

RADICAL REJECTION

PARTING FROM EXTREME VIEWS ABOUT REALITY

A Graduate Level Course
Based upon the Madhyamakavatara by Chandrakirti
With Commentary by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche
And Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche

THE MYTH OF EMPTINESS

PART FIVE SOURCEBOOK



Buddhapālita

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Radical Rejection
Parting from Extreme Views about Reality
Part Five
The Myth of Emptiness

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Manjushri Supplication

Through the blessings of awareness-emptiness, Prince Manjushri,
 Open the eight treasures of courage*, which descend from the expanse of wisdom,
 So I may become the commander of the ocean
 Of the dharma treasury of scripture and realization.
 I supplicate Mipham, the melody of gentleness (Manjughosha).
Om Arapachana Dhi Hum

Dedication Song

All you sentient beings I have a good or bad connection with
 As soon as you have left this confused dimension
 May you be born in the west in Sukhavati
 And once you're born there complete the bhumis and the paths.

Composed by Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche. Translated by Jim Scott

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Part Five

The Myth of Emptiness

I. Root Text:

- A. Emptiness as it is to be realized by the Mahayana (v. 6:179-226)
- B. The Final Four Bhumis (v. 7:1-10:1)
- C. The Result, Buddhahood (v. 11:1-51)
- D. Colophon and Dedication (v. 11:52-56)

II. Commentaries:

- A. Outline: Mipham pp. 137-141
- B. Dzongsar: pp. 296-412
- C. Mipham: pp. 314-353
- D. Sourcebook (SB)

Syllabus

I. Intro, Review, Overview, Synopsis

- A. Topics:
 - 1. Review
 - a) Purpose of the text
 - b) Outline of the text
 - c) Major arguments
 - 2. Preview
 - a) Categories of Emptiness
 - b) Final Four Bhumis
 - c) Buddhahood and Buddha Activity
 - d) The Path and its nuances

- B. Readings:
 - 1. Root Text: Verses 6:179-180

II. The Sixteen Types of Emptiness

- A. Topics:
 - 1. The 16 Emptinesses: first three sets of four (i.e. numbers 1-12)
 - 2. Realization of emptiness by shravakas vs bodhisattvas
- B. Readings:
 - 1. Root Text: Verses 6:181-218
 - 2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 296-301
 - 3. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 304-308 (middle)

4. Mipham Commentary: pp. 314-318 (bottom)
5. SB: The Sixteen Emptiness, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, Karme Choling Program 2002, pp. 266-276 (bottom)

C. Optional Readings:

1. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 301-304 (top)

III. The Sixteen Emptinesses Part II and the Summary into Four

A. Topics:

1. The 16 Emptinesses: last set of four (i.e. numbers 13-16)
2. Summary into the Four Categories of Emptinesses
 - a) Things
 - b) Non-things
 - c) Essence
 - d) Other entity
3. Result of the analysis

B. Readings:

1. Root Text: Verses 6:219-226
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 308-313
3. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 322-330
4. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 339-340
5. Mipham Commentary: pp. 318 (bottom)-323
6. SB: The Sixteen Emptiness, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, Karme Choling Program 2002, pp. 276 (bottom)-279

C. Optional Readings:

1. Dzongsar Commentary: pp.313-322
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp.330-338

IV. The Final Four Bhumis

A. Topics:

1. The Seventh Bhumi:
 - a) Two sets of six skillful means
 - b) Dendzin and tsendzin
 - c) Maitreya and Nagarjuna
2. The Eighth Bhumi:
 - a) Requested by the Buddhas to remain
 - b) Patience of the unborn
 - c) Bodhisattvas outshining shravakas
 - d) Refinements of emptiness
3. The Ninth Bhumi:
 - a) The ten powers or strengths
4. The Tenth Bhumi:
 - a) Qualities and purity
 - b) Four perfect cognitions
5. The qualities of all of the bhumis

B. Readings:

1. Root Text: Verses 7:1; 8:1-3; 9:1; 10:1
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 341-345 (middle)
3. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 349-355 (bottom)

4. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 358-361 (bottom)
5. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 364-369 (top)
6. Mipham Commentary: pp. 323-330

C. Optional Readings:

1. Dzongsar Commentary: pp.345-348
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp.356-357
3. Dzongsar Commentary: pp.361-363

V. The Bodhisattva Path

A. Topics:

1. Path of concentration vs. path of insight
2. Continuous and gradual vs. spontaneous and sudden progress
3. Detailed review of the 37 Aspects of the Five Paths
 - a) Accumulation
 - b) Preparation or unification
 - c) Seeing
 - d) Meditation or training
 - e) No more learning or training

B. Sourcebook Readings:

1. The Path, from *The Essence of Buddhism*, Traleg Khyabgon Rinpoche, Shambhala, pp. 96-118
2. The Aspects of the Five Paths, from *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, Gampopa, Translated by Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche, Snow Lion, pp. 257-261
3. SB - Charts on the Five Paths, pp. xi-xv:
 - a) The Mahayana Paths and Stages
 - b) The 37 Wings of Enlightenment and The Five Paths
 - c) The Sixteen moments of the Four Truths on the Path of Seeing
 - d) The Jnanas

C. Sourcebook Optional Readings:

1. The Training and Attainments of Five Paths of Mahayana, *Buddha Mind* (reprinted as The Practice of Dzogchen), Tulkus Thondrup Rinpoche, Wisdom, pp. 375-389
2. The Way of Wisdom, *The Path of Serenity and Insight*, Henepola Gunaratana, Motilal Banarsi Dass, pp. 143-150

VI. Enlightenment and Buddhahood

A. Topics:

1. How is enlightenment achieved? Achieving the uncreated
2. Qualities achieved on each section of the ten bhumis:
 - a) First
 - b) Second to seventh
 - c) Eighth, Ninth and Tenth
3. The kayas: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya

B. Readings:

1. Root Text: Verses 11:1-16
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 369-377 (top)
3. Mipham Commentary: pp. 331-337

4. SB: Perfect Buddhahood from *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, Gampopa, Translated by Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche, Snow Lion, pp. 281-293

VII. The Buddha's Kayas: Manifestations and Activity

A. Topics:

1. Dharmakaya: pacification of conception
2. Sambhogakaya:
 - a) Nature as the display of merit
 - b) Inconceivable enlightened qualities
 - c) The ten powers or strengths

B. Readings:

1. Root Text: Verses 11:17-51
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 377 (top) - 390 (bottom)
3. Mipham Commentary: pp. 338-344 (bottom)
4. SB: Activities of the Buddha, from *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, Gampopa, Translated by Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche, Snow Lion, pp. 297-300

C. Optional Readings:

1. Dzongsar Commentary: pp.390-394

VIII. Nirmnakaya; Conclusion, Review and Celebration

A. Topics:

1. Nirmnakaya: enlightened activity
2. Devotion and understanding
3. Concluding verses
4. Overview of the structure of the text

B. Readings:

1. Root Text: Verses 11:52-56
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 394-399 (bottom)
3. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 407 (top) - 412
4. Mipham Commentary: pp. 344 (bottom) -353

C. Optional Readings:

1. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 399 (bottom) - 406
2. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 270-271 (text summary)
3. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 290-291 (text summary)
4. Dzongsar Commentary: pp. 431-434, 442 (charts)

The Madhyamakavatara
By Chandrakirti

Mipham's Summary Outline of the Text

I. Introduction (v. 1:1-4), p. 59

- A. Title and Homages
- B. Praise of Compassion (v. 1:1-2)
- C. The three types of compassion (v. 1:3-4)

II. The First Five Bhumi (v. 1:5-5:4), pp. 60-67

- A. The First Bhumi, Complete Joy (v. 1:4-17), pp. 60-61
- B. The Second Bhumi, Without Stain (v. 2:1-10), pp. 62-63
- C. The Third Bhumi, Giving Out Light (v. 3:1-13), pp. 64-65
- D. The Fourth Bhumi, Dazzling with Light (v. 4:1-2), pp. 66
- E. The Fifth Bhumi, Difficult to Overcome/Practice (v. 5:1-4), pp. 67

III. The Sixth Bhumi, Advancing/Knowing Clearly (v. 6:1-226)

- A. Overview (v. 6:1-7), pp. 68-69

B. Establishing Emptiness by Rational Demonstration (v. 6:8-178)

1. Absence of Self in Phenomena (v. 6:8-119)

- a) Refuting the Four Extreme Theories of Genesis (v. 6:8-103)**
 - (1) Phenomena do not arise from Self (v. 6:8-13), 69-70**
 - (a) On the Ultimate Level (v. 6:8-11), p. 69
 - (b) On the Conventional Level (v. 6:12-13), pp. 69-70
 - (2) Phenomena do not arise from Other (v. 6:14-97), pp. 70-74**
 - (a) From viewpoint of Absolute Truth (v. 6:14-31), pp. 70-4
 - (b) From the point of view of Relative Truth (v. 6:32), p. 72
 - (c) Benefits of this analysis (v. 6:33-44), pp. 72-74
 - (d) Refuting Cittamatra Viewpoint (v. 6:45-97), pp. 74-81**
 - (3) Phenomena do not arise from both Self & Other (v. 6:98), p. 82**
 - (4) Phenomena do not arise from no cause (v. 6:99-103), p. 82**

- b) Dependent arising as truth of all phenomena (v. 6:104-119), p. 82-85**

2. Absence of Self in the Person (v. 6:120-178), p. 85-93

- a) Preamble (v. 6:120), p. 85**
- b) Refuting the person as something substantial (v. 6:121-140)**
 - (1) Refuting that the person exists with five aspects (v. 6:121-145)**
 - (a) Self and aggregates are not different (v. 6:121-125) p. 85
 - (b) Self and aggregates not the same (v. 126-141) pp. 85-88
 - (c) Self & aggregates not support & supported (v. 6:142) p. 88
 - (d) Self does not possess the aggregates (v. 6:143), p. 88

(2) Refuting the existence of the individual as something indescribable (v. 6:146-149), pp. 88-89

- c) The person as dependently imputed (v. 6:150-165), pp. 89-91
 - (1) Using reasoning to establish it is imputed (v. 6:150), p. 89
 - (2) The Simile of the Chariot (v. 6:151-165), pp. 89-91
 - (3) Applying the simile to self of persons (v. 6:162-165), p. 90-91
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 - (1) Dependently imputed things and actions (v. 6:166-167), p. 91
 - (2) Causes and effects (v. 6:168-178), pp. 91-93

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- 2. The Sixteen Emptinesses (v. 6:181-218), pp. 93-98
- 3. The Condensation into the Four Emptinesses (v. 6:219-223), pp. 98-99
 - a) The Emptiness of Things
 - b) The Emptiness of Absence of things
 - c) The Emptiness of Own Nature
 - d) The Emptiness of Other Nature
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IV. The Final Four Bhumi (v. 7:1-10:1), pp. 100-103

- A. The Seventh Bhumi, Gone Far (v. 7:1), p. 100
- B. The Eighth Bhumi, Immovable (v. 8:1-3), p. 101
- C. The Ninth Bhumi, Perfect Intelligence (v. 9:1), p. 102
- D. The Tenth Bhumi, Cloud of Dharma (v. 10:1), p. 103

V. The Result, Buddhahood (v. 11:1-51), pp. 104-112

- A. Summarizing the qualities of the bhumi (v. 11:1-9), pp. 104-105
- B. How the Buddha Attained Enlightenment (v. 11:10-16), pp. 105-106
- C. The Kayas that are Attained (v. 11:17-47), pp. 106-111
- D. Why the Buddha is Supreme (v. 11:48-51), pp. 111-112

VI. Colophon and Dedication (v. 11:52-56), pp. 112-113

The Madhyamakavatara by Chandrakirti

Detailed Outline of Jamgon Mipham's Commentary For Course Five of the Radical Rejection Series

I. The Categories of Emptiness Established by Reasoning (v. 6:179-223), pp. 93-99

- A. A short explanation of the categories of emptiness generally (v. 6:179-180), p. 93
- B. A detailed explanation:

1. The Sixteen Emptinesses (v. 6:181-218), pp. 93-98

- a) The first group of four kinds of emptiness
 - (1) Inner emptiness
 - (2) Outer emptiness
 - (3) Emptiness as both out and in
 - (4) Emptiness of emptiness
- b) The second group of four kinds of emptiness
 - (1) Emptiness of immensity
 - (2) Emptiness of the ultimate
 - (3) Emptiness of the compounded
 - (4) Emptiness of the uncompounded
- c) The third group of four kinds of emptiness
 - (1) Emptiness of what is beyond extremes
 - (2) Emptiness of what is endless and beginningless
 - (3) Emptiness of what should not be spurned
 - (4) Emptiness of essential nature
- d) The fourth group of four kinds of emptiness
 - (1) Emptiness of all phenomena
 - (2) Emptiness of defining attributes
 - (a) On the level of the ground
 - (b) On the level of the path
 - (c) On the level of the fruit
 - (3) Emptiness of the unobservable
 - (4) Emptiness of nonthings

2. The Condensation into the Four Emptinesses (v. 6:219-223), pp. 98-99

- a) The Emptiness of Things
- b) The Emptiness of nonthings
- c) The Emptiness of the nature itself
- d) The Emptiness of the transcendent quality

3. Concluding summary of the twenty emptinesses

C. Concluding description of the sixth ground by stating its qualities (v. 6:224-225), p. 99

II. The Final Four Bhumi (v. 7:1-10:1), pp. 100-103

- 1. The Seventh Bhumi, Far Progressed (v. 7:1), p. 100
- 2. The Eighth Bhumi, Immovable (v. 8:1-3), p. 101
- 3. The Ninth Bhumi, Perfect Intellect (v. 9:1), p. 102
- 4. The Tenth Bhumi, Cloud of Dharma (v. 10:1), p. 103

III. The Qualities of the Ten Grounds (v. 11:1-9), pp. 104-105

- A. The Twelve Groups of One hundred qualities that manifest on the first ground**
B. The adaptation of these qualities to the following grounds

1. On the following six impure grounds, the number of qualities is multiplied
2. On the pure grounds the number of qualities is compared to particles of dust
 - a) The qualities of the eighth ground
 - b) The qualities of the ninth ground
 - c) The qualities of the tenth ground
 - (1) The multiplication of the twelve qualities
 - (2) Other qualities

IV. The Ultimate Ground of Buddhahood (v. 11:1-51), pp. 104-112

A. The Attainment of Buddhahood

- 1. How Buddhahood is Attained (v. 11:10-16), pp. 105-106**
 - a) When buddhahood is attained
 - b) The place where buddhahood is attained
 - c) The manner in which buddhahood is attained
- 2. An answer to objections**
 - a) The objections themselves
 - b) An answer to the objections

B. What is the Goal, Namely Buddhahood? (v. 11:17-47), pp. 106-111

- 1. A description of the kayas which are the basis**
 - a) The dharmakaya
 - b) The sambhogakaya
 - c) The kaya similar to its cause
- 2. The qualities based on the kayas (v. 6:28-43)**
 - a) The ten strengths, which are the principal qualities of buddhahood
- 3. How, after achieving buddhahood, one may benefit others by means of nirmanakaya emanations (v. 6:44-47)**
 - a) The deeds of the Buddha our Teacher, the supreme nirmanakaya
 - b) The ultimate teaching of the Buddha is established as a single path
 - c) The Buddha our Teacher is beyond all limitation as concerns his perfect enlightenment and his sojourn in samsara (v. 11:48-51), pp. 111-112

V. Conclusion (v. 11:52-56), pp. 112-113

A. The conclusion of the main body of the treatise

1. How the text was composed
2. The dedication of the merit accruing from the composition of the text

B. The conclusion of the treatise

Middle Way Chants & Songs

Friends

Friends are empty forms just like a water moon
To think of them as being truly real
Will only make you many sufferings increase

To know they're empty forms like a watermoon
Will make illusion-like samadhi increase
Compassion free of clinging will increase

And non-referential view will also increase
And meditation that's fixation-free
And conduct free of doer deed increase

Of all the many marvels, this by far the most marvelous
Of all the many wonders, this the most wonderful

Composed by Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche. Translated and arranged by Jim Scott.

All These Forms

All these forms – appearance emptiness
Like a rainbow with its shining glow
In the reaches of appearance emptiness
Just let go and go where no mind goes

Every sound is sound and emptiness
Like the sound of an echo's roll
In the reaches of sound and emptiness
Just let go and go where no mind goes

Every feeling is bliss and emptiness
Way beyond what words can show
In the reaches of bliss and emptiness
Just let go and go where no mind goes

All awareness – awareness emptiness
Way beyond what thoughts can know
In the reaches of awareness and emptiness
Let awareness go – oh, where no mind goes

Composed by Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche; translated and arranged by Jim Scott

From Nagarjuna's Fundamentals of the Middle Way

Like a dream, like an illusion,
Like a city of gandharvas,
That's how birth, and that's how living,
That's how dying are taught to be

From the Sutra of the Noble Collection

Know the five skandhas are like an illusion
Don't separate the illusion from the skandhas
Free of thinking that anything is real
This is perfect wisdom's conduct at its best!

From Chandrakirti's Entering the Middle Way

There are two ways of seeing every thing,
The perfect way and the false way,
So each and every thing that has ever been found
Holds two natures within.

And what does perfect seeing see?
It sees the suchness of all things.
And false seeing sees the relative truth—
This is what the perfect Buddha said.

From the King of Samadhi Sutra

All the images conjured up by a magician
The horses, elephants and chariots in his illusions
Whatever may appear there, know that none of it is real
And it's just like that with everything there is!

The Song of the Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range

For the mind that masters view the emptiness dawns
In the content seen not even an atom exists
A seer and seen refined until they're gone
This way of realizing view - it works quite well

When meditation is clear light river flow
There is no need to confine it to sessions and breaks
Meditator and object refined until they're gone
This heart bone of meditation - it beats quite well

When you're sure that conduct's work is luminous light
And you're sure that interdependence is emptiness
A doer and deed refined until they're gone
This way of working with conduct - it works quite well

When biased thinking has vanished into space
No phony facades, eight dharmas, nor hopes and fears,
A keeper and kept refined until they're gone
This way of keeping samaya - it works quite well

When you've finally discovered your mind is dharmakaya
And you're really doing yourself and others good
A winner and won refined until they're gone
This way of winning results - it works quite well

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, translated and arranged by Jim Scott and Ari Goldfield

FIVE PATHS, THIRTY-SEVEN WINGS OF ENLIGHTENMENT AND TEN BHUMIS

I. Path of Accumulation - Sambharamarga

- A. The Four Mindfulnesses - Smryupasthana
 - 1. Mindfulness of form/physical world
 - a. 32 parts of body
 - b. 4 Elements
 - 2. Mindfulness of Feeling
 - a. Three feelings
 - 3. Mindfulness of Mind
 - a. Six Indriya
 - b. 12 Ayatana
 - c. 18 Dhatus
 - 4. Mindfulness of Dharmas, Reality, Meaning
 - a. Samskaras
 - b. Three (or Four) Marks

- B. The Four Renunciations - Samyakprahana

- 5. Reducing negative inclinations
- 6. Stopping other negative inclinations from arising
- 7. Increasing positive inclinations
- 8. Giving rise to other positive inclinations

- C. The Four Practices of Concentrative Absorption - Rddhipada

- 9. Strong Interest - chanda
- 10. Perseverence - virya
- 11. Intentiveness - citta
- 12. Investigation - Mimamsha

II. Path of Application - Prayogamarga

- A. The Five Controlling Powers - bala

- 13. Confidence - shraddha
- 14. Sustained Effort - virya
- 15. Inspection - smrti
- 16. Concentrative Absorption - dhyana
- 17. Appreciative Discrimination - prajna

- B. The five Unshakable Powers - bala?

