

## The Mahayana Path of Preparation & Buddha-nature

The topics of this year's spring course are (1) the Mahayana path of preparation and (2) Buddha-nature. These topics are set forth in Maitreya's *Ornament for Clear Realization* (Skt.: *Abhisamayalamkara*, Tib.: *mngon rtogs rgyan*) and thus pertain to the study of *Prajnaparamita* (Tib.: *Pharchin*, Engl.: *Perfection of Wisdom*). *Prajnaparamita* is the first of the five main topics or fields of study of Buddhist philosophy. The five topics are listed below.

The presentation of (1) the Mahayana path of preparation and (2) Buddha-nature are preceded by a short introduction and a summary of the verses of the *Ornament for Clear Realization* we discussed during previous courses.

### THE THREE WHEELS OF DHARMA

After the Buddha attained enlightenment, he spent the remaining 45 years of his life travelling across the Indian subcontinent turning the *Wheel of Dharma*, i.e. explaining and disseminating what he had come to realize. There are 84,000 collections of discourses taught by the Buddha according to the diverse dispositions, inclinations and interests of his disciples.

Among the different ways of classifying those teachings, one of the most common is known as the *Three Wheels of Dharma*.

The convention of the three wheels is an attempt to categorize the content and philosophical views of the large array of Buddhist teachings, and there are different ways in which to classify the discourses into three wheels. One is from the point of view of time. The time from the Buddha's enlightenment until his passing away can be divided into three periods. The teachings the Buddha gave during the initial period fall into the category of the first wheel, the teachings he gave during the intermediate period fall into the category of the second wheel, and the teachings he gave during the later period fall into the category of the third wheel. An example of a discourse that pertains to the first wheel is the *Sutra on the Four Noble Truths* (Skt.: *Catvari aryasatyani sutra*, Tib.: *'phags pa'i bden pa bzhi'i mdo*) given in the Sarnath deer park near Varanasi to his first five disciples, shortly after his enlightenment. Another example is the teaching in which the Buddha explains to the first five disciples that the lower part of the monastic robes (Tib.: *sham thabs*) should be worn in a circular fashion. This discourse is from the *Minor Teachings [of the Vinaya]* (Tib.: *lung phran tshegs*), which is one of the *Four Texts on the Vinaya* (Tib.: *'dul ba lung sde bzhi*) taught by the Buddha.

Examples of discourses that pertain to the second wheel are the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* given on Vulture Peak Mountain in Rajghir. And examples of teachings that pertain to the third wheel are the *Sutra on the Essence of the Tathagata* (Skt.: *Tathagathagarbha Sutra*, Tib.: *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo*) and the *Condensed Vinaya* (Tib.: *'dul ba mdor bsdus*). The *Condensed Vinaya* is also one of the discourses from the *Minor Teachings [of the Vinaya]*.

Another way to classify the Buddha's teachings into three wheels is from the point of view the subject-matter, or more precisely, from the point of view of teaching selflessness. It derives from the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* (Skt.: *Samdhinirmocana sutra*, Tib.: *dgongs pa nges par 'grel ba'i mdo*) and does not include all the discourses. For instance, it does not include the teaching in which the Buddha explains that the lower part of the monastic robes should be worn in a circular fashion.

The three wheels according to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* are:

#### The first wheel

The first wheel constitutes Hinayana (Theravada/Fundamental Vehicle) teachings and refers to the Buddha's first discourse, the *Sutra on the Four Noble Truths* (Skt.: *Catvari aryasatyani sutra*, Tib.: *'phags pa'i bden pa bzhi'i mdo*).

