

Chapter 8

The Hinayana Paths

TOPIC II. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PATH

In this chapter we move on to the second main topic of the eight topics of the text, which deals with the knowledge that the bodhisattvas have of the path. We will study the path through eleven subtopics.

A. THE FOUNDATION OF THE PATH

Understanding of the path is understanding the essence of the path that the bodhisattva travels and the way in which this path can be accomplished is the foundation of the path itself. The basis or foundation from which the path arises, is the first topic.

1. REMOVING PRIDE

The Buddha taught the dharma to many different kinds of beings. When he taught the Prajnaparamita, there were many, many gods who came to hear about the Prajnaparamita and to see the Buddha. These gods had most magnificent and resplendent bodies, radiant with light, very beautiful and very subtle. When they came to hear the teachings with their radiant and beautiful bodies, they were completely outshone by the splendor of the Buddha. The magnificence of the Buddha's physical radiance put the radiance of the deities to shame reducing the pride of those gods. The reason that the Buddha had such a magnificent body was that before he was the Buddha, he had studied the teachings and put them into practice with an absence of pride. As a result of that, he was by far the most resplendent being causing the gods to respect him.

When we practice there are some things that we must eliminate: desire or attachment, aggression, stupidity, jealousy, and pride. Because these are the root of negative actions, they are also the root of suffering. In particular, when we study and practice the dharma it is most important to eliminate pride. As long as we have pride, it is very hard for the good qualities to emerge. Our pride means we are concerned with our external appearance, possessions and also our inner mind. As long as pride is present, the real qualities cannot grow. In the sutras there is an example of pride, having pride is like an overturned pot. If a pot is the right way up, whatever is poured into it is retained, but if a pot is turned upside down then whatever is poured into it just runs off. So when we study, if we have pride then we never really receive the essence of the teachings.

2. CERTAINTY OF THE OBJECT (PRACTICE)

After removing pride, the root for proper practice, we must develop certainty about the object. If we are a casual practitioner, then sometimes we don't follow the path and sometimes we intend to practice and rejoice in the practice and sometimes we just let it drop for awhile. If we are this kind of casual practitioner, then we'll never really carry our practice through to the end. Of course, anything that we do that is good will have favorable results. But with a casual attitude, we can never achieve full fruition. Therefore we need complete conviction about the goodness of what we are doing.

3. ENCOMPASSING (ALL PRACTICE)

Besides having a certain commitment to what one is doing, we need a complete commitment by really applying oneself to the totality of the practice. Rather than being selective we practice all of the paramitas, not just a few of the paramitas.

4-5. NATURE AND THE FUNCTION

The fourth point is to work upon developing the realization of the true nature of phenomena. The true nature is a vital topic in our meditation. The removal of pride, the definite commitment to one's

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practice, the totality of the commitment and the study of the true nature need to be put into action. The making of these first four points reality in terms of our practice is the fifth point. These five topics are the foundation for the path. The remaining ten subtopics concern the path itself (Tib. *lam dngos*). In this section we will study the main ways shown by the Buddha. We will see the path of the shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas, and great path of the bodhisattvas, we'll look at the path of insight, the path of cultivation and so on.

B. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SHRAVAKA PATH

The only way to Buddhahood is the mahayana path. There are some people who are capable of practicing that way and the mahayana and some people who are not yet capable. Rather than leaving out those who can't practice the bodhisattva path, the Buddha taught the hinayana path. They will be able to practice, and it will bring about very good results. For their sake, the Buddha taught the hinayana for those who will be able to ultimately achieve enlightenment.

In the hinayana path, the students learn about the four Noble Truths of the Buddha and meditate upon the meaning of these four truths. The goal of the practice is to eventually gain an actual direct realization of the meaning of these four truths. There is a very good example to help us understand the four Noble Truths. When we are sick, we first need to understand just what the illness is or which part of the body that is sick and we need to make a good diagnosis to understand the illness. To effectively cure the illness, we need secondly understand the cause of the illness. Then third we need to think of how good it is to be healthy, how we really need to recover from that sickness. We need to know the value of health. Then fourth we need to know what medicine to take to bring back the state of health. If we understand these four steps in medicine, it is easy to understand the four truths in relation to a spiritual malady.