- 18. Confidence - shraddha
- 19. Sustained Effort - virya
- 20. Inspection - smrti
- 21. Concentrative Absorption - dhyana
- 22. Appreciative Discrimination - prajna

- C. Four Stages – Levels of Realization of Emptiness

- a. Heat

- b. Peak
- c. Supreme Dharma
- d. Highest Wordly Experience/Dharma

III. The Path of Seeing – Darshanamarga – Stream Winner

- A. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment
- 23 1. Attentive Inspection - smrit
 - 24 2. Investigation of meanings and values - dharma-pravicaya
 - 25 3. Sustained effort - virya
 - 26 4. Joy - pirti
 - 27 5. Refinement and serenity - prasabdi
 - 28 6. Concentrative Absorption - samadhi
 - 29 7. Equanimity – upeksha

B. Bhumis / Paramita:

- 1. Joyful - Pramudita / Generosity – Dana

C. Sixteen Moments of the Four Noble Truths

IV. The Path of Cultivation - Bhavanamarga

A. The Eightfold Noble Path - Aryamarganga

Prajna - Wisdom:

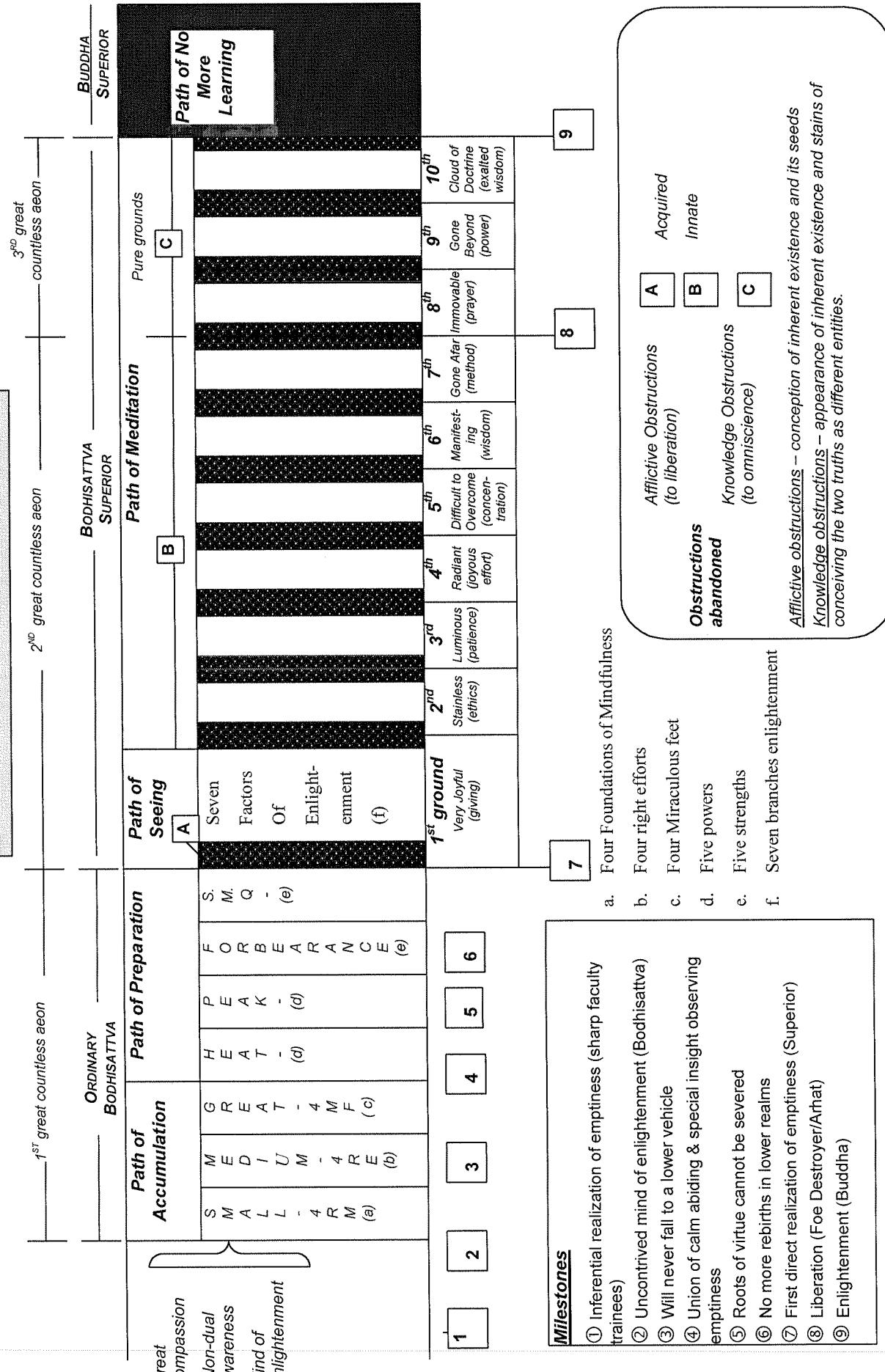
- 30 1. Right View - samyagdrsti
- 31 2. Right Intention - samyaksamkalpa
- 32 3. Right Speech - samyagvac
- 33 4. Right Action - samyakkarmanta
- 34 5. Right Livelihood - samyagajiva
- 35 6. Right Effort - samyagvyayama
- 36 7. Right Mindfulness - smayaksmrti
- 37 8. Right Concentration - samyaksamadhi

Pertaining to Shila, Samadhi and Prajna:

- #### **B. Bhumis / Paramita:**
- 2. Stainless - Vimala / Discipline - Shila
 - 3. Illuminating One - Prabhakari / Patience - Kshanti
 - 4. Blazing - Arcismati / Effort - Virya
 - 5. Difficult to conquer - Sudurjaya / Meditation - Samadhi
 - 6. Manifest - Abhikukti / Knowledge - Prajna
 - 7. Far Going - Durangama / Skillful Means - Upaya
 - 8. Unshakable - Acala / Aspiration - Pranidhana
 - 9. Good Discrimination - Sadhumati / Power - ?
 - 10. Cloud of Dharma - Dharmamegha / Wisdom - Yeshe

V. Path of Non-Meditation - Abhavanamarga

Mahayana Path in Prasangika-Madhyamaka



Sixteen Moments of the Path of Seeing = Sixteen Aspects of the Four Noble Truths

The Attributes of the Four Noble Truths	Moment or Aspect	Noble Truth of Suffering	Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering	Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering	Noble Truth of the Noble Eightfold Path
The Four Forbearances	1-4	Impermanence	Origin	Cessation or disappearance	Path
The Four Knowledges	5-8	Suffering	Production	Peace or pacification	Right Method
The Four Subsequent Forbearances	9-12	Empty or essenceless	Cause	Excellence or supreme bliss of nirvana	Attainment
The Four Subsequent Knowledges	13-16	Egolessness	Condition	Certainty of liberation or ultimate separation and attainment	Conducive to liberation

Table 1 States developed on the basis of Calm meditation

<i>States arising from Calm alone</i>	<i>When combined with Insight</i>
THE FORMLESS REALM	
<i>States present:</i> one-pointedness, equanimity	
8 The sphere of neither-cognition-nor-non-cognition	→→→ ATTAINMENT OF CESSATION
7 The sphere of nothingness	
6 The sphere of infinite consciousness	
5 The sphere of infinite space	
THE REALM OF PURE FORM	
<i>States present</i>	
4 Fourth <i>jhāna</i> — One-pointedness equanimity	→→→ THE SIX HIGHER KNOWLEDGES
	Psychic powers
	Clairaudience
	Mind-reading
	Memory of previous lives
	Clairvoyance
	<i>Nibbāna</i>
3 Third <i>jhāna</i> —	One-pointedness, happiness, equanimity
2 Second <i>jhāna</i> —	One-pointedness, happiness, joy
1 First <i>jhāna</i> —	One-pointedness, happiness, joy, examination, applied thought
THE SENSE-DESIRE REALM	
iii Access concentration, based on 'counterpart sign'.	
ii Work on 'acquired sign', so as to suspend the hindrances.	
i Work on 'preliminary sign' (e.g. the breath or a <i>kasīna-mandala</i>)	

THE PROFOUND INNER REALITY

HEVAJRA TANTRA

and

WISDOM OF THE MIDDLE WAY

Karmê Chöling
Summer 2000

KHENPO TSÜLTRIM GYAMTSO RINPOCHE

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The Sixteen Emptinesses

Translated by Jules Levinson

Root Verses

Since selflessness is what liberates beings,
The Buddha taught two types: the selflessness of individuals and of phenomena.
Then, in order to better help those to be tames,
The teacher taught further divisions. (179)

In the extensive explanation of emptiness
There are sixteen divisions;
In the concise explanation [the Buddha] summarized these into four,
And these are explained to be the teachings of the mahāyāna. (180)

1. Emptiness of the inner

Since it has no inherent nature,
The eye is empty of itself.
Ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are the same way.
They are all described in a similar way. (181)

They do not last forever,
They do not remain for a short time and decay—
The eye and the rest that are the six inner ones
Are things that have no inherent nature at all.
This is called “emptiness of the inner.” (182)

2. Emptiness of the other

Since its nature is emptiness
Form is empty of form.
Sounds, odors, things that are tasted, what the body feels,
And mental phenomena are exactly the same! (183)

Form and so forth have no inherent nature:
This is called “emptiness of the outer.” (184a-b)

3. Emptiness of the inner and outer

That both inner and outer have no inherent ‘nature’
Is called “emptiness of the inner and outer.” (184c-d)

4. Emptiness of emptiness

All phenomena have no inherent nature.
The wise ones call this “Emptiness.”
It is asserted that this emptiness as well
Is empty of the essence of emptiness. (185)

The emptiness of what is called "emptiness"
Is the "emptiness of emptiness."
The Buddha taught it to counteract the clinging
Of the mind that thinks emptiness is a thing. (186)

5. Emptiness of the vast

Since they pervade everything without exception,
All sentient beings and the whole universe,
And since the immeasurables prove their infinitude,
The directions are given the name "vast." (187)

All these ten directions' emptiness
Is called "emptiness of the vast."
It was taught in order to reverse
Our clinging to the vast as being real. (188)

6. Emptiness of the ultimate

Because it is the supreme of all needs,
Nirvāṇa is the ultimate.
Nirvāṇa is empty of itself,
And this is the "emptiness of the ultimate." (189)

The Knower of the Ultimate
Taught the "emptiness of the ultimate"
To counteract the mind's tendency
To think that nirvāṇa is a thing. (190)

7. Emptiness of the composite

Because they arise from conditions
the three realms are "composite," it is taught.
They are empty of themselves,
and this, the Buddha said, is the "emptiness of the composite." (191)

8. Emptiness of the noncomposite

When arising, abiding, and cessation are not among its characteristics,
A phenomenon is "noncomposite."
These are empty of themselves,
And this is the "emptiness of the noncomposite." (192)

9. Emptiness of that which is beyond extremes

That to which extremes do not apply
Is expressed as being "beyond extremes."
Its emptiness of its very self
Is explained to be the "emptiness of that which is beyond extremes." (193)

10. Emptiness of that which has neither beginning nor end

Since it has no point when it began Nor time when it will end, samsara
 Is called "that which has neither beginning nor end."
 Since it is free from coming and going, it is like a dream. (194)

Existence is void of existence—
 This is the emptiness of
 That which has neither beginning nor end.
 It was definitively taught in [Nagarjuna's] *Treatise*. (195)

11. Emptiness of what should not be abandoned

To "abandon" something means
 To throw it away or to lose it.
 What should not be abandoned is
 What one should never cast away from oneself—the mahayana. (196)

What should not be abandoned
 Is empty of its very self.
 Since this emptiness is its nature,
 It is called the "emptiness of what should not be abandoned." (197)

12. Emptiness of the true nature

The very essence of the composite and everything else
 Was not created by the students, the solitary realizers,
 The bodhisattvas, or even the buddhas. (198)

Therefore, this essence of the composite and so forth
 Is explained to be the true nature of phenomena.
 It itself is empty of itself—
 This is the "emptiness of the true nature." (199)

13. Emptiness of all phenomena

The eighteen potentials, the six types of contact,
 And from those six, the six types of feeling,
 All that has form and all that does not,
 The composite and the noncomposite—these comprise all phenomena. (200)

All of these phenomena are void of themselves.
 This is the "emptiness of all phenomena." (201a-b)

14. Emptiness of defining characteristics

The nonexistence of entities such as "suitable to be form" and so forth
 Is the emptiness of defining characteristics. (201c-d)

15. Emptiness of the imperceptible

The present does not remain;
The past and the future do not exist.
Wherever you look, you cannot see them,
So the three times are called "imperceptible." (216)

The imperceptible is in essence empty of itself.
It is neither permanent and stable
Nor impermanent and fleeting—
This is the "emptiness of the imperceptible." (217)

16. Emptiness of an essence in the nonexistence of entities

Since entities arise from causes and conditions,
[They are mere' collections that have no essence.
This nonexistence of collections is empty of itself,
And this is the "emptiness of an essence in the nonexistence of entities." (218)

THE FOUR EMPTINESSES

1. Emptiness of entities

In short, entities are
Everything included in the five aggregates.
These are empty of themselves,
And this is the "emptiness of entities." (219)

2. Emptiness of nonentities

In short, nonentities are
All noncomposite phenomena.
Nonentities are empty of themselves,
And this is the "emptiness of nonentities." (220)

3. Emptiness of the true nature

Phenomena's true nature itself has no essence—
This is the "emptiness of the true nature."
Since no one created it
It is called "true nature." (221)

4. Emptiness of the other entity

Whether or not buddhas appear in the world,
The natural emptiness of all entities
Is proclaimed to be
The "other entity." (222)

Other names for this are the “genuine limit” and “suchness”—
These are the “emptiness of the other entity.”

These [twenty emptinesses] were taught extensively
In [the sūtras] of the transcendent perfection of wisdom. (223)

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, root verses translated by Ari Goldfield.

Commentary

We will sing the song of the beloved master, Milarepa, on “An Authentic Portrait of the Middle Way.” He is our very beloved master. [All sing.]

This evening I will explain the presentation of the sixteen emptinesses in a brief way. The presentation is taken from the commentary composed by the glorious Chandrakīrti. Chandrakīrti was the great master who drew a portrait of a cow and then milked it. He then took the milk and the yogurt made from it to feed the ordained saṅgha. He demonstrated the emptiness of all things in this way in order to overcome their adherence to the four truths as truly existent.

Chandrakīrti composed two commentaries on Nāgārjuna’s *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (San. *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*). The commentary on its words is known as *Clear Words* (San. *Prasannapada*). The commentary on its meaning is known as *Entrance to the Middle Way* (San. *Madhyamakāvatāra*). From the sixth chapter of *Entrance to the Middle Way*, which deals with the sixth bodhisattva bhūmi and with prajñāpāramitā, I will explain the presentation of the sixteen emptinesses.

Sixteen Types of Emptiness

Because the basis for the division of selflessness consists of phenomena and individuals, Chandrakīrti begins with a discussion of the selflessness of phenomena and the selflessness of individuals.

**Since selflessness is what liberates beings,
The Buddha taught two types: the selflessness of individuals and of
phenomena. (179a-b)**

In order to liberate beings from samsāra, selflessness was taught in two aspects.

**Then, in order to better help those to be tamed,
The teacher taught further divisions. (179c-d)**

“Teacher” refers to the perfectly enlightened Buddha. Starting with the two aspects of selflessness, phenomena and individuals, he divided it further in many ways to suit the needs of those who were to be tamed. How did he divide it? The next stanza explains it.

**In the extensive explanation of emptiness
There are sixteen divisions;**

In the concise explanation [the Buddha] summarized these into four,
And these are explained to be the teachings of the mahāyāna. (180)

That is, the Buddha also gave an elaborate explanation of selflessness, categorizing it as sixteen types. As for selflessness or emptiness, there are no internal divisions in its own nature. However, from the point of view of the phenomena whose nature it is, one may speak of many divisions. Having elaborated it as sixteen, the Buddha summarized it as four. Thus initially there are two divisions, then sixteen, and then four. Of the sixteen emptinesses, internal emptiness is the first.

Since it has no inherent nature,
The eye is empty of itself. (181a-b)

This can be expressed in the form of a reasoning:

Subject: The eye

Predicate: Is empty of its own nature

Reason: Because it is beyond being either single or multiple, one or many.

Ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are the same way.
They are all described in a similar way. (181c-d)

The reason given previously can be applied to each one of these. I will not go through it now in order to save time. But when you have the time, you should apply the reasons carefully to each one of these subjects.

They do not last forever,
They do not remain for a short time and decay—
The eye and the rest that are the six inner ones
Are things that have no inherent nature at all.
This is called "emptiness of the inner." (182)

This can be presented in the form of a reasoning:

Subject: The six sense powers, the eye and so forth,

Predicate: Are called the "emptiness of the inner"

Reason: Because (1) they are not eternal, that is, unchanging and (2) they do not inherently disintegrate.

Please repeat these lines once. [All chant.]

Since its nature is emptiness
Form is empty of form. (183a-b)

This can be expressed in the form of a reasoning:

Subject: Form

Predicate: Is empty of form

Reason: Because forms are beyond being either one or many.

**Sounds, odors, things that are tasted, what the body feels,
And mental phenomena are exactly the same! (183c-d)**

Each of these subjects should be similarly arranged in a syllogism: The subject is empty of itself, because of being neither truly one nor truly many.

**Form and so forth have no inherent nature:
This is called "emptiness of the outer." (184a-b)**

This refers to the external sense fields. Let's recite that. [All chant.]

**3. That both inner and outer have no inherent 'nature
Is called "emptiness of the inner and outer." (184c-d)**

Here, the emptiness of the duality of apprehended and appreher—*the object that is apprehended, the outer, and the subject that apprehends it, the inner*—are both negated in order to overcome one's belief in the reality of both of them. The next four lines teach the emptiness of emptiness.

**4. All phenomena have no inherent nature.
The wise ones call this "Emptiness."
It is asserted that this emptiness as well
Is empty of the essence of emptiness. (185)**

Phenomena have no inherent nature of being either single or multiple, one or many. This absence was called emptiness by the learned one, the completely enlightened Buddha. That emptiness itself is empty. Emptiness, too, is empty of inherent existence. It is empty of its own emptiness. To put this in the form of a syllogism:

*Subject: Emptiness
Predicate: Is also empty by nature
Reason: Because it is empty of being truly one or truly many.*

**The emptiness of what is called "emptiness"
Is the "emptiness of emptiness."
The Buddha taught it to counteract the clinging
Of the mind that thinks emptiness is a thing. (186)**

All things may well be empty but, if the emptiness itself were truly established, that would be an extreme of nihilism. It would not accord with the reasonings set forth in the second turning of the wheel of dharma. So this explanation accords with the second turning. Please recite this one time. [All recite.]

Next we will consider the emptiness of the vast:

**5. Since they pervade everything without exception,
All sentient beings and the whole universe,
And since the immeasurables prove their infinitude,
The directions are given the name "vast." (187)**

Sentient beings are the internal; the world in they live is the external. The directions pervade both sentient beings and this world. Also, the directions serve as an example for immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, and so forth, because they have no limit. Therefore, the directions are the vast. The next four lines teach the emptiness of these directions, which is called the "emptiness of the vast."

All these ten directions' emptiness
Is called "emptiness of the vast."
It was taught in order to reverse
Our clinging to the vast as being real. (188)

The ten directions, having been shown to be vast, are now shown to be empty. Why? This reverses clinging to the ten directions as truly existent. This can be expressed in a syllogism:

Subject: From among the ten directions, east and west
Predicate: Do not truly exist
Reason: Because east depends on west and west depends on east.

In other words, they mutually depend upon one another.

Subject: East
Predicate: Is empty
Reason: Because it becomes the west in dependence on other directions.

Subject: West
Predicate: Is empty
Reason: Because it becomes the east in dependence on other directions.

We can draw a picture of the world and label different parts of the picture as east, west, and so forth. However, except for our labeling them in that way, they are not really there. Thus, the directions are empty of any real existence. Above depends on below and below depends on above. The people that we think are below themselves think that they are above. We are the above, but we become the below. This is like the people in Australia. We think they are below, but they think they are on top. They become the top and we become the bottom.

The next two verses teach the emptiness of the ultimate. "Ultimate" refers to *nirvāṇa*, the state of having passed beyond all misery.

6. Because it is the supreme of all needs,
Nirvāṇa is the ultimate.
Nirvāṇa is empty of itself,
And this is the "emptiness of the ultimate." (189)

Here we are speaking about the emptiness of the ultimate. Among all the things that sentient beings need, this is supreme. Because it is *nirvāṇa*, it is the ultimate. If we put this in the form of a syllogism:

Subject: The ultimate, *nirvāṇa*,
Predicate: Is empty of nature
Reason: Because of being neither truly one nor truly many.

**The Knower of the Ultimate
Taught the "emptiness of the ultimate"
To counteract the mind's tendency
To think that nirvāṇa is a thing. (190)**

This verse gives the reason for teaching the emptiness of the ultimate, nirvāṇa. Why is it taught? It is taught so that one will not think that the ultimate, nirvāṇa, is real or truly existent, but will understand that the ultimate, nirvāṇa, is empty of an inherent nature. Let's recite these two verses. [All recite.]

In teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, it is taught that nirvāṇa is itself emptiness. The protector Nāgārjuna devoted one chapter of *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* to an examination of nirvāṇa. There he showed by many reasonings that it too is emptiness. When presenting the sixteen types of emptiness in *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Chandrakīrti taught the emptiness of nirvāṇa, calling it the "emptiness of the ultimate." In his songs, Milarepa also gives many reasons that help us to understand nirvāṇa's lack of true existence.