Therefore, the principal disciples of the *Sutra on the Four Noble Truths* are Hinayana practitioners, i.e. practitioners who mainly aspire to attain self-liberation. However, it is important to understand that those Hinayana practitioners (who are the principal disciples of the first wheel) are followers of different philosophical tenet systems. Some are followers of the Vaibashika (the Great Exposition School), some of the Sautrantika (the Sutra School), and some of the Prasangika Madhyamika (the Middle Way Consequentialist School). Hence, not only does the Buddha set forth the four noble truths in the first wheel, he also literally teaches Hinayana practitioners who are proponents of the Vaibashika and

Sautrantika that the five aggregates, the eighteen constituents, the twelve sense-spheres, the thirty-seven harmonies of enlightenment, and so forth exist truly. At the same time, he teaches Hinayana practitioners who are followers of the Prasangika Madhyamika that phenomena *lack* true existence.

This ability to simultaneously teach opposing concepts (such as true existence and the *lack* of true existence) in accordance with the different interests, predispositions, and needs of his disciples is explained to be one of the unique qualities of a Buddha.

Sutras that teach related subject matter and therefore pertain to the category of the first wheel are:

1. The ***Sutra of the Close Placement of Mindfulness on the Sacred Dharmas*** (Skt.: *Saddharma smrtyupashthana sutra*, Tib.: *dam pa'i chos dran pa nyer bzhag gi mdo*)
2. ***Hundreds of Karmic Deeds*** (Skt.: *Karmashataka Sutra*, Tib.: *las brgya pa*)
3. ***Hundreds of Accounts of Realizations*** (Skt.: *Avadanashataka Sutras*, Tib.: *rtogs brjod brgya pa*)
4. ***The Scriptural Texts of the Rules of Discipline*** (Skt.: *Vinayagama*, Tib.: *'dul ba'i lung shes che ba*).

Even though these four sutras pertain to the first wheel, they are not referred to as the first wheel.

### The second wheel

The second wheel constitutes Mahayana (Universal Vehicle) teachings and refers to the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras***. Explicitly, they teach the ultimate truth (the lack of true existence) and implicitly, the meditational paths that lead to full enlightenment.

Since they teach related subject matter, the following sutras pertain to the category of the second wheel (though they are not referred to as the second wheel):

1. The ***Descent into Lanka Sutra*** (Skt.: *Lankavatara Sutra*, Tib.: *lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo*),
2. The ***King of Concentration Sutra*** (Skt.: *Samadhiraja Sutra*, Tib.: *ting nge 'dzin rgyal po'i mdo*),
3. The ***Sutra of the Ten Bhumis*** (Skt.: *Dashabhumika Sutra*, Tib.: *mdo sde sa bcu pa*),
4. The ***Sutra on the Essence of the Tathagata*** (Skt.: *Tathagathagarbha Sutra*, Tib.: *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo*),
5. The ***Sutra Requested by the Arya Shrimala*** (Skt.: *Aryashrimala Pariprccha Sutra*, Tib.: *'phags pa dpal 'phreng gi mdo*),
6. The ***Sutra of the Ornament for the Illumination of Primordial Wisdom*** (Skt.: *Jnanaloka Alamkara Sutra*, Tib.: *Ye shes snang ba'i rgyan gyi mdo*),
7. The ***Sutra of the Great Nirvana*** (Skt.: *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, Tib.: *mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo*)
8. The ***Sutra of the Question of Dharanishvararaja*** (Skt.: *Dharanishvararajapariprccha*, Tib.: *gzungz kyi dbang phyug rgyal pos zhus pa*)

### The third wheel

The third wheel is also from the point of view of the Mahayana and refers to the seventh chapter of the ***Sutra Unravelling the Thought***, called ***Questions by Paramartha Samudgata*** (Skt.: *Paramartha Samudgata Pariprccha*, Tib.: *don dam yang dag 'phags kyis zhus pa*).