When we are living in samsara, we need to know the very nature of our existence. We need to know that it is impermanent and there is always suffering in samsara. Suffering is a very inherent part of samsara. As we study, this becomes very clear and we become aware of the truth of that nature of suffering, which belongs to our present condition. The first Noble Truth is it is the knowledge of the

truth of suffering. This corresponds to diagnosing what the illness is. But to know about suffering is not enough, we need to get rid of it. We cannot just immediately annihilate suffering, but must remove the causes of suffering and the causes of future suffering. Therefore we need to know what those causes are which is karma. We need to know that karma stems from the disturbing emotions (Skt. *kleshas*), so karma and these defilements are the very cause of suffering. The knowledge that karma and the defilements must be eliminated is the second Noble Truth of the origination of suffering. This corresponds to knowing the cause of the illness in the previous example. Next we need to know how elimination suffering that leads to lasting happiness. Knowledge of the value of cessation is the third Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering. This corresponds to wanting to become well in the previous example. In order to get rid of the cause of suffering, one needs to practice the path of dharma which is the fourth Noble Truth, the truth of the path. This then corresponds to taking medicine in the previous example.

The four Noble Truths were taught by the Buddha to the followers of the hinayana path. The followers learned about the four truths, and then contemplated their meaning, and they meditated on these four truths which lead them to the results of the path of the shravakas. But the four Noble Truths were also the principal topic for those following the mahayana as well, because this path leads to liberation and the knowledge of all phenomena (Buddhahood). Therefore, mastering the four Noble Truths is suitable for those of the hinayana and the mahayana. But even though the object is the same, there's a difference in their approach. In the hinayana, the four Noble Truths are very real being the truth of reality, so suffering is understood to be very real and substantial. Likewise, the cause of suffering, karma, and the defilements are seen as truly existing things. Cessation is seen as something that really exists. The path is seen as a truly existing phenomenon, too.

In contrast, the bodhisattvas approach the four Noble Truths from emptiness and are in themselves not solid, independently existing things. Of course, they know that in the relative world suffering is real, but they also realize that when we look at the very essence, the very nature of what is taking place, there is nothing but emptiness. It is the same when they study the causes of suffering:

they understand how these causes have their relative reality, but they also understand how these causes are in themselves no more than emptiness. So their approach to the four Noble Truths is different.

When we compare the two main approaches of the lesser and the greater vehicle, we can neither say that they are completely the same nor that they are completely different. It is not as though everything that concerns those two paths is different. Many factors about those two approaches are the same. In both of these paths we are trying to find out the real nature of phenomena. Whoever applies the teachings of either path properly can achieve the final result of liberation which is their great similarity. On the other hand, they are not exactly the same because in the lesser vehicle, the teachings are quite limited. They are very skillful teachings given by the Buddha for people of a certain capacity. These teachings are easier to practice and their result is easier to achieve. In the mahayana, as we have already discussed, the four Noble Truths are seen in the context of profound emptiness and all aspects of the bodhisattva path are included. By practicing this all-embracing path, we can achieve the ultimate goal of Buddhahood. So we could say that from a preliminary point of view, the paths of the lower and greater vehicle have a different nature, whereas from the ultimate point of view, their essence is the same. Therefore the bodhisattva needs to know the shravakas path as well.

C. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRATYEKABUDDHA PATH

In the last section we examined the shravaka path. Now we are concerned with the knowledge concerning a higher path of the pratyekabuddhas who are called in the text “solitary buddhas,” because they realize the truth by themselves. In former lives, they studied with a buddha or other teachers and learned how to practice the dharma. Then later, in order to bring this to fruition, they are born in a world where the dharma teachings are not known. Because of the power of their former karma, they have an inquisitive mind that wants to know what life is about, where they come from, and what will happen to them in the future. They find themselves propelled by this power of karma to go to places such as funeral grounds, and there they see the bones and rotting flesh and they start

to think, “What does all this mean?” They think those bones are a token of death and that death with its suffering comes about because of birth. When they think about where birth comes from, they realize that birth itself comes about because of karma. As they contemplate this they realize karma comes from the defilements. Then they look even further into this understanding and realize those defilements come from, the belief in the self or ego. In the light of what they understand, they decide they must practice and so they go and do their practice. They go to meditate and they feel very comfortable by themselves and don’t feel the need to resort to a teacher or companions. They understand things all by themselves and go and meditate all by themselves. They’re lovers of solitude and because of this, they are compared to a rhinoceros because it has this very big single horn on its nose. This singularity, this solitude is a key factor concerning them.

Pratyekabuddhas don’t particularly want to teach the dharma or what they’ve understood to others. But if someone happens to come along and realizes the pratyekabuddha’s qualities and wants to learn how to do that for himself, then the pratyekabuddha will help him. But they don’t teach in terms of words and ideas. Pratyekabuddhas don’t formally accept students (Tib. *rjes su ‘dzin pa*) give spoken teachings, rather would lead the other person by what they actually do. They use their very subtle bodies that they gain from their practice to demonstrate miracles. By seeing these extraordinary things, the other person will gain some understanding.

