding of nonduality like the Yogācāra's idea of śūnyata; and that the Mahāyāna path alone reaches the full understanding of emptiness (śūnyatā = the two *nairātymas*). According to the Yogācāra Svātantrika Mādhyamika, it is on the basis of a different understanding of no-self that the differences between the paths depend. The Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, on the other hand, holds that there is no difference in the understanding of no-self achieved by the Hinayāna and Mahāyāna paths, and that what differentiates them is the kind of method (*upāya*) which each cultivates, the Hinayāna lacking mainly the great compassion which is the root of the Mahāyāna. Similarly, there are differences among the Mahāyāna systems in their manner of distributing among the

knowledge and passion obscurations the passions and nesciences which constitute the meditation and cultivation rideances, as all nesciences are not reckoned as knowledge obscurations and are frequently put on the side of passion obscurations. Knowledge obscurations denote primarily habit formations which are the dispositions of past passions and nesciences and constitute what is sometimes called the "transcendental illusion."

Having indicated roughly that some areas such as these cannot be generalized, it is possible to proceed to the salient features of the Mahāyāna path which are shared by all Mahāyāna systems and by virtue of which they are Mahāyāna.

In addition to the development of the great love and compassion and the mind to enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) which motivate the development of the paths of accumulation and of reaching, at the time of reaching the path of vision the Mahāyāna path joins the cultivation of the full mastery of the perfections (*pāramitā*) to the process of obliteration of the passions. Along with accomplishing the manifold of cessation resulting in one's own individual emancipation, it thereby produces ten levels (*daśa-bhūmi*) approaching progressively closer and closer to full perfect enlightenment.

From the beginning of the first moment of the Mahāyāna's path of vision, the yogin's activity is predicated on two kinds of gnostic knowledge, i.e., at the time of meditation on

śūnyatā (*śamāhita-jiññāna*) and at the time of subsequent understanding (*pr̥ṣṭha-labdhajñāna*). At the time of meditation on śūnyatā, he perceives things directly as they are. At the time of subsequent understanding, he sees all things as resembling an illusion of magic, for upon his emerging from such meditation, the "transcendental illusion" again arises even though he understands it to be just like a magical illusion.

On the bases of these two kinds of gnostic understanding, he cultivates the perfections (*pāramita*). These perfections are the six: the perfection of giving, of a lawful conduct, of patience, of manly effort, of meditation, and of wisdom. Of

these six, the perfection of wisdom alone is on the side of wisdom and the accumulation of gnoses, and the other five are on the side of method and the accumulation of merit. For at the time of full perfect enlightenment, the accumulation of gnoses is the cause of the noncorporeal body (*dharma-kaya*) of the Buddha, whereas the accumulation of merit is the cause of the Buddha's corporeal bodies (*sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*). The actual method of cultivating the perfections is by way of subdistribution, for each perfection entails the others, and there are six hexads, making thirty-six: a giving of giving, a lawful conduct in giving, a patience in giving, an effort in giving, a meditation during giving, a wisdom in giving, a giving of lawful conduct, and so on, up to a wisdom of wisdom. To these six are added another four: the perfections of method, of vowed, of power, and of gnoses, although these do not participate in the method of acquiring the six perfections by means of mastering them one by one through their subdistributions. The cultivation and full attainment of these ten perfections is coextensive with the Mahāyāna paths of vision and of cultivation. On the path of vision the perfection of giving is attained, and this, along with the seeing riddances, constitutes the first of the ten levels (*daśa-bhūmi*). The remaining nine levels are the stages of the Mahāyāna path of cultivation, and on each of these, one by one respectively, the remaining nine perfections are cultivated and achieved.

During the progress of the ten levels, the yogin has been alternating between two kinds of gnosis, at the time of meditation and subsequent understanding. At the climax of the tenth level, there arises a particular concentration called "the concentration like adamant" (*vajropamasamādhī*), at the termination of which these two kinds of gnoses (*samāhita* and *pr̥ṣṭha-labdhajñāna*) arise simultaneously, and there likewise arises the aggregation of physical and mental qualities which constitute full perfect enlightenment or Buddhahood.

The Mahāyāna path as we have discussed it is that taught in the Mahāyāna sūtras, and it is often called "the vehicle of

the perfections" (*pāramitāyāna*). There is yet another kind of Mahāyāna path system, "the adamant vehicle" (Vajrayāna), or the path practice taught in the tantras. According to the tantras themselves, this is a more efficacious system of practice of the Mahāyāna path, because through it Buddhahood can be obtained in a single lifetime, whereas the time required for the development of the *pāramitāyāna* is usually said to be three unmeasured eons or *kalpas*. The differences between the *pāramitāyāna* and the Vajrayāna is mainly in the domain of the method of practice, and both require the development of great love and compassion and the mind to enlightenment, an understanding of śūnyatā, the cultivation of both wisdom (prajñā) and method (*upāya*), and the practice of the six pāramitās, although the Vajrayāna method of practicing the perfections is not by the *pāramitāyāna* method of subdivision as we have briefly described it. Likewise, the tantric method of the developing stages (*utpannakrama*) and the perfecting stages (*sampannakrama*) are specifically tantric applications of mental stabilization and higher vision. These subjects require a much deeper discussion than can be given here in a general overview of Buddhist meditative practice.

In our paper the discussion of *śamatha* and *vipāṣyāna* is to be found mainly in the *Bhavaṇākramas* of Kamalaśīla. The discussion of the four dhyānas follows chapter VIII of the *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu. Discussion of the preparation (*samāntaka*) is treated in chapter VIII of the *Abhidharmakośa* and the *Śravakabhūmi* of Asanga. Also, discussion of the transmundane path follows the *Śravakabhūmi* and chapter VI of the *Abhidharmakośa*. The four steps of penetration belonging to the path of reaching, as well as the fivefold path system, are treated at length in chapter VI of the *Abhidharmakośa* and in chapter I of Maitreyanatha's *Abhisamayālamkāra*. Schematization of the "riddances" achieved on the paths of seeing and of cultivation are in chapter V of the *Abhidharmakośa* and chapter I of the *Abhisamayālamkāra*. Principal discussions of the Mahāyāna path, the six perfections, the ten stages, and so on, are in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of Asanga and in the *Abhisamayālamkāra*. The general overview of the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna, including the Vajrayāna, is that of the *Bodhimārga pradīpa* of Atīśa, and its Tibetan commentaries, Tsong kha pa's *Lam rim chen mo* and others.

## NOTE

1. The subject of meditation is treated at great length in various Indian Buddhist sūtras and śastras, most notably, the *Saṃdhinirmocara-sūtra*, the *Sūrālamkāra* and *Abhisamayālamkāra* of Maitreyanātha, the *Yogacarībhūmi*, *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, etc., of Asanga, the Three *Bhavaṇākramas* of Kamalaśīla, and the *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu, etc. The salient points of our discussion are to be found in these texts. Among Tibetan texts on the subject, *Lam rim chen mo* of Tsong kha pa is by far the most exhaustive. Tsong kha pa's *Lam rim* is in turn a commentary on the *Bodhimārga pradīpa* of Dipamkāraśrījñāna, who is famous in Tibet under the name of Atīśa. In the *Bodhimārga pradīpa*, all the teachings of Buddhism are brought together and presented from the point of view of the objectives of their practices, which Atīśa sees as happiness in this and in future life, final deliverance from the round of transmigrations (*samsāra*), and the attainment of full perfect enlightenment, respectively.

(a'') A general presentation of objects of meditation

This has three sections:

1. The objects of meditation themselves
2. Who should meditate on which objects
3. Synonyms of the object of meditation

THE GREAT TREATISE  
ON THE STAGES OF THE PATH  
TO ENLIGHTENMENT

by  
Tsong-kha-pa

Volume Three

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(a'') Universal objects of meditation

Universal objects of meditation are of four types: (a) discursive images, (b) non-discursive images, (c) the limits of existence, and (d) achievement of your purpose. [491]

The two types of images (*discursive* and *non-discursive*) are posited in terms of the observer: the first is the object of insight, and the second is the object of meditative serenity. The image is not the actual specifically characterized object upon which your mind is focused, but rather the appearance of that object's aspect to your mind. When you carry out analysis while observing an object, then the image is discursive since analytical thinking is present. When you stabilize your mind without analysis while observing an object, the image is said to be non-discursive since analytical thinking is absent. As for these images, what objects of meditation are they images of? They are the images, or aspects, of the five objects of meditation for purifying behavior, the five objects of meditation for expertise, and the two objects of meditation for purifying afflictions.

The *limits of existence* are posited with reference to the observed object. There are two: The limits of existence for the diversity of phenomena, which are expressed in the statement, "Just this is all there is; there is nothing more"; and the limits of existence for the real nature, expressed in the statement, "This alone is how things exist; they do not exist in any other way." In the case of the diversity of phenomena, this means that the five aggregates include all composite phenomena, the eighteen constituents and twelve sources include all phenomena; and the four truths include everything there is to know; there is nothing else beyond this.<sup>60</sup> In the case of the nature, this means that reason establishes the truth or reality of those objects of meditation.

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*Achievement of purpose is posited in terms of the result. With either serenity or insight you direct your attention to the images of those objects of meditation. Then you stabilize on them, become accustomed to them, and, by virtue of repeated practice, you become free from your dysfunctional tendencies, undergoing a fundamental transformation.* [492]

#### (b'') Objects of meditation for purifying your behavior

Objects of meditation for purifying behavior are objects that purify behavior in which attachment or the like [hatred, delusion, pride, or discursiveness] is predominant. There are five such objects of meditation. Respectively they are: (a) ugliness, (b) love, (c) dependent-arising, (d) differentiation of constituents, and (e) inhalation and exhalation. (a) Of these, the *objects of meditation on ugliness* consist of the thirty-six uglinesses pertaining to the body,<sup>61</sup> such as head and body hair, and external uglinesses such as a corpse's turning blue.<sup>62</sup> When an aspect of impurity and ugliness arises in your mind, you keep your attention on it. (b) *Love* involves focusing on friends, enemies, and persons toward whom you have neutral feelings, and having an attitude—at the level of meditative equipoise—of providing them with help and happiness. Keeping your attention on these objects of meditation with a loving attitude is called “meditation on love”; love refers both to the subjective attitude and to the object. (c) Regarding the *object of meditation on dependent-arising*: All there is in the past, the present, and the future is dependent-arising in which effects that are mere phenomenal factors simply arise based on mere phenomenal factors. Apart from these, there is no performer of actions or experienter of their effects. You focus your attention on this fact, and hold it there. (d) As for the *object of meditation on the differentiation of the constituents*: You differentiate the factors of the six constituents—earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. You focus your attention on them and hold it there. (e) Regarding the *object of meditation on inhalation and exhalation*: You focus your attention without distraction by counting and watching the breath move in and out.

#### (c'') Objects of meditation for expertise

There are also five objects of meditation for expertise, namely expertise in (a) the aggregates, (b) the constituents, (c) the sources, (d) dependent-arising, and (e) what is and is not possible. (a) The aggregates are the five aggregates of form and the others [feeling,

discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness]. Expertise in these is knowing that, apart from these aggregates, the self and what pertains to the self do not exist. (b) The constituents are the eye and the others of the eighteen constituents. Expertise in them is knowing the causal conditions by which those constituents arise from their own seeds. [493] (c) The sources are the eye and the others of the twelve sources. Expertise in these is knowing that the six internal sources are the dominant conditions for the six consciousnesses, that the six external sources are the object-conditions, and that the mind which has just ceased is the immediately preceding condition. (d) *Dependent-arising* is the twelve factors.<sup>63</sup> Expertise in them is knowing that they are impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self. (e) *What is and is not possible* refers to such things as it being possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a virtuous action, but not possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a non-virtuous action. Expertise in this is knowing that things are this way. This is a particular case of expertise in dependent-arising; the difference is that you understand diverse causes.<sup>64</sup> When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating serenity, you keep your attention on just one of the perspectives in which the aggregates, etc. may be known.

#### (d'') Objects of meditation for purifying afflictions

Purifying afflictions means either merely reducing the strength of the seeds of the afflictions or else utterly eradicating the seeds. In the former case, the objects of meditation are the comparative coarseness of each lower stage and comparative calmness of each higher stage, proceeding from the level of the desire realm up to the level of Nothingness.<sup>65</sup> In the latter case, the objects of meditation are impermanence and the other of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths.<sup>66</sup> When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating serenity, you do not analyze, but instead keep your attention on any one cognition of an aspect of those objects that appears to it.

Kamalāśila's second *Stages of Meditation*<sup>67</sup> states that objects of meditation are three. (1) After you have brought together everything that all twelve branches of scripture say about determining, settling into, and having settled into reality, you stabilize your mind upon it. (2) You observe the aggregates, etc., which include phenomena to some extent. (3) You stabilize your mind on the physical form of the Buddha, which you have seen and heard about.

How do you stabilize your mind on things such as the aggregates? [494] When you understand how all compositional things can be included within the five aggregates, you mentally collect them, gradually, into these five aggregates. Then you observe them and keep your attention on them. Just as discerning wisdom develops when you cultivate differentiation, so when you cultivate collectedness you develop concentration wherein your attention is brought together on the object of meditation without moving toward other objects. This is a personal instruction of the knowledge tradition. Likewise, when you understand how all phenomena can be included within the constituents and sources, you mentally collect them into these categories and keep your attention on this.