**7. Because they arise from conditions
The three realms are "composite," it is taught. (191a-b)**

We can put this in the form of a syllogism:

Subject: The three realms
Predicate: Are composite
Reason: Because they arise from conditions.

**They are empty of themselves,
And this, the Buddha said, is the "emptiness of the composite." (191c-d)**

We can also put this in the form of a syllogism:

Subject: The three realms
Predicate: Are empty of themselves
Reason: Because (1) they are beyond being either one or many and (2) they do not arise from the four extremes.

The emptiness of the three realms is given the name the "emptiness of the composite." Let's recite this verse. [All recite.] The next emptiness taught is the emptiness of the noncomposite.

**8. When arising, abiding, and cessation are not among its characteristics,
A phenomenon is "noncomposite."
These are empty of themselves,
And this is the "emptiness of the noncomposite." (192)**

What is free of arising, abiding, and ceasing is the noncomposite. If we put the meaning into a syllogism:

Subject: The noncomposite
Predicate: Is empty of its own nature
Reason: Because it is beyond being either one or many.

The emptiness of the noncomposite was taught in order to overcome any attachment to conceptualizing the noncomposite as truly existent. Its emptiness is called the "emptiness of the noncomposite."

9. That to which extremes do not apply
Is expressed as being "beyond extremes."
Its emptiness of its very self
Is explained to be the "emptiness of that which is beyond extremes." (193)

The next emptiness is called the "emptiness of that which is beyond extremes." It refers to the path of the middle way, the path of emptiness and of dependent origination, which is beyond extremes. It does not fall into any extremes itself. That is, it is empty of itself.

Now that we have discussed the first nine of the sixteen emptinesses, please recite everything we have done so far. [All recite.]

10. Since it has no point when it began
Nor time when it will end, samsāra
Is called "that which has neither beginning nor end."
Since it is free from coming and going, it is like a dream. (194)

The tenth emptiness is called "that which has neither beginning nor end." If we present this in the form of a syllogism:

Subject: Samsāra, this dream-like existence,
Predicate: Has no beginning or end
Reason: Because no beginning and no end are observed.

Subject: Samsāra
Predicate: Is empty of itself
Reason: Because it is free from coming and going
Example: Like a dream.

Subject: Samsāra, this dream-like existence
Predicate: Is empty of itself
Reason: Because it is free from being truly one or truly many.

Existence is void of existence—
This is the emptiness of
That which has neither beginning nor end.
It was definitively taught in [Nāgārjuna's] *Treatise*. (195)

This type of emptiness has been described in a definite way in Nāgārjuna's treatise, *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*.

11. To "abandon" something means
To throw it away or to lose it.
What should not be abandoned is
What one should never cast away from oneself—the mahāyāna. (196)

What does "abandoned" mean? It means "scattered," "broken into fragments," "lost," "gotten rid of," or "thrown away." Its opposite is "not abandoned," "not thrown away," "not lost," or "not destroyed." There is something one should never abandon. What is it? It is the dharma of the mahāyāna, the great vehicle that is the union of wisdom and compassion.

**What should not be abandoned
Is empty of its very self.
Since this emptiness is its nature,
It is called the "emptiness of what should not be abandoned."** (197)

This can be stated in a syllogism:

Subject: What should not be abandoned, the mahāyāna,
Predicate: Is empty of its own nature
Reason: Because it is beyond being truly one or truly many.

**12. The very essence of the composite and everything else
Was not created by the students, the solitary realizers,
The bodhisattvas, or even the buddhas.** (198)

**Therefore, this essence of the composite and so forth
Is explained to be the true nature of phenomena.
It itself is empty of itself—
This is the "emptiness of the true nature."** (199)

The essence of the composite—meaning what has been put together—was not created by the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, or tathāgatas, the authentically enlightened buddhas. Therefore, the essence of the composite and so forth is described as what inheres within them, and is called the "emptiness of the true nature. Why? Because it is beyond being fabrication, contrivance, and alteration. However, some people will fixate on the nature of composite phenomena as something real. In order to overcome that fixation, it is taught that the true or abiding nature, the emptiness that is the essence of composite phenomena, is itself empty.

**13. The eighteen potentials, the six types of contact,
And from those six, the six types of feeling,
All that has form and all that does not,
The composite and the noncomposite—these comprise all phenomena.** (200)

**All of these phenomena are void of themselves.
This is the "emptiness of all phenomena."** (201a-b)

Next we have the emptiness called the "emptiness of all phenomena." As you can see, everything is listed here: the eighteen potentials (San. dhātu), the six types of contact, the six types of feeling that arise from contact, phenomena that have form, phenomena that do not have form, composite phenomena, and noncomposite phenomena. The emptiness of all these things is the emptiness of all phenomena.

**14. The nonexistence of entities such as "suitable to be form" and so forth
Is the emptiness of defining characteristics.** (201c-d)

"Defining characteristics," or definition, is what defines a thing. The definition of form is surely one of the oddest creatures in Buddhist philosophy. It is "that which is suitable as form." However, if we did not define it in that way, it would be rather difficult to define it at all. Similarly, the definition of the sense field associated with eye consciousness is "that which is apprehended by an eye consciousness," and the definition of the sense field associated with ear consciousness is "that which is apprehended by an ear consciousness." The definition seems to be circular, but it works.

First one posits various defining characteristics of things. But then one discovers that the things defined in that way are, when well analyzed, empty of those very same defining characteristics. That is what is being pointed at here. The emptiness of defining characteristics is the emptiness in the very things that appear to define them to begin with.

That is a brief way of understanding it. The discussion of the emptiness of defining characteristics is quite extensive in this text, running through verse 215. But Rinpoche will not go through it all this evening; otherwise, we would not finish.

- 15.** The present does not remain;
The past and the future do not exist.
Wherever you look, you cannot see them,
So the three times are called "imperceptible." (216)

The present does not remain for even a second moment. The past and the future simply do not exist. Therefore, all three are imperceptible. Their emptiness is called the "emptiness of the imperceptible."

The imperceptible is in essence empty of itself.
It is neither permanent and stable
Nor impermanent and fleeting—
This is the "emptiness of the imperceptible." (217)

The three imperceptibles—past, present, and future—are devoid of their own essence, or nature (Tib. ngowo). That is, they are empty of themselves; they are empty of what they are. What shall we say about their being devoid of their own nature? They do not abide eternally, neither do they disintegrate. Therefore, this is called the "emptiness of the imperceptible."

- 16.** Since entities arise from causes and conditions,
They are mere collections that have no essence.
This nonexistence of collections is empty of itself,
And this is the "emptiness of an essence in the nonexistence of entities." (218)

All outer and inner entities, or things, arise from conditions. Therefore, they do not really have the essence, or nature, of what has been produced from gathering together all the conditions. The emptiness of that product, or result, is called the "emptiness of an essence in the nonexistence of entities." Entities, or things, have no essence or nature. That very lack of essence is itself empty.

Rinpoche would like us to chant stanzas 179 to 218. [All chant root verses, then sing "An Authentic Portrait of the Middle Way."]

The abiding nature of all phenomena without exception is freedom from elaborations, primordial purity, and equality. Therefore, emptiness itself has no internal divisions. But if this is true, where have these sixteen divisions come from? They are explained in terms of the various phenomena that have emptiness as a particular quality. Phenomena are limitless in number, but they have been categorized as these sixteen types in order to stop or block one's fixation on the various types of phenomena that have the quality of emptiness.

Machik Labdrön, an emanation of noble lady Tārā, was able to read all twelve volumes of the prajñāpāramitā sūtras in one day. No one in Tibet has ever been able to read as quickly as she could. In one month, she read the entire collection of teachings on emptiness thirty times. She directly realized emptiness itself through the enlightened speech of the Buddha, who taught that form is not white, red, square, round, or any other quality one might use to describe it.

Most of the siddhas of Tibet attained siddhi through the practice of vajrayāna, but Machik Labdrön did so through practicing prajñāpāramitā. Therefore, her son Gyalwa Töndrup praised her by saying, "Mother, you are a siddha of prajñāpāramitā, for you liberate the being of those who have good fortune. For myself and others who have confidence in you, please grant your blessings."

Machik Labdrön made a series of meditation practices out of the sixteen emptinesses. She divided them into sixteen different sessions, so that students could meditate on emptiness in that way. For instance, for one session, she would have her students chant the stanza on internal emptiness and then meditate on it. For the next session, students would chant and meditate on the stanza on external emptiness. In this way, they worked their way gradually through each of the sixteen emptinesses.

If you practiced four sessions a day, you would finish the sixteen emptinesses in four days. Four times four is sixteen, isn't it? Let's chant stanzas 181 and 182 on internal emptiness and then meditate. [All chant stanzas and meditate, ending with stanza 218.]

This kind of meditation is an analytical meditation. If it goes well, it will help you understand emptiness and increase your precise and brilliant prajñā.

Four Types of Emptiness

In the next five verses, the sixteen emptinesses are summarized as the four emptinesses.

- 1. In short, entities are
Everything included in the five aggregates.
These are empty of themselves,
And this is the "emptiness of entities." (219)

All things can be summarized as the five aggregates. What does the word "entities" refer to? It refers to the five aggregates, or skandhas. These five aggregates include all things. They are beyond being either one or many. Because they are beyond being either one or many, they are empty of their own nature. In effect, all things are drawn down to just one in this way.

- 2. In short, nonentities are
All noncomposite phenomena.

**Nonentities are empty of themselves,
And this is the "emptiness of nonentities."** (220)

This stanza teaches the emptiness of nonentities. Nonentities, or nonthings, is a name for phenomena that have not come about through the gathering together of causes and conditions. They are noncomposite phenomena, free from arising, ceasing, and abiding. What are examples of noncomposite phenomena? Space, analytical cessations, and nonanalytical cessations¹ are noncomposite and nonentities. Because they too are empty of their own nature, they are called the "emptiness of nonentities."

**3. Phenomena's true nature itself has no essence—
This is the "emptiness of the true nature."
Since no one created it
It is called "true nature."** (221)

Here, the "emptiness of the true nature" is identical with the emptiness by the same name that was taught in the list of sixteen (see stanzas 198-199).

**4. Whether or not buddhas appear in the world,
The natural emptiness of all entities
Is proclaimed to be
The "other entity."** (222)

Other names for this are the "genuine limit" and "suchness"—
These are the "emptiness of the other entity."
These [twenty emptinesses] were taught extensively
In [the sūtras] of the transcendent perfection of wisdom. (223)

Emptiness of the "other entity" refers to the way in which it is apprehended. Emptiness is not an object for dualistic consciousness; it is something else altogether. It is an object for jñāna, or primordial wisdom. For that reason, it is called the "other entity."

If you find that the sixteen emptinesses are too many, you can abbreviate them to four. All entities are included within the emptiness of entities. All nonentities are included within the emptiness of nonentities. All phenomena are included within the emptiness of the true nature. Emptiness itself is the emptiness of the other entity. This makes it easy. So let's chant all four emptinesses. [All chant stanzas 219-223.]

These sixteen emptinesses are important in the tradition stemming from the second turning of the wheel of dharma. However, the sixteen emptinesses are also important in the vajrayāna. For that reason, I have given a brief explanation of these categories.

Because the reasons why these various phenomena are empty are given in the twenty-five chapters of Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, I have not given them here. I have only given the categories. [All chant dedication of merit.]

¹ According to Tsepak Rigzin (*Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*), analytical cessation is a cessation acquired through the wisdom of meditation and analysis on the four noble truths. Nonanalytical cessation, which is impermanent by nature, is not acquired through such a means.

THE
ESSENCE of
BUDDHISM

*An Introduction to
Its Philosophy and Practice*

TRALEG KYABGON



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is that even if there is no substantial, permanent, independent, inherently existing self or ego, that does not mean that there is no one to travel on the path, that there is no one to become transformed from a state of delusion and confusion.

Egolessness is not the same as self-extinction. We do not cease to exist, but we come to know more about ourselves. Realizing that there is no unchanging self can in fact be an enriching experience. The path consists of working with ourselves so that gradually, by overcoming the various inhibitions, confusions, and delusions of the mind, we start to develop more insight into our own nature.

When we look at ourselves in the present moment, we see all kinds of confusions and defilements in our mind. Yet the possibility of overcoming all that and becoming enlightened is a reality. Our own lives become enriched from having undertaken this journey. So it's important not to mistranslate this concept of selflessness or nonexistence of ego. To say that we do not exist at all is the nihilistic view, which the Buddha rejected completely.

As we saw earlier, there are two different ways to attain the goals of liberation and enlightenment. One is the Shravaka method, which aims to attain enlightenment for one's own sake. The other is the Bodhisattva approach, which consists in working for the benefit of others and thereby attaining enlightenment. Both approaches are legitimate. We can attain the goal from either perspective. Whichever approach we take, there are five stages of progress or development along the path that we travel: the path of preparation (also called the path of accumulation), the path of application, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning. The first two, the path of preparation and the path of application, are normally referred to as worldly paths, whereas the last three are known as supramundane paths. On the last three paths, there is a greater development of wisdom. From the Buddhist perspective, without wisdom we operate on the level of a worldly person. No matter how kind-hearted we are, or how well behaved we may be, if we are devoid of wisdom, we are still operating within the context of this world and not the world of spirituality.

Wisdom does not necessarily mean being clever. Wisdom in Buddhism has more to do with having a real understanding of ourselves

II

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

The Five Paths and the Ten Stages of the Bodhisattva

THE CONCEPT OF "PATH" is extremely important in Buddhism, which places emphasis on our individual capacity to achieve liberation or enlightenment by ourselves, rather than relying on the power of another. When we embark on a journey, when we travel on the path, we must do so alone. No one else can do it on our behalf. It is like getting to know a new country: if we want to see it, we must go there ourselves. Others may come back with photographs and give us an idea of what the place is like, but this is no substitute for our firsthand experience.

However, people who have visited a particular place and come back with photos and stories may be able to tell us how to actually make that journey ourselves, and how to make it in a pleasant rather than a painful way. In a similar way, even though we must make the spiritual journey ourselves, we can receive guidance and information from others, and this is provided by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In this way, from the Buddhist perspective, embarking on the spiritual journey, or traveling on the path, is an essential concept.

The other notion involved with this idea of traveling on the path

and the phenomenal world. On the Shravaka level it means understanding impermanence, and on the level of the Bodhisattva it means understanding emptiness. A really spiritual person must possess the qualities of compassion and love as well as wisdom. Even if compassion and love are present in the mind-stream of a particular individual, if that person is lacking in wisdom he or she is still not a fully developed person.

THE PATH OF PREPARATION

On the path of preparation or accumulation, we must initially recognize that the samsaric condition in which we have been living is completely unsatisfactory and unfulfilling. Without that recognition, there is absolutely no chance of making any kind of spiritual progress at all. The samsaric condition is basically a condition of the mind, not of the external world (although many people assume otherwise). Samsara is not the material world in which we live—houses, trees, mountains, rivers, animals, and so forth; rather, it is the mind that is constantly busy and never able to remain still for a moment. The samsaric condition is created by a mind that constantly reaches out, grasping this and rejecting that, filled with immense craving, which a person will do anything to satisfy. Much of the time, the delusion of anger or hostility has its origins in this first delusion of excessive desire. When excessive desire is present, anger and hostility naturally arise because they are evoked by frustrated desires.

What produces this agitation of the mind, itself caused by excessive desire or hostility and resentment, is the presence of ignorance. This means not realizing what is really beneficial for ourselves and what is really harmful. If we are able to realize that the negative emotions in which we indulge are not at all helpful but are in fact extremely harmful, the desire to overcome them will arise.

We must come to this realization because we are seeking true, lasting, permanent happiness. We normally think that this kind of happiness can be obtained by grasping at things that by their own nature are impermanent. So we think, for example, that if we get married, all of our problems will be solved; if we have children, that will be wonderful; if we get a promotion at work, many of our prob-

lems will disappear. Buddhism does not say that we ought not to have experiences of temporal happiness or pleasure. But it does say that we do not normally think of these as temporal pleasures; in fact, we think of them as a permanent source of happiness, and this is where our mistake lies, caused by our ignorance.

Naturally this does not mean that we should necessarily reject experiences of temporal happiness or pleasure, but we should realize that these are only temporary, because whatever we can obtain in this life can also be lost. Children can be lost, we can be divorced from our spouses, we can lose our jobs, we can suffer loss in terms of business—all these things can and do happen. If we have not followed a spiritual path, our life will be completely devastated by such events, because we have concentrated purely on what we have rather than what we are.

Spiritual practice is about being, or becoming, a different person; having a different experience of our own being. It has scarcely anything to do with what we have in terms of job, family, and so forth. This does not mean that we should reject our family in order to be spiritual, or that we should stop working and live in the jungle in order to be spiritual. Even the happiness that we may feel in the jungle will turn into unhappiness when the mosquitoes and the snakes start biting! Real happiness has to come from within, from having a greater understanding of ourselves. As our inner struggles and conflicts gradually lessen and we become more integrated, we gain a sense of peace. We will not stop having problems in life, because many problems come from the external world. However, the inner sense of integration enables us to deal with whatever arises in our life. This is the kind of thing we have to work with on the path of preparation.

We begin to realize where the real source of happiness lies, and this makes us keen to pursue the path. If we are not convinced, if we are not looking forward to our destination, the journey cannot take place.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

We now turn to some of the subjects and practices described in previous chapters, and place them in the context of the Mahayana path.

The path of preparation is divided into three stages. At the first stage, the practitioner has to realize that meditation is the antidote for the fragmented, distorted, and confused mind that experiences inner conflicts. No other method is more efficient than the practice of meditation, which enables different kinds of centering of the self to take place. This is different from ego-centeredness or self-centeredness. It is achieved through shamatha, the meditation of tranquillity, which has to be complemented by the practice of vipashyana, the meditation of insight. In this particular case, the vipashyana practice consists of the four foundations of mindfulness. The four foundations of mindfulness are mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feeling, mindfulness of mind, and mindfulness of the phenomenal world. Through the practice of vipashyana the meditator comes to realize that everything is subject to change. From the Buddhist point of view the understanding of impermanence is fundamental. Some people understand this on an intellectual level only, but it has to become a personal experience. If the way in which we live our life reflects this understanding, rather than a mere intellectual knowledge of it, when changes occur in our life we are actively helped by this understanding.

In order to personalize this understanding, we engage in the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness. What could be more personal than our own body, feeling, and mind, and our own perception of the phenomenal world through the senses? We observe the body to see changes on the physical level; we observe our feelings of joy, pain, and so on; and we observe our mind—its thoughts, concepts, whatever is arising in it. For example, we may think we are depressed, and this seems to be one continuous state of mind. But as we become more observant of the mind, we realize that even our depressed state is interrupted by moments of joy, or of some other state.

Similarly, we also realize that what we perceive through our senses of the external world is subject to change. In the material world, some changes occur very rapidly, while others occur only very slowly but at a steady pace. Geologists say the Himalayas are becoming taller, but this is happening so slowly that we cannot observe it. Nonetheless it is taking place. So even those material things that seem

very solid and real are also insubstantial, in the sense that they are also subject to change. They are not immobile or static. On the level of the first path, the path of preparation, the practitioner has some real understanding of impermanence, which is gaining insight into the nature of things. This is different from the shamatha experience of tranquillity.

This experience of impermanence should be seen as a positive rather than a negative. We should not despair because everything perishes. To be vibrant, to be active, not to remain in a state of inertia, is a good thing. Change in all different ways can be a very positive experience. If there were no change, how could we ever overcome our delusions? How would it be possible to eradicate ignorance and defilements? It's possible precisely because mind and consciousness can be transformed by practice and training. The whole idea of transformation means change. That's how an ordinary sentient being can become an Arhat or Buddha.

The Four Abandonments

The second stage of the path of preparation is attained when the individual starts to progress in the practice of the four abandonments. These four practices consist of trying to exercise control over our negativities and at the same time trying to prevent potential negativities from arising in the future. Buddhism asserts that there is an intimate relationship between thoughts and actions, and there is thus a connection between the practice of morality and our sense of well-being and health. The practice of morality is not just a matter of following rules, acting out of a sense of duty and obligation. We engage in wholesome deeds precisely because this is how we can experience a positive state of mind. This in turn leads us to the experience of physical and mental well-being. Conversely, engaging in negative states of mind leads us to behave negatively. This produces further mental agitation, anxiety, and fear, which cause imbalance in both mind and body.