The pratyekabuddha practitioner in their renunciation manage to realize the nonexistence or emptiness of external phenomena and of the self. On the path of junction, there were four things which were to be eliminated: the idea of the precept, the perceiver, objective reality, and the belief in the reality of mental formulations. Of these, the pratyekabuddhas manage to rid themselves from the first idea and they really understand the true nonexistence of external objects. So they achieve this and they also understand of course the nonexistence of personal self. The pratyekabuddhas understand the nonexistence of the external objects, but they still don’t realize that the mind which is the perceiver has no true existence. They still feel the true existence of the experiencing mind. This path of the pratyekabuddhas is a very worthy object of

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knowledge for the bodhisattvas because it is a genuine path leading to liberation from samsara. For this reason, the bodhisattva needs knowledge of the shravaka path, the pratyekabuddha path and the bodhisattva path: They are all genuine paths.

Summary

In our study of the knowledge of the path, we first examined the foundation for the path, which enables us to enter upon the path. Second, we examined the shravaka's path and we saw what constitutes their approach and their practice, and also what sort of results will emerge from that. Third, we examined the more extraordinary path of the pratyekabuddhas. We saw again what they practice and the results which spring from their practice. Not only that but we also saw how the bodhisattvas are not ignorant of this path. They understand the path of the shravakas. Not only do they understand that path, they understand how that path is empty of any true nature in itself. They understand it is not something that is solidly existing. Fourth the bodhisattvas understand the path of the pratyekabuddhas. They know it, they understand it, and also they understand how it is not truly existent.

Chapter 9

The Bodhisattva Path of Insight

We have studied the path of the shravaka, the path of the pratyekabuddha, and now come to the bodhisattva path. This is divided into knowledge gained on the third path of insight and knowledge gained on the fourth path of meditation.

D. THE PATH OF INSIGHT OF THE MAHAYANA

The first aspect deals with the knowledge of wisdom of the path of insight. Presently, we and most other beings have lost our clarity of perception of the true nature of phenomena. With our ignorance, we have projected our present reality, which we call samsara. The problem with this is that as long as we are living in ignorance produced by this delusion, there will always be suffering, hardship, fear and so on for us. Obviously, we need to be able to remove this ignorance from our being. To eliminate ignorance we need, first of all, to perceive clearly the true nature of phenomena. Once we have this clear vision of it, we can meditate on it again and again until the reality of the dharmata manifests. On the path of insight this first vision of the true nature occurs.

The insight into the true nature begins on the path of insight and becomes clearer while proceeding on the path of junction. To obtain a clearer idea of what is taking place, we can return to the example of the rope, which is mistaken for the snake. When we see a rope and mistake it for a snake, then we have a deluded perception. Of course, as far as the rope itself is concerned, it has nothing at all to do with a perception of a snake. It's just a rope. But because of our deluded perception we develop fear and anguish and suffering. Now to remove that anguish and panic, we could take snake venom antidote or make a snake trap. All these remedies won't work except to realize that the rope is just a rope and seeing it as a snake was a

delusion. So the path of insight where one gets the true vision of what is really taking place. One sees the true nature. On the previous path of junction we gradually come closer and closer to this realization of what is really there by thinking and reflecting on the nature of reality and again and again and trying to meditate on it. On the path of insight, this meditation results in actually seeing reality as it is.

When we realize that the rope is just a rope, then that is enough to eliminate the illusion of a snake. We don't have to do anything further because this removes the delusion. In that respect, it's the same when we have reached the path of insight. The insight into the true nature of phenomena is enough to remove the various mental defilements and we particularly need to work on these disturbing emotions because the vision of the truth automatically dispels them, just as the true perception of the rope dispels the idea of the snake. There is a difference, however, between the example of a rope and insight into things as they are. The rope is very temporary and the delusion of samsara goes back to beginningless time. Because samsara is such an ingrained habit, even though one has seen the true nature, flashes and flickers of this deluded samsara will come back again and again. So we need to cultivate the true insight again and again until the realization is completely perfect. One does this on the next path, the path of meditation or cultivation.

We saw that the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas had the four noble truths as their main object of study and contemplation. Here on the bodhisattva path, the insight is into the four Noble Truths. The four Noble Truths deal with two main areas: the deluded state of samsara and freedom from the delusion. There is the cause and effect relationship between samsara with its delusion and liberation from this delusion of samsara. In the first Noble Truth we study the way that the deluded mind produces all of the suffering and the manifestation of the samsaric world as an effect. The second Noble Truth looks at the very root or cause of that suffering. The third Noble Truth studies the effect of liberation from delusion, that is the state of cessation of perfect Buddhahood. In the fourth Noble Truth we understand the causes which will liberate us from delusion. So we can see a cause and effect between the effect of deluded samsara and the cause of deluded samsara. There is the effect of liberation,