Among these four types of objects of meditation, objects of meditation for purifying behavior, as explained, facilitate the stopping of attachment and such in those whose behavior is dominated by attachment and such. They are special objects of meditation because you may readily attain concentration based upon them. Objects of meditation for expertise are conducive to the development of the insight that knows emptiness inasmuch as they refute a personal self that is not included among those phenomena. Therefore, they are excellent objects of meditation for cultivating serenity. Objects of meditation for dispelling afflictions serve as general antidotes to the afflictions, so they have great significance. The universal objects of meditation are not distinct from the aforementioned three.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, since you must achieve concentration using an object of meditative serenity that has a particular purpose, those who achieve concentration using things like pebbles and twigs for objects of meditation are clearly ignorant of the teachings on objects of concentration.

There are those who suppose that if you focus on an object of meditation and keep your attention on it, this is an apprehension of signs. They claim that meditation on emptiness means just stabilizing your mind without any basis, without focusing on any object of meditation. This is a total misunderstanding of how to meditate on emptiness. If you have no consciousness at that time, then neither will you have a concentration that cultivates emptiness. [495] On the other hand, if you have consciousness, then you are conscious of something, so you have to accept that there is an object of consciousness in terms of which consciousness is posited. If there is an object of consciousness, then precisely that is the object of meditation of that mind, because "object," "object of meditation,"

and "object of consciousness" have the same meaning. In that case, they would have to accept that even their method of concentration would apprehend signs. Thus, their approach is not correct.

Furthermore, whether something constitutes meditation on emptiness is determined by whether it is meditation founded upon the view that knows the way things are; it is not determined by whether there is any conceptualization vis-à-vis the object. This will be demonstrated at length below.<sup>69</sup> Even those who claim to stabilize their minds without an object of meditation must think first, "I will keep my attention such that it does not stray toward any object whatsoever," and then keep their attention in that way. After they have focused like that on the mind itself as an object of meditation, they must be certain to fix on this object without straying in any way. Thus, their own experience contradicts their claim that they have no object of meditation.

In this way, the classic texts on achieving concentration explain that there are many objects of meditation. The purposes of these meditative bases for stabilizing your mind are as explained above, so you should gain expertise in them. Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation* explains that the object of meditation of serenity is indeterminate,<sup>70</sup> and Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* says, "[It is] whatever object or objects of meditation that are appropriate."<sup>71</sup> These statements mean that you are not required to stick with one particular object of meditation; they do not show how to define the range of existing objects of meditation.

## (2)) Who should meditate on which objects

As there are various kinds of people, from those with a preponderance of attachment to those with a preponderance of discursive-ness, Asaṅga's *Śrāvaka Levels* cites an answer to a question of Revata:<sup>72</sup>

Revata, if attachment uniquely dominates the behavior of a monk-yogi, a practitioner of yoga, then he focuses his mind on the object of meditation of ugliness. [496] If hatred dominates his behavior, he meditates on love; if ignorance dominates his behavior, then he meditates on the dependent-arising of this condition; if pride dominates his behavior, he focuses his mind on the differentiation of the constituents.<sup>73</sup>

And:

If discursiveness uniquely dominates his behavior, then he focuses his mind on an awareness of the exhalation and inhalation of the

breath. In this way, he focuses his mind on an appropriate object of meditation.

Asaṅga's Śravaka Levels also states:<sup>74</sup>

In this regard, persons whose behavior is dominated by attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride, or discursiveness should, for a while at the outset, just purify those behaviors by contemplating objects of meditation for purifying behavior. After this they will see the stability of their minds, and they will ascertain only their objects of meditation. So they should definitely persevere at using their objects of meditation.

Thus, you certainly should work with these objects of meditation.

If you are a person whose behavior is balanced, or one whose afflictions are slight, then it suffices to keep your attention on whichever of the aforementioned objects of meditation you like; it is not necessary to have a particular one. Asaṅga's Śravaka Levels states:<sup>75</sup>

Those whose behavior is balanced should work at whichever object they like so as to attain just mental stability; this is not for the purpose of purifying behavior. Understand that the same applies to those with slight afflictions.

Being dominated by desire—or another of those five afflictions—means that in a previous life you were fully involved in that affliction, became accustomed to it, and expressed it frequently, so that now even if there is a minor object of desire—or another of the five—that affliction arises in a strong and long-lasting form. [497] Balanced behavior means that you were not fully involved in desire and the others in your previous lives, you did not become accustomed to them, and you did not express them frequently. Still, you have not recognized that they are faults and you have not suppressed them, so while desire and such are not predominant or of great duration, it is not as though they do not occur. Having slight afflictions means that you were not fully involved and so on in desire—or another of those five—in your previous lives, and you do see their disadvantages, etc. Therefore, with respect to objects of desire and such that are major, many, or intense, your desire and such arise slowly, while for moderate or minor objects, these afflictions do not arise at all. Also, when desire or another of those five afflictions is predominant, you take a long time to realize stability; with balanced behavior, you do not take an excessively long time; with minor afflictions, you do so very quickly.

An answer to a question of Revata [as cited in the Śravaka Levels]  
also explains who works on objects of meditation for expertise:<sup>76</sup>

Revata, if a monk-yogi, a practitioner of yoga, is confused about the characteristic nature of all composite things, or confused about the thing called person, self, living being, life, that which is re-born, or the nourisher, he should focus his mind on the objects of meditation for expertise in the aggregates. If he is confused about causes, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in the constituents. If he is confused about conditions, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in the sources. If he is confused about impermanence, suffering, and selflessness, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in dependent-arising, and on what is and is not possible.

As this states, you mainly use these five objects of meditation to stop confusion.<sup>77</sup>

Which persons should focus their minds on objects of meditation for dispelling afflictions is also stated in the same sūtra [answering the questions of Revata].<sup>78</sup>

If you wish to be free from the attachment of the desire realm, focus your mind on the coarseness of the desire realm and the calmness of the form realm; [498] if you wish to be free from the attachment of the form realm, focus your mind on the coarseness of the form realm and the calmness of the formless realm. If you wish to become disenchanted with all of the perishing aggregates, and wish to be free from them, then focus your mind on the truth of suffering, the truth of origins, the truth of cessation, and the truth of the path.

You can use these objects of meditation both for analytical meditation with insight and for stabilizing meditation with serenity, so they are not exclusively objects of meditation for serenity. Still, since some serve as objects of meditation for newly achieving serenity and others are used for special purposes after attaining serenity, I have explained them here in the section on the objects of meditation of serenity.

### (3')) Synonyms of the object of meditation

There are synonyms for the images or mental appearances of these objects of meditation explained above, these "points upon which the attention is kept," or "meditative bases for concentration," as stated in Asaṅga's Śravaka Levels:<sup>79</sup>

**The Complete Stages of the Zhi-gNas Path: The Symbology of the Print**  
***The Diamond Light: An Introduction to Tibetan Buddhist Meditations***  
**Compiled by Janice Dean Willis**

Similar to the Japanese Zen, “Ten Ox-herding Drawings,” the Tibetan practice of calming the mind and developing concentration is illustrated by this drawing. The Tibetan symbols are the elephant, the monk and the monkey.

- 1) The *elephant* is the example of the *mind*. It is used in the Tibetan diagram of the Zhi-gNas Path because:
  - a) If an elephant is wild, it is very dangerous to all other animals. Likewise, if the mind is not controlled, it can harm others. All suffering is caused by an untamed mind.
  - b) If an elephant is once tamed, he obeys his master better than any other animal; even if the master says to pick up a very large hot ball with his trunk, the elephant will do it. If the mind is once tamed, it can perform any action, no matter how difficult.
  - c) The footprint of the elephant is larger than any other animal's. If our mind is tamed and comes into the control of the Dharma, it also serves its master better than any other thing.If our mind is very peaceful and well tamed, there will no longer be any enemies of that person anywhere. If our mind is peaceful, we make all others around us peaceful. All the results of our mind-whether good or bad-are greater. The body and speech of a person are only servants of the mind.
- 2) The *monk* in the drawing is the *meditator*.
- 3) *The dark color of the elephant* signifies the presence of “Ching-wa” and rMugs-pa, because these two are “the darkness of the mind.” Therefore, the *dark elephant* symbolizes the *mind's sinking*.
- 4) The *monkey* symbolizes Tho-wa, and its dark color ‘hGro-pa, or the two forms of *scattering*. The monkey leads the elephant everywhere, always to different objects. (Just as scattering distracts the mind to sense objects.)
- 5) The *rope* held by the monk symbolizes Dran-pa, remembrance; and the *hook* symbolizes She-shing, or watchfulness.
- 6) The *fire* is the energy for *meditation*.
- 7) The conch, cymbals, mirror, perfume, and fruits represent the five sense objects. During meditation the mind is readily distracted by the objects of sense.
- 8) There are *nine elephants* in the drawing. These represent the *nine stages of the mind's development* along the Zhi-gNas Path. (The object of the meditation is not mentioned here, because it may vary. Any object of concentration is sufficient to develop Zhi-gNas, though Tibetan practice, from the beginning, uses a visualization of a deity, i.e., a holy object.)

**The Nine Stages of the Path**

1. 1st Stage ('hJug-pa; pronounced “juk-pa”), “to put, or fix.” In the first stage our mind is completely under the control of 'hGro-pa and Tho-wa, and at the will of the five sense objects. (The rope and the hook carried by the monk cannot help at this point.) When the object is not clear, disturbances are plentiful. The “elephant” is not even looking toward the rope and hook. At this first stage, the flame of the fire must be very strong, because much energy is needed.

2. 2nd Stage (rGyun-du-'hJug-pa), “to put, continuously.” Hope of success begins at this stage. (The monk holds up his hands.) The rope and hook are needed to bind and tie the elephant. One must use remembrance and watchfulness to bring close the object of meditation. The hook makes it possible to drive the elephant in the right direction. The *white spot* on the heads -of the elephant and of the 'hGro-pa monkey symbolize that the *mind begins to become a bit more calm*. 'hGro-pa and Tho-wa become a bit less of a problem.
3. 3rd Stage (Lan-te-'hJug-pa), “to go and come back; to put, go, and return.” Using remembrance (dran-pa )-the rope is on- the elephant’s neck and the *elephant looks toward the monk*. The *rabbit* makes his appearance at this stage. Within “Ching-wa,” there are two divisions: Ching-wa-Rags-pa (which is the grosser form of sinking, and is easy to recognize as distraction) and Ching-wa-Ta-mo, which is the fine, camouflaged form of the distraction. The rabbit represents Ching-wa-Ta-mo, this subtle form of sinking. The rabbit uses good camouflages. It can be *mistaken for progress*; but this is a mistake. Ching-wa-Ta-mo does not disturb concentration, and so it relaxes the meditator, and is pleasurable. Still, it is a disturbance, because later it will make our mind weak; it kills the desire to make much effort or expend much energy. Like a punctured balloon, it makes the mind weaker and weaker, slowly. At this stage, this fine, subtle form of “Ching-wa” is discovered.
4. 4th Stage (Nye-par-'hJug-pa), “to put closely.” At this stage, the dark and white colors are almost half and half. 'hGro-pa and Tho-wa are much less. The rope on the elephant’s neck is *loose*, because the mind is quite *obedient* at this stage. Concentration on the object is possible for a maximum of fifteen minutes, without any distraction.
5. 5th Stage ('hDul-par-Jed-pa), “to tame.” 'hGro-pa and Tho-wa are almost completely gone at this stage. For this reason, the *monkey is now behind the elephant*; now the mind is not under the leadership of scattering distractions. The rope (i.e., Dran-pa) is not very necessary now. But at this stage, “Ching-wa” appears very strong. At this time the hook (i.e., watchfulness) is very important. A meditator, after long fighting with 'hGro-pa and Tho-wa, now tends to relax. Therefore, “Ching-wa,” which is “easing-weakness,” grows. At this stage is shown *another monkey* eating from a tree. But *this monkey* is outside of the Zhi-gNas practice. He is not on the path. This means that while one is developing Zhi-gNas, *no other thoughts*, even those of Dharma or meditations on Samsara, etc., must be allowed to interfere with the concentration! At this fifth stage, fixed concentration for more than half an hour is possible. The object is very clear, very “close” to the mind; and the mind is peaceful, with no distractions. From this stage on, the meditator can see the object of concentration much clearer than with his two eyes!
6. 6th Stage (zhi-par-Jed-pa), “to make peace.” There is no more 'hGro-pa or Tho-wa, and almost no “Ching-wa.” No hook and rope are needed. The monk is not even looking at the elephant. Concentration without any disturbance is possible for at least one hour.
7. 7th Stage (Nam-par-zhi-par-Jed-pa), “to make completely peaceful.” After long practice, this stage is reached. The monk is behind the elephant. He just allows his mind to go. It will concentrate on its own. No energy is needed; concentration comes immediately. (But still,

the monk is *looking*! There is still subtle “Ching-wa” and Tho-wa, but (because they totally lack dark color) there is no disturbance at all. Concentration is possible for about four hours.

8. 8th Stage (Tse-chig-tu-jed-pa), “to make one-pointed.” At this stage there is automatic concentration until the meditator wishes to stop it. And as the concentration progresses, so does the clarity of the object concentrated upon. (At this stage one’s other senses do not operate as well, or at all.) The monk doesn’t even need to look at the elephant; the elephant just comes and obeys. Concentration for one or two days without a break is possible.
9. 9th Stage (Nyag-par-Jog-pa), “to put equally.” The monk meditates, and the elephant just sleeps. At this stage there is *no limit* to the length of fixed concentration. According to the meditator’s feelings, his mind and the object become one. (Actually, they are different from one another, but this “oneness” is a definite sign of progress.) The meditator is totally non-dependent upon the senses. For example, he needs no food. The Scriptures mention that at this stage the meditator uses only “the food of samatha.” At this stage the meditator feels able to count all the molecules of a mountain, so sharp is his concentration. Many people mistake this stage as the goal of Zhi-gNas, itself. But all these nine stages are only the *path to Zhi-gNas*; they are not really Zhi-gNas. The real Zhi-gNas is reached at the tenth stage, when the monk is sitting astride the elephant.