In the seventh chapter of this sutra, the Bodhisattva Paramartha Samudgata asks the Buddha what he had in mind when during the first wheel he said that the five aggregates, etc. exist truly and during the second wheel that they do not, for if taken literally, these two statements appear to be contradictory. Since the Buddha was aware that the principal disciples present at the time of Paramartha Samudgata's question were suitable vessels for the Chittamatra (Mind-Only) tenets, he replied by explaining that phenomena can be divided into those phenomena that exist truly and those that do not. With this explanation the Buddha presented the philosophical system of the Chittamatra, whose proponents assert that impermanent phenomena and emptiness exist truly, whereas permanent phenomena other than emptiness do not.

The remaining nine chapters of the ***Sutra Unravelling the Thought*** pertain to the category of the third wheel (but are not referred to as the third wheel).

Please note that the ***Sutra Unravelling the Thought*** has ten chapters containing questions put by nine Bodhisattvas and one Hearer (Subhuti). In the first chapter a Bodhisattva replies, whereas in the remaining chapters the reply is given by the Buddha. The Sutra was taught in Vaishali.

Even though the ***Sutra on the Essence of the Tathagata*** (Skt.: ***Tathagathagarbha Sutra***, Tib.: ***de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo***) is described as pertaining to the category of the second wheel, according to the categorization of the discourses of the Buddha into three wheels from the point of view of teaching selflessness, from the point of view of time it is one of the sutras of the third wheel.

Please note that both the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** and the ***Sutra on the Essence of the Tathagata*** present Buddha-nature. In the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** the Buddha describes mainly the objective Buddha-nature - also called the objective clear light - which refers to the ultimate truth of emptiness. However, later on in the ***Sutra of the Essence on the Tathagata*** the Buddha teaches chiefly the subjective Buddha-nature - also called the subjective clear (i.e. the clear light nature of the mind). This sutra is therefore regarded as a bridge between the Sutric and the Tantric teachings.

This concludes a brief description of the three wheels.

Of the three wheels, the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** of the second wheel are the principal teachings relied upon for the study of Buddhist philosophy according to the Nalanda tradition of Buddhism. These sutras flourish in many countries, including China - from where they were taken to Japan, Korea and Vietnam - and Tibet, from where they were transmitted to Mongolia, the trans-Himalayan region and areas within the Russian Federation.

The ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** are also called 'Sutras of the Sublime Mother'. Here, 'Sublime Mother' refers to Prajna-Paramita, the female Buddha figure that represents wisdom. Wisdom is called 'Sublime Mother' because like a mother gives birth to her children, wisdom gives birth to all Arya beings (i.e. those who have directly realized the ultimate nature of reality, emptiness) and to their attainment of liberation and Buddhahood.

There are many different ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** of various lengths. Seventeen were translated into Tibetan, one of them being the ***Heart Sutra***. These seventeen are collectively called the ***Seventeen Mother and Son Sutras*** and they consist of six 'Mother Sutras' and eleven 'Son Sutras'.

The ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** explicitly teach emptiness and implicitly, or in a hidden fashion, the meditational paths leading to enlightenment. Nagarjuna in his ***Six Compendia of Reasoning*** expounds on the explicit meaning of the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** and Maitreya in his ***Ornament for Clear Realizations*** expounds on the implicit meaning of the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras***. The text we are studying here is Maitreya's text.

As mentioned above, the main genre of teachings relied upon for the study of Buddhist philosophy according to the Nalanda tradition of Buddhism is the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras***. Since Tibetan Buddhism is based on the Nalanda tradition, students of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition also rely chiefly on these sutras.

In general, the different topics of Buddhist philosophy that are studied and debated in Tibetan monastic institutions can be summarized into what are called the ***Five Volumes of the Great Texts*** (Tib.: ***gzhung chen bka' pod lnga***), which basically refer to five different topics or fields of study:

- **Prajnaparamita** (Perfection of Wisdom, Tib.: ***shes rab kyi pha rol du phyin pa/ phar phyin***)
- **Madhyamika** (Middle Way, Tib.: ***dbu ma***)
- **Pramana** (Logic/epistemology, Tib.: ***tshad ma***)
- **Abhidharma** (Phenomenology, Tib.: ***mngon pa mdzod***)
- **Vinaya** (Discipline, Tib.: ***'dul ba***)

The foundation of these five topics is the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras***. The study of **Prajnaparamita** (or **Pharchin**) entails the study of the implicit meaning of the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** and thus the study of the meditational paths that lead practitioners to the enlightenment of a Buddha.