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and there is the cause of liberation. This cause and effect is the principal topic of the path of insight. In more detail:

First of all, samsara is suffering. Sometimes we are suffering and having difficulties, then sometimes we feel happiness and joy, and at other times there is a neutral aspect to samsara when we are neither suffering nor particularly joyful. So at first it would be rather exaggerated to consider the whole of samsara to be suffering. But when we look from an absolute point of view, which is much more subtle and more profound, we realize how the whole of samsara is riddled with suffering and is full of suffering. We see that even if there is some happiness, it is always very temporary. Maybe it will last for ten or twenty years, but the person who experiences that happiness must inevitably be subject to the conditions of aging, sickness, and death. For that reason alone we can see that living in samsara is not the very best happiness. It is not lasting, but so fragile and so superficial. The Buddha has taught that all things and people must end one day or another. All composite objects must end in disintegration at the end.¹ Everything that is gathered together must be dispersed. Everything that is born must die. So when we know that, we can understand how it really is true that samsara is suffering. The understanding of the truth of suffering means that we appreciate how the whole of samsara is intimately, inseparably bound up with suffering.

The second Noble Truth deals with the origination of that suffering by understanding that suffering is a product which comes as a result of karma, of one's actions. We see that karma (literally "action") is in itself produced by our mental defilements. They induce us to act, and the actions produce samsara. So the defilements and karma are the two main topics of the second Noble Truth or the truth of origination. Under the sway of our mental defilements, we sometimes act virtuously, sometimes we act unvirtuously, and sometimes we act neutrally. All of these actions create other causes for a later interwoven manifestation of samsara. On the relative level the bodhisattva understands the first two truths: what suffering is, and its causes. But more than this the bodhisattva understands these two truths in their ultimate sense too. The bodhisattva understands how suffering has no true independent nature of its own. He or she understands also that the causes of suffering have no true

independent reality of their own. The bodhisattva goes far beyond the appearances of things to the ultimate truth, and so the bodhisattva develops jnana or the deepest wisdom in respect to those two truths.

The second set of cause and effect concerns the cessation of suffering and what brings it about. If we really think about what goes on in samsara, we see many different kinds of suffering. Some people have different kinds of physical suffering, some people have no work that causes anguish, and so on. What makes it even more complex is that it is not just one person's problem because we live in the great ocean of suffering of samsara. So we are part of a whole web of humanity and other beings suffering. The way to get out of this is not to work directly each individual suffering, but to gain definite liberation from the whole system of samsara. So we need to eliminate the very causes of the suffering which is karma. We need to eliminate any cause of karma and the cause of karma is the defilements. When we want to stop suffering, we need to eliminate the defilements. When we manage to completely eliminate these defilements, we gain a real cessation of suffering. The way we can actually eliminate the defilements is through the various skillful means of the path. How to go about blocking off all the suffering within us is dealt with in the fourth truth of the path. The cause and result of cessation then is like with the first two, the bodhisattva not only sees how the bodhisattva takes place in a relative way, but also has this profound understanding that cessation is itself empty and that the path itself is empty. This is a very deep insight and takes place on the path of insight. The bodhisattva gains insight in a way that has been described as the four Noble Truths, suffering, its cause, cessation, and its cause. Therefore the path of insight is called "the path of seeing the four truths" (Tib. *bden pa bzhi mthong bati mthong lam*).

When we reach the path of insight, we achieve the first bodhisattva level (Skt. *bhumi*) called, "overwhelming joy." The reason that it is called overwhelming joy is because when we realize the truth of emptiness, there is such joy of realizing that at last we have really achieved what we have been hoping for so long to benefit ourselves and others. For so long we have been working towards achieving some definitive realization hoping and hoping for real insight into the true nature of phenomena. Suddenly it is there, in the

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very palm of our hand. It is something very real that we won't lose. It has been so long awaited that one is overwhelmed with joy. It brings great joy for oneself because before when we had not reached this level of realization, one wished very, very much to help other beings, but one did not have very much power or ability to help others. When one reaches this level of insight, then suddenly one has the power to help others. One has the ability, the vastness, the wisdom to really do a vast wave of activity to liberate other beings. Because one can at last do what one has wished to do for so long to help them, one is again filled with spontaneous joy. So that is why it is called the stage of overwhelming joy.

Chapter 10

The Bodhisattva Path of Meditation or Cultivation

We are in the second section of the text that is knowledge of the path. So far we have studied the first four subdivisions, the first of which was showing the foundation of the path, which was for instance concerned with giving up pride. Then we saw something about the shravaka's path, the pratyekabuddha's path, and the path of bodhisattva.