Being positive in this context means that we are observant in the practice of mindfulness, observing our body, speech, and mind. It is said that negative habits are formed through not paying enough at-

tention to our physical behavior and our verbal and mental processes. So we need to become more attentive. This is not the same as being self-conscious. Sometimes people say that they have been trying to practice mindfulness but that causes them to become self-conscious, and when they become self-conscious they feel paranoid. It's not as if we are observing ourselves in the same way that someone else would watch us. That would just make us feel exposed and very vulnerable. We simply look at what's going on in our mind and how we operate in the world.

Modern neurologists and other scientists also say that our character and personality are intimately linked to our sense of well-being, and the likelihood of our suffering from heart disease, high blood pressure, and similar conditions. Since Buddhists view thoughts, emotions, actions, morality, and physical and mental well-being as interconnected, we engage in these four contemplations: first, preventing potential negativities from arising; second, trying to deal with those which have already arisen; third, cultivating positive qualities that have not yet arisen; and last, developing those which have already arisen.

It's important to realize that our negative thoughts and emotions are not negative in an absolute form, but only in relation to the effects they have on our mind and our state of being. That's why they should be avoided, not because they are inherently bad. So when they arise, we should just think of them as negativities with which we have to work and which can be overcome.

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The Four Limbs of Supernatural Powers

The last stage of the path of preparation is achieved when the practitioner applies what are called the four limbs of supernatural powers. Here the miracle has more to do with hard work than any kind of intervention from the divine. The first limb is inclination, the second is effort, the third is intention, and the last is analysis.

First of all, we must have the inclination, or we would not start anything. In order to accomplish any project, the inclination and interest have to be there. Interest is followed by effort, or vigor. If interest is present, it becomes easier to apply ourselves and focus at-

tention on the task at hand. The next factor is intention, by which we mean that the practitioner has made a commitment to develop positive qualities, and work toward overcoming the negative tendencies of the mind. The last factor is analysis, meaning that we have to analyze and see what is beneficial and what is not beneficial for us and others. This is not done by using thinking and concepts in our normal way, which only generates more confusion. Rather, we use our thinking power and conceptual skills to analyze what is beneficial and what is not beneficial.

Buddhism does not discourage thinking, but it does discourage excessive thinking, which doesn't lead us anywhere. Much of the thinking that occupies our mind for twenty-four hours a day is motivated by delusions of excessive attachment, anger, resentment, confusion, pride, ignorance, and so on. We can use our thoughts more constructively than this, which is what we are recommending here.

In this way, the traveler on the spiritual path is able to go through the three stages of the first path, the path of preparation.

The path of preparation establishes us in spiritual practice by turning us away from our everyday concerns to a large extent. Turning away from samsaric preoccupations doesn't necessarily mean that we have to abandon them completely. It is more that we work with the attitude we have toward things and toward other people.

What binds us to the samsaric condition is not things in themselves but our attachment to them, the unceasing craving and grasping that arise in the mind. It is these that we have to work with. Material wealth can become a hindrance, for example, if attachment, clinging, and grasping are present in the mind of the individual.

The sharp distinction between the spiritual and the material that is common in the West is quite foreign to the Buddhist way of thinking. Whether we are spiritual or not is fundamentally dependent on our attitude, how we see the world and how we interact with other sentient beings. The samsaric condition is created not by the external world or conditions that exist outside of ourselves, but by the disturbed mind.

So that's what the path of preparation is all about. We try to train ourselves in such a way that we are able to make progress on the path. It's also called the path of accumulation (of merit), because we

can reorient ourselves to become the proper vessel in order to develop further. The idea of being a vessel is very important in Buddhism. It means that if we have been unable to create the appropriate mental conditions to give rise to certain spiritual qualities, then no matter what sort of master or spiritual teacher we are in contact with, no matter which texts we have read and understood, nothing much will happen. This is because we have been unable to create in ourselves a real spiritual vessel that is able to contain the qualities necessary for our development. We need to be open and have a sense of receptivity in our mind-stream. By developing in this way, we are able to embark on the next path, the path of application.

Returning Home

The Bodhisattva perspective on these first two paths differs slightly from the Shravaka one. In addition to the practices shared with the Shravakas, the Bodhisattva is able to generate bodhichitta, or the compassionate concern for all living creatures. This commitment to caring for others actually comes from the way in which the Bodhisattva understands himself or herself, as having Buddha-nature within. From the Bodhisattva perspective, the journey is not necessarily a linear one, in which we leave samsara and arrive at nirvana, but is more like returning home.

If we see our own ego as being the principal source of our identity, this causes feelings of alienation, rejection, and disengagement. But if we begin to realize that our own nature is that of the Buddha, and that everyone else has this same nature, we feel more affinity with other sentient beings.

There are stories in the Mahayana sutras about this process of leaving home and returning home. We got lost by becoming completely enmeshed in the samsaric condition and seeing the ego as our principal source of identity. As we come to realize our own Buddha-nature through practice, we start to find our way home and in fact discover that our home has always been here, but for some reason we have not been able to see it. Instead, we have been taking refuge in an alternative “home” that is not truly our own.

THE PATH OF APPLICATION

The path of application, or path of junction, consists of meditation on the Four Noble Truths—the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the path that leads us out of suffering. It is important to understand suffering in order to overcome it. If we do not fully acknowledge that suffering is a reality, it is very unlikely that we will make any real effort to overcome it. So first we must acknowledge the existence of suffering fully and in a realistic manner.

As part of the practice of the path of application there are four meditations, each associated with one of the Four Noble Truths. The four meditations are on suffering, impermanence, emptiness, and selflessness.

The Truth of Suffering

Several meditations are practiced in connection with the first Noble Truth. The first practice is the *meditation on suffering* itself. Three different types of suffering are described in the teachings. One is “conditioned suffering”: the fact that everything is subject to change and is the product of causes and conditions naturally produces suffering in us. Particularly when things are pleasant and joyous, we do not want these situations to change. But because everything is subject to change, sooner or later we have to accept the fact that what used to give us pleasure no longer does so, or even becomes the cause of unhappiness. Old age is an example of conditioned suffering.

Whether we go to the gym or not, whether we have liposuction or breast implants or go to the plastic surgeon to remove wrinkles, the fact of the matter is that we are getting older. This is something that we have to accept. I’m not saying that people should not try to look more youthful, but they need to be more realistic about such things.

The second kind of suffering is the “suffering of change.” This includes our anticipation that if we change our job or change our partner, we will be happy. But because the mind has not changed, the suffering continues.

The third kind is the “suffering of suffering.” We are already

suffering in some way, then something else goes wrong and we suffer even more. All these types of suffering can be handled if we have done some spiritual practice, because then we are not so overwhelmed by these experiences. But if we have not been trained, we experience real mental anguish and frustration. So we should not think of the Buddhist teachings on suffering as pessimistic or exaggerated. There is no exaggeration, because we all experience this on a daily basis.

The next meditation on the first Noble Truth, the truth of suffering, is the *meditation on impermanence*. When we are suffering, we do not look at the causes and conditions that have given rise to the experience of suffering. We are so engrossed in the experience that we forget that the experience itself is part of the causes and conditions. The intensity of the experience of suffering prevents this insight from occurring.

The third practice is the *meditation on emptiness*. The practitioner has to realize that the experience of suffering itself has no real enduring essence or reality. This comes from the meditation practice I just mentioned, through realizing that suffering is produced by causes and conditions.

The last meditation associated with the truth of suffering is the *meditation on selflessness*. The practitioner has to realize that there is no permanent, unchanging self that is enduring all these unpleasant experiences. The belief that there is something called a "self" or a "soul" that is unchanging and permanent is so strong as to be almost instinctive. Even our language accustoms us to saying things like "my feelings," "my memory," "my body," "my passions," "my emotions," "my thoughts," "my concepts," and we regard the self as something that exists over and above all these things. Buddhist teachings say that this is completely fictitious and fabricated by the mind.

From the Buddhist perspective, the self should be seen as dynamic and alive, not static and fixed. If the self were to be completely unchanging, it would not be affected by whatever goes on in the mind. But if it were untouched by our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and concepts, then what use would the self have, even if it existed?

To be able to experience things in an emotional way and use our thoughts in a creative manner is what makes our life interesting. When we think of ourselves as a fixed entity, when we say, "I was

hurt so badly," we are unable to let go. But if we think of ourselves as being in a dynamic process continuously, our fixation on the past will be greatly reduced. Then we can really take charge of our lives. We are able to deal with our present experiences and even reconcile the past, as well as having a greater understanding of how to work with our future situation. This constantly dynamic self is an important idea in Buddhism. Without it we cannot make any spiritual progress at all.

The Origin of Suffering

The next of the Four Noble Truths is the truth of the origin of suffering. According to the Buddhist teachings, the fundamental source of suffering lies within, in our grasping and clinging. These produce suffering. The injustices that exist in the world, the poverty and so on, are also reflections of the individual mind. Fundamentally, all the different kinds of suffering which are experienced in the world have their origin in the mind and are created by clinging and grasping.

The first contemplation on the truth of the origin of suffering involves "causes." Instead of thinking that suffering exists and this is just a fact, we have to look at the causes. We have to see where suffering originates, how it is caused and in what manner it arises. The second is the contemplation of "effect," an inquiry into what sorts of effects are produced by what sorts of causes. The Buddha said that anyone who can really understand the relationship between cause and effect understands his teachings properly. Thus causality is seen as central to Buddhist philosophy.

The third contemplation is the contemplation of "appearance," which means looking at the experience of suffering itself. The last contemplation is on "conditions." There are not only causes present, but conditions also, in order for the effects to come into being.

These four contemplations have one aim in common, which is to correct our understanding of how things happen. For example, many people believe that the first cause, or the final cause, is some form of God. According to the Buddhist teachings, becoming familiar with the contemplations mentioned above corrects the kind of understand-

ing that says that there are first causes or final causes, there is a creator, and so on.

The Cessation of Suffering

The next truth is the truth of cessation. Cessation means that it is possible to end our experience of suffering and mental torment. It is a possibility and it can be done. The first contemplation of this truth involves the “conviction” that impurities of the mind can be eradicated and abandoned. The second consists of the “contemplation of quiescence,” which means that suffering can be completely eradicated and that there will be no suffering left when we attain nirvana. We gain complete conviction of the possibility of attaining permanent quiescence.

The third contemplation is that of “excellence,” meaning that we realize that shamatha meditation experiences fall short of real spiritual practice. Such meditation is unable to provide the practitioner with the final liberation, which has to come from vipashyana. The fourth contemplation is on “renunciation.” This consists of realizing that all the defiling tendencies of the mind can be renounced and that liberation can be attained as a consequence.

titioners on the path of application are able to develop through the next four stages.

Four Levels of Attainment

The fundamental insight developed from the practice of the contemplations on the Four Noble Truths is to realize that everything arises from causes and conditions. This insight brings about the first level of the path of application, which is called heat, or *tummo* in Tibetan. *Tummo* in this context is used as a metaphor. Just as heat is an indication of the presence of fire, so when the practitioner has arrived at the first level of the path of application, which is heat, he or she begins to experience the heat of the fire of wisdom or insight.

Just as fire has the capacity to burn wood or debris and to consume it, similarly wisdom has the capacity to consume the defilements and obscurations of the mind. The experience of heat is followed by the second level of the path of application, *tsemo*, which means “summit” or “peak.” The practitioner at this level has been able to work with and perfect all the positive qualities of a worldly person.

Until we have been able to attain the third path, which is the path of seeing, whatever we have developed up to that point is still very much involved with what are called the worldly virtues and qualities, rather than the transworldly ones. The reason why the good qualities developed on the level of peak still remain within the realm of munificence and not supramundanity is that real insight is developed at the level of the path of seeing and not before.

The experience of peak is followed by what is called patience, or *söpa* in Tibetan. This is not patience in the ordinary sense, but is concerned more with fearlessness. The practitioner is no longer afraid of concepts such as impermanence, nonsubstantiality, and emptiness. Instead of thinking of them as something negative or frightening, the practitioner has full confidence in their reality. Real conviction is established, based on an attitude of being completely fearless.

The path of application culminates in the attainment of excellence of the worldly spiritual qualities. This is called *chöchok* in Tibetan, which means “most excellent of dharmas,” but in this context it means “dharmas associated with worldly attainments.” The experi-

The Path Out of Suffering

We now arrive at the three contemplations of the truth of the path. The first involves contemplating the path and seeing it as the vehicle that is capable of transporting us from samsara to nirvana. Not only is it possible to bring suffering to an end, but we realize that there are methods that can be employed in order to do so. And this is what the contemplation of the path consists of. The second contemplation is on attainment, by which we realize that the path we are following is the correct path, and we have no interest in deviating from that. The third contemplation is on liberation. We realize that by following the Eightfold Noble Path we can achieve liberation, and we can go beyond the samsaric condition with which we have become very familiar.

By contemplating the Four Noble Truths in this way, prac-

ence of supreme or excellent spiritual qualities of the worldly person produces an insight that is very similar to that of someone on the path of seeing.

According to the teachings, once the second level of the path of application has been attained, it is practically impossible for practitioners to regress. Whatever qualities they have been able to develop will remain, and they cannot slip backwards. After the level of patience, it is not possible to fall into lower forms of existence. For example, if you want to become a musician and you practice every day, you become very good at it. After that, even if you do not practice for many years it is easy to pick it up again. But if you have been half-hearted in your practice, and then you neglect it for a few years, when you try to go back to it, you have to virtually start all over again. It's as if you had never learned any music whatsoever. It's the same with Dharma practice. Doing some spiritual practice as often as we can, on a daily basis, is more fruitful than doing a lot of practice for a short time, followed by no practice for a long time.

The experience of supreme or excellent qualities of the worldly spiritual person leads to the realization of the path of seeing. It gets its name from the fact that for the first time the practitioner gains true insight into reality. This path of seeing has been attained because the "five spiritual faculties" have been developed to the utmost level on the third level of the path of application. These faculties are heat, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and insight or wisdom. Just as our physical sense organs and faculties enable us to see the world more clearly and to function better, similarly, we can perceive reality in its true form by developing the five spiritual faculties.



THE PATH OF SEEING

The last level of the path of application is the end of the worldly spiritual path. From here on it is called the "supramundane spiritual path." This starts with the path of seeing. In Mahayana Buddhism, the path of seeing coincides with the first stage, or bhumi, of the Bodhisattva. The reason why this is called the path of seeing is that for the first time the practitioner has come face to face with ultimate reality and sees it for the first time. From now on, whatever one does

is unsullied activity. One is not bound by karma anymore, because one's actions do not lead to the creation of further karma.

Insight into Ultimate Reality

In the Shravaka teachings, insight into ultimate reality is gained through formal retreats in which the practitioner undergoes the "sixteen moments of realization"—four associated with each of the Four Noble Truths. A "moment" here does not necessarily mean just one moment of time. It could be more akin to what we normally mean by an event.

The four realizations associated with the first of the Four Noble Truths begin with "patient acceptance" of the reality of suffering, followed by the "dharma knowledge" of the reality of suffering. These are the first two moments, and both are involved with the mind state of what is called the "desire realm."

Then follow the second two moments, which are the subsequent patient acceptance of the nature of suffering, and the subsequent dharma knowledge of the reality of suffering, associated with the realms of form and formlessness. These moments of realization are applied to the other three Noble Truths as well, until sixteen such moments are attained.

The "form" and "formless" realms referred to here mean that the practitioner has been able to attain altered states of consciousness. While the first two moments correspond to the normal state of consciousness (the desire realm), the last two moments correspond to these altered states of consciousness (the form and formless realms).

"Patient acceptance" can be understood as more like "conceptual understanding," and "dharma knowledge" means direct experience, or a "nonconceptual direct knowledge" of the Four Noble Truths. Patient acceptance enables us to remain on the path in an uninterrupted manner, without being sidetracked, and direct experience of reality helps us to come closer to attaining liberation.

Even though all this may seem a bit complicated, I think it is important to cover it in the way in which it is discussed in the teachings. This is how the Shravaka practitioner realizes ultimate reality on the path of seeing.

The Bodhisattva path of seeing occurs when the Bodhisattva attains the first level, or *bhumi*. He or she gains insight into ultimate reality, which is shunyata. As I mentioned previously, “emptiness” or “voidness” in the Mahayana teaching does not refer to things not existing or being empty as we normally understand it. Rather, emptiness means that nothing has any kind of enduring substance or essence. The nature of the phenomenal world itself is emptiness. An intimate relationship exists between ultimate truth, which is emptiness, and relative truth, which is the empirical world. Chandrakirti has said that without relying on relative truth we will not understand ultimate truth. Therefore, we should not say that this empirical world is completely illusory and nonexistent. That is not the Mahayanist view of emptiness. To recapitulate further, to think that everything has substantial or inherent existence is to fall into the other extreme. That's why it is said that in order to understand emptiness one has to develop the middle view, the view that does not fall into either extreme of eternalism or nihilism.

We are normally unable to perceive things in their true perspective. Some kind of distortion has been introduced either in terms of our visual organs or in terms of the mind. The teachings present examples such as mistaking a rope for a snake. The rope is there, but to think that the rope is a snake is to misperceive it. Similarly, to think that things have some kind of inherent existence is to misapprehend or misperceive their reality. At the same time, to think that there is nothing at all is to completely misunderstand what is meant by emptiness.

The difference between realizing nonsubstantiality and realizing emptiness is not a difference of kind but of degree. According to the teachings, the Bodhisattva, who understands emptiness, has a more subtle understanding of the nature of things than the Shravaka, who understands nonsubstantiality. Nonsubstantiality is realized through contemplation of causality. If we become very familiar with how the causal nexus operates, our understanding of the nonsubstantiality of things is greatly increased, and from that comes realization of emptiness. Otherwise, we may still cling to some idea of a creator, for example, or to the notion that change is more like transformation and that there is an unchanging reality or substance.

Various theories of atomism say that gross objects like tables and chairs do change, but they are constructed of atoms and these atoms do not change. So it is believed that atoms in themselves have some kind of substantial existence. However, if we become familiar with Buddhist ideas of causality and emptiness, we can see that such theories of atomism are very misleading. That's why Nagarjuna said that because of emptiness, everything is possible. If things had a fixed essence, change would be impossible. Without change, nothing could happen. So, instead of thinking of emptiness as negative, we should consider that it is because of emptiness that the world can function at all. Emptiness makes it possible.

THE SEVEN LIMBS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The Bodhisattva on the first level realizes emptiness for the first time, by realizing the seven limbs of enlightenment. These consist of mindfulness, awareness, discriminating wisdom, effort, joy, concentration, and equanimity. These qualities in the seven limbs exist before they are realized on the path of seeing, but at this stage they are able to mature. From the Shravaka perspective, these qualities are developed from the practice of shamatha, vipashyana and contemplation of the Four Noble Truths. From the Bodhisattva perspective, they develop from the practice of the six paramitas. Having these qualities helps in terms of understanding ultimate reality, but having a greater understanding of ultimate reality would also help in the development of these qualities.

These qualities have to be developed over a period of time. This is why the whole idea of training or cultivation is so important in the Buddhist teachings. We have to learn. We have to educate ourselves. We have to train. Only then will such qualities be actualized. It's not very helpful to have an “all or nothing” attitude here. We should always think in terms of degree. We are either more mindful or less mindful, more aware or less aware; we exert ourselves to a greater or lesser degree, and so forth. If we think that we should have all these qualities fully developed at the very beginning, we are expecting too much of ourselves. If that were the case, the five paths would be redundant!

In Buddhism, it is knowledge that delivers us from the samsaric state of dissatisfaction, frustration, and mental torment, rather than the development of faith or good works. That does not mean that we should not do good works, of course, but they are not sufficient in themselves to obtain liberation. When both good works and compassion are supported by wisdom, practitioners have been able to fulfill both the necessary and sufficient conditions to attain enlightenment. When practitioners attain the path of seeing, they become completely transformed, which is why the path of seeing is equated with the attainment of the supramundane level of spiritual realization.

Until practitioners have arrived at the level of the path of seeing, they have been more involved with creating knowledge, with doing good works, and also perhaps with a certain amount of meditation. They have not been able to develop any insight into the true nature of things until they reach the level of the path of seeing, where they have direct experience of how things really are, rather than how they appear to the deluded consciousness through the senses.

THE PATH OF MEDITATION

The path of seeing is followed by the path of meditation. This coincides with the second stage of the Bodhisattva and stretches to the tenth Bodhisattva level. Although one engages in the practice of meditation right from the beginning, starting from the path of preparation, on the path of meditation one starts to gain certain experiences and realizations that were not present previously.