### Concluding Remarks

After the 9th Stage of Zhi-gNas is attained, many new, extraordinary experiences come, which have never been experienced before. When these experiences come, this is the sign that Zhi-gNas has been attained; this is the Zhi-gNas goal. Not only when in meditation, but *in all actions*, the one possessed of accomplished Zhi-gNas is at this stage of full concentration. His body feels light as the wood-wool flower (like the mimosa blossom). After this goal, the meditator gains all other supernatural powers (such as reading minds, disappearing, and transferring his consciousness into other beings). Like someone who has “sharpened the axe to cut all things,” he is capable of doing *any other meditative practice*. After sharpening an axe, a person must use it. After taming the mind in Zhi-gNas, one must use it for higher practice. We must use it for the attainment of Enlightenment! We must ourselves become Buddha!

The miracle powers are not important things. The important thing is developing the mind! One has to *free* one’s mind from the “trap of delusion.” At this level of attainment any concentration is possible, but when the meditator attempts to judge or investigate, for example, thought, he does not get this pleasurable feeling. Then again, one has to *train for investigation*. After this training is complete, during and after investigating, the meditator gets this pleasure. This type of pleasure is much more than before (i.e., than the pleasures of Zhi-gNas alone). This goal, with its higher pleasure feelings, is called “Ihag-thong,” to see *more, higher* seeing. It is called “adi-Zhi-gNas.”

These are the two indispensable things for higher practice, for abandoning delusion. If one wants to cut a tree, he must have both a strong arm (Zhi-gNas) and a good axe (Ihag-thong). After training in these two, one must use the mind for higher and higher practice.

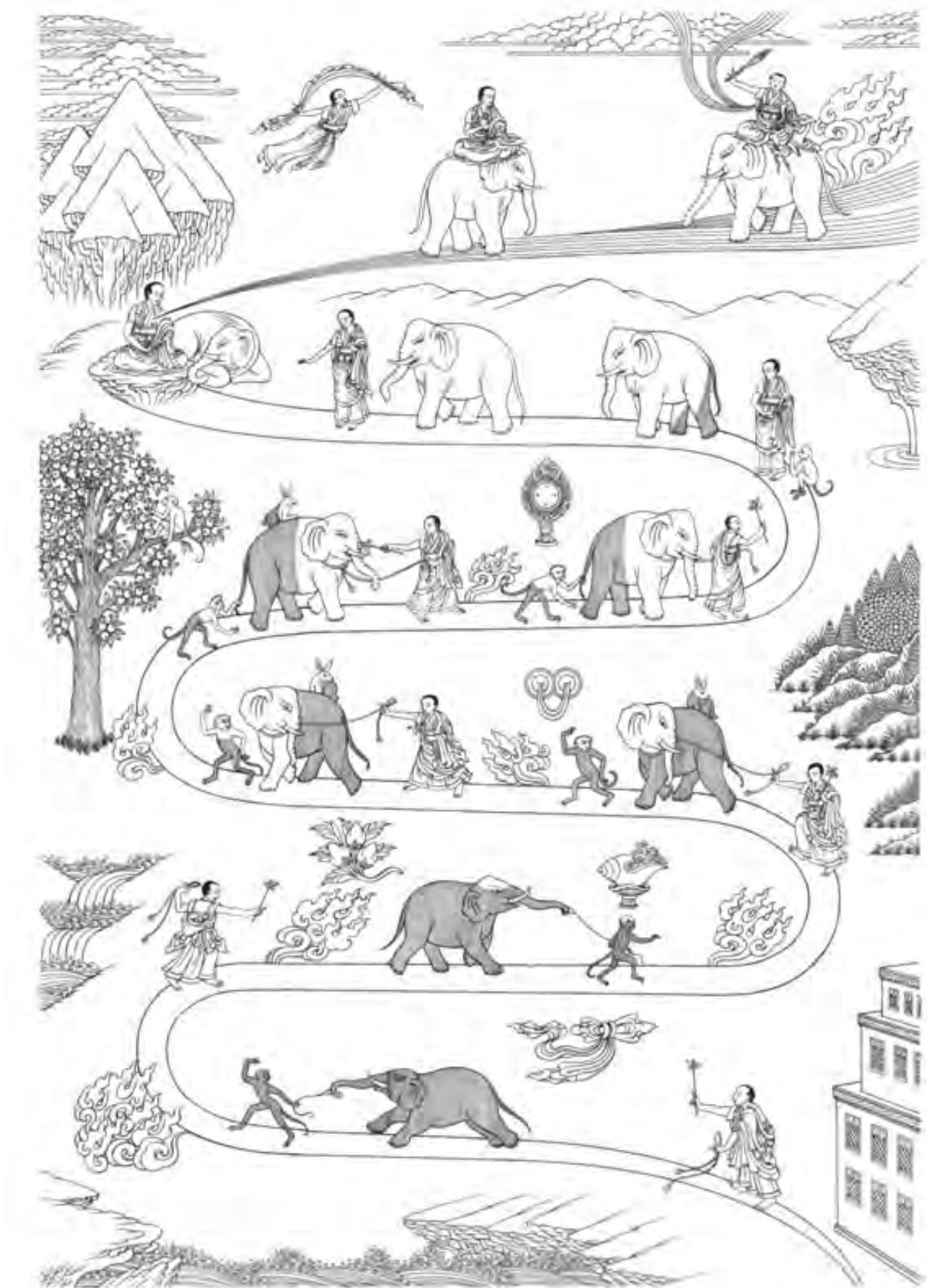


Plate 60: Diagram of Shunyata meditation practice, depicting the nine stages of mental development

# *Sarvāstivāda*

# *Abhidharma*

*Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti*  
法光

## 15. The Path of Spiritual Progress

- 15.1. Doctrine of gradual enlightenment
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### 15.1. Doctrine of gradual enlightenment

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The sixth chapter of the AKB is devoted entirely to the discussion on the path and spiritual attainments and it enumerates and defines various paths.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the study of the nature and functions of the various paths is an integral part of *abhidharma*. One of the four great Sarvāstivāda masters, Ghosaka, underscores this in his definition of *abhidharma*:

For the seeker for liberation engaged in the proper practice, [abhidharma]  
can analyze what has not been understood: this is *duḥkha*; this is the cause

of *duḥkha*; this is the cessation of *duḥkha*; this is the path leading to the cessation; this is the preparatory path (*prayoga-mārga*); this is the unhindered path (*ānātaraya-mārga*); this is the path of liberation (*vimukti-mārga*); this is the path of advance (*vīśa-mārga*); this is the path of the candidate (*praiṇamaka-mārga*); this is the acquisition of fruit. *Abhidharma* is so called because it can correctly analyze such meanings.<sup>2</sup> (See also, § 1.2).

For the Sarvāstivāda, the path of spiritual progress is a very long journey. It takes three *asamikhyeya-kalpa*-s for a practitioner to reach the state of perfect Buddhahood<sup>3</sup> practicing accumulatively the six perfections (*śīla*, *dāna*, *vīrya*, *kṣanti*, *dhyāna*- and *prajñā-pāramitā*) and tens of thousands of difficult practices on the way.<sup>4</sup> This long period of practice pertains, in fact, only to the stage of preparatory effort (*prayoga*).<sup>5</sup> The whole process is one of gradual progress, and the Sarvāstivāda doctrine is definitely not one of sudden enlightenment. The MVŚ records the Buddha's own statements in this regard:

I remember that in the past, I have stated thus: ‘There is no *śramaṇa* or *brahmāṇa*, etc., in the past, present or future who can acquire knowledge and vision with regard to all *dharma*-s abruptly. If one says there is, [one is speaking of] an impossibility. One must first go through three *asamikhyeya-kalpa*-s, practicing tens of thousands of difficult practices, gradually perfecting the six *pāramitā*-s, in order that one can possess true knowledge and vision with regard to all *dharma*-s.<sup>6</sup>

The MVŚ records the view of some, such as the ‘abrupt-abandonment *śramaṇa*-s’, that defilements are abandoned all at once at the stage of the arising of the *vajropama-samādhi*; at all the previous stages there only can be the temporary suppression of the active *pariyavashāna*-s. Others, like the Dārṣṭāntikas and the Bhadanta, assert that ordinary worldlings cannot abandon any defilements at all. This is because only the *ārya*-s possess the noble (i.e., pure) *prajñā* with which alone the defilements

can be abandoned (cf. § 12.9.3). For these various masters then one cannot properly speak of any spiritual progress through the worldly paths. The MVŚ states, in this connection, that it is in fact for the purpose of refuting such views that the two counteractions for the abandonment of defilements — the distinction between the path of insight (*darśana-mārga*) and the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-mārga*) — are shown.<sup>7</sup> Each of the three spheres of existence has these two categories of defilements — *darśana-heya* and *bhāvanā-heya* — which must be totally eradicated, and this process takes place gradually. Like the Sarvāstivādins, these opponents also concede that there are four fruits of the spiritual life (*śrāmanya-phala*). However, they hold that the abandonment of the defilements can take place only at the time of *vajropama-samādhi*. The first three fruits can only suppress the defilements, inducing the *vajropama-samādhi*. Other opponents hold that direct insight into all four noble truths arises abruptly (see below, § 15.3.1). This view too is refuted in the same context by the Sarvāstivādins who argue that like the *bhāvanā-heya* defilements, the *darśana-heya* ones must also be abandoned gradually, not all at once.<sup>8</sup>

In brief, in the Sarvāstivāda system, the gradual path of spiritual progress begins at the stage when the practitioner is an ordinary worldling. When he becomes an *ārya*, he must continue to move up gradually. The gradual degrees of spiritual insight acquired on the whole path correspond to the gradual abandoning of defilements at the various stages. At the very final stage of the path of cultivation, the *vajropama-samādhi* arises and the practitioner cuts off whatever defilements remain. He then acquires a homogeneous acquisition of disjunction (*visanyoga-prāpti*) collectively with regard to the abandonment of all the defilements pertaining to the two categories in the three spheres, and he is said to have acquired the complete knowledge of the exhaustion of all fetters (*sarva-samyojana-pariyādāna-parijñā*).<sup>9</sup> The end of the journey is when the knowledge of the absolute non-arising (*anupāda-jñāna*) of all future defilements arises in him, and he is said to have attained *nirvāṇa*.

## 15.2. Preliminaries for the preparatory stage

The preparatory stage (*prayoga*), in the proper sense, comprises meditational practices. But, in keeping with the general Buddhist tradition, the whole spiritual path of the Sarvāstivāda is an integrated system of *śīla-samādhi-prajñā*. That is to say: meditational practices (*samādhi*) cannot be isolated from the total context of spiritual commitment and a life of ethical alignment that is, in general, in keeping with this commitment. Accordingly, there are preliminary preparations before one can even properly embark on those meditational practices.

Commenting on what the *sūtra* refers to in speaking of the “profound Abhidharma”, the MVŚ states:

In the absolute sense (*paramārtha*), the intrinsic nature of Abhidharma can only be the outflow-free faculty of understanding (*prajñendriya*). From this very perspective, those which bring about the excellent (*vिश्वा*) worldly ‘understanding derived from cultivation’ (*bhāvanā-mayī prajñā*) — namely, ‘warmed-up’, ‘summits’, ‘receptivities’ and the ‘worldly supreme *dharma*-s’ — can also be called Abhidharma on account of their ability to discern the four noble truths separately.

Again from this very perspective, those that bring about the excellent ‘understanding derived from reflection’ (*cintāmayaī prajñā*) — namely, contemplation on the impure, mindfulness of breathing, etc. — can also be called Abhidharma on account of their ability to discern the aggregates (*skandha*) separately and collectively.

Again from this very perspective, those that bring about the excellent ‘understanding derived from listening’ (*śrutamayaī prajñā*) — [namely] the analysis and establishment of the intrinsic and common characteristics of *dharma*-s, destroying the delusion with regard to existent entities and cognitive objects (*ālambana*) — can also be called Abhidharma on account of the fact that they neither superimpose (*sam-ā-vṛtuḥ*) nor deny (*apa-ā-vṛtuḥ*) with regard to *dharma*-s.

Again from this very perspective, those that bring about the excellent ‘understanding derived from the abode of birth’ (*upapatti-sthāna-prātilambhikā prajñā*) can also be called Abhidharma on account of their ability to operate (*Vyrt*) non-erroneously in receiving, bearing in mind, pondering and examining the 12-limb (*dvādaśāṅga*) teaching of the *tripitaka*. ...<sup>10</sup>

The above explanations are in fact a statement of preparatory stages that lead to the attainment of perfect *prajñā* (= Abhidharma in the absolute sense). These stages are as follows:

Studying the Buddha’s teaching with the support of the understanding derived from birth (*upapatti-prātilambhika-prajñā*)

Studying the Abhidharma — analyzing the characteristics of *dharma*-s (*śrutamayaī prajñā*)

Meditations such as contemplation on the impure and mindfulness of breathing (*cintāmayaī prajñā*)

‘Warmed-up’, ‘summits’, ‘receptivities’ and the ‘worldly supreme *dharma*-s’ (*bhāvanāmayaī prajñā*)

Attainment of outflow-free *prajñā* (final destination)

A more comprehensive, although succinct, prescription for the steps leading to stream entry is given in the MVŚ as follows:

These are the preliminary preparations for one [aiming at] the fruit of stream entry:

At the beginning, because of his aspiration for the fruit of liberation, he diligently practices [i] generosity (*dāna*) and the pure precepts (*sīla*); [ii] the understanding derived from listening, [comprising] the contemplation of the impure, mindfulness of breathing and the foundations of mindfulness

(*smṛtyupasthāna*); and [iii] warmed-up, summits, receptivities and the worldly supreme dharma-s; and [then he enters into] [iv] the 15 moments of the path of insight (*darsana-mārga*). This is collectively said to be ‘firmly on one’s feet’.