There is a good reason for calling this fourth path the path of cultivation rather than the path of meditation. The Tibetan word that is translated as "cultivation" is *gom* which also means meditation. This word has the sense of getting used to something encountered on the path of insight, namely, dharmata. But experiencing dharmata is not enough because there's still something that needs to be worked on to make that experience more and more familiar so that it becomes more and more perfect. So this is why this path is called the path of cultivation because one cultivates the realization that starts with insight, and one meditates on it more and more until realization is complete. Returning to the example of the snake and rope, all the fear and anxiety of thinking it is a snake are removed, by simply knowing it is a rope. Mistaking a rope for a snake is a temporary misconception with little conditioning involved. However, the delusion that we have that covers our perception of dharmata is much more difficult to remove because we have held it since beginningless time. Even when we see the true nature on the path of insight, through the tremendous power of habit, the delusion will return. This is why in the path of cultivation one needs to cultivate the pure experience until it is all-embracing.

There are two main aspects to the path of cultivation: the untainted and tainted aspect. The untainted aspect concerns actual meditation when one is absorbed in the realization of the dharmata. This is the very pure complete absorption into the true nature. On the path of insight, we were only concerned with this untainted dimension of seeing absolute reality. But on the path of cultivation, we also have a tainted

dimension which concerns post-meditation when one is not completely absorbed in that experience. In post-meditation, we work on the development of the power of the roots of our own virtue, on the benefiting of other beings, on the removal of illusory stains. Because we are working on these on the relative level, it is called the tainted dimension. We will now look at various aspects of the path of cultivation, the first being the functions, what can be achieved by the path of cultivation.

E. FUNCTIONS OF THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

The first point is complete pacification. By meditating on the path of cultivation one will, first of all, develop efforts in pacifying one's own defilements, ego-clinging, obscuration of knowledge and whatever else needs to be abandoned.

The second point is respect for all beings. One will have lost one's arrogance and not engage in (enticing) everybody, but naturally feel respect towards others.

The third point is victory in the battle over the defilements. By the power of pacifying one's mind and being respectful to everyone, one will be able to suppress and eventually completely eliminating one's defilements.

The fourth point is not being subdued by negative influences. Besides defeating the maras and kleshas within one's mind and stream of existence, one also gains victory over the outer manifestations of the maras which are the various negative forces and even demons seem to appear. There is an intimate relation between the inner maras, and the appearance of seemingly outer, negative influences. Once one has crushed the power of the maras within, then automatically the negative influences on the outside are crushed and are no longer effective. So the next part of this section on the path of cultivation says that one overcomes harmful influences.

All of these qualities arise gradually by the Bodhisattva's practice of the path of cultivation. Therefore the subsection we are in is called the "functions" or "actions" related to the path of cultivation (Tib. *byed pa sgom lam*).

F. THE ASPIRATION OF THE

MAHAYANA PATH OF CULTIVATION

The bodhisattvas who are traversing the stage of cultivation have very great diligence and aspiration which is the very root of their actual progress. They are inspired first by the most profound realization of the nature of phenomena, they hope to achieve for themselves the very highest goal possible for a being. Second, they are inspired to achieve the very greatest benefit for others. Third, they have very great determination to achieve the simultaneous benefit of self and others. It's that determination that spurs them on.

On the path of cultivation, one is continually developing one's learning on the previous path of insight. One is working on removing all of the blockages and flickers of previous conditioning which are left. One is also trying to develop all the good qualities which enhance one's insight. The key to all this is really to have diligence and it is the degree of one's diligence which will determine the emergence of the result. So just to rest in that level of realization in itself is not enough. In general, there are two types of diligence. The first is the diligence of continuous application where one makes efforts for say a month or a year and then continues and continues with the development of one's spiritual realization. The second is called the diligence of inspiration meaning not being half-hearted in what one is doing. Rather one has full of inspiration for what one is doing and one will just work at realization with love as much as one can. There is a very good example for this latter sort of diligence in the life of Jetsun Milarepa. We can see from his biographyⁱⁱ that his appreciation and respect for what can emerge through practice made him work so hard on his own development. An example of the first continuous diligence is Asanga who for three years meditated on Maitreya. He didn't get much tangible results, so he meditated for another three years, and then another three years, and another three years. In the end, from the time he started his retreat until the time he actually had the vision of Maitreya, he had meditated incessantly for twelve years. These two sorts of diligence then help us swiftly traverse the stages of cultivation.

To summarize our diligence is focused on benefiting ourselves, upon benefiting others, and benefiting simultaneously ourselves and others. So this concern with our own achievement and helping others is the whole reason for applying diligence. Whether we will actually

achieve great or little benefit for ourselves and others is intimately dependent upon the kind of spiritual inspiration that we have to help others. It's for this reason that these three topics on aspiration are a fundamental aspect of the path of cultivation.