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The Dhyanas and Formless Attainments of Shamatha

Through the practice of shamatha, we are able to gain access to areas of consciousness that were previously inaccessible, such as the four levels of *dhyanas*, or meditative concentrations, and the four levels of absorption. The four dhyanas are progressive stages of concentration. At first, thoughts, concepts, and other elements are present as well as emotional experiences of joy and happiness. As we proceed, the mind becomes very settled and concentrated, to such a point that even these mental processes cease to operate. The four stages of concentration

correspond to our normal state of consciousness. The four absorptions correspond to the higher reaches of our development in terms of meditation; nevertheless, by themselves they are not necessarily very spiritual. They are simply altered states of consciousness of which we were unaware before.

Through meditation we can experience sensations of happiness and bliss, but on the fourth dhyana level even these cease. They are followed by the first absorption, which is called infinite space, or *nam-kha thaye* in Tibetan. *Namkha thaye* means that we are in such a deep state of concentration that our senses are no longer operating. We do not see, hear or taste anything, and that is why this state is known as infinite space. This does not mean that things have ceased to exist. It simply means that we have been able to place our mind in such a deep state of concentration that all the gross levels of mental functioning and sensory impressions have been temporarily suspended.

The experience of infinite space is followed by the experience of infinite consciousness, which is *namshe thaye* in Tibetan. Infinite consciousness here means that as we go deeper into the state of consciousness, we see that everything is actually consciousness; there is no sense of duality between subject and object.

The third level of absorption is called *chiyang mepa* in Tibetan, which means "nonexistence." The state of absorption has become deeper so that we really have absolutely no experience, no feelings, no emotions, no thoughts or concepts arising in the mind; so there is nothing.

The last state of absorption is known as "nonperception," which is even deeper than the one before when we were already feeling that there was nothing; it is as though that is not good enough! We have to have another state, when we don't even have the perception of nonperception. "Nonperception" is *yömin menin* ("neither existence nor nonexistence") in Tibetan, which means that, unlike the previous state, we are not even thinking that there is nothing. Even that thought has been dropped.

The Four Divine Abodes and Vipashyana

As I said before, the practice of shamatha may be able to give rise to different levels of consciousness, in which our concentration becomes

more focused, but by itself it is unable to create any real spiritual qualities within the mind-stream of the individual. These have to come from the contemplation of the four divine abodes of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity, as well as from vipashyana practice on emptiness, nonsubstantiality, and so forth. Shamatha produces stability of the mind. Based on that stability, we can work with our emotions through the four divine abodes and work with our thoughts and concepts through the practice of vipashyana. Then we are able to transform our meditation so that what we achieve through the practice of meditation becomes supramundane.

In Buddhism it is considered okay to go into altered states of consciousness, but even if we are unable to attain these states we can still attain enlightenment. Certain people have the capacity to go into altered states, but such states are not necessary on the path. What is necessary is that through the practice of shamatha we learn to stabilize our mind. Without mental stability the mind is constantly busy and distracted, either through the senses or in terms of mental activities, emotions, and thoughts. A certain level of mental stability helps to bring about insight, which is essential. Insight meditation causes spiritual transformation in the practitioner, and shamatha meditation, in which mental stability is developed, provides the general conditions that allow insight to arise. That is why both types of meditation are necessary.

When discussing the four divine abodes, we should be clear about our understanding of the words used. Feeling is *tsorwa* in Tibetan and *vedana* in Sanskrit, and has to be distinguished from emotions. Whereas emotions can be skillful or unskillful, feelings cannot. Feelings are closely associated with the body, while emotions are partly physical and partly mental. In the West this idea is very new. In philosophy and in theology, emotions have been closely associated with the body and are therefore thought to be something that we have to learn to control, rather than being related to the mind. Buddhism says that it is possible to work with emotions in a positive way, because there is nothing intrinsically wrong with them. The problem lies in how we deal with them, how we experience and express them. So we can train ourselves and develop skills in order to use emotions to enliven us and make our lives richer, instead of caus-

ing more problems for ourselves and other people. We can learn to create a more positive environment, and this is what contemplation on the four divine abodes involves.

The Bodhisattva experience of the path of meditation relates to the rest of the ten levels, or bhumis, of the Bodhisattva Path. Through this path, the Bodhisattva is able to perfect each of the six paramitas—generosity, moral precepts, patience, vigor, concentration and wisdom—as he or she traverses the different levels of bodhisattva attainment. The early perfections are realized first, because it is easier to practice generosity than it is to practice patience, for example. Through training, the Bodhisattva gradually realizes the real extent and potential of the virtues associated with the six perfections. He or she then attains Buddhahood, since the realization of the six paramitas is equated with Buddhahood. Once the tenth Bodhisattva level is attained, the practitioner has become a fully enlightened being or Buddha. He or she has then attained the Bodhisattva ideal of the path of no more learning.

Having traversed the paths and stages described previously, the practitioner attains the last of the five paths, the path of no more learning, which equates with the full enlightenment of Buddhahood. The practitioner has realized the aspects of Buddha's being, referred to as the three *kayas*, which are two aspects of Buddha's being associated with his form body and one aspect associated with his authentic original being. Through the accumulation of merit one realizes the form aspects of Buddha's being and accumulation of wisdom, while on the path one realizes the formless aspect, which is the original state of Buddha's being.

The five paths are part of the teachings called *lamrim*, the path and stages, or *sa lam*, meaning the path and bhumis, or spiritual levels. What is presented here is the idea of spiritual progress. We begin our journey as ordinary, confused sentient beings, our minds completely governed by ignorance and defilements. Gradually purification of the mind takes place, as wisdom and insight increase and our defilements and delusions begin to subside and dissipate. Eventually there is no longer any confusion in the mind; wisdom has flowered and matured in the form of Buddha's mind.

The teachings of the path and stages are presented in a very progressive and developmental form. This approach is called *rimgyipa* in Tibetan, which means a step-by-step approach. But this is not the only approach to the path. There is another one, *chikcharwa* in Tibetan, in which the possibility of sudden illumination is emphasized. The Kagyü tradition, the tradition to which we belong, makes use of both approaches. For example, Gampopa employs the method of the gradualists in his work *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, which is a very important text for our Kagyü tradition. At the same time there is another strand of the tradition, coming from the Mahamudra teachings, which emphasizes the sudden illumination approach. So it is necessary for us to be able to reconcile the differences between these two approaches.

We need to understand that the path and stages as presented in the Sutra teachings should not be taken too literally. For example, it is said in the sutras that a Bodhisattva must remain in the samsaric world for three countless eons before Buddhahood is attained. Even Buddha-nature—the potential for enlightenment that exists in the mind-stream of the individual—is sometimes regarded as a potentiality rather than an actuality in the Sutra tradition. According to this perspective, to actualize it means that we must engage in the path of the Bodhisattva and traverse all the different stages of this path in order to accomplish Buddhahood. Thus the concept of Buddha-nature is seen as a potentiality that has to be brought to the surface through a long period of practice. It can't be attained instantaneously, according to the Sutra teachings. However, as we shall see when we turn to a discussion of the Tantra and Mahamudra traditions, this is not the view of all the Buddhist schools.

BUDDHAHOOD

The Three Kayas

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TWO TYPES OF BUDDHA'S BEING

The idea of the three *kayas* is associated with the ultimate aspiration of practitioners. It symbolizes the final goal that they would like to achieve. Generally, we talk about the two levels of truth, the ground as the starting point, the two accumulations of wisdom and means as the path, and the two types of Buddha's being (*kaya*) as the fruition. As a starting point, we begin to look at our perception of the world and our perception of ourselves. We realize that so many of our experiences are conceptual constructions. There is no reality to them because they are insubstantial. With that realization, we have some insight into absolute truth. In this sense, one uses the idea of two levels of truth as the starting point. When we embark upon the path, the idea of working for the benefit of others becomes important. This is achieved through engaging in Bodhisattva deeds such as generating compassion. This sows the seeds for attaining the "form body" of the Buddha (*rupakaya*). Concurrently, as one also increases one's insight and wisdom, this eventually manifests as the full unfoldment of the

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CHAPTER 18 The Aspects of the Five Paths

By first cultivating the mind of supreme enlightenment and then persistently training, one will go through all the paths and levels of a bodhisattva. Explanation of the path follows. The summary:

The path of accumulation, the path of application,
The path of insight, the path of meditation practice,
And the path of complete perfection—
These five comprise the explanation of the paths.

The five paths according to the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*: First, the paths establish a foundation through study and practice of the Dharma of lower and middle capacity persons, then cultivate the mind of aspiration and action bodhicitta, then they gather the two accumulations. These clearly explain the path of accumulation. "Then one gradually attains the heat¹ and so forth" explains the path of application. "Obtain the level of Great Joy and so forth" explains the paths of insight, meditation, and perfection.

I. **Path of Accumulation.** One who has the Mahayana family cultivates bodhicitta, receives teachings from masters, and makes effort in the virtues until the heat of wisdom is attained. During this time, progress is classified in four stages: realization, aspiration, greater aspiration, and achievement. Why is this called the path of accumulation? Because on it, one gathers the accumulations of virtue in order to become a vessel for the realization of heat and so forth. Therefore, it is called the path of accumulation.

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These are also called the root virtues which are similar to liberation. At this stage, twelve of the branches of enlightenment are practiced:

- A. the four types of mindfulness,
- B. the four types of perfect abandonment, and
- C. the four feet of miracle powers.

A. The Four Types of Mindfulness are:

1. sustaining mindfulness of the body,
2. sustaining mindfulness of feelings,
3. sustaining mindfulness of the mind, and
4. sustaining mindfulness of phenomena.

These four occur during the lesser stage of the path of accumulation.

B. The Four Types of Perfect Abandonment are:

1. abandoning nonvirtues which have been created,
2. not allowing new nonvirtues to be produced,
3. producing the antidotes, virtues which have not arisen, and
4. allowing those virtues which have arisen to increase.

These four occur during the middle stage of the path of accumulation.

C. The Four Feet of Miracle Powers are:

1. the absorption of strong aspiration,
2. the absorption of perseverance,
3. the absorption of the mind, and
4. the absorption of investigation.

These four occur during the greater stage of the path of accumulation.

II. Path of Application. The path of application begins after perfection of the path of accumulation. It has four stages corresponding to the realization of the Four Noble Truths: heat, maximum heat, patience, and realization of the highest worldly dharma. Why is it called the path of application? Because there, one makes an effort to directly realize truth.

A. Five Powers. Furthermore, during the stages of heat and maximum heat, five powers² are practiced:

- the power of faith,
- the power of perseverance,
- the power of mindfulness,
- the power of absorption, and
- the power of wisdom awareness.

B. Five Strengths. During the stages of patience and highest worldly dharma, five strengths³ are practiced:

- the strength of faith,
- the strength of perseverance,
- the strength of mindfulness,
- the strength of absorption, and
- the strength of wisdom awareness.

III. Path of Insight. The path of insight begins after the highest worldly dharma and consists of calm abiding as a basis for special insight focused on the Four Noble Truths. Four insights correspond to each of the Four Noble Truths, making a total of sixteen—eight patient acceptances and eight awarenesses—the patient acceptance of the dharma which leads to an awareness of suffering, actual awareness of suffering, continuous patience leading to the discriminating awareness which characterizes the realization of the Truth of Suffering, continuous discriminating awareness subsequent to realization of the Truth of Suffering, and so forth.⁴

Why is it called the path of insight? Because there, one realizes the Four Noble Truths which were not seen before. At this stage there are seven of the branches of enlightenment:

- the perfect mindfulness branch,
- the perfect discrimination branch,
- the perfect perseverance branch,
- the perfect joy branch,
- the perfect relaxation branch,
- the perfect absorption branch,
- the perfect equanimity branch.

IV. Path of Meditation. The path of meditation practice begins after the realization of special insight. It has two paths:

- A. the path of worldly meditation practice and
 - B. the path of meditation practice beyond the world.
- A. Worldly Meditation Practice** consists of the first, second, third, and fourth meditative stages, and the formless stages of increasing the infinite nature of space, increasing the infinity of consciousness, increasing the nothing-whatsoverness, and increasing neither perception nor non-perception. There are three purposes to practicing this meditation:

suppressing the afflictive emotions which are the subject of abandonment in the path of meditation; establishing the special qualities of the Four Immeasurables and so forth; and creating the foundation for the path beyond the world.

B. Meditation Practice Beyond the World consists of the furthering of calm abiding and special insight, focused on the two types of wisdom. During the path of insight there were two "patient acceptances" and two "awarenesses" corresponding to each of the Four Noble Truths, making a total of sixteen. The eight patient acceptances were completed in the path of insight. One becomes familiarized with the eight awarenesses in the path of meditation through the calm abiding and special insight related to the four meditative concentrations and three of the formless absorptions. Furthermore, part of the awareness of phenomena is to familiarize oneself with all the realization of dharma-as-such. Part of the continuity awareness is to familiarize oneself with all the realization of primordial wisdom. The state of neither perception nor non-perception is merely worldly meditation because the movement of sensation is so unclear.

Why is this called the path of meditation? Because there, one becomes familiar with the realizations that one achieved in the path of insight. At this stage, there are eight of the thirty-seven branches of enlightenment:

- perfect view,
- perfect conception,
- perfect speech,
- perfect action,
- perfect livelihood,
- perfect effort,
- perfect mindfulness, and
- perfect absorption.⁵

V. Path of Perfection. After the vajra-like absorption, one actualizes the nature of awareness, the awareness of exhaustion, and awareness of the unborn. The vajra-like absorption is the state at the edge of the path of meditation and is included in the preparation and unobstructed stages. This absorption is called "vajra-like" because it is unobstructed, hard, stable, of one taste, and all-pervasive.

"Unobstructed" means that it cannot be affected by the action of the world. "Hard" means it cannot be destroyed by obscurations. "Stable"

means it cannot be shaken by discursive thoughts. "One taste" means everything is of one taste.⁶ "All pervasive" means that it observes the suchness of all knowledge.

The "awareness of the exhaustion of causes" that arises after this absorption is the primordial wisdom awareness that observes the Four Noble Truths by the power of the exhaustion of all causes. The "awareness of the unborn"⁷ is the primordial wisdom that observes the Four Noble Truths by the power of abandoning the result, suffering. In other words, this primordial wisdom clearly observes the exhaustion of the cause and non-production of the result and is called the "awareness of the exhaustion and non-production."

Why is this called the path of perfection? Because the training is perfected and one enters the city of nirvana—this is why it is called the path of perfection. At this stage, there are ten attainments of no-more-training,⁸ starting with perfect view of no-more-training through the perfect absorption of no-more-training and then the full liberation of no-more-training and the perfect primordial wisdom of no-more-training—these ten attainments of no-more-training are included in the five unafflicted skandas:

- perfect speech of no-more-training, perfect action, and perfect livelihood are in the heap of moral ethics;
- perfect mindfulness of no-more-training and perfect absorption are in the heap of absorption;
- perfect view of no-more-training, perfect conception, and perfect effort are in the heap of wisdom awareness;
- perfect, full liberation is in the heap of full liberation;
- perfect awareness is in the heap of seeing the primordial wisdom of full liberation.

This is the eighteenth chapter,
dealing with aspects of the five Paths, from
The Jewel Ornament of Liberation,
the Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings.

CHAPTER 20

Perfect Buddhahood

Thus, one attains the perfect Buddhahood of the three kayas by completely passing through all the paths and bhумis. The *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* says:

The enlightenment of a Buddha is not too far away.

Thus, the summary of Buddhahood is:

Nature, significance of the name,
Classification,
Definition, definite number, characteristics,
And special traits—
These seven comprise the kayas of the complete, perfect
Buddha.

I. Nature. The nature of a complete, perfect Buddha is:

- A. perfect purification, and
- B. perfect primordial wisdom.

A. Perfect Purification. The two obscurations of afflicting emotions and obscurations to knowledge were suppressed on the bhumis and paths and, right at the vajra-like absorption, they are fully abandoned without remainder. The obscurations to equipoise and so forth are included in these two obscurations. Therefore, by purifying these two, all obscurations are abandoned.

B. Perfect Primordial Wisdom. There are different opinions about the Buddha's primordial wisdom. Some believe that Buddha possesses discursive thought as well as primordial wisdom. Some say that Buddha does not possess discursive thought, but does possess primordial wisdom which is very clearly aware of everything. Others say that the continuity of the primordial wisdom has ceased. Some say that the Buddha never had primordial wisdom.

Possession of Primordial Wisdom.

Both sutras and shastras explain that Buddha does possess primordial wisdom. The *Condensed Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* says:

Therefore, one who wishes to achieve the supreme transcendent awareness of the Buddha, should have confidence in the "Mother of Buddha."¹

Also, the 100,000 Stanza *Perfection of Wisdom* says:

The complete, perfect Buddha perfectly achieved primordial wisdom without any obscuration to any phenomena.

The twenty-first chapter of the same sutra says:

There is primordial wisdom of the unsurpassed Buddha. There is turning the Wheel of Dharma. There is fully maturing the sentient beings.

There are many other sutras that explain about primordial wisdom.

According to the shastras, the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:

As when the rays of the sun rise
All rays of light occur,

Likewise one should understand the arising of the primordial wisdom
Of all the Buddhas. And so forth.

And:

Mirror-like wisdom is unshakable.

The other three primordial wisdoms depend on that:
Equanimity, discrimination, and activity accomplishment.

Other shastras also explain about the Buddha's primordial wisdom. Those saying that Buddha possesses primordial wisdom depend on these texts.

How Primordial Wisdom is Possessed.

In brief, there are two primordial wisdoms:

1. the primordial wisdom of actualizing reality as-it-is and
2. that of omniscience.

1. The first, "actualizing reality as-it-is," means understanding the ultimate meaning. As mentioned earlier, by perfecting the complete suchness at the final vajra-like absorption, one sees complete liberation of the object through which all the gross thoughts are pacified. Through this, one realizes the one taste of freedom from elaboration, the Dharmadhatu, and primordial wisdom. For example, this is like mixing two waters into one or melting two butters into one. It is like saying, "I saw space" when there are no forms to be seen. The great awareness wisdom without appearance is the basis of all the precious qualities. As is said:

For example, as one water is mixed into another or as butters melt into one, the inseparable primordial wisdom is fully unified with the object of knowledge, free from elaboration. This is called the Dharmakaya, which is the nature of all Buddhas.

And:

People express in words that they "see" space. But investigate by asking how they could "see" it. Likewise, Buddha explained how dharmas are to be seen. There is no other example to express this.

2. "The primordial wisdom of omniscience" means knowing the meaning of all the conventional states. Supported by the vajra-like absorption, one achieves the great wisdom awareness by annihilating all the seeds of obscurations. By that power, all the knowledge of the three times can be seen very clearly like seeing a fresh crystal-fruit in your palm. The sutras also mention that the conventional is known by the Buddha. As is said:

One feather of a peacock
Has many different causes.
They cannot all be known without complete knowledge.
Knowing that is the power of omniscience.

The *Unsurpassed Tantra* says:

Through greatest compassion, knowing all worlds,
Having seen all worlds....

In what way is this seen and known? It is not like seeing phenomena as real; it is seen and understood as illusion. The *Accomplishment of Dharmadhatu Sutra* says:

For example, when magicians conjure up a magic display, they fully understand this and do not become attached to their illusion. Likewise, all the three worlds are like magic displays and the wise, completely enlightened Buddha is aware of that.

The Meeting of Father and Son Sutra says:

The magician manifests magic and, because he understands it as magic, is not confused on that subject. You see all beings like that. I prostrate to and praise the Omniscient One.

Argument: Buddhas Do Not Possess Omniscent Knowledge of the Conventional.

Some say that the complete, perfect Buddha possesses understanding of the ultimate meaning, which is called the wisdom of actualizing reality as-it-is, but does not possess the wisdom of the conventional states, which is called the primordial wisdom of omniscience. It is not that Buddha is unaware of something that could be known, but that there is no conventional level and therefore the primordial wisdom of knowing it does not exist.

Furthermore, they argue that the conventional appears [subjectively] to the ordinary, childish ones, who are caused by the ignorance of the afflictive emotions, and to the three Noble Ones, who are caused by ignorance without affliction. For example, these perceptions are like those of persons with cataracts who see falling hair and fuzzy images. The Buddha fully purified ignorance during his vajra-like absorption and realized the meaning of suchness, a state in which there are no phenomena to be seen. Therefore, the Buddha does not possess the confused, conventional state as, for example, someone with cured cataracts has no vision of falling hair or fuzzy images.

Thus, the conventional state appears through the power of ignorance and exists relative to the worldly. Depending on Buddhahood, the conventional state does not exist, so there can be no primordial wisdom to know it.