The above prescription clearly includes the practice of skillful acts such as giving and ethical alignment.

Elsewhere, the MVŚ explains why there is no retrogression from stream entry and speaks of the foundation of the path of insight:

Question: Why is there no one who regresses from stream entry?

Answer: Because of the firmness of its foundation.

What is the foundation?

This comprises the [following practices] of the seeker for liberation: giving; ethical living; engagement in the works of the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha; attending on the old and the sick; recitation of the noble words and expounding them to others; proper mental application (*voniśo manastāra*); the practice of the contemplation on the impure, mindfulness of breathing, the foundations of mindfulness, the contemplation of the three meanings (三義), skillfulness with regard to the seven abodes (七處善; \**sapta-sīhāna-kausala*), warmed-up, summits, receptivities and the worldly supreme dharma-s.<sup>11</sup>

We have here the prescription of not only more skillful activities, both social and religious, such as attending on the sick and expounding the *Dharma*, but also the following two additional contemplative practices:<sup>12</sup>

(1) Contemplation of the three meanings, which refers to the sequential contemplation on the true meanings of the *skandha*-s, *āyatana*-s and *dhātu*-s.

(2) Skillfulness with regard to the seven abodes which is an examination of the five aggregates truly as they are, from seven perspectives. To take *rūpa* as an example: one examines *rūpa* itself as (i) fruit, and (ii) the causes from which it is generated. One further examines (iii) its cessation, (iv) the counteracting path leading to its cessation, (v) its enjoyable aspect (*āsvādana*) as an object of attachment, (vi) its loathsome aspect as a fault (*ādīnava*) to be avoided, and finally (vii) the transcendence of its attachment.

These two practices are not mentioned in the AKB. But their occurrence is already attested in the *Samyuktāgama*.<sup>13</sup>

The AKB prescribes the preliminaries as follows:<sup>14</sup>

- (I) observance of the precepts (*śīlam pālayati*);
- (II) development of the proper understanding derived from listening (*śruta-mayī prajñā*) — studying and receiving instructions from teachers.

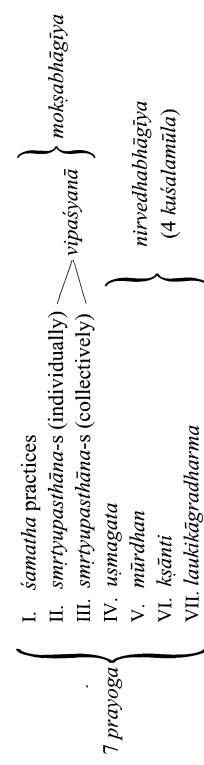
To ensure success in meditation, one must purify one’s body and mind in three ways:

- (i) physical withdrawal or distancing (*yupakarṣa*) by dissociating from evil friends and cutting off unfavorable conditions, and mental withdrawal by eradicating unskillful thoughts (*akusala-vitarka*);
- (ii) practicing contentment and having few desires (*samutṣṭiś ca alpechhatā ca*);
- (iii) abiding in the four noble lineages (*ārya-yamśa*) — called thus because the noble ones are begotten from them (*āryāṇām ebhyaḥ prasavāt*) — which are non-greed in nature (*alobha*): [they are] (a-c) contentment with clothing, food, bed and seat,

and (d) delight in the abandonment of defilements (= in the realization of cessation (*nirodha*) and in the cultivation of the noble path (*prahāṇa-bhāvanā-ārāmatā*).<sup>15</sup>

### 15.3. Different stages of the path

The whole path leading to this final perfection is divided by the Sarvāstivādins into the seven stages of preparatory effort and four stages of spiritual fruits, as shown in the following chart:



In the AKB, the *nirvedha-bhāgīya* is also collectively called the four skillful roots, as they lead to the fruition of stream entry (*srotaāpatti*) which is the point of no return in the spiritual journey — the practitioner is henceforth destined for perfect liberation. It is the critical point at which a *prthagjana* becomes an *ārya*, never to retrogress to be a mundane worldling again. The MVŚ, however, speaks of both portions equally as being skillful roots<sup>16</sup> — in the sense of being seeds, and explains the two terms as follows:

The *mokṣa-bhāgīya kuśala-mūla-s*: [the practitioner] plants the seeds that are decisive for liberation. On account of this decisiveness, he can attain *parinirvāṇa*.

The *nirvedha-bhāgīya kuśala-mūla-s*: i.e., *usmagata, mūrdhan, kṣanti, laukikāgnadharma*.<sup>17</sup>

#### 15.3.1. Mokṣa-bhāgīya

The MVŚ<sup>18</sup> proceeds here to analyze the *mokṣa-bhāgīya* articulately:

- (i) They have as their intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) the threefold *karma* — bodily, vocal and mental — with the predominance of the mental.
- (ii) They pertain to the mind ground (*mano-bhūmi*).
- (iii) They are acquired through effort, not innate.
- (iv) They are derived from *śruta-mayī* and *cintā-mayī*, not *bhāvanā-mayī prajñā*.
- (v) They are produced only among human beings, only in those existing in *kāmadhātu* — not *rūpa-ārūpya-dhātu-s*; and only those in the three continents — not in the Uttarakuru-dvīpa.
- (vi) They are planted (as seeds) only where the *Buddha-dharma* exists, hence only when a Buddha appears.

From the chart above, one sees that the preparatory path comprises two portions:

- (1) *mokṣa-bhāgīya*: those conducing, i.e., serving as causes, to liberation (= *nirvāṇa*);
- (2) *nirvedha-bhāgīya*: those conducing to decisive distinction, i.e., to the arising of outflow-free knowledge.

- (vii) They are planted by both males and females.
- (viii) They may arise as a result of the practice of giving, or of ethical observance, or of hearing (learning) the *Dharma* from others: One may plant these seeds of liberation by the mere giving of one lump (*pinda*) of food or by the mere observance of the eight precepts (*upavasthā-śīla*), etc., provided the motivation is genuinely for liberation.
- (ix) These can be planted only by those who have a strong aspiration for *nirvāṇa* and disgust for *samsāra*.
- (x) Once they have been planted, it takes a minimum of three lives to attain liberation: in the first life the seeds are planted; in the second, they are matured; in the third, liberation is attained. But it may take many many *kalpa*-s (a) if the practitioner fails to give rise to the *nirvedha-bhāgīya*, or (b) if he, although having given rise to the *nirvedha-bhāgīya*, fails in the many *kalpa*-s that follow to give rise to *samyakta-niyāma-avakramaṇa* (i.e., attain stream entry — see *infra*, § 15.4).
- (xi) There are six progressively superior types (*gotra*) (see *infra* — on six types of *arhat*) of *mokṣa-bhāgīya*: (1) *parihāṇa-dharman* — those susceptible to retrogression; (2) *cetanā-dharman* — those capable of ending their existences at will; (3) *anurakṣaṇā-dharman* — those capable of protecting themselves from retrogression; (4) *sthūlākampya* — those capable of abiding in their attainment without retrogressing, although they may not progress unless effort is exerted; (5) *prativedhanā-dharman* — those capable of penetrating the state of *arhat*; (6) *akopya-dharman* — those absolutely not susceptible to retrogression. Each preceding type is transformed progressively to the succeeding type.
- (xii) The śrāvaka-type (*śrāvaka-gotra*) of *mokṣa-bhāgīya* is transformed, giving rise to those of the *pratyeka-buddha* and Buddha. The *pratyeka-buddha* type is transformed, giving rise

to those of the śrāvaka and Buddha. The Buddha-type having been given rise to, there can be no further transformation as it is the strongest (*tīkṣṇa, tīvra*) type.

Those who have not planted the *kuśala-mūla*-s of *mokṣa-bhāgīya* are said to be stream-accordants (*anu-srota*); those who have done so, stream-discordants (*prati-srota*). “Stream” here refers to *samsāra*. For even if one should perform great meritorious actions, or master the *tripiṭaka*, or practice and have various meditational attainments and supernormal powers, etc., and obtain favorable states of rebirth, one would still have to experience *duhkha* in *samsāra*. On the other hand, as a result of having planted the *kuśala-mūla*-s of *mokṣa-bhāgīya* at the preparatory stage,

a person can be said to be abiding on the shore of *nirvāṇa*. [This is so] even if he should, on account of his defilements, subsequently commit various bodily, vocal or mental actions, or the ānantarya-*karma*-s, or cut off all *kuśala-mūla*-s to the extent that there exists in him not the slightest seed of white *dharma*-s, [even if he should] fall into the Avici hells, undergoing various forms of suffering. This is on account of this person being destined to attain *parinirvāṇa*.<sup>19</sup> (However, he is not said to have entered *samyakta-niyāma*.)

Such being the spiritual significance of the *mokṣa-bhāgīya*, the meaning of the term should become obvious. It is said that it is better to be Devadatta who fell into the Avici hell than to be Udraka-rāmaputra who was born into the *naiva-sanjñā-nāsanjñā* heaven. For, although the former committed three of the ānantarya-*karma*-s and thereby cut off the *kuśala-mūla*-s, he will — on account of having acquired the *mokṣa-bhāgīya* — attain *pratyekabuddha-bodhi* at the time when human life can last 84,000 years, becoming a *tīkṣṇendriya* excelling even Śāriputra, etc. The latter did not plant the *mokṣa-bhāgīya*. Accordingly, in spite of his rebirth in the *bhavāgra*, he ended up in the evil planes of existence unable to gain liberation.<sup>20</sup>

### 15.3.1.1. *Śamatha* and *vipāśyana*

The above emphasis on the critical importance of the *mokṣa-bhāgiya* for liberation also spells out the great significance of tranquility (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipāśyānā*) — of which the *mokṣa-bhāgiya* is comprised — as spiritual praxis.

The practitioner begins with the two *śamatha* practices of contemplation on the impure (*aśubha-bhāvanā*) and mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasmiṇī*) which constitute the entrance<sup>21</sup> into spiritual cultivation proper. The former practice is the contemplation on the progressive deterioration of the body, and has the counteraction of greed as its aim. The latter comprises six aspects: counting, following, fixing, observing, modifying and purifying.<sup>22</sup> The MV\$<sup>23</sup> calls these two meditational practices the two gateways of immortality (*amṛta-dhāra*), i.e., *nirvāṇa*.

In the Chinese commentary, the tranquility meditations are often collectively spoken of as the ‘five-fold mental stilling’ (五停心).<sup>24</sup> This is also the term that had been used in the various works of the great Tian Tai master, Zhi Yi (智顥; ca. 538–597).<sup>25</sup>

The corresponding Sanskrit term cannot be traced in the AKB or other related Indian Abhidharma texts in their original. In the MV\$, the meditations under this group are mentioned in some places, but are not explicitly grouped together.<sup>26</sup> At one place in this text, it is stressed that “meditators rely mostly on the contemplation of the impurities as the gateway for entering into the noble path”.<sup>27</sup> There, this contemplation is discussed at very great length,<sup>28</sup> and it is shown how, immediately after completing this contemplation, the meditator can sail into the *vipāśyana* practice of the mindfulness on the body, etc.

But, as a specific group of tranquility practices, the five methods had probably developed at a fairly early stage. An early Chinese translation of the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* (菩薩地持經; T 30, no. 1581) enumerates them as the five “gateways (methods) for transcendence” (度門):

1. contemplation on the impure. 2. meditation on loving kindness (*maitrī*),
3. contemplation on conditioned co-arising. 4. contemplation on the division of the *dhātu*-s. 5. mindfulness of breathing.<sup>29</sup> In Buddhamitra’s *Essential Methods of the Five-gateway Dhyāna-sūtra* (T 15, no. 619, 五門禪經要用法; 325c), the contemplation on the *dhātu*-s is replaced by the ‘recollement on the Buddha’ (*buddhānusmṛti*). These meditations are said to have been taught in consideration of the different personality types — those of the predominantly greedy type (*adhi-rāga*), those of the predominantly distracted type (*adhi-vitarka*), etc..<sup>30</sup>

- (1) contemplation on the impure — greedy type
- (2) meditation on loving kindness — hateful type
- (3) contemplation on conditioned co-arising — deluded type
- (4) contemplation on the *dhātu*-s — conceited type
- (5) mindfulness of breathing — distracted type
- (5ii) recollection on the Buddha — those who are drowsy, have unwholesome thoughts, and are oppressed by object domains)

Having achieved tranquility, the practitioner then proceeds to the practice of insight comprising the fourfold application of mindfulness<sup>31</sup> on body (*kāya*), sensation (*vedanā*), ideations (*saṃjñā*) and *dharma*-s.<sup>32</sup> This is done in two ways: First, he contemplates the specific characteristics<sup>33</sup> of each of the four — the body is impure; sensations are unsatisfactory (*duhkha*); ideations are impermanent; all *dharma*-s are without a Self.<sup>34</sup> He must also contemplate generally that the body, sensations, ideations and *dharma*-s are — in each case — like all conditioned *dharma*-s in being impure, unsatisfactory, impermanent and without a Self. Next, he contemplates collectively that all four — body, sensations, ideations and *dharma*-s — are equally impure, unsatisfactory, impermanent and without a Self.

It is to be noted that for the Sarvāstivādins, *śamatha* and *vipāśyana* are not mutually exclusive practices, nor are they to be too sharply differentiated. It is an *abhidharma* doctrine that within one and the same

thought there exists both *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, according to the Sarvāstivāda, *samādhi* and *prajñā* necessarily co-exist as two of the ten universal thought concomitants (see *supra*, § 9.3.4.1). The two types of practitioners are to be distinguished from the point of view of their preparatory stages:

Those who mostly cultivate the provisions (*sambhāra*) of *śamatha* are those who, at the stage of preparatory effort, always delight in solitude and shun noisiness. They see the faults of socializing and constantly dwell in quiet places. When they enter into the noble path, they are called the *śamatha*-type of practitioner (*śamatha-carita*).