We begin dharma practice with only a small aspiration to help others. That can be developed until one has a medium degree of aspiration. In the text, it mentions three levels of aspiration of small, larger, and great. When one applies these to the three areas of one's work, it makes nine kinds of aspiration. For one's own benefit, one can either work on enlightenment with a lesser aspiration, a middling aspiration, or very great aspiration. Working on the simultaneous benefit of oneself and others is concerned can be done with a lesser aspiration, a middling aspiration, or a greater aspiration. Working specifically for the benefit of others, one can go about it with a lesser, middling, or greater aspiration. This makes nine possibilities. These are very important in very practical terms in bringing about the different realizations and getting rid of the obstacles and karmic traces which are still left. This once again stresses the importance of aspiration in the actual work that one does in this path of cultivation.

G. THREE KINDS OF PRAISE ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

As already discussed on the path of cultivation there is a tainted aspect and an untainted aspect to the stage of cultivation of the path. The tainted aspect covers five points: function aspiration, praise, dedication, and rejoicing. As we have seen, aspiration is an important factor for progress through the stage of cultivation because with it we will be very diligent and apply ourself to the development of this vision of the true nature that we have had. It is through this diligence that we will actually make progress and achieve the results. With this aspiration we have such an appreciative mind to praise the three jewels.

The praise bodhisattvas make because of their great aspiration, is a key factor in their development. These are not just blind eulogies addressed to just anything. They are very meaningful prayers, expressions of the joy the bodhisattva on the path of cultivation. The object of the prayers of these bodhisattvas is to the most perfect Buddha, the most perfect state of Buddhahood, and to other great bodhisattvas. They engage in praise to be able to generate more spiritual energy to help

others. What they praise and the way in which they make their aspiration is most skillful and most appropriate because this really develops a great benefit to themselves and to others. Ordinary people when they praise something or are praised tend to develop more pride and this gives rise to more problems. However, these bodhisattvas are so pure that the giving and receiving praise does nothing but enhance their wisdom and their understanding. It's very wonderful. Just as we had three different levels of aspiration—lesser, middling, and greater—we have three degrees of praise: praising (Tib. *bstod pa*), more respectful praise (Tib. *bkur ba*), and very profound praise (Tib. *bsngags pa*).

H. DEDICATION ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

On the tainted path of cultivation, there are five points: functions, aspirations, praise, dedication, and rejoicing. The three key points are aspiration, dedication, and rejoicing. As we have seen, aspiration is the inspiration from which everything takes place. Through aspiration, we make progress and generate a great deal of energy. Dedication channels the energy we developed through aspiration into the bodhisattva paths. We can compare this to gold. Through aspiration we are on the path of cultivation, and this is like the gold being worked into the beautiful ornament one wishes to have.

When we study this aspect of dedication on the path of cultivation in more detail, we will find that it has twelve particular attributes. On the path of cultivation, the activity of dedicating, the power of one's practice, is very special and quite singular. It is called the supreme action. Normally if we do something good then we create something virtuous. If we just leave it at that, then the power of that virtue can rapidly be corrupted because immediately afterwards we spoil it with pride and all of the normal negative feelings. Or we might simply do something some minor benefit and thereby the positive energy exhausts itself making the virtue only temporary. Generally speaking, we need to dedicate or channel that virtue immediately towards most perfect enlightenment. In that way, not a drop of it is lost and it is turned into a cause for the very best of all things. So this dedication makes the maximum use of everything that we do. This dedication to Buddhahood for the sake of others is the supreme activity because it is endowed with a special need and a special result.

The second attribute is that the dedication of the roots of virtue of the bodhisattvas on the path of cultivation is made rich because it is done without any objectifying of what takes place. It transcends the three circles that which is to be dedicated (the roots of virtue), the one who dedicates (the bodhisattvas), and the one to whom they dedicate (all sentient beings). Those three things are not mistaken for real entities because the bodhisattvas know fully well that these things are empty of a nature of their own.

The third attribute of this dedication is that it is completely unerring. When one gathers some power through practice, one could channel that power into something harmful for other beings by use that power to increase the defilements which would be harmful to others. The dedication made by the bodhisattvas on the path of cultivation is unerring, because what they achieve is always dedicated to the good of all beings. They are dedicated so that dharma practice may be achieved in the most perfect way, so there is never anything but the very best wish of dedication.

The fourth attribute, is that the dedication is isolated. This means it has nothing to do with selfishness. The dedication is only for the good of all other sentient beings without the slightest trace of wishing that the products of one's practice in some way benefits oneself. It transcends any trace of selfishness.

The attribute point is that their dedication follows the example of the Buddha. In the past the buddhas and bodhisattvas have created roots of virtue and have dedicated these to the good of all beings. In the present, buddhas and bodhisattvas are doing this and in the future they will do this, too. These bodhisattvas who are on this path of cultivation dedicate in just the same way as all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future.