If the Buddha had cognition of appearances, then he would be seeing the object of delusion and would himself be confused. This would contradict all the Sages' remaining in the absorption state and so forth. The *Noble Profound Representation Sutra* says:

The complete, perfect Buddha always abides in total absorption.

Refutation: Buddhas Do Possess Omniscent Knowledge of the Conventional.

Those who believe the earlier argument, that the Buddha does possess wisdom of the conventional state, say that the mind will not become scattered and so forth just by being in a post-meditative state and, so, there is no contradiction with the quotation about always abid-

ing in absorption and so forth. It is not right to assume that one will be confused just by knowing the object of confusion. Even though one understands all the objects of confusion known to others—that mind, which knows all confusion and shows it to be the very cause of temporary status and the liberation of enlightenment of all sentient beings—how could it be confused? Therefore, it is said:

Just knowing the confusion,
That mind is non-confusion.

Others say there is no logical harm in bringing a conventional object into the mind without grasping it as real. Even though Buddha projects the object, he will not be confused.

Post-meditative Primordial Wisdom.

Therefore, those who hold the earlier argument that the Buddha does possess wisdom of the conventional state believe that Buddha possesses post-meditative primordial wisdom, which is called "all-knowing." As is said:

Formerly actualizing reality as-it-is without discursive thought, he engages in an unconfused equipoise state. Later, knowing all conventional knowledge with conceptual thought, he engages in post-meditation in the confusion-appearance.

The later opinion that Buddha does not possess post-meditative primordial wisdom is expressed in the *Vast Noble Door of Accomplishment Sutra*:

The Tathagata achieves nothing after attaining the direct, complete Buddhahood. This is because there are no objects to be known.

Still others say:

Some heretics say that liberation is a place to go. When you achieve the completely peaceful state there is nothing left, like an extinguished fire.

Thus, all the different opinions have been explained.

Kadampa Position.

Geshe believes that the nature of the body of the actual perfect, complete Buddha is Dharmakaya. Dharmakaya is the exhaustion of all mistakes, or just a return to the inherent nature. But these are just labels. In reality, Dharmakaya is unborn, free from elaboration. The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:

Liberation is just the exhaustion of confusion.

Therefore, the Buddha is Dharmakaya since Dharmakaya is unborn and free from elaboration; it cannot possess primordial wisdom. In that case, you might say this contradicts the two primordial wisdoms as stated in the sutras, but it does not. When the eye consciousness is stimulated by a blue object, one says, "I saw blue." Likewise, that primordial wisdom which transforms into the Dharmadhatu is called the wisdom of actualizing reality as-it-is. This knowledge of actualizing all phenomena is relative, so it is laid out in dependance on the perceptions of the trainees. This system is comfortable.

Milarepa's Position.

Jetsun Mila's position regarding primordial wisdom. He said this unfabricated awareness is beyond words and conceptual thoughts such as existence or non-existence, eternalism or nihilism, and so forth. It will not be contradicted whatever name is used to express it. Primordial wisdom is also like this. Those who would be expected to be scholars—even if they asked the Buddha himself—I don't think he would say one way or the other. Dharmakaya is beyond conception, unborn, free from elaborations. "Don't ask me. Just look at your mind," indicates that there is no special opinion in Milarepa's system.



Therefore, the nature of the Buddha is perfect purification and perfect primordial wisdom. The *Unsurpassed Tantra* says:

Buddhahood is indivisible yet one can categorize it
According to its qualities of purity;
The two qualities of primordial wisdom and freedom—
Comparable to the sun and the sky.

And the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:

The seeds of the obscurations of afflicting emotions and
obscurations of knowledge,
Although present for a long time,
Are fully uprooted and purified by renunciation.
Buddhahood is possessed by those with excellent virtuous
qualities.

II. Significance of the Name. Why is one called "Buddha"? One who has fully awakened (Tib. *sang*) from ignorance as from sleep and fully blossomed (Tib. *gye*) the discriminating wisdom into the two knowledges is called a Buddha (Tib. *Sangye*). Thus it is said:

Because of having awakened from the sleep of ignorance and having blossomed the discriminating wisdom into the two knowledges, he is called "Buddha."

"Awakened from the sleep of ignorance" is the perfect purification, as described earlier. "Blossomed the discriminating wisdom into the two knowledges" means the perfection of primordial wisdom, as was explained before.

III. Classification. The Buddha's forms are classified as three: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya. The *Golden Light Sutra* says:

All the Tathagatas possess three forms: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya.

Some scriptures mention two forms, even four or five forms. Even though they say that, all the forms are included under these three. The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* mentions:

One should understand that all forms of the Buddha are included in the three.

IV. Definition. Dharmakaya is the identity of the actual Buddha. The *8,000 Stanza Perfection of Wisdom* says:

One should not see the Buddha as the form bodies. The Tathagata is Dharmakaya.

The *King of Meditative Absorption Sutra* mentions:

One should not see the Victorious One as the form bodies.

The two form bodies should be understood to manifest through the combination of these three:

- A. magnificent blessings of the Dharmakaya,
- B. the projection of the trainees, and
- C. previous devoted aspiration prayers.

A. Furthermore, if they appeared only through the magnificent blessings of Dharmadhatu [Dharmakaya], then since all sentient beings are pervaded by the Dharmadhatu, all would be liberated without effort and able to see the face of Buddha. This is not the case. Therefore, they do not appear only by the magnificent blessings of the Dharmadhatu.

B. If the form bodies were solely the projection of trainees. It is an error to project an appearance which does not exist. Since all sentient beings have been acting in this error since beginningless time, then if

one attained Buddhahood by depending on this error, all would have attained enlightenment. This is not the case. Therefore, they do not appear solely through the projections of trainees.

C. If the form bodies appeared only through devoted aspiration prayers. Has the complete, perfect Buddha mastered devoted aspiration prayer or not? If this was not mastered, then he could not be omniscient. If this was mastered, then all beings should be liberated without effort just by his devoted aspiration prayers because such prayers are made without partiality. This is not the case. Therefore, they also do not appear solely through devoted aspiration prayers.

Thus, the two form bodies appear through the combination of these three forces.

V. Reason There Are Definitely Three Kayas. It is out of necessity. Dharmakaya is for one's own benefit, and the two form bodies are for others' benefit.

How does Dharmakaya benefit oneself? Obtaining the Dharmakaya is the basis for all the good qualities. Good qualities like strength, fearlessness, and so forth gather there as if they had been summoned. Not only does this happen when the Dharmakaya has been obtained, but even those devoted to the Dharmakaya who are slightly, partially, or greatly realized obtain different stages of these good qualities. They respectively obtain small, many, more, and infinite qualities.

The supreme worldly experiences—all the perfect powers, clairvoyance and meditative absorption, and so forth—are achieved through devotion to the Dharmakaya. Obscuration abandonment, clairvoyance, miracle powers, and so forth—all the qualities of Hearer Arhats—are achieved by slight realization of Dharmakaya. Obscuration abandonment, meditative absorption, clairvoyance, and so forth—all the qualities of Solitary Realizer Arhats—are achieved by partial realization of Dharmakaya. Obscuration abandonment, meditative absorption, clairvoyance, and so forth—all the qualities of bodhisattvas who attained bhūmis—are achieved by greater realization of Dharmakaya.

The two form bodies are presented to benefit others. Sambhogakaya is shown to the more purified trainees and the Nirmanakaya is shown to impure trainees. Therefore, it is definite that the Buddha has three forms.

VI. Characteristics of the Three Kayas.

A. **Dharmakaya.** Dharmakaya is merely labeled as the exhaustion of all errors through realization of the meaning of the all-pervading emptiness of all phenomena, or as the mere reverse of the nature of

confused projection. In reality, it does not possess in any way whatsoever the identification, characteristics, or the designation of 'Dharmakaya.' This is just as Milarepa said.

If expressed from another angle, Dharmakaya has eight characteristics:

1. sameness,
2. profundity,
3. permanence,
4. oneness,
5. perfection,
6. purity,
7. radiance, and
8. relationship to enjoyment.

1. **Sameness.** There is no difference between the Dharmakaya of all the Buddhas.

2. **Profundity.** Because it is free from all elaboration, it is difficult to realize.

3. **Permanence.** It is not compound; it has no beginning, middle, or end; and it is free from birth and cessation.

4. **Oneness.** It is indivisible because the Dharmadhatu and primordial wisdom cannot be differentiated.

5. **Perfection.** It is unmistaken because it is beyond exaggeration and underestimation.

6. **Purity.** It is free from the three obscurations.²

7. **Radiance.** There are no discursive thoughts; only nonconceptual thoughts are projected in the nonconceptual state.

8. **Relationship to Enjoyment.** Embodying the nature of vast good qualities, it is the foundation of the complete enjoyment (Sambhogakaya).

The *Unsurpassed Tantra* says:

Beginningless, centerless and endless
Completely indivisible,
Free from the two,
Free from the three,
Stainless and concept-free—
Such is the Dharmadhatu.
Understanding of its nature is the vision
Of the yogin who abides in meditation.

The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:
The Nature-body is sameness, subtle, and related to enjoyment.

B. Sambhogakaya. Sambhogakaya also has eight characteristics:

1. surroundings,
2. field,
3. form,
4. marks,
5. Dharma,
6. activities,
7. spontaneity, and
8. naturally nonexistent.

1. Surroundings. The surroundings [retinue] of this body are the bodhisattvas abiding at all the bhumis.

2. Field of Enjoyment. The field in which enjoyment is experienced is the completely pure Buddhadfield.

3. Form of Enjoyment. The body of enjoyment of Buddha Vairocana and so forth.

4. Marks. The marks that are possessed are the thirty-two major³ and eighty minor marks.⁴

5. Full Enjoyment of Dharma. The full enjoyment of Dharma is the complete Mahayana teaching.

6. Activities. Activities are prophesizing bodhisattvas' enlightenment and so forth.

7. Spontaneity. All its activities and so forth are free from effort; like the supreme jewel, it manifests spontaneously.

8. Naturally Nonexistent. Even though it manifests in various forms and so forth, it is actually like the color of crystal, free from the nature of all diversity.

The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:

Sambhogakaya, in all the Buddhadfields,
Is differentiated by
The gathered surroundings, field, marks,
Form, complete enjoyment of Dharma, and activities.

Also, the *Ornament of Clear Realization* says:

Being master of the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks
and because it enjoys the Mahayana teachings, it is called the
Sambhogakaya of the Sage.

3. Nirmankaya. Nirmankaya also has eight characteristics:

1. basis,
 2. cause,
 3. field,
 4. time,
 5. nature,
 6. engaging,
 7. maturing, and
 8. liberating.
1. Basis. Its basis is Dharmakaya, which is unmovable.
 2. Cause. It arises from the great compassionate wish to benefit all sentient beings.
 3. Field. Its fields are the fully pure and the fully impure fields.
 4. Time. It is unceasing for as long as the world exists.
 5. Nature. It manifests in three forms. The artistic emanation is expert in all the various arts such as playing the lute and so forth; the birth emanation manifests various inferior bodies like a rabbit and so forth; the superior emanation descends from Tushita, enters the mother's womb, and so forth until it passes into parinirvana.
- The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:
- Through various forms, apparitional by nature
The one excellently born into the highest birth
Descends from that "Realm of Great Joy,"
Enters the royal womb and is nobly born on Earth.
Perfectly skilled in every science and craft,
Delighting in his royal consorts' company,
Renouncing, enduring hardship,
Going to the place called "Enlightenment's Very Heart,"
He vanquishes the hosts of mara.
Then, perfect enlightenment, he turns the Wheel of
Dharma
And passes into nirvana—in all those places, so impure,
The Nirmankaya shows these deeds as long as worlds
endure.

6. Engaging. It induces a variety of ordinary beings to engage in entering the path by creating interest in the three types of nirvana.

7. Maturing. It fully matures all the accumulations of those who have entered the path.

8. Liberating. It liberates those who are fully matured by virtue from the bondage of existence.

The *Unsurpassed Tantra* says:

This form causes beings to enter into the path of nirvana and become fully mature.

These are the eight characteristics of Nirmanakaya. The *Ornament of Clear Realization* says:

The impartial activities of the body—the unceasing Nirmanakaya of the Sage variously benefits all sentient beings as long as samsara exists.

VII. Special Traits. There are three special traits of Buddhahood:

- A. equality,
- B. permanence, and
- C. appearance.

A. First, the Special Trait of Equality. The Dharmakayas of all Buddhas are inseparable from their basis, Dharmadhatu; therefore, they are equal. The Sambhogakayas of all Buddhas are inseparable in their realization, therefore, they are equal. The Nirmanakayas of all Buddhas manifest common activities, therefore, they are equal. The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:

They are equal in basis, realization, and activities.

B. Second, the Special Trait of Permanence. The Dharmakaya is, by nature, permanent because it is the ultimate state free from birth and cessation. The Sambhogakaya is permanent because of its continuous enjoyment of the Dharma. The Nirmanakaya is permanent because of its activities which it manifests again and again. Even though it disappears, even though the stream of continuity ceases, if appears without missing any opportunity. The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* says:

These are permanent by nature, by unceasing continuity, and by continuity of actions.

C. Third, the Special Trait of Appearance. The Dharmakaya appears through the purification of obscurations of knowledge in the Dharmadhatu. The Sambhogakaya appears through the purification of afflictive emotions. The Nirmanakaya appears through the purification of karma.

This is the twentieth chapter,
dealing with the result which is perfect Buddhahood, from
The Jewel Ornament of Liberation,
the Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings.

CHAPTER 21

Activities of the Buddha

First, cultivating the mind of enlightenment, then, in the middle, practicing the teachings and the path, and eventually, at the end, attaining the result of Buddhahood—all these are done for the sole purpose of dispelling suffering and establishing the happiness of all sentient beings. When one attains Buddhahood, there are no conceptual thoughts or efforts. Therefore, can Buddhas manifest any benefit for sentient beings? Without conceptual thoughts or efforts, Buddhas manifest benefit for sentient beings spontaneously and unceasingly.

Explanation of how this occurs. The summary:

The body benefits sentient beings without conceptual thoughts.

Likewise the speech and mind also benefit sentient beings without conceptual thoughts.

These three comprise the activities of a Buddha.

Benefiting sentient beings without conceptual thought by body, speech, or mind is explained with examples from the *Unsurpassed Tantra*:

Like Indra, the drum, clouds, Brahma,
The sun, a wish-fulfilling gem, space,
And earth is the Tathagata.

I. Activities of the Body. "Appearing as Indra." This is a simile for how the body benefits sentient beings without conceptual thought. For example, Indra, king of the gods, abides in a victorious palace

with a retinue of goddesses. That palace has the nature of clear and clean lapis lazuli and, because of that, Indra's image is reflected outside the palace. From the earth, men and women see the reflections of Indra with all his enjoyments and they say aspiration prayers that they may also be born there quickly and make effort to develop virtue for that purpose. By that, they are born there after death.

The appearance of that reflection has no conceptual thought or movement. Likewise, those who enter into the great purpose—meditating and so forth—will see the body of the perfect Buddha, which is marked by major and minor signs, manifest various activities: walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, giving Dharma teachings, being absorbed in meditation, and so forth. By seeing them, they develop devotion and motivation and then, in order to achieve Buddhahood, they engage in its cause—the cultivation of bodhicitta and so forth—and eventually achieve it. The appearance of that body has no conceptual thoughts or movement. It is said:

Just as the reflection of the form of the king of gods
Appears in the clear lapis lazuli ground,
So also does the reflection of the king of mighty sages' form
Appear in the clear ground which is beings' minds.

This is the body benefitting sentient beings without conceptual thought.

II. Activities of Speech. "Like the drum of the gods." This is a simile for how the speech benefits sentient beings without conceptual thought. For example, above the palace of the victorious gods, the drum of the gods, which is called "Holding the Power of Dharma," is established through the power of the gods' previous virtuous actions. Without conceptual thought, that drum reminds the heedless gods by sounding the dharma that: all composite phenomena are impermanent, all phenomena are without self, all the afflicted states are of the nature of suffering, and all the cessations are peace. It is said:

Through the power of the gods' former goodness,
The dharma drum in the divine realms,
Without effort, location, mental form, or concept,
Exhorts all the uncaring gods over and over again with its throbs
Of "impermanence," "suffering," "no-self," and "peace."

Likewise, even though there is no effort or conceptual thought, the speech of the Buddha manifests the teachings depending on the dispensations of the fortunate ones. It is said:

Like this, the all-pervading [Dharmakaya] is without effort
and so on,
Yet his Buddha-speech permeates all beings without
exception.
Teaching the noble doctrine to those of good fortune.

This is speech benefitting sentient beings without conceptual thought.

III. Activities of Mind. "Like a cloud." This is a simile for how the wisdom mind benefits sentient beings without conceptual thought. For example, in the summer, clouds gather in the sky without effort, causing crops and so forth to grow perfectly through the rain falling on the ground without conceptual thought. It is said:

The rainy season's clouds continually and effortlessly
Downpour vast amounts of water onto the earth
And are the cause for good and bountiful crops.

Likewise, the activities of the wisdom mind ripen the trainees' crop of virtue through the rainfall of Dharma without conceptual thought. It is said:

Likewise clouds of compassion, without any
conceptualization,
Rain down the waters of the Victor's noble teaching
And cause the harvests of virtue for sentient beings.

This is the wisdom mind benefitting sentient beings without conceptual thought.

"Like Brahma." For example, without moving from the Brahma-palace, Brahma, king of the gods, can be seen in all the god realms. Likewise, Buddha, while not moving from the Dharmakaya, benefits all trainees by manifesting the twelve deeds and so forth. Thus, it is said:

Without effort and without leaving the Brahma-heaven,
Brahma in any divine abode can manifest his presence.
Similarly, without ever departing from the Dharmakaya, the
great Victor
Effortlessly manifests his emanations in any sphere, to the
fortunate.

"Like the sun." For example, the radiant light of the sun opens lotuses and so forth—an infinite diversity of flowers—at one time without conceptual thought. Likewise, the radiant light of the Dharma

opens the virtuous lotus of the mind of infinite families and the dispositions of trainees while without conceptual thought and without effort. It is said:

The sun, without ideation, by its own light's radiation,
Simultaneously makes lotuses bloom and other things ripe.
Similarly, without ideation, the Tathagata sun pours forth his
rays
Of noble Dharma onto those "lotuses" who are beings to be
trained.

Or, in other words, the image of the sun is simultaneously reflected in all the clear water-vessels at one time. Likewise, the Buddha is simultaneously reflected in all the pure-visioned trainees. It is said:

Due to this,
The infinite reflection of the sun of the Sugata
Appears in all the "water vessels"
Of pure trainees simultaneously.

"Like the wish-fulfilling jewel." For example, even though the wish-fulfilling jewel has no conceptual thought, it manifests whatever one needs if one prays to it. Likewise, depending on the Buddha accomplishes all the purposes associated with the various wishes of Hearers and so forth. It is said:

A wish-fulfilling gem, though thought-free, fulfills simultaneously
All the wishes of those within its sphere of activity.
Likewise, though those of varying aspiration hear various
teachings
When relying on the wish-fulfilling Buddha, he does not so
conceive.

Likewise, the lute, space, and earth are similes for benefitting sentient beings without conceptual thought.

This is the twenty-first chapter,
dealing with the activities of a Buddha, from
The Jewel Ornament of Liberation,
The Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings.

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, the Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings, an explanation of the stages of the path of the Mahayana vehicle, was composed by the physician Sonam Rinchen at the request of Bhante Dharmakyab. Dharmakyab acted as scribe.

BUDDHA MIND

An Anthology of Longchen Rabjam's Writings on *Dzogpa Chempo*

by

Tulku Thondup Rinpoche

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9. *The Training and Attainments of Five Paths of Mahāyāna*

In the *Sūtric* (exoteric) teachings of *Mahāyāna* the levels of spiritual attainment in the process of training are categorized as the ten stages and five paths. In the *sūtras* the Ten Stages and Five Paths with Thirty-seven Aspects of Enlightenment are discussed in detail and that structure is the common basis for *tantric* teaching and for *Dzogpa Chempo*. In *Shingta Chempo* (SC) Longchen Rabjam summarizes the training on “thirty-seven aspects of enlightenment” for perfecting five paths.

THE PATH OF ACCUMULATION (*Tshogs-Lam*)

SC-II, 123b⁶ The contemplation on and the realizations of, for example, hearing, pondering and meditation with (their) hosts of virtues, which start from the developing of the mind of enlightenment in *Mahāyāna* (and proceed) until the development of heat (of the path of application) in ones' mind, which leads to the island of liberation, is the path of accumulation.