Those who mostly cultivate the provisions of *vipaśyanā* are those who, at the stage of preparatory effort, always delight in studying and reflecting on the *tripitaka*. They repeatedly examine the specific and general characteristics of all *dharma*-s. When they enter into the noble path, they are called the *vipaśyanā*-type of practitioner (*vipaśyanā-carita*).<sup>36</sup>

Their mutual non-exclusiveness is also underscored in the various opinions given in the MVŚ<sup>37</sup> by different Ābhidharma masters as to how many of the six aspects of mindfulness of breathing (§ 15.3.1.1) come under either *śamatha* or *vipaśyanā*: Some say the first three are *śamatha*, the last three *vipaśyanā*; others say the opposite. The compilers of the MVŚ remark that “there is no fixed rule here — all may come under *śamatha* or all may come under *vipaśyanā*”.

One question here arises: Does one need to attain the *dhyanā*-s in order to acquire the pure *prajñā* which liberates us from *samsāra*? Does one in fact need to practice meditation at all?

From the Sarvāstivāda Ābhidharma perspective, the answer is clearly ‘yes’. It is stated that the four roots of skillfulness (i.e., the *moksabhāgīya*) can only be produced from the understanding derived from cultivation, not from those derived from reflection and listening.<sup>38</sup> In other words,

at the preparatory stage leading to the actual attainment of warmed-up, etc., the practitioner necessarily depends on meditational practices.

It is further stated that the practitioner can acquire these roots only at the stages of the ‘not-yet-arrived’ (*anāgama*), the intermediate meditation (*dhyanāntara*) and the four meditations (*dhyanā*).<sup>39</sup> This means that he must have acquired the degree of concentration of the ‘not-yet arrived’ stage. This stage is a ‘neighborhood’ (*sāmantaka*), i.e., a meditational state bordering the *dhyanā* stage proper into which its power of concentration is strong enough to lead. There is one such ‘neighborhood’ stage bordering each of the meditational attainments (*samāpatti*). Since there are eight meditational attainments — four *dhyanā*-s (also called the four ‘fundamental or principal meditations’, *maula-dhyāna*) of the fine-material sphere and four meditational attainments of the non-material sphere (*ārūpya*) — there are corresponding eight ‘neighborhood’ stages, the first of which, bordering the first *dhyanā*, is called the ‘not-yet-arrived’ stage.<sup>40</sup>

### 15.3.2. Nirvedha-bhāgīya

Penetration (*nirvedha*) here refers to insight — that is, the *ārya-mārga*. The AKB explains the term as follows:

Penetrating (*vidha*) is in the sense of distinction (*vibhāga*). *Nir-vedhaḥ* means decisive distinction which is the noble path. For through it [— the noble path —] there is the abandonment of doubt and the distinction of the truths: ‘This is *duḥkha*; up to ‘This is the path’. Its portion (*bhāga*) refers to one portion of the *darśana-mārga*. They are conducive to *nirvedha* (*nirvedha-bhāgīyāni*) because they are favorable to it on account of being its inducer.<sup>41</sup>

The *nirvedha-bhāgīya*-s comprise the warmed-up (*usmaga*), the summits (*mūrdhan*), the receptivities (*ksānti*), and the worldly

supreme *dharma*-s (*laukikāgra-dharma*); each serves as the *samamantra-prayaya* for the succeeding one.<sup>42</sup> These four are also called

- (1) “truth-coursing” (*saty-a-cāra* ?),
- (2) “counteraction-cultivation” (*pratipakṣa-bhāvanā* ?),
- (3) roots of skillfulness (*kuśala-mūla*):

(1) because they course through the four truths by means of the 16 modes of activities (*ākāra*); (2) because “for the sake of the *ārya-mārga*, one cultivates the body as a receptacle (*kāya-bhājana*), removing the impurities and inducing the *ārya-mārga*”; (3) because “these four constitute the very foundation and footing for the *ārya-mārga* and *nirvāṇa* which are the truly good (*paramārtha-nāma kusala*)”;<sup>43</sup> In terms of the threefold *prajñā* — *śruta-mayī*, *cintā-mayī* and *bhāvanā-mayī* — the *mokṣa-bhāgiya*-s are subsumed under *cintā-mayī prajñā*, while the *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s under *bhāvanā-mayī prajñā*; both being induced by the *abhidharma* which, in its intrinsic nature, in the highest sense (*paramārtha-tathāt*) is the outflow-free *prajñā*.<sup>44</sup>

As to whether a *bodhisattva*, in the course of his previous existences has given rise to the *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s, opinions differ among the Sarvāstivāda masters. The Vaibhāṣika view (*evan̄ tu varṇayanti*) is that within the one sitting of the fourth *dhyāna* of the present life, the *bodhisattva* gives rise to all the excellent *kuśala-mūla*-s from *aśuci-bhāvanā* up to *annupāda-jñāna*.<sup>45</sup>

As in the case of the *mokṣa-bhāgiya*-s (*supra*, § 15.2.1), there are also six *gotra*-s of *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s, each being progressively transformed into the succeeding superior type.<sup>46</sup> These are produced among humans of the three continents, excepting Uttarakuru-dvīpa, and among gods — of both sexes — of the sphere of sensuality, but not among beings of the three evil planes of existence. They can only be produced where one can enter into *samyakṣṭa-niyāma*, and this is possible only where:

- (i) both receptivity (*ksānti*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) can be produced,
- (ii) both the *dharma-jñāna* as well as the *anyaya-jñāna* can be produced,
- (iii) there exist both the superior bodily basis (*āśraya*) and the experience of *duḥkha*.

In the other two spheres, only *ksānti* and *anyaya-jñāna* can arise and there is no experience of *duḥkha*. Accordingly, the *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s are not produced in the two upper spheres.<sup>47</sup>

### 15.3.2.1. Warmed-up (*uṣmagata*)

This is the first indication or the anticipation of the *anāśrava-jñāna*.

As a result of the operation of knowledge on an object, there arises the warmth of the noble knowledge capable of burning the fuels of defilements. Hence, it is called ‘warmed up’. This is like rubbing [two stones] to get fire — as a result of the mutual dependence of the lower and upper [stones], there arises the warmth of fire capable of burning fuels.

Venerable Ghosaka explains: On account of seeking liberation, there arise the *kuśala-mūla*-s. They are the foresign for the arising of the sun of the noble path ... [and] of the fire of the noble path; hence the name ‘warmed-up’. This is like the case of smoke as the foresign preceding the arising of fire.<sup>48</sup>

This is a lengthy stage the practice of which is characterized by the three *prajñā*-s — *śruta-mayī*, *cintā-mayī* and *bhāvanā-mayī*. First, one begins with the cultivation of the *śruta-mayī prajñā* by learning from a teacher or studying the *tripitaka*. Then one realizes that all the *śruta-mayī prajñā* by learning from a teacher can be summarized into the 18 *dhātu*-s, the 12 *āyatana*-s and the five *skandha*-s. One then proceeds — progressively seeking more and more concise teachings — to examine each of them, understanding in terms of terminology, specific characteristics and common characteristics. In this

manner, one progresses to the practice of the four *smṛtyupasthāna*-s, and finally the repeated contemplation of the 16 *ākāra*-s of the four truths, pertaining to both the sphere of sensuality and the two upper spheres. *Ākāra* here means the mode of comprehending activity of the mind. This activity on an object results in a resemblance or reflection of the object in the mind — the ‘mode’. The 16 *ākāra*-s are as follows:

- (I) *duḥkha-saya* — impermanent (*anitya*), unsatisfactory (*duḥkha*), empty (*śūnya*) and soulless (*anātman*);
- (II) *samudaya-saya* — cause (*hetu*), origin (*samudaya*), successive causation (*prabhava*) and condition (*pratyaya*);
- (III) *nirodha-saya* — cessation (*nirodha*), calm (*śānta*), excellence (*pranīta*) and escape (*nिःsaranya*);
- (IV) *mārga-saya* — path (*mārga*), right method (*nyāya*), course of practice (*pratipatti*), conducive to exit (*nairānika*).

This examination of the four noble truths, however, does not constitute direct spiritual insight; “it is like examining pictures through the veil of a silk-cloth”. It is only up to this point that the practitioner has perfected the *śruta-majī praṭijñā*.

With this as the basis, he produces the *cittā-mayī praṭijñā*. Having perfected this, he next produces the *bhāvanā-mayī praṭijñā*. This is also called the ‘warmed-up’. From warmed-up, the summits are produced. From summits, *dharma*-s. From receptivity, the worldly supreme *dharma*-s. From worldly supreme *dharma*-s, the *darsana-mārga*. From *darsana-mārga*, the *bhāvanā-mārga*. From *bhāvanā-mārga*, the *asāikṣa-mārga*. In this way, the *kusala-mūla*-s are gradually fulfilled.<sup>49</sup>

The warmed-up may be lost through retrogression, or transcendence of sphere or stage, or loss of the *nirāya-subhāga*. As a result, one may commit the *ānantarya-karma*-s, cut off the *kusala-mūla*-s, and fall

into the bad planes of existence. Nevertheless, it can serve as the decisive cause for the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. “One who has acquired the warmed-up is like a fish that has swallowed the fisherman’s hook — [destined to be caught]; he is destined for the *nirvāṇa-dharma*.<sup>50</sup>

### 15.3.2.2. Summits (*mūrdhan*)

At this stage the practitioner continues to contemplate the 16 modes of activities of the four noble truths. But these roots receive another name on account of their excellence.<sup>51</sup> They are called summits/peaks because:

- (i) They are the highest of the shakable skillful roots. At this stage, one can either proceed to the next stage or fall back to commit evils and be born in the *durgati*.<sup>52</sup>
- (ii) They are like peaks, between the previous and the subsequent stages. This is like a person situated at the peak of a mountain: He does not remain for long — either, in the absence of any obstacle, he passes over this mountain to another mountain, or, in the presence of obstacles, he has to descend. The *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s are twofold: retrogressible and non-retrogressible. Among the former, the inferior one is called “warmed up”; the superior, “summits”. Among the latter, the inferior, “receptivity”; the superior, “worldly supreme *dharma*-s”. It is also because these excel among the retrogressible *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s that they are called ‘summits’.<sup>53</sup>

Like the warmed-up, the summits may be lost through the same causes. As a result, one may commit the *ānantarya-karma*-s and fall into the bad planes of existence. However, these skillful roots excel the previous one in that even when the practitioner should fall to commit evil, he will never fall to the extent of having the skillful roots cut off.<sup>54</sup>

### 15.3.2.3. Receptivity (*kṣānti*)

Although all four *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s are conducive to insight into the truth, receptivity accords with *satyābhismaya* more so than the other three, hence this alone is said to be truth-accordant.<sup>55</sup> It is called receptivity “because of the greatest receptivity to the truths — on account of the non-regressibility [of this stage]”<sup>56</sup>

At the stage of warmed-up, the truth is acceptable to one and pleases (*ksamate rocate*) one weakly; at the stage of the summits, to a medium degree. Immediately after that, receptivity now arises because of the greatest receptivity to the truths ... This is because receptivity does not regress, whereas there is the possibility of retrogression from the summits.<sup>57</sup>

Like the warmed-up and the summits, receptivity can be lost through the transcendence of sphere and stage or loss of the *nikāya-sabhāga*, not through retrogression. In fact, one who has acquired it can never regress from it, nor can he commit the *ānantarya-karma*-s or fall into the bad planes of existence.<sup>58</sup>

Receptivity is also threefold: weak, medium and strong. As in the case of the warmed-up and the summits, the weak and medium receptivities contemplate fully all 16 modes of activity of the four truths — four pertaining to the sphere of sensuality and four to the two higher spheres; in all, eight truths and 32 modes of activity. However, the strong receptivity contemplates only the truth of unsatisfactoriness pertaining to the sphere of sensuality. This is because, at the stage of contemplation of the medium receptivity, there begins a successive reduction of the higher modes of activity and spheres until finally, in the last two moments of the stage, the practitioner applies his mind to only two modes of activity — impermanence and unsatisfactoriness — of the sphere of sensuality.<sup>59</sup> The reason for being successively more restrictive in contemplation is so as to make the contemplation progressively more focused and thus more effective in inducing the outflow-free knowledge. The MV\$<sup>60</sup>

explains this with a simile: A wealthy man, unable to bring along all his possession to another country, changed them into money. Unhappy that the money was too much, he changed them into gold. Still unhappy that the gold pieces were too heavy, he changed them into expensive jewels. In this way, he was finally able to carry his possessions with him and travel freely.

In the very next moment when the strong receptivity comes into operation, the practitioner, in a single thought, contemplates only the unsatisfactoriness pertaining to the sphere of sensuality. At this stage, although the *darsana-hyea* defilements are not yet abandoned, they are already successfully suppressed.

### 15.3.2.4. Worldly supreme *dharma*-s

Immediately following the last moment of the strong receptivity, the worldly supreme *dharma*-s arise, contemplating — like the strong receptivity — in one moment only the unsatisfactoriness pertaining to the sphere of sensuality. These *dharma*-s have as their intrinsic nature those *citta-caitta*-s which serve as the *samanantara-pratyaya* for the entrance into *samyakta-niyāma* (i.e., *darsana-mārga*).<sup>61</sup> That is, with these as the *samanantara-pratyaya*, the practitioner relinquishes the nature of an ordinary worldling (*prthagjanava* — see below, § 15.3.2) and acquires the nature of the noble (*āryava*).