The attribute point is that a Bodhisattva's dedication is accompanied by skillful means. Their dedication of virtue is not an empty wish. They dedicate the actual power they have acquired through their practice of the six paramitas, so their generosity, skillful conduct, forbearance, and so on are what is actually dedicated. So the dedication is associated with their skillful means.

The seventh attribute is that the dedication has no characteristics. This means the dedication is made in the light of understanding emptiness. If the person who is dedicating clings to the idea that there is

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something to be dedicated, someone who is dedicating and someone the dedication is for, the dedication is impure. Instead bodhisattvas on the path of cultivation make their dedication in the true knowledge of emptiness, so they don't fall into the trap of intellectual solidification.

The eighth attribute is that the dedication is pleasing to the buddhas. This is a sign of its quality and great purity. Therefore it is pleasing to all of the buddhas and generates great joy and rejoicing in those who have achieved the full enlightenment.

The ninth attribute is that the dedication is not an instrument of the three realms. One could channel the power of one's practice to obtain some sort of samsaric reward, in which case it would fall somewhere within the *desire realm*, the *form realm*, or the *formless realm*. This dedication, however, channels the power of practice towards liberation and enlightenment.

The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth attributes are called the lesser, the middling, and the great dedication. The tenth point is that the first three stages in the path of cultivation, which are the second, third, and fourth bodhisattva levels is a dedication of a lesser power. The eleventh point is that because of the higher realization and purity of the bodhisattva on the fifth, sixth, and seventh bodhisattva levels, the dedication has a middling power. Then on the eighth, ninth, and tenth bodhisattva levels which are also called the very pure bodhisattva levels, there is the most superior form of dedication. That is the twelfth point.

With these twelve attributes we can understand the particularity of dedication of bodhisattvas on this path of cultivation.

I. REJOICING ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

The next characteristic of the path of cultivation concerns this rejoicing in our virtue and attuning to other's virtue. We have seen that the fact of dedicating our virtue changes it into the bodhisattva path. Rejoicing increases that power and makes it something very vast and encompassing.

First of all, the attunement is associated with skillful means. When bodhisattvas create spiritual development, not only do they dedicate their own spiritual realization and power and rejoice in it, but they attune to everything accomplished by other great bodhisattvas and buddhas. Because of the attunement the power automatically increases.

The rejoicing in virtue or attunement takes place beyond any objectification, i. e. it is beyond the “three circles” of there is someone doing it, something that is done, and someone is receiving the act. This is not objectively solidified so their rejoicing is very pure.

The attunement of our virtue is usually the remedy for jealousy. We should understand what a negative and destructive poison jealousy is. Jealousy has in it all the other poisons and promotes them. Jealousy is associated with desire for great personal qualities and is intimately linked to aversion to the qualities in others. It is also intimately connected to pride because we feel we deserve what others have. So we can see that jealousy contains all the other disturbing emotions and reinforces them. Once we fall victim to jealousy, it is very destructive because it causes us to do harm to others and causes harm to our own development. It causes all the goodness that we have accumulated to become dispersed.

On the other hand, if we do this attunement we are overcoming any tendency we will have for jealousy. Because jealousy is so innately related to the other disturbing emotions or kleshas, we are eliminating these five kleshas from our existence. Just by doing that, we are doing something very important and useful in our task to help others. That is why attunement is so vital for us.

We have just discussed the three aspects of the tainted dimension of the path of cultivation: aspiration and dedication and attunement.

Generally speaking, on the path of cultivation in the postmeditation stage, the bodhisattva is practicing the six paramitas and through this, we are accumulating a great deal of virtue and wisdom. These two accumulations are done primarily through these three practices of aspiration, dedication, and attunement. Everything they do in the postmeditation stage becomes the cause for a very vast and powerful practice that is beneficial for self and others.

J. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

We now come to the points covered by the untainted aspect of the path of cultivation. The first aspect of the untainted aspect is the achievement of the path of cultivation.

In general, on the path of cultivation we are cultivating the insight that one has gained on the preceding path and one is trying to perfect that insight. Because this achievement is working on the cause of

Buddhahood, this key insight of the true nature of phenomena is called “the most supreme thing.”

The achievement of the path of cultivation is very meaningful, because it is just by resting in this realization of the universal nature, that all the stages of accomplishment will emerge on their own accord. One does not need to focus the mind on one particular aspect or another. It is resting in the emptiness which is the nature of phenomena and that automatically everything will emerge. So one can see the great importance of that meditation.