Cause: The awakening of the lineage (*Rigs*), which is the basis (*rTen*) for developing the mind of enlightenment.
Result: The four following paths.

Etymology: The path of accumulations, as it mainly accumulates the hearing (study), pondering and merits.
Division: There are three:

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Small (Sub-Division of the) Path of Accumulation
^{124a/2}In this practice one mediates on the fourfold awareness (*Dran-Pa Nye-Bar bZhag-Pa bZhi*) in both meditation and post-meditation periods. These are the contemplations on: (i) Seeing the bodies (*Phug-Po*) of oneself and others as space during the meditation period. During the post-meditation period seeing the body as Māyā (*sGyu-Ma*). One also mediates on the filthiness (of the body) as the antidote to attachment. (ii) Seeing feeling (*Tshor-Ba*) without conceptions in the meditation period, and during the post-meditation period as (unstable) like a water-tree. One also mediates on seeing them as mere sufferings. (iii) Seeing the mind (*Sems*) as unborn (during the meditation) and as impermanent (during the post-meditation). (iv) Seeing that phenomena (*Ch'os*) are merely nominal (during the meditation) and that they are mere Māyā (during the post-meditation period).

Mediocre (Sub-Division of the) Path of Accumulation

^{124b/1}It is the meditation on the four perfect purifications [efforts] (*Yang-Dag sPongs-Pa bZhi*), which are the highest degree of progress of experiences achieved through the previous (contemplations). They are (i) not to generate any unwholesomeness which has not been generated (in the past), (ii) removing any unwholesomeness which has been generated, (iii) generating virtues which have not arisen, and (iv) developing virtues which have arisen in oneself through the four means: admiration (*'Dum-Pa*), exertion (*'Bad-Pa*), efforts (*rTsol-Ba*), and diligence (*brTson-'Grus*).

Great (Sub-Division of the) Path of Accumulation

^{124b/2}It is the contemplation on the four miraculous feet (*Dzus-'Phrul Gyi rKang-Pa bZhi*): (i) Admiration ('Dun-Pa), (ii) investigation (*dPyod-Pa*), (iii) concentration (*Sems-Pa*), and mindfulness (*Dran-Pa/bTson-'Grus*). . . .

Meditation: During the training in the Path of Accumulation, with the intention of achieving enlightenment, one makes efforts in the disciplines of sealing the doors of the sense-

faculties, eating modestly, and not sleeping during the early and later parts of the night. The mediator is joyous because of being mindful in the efforts of accepting and rejecting. He advances on the path which leads to the Path of Application with no regrets about virtuous deeds but with joy, faith and admiration (*Mos-Pa*), and so on, with all the other virtues, which are the cause of liberation. He devotes (his life to) study, pondering, and meditation.

Time: The Small (sub-division of the) Path of Accumulation is the beginning of the three countless eons of training (in the path of enlightenment). At the time of the practice on the fourfold awareness (*Dran-Pa Nyer-bZhag*), the time of attainment of the Path of Application is uncertain. At the time of practice on the four perfect efforts (*Yang-Dag sPong-Pa bZhi*), it is certain that the attainment of the Path of Application will take place in the next life. At the time of training on the four miraculous feet, it is certain that one will attain the Path of Application in this very lifetime.

Antidote: In the Path of Accumulation, one trains on the antidote of assaulting (the defilements) (*Sun-'Byin*) by seeing the compositional factors ('Du-Byed) as faults.

Abandonment: One renounces all the direct attachments by seeing the contaminated phenomena (*Zag-bChas Kyi Ch'os*) as faults.

Realization: One realizes generally (*Dor-sPyi*) the twofold no-self mainly by study and pondering and in some cases by meditation.

Virtues: One attains the virtues of eyes and foreknowledges and so on.

Meditation: One meditates on the (following) trainings: disciplining oneself in concentration on entering and withdrawing from (proper and improper) physical and vocal (activities); wisdom of studies, pondering and meditation concerning the words and meanings of the scriptures and the recollections of the triple gem. One meditates on the four Dharma seals, seeing that all compounded things are impermanent, that everything with flaws (*Zag-bChas*) is suffering, that all phenomena

are emptiness and all beings are no-self. Meditate on the five liberative virtues: confidence, diligence, recollection, contemplation, and wisdom, which are not yet developed in the form of (five) faculties (*dBang-Po*). One contemplates on disciplines, generosity and recollections on precious human life, death, birth, inhaling and exhaling.

Activities: While acting one meditates on (nine) impurities and eight concepts of great beings. One meditates on them beginning with going for refuge and developing the mind of enlightenment and dedication of the merits. The meditations on the nine impurities are seeing one's own and others' bodies as decaying, eaten by worms, reddish, bluish, dark, scattered, burnt, and putrid. As (the antidote) to desire one meditates on filthiness, for hatred on loving-kindness and for ignorance on interdependent causation.

^{126a/5}The eight conceptions (*rNam-Par rTog-Pa*) of the great beings: In Nyi-Khri gZhung-Grel it is said:

They are the thoughts, (1) When may I dispel the sufferings of living beings? (2) When may I lead people who are in danger of poverty to great wealth? (3) When may I fulfill the needs of living beings with my body of flesh and blood? (4) When may I benefit living beings by living in hell for a long time? (5) When may I fulfill the wishes of beings through the great prosperities both of the world and the transcendence of the world? (6) When may I become a Buddha and uproot the sufferings of beings? (7) When may I never have rebirths which are not beneficial to beings, in which I exclusively analyze the taste of absolute truth, speak words that are uncaring of (the benefit of) beings, have life, body, intellect, wealth or majesty that are not beneficial to others and am eager to harm others? (8) When may I experience the results of others' non-virtuous deeds and may others experience the results of my virtuous deeds?

THE PATH OF APPLICATION [ENDEAVOR] (*sByor-Lam*)^{127a/1}The basis (of life): It is the beings in any of the six realms in whom the final stages of the great (sub-division of the) Path of Accumulation has been generated. In the *sutras* it is said that in numerous beings among the gods, *nāgas*, and demi-gods (the Path of Application) has been generated.

Basis of intention: It is the (mind) of the desire realms or of the six stages of absorption.

Cause: It is the final stage of the great level of the Path of Accumulation.

Essence (*Ngo-Bo*): It is the worldly wisdom generated by meditation.

Division: There are four: heat (*Drod*), climax(*rTse-Mo*), forbearance (*bZod-Pa*), and supreme (mundane) realization (*Ch'os-mCh'og*).

Meditation: In heat and climax one practices on the five faculties (*dBang-Po*): confidence(*Dad-Pa*), diligence (*bTson-'Grus*), awareness (*Dran-Pa*), contemplation (*Ting-Nge 'Dzin*), and wisdom (*Shes-Rab*). They are called faculties as they directly enforce the generating of enlightenment. . . (In forbearance and supreme (mundane) realization one practices on the five powers (*STobs*): confidence, diligence, awareness, contemplation, and wisdom.)

Primordial Wisdom: In the four divisions of the Path of Application there are four primordial wisdoms: (1) The attainment of light of primordial wisdom of “heat” (*Drod sNang-Ba Thob-Pa'i Ye-Shes*) of *Mahāyāna* is the antidote to apprehending the objects as real, by seeing all phenomena as merely the lights of the mind, a little light generated by mundane meditation. . . Here, light means the forbearance of definite concentration on Dharma. . .

(2) The increase of the light of primordial wisdom of “climax” (*rTse-Mo sNang-Ba mCh'od-Pa'i Ye-Shes*) is the attainment of the mediocre light generated by mundane meditation through the efforts of meditation on no-self for the purpose of increasing the light of the Dharma itself. . .

(3) The primordial wisdom of entering partially into the suchness of the “forbearance” (*bZod-Pa De Kho-Na-Nyid Kyi Phyogs-gChig-La Zhugs-Pa'i Yé-Shes*) is the antidote of distractions toward external phenomena (viewing them) as the objects, through the attainment of the great light generated by meditation on abiding in mere mind

(4) The primordial wisdom of supreme (mundane) realization (is achieved) “immediately before” (*Ch'os-mCh'og De-Ma Thag-Pa'i Yé-Shes*) (the attainment of the Path of Seeing without interruption (of any other attainments). This primordial wisdom is the completion of the visions generated by mundane contemplations, as there is no distraction by apprehension of the objects.

(Sub-division): Each of the four aspects of the Path of Application (*Nges-'Byed*) has three sub-divisions, classified as small, mediocre, and great

Antidote: It is the renunciation (*sPong-Ba*) of the defilements by suppressing (*mGo-gNon-Pa*) them. Generally there are four kinds of antidotes: the antidote of assault (*Sun-'Byin-Pa*), renunciation (*sPong-Pa*), the basis (*rTén*), and the uprooting (*Hz-a-Ba Nas sPong-Pa*), like the uninterrupted path which uproots from the root

Abandonment: It diminishes the seed and the direct obscurations, and liberates from the decline and poverty of ordinary beings (*So-So'i SKye-Bo*).

Realization: General realization (*Don-sPyu*) of the two no-selves through the primordial wisdom generated by mundane meditations.

Virtues: In *Ratnadeśha-sūtra* many virtues such as contemplations, recollections (*gZungs*), and foreknowledges are mentioned.

Supreme over the Path of Accumulation: There is no difference (between this and the Path of Accumulation) generated by meditation (*bsGom-Byung*), but in this the primordial wisdom of no-thought is clearer, and it is closer to the Path of Seeing.

THE PATH OF SEEING (*mThong-Lam*)

1286²⁷The primordial wisdom of the Path of Seeing arises at the end of the great supreme (mundane) realization (of the Path of Application) and it is in sixteen moments (*sKad-Chig*). They are the forbearance of knowledge of the attributes (*dharma*), the knowledge of the attributes, the forbearances of subsequent knowledge, and the subsequent knowledge of each of the four truths: suffering, source of suffering, cessation (of suffering), and the path (of cessation)

The basis (of life): The basis of arising of primordial wisdom is the same as in the case of great highest (mundane) realization (of the Path of Application) and it could be any being from any of the six realms.

The basis of mind: It is the fourth absorption.

Cause: The highest (mundane) realization (of the Path of Application) is the direct cause and other aspects of the Paths of Accumulation and Application are the indirect causes.

Result: It is the development of the two later paths.

Essence: There are sixteen moments related to the (levels of) purification of the defilements of the nature by the divisions of the four truths.

Abandonments: There are ten defilements: five defilements related to view and five defilements unrelated to view. The five related to view are: views of transitory collections (I and mine as real) (*'Jigs-Tshogs-La lTa-ha*), view holding to extremes (*mThar-'Dzin*), wrong view (*Log-lTa*), viewing (a wrong view) as supreme (*lTa-Ba mCh'og-'Dzin*) and view that ethics and asceticism are supreme (*Tshul-Khrims brTul-Zhugs mCh'og-'Dzin*). The five unrelated to view are: desire, hatred, pride, ignorance, and doubt.

In the desire realm, the ten abandonments become 40 by multiplying each of them by the four truths. For the two upper realms (the form and formless realms), excluding hatred, there are nine defilements, and by multiplying them (by the four truths) they become 72. So in total there are 112 defilements (of the three realms) to be abandoned in the Path of Seeing

In the four absorptions (form realms) and four formless realms, hatred is not applied, as the beings' minds are moistened by tranquillity, because they do not possess the nine bases of hatred, the thought of harming. The nine are: (thinking that this person) harmed me in the past, is harming me at present, and will harm me in the future. In the same way, three towards one's friends and three towards one's enemies, (thinking that he) benefited my enemy and so on. These (ten) emotional defilements lead the wrong way. For example, in the case of the truth of suffering (*samsāra*): (1) by the view of transitory collection one apprehends the truth of suffering as "I" and "my." (2) By the view of holding to extremes one apprehends the truth of suffering as existent or non-existent and eternal or nil. (3) By wrong view one apprehends that the truth of suffering is non-existent. (4) By ignorance one enters into it without knowing its characteristics. (5) By doubt one enters into it...with doubt that there is a truth of suffering. There are those five ways of relating to the truth of suffering.

(6) Desire generates attachment. (7) Pride generates haughtiness and boasting. (8) Apprehending (wrong views) as the supreme view generates apprehending them as supreme. (9) The view of apprehending ethics and asceticism as supreme generates apprehending them as the way of purity and liberation. (10) Hatred creates ill will toward whatever is not in accord with those five ways of relating. As they (the ten defilements) are applied to the truth of suffering, they are applied to the other three truths as well. In the case of the truth of cessation, the nominal (aspect) is related to, but is not the meaning....

Antidote: All the emotional defilements (*Nyon-Mongs-Pa*) of the three realms, which are the abandonments of the Path of Seeing, are to be purified together. The four forbearances of the knowledge of the attributes (*Ch'os Shes-Pa'i bZod-Pa*) of the fourfold truth, namely, suffering [*samsāra*], source of suffering [emotions], cessation of suffering [*nirvāṇa*], and the path of cessation are one in their being mental phenomena (*Blo-sDzas*), but they are four in their isolated factors (*IDog-Pa*).

When it (the antidote) arises, in a single (instant of a) moment, it becomes the uninterrupted path (*Bar-Ch'ad Med-Lam*), the antidote of renouncing the abandonment of the Path of Seeing from the root. It renounces the 112 abandonments of the Path of Seeing in a moment. (The process of abandonment: In the first instant,) the secondary cause (*Nye-rGyu*) of the forbearances and the knowledge of the attribute (*Ch'os-bZod*) of each of the four truths and their respective active (*Nus-IDan*) abandonments encounter (each other). In the second instant, the actual cause (*dNgos-rGyu*) of the forbearances of the knowledge of the attribute of the four truths) and their respective (*Ngo-sKo*) inactive (*Nus-Med*) abandonments encounter (each other). In the third instant, the four forbearances of the attributes (*Ch'os-bZod*) arise and the cessation of the entirety (up to the) subtle abandonments takes place spontaneously....

The four attributes (*Ch'os*) of the individual four truths are the same mental phenomena. So the liberation from defilements of the forms (*rNam-Pa*) of the four truths of the three realms is the path of liberation (*rNam-Grol Lam*, i.e., the Path of Seeing), the antidotes. Likewise, the four subsequent forbearances (*rjes-bZod*) and four subsequent knowledges (*rjes-Shes*) are the distinguishing path, the far-abandoning antidote.... Those abandonments are (included in) the two obscurations, and the (antidotes) liberate (one) from them....

The distinction of the two (obscurations) is: The nature (*Ngo-Bo*) of misery and so forth, of unvirtuous or neutral obscurations (*bGrib-Pa Lung-Ma-bShTan*) which make the mind very unpeaceful are the "emotional obscurations" (*Nyon-bsGrib*). The subject and object of the concept of apprehender and apprehended with the nature (*Ngo-Bo*) of contaminated (*Zag-bChas*) virtues or unobsuring neutrality, which is not free from the attachment to the truth of the three cycles (subject, object, and action), is the "intellectual obscuration" (*Shes-brGrib*). Among them the imaginary obscurations of emotions are the abandonments of the Path of Seeing, and the innate emotions (*lHan-sKyes*) are the abandonments of the Path of Meditation.

The gross concept of apprehender and apprehended, the intellectual obscurations, are the abandonments of the Path of Seeing, and the subtle ones are the abandonments of the Path of Meditation . . .

Realization: It is the direct realization of the two no-selfs through the transmundane primordial wisdom.

Virtues: The twelve hundred, and so on, of the first stage, which have been mentioned earlier.

Time: First, the four forbearances of the attributes of the four truths arise simultaneously. After that, the four knowledges of the attributes arise simultaneously. After that, the four subsequent knowledges arise simultaneously. After that, the four sets of "instants in which an action can be completed" (*Bya-rDzogs Kyi sKad-Chig-Ma*) arise all four kinds of entities (*Ngo-Bö*) with their sixteen isolated factors (*lDog-Pa*), because the realization of the four truths arises instantly and their (two sets of) four forbearances and (two sets of) four knowledges are developed successively (*Rim-Pas*). The abandonments of the Path of Seeing are renounced in a moment by the forbearances of the attributes (*Ch'os-bZod*), and the Path of Seeing arises in four parts successively . . .

Meditation: During the first stage, one meditates on the seven branches of enlightenment (*Byang-Ch'ub Kyi Yan-Lag bDun*) . . .

The Aryabodhipaksanirdeśa-sūtra says:

- (1) O *Maṇīśī*, whoever sees all phenomena as no-thing (*dNgos-Med*), because there are no concepts and recollection is the awareness (*Dran-Pa*) branch of enlightenment.
- (2) O *Maṇīśī*, whoever remains isolated from all phenomena without conceptualizations, as he never establishes either virtuous, unvirtuous or neutral (deeds), is the discriminative (*Ch'os rNam-Par 'Byed-Pa*) branch of enlightenment.
- (3) O *Maṇīśī*, whoever neither abandons nor accepts the three realms (*Khams-gSum*), as he has destroyed the perception ('*Du-Sheś*) of the body (*Lus*), is the

diligence (*bRtson-'Grus*) branch of enlightenment. (4) O *Maṇīśī*, whoever does not generate joy in the formations ('*Du-Byed*), as he has destroyed joy and distress, is the joy (*dGa'-Ba*) branch of enlightenment. (5) O *Maṇīśī*, whoever has total pliancy of mind in all phenomena, as there are no conceptualizations of non-conceptualized things, is the pliancy (*Shin-sByang*) branch of enlightenment. (6) O *Maṇīśī*, he whose mind is not conceptualizing, as he subsequently conceives the destruction of phenomena, is the contemplation (*Ting-Nge-'Dzin*) branch of enlightenment. (7) O *Maṇīśī*, whoever does not abide in, rely on, is not attached to and not bound to any phenomena and remains neutral about not subsequently seeing any phenomena perfectly and acquiring joy is the equanimity (*bTang-sNyoms*) branch of enlightenment.

THE PATH OF MEDITATION (*bsGom-Lam*)

^{131b/61f}It is (the meditation which) advances the experiences of the meanings of the (trainings and realizations) of the aspects which are concordant with the "definite differentiations" (*Nges-'Byed Ch'a-mThun*) (i.e., Application) and of the Path of Seeing, which has already been realized. . . .

There are nine levels in this path; small, mediocre, and great, each of which are sub-divided into small, mediocre, and great (levels) . . .

(Objects of) Abandonments: In the Path of Meditation there are great, mediocre, and small (objects of) abandonment and they are divided into nine sub-divisions; the great of great, mediocre of great, small of great, great of mediocre, mediocre of mediocre, small of mediocre, great of small, mediocre of small, and small of small (objects of) abandonment. These (objects of) abandonment are abandoned in the nine levels of stages, such as the "immaculate" (*Dri-Ma Med-Pa*, the second) stage. By the small of the small level of the Meditation Path, the immaculate stage, are abandoned the (objects of) abandonment of the great of the great level of the Meditation Path, and the (objects of) abandonment of the small of the

small level of the Meditation Path are renounced by the great of the great level of the Meditation Path, the tenth stage. Here, the gross defilements are called the great (objects of) abandonment and the subtle ones are called the small

The basis of birth: The basis of birth for the arising of the Path of Meditation is similar to the Path of Seeing. Most of the births are of the men and women of the three continents, but they are also possible among (the births of) other (realms). Any (life) is appropriate if it maintains the attainments which have already been generated in oneself

Basis of mind: Mostly (the attainments of the path of meditation) are based on the fourth absorption, but they could also be based on other absorptions.

Cause: The first three paths are its cause.

Result: It is the path of “no more training”

Essence(Ngo-Bo): From the point of view of abandoning the defilements of the individual nine stages there are four levels; the preliminary (*sByor-Ba*), the uninterrupted path (*Bar-Ch'ad-Med Lam*), the liberation path (*rNam-Ch'ol Lam*), and the special path (*Khyad-Par Gyi Lam*). The preliminary and uninterrupted paths are the antidotes of renouncing (the objects of abandonment) (*sPong-Ba'i gNyen-Po*). The path of liberation is the basis of the antidote (*rTen-Gyi gNyen-Po*). The special path is the far-abandoning antidote (*Thag-bSring Gi gNyen-Po*). For example, (1) by the end of the first stage (“the preliminary path”), which is the last moment (before) the arising of the wisdom of the second stage, “one suppresses (*mGo-g-Non*) the manifesting emotions,” which obscure the arising of the second stage, (2) by the “uninterrupted path,” which is the arising of the second stage, one “abandons the faults of discipline” (*Tshul-'Cha'l*) of its stage “from the root;” (3) the “path of liberation,” which starts from the second moment (of the arising of the second stage), is the “basis of the antidote;” and (4) the “special path,” the final one of the stage, is the “far-abandoning antidote.” Thus all the respective defilements of this stage are abandoned by starting from the first moment till the completion of the stage. All the defilements

of those (respective) stages are abandoned at the time the (particular) stage ends. These days some coarse scholars of the *Prajñāparamitā* say:

The (objects of) abandonment (i.e., the defilements) of the Path of Insight are to be abandoned by the path which is to be developed. The (objects of) abandonment of the Path of Meditation are to be abandoned by the path which is to be ended.