In the JP\$<sup>62</sup> these are the first of the four *nirvedha-bhāgiya*-s to be discussed. The MV\$ attempts to justify this choice of order, giving elaborate explanations.

These *citta-caitta*-s — [the last of an ordinary worldling] — in comparison to the other worldly *dharma*-s, are the best, the excellent, the senior, the chief, the superior, the wonderful; hence they are called the worldly supreme *dharma*-s.<sup>63</sup>

They are said to be excellent since they alone can open up the door of the noble path.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, they are said to be the best in comparison to the *śruta-mayī*; excellent, in comparison to the *śravāna-māri*, senior, in comparison to the *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* practices; chief, in comparison to *taṣmagata*; superior, in comparison to *mūrdhan*; wonderful, in comparison to *ksānti*. Various other explanations for these six attributes are given in the MVŚ.<sup>65</sup>

There is another view that the worldly supreme dharma-s have the five outflow-free faculties (*indriya*) — *śraddhā*, *vīrya*, *smṛti*, *samādhi*, *prajñā* — as their intrinsic nature. This view is attributed to either the old Ābhidharmika masters or the Vātsiputriyas. The former in this way in order to refute the view of the Vibhajyavādins that these five faculties are necessarily outflow-free. By asserting in this way, the old Ābhidharmikas intend to show that these five faculties can also be with-outflow since they exist in an ordinary worldling. The Vātsiputriyas hold that these five faculties are *kusala* in their intrinsic nature (*svabhāvataḥ*), and all differences pertaining to the *ārya* are to be established on the basis of these five.<sup>66</sup>

The two Dārśāntika masters, Dharmatrāta and Buddhadēva, also hold different views in this regard. For the former, all *citta-cittā*-s are simply specific states of *cetanā*; accordingly, the worldly supreme dharma-s have *cetanā* as their intrinsic nature. For the latter, the *citta-cittā*-s are none other than the *citta* itself; accordingly, the worldly supreme dharma-s have *citta* as their intrinsic nature.<sup>67</sup>

### 15.3.3. Summary

To sum up: the *nirvedha-bhāgiya* constitutes the *prajñā* derived from cultivation, and the *mokṣa-bhāgiya*, the *prajñā* derived from reflection. These two *prajñā*-s, together with that derived from hearing — which, in *abhidharma*, refers specifically to the study of the specific and common characteristics of *dharma*-s — in the preliminary stage,

constitute the threefold impure or with-outflow *prajñā*. They are considered as *abhidharma* in the conventional sense, and we can discern here the reason for the Ābhidharmikas to be concerned with spiritual practices. These conventional *abhidharma*-s serve as the instruments for bringing about the out-flow-free *prajñā* which is *abhidharma* in the absolute sense<sup>68</sup> (see *supra*, § 1.2).

### 15.4 Direct realization (*abhisamaya*), path of insight (*darśana-mārga*) and stream entry (*srotuśāpatti*)

In the stages of preparatory effort, contemplations on the truths were carried out with knowledges that are with-outflow (*sāṃsāra*). Immediately following the moment of the worldly supreme *dharma*-s, the practitioner is able to give rise to the outflow-free knowledges (*anāśrava-jñāna*) with which he again contemplates the 16 modes of activity of the four truths — those pertaining to the sphere of sensuality followed by those pertaining to the two upper spheres. The MVŚ explains why, for each of the modes of activity (*duḥkha*, etc.), the practitioner must first contemplate that pertaining to the sphere of sensuality, and then collectively that pertaining to the upper spheres:

- (i) the former is grosser and more easily observed than the latter;
- (ii) the sphere of sensuality is a non-concentrated stage, whereas the two upper spheres are both concentrated (*samāhita*) stages;

hence the practitioner must do the two contemplations separately.<sup>69</sup>

This contemplation is termed *abhisamaya* — direct realization — which is the direct spiritual insight into the truths. One of the Ābhidharmika definitions of *abhidharma* is that “it is that which directly realizes (*abhi-sam-vi*) and realizes (*sakṣāt-kr*) the *dharma*-s”. And Vasumitra explains that “*abhidharma* is that which can directly realize the four noble truths”.<sup>70</sup> This process takes 16 thought moments the first 15 of

which constitute the path of insight (*darsana-mārga*) and the 16<sup>th</sup> the beginning of the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-mārga*).

Complete insight into each of the truths is achieved in two moments, called ‘paths’ on account of their having to be gone through. In the first moment, called the unhindered path (*ānantarya-mārga*), the outflow-free understanding that arises is called a receptivity (*kṣānti*) to knowledge, and with this, the defilements abandonable by insight into the particular truth are abandoned. In the following moment, called the path of liberation (*vimukti-mārga*), knowledge proper arises through the induction of the acquisition (*prāpti*) of the cessation through deliberation (*pratisamkhya-nirodha*) of the defilements arises.<sup>71</sup> In this way, for the whole contemplative process covering the sphere of sensuality followed by the two upper spheres, there arise eight receptivities and eight knowledges, all being *prajñā* in their intrinsic nature. This doctrine can be understood as follows: The abandoning of a defilement requires a sufficient degree of insight, represented by the notion of receptivity, into the true nature of things — unsatisfactory, impermanent, etc. When in the next moment the defilement which disturbs and sullies (two connotations of *vklis*) the mind is no more, wisdom proper — a higher degree than receptivity — ‘shines forth’ as it were. Put differently, this can be seen as a corollary of the general Buddhist position that insight is the means as well as that which necessarily arises at the end — and in this sense the virtue *par excellence* — of spiritual praxis. In the Sarvāstivāda conception, the insight, designated as *jñāna*, that constitutes the very path of liberation is not just a mere state of mental clarity or cognitive perfection. It is a positive force having the efficacy of inducing the *prāpti* of *pratisamkhya-nirodha*; which is to say, it serves as the necessary causal factor for the acquisition of the *nirodha*. The latter, being unconditioned, is not directly caused or directly produced by it; it is, however, acquired (*prāpta*) by virtue of the *prāpti* so induced by it. (See *infra*, § 16).

That the unhindered path and the path of liberation represent the indispensable functioning of insight in overcoming defilements and attaining cessation is also underscored by the doctrine of the three outflow-free cognitive faculties: *anājñātam-ājñāsyāmīndriya*, *ājñendriya* and *ājñātāvīndriya*. These three faculties, in their essential nature, are constituted of *manas*, *sukha*, *saumanya*, *upeksā*, *śradhā*, *vīrya*, *smṛti*, *samādhī* and *prajñā*. These nine are said to be differentiated as the three distinctive faculties on account of the predominance that they exercise in the *darsana-mārga*, *bhāvanā-mārga* and *asaiṣamārga*, respectively: the *anājñātam-ājñāsyāmīndriya*, with regard to the cessation of the *darsana-haya* defilements; the *ājñendriya*, with regard to the cessation of the *bhāvanā-haya* defilements; the *ājñātāvīndriya*, with regard to the state of bliss in the present life (*dhṛṣṭadharmasukhavīhāra*) of an *arhat*.<sup>72</sup> In the acquisition of the fruit of stream entry, the *anājñātam-ājñāsyāmīndriya* functions as the inductor (*āvāhaka*) of the *visamnyoga-prāpti*, and the *ājñendriya* functions as the support of this *prāpti*. The first constitutes the unhindered path; the second, the path of liberation. In the acquisition of the fruit of arighthood, the *ājñendriya* constitutes the unhindered path; the *ājñātāvīndriya*, the path of liberation.<sup>73</sup>

Vasubandhu explains that the *kṣānti*-s are called the *ānātarya-mārga*-s as they cannot be obstructed in the cutting of the *prāpti* of the *kleśa* (*kleśa-prāpti-vicchedam pratyantarayitum asākhyatvāt*). The *jñāna*-s are called *vimuktī-mārga*-s because in those who are thus liberated from the *prāpti*-s of these *kleśa*-s, they co-arise with the *visamnyoga-prāpti*.<sup>74</sup> Samghabhadra criticizes:

If so, the *vimukti-mārga* should also be named *ānātarya*, inasmuch as its co-nascence also cannot be obstructed. Rather, one should explain thus: it is called *ānātarya* because there exists no *antara* (nothing in between); *ānātarya* itself is the *mārga*, hence the name *ānātarya-mārga*. The meaning is that there is no *mārga* of the same species which can come in between, preventing it from becoming the condition for the [arising] of

the *vimukti-mārga*; for the *ānātariya-mārga* all last only one *ksana*, while the *vimukti-mārga* may continue as a series...<sup>75</sup>

In the contemplation of the four truths pertaining to the sphere of sensuality, the receptivities and knowledges are called *dharma-jñāna-ksānti* and *dharma-jñāna* — the term *dharma* signifying the fact that the nature of *dharma*-s subsumable under the particular truth is seen for the first time.<sup>76</sup> Those pertaining to the two upper spheres are called *anvaya-jñāna-ksānti* and *anvaya-jñāna*, the term *anvaya* — ‘subsequent’ or ‘following’ — signifying the fact that these truths are realized subsequently and in a similar manner to those pertaining to the sphere of sensuality.<sup>77</sup> Samghabhadra<sup>78</sup> insists that the *anvaya-jñāna* is not an inferential knowledge, but rather a direct one like *dharma-jñāna*.<sup>79</sup> The following chart summarizes the 16 moments of insight:<sup>80</sup>

### The process of the direct insight into the four truths

*darśana mārga* (15 moments)

1. *duḥkhe dharmajñānakṣānti*
2. *duḥkhe dharmajñāna*
3. *duḥkhe anvayajñānakṣānti*
4. *duḥkhe anvayajñāna*
5. *samudaye dharmajñānakṣānti*
6. *samudaye dharmajñāna*
7. *samudaye anvayajñānakṣānti*
8. *samudaye anvayajñāna*
9. *duḥkhanirodhe dharmajñānakṣānti*
10. *duḥkhanirodhe dharmajñāna*
11. *duḥkhanirodhe anvayajñānakṣānti*
12. *duḥkhanirodhe anvayajñāna*
13. *duḥkhapratipakṣamārgē dharmajñānakṣānti*
14. *duḥkhapratipakṣamārgē dharmajñāna*
15. *duḥkhapratipakṣamārgē anvayajñānakṣānti bhāvanā-mārga*
16. *duḥkhapratipakṣamārgē anvayajñāna*

(Cf. AKB, 350 f.)

### 15.4.1. *Satyābhīsamaya* as a gradual process

The above process illustrates the Sarvāstivāda position that the direct realization into the truths is a gradual process. In support of this position, the MVŚ quotes a *sūtra* in which the Buddha is represented as stating to Anāthapindada (Pāli: Anāthapindika) explicitly that *satyābhīsamaya* is a gradual process, like ascending a four-rung ladder.<sup>81</sup> This position is consistent with the Sarvāstivāda doctrine that defilements are abandoned gradually. In the AKB, Vasubandhu explains the rationale for the progressive sequence as follows:

The discourse of the truths is in conformity with [the order of] direct realization. Now, what is the reason that the *abhīsamaya* of these truths is in this way?

For, that to which one is attached, by which one is oppressed, and from which liberation is sought — that very one, *duḥkha-satya*, at the stage of investigation is examined first.

Afterwards, [proceeding to investigate:] “What is the cause of this (*duḥkha*)?” — the *samudaya-satya*. “What is the cessation of this (*duḥkha*)?” — the *nirodha-satya*. “What is the way of this?” — the *mārga-satya*.

It is like having seen the disease, [there follows] the searching for its cause, its elimination and its medicine.<sup>82</sup>

However, other Buddhist schools disagree. The Mahāśaṅghika, Mahīśāsaka and Dharmaguptaka are known to hold that it is an abrupt process.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the Mahāśaṅghika states:

Within the one moment of the knowledge pertaining to the direct realization [of the four noble truths] (*ekakṣanikābhīsamayāntika-jñāna*), the differences in the various *ākāra*-s of the four noble truths are fully known (*parijñāna*).<sup>84</sup>

There was, however, a certain branch of the Mahāsāṃghika which held that there was a distinctive direct realization for each of the distinctive *ākāra* of the truths.<sup>85</sup>

According to Yaśomitra<sup>86</sup> the abrupt view belongs to the Dharmaguptikas, etc.; but according to Pu Guāng,<sup>87</sup> the Mahāsāṃghikas, etc. The MVŚ mentions the Vibhajyavādins as among those holding the abrupt view:

There are some who assert that the four noble truths are directly realized at once, such as the Vibhajyavādins. ... They base themselves on the *sūtra*: The Bhagavat said, 'If, with regard to *dukkha-satya*, there is no doubt, there is likewise no doubt with regard to the *saṃudaya*, *nirodha*- and *mārga-satya*. Since doubt with regard to the four noble truths disappears at once, it is known that the direct realization is definitely abrupt and not gradual.'<sup>88</sup>

The Bhadanta, while holding that the direct realization into the four truths is acquired gradually, held that at the first moment of gaining entry into *saṃyakṣaṇyāma* (see below), one is said to have direct faith with regard to all the truths<sup>89</sup> [at once]:

When one abides in the *dukkha-dharma-jñāna*, if one does not acquire faith with regard to all four truths, one cannot be said to abide [therein]. This is like the case of one who takes an earthen vessel up a pavilion and then throws it onto the ground. When the vessel has not yet reached the ground, it can be said to be broken, even though it has [in fact] not yet been broken, on account of the fact that it is definitely about to be broken.<sup>90</sup>

The Theravāda also upholds the abrupt view. Buddhaghosa, in his *Visuddhimaggā*, reasons as follows:

In each of the four path-knowledges (*sotāpanni-mageya*, etc.), [and] in that order, four functions— comprehension, abandonment, realization and practice — are exercised in one and the same moment. It follows that the four noble truths are fully realized in a single moment. Moreover, there is

the single realization of the four truths in the sense of truthness in 16 aspects: oppression (*pīlana*), being compounded (*sankhata*), torment (*santāpa*) and change (*vipariṇāma*) pertaining to *dukkha-sacca*; accumulation (*āyuhana*), source (*nidāna*), connection (*sanyoga*) and obstruction (*palibodhi*) pertaining to *saṃudaya-sacca*; exit (*nissarana*), separation (*viveka*), being uncompounded (*asaṅkhata*) and immortality (*amata*) pertaining to *nirodha-sacca*; leading out (*niyāna*), cause (*hetu*), seeing (*dassana*) and dominance (*ādhipeṭeyya*) pertaining to *marga-sacca*. This is compared to the simultaneous functions of the lamp:

the lamp burning the wick — knowledge comprehending *dukkha*;  
the lamp dispelling darkness — knowledge abandoning *saṃudaya*;  
the lamp revealing light — knowledge developing the *maggā*;  
the lamp consuming the oil — knowledge realizing *nirodha*.<sup>91</sup>

Although the Sarvāstivāda holds the gradual view, it too concedes a certain sense of abrupt realization. This school speaks of three types of *abhisamaya*:

- (1) *darśanābhīṣisamaya* (*abhisamaya as darśana*) — the direct clear realization of the four noble truths by pure *prajñā* alone;
- (2) *ālambanābhīṣisamaya* (*abhisamaya of object*) — this pure *prajñā* taking the same objects as its conjoined *dharma*-s;
- (3) *kāryābhīṣisamaya* (*abhisamaya as enterprise*) — this pure *prajñā*, the conjoined *dharma*-s sharing the same objects with it, and other conascent *dharma*-s such as *jāti* and other *viprayukta-saṃskāra*-s, etc., all participating in the same enterprise. The Sarvāstivādins would concede that it is permissible to speak of abrupt *abhisamaya* with regard to *kāryābhīṣisamaya*: At the very moment of the direct realization into *dukkha-satya*, there can be the abandoning of *saṃudaya*, the realization of *nirodha*, and the cultivation of *mārga*. This is so because at the time of

the seeing of *duḥkha-satya*, there is the *kāryābhīṣamaya* with regard to the other three *satya*-s.<sup>92</sup>

An intermediate position between the ‘abrupt view’ and the ‘gradual view’ is given in the SatŚ. On the one hand, it states as follows:

As a result of the insight into the *nirodha-satya*, one is said to be enlightened.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, when one truth is realized, complete insight into all the truths is obtained — a view similar to those of the Mahāśāṅghika and the Vibhajyavāda. On the other hand, the process that leads finally to the realization of *nirodha-satya* is a gradual one:

The thought of concept (\**prajñapti-citta*), the thought of *dharma* (\**dharma-citta*), the thought of *śūnyatā* (\**śūnyatā-citta*) — these three thoughts having ceased, it is called *nirodha-satya*.<sup>94</sup>

Initially, at the stage of developing the *śruta-mayī prajñā* and *cintā-mayī prajñā*, the practitioner eliminates the thought of *prajñapti* by realizing that concepts such as the *pudgala* and a vase, etc., exist only at the *samvriti-satya* level and are without any ontological status from the absolute standpoint. But the *dharma*-s, such as *nirvāṇa* and the *skandha*-s are true existents. This is called the elimination of the *prajñapti-citta* by means of the *dharma-citta*.

Next, at the second stage, i.e., the stage of developing the *bhāvanā-mayī prajñā*, the practitioner further contemplates the *dharma*-s such as *nirvāṇa* and the five *skandha*-s. He then realizes that these *dharma*-s too, from the absolute standpoint, are non-existent — empty (*śūnya*). This is the elimination of the *dharma-citta* by means of the *śūnyatā-citta*:

The five *skandha*-s too are in actual fact non-existent; they exist [only] from the standpoint of *samvriti-satya*. . . . Moreover, as a result of the insight into the *nirodha-satya*, one is said to attain enlightenment (得道). Thus,

we know that *nirodha* exists from the standpoint of *paramārtha-satya*, but not the *skandha*-s.<sup>95</sup>

Finally, at the third stage, one must eliminate even the thought of *śūnyatā*, i.e. “the thought taking *nirvāṇa* as its object”.<sup>96</sup> It is only then that one perfectly realizes the *nirodha-satya*. Through further contemplation one now realizes that:

[In the *anupadhisēsa-nirvāṇa*,] the *skandha*-s have ceased without any remainder — hence the name *nirvāṇa*. Herein, what is there that exists? . . . It is not that there is no *nirvāṇa*; only that there are no real *dharma*-s.<sup>97</sup>

In this way, one accomplishes the insight into the *nirodha-satya*.<sup>98</sup>

#### 15.4.2. Entry into the certitude of perfection (*samyakta-niyamāvakti*)

From the first moment of insight — the receptivity to the *dharma*-knowledge with regard to unsatisfactoriness (*duḥkhe dharma-jñāna-kṣanti*) — the practitioner becomes a noble one, an *ārya*, a term for the Buddhist saint. The AKB gives the popular etymology as *ānād yātah* — ‘has gone far’:

[The *ārya*-s are] those in whom the outflow-free path has arisen. They are *āryas* because they have gone far from the evil *dharma*-s on account of their obtaining the acquisition of absolute disconnection [from the defilements], for, being destined for the exhaustion of the defilements, they are destined for perfection (*samyakta-niyatiāh*).<sup>99</sup>

Prior to this critical point in his spiritual career, he has been an ‘ordinary worldling’. The JPŚ defines the ‘quality of an ordinary worldling’ (*prthagjanīya*) as the non-obtainment (= non-acquisition, *aprāpti*) of the *dharma*-s of the noble ones.<sup>100</sup> This non-obtainment is not just a mere abstract concept of negation; it is a *viprayukta-saṃskāra-dharma* — a real force — the efficacy of which is explained by Vasumitra as follows:

It causes sentient beings to generate views of different types (*prthag-jāti*), defilements of different types, do *karma*-s of different types, experience fruits of different types and births of different types. Furthermore, it causes sentient beings to fall into different spheres, go to different planes of existence (*gati*), experience different births. Hence, it is called the quality of an ordinary worldling. ...<sup>101</sup>

The MVŚ further explains that all *ārya*-s are called ‘equal beings’ (平等; *samāna-jana*) because they attain the truth equally, see equally, are inclined equally. The ordinary worldlings are different from them — not having equality in the same manner as the *ārya*-s; hence they are called *prthagjana*.<sup>102</sup>

From the first moment of his entry into the *darsanaya-mārga* up to the 15<sup>th</sup> moment, this *ārya* is called the candidate for the fruit of stream-entry (*srotāpatti-phala-pratipannaka*). He has now abandoned 88 defilements by insight (see *supra*, § 12.6.2.1 a). At the 16<sup>th</sup> moment, he is called the “abider in the fruit of stream entry” (*srotāpatti-phala-stha*). He is destined to final liberation within a maximum of seven rebirths.<sup>103</sup> However, according to the Vaibhāṣikas, the stream-entrant is said to be reborn at most seven times in the sense that he will have seven births as a human, seven intermediate existences (*antarabhava*); likewise his births among the gods — a total of up to 28 existences.<sup>104</sup> The MVŚ explains the term stream entrant as follows:

*Srotas* means the noble path; *ā-panna* means entered. He is called a stream entrant (*srotāpana*) as he has entered the noble path.<sup>105</sup>

Two types of practitioners who enter the path of insight are distinguished: One with a weak faculty (*mṛdindriya*) enters the path having first relied on faith in the teacher’s teachings; the other, with a sharp faculty (*tiksñenendriya*), having first studied and understood the Buddha’s teachings himself. In the first 15 moments of the path, the

former is called a ‘pursuer through faith’ (*śraddhānusārīn*); the latter, ‘pursuer through the doctrines’ (*dharmaṇusārīn*).<sup>106</sup> At the 16<sup>th</sup> moment, the former is called ‘one who is freed through predominance of faith’ (*śraddhādhimukta*); the latter, ‘one who has attained through views’ (*drṣṭi-prāpta*):

A liberated person with a predominance of faith is called *śraddhādhimukta*. It is not that he does not have any *prajñā* at all; but he is not illumined (i.e., made conspicuous) by that, hence he does not receive that name. One is a *drṣṭi-prāpta* from the fact of being illuminated by views on account of the predominance of *prajñā*. It is not that he does not have any faith at all ...

Others, however, on the basis of etymology, explain thus: “A *śraddhādhimukta* is one freed from those abandonable by insight on account of the predominance of faith. A *drṣṭi-prāpta* is one who has attained the fruit on account of the predominance of views.”<sup>107</sup>

The first receptivity is also explained as the entry into certitude (*nijama/nyāma*), for it is the entry into the certitude of perfection (*samyakva-niyamāvakrañti*). That is, from this point onward, the practitioner is destined for — i.e., will definitely attain — *nirvāṇa* (= *samyakva*).<sup>108</sup> Xuan Zang’s translation here — probably following a fanciful etymology of the variant *nyāma* as <*ni* + *āma* (‘separation from the raw’; Tibetan: *skon med pa* — ‘free from defects’) given in the MVŚ<sup>109</sup> — corresponds additionally to the alternative term *samyakva-nyāma*, rendered as 𩷇生離生, ‘perfection which is the separation from the raw’:

This is called ‘entry into *samyakva-nyāma*’, and also ‘entry into *samyakva-nyāma*’, for this is the first entry into *samyakva-nyāma* as well as the first entry into *samyakva-niyāma*. In the *sūtra*, *nirvāṇa* is called *samyakva*. Or, *samyakva* signifies the noble paths. ‘Raw’ (𩷇 — *āma*) refers to the defilements or the immaturity of the [skillful] roots; the noble paths can go beyond them, hence ‘separation from the raw’. The noble paths are

said to be certitude on account of the fact that they can decisively lead to *nirvāna*, or that they can decisively discern the characteristics of the truths. Reaching this stage is said to be entry.<sup>110</sup>

Although an ordinary worldling who has obtained the *mokṣa-bhāgīya*-s will definitely attain *nirvāṇa* also, he is not said in the same way as having entered the certitude of perfection for he could still commit evil and fall into the category of being destined for evil-ness.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, unlike the stream entrant who will be reborn at the most seven times, the time of his attainment of *nirvāṇa* is unfixed. (See example of Devadatta, in § 15.2.1).

### 15.5. Non-retrogressibility of stream-entry<sup>112</sup>

The *darsana-mārga* is not retrogressible, for it is a path — process — which proceeds very swiftly, without being held back or prematurely interrupted. Just as one being carried forward by a rapid incapable of holding back, when the practitioner is on this path, he is being carried away by the great current of Dharma; there is no possibility of his going backward.

Moreover, one regresses mostly on account of the manifestation of defilements; when one is within the *darsana-mārga*, there is no possibility of generating even a *husala-citta* that is with-outflow, let alone a *citta* of defilements. Hence there can be no retrogression.

Besides, retrogressibility in this case would entail the following fallacies:

Having gained insight into the truths, one does not have the insight again; having attained the spiritual fruit, one does not attain it again; having directly realized, one does not directly realize it again; having entered into *samyakva-nyāma*, one does not enter into it again; having become an *ārya*, one becomes an ordinary worldling again; having abided in the

category of those destined for perfection (*samyakva-niyata-rāśi*), one abides in the category of those who are not destined [for perfection or evil-ness (*mithyānā*)] again. ...<sup>113</sup>

In fact, the practitioner can fall from all the fruits excepting the first.<sup>114</sup> The Mahāśāṅghika, on the other hand, holds that a stream entrant is susceptible to retrogression. He is in fact said to be capable of committing all evils except the mortal transgressions (*ānantarya*).<sup>115</sup>

### 15.6. Path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-mārga*)

The word *bhāvanā*, often translated as ‘meditation’ is more literally — and also more correctly — ‘cultivation’ or ‘development’ of the mind. It is, however, true that meditation constitutes the most important aspect of the process. But this ‘meditation’ must not be equated with *saṃādhi* as opposed to *vipasyanā*. There is no indication in the Sarvāstivāda system that *darsana-mārga* refers to the latter, and *bhāvanā-mārga* — in contrast — to the former. The MVŚ states explicitly that, in truth, the two *mārga*-s are not separable from each other. The two are differentiated only on account of the fact that, while both *parijñā* and *apramāda* are present in both, in *darsana-mārga* the former predominates and is strong and in *bhāvanā-mārga*, the latter. Venerable Vasumitra explains that the defilements abandoned by the realization into the four truths cannot be distinguished as ‘this is abandoned by insight’, ‘that is abandoned by cultivation’. However, what is abandoned (*prahīna*), cast aside (*pratimhṛṣṭa*) and expurgated (*vyanti-bhūta*) by the power of insight is said to be abandonable by insight. Those [defilements] whose various grades come to be gradually thinned and finally abandoned completely as a result of practice, cultivation and repeated action (*āsevita-bhāvita-bahulikṛta*) in accordance with the path that has been acquired are said to be abandonable by cultivation.<sup>116</sup>

The path of cultivation is the stage of repeated practice which begins at the 16<sup>th</sup> moment of *satyābhīsamaya*. It is through this stage which may last a considerable period of time that all the tenacious defilements remaining after the *darśana-mārga* come to be gradually eradicated. These *bhavānā-heya* defilements comprise *rāga*, *pratīgha*, *moha* and *māna* pertaining to the *kāmadhātu*; and three each — excluding *pratīgha* which does not exist in a mind of meditation which is concentrated — in the two upper spheres. This gives a total of ten defilements (see chart in § 12.6.2.1 b). As these defilements are blunt by nature and hence difficult to detect and differentiate, they are collectively classified into nine grades on the basis of the degree of strength of their arising — weak (*mṛdu*), medium (*madhya*), strong (*adhimātra*); each again subdivided into weak, medium, strong — thus giving weak-weak, etc., up to strong-strong.<sup>117</sup> Whereas the *darśana-mārga* is a sharp or forceful (*tūra*, *tīkṣṇa*) path which on arising cuts off all the nine grades (see below) of the defilements at once, the *bhāvanā-mārga* is not forceful, so that the nine grades are cut off gradually through repeated practice, one by one.