K. THE PURIFICATION ON THE PATH OF CULTIVATION

The second point of the untainted aspect of the purification on the path of cultivation is thus closely linked to the aspect of achievement we talked about in the previous section, it is like looking at the other side of the coin. We will study the things that will produce the purification and also the things that will hamper purification.

There are three positive causes for the purification on the path. The first key cause is to resort to the supreme teacher. The great bodhisattvas turn to the very best teacher for guidance. When they do this they feel a great inspiration to continue and develop their meditation and practice. From that inspiration will come diligence. From diligence will come the actual result of being able to help others and one’s self. So the root of this is to turn to the very best teacher.

The second cause is to cultivate the six paramitas and the third is to develop great skillful means. These three bring about purification at the path of cultivation.

If we really want to achieve utter purity there are four obstructing causes which block us from achieving utter purity. The first obstacle is to be subject to the influences (Skt. *maras*) that will not allow our mind to turn to the dharma. The second obstacle arises when we have been able to enter the dharma, but lacks the particular interest in going very deeply into understanding the nature of phenomena. It is not wanting to find the deepest truth. The third obstacle is having a strong attachment to our skandhas, our body and so forth. The fourth obstacle is to enter into a close relationship with persons who lead us to do unvirtuous activities.

When we actually achieve utter purity, we must consider what it is we are taking away: it is the obscurations of defilements, the obscurations of knowledge and the obscurations of the lower paths which are concerned with one's benefit alone and which are present in the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas. For a bodhisattva, these three types of obscurations must be removed progressively as he or she moves on from the second up to the tenth bodhisattva level.

Questions

Question: Could you talk a little bit on the role of the lineage gurus.

Rinpoche: It was mentioned previously that we pay homage to the root guru and to the lineage gurus. The lineage gurus are the gurus of the line of transmission of what we study. These transmissions date from the teachings of the Buddha himself, but they don't go back beyond that. Even though the Buddha had previous lives and even though he may have had teachers then. Our transmission of the lineage gurus now come from the time that he taught the dharma in our world onwards and they were uninterruptedly transmitted to our days.

We are familiar with the Buddha as a teacher from his teaching at Varanasi. This is what we call the highest nirmanakaya of the Buddha. The nirmanakaya is one of several aspects of the Buddha once he manifests enlightenment, the aspect in the world, the historical aspect.

If we consider our own Karma Kagyu lineage, we see that it goes back to the great master Tilopa. He did not meet Buddha in his nirmanakaya form, but he had contact with another aspect of Buddha, the dharmakaya Vajradhara, which is inseparable from the essence of Buddha's mind. So he also received teachings directly from the Buddha, but from the dharmakaya aspect. Beside this direct transmission from Buddha's dharmakaya, Tilopa also received the similar teachings indirectly through a lineage that came from the Buddha also, through the great masters, Saraha and Nagarjuna and so on. He assembled all of these teachings, either through direct transmission or through indirect transmission. They were handed by him to his student Naropa. Tilopa and Naropa were both great Indian masters. Then it went to Tibet with the great master Marpa, and then to Milarepa and Gampopa, and then handed down successively to the first Gyalwa Karmapa, and through the lineage of the Karmapas and their gurus up until the present day. Now all

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of the line of gurus in that transmission from the Buddha, who first gave the teachings, up until the present time constitute what we call the lineage lamas. When we take refuge and pay our respect, it is towards them that we address our prayers.

Question: I understand if one has the text in front of one, and one is studying it day after day carefully, one can digest it. I can't begin to digest it and the effect it has on me is confusion

Rinpoche: There is a very great benefit for us studying the way that we are doing, even though it seems too much, doesn't it? Because it's too much, we don't feel that we get any thing in the end, but that isn't quite the case.

In Tibet one's spiritual evolution came about through a mixture of different things. One could just specialize in Prajnaparamita and study it in very thorough detail and then meditate on it and achieve results that way. Or one could specialize in something else which is just vajrayana practice. But what was found to be most beneficial was to marry the sutra level of practice with the tantra level of practice. It was discovered that there was really a great benefit to this so that, as we get an introduction to the Prajnaparamita (as we are doing in this text), we get some idea of what Prajnaparamita means, rather than just having some vague idea. With study at the sutra level we know just what the Prajnaparamita implies. Even a little knowledge really enhances our tantric practice, because it throws the light of wisdom onto everything the tantric practice symbolizes and why we are actually working with the tantric practice of the vajrayana also will shed light on understanding the Prajnaparamita. So that when we study, we will say, "Yes, It's indeed true, it's just like that." Even though we don't go to the very bottom of everything, this introduction to various topics, the bare bones of the sutras, is very useful.

This book (172 pages) can be ordered from:

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ⁱ. In fact these were the last words of the Buddha.

ⁱⁱ. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa. *The Life of Milarepa*. London: Paladin, 1979.