It is clear that they are very ignorant of the subject of antidotes.

Virtues: Explained before

Way of Abandoning the Nine Defilements of the Nine Stages: There are six innate (*Lhan-Chig sKyes-Pa*) defilements; desire, hatred, pride, ignorance (lack of knowledge), the view of the transitory collection (I and mine as real), and the view of holding to extremes. They can be subdivided in two different ways. (a) According to the point of view of realms, there are sixteen defilements. They are the six defilements of the desire realm, and for the absorptions (form realms) and formless realms there are five defilements each, excluding hatred. (b) According to the levels (*Sa*), there are forty-six defilements. Six are for the desire realm, five each for the four absorptions and four formless realms. If each of them are subdivided again into nine degrees of great, mediocre and small, then the six defilements of the desire realm become fifty-four and the five defilements, excluding hatred, of the four absorptions become four sets of forty-five (=180) abandonments. Likewise, in the formless realm there are four sets of forty-five (=180) defilements. So in total there are four hundred and fourteen (objects of) abandonment in the Path of Meditation.

The “(path of) preliminaries” subdues the abandonments, the “uninterrupted path” abandons them directly, the “liberation path” creates the basis of the antidote and the “special path” abandons the antidotes to a far distance In these stages they practice on the Eightfold Noble Path

('Phags- Lam brGyat). . . . In Aryabodhipaksanirdeśa-sūtra it is said:

(1) O Manjuśī, whoever sees all phenomena (*Ch'os*) without lack of equanimity and with non-duality has the right view (*lTa-Ba*). (2) O Manjuśī, whoever sees that all phenomena are never existing, very never existing and totally never existing through the way of not-seeing has right thought (*rTog-Pa*). (3) O Manjuśī, seeing all phenomena as inexpressible is right speech (*Ngag*). (4) O Manjuśī, seeing all phenomena as free from creator and creation is right action (*Las Kyi mTha*). (5) O Manjuśī, seeing all phenomena as free from increase or decrease is right livelihood ('Tsho-Ba). (6) O Manjuśī, accomplishing all phenomena in the manner free from efforts and creating is right effort (*rTsol-Ba*). (7) O Manjuśī, seeing all phenomena with no concepts and recollections is right recollection (*Dran-Pa*). (8) O Manjuśī, seeing all phenomena in natural contemplation without commotion and conceptualizations because they are free from conceptualizations is right contemplation (*Ting-Nge Dzin*). These stages are, according to their nature (*Ngo-Bo*), free from concepts and thinking . . . But (they are designated) separately because the realization of enlightenment, which is the transformation into (*gNas Gyur-Pa*) the ultimate nature (*Khams*), depends on the purification of the degrees of obscurations of the nature (*Khams*). At the time of ultimate purity (*Dag-Pa mThar-Thug*), one sees the self-clarity of the primordial sphere or the Luminous Buddha, (like) seeing the (fullness of the) moon because of the day (of the full moon).

THE PATH OF NO MORE TRAINING (*Mi-Slob-Lam*)

^{135a/2}(Objects of) Abandonment: It renounces the two-fold obscurations with their traces.
Special Realization: It realizes the complete *Dharmakāya* directly.

Virtues: They complete the endless qualities of both mundane and transmundane virtues.

Purpose of the Paths and Stages

^{135b/2}The unexcelled Buddhahood is impossible to attain until one completes the paths and stages . . .

Whether Buddhahood is attained in sixteen lives, etc., or very fast as in one life time, one has to proceed through the levels of the paths and stages as they are, because it is necessary that the defilements (of the different levels) be abandoned, and the virtues need to be achieved. Today there are people who say that even without relying on the paths and stages, Buddhahood will be attained, and that without completion of accumulations and purification of the obscurations, the paths and stages and enlightenment will be achieved. It is clear that they are possessed by someone else [*Māra*]. Because they contradict the scholars, adepts, great sūtras, *tantras* and the great scriptures. Therefore, one should endeavor in the training of the pure stages and paths.

THE PATH OF SERENITY AND INSIGHT

An Explanation of the Buddhist Jhānas

CHAPTER VII THE WAY OF WISDOM

The goal of the Buddhist path, complete and permanent liberation from suffering, is to be achieved by practicing the three stages of the path—moral discipline (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*pāna*). The mundane *jhānas*, comprising the four fine material *jhānas* and four *ārūpjas*, pertain to the stage of concentration which they fulfil to an eminent degree. However, taken by themselves, the *jhānas* suffer from two liabilities. Firstly, due to carelessness or complacency, they can be lost. And secondly, their attainment does not suffice to ensure complete deliverance from suffering. The reason the mundane *jhānas* cannot by themselves bring final liberation from suffering is because they are incapable of cutting off its source. The Buddha teaches that the fundamental cause of suffering, the driving power behind the cycle of rebirths, is the defilements (*kilesa*) with their three unwholesome roots—greed, hatred, and delusion. Concentration of the absorptive level, no matter how deeply it might be developed, only induces a suppression of the defilements, not their radical extirpation. It cannot dismantle the latent seeds of the defilements, and thus cannot abandon them at the root. Thence bare mundane *jhāna*, even when sustained, does not by itself terminate the cycle of rebirths. To the contrary it can even help perpetuate the round. For each fine material and immaterial *jhāna* attained, if held to with an attitude of clinging, brings about a rebirth in that particular plane of existence corresponding to its own *karmic* potency, which can then be followed by a rebirth in some lower realm.

What is required to achieve complete deliverance from the cycle of rebirths is the eradication of the defilements. Since the most basic defilement is delusion (*moha*), also called ignorance (*avijjā*), the key to liberation lies in the eradication of ignorance by developing its direct opposite, namely wisdom (*paññā*). In this chapter we will examine the nature of wisdom and the methods by which it is developed. Since wisdom presupposes a certain proficiency in concentration it is inevitable that *jhāna*

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comes to claim a place in its development. This place, however, is not fixed and invariable, but as we will see allows for differences depending on the individual meditator's disposition. Fundamental to the discussion in this chapter and the next is a distinction between two terms crucial to Theravāda philosophical exposition. These two terms are "mundane" (*lokiya*) and "supramundane" (*lokuttara*). The term "mundane" applies to all phenomena comprised in the world (*loka*) of the five aggregates of clinging (*paccaupādānakkhandha*)—material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. It covers subtle states of consciousness as well as material and emotional states, virtue as well as evil, meditative attainments as well as sensual engrossments. The term "supramundane", in contrast, applies exclusively to that which transcends the world of the clinging-aggregates. It covers nine terms, the nine *lokuttara dhammā*: *nibbāna*, the four noble paths (*maggā*) leading to *nibbāna*, and their corresponding four fruits (*phala*) which experience the bliss of *nibbāna*. It is hoped that the discussion to follow will make the meanings of these terms clear.

The Nature of Wisdom

The *Vividhimagga* presents an analytical exposition of wisdom dealt with under six headings: [1] the definition of wisdom, [2] the sense in which it is called wisdom, [3] its characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause, [4] its classification, [5] its method of development, and [6] its benefits.¹ A brief consideration of these principles should help bring the nature of wisdom to light.

[1] Wisdom, according to Buddaghosa, is defined as insight knowledge associated with wholesome states of consciousness.² [2] Wisdom (*paññā*) is so called in the sense that it is an act of understanding (*pajāna*), a mode of knowing (*jāna*) distinct from and superior to the modes of perceiving (*saijāna*) and cognizing (*vijāna*). What distinguishes wisdom from these other forms of cognition is its ability to comprehend the charac-

teristics of impermanence, suffering and selflessness and to bring about the manifestation of the supramundane path.

[3] Wisdom has the specific characteristic of penetrating the true nature of phenomena. It penetrates the particular and general features of things through direct, unmediated cognition. Its function is "to abolish the darkness of delusion which conceals the individual essences of states" and its manifestation is "non-delusion." Since the Buddha says that one whose mind is concentrated knows and sees things as they are, the proximate cause of wisdom is concentration.¹

[4] The wisdom instrumental in attaining liberation is divided into two principal types : insight-knowledge (*vijñanā-nīya*) and the knowledge pertaining to the supramundane paths (*maggā-nīya*). The first is the direct penetration of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena—impermanence (), suffering (*dukkhā*) and selflessness (*anatītā*). It takes as its objective sphere the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*)—material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.² Because insight-knowledge takes the world (*loka*) of conditioned formations (*saṅkhāra*) as its object it is regarded as a mundane (*lokiya*) form of wisdom. Insight-knowledge does not itself directly eradicate the defilements. It serves to prepare the way for the second type of wisdom, the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which emerges when insight has been brought to its climax. The wisdom of the path, occurring in the four distinct stages (to be discussed below), simultaneously realizes *nibbāna*, fathoms the four Noble Truths, and cuts off the defilements. This wisdom is called "supramundane" (*lokuttara*) because it rises up (*uttarati*) from the world (*loka*) of the five aggregates to realize the state transcendent to the world, *nibbāna*.

[5] The Buddhist yogin, striving for deliverance, begins the development of wisdom by first securely establishing its roots—purified moral discipline and concentration. He then learns and masters the basic material upon which wisdom is to work—the

1. "Dhammānānī sabhāvapatividhalakkhanā paññā. Dhammānānī sabhāvapatiçchādaka-mnōhāndhakāraviddhainasanāsa; asammo lapaaccupatthā;

2. In Pali: *Rūpakkhanda*, *vedanākkhanda*, *saññākkhanda*, *satiñākkhanda*,

vipññānakkhanda.

1. PP., pp. 479-89. Vism., pp. 369-75.

2. PP., p. 479. "Kusalacittāampayuttāni vipassanāñānāni paññā."

Vism., p. 369.

aggregates, elements, sense bases, dependent arising, the Four Noble Truths, etc. He commences the actual practice of wisdom by cultivating insight into the impermanence, suffering, and selflessness of the five aggregates. When this insight reaches its apex it issues in supramundane wisdom, the right view factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. The wisdom of the path turns from conditioned formations to the unconditioned *nibbāna*, destroying thereby the latent defilements at their root.

[6] The removal of the defilements, the experiencing of *nibbāna* and the achievement of the states of holiness culminating in arahatship—these, according to Buddhaghosa, are the benefits in developing wisdom.¹

The Two Vehicles

The Theravāda tradition recognizes two alternative approaches to the development of wisdom, between which yogins are free to choose according to their aptitude and propensity. These two approaches are the vehicle of serenity (*smṛthayāna*) and the vehicle of insight (*viññānayāna*). The meditators who follow them are called, respectively, the *smṛthayānikas*, “one who makes serenity his vehicle,” and the *viññānayānikas*, “one who makes insight his vehicle.” Since both vehicles, despite their names, are approaches to developing insight, to prevent misunderstanding the latter type of meditator is sometimes called a *suddhaviññāsanayānika*, “one who makes bare insight his vehicle,” or a *sutta-viññāsaka*, “a dry insight worker.” Though all three terms appear initially in the commentaries rather than in the suttas, the recognition of the two vehicles seems implicit in a number of canonical passages.

The *smṛthayānika* is a meditator who first attains access concentration or one of the eight mundane *jhanas*, then emerges and uses his attainment as a basis for cultivating insight until he arrives at the supramundane path. The experience of the path in any of its four stages occurs at a level of *jhānic* intensity and thus necessarily includes supramundane *jhāna* under the heading of right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. In contrast to the *smṛthayānika*, the

viññānayānika does not attain mundane *jhāna* prior to practicing insight-contemplation, or if he does, does not use it as an instrument for cultivating insight. Instead, without entering and emerging from *jhāna*, he proceeds directly to insight-contemplation on the mental and material phenomena that appear in the six spheres of sense experience—the five outer senses and thought. By means of this bare insight he reaches the noble path, which as in the former case again necessarily includes supramundane *jhāna*.

The kingpost of the *viññānayānika*'s approach is the practice of mindfulness (*sati*), the bare non-discursive observation of the changing phenomena of mind and body. The Buddha expounds the practice of mindfulness in terms of four contemplations—the contemplation of body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), states of mind (*citta*), and mind-objects (*dhamma*). These four contemplations, the four “foundations of mindfulness” (*saṅkhārathāna*), bring to the focus of the observational field the diverse kinds of mental and material phenomena with their universal marks of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. The *smṛthayānika*, too, at the time he emerges from *jhāna* and begins insight-contemplation, has to practice the four foundations of mindfulness, as these have been called by the Buddha “the only way that leads to the purification of beings, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the ending of pain and grief, to the achievement of the right path and the realization of *nibbāna*.²

The classical source for the distinction between the two vehicles of serenity and insight is the *Visuddhimaggā*, where it is explained that when a meditator begins the development of wisdom ...if, firstly, his vehicle is serenity, [he] should emerge from any fine material or immaterial *jhana* except the base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception, and he should discern, according to characteristic, function, etc., the *jhana* factors consisting of applied thought, etc. and the states associated with them.²

Other commentarial passages allow access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*) to suffice for the vehicle of serenity. The last *āruṇḍha* is

1. DN. 2: 290.
2. PP., pp. 679-80. Vism., p. 503.

1. See Vism., Chapter XXIII.

excluded because its factors are too subtle to be discerned by a beginning meditator. The meditator whose vehicle is pure insight, on the other hand, is advised to begin by discerning material and mental phenomena directly, without utilizing a *jhāna* for this purpose. This second type of meditator is sometimes referred to by another name, "dry insight worker", applied because his insight lacks moistening with the waters of *jhāna*.¹

Although, as we mentioned earlier, the three terms—*samathayānika*, *vipassanāyānika*, and *sukkhavipassaka*—are terms of commentarial coinage, the distinction of vehicles and practitioners seems to draw directly from the Pali Canon. The Buddha generally includes the four *jhānas* in complete expositions of his system of training, placing them before the development of insight and the attainment of the path. A number of suttas, however, give evidence for alternative approaches to the practice. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the Buddha states :

There is, monks, one person who gains internal serenity of mind but does not gain the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena;...one person who gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena but does not gain internal serenity of mind;...one person who gains neither;...and one person who gains both....²

He urges the first, established on his serenity of mind, to strive to gain the wisdom of insight into phenomena, and the second, established on his wisdom of insight into phenomena, to strive to gain serenity of mind. The commentary explains "serenity of mind" as mental concentration of absorption (*appanāditasamādhī*) and the "higher wisdom of insight into phenomena" as the insight-knowledge discerning formations (*sankhārapariggahavipassanāyānika*), i.e. insight into the five aggregates.³ The fact that individuals are capable of one attainment in the absence of the other provides a starting point for a differentiation of vehicles adapted to their differing capacities. In the end, however, all meditators have to enter upon the development of insight in order to reach the liberating path.

An even clearer enunciation of alternative vehicles to the goal is presented in a sutta spoken by the Venerable Ānanda. On one occasion Ānanda declared to a group of monks that there are some monks who develop insight preceded by serenity (*samathavipbhāgamaṇīvippassanā*) and some who develop serenity preceded by insight (*vipassanāvabhāgamaṇī samatham*). Both approaches, in his account, issue in the supramundane path :

Herein, friends, a monk develops insight preceded by serenity. As he develops insight preceded by serenity the path arises. He follows that path, develops it and cultivates it. As he follows, develops, and cultivates the path the fetters are abandoned, the latent tendencies are destroyed. Or again, friends, a monk develops serenity preceded by insight. As he develops serenity preceded by insight the path arises. He follows that path, develops and cultivates it. As he does so the fetters are abandoned, the latent tendencies are destroyed.¹

The commentarial exegesis of this passage (found in the *Majjhima Nikāya* commentary) explains the procedure for developing insight preceded by serenity thus :

Here, someone first produces access concentration or absorption concentration; this is serenity. He contemplates with insight that serenity and its concomitant phenomena as impermanent, etc.; this is insight. Thus first comes serenity, afterwards insight.²

The procedure for developing serenity preceded by insight is described as follows :

Here, someone contemplates with insight the five aggregates of clinging as impermanent, etc. without having produced the aforesaid kinds of serenity (access and absorption); this is insight. With the completion of insight there arises in him mental one-pointedness having as object the renunciation of the phenomena produced therein; this is serenity. Thus first comes insight, afterwards serenity.³

1. See *Vism. T.* 2:474.

2. AN. 2:92-93.

3. AN.A. 2:325.

1. AN. 2:157.

2. MN.A. 1:112.

3. *Ibid.*, 113.

In case it should be suspected that the second type of meditator still attains mundane *jhāna* after developing insight, the subcommentary to the passage points out: "the mental one-pointedness he gains is right concentration of the supramundane path (*maggasammāsamādhi*) and its object, called 'renunciation' (*vana-sagga*), is *nibbāna*."¹ The Ānguttara sub-commentary explicitly identifies the second meditator with the *viññāsanāyānika*: "He develops serenity preceded by insight": this is said with reference to the *viññāsanāyānika*.²

Thus the *samathayānika* attains in order first access concentration or mundane *jhāna* and then insight-knowledge, by means of which he reaches the supramundane path containing wisdom under the heading of right view (*sammāditthi*) and supramundane *jhāna* under the heading of right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). The *viññāsanāyānika*, in contrast, skips over mundane *jhāna* and goes directly into insight-contemplation. When he reaches the end of the progression of insight-knowledge he arrives at the supramundane path which, as in the previous case, brings together wisdom with supramundane *jhāna*. This *jhāna* counts as his accomplishment of serenity.

The Functions of *Jhāna*

For a meditator following the vehicle of serenity the attainment of *jhāna* fulfills two functions: first, it produces a basis of mental purity and inner collectedness needed for undertaking the work of insight-contemplation; and second, it serves as an object to be examined with insight in order to discern the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. *Jhāna* accomplishes the first function by providing a powerful instrument for overcoming the five hindrances. As we saw, the Buddha declares the five hindrances to be corruptions of the mind and weakeners of wisdom which prevent a man from seeing things as they are.³ For wisdom to arise the mind must first be concentrated well, and to be concentrated well it must be freed from the hindrances. This task is accomplished by the attainment of

jhāna: access concentration causes the hindrances to subside, the first and following *jhānas* drive them further and further away. Cleared of the hindrances the mind becomes "pliant and supple, having radiant lucidity and firmness, and will concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints."¹

In their capacity for producing concentration the *jhānas* are called the basis (*pāda*) for insight, and that particular *jhāna* a yogin enters and emerges from before commencing his practice of insight is designated his *pādakajjhāna*, the basic or foundational *jhāna*. Insight cannot be practiced while absorbed in *jhāna*, since insight-meditation requires investigation and observation, which are impossible when the mind is immersed in one-pointed absorption. But after emerging from the *jhāna* the mind is cleared of the hindrances, and the stillness and clarity that then result conduct to precise, penetrating insight.

The *jhānas* also enter into the *samathayānika*'s practice in a second capacity; that is, as objects for scrutinization by insight. The practice of insight consists essentially in the examination of mental and physical phenomena to discover their marks of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. The *jhānas* a yogin has attained and emerged from provide him with a readily available and strikingly clear object in which to seek out the three characteristics. After emerging from a *jhāna* the meditator will proceed to examine the *jhānic* consciousness, analyzing it into its components, defining them in their precise particularity, and discerning the way they exemplify the three universal marks. This process is called *sammasaṇāna*, "comprehension-knowledge," and the *jhāna* subjected to such a treatment is termed the *sammāsitajjhāna*, "the comprehended *jhāna*."² Though the basic *jhāna* and the comprehended *jhāna* will often be the same, the two do not necessarily coincide. A yogin cannot practice comprehension on a *jhāna* higher than he is capable of attaining, but a yogin who uses a higher *jhāna* as his *pādakajjhāna* can still practice insight-comprehension on a lower *jhāna* he has previously attained and mastered. This admitted difference in nature between the *pādaka* and *sammāsitajjhānas* leads to discrepant theories about the supramundane concentration of the noble path, as we will see below.³

1. M.N.T. 1:204.

2. A.N.T. 2:34.

3. See Chapter III pp. 28-29.

1. Ibid. p. 41.

2. P.P., pp. 706-709. Vism., pp. 521-22.

3. See below pp. 182-83.