This is like two knives, one sharp and one blunt, cutting the same thing; the sharp one cuts it at once, the blunt one gradually.<sup>118</sup>

The sequence of abandoning the defilements begins with the strong-strong grade in the *kāmadhātu* and ends with the weak-weak grade in the *bhavāgra bhūmi* of the *ārūpya-dhātu*. In this way, a total of 88 grades of defilements existing in the nine *bhūmi-s* — *kāma-dhātu*, the four *dhyāna-s* of the *rūpadhātu* and the four *ārūpya-dhātu* — come to be successively eradicated. The strong-strong grade of defilements is abandoned by the weak-weak grade of the counteractive path. The reason for this is that the coarsest defilement is graded as the strong-strong and the subtlest, weak-weak. On the other hand, the most powerful counteragent is graded as the strong-strong, and the weakest is graded as weak-weak. Since the coarsest defilement is the easiest to

counteract and the subtlest the most difficult, the weakest counteractive *jñāna* is utilized for the former, and the strongest, for the latter. The AKB explains this with two similes: the gross stain of a cloth is washed out first, and the subtlest, last; a great darkness is dispelled by a small light, and a small darkness by a great light.<sup>119</sup> As in the case of the *darsanā-heya* defilements, the abandonment of each grade of the *bhāvanā-heya* defilements involves the unhindered path and the path of liberation. The difference is that in this case, the defilements are abandoned in the unhindered path by knowledge (*jñāna*), not receptivity.<sup>120</sup> At the final stage, when the practitioner abandons the weak-weak grade and arrives at its path of liberation, one enters into the path of the non-trainee (*asaiṣa-mārga*) and becomes an *arhat*.

### 15.7. Attainment of the four fruits of the spiritual life

The four fruits have their origin in the *siūras*. As explained above, according to the Sarvāstivāda, at the 16<sup>th</sup> moment of the *satyābhīsamaya*, the practitioner attains the fruit of stream entry. He has abandoned all the 88 categories of defilements abandonable by insight. In the *siūra*,<sup>121</sup> this attainment came to be associated with the overcoming of three fetters (*samyojana*) — *satkāya-dṛṣṭi* (Pāli: *sakkāya-ditthi*), *sīla-vrataparamārsha* (Pāli: *sīlabhāta-paramāsa*) and *vicikīśā* (Pāli: *vicikicchā*). These three, together with *kāmacchanda* and *vyāpāda*, constitute the *avarabhāgiya* (Pāli: *oramabbhāgiya*). In this context, the Sarvāstivāda agrees with the Theravāda: The stream entrant has overcome only the first three *avarabhāgiya* fetters and must still overcome the last two as well as all the five *ūrdhva-bhāgiya* (Pāli: *uddhambbhāgiya*) fetters — *rāga* pertaining to the two upper spheres, *uddhatya*, *māna* and *avidyā*.<sup>122</sup> However the AKB explanation here is not acceptable to Saṅghabhadra.<sup>123</sup>

In the path of cultivation, the practitioner who has overcome up to five grades of the defilements becomes a candidate for the fruit of once-

returner. When he has abandoned the sixth grade, he attains the fruit of a once-returner (*sakṛdāgāmin*), so called because, having been born among the gods and returning once to the human world, he will have no further rebirth. In addition to being free from the first three *avarabhāgiya* fetters, he has now also weakened or thinned *rāga*, *praiṅgha* and *avīḍyā*.<sup>124</sup>

Having abandoned the seventh or eighth grade — or more strictly speaking, having reached the *ānantarya-mārga* of the ninth grade — he becomes a candidate for the fruit of a non-returner. Having completely abandoned the ninth grade and abiding in the *vimukti-mārga* of the ninth grade, he attains the fruit of a non-returner. He will no longer be reborn in the *kāmadhātu* since he has now abandoned all five *avarabhāgiya* fetters that bind one to the lower *dhātu*.<sup>125</sup> The non-returner who has realized the *nirodha-samāpatti* (= *saṃjñāveśita-nirodha-samāpatti*) is called a ‘bodily witness’ (*kāya-sāksin*). He is so called because he has directly experienced the peace of this *saṃpatti* through the basis of the body — there being no mentation — which is similar to *nirvāṇa*. This is the sharpest of all the faculties of non-returners.<sup>126</sup>

From the moment when the non-returner becomes detached from the first grade of the defilements pertaining to the first *dhyāna* up to the moment when he abandons the eighth grade of the defilements pertaining to *bhavāgra* — or more strictly, when he is in the *ānantarya-mārga* of the ninth grade of defilement of *bhavāgra* — he is a candidate for the fruit of arighthood. This unhindered path is the most powerful of all, capable of breaking all defilements whatsoever, and is accordingly called the *vajra-like* (*vajropama*) *saṃpatti*. When this ninth grade is completely abandoned, there arises in the practitioner the knowledge of the exhaustion of the outflows (*kṣaya-jñāna*). Immediately after this knowledge, if he becomes an *arhat*, if he is of the immovable (i.e., non-retrogressive) type in the *vimukti-mārga*, there arises in him the knowledge of the non-arising of outflows, for he has then absolutely abandoned all defilements along with their traces (*vyāsanā*)

and overcome the unclefied ignorance (*aklistā-guṇāna* — cf. *supra*, § 12.10). Otherwise, if he is a retrogressive type, there arises in him the same knowledge of exhaustion or the perfect view of the non-trainee. An *arhat* is called a non-trainee, for he has completed all training.

### 15.8. Out-of-sequence attainments

The above account of the sequential attainment of the four fruits represents the stages of progress of an *ānupūrvaka* — one who progresses according to the regular order. He begins as a *sakala-bandhana*. As we have seen earlier (§ 12.9.3), however, the Sarvāstivāda maintains that an ordinary worldling can abandon defilements through the mundane paths, except those that pertain to the existence-peak (*bhavāgra*). Since spiritual progress results from the abandonment of defilements, it means that an ordinary worldling can make tremendous progress before he enters into the noble path, and when he does enter it, he can attain up to the stage of *anāgāmin-phala*.

The worldly path of cultivation is with-outflow. In making upward progress, an ordinary worldling practices it by contemplating six modes of activities:

In the mundane unhindered paths, he reflects on the lower spheres as being

1. coarse (*audārika*), or
2. unsatisfactory (*duḥkha*), or
3. like a thick wall (*sthūlabhitti*).

In the paths of liberation, he sees the upper spheres as being

1. calm (*sānta*), or
2. excellent (*prajīta*), or
3. escape (*nihśarana*).

In this way, by becoming disgusted with a lower sphere and finding delight in an upper sphere, he abandons the defilements pertaining to the former and moves up to the latter.<sup>127</sup> This method of practice, however, entails that he cannot abandon the defilements pertaining to the highest stage of existence, the *bhavāgra*, for there is no stage higher than it to contrast with in order to generate disgust. Accordingly, to complete his journey, he must rely finally on the outflow-free knowledge arising in *satyābhīsamaya*.<sup>128</sup>

Before entering into the *darsana-mārga*, if the practitioner has not abandoned any *bhāvanā-heya* defilement pertaining to the sphere of sensuality through the worldly path, or has abandoned up to the fifth category only, he becomes a candidate for stream entry upon entering the *darsana-mārga*. However, if he has abandoned from six to eight categories, he thereupon skips to become a *sakṛdāgāmi-pratipannaka*. In the 16<sup>th</sup> moment, he abides in the fruit of *sakṛdāgāmin*. Such a practitioner is known as a *bhīyo-vitārāga* — ‘one who has been much detached’. If the practitioner has become fully detached beforehand from the sphere of sensuality by having abandoned all the nine categories of defilement pertaining to it, or if he is detached with regard to the higher spheres by having additionally abandoned all nine categories of defilements pertaining to each of the stages of the fine-material sphere and the first three immaterial spheres — i.e., up to the stage of the *ākīñcanyāyatana* — he skips to become an *anāgāmi-pratipannaka* upon entering the *darsana-mārga*, and an *anāgāmin* in the following moment.

crushed the defilements with the *vajropama-samādhī*, he ought not to give rise to the defilements again and retrogress. Just as, a log having been burnt, there remain only the ashes, it does not become a log any more. The same should be true for the *arhat* — having burnt the defilements with the fire of the outflow-free knowledge, he ought not give rise to the defilements again and retrogress.<sup>129</sup>

The Mahāsāṃghika is also known to hold a similar view.<sup>130</sup> So too, the Sautrāntika whose view is endorsed by Yasubandhu in the AKB.<sup>131</sup> According to the Sarvāstivāda, however, an *arhat* who has started as a *śraddhāmūsārin* is still susceptible to retrogression. He is said to be one circumstantially liberated (*samaya-vimukta*). His realization of *saṃāpatti* is also dependent on circumstances (*samaya*). The MVŚ quotes the *sūtra* as teaching that there are five reasons for the retrogression of such an *arhat*:

- (1) having too many undertakings;
- (2) indulgence in conceptual proliferation (*prapañca*);
- (3) being fond of quarrel;
- (4) being fond of traveling afar;
- (5) being constantly sick.

Moreover, the *sūtra* mentions an *arhat* named Gautika, a *samaya-vimukta* who had regressed six times. At the seventh time, fearing that he might again regress, he killed himself with a knife and attained *parinirvāṇa*.<sup>132</sup>

In contrast, one who has started as a *dharma-nusārin* is not retrogressive. He is said to be non-circumstantially liberated (*asamaya-vimukta*) and is called ‘one liberated through wisdom’ (*prajñā-vimukta*). If, additionally, he has also overcome the hindrance to *saṃāpatti* and can enter into the *nirodhā-saṃāpatti* at will, he is said to be ‘liberated doubly’ (*ubhayobhāga-vimukta*). In all, six types of *arhat*-s are distinguished:

(1) *parihāṇa-dharman* — those susceptible to retrogression;(2) *cetanā-dharman* — those who can end their existences at will;(3) *amurakṣanā-dharman* — those who can preserve themselves by constantly guarding against the loss of what has been acquired;(4) *sthitākampya* — those who remain stable in their stage of attainment, with neither progress nor retrogression;(5) *prativedhanā-dharman* — those capable of penetrating the state of the *akṛavya-dharman arhat* which they can attain quickly;(6) *akṛavya-dharman* — ‘the unshakable ones’ — those not susceptible to retrogression. The first five are *samaya-vimukta-s*, the last *asamaya-vimukta-s*.<sup>133</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> AKB, 391.<sup>2</sup> MVŚ, 4b; see *supra*, § 1.2.<sup>3</sup> MVŚ, 70a, 85a, 315c, etc.<sup>4</sup> MVŚ, 428b: *śrāvaka-bodhi* requires only 60 *kalpas* of *prayoga; prayekabuddha*,<sup>5</sup> MVŚ, 154a, 157c, 159a, 210b, etc.<sup>6</sup> MVŚ, 327c.<sup>7</sup> Cf. MVŚ, 264b–c, 465c; see also *supra*, § 12.7, § 12.9.3.<sup>8</sup> MVŚ, 264c–265a.<sup>9</sup> MVŚ, 317a.<sup>10</sup> MVŚ, 34a-b.<sup>11</sup> MVŚ, 933c.<sup>12</sup> See JPS, 964b; MVŚ, 560b, etc.<sup>13</sup> See SA, T 2, 10a–11c.<sup>14</sup> AKB, 334 ff.<sup>15</sup> AKB, 335 f; MVŚ, 906c ff.<sup>16</sup> MVŚ, 34c–35a speaks of three types of *kusala-mūla-s: punya-bhāgīya, mokṣa-bhāgīya* and *nirvedha-bhāgīya*. The first are the seeds of good rebirths as human and *deva*.<sup>17</sup> MVŚ, 35a.<sup>18</sup> MVŚ, 35a–b.<sup>19</sup> MVŚ, 885b–c.<sup>20</sup> MVŚ, 885b–886a.<sup>21</sup> AKB, 337.<sup>22</sup> AKB, 339 f; MVŚ, 134c.<sup>23</sup> MVŚ, 384b, 662c, etc.<sup>24</sup> E.g.: Pu Guang’s commentary on the AKB, T 41, 339b; etc.

# TREASURY of PRECIOUS QUALITIES

## *The Rain of Joy*

by JIGME LINGPA

WITH *The Quintessence of the Three Paths*  
A Commentary by Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche

BOOK ONE  
*Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group*  
*Forewords by H. H. the Dalai Lama*  
*and Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche*

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

### 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—

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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."<sup>67</sup> 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

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.<sup>68</sup> One should, moreover, be familiar with the system<sup>†</sup> that teach that cessation involves the complete destruction of the mainstream 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.

\* See appendix 4, p. 38.

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.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup>

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 samadhis of form and the formless absorptions. 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.<sup>72</sup> At the second instant, there occurs an *understanding* of the nature of suffering, and here wisdom arises as the antidote.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup>

The eighteen shravaka schools<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> 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

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

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 instants<sup>78</sup> 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.

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

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

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.<sup>79</sup> 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 originated in this way from beginningless time.

Thus, the obscurations eliminated by seeing<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

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

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

\* *mnyam bzhang skad cig*. See the definition of "instant" given in note 5.

\* See appendix 5, p. 387.