The study of the **Madhyamika** entails the study of the explicit meaning of the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras***, i.e. of the ultimate nature of emptiness, the direct realization of which is vital to attaining Buddhahood. The study of **Pramana** (or **Logic**) entails the study of the methods of analysis which are an essential tool for comprehending the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras***. The study of **Abhidharma** entails the study of different classifications of reality that are central to the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras***. And

the study of **Vinaya** represents the moral conduct by which practitioners of the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras** should abide.

Furthermore, by studying the five topics one also gains an understanding of the four philosophical tenet systems (Vaibashika, Sautrantika, etc.). The reason for this is that the main text used for the study of **Abhidharma** is Vasubhandu's **Abhidharmakosha**, which teaches Vaibashika (Great Exposition School) and Sautrantika (Sutra School) tenets. The main text used for the study of **Pramana** is Dharmakirti's **Pramanavartika**, written from the point of view of the Chittamatra (Mind-Only School). The main text used for the study of the **Prajnaparamita** is Maitreya's **Ornament for Clear Realizations**, which is traditionally presented from the perspective of the Svatantrika Madhyamika (Middle Way Autonomy School). And the main text used for the study of **Madhyamika** is Chandrakirti's **Supplement to the Middle Way**, which teaches the Prasangika Madhyamika (Middle Way Consequentialist School).

The reason for traditionally presenting the topic of the **Prajnaparamita** from the point of view of the Svatantrika Madhyamika (although Maitreya actually taught the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** from the point of view of the Prasangika Madhyamika) is that the majority of the authors of the most important Indian commentaries on Maitreya's **Ornament for Clear Realizations** were proponents of the Svatantrika Madhyamika.

Furthermore, there are two sub schools of the Svatantrika Madhyamika:

- (1) Yogachara Svatantrika (Yogic Autonomy School, Tib.: *rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma rang rgyud pa*)
- (2) Sautrantika Svatantrika (Sutric Autonomy School, Tib.: *mdo sde spyod pa'i dbu ma rang rgyud pa*)

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** is usually presented from the point of view of the Yogachara Svatantrika since Shantarakshita and Haribhadra are both followers of this philosophical tenet system. The philosophical viewpoint Tibetan Buddhist students follow when they study the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** is determined by the philosophical viewpoint of these two Indian masters, for Shantarakshita introduced the teachings of the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutra** and the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** in Tibet, while Haribhadra's **Commentary Clarifying the Meaning** is the most prominent Indian commentary on the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Haribhadra was also Shantarakshita's disciple.

However, the explanations given here in this course are from the point of view of the Prasangika Madhyamika (Middle Way Consequentialist) School, the highest philosophical tenet system. The reason is that Western students of Buddhist philosophy usually are more familiar with this tenet school, and since the different topics of the **Prajnaparamita** are very extensive and complicated, it may be better to avoid creating more confusion by presenting them from the point of view of the Yogachara Svatantrika. Nonetheless, whenever there are major differences between the two schools, they will be pointed out.

## THE ORNAMENT FOR CLEAR REALIZATIONS

The **Ornament for Clear Realizations** (Skt.: **Abhisamayalamkara**, Tib.: **mngon rtogs rgyan**) - abbreviated as the '**Ornament**' - is one of five treatises revealed to Asanga in the Tushita pure realm by the future Buddha Maitreya. As mentioned above, it is a commentary on the implicit or hidden meaning of the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras**, and thus describes the different meditative stages and awarenesses required to become a fully awakened Buddha, from the generation of Bodhicitta until the attainment of the omniscient mind of a Buddha.

Even though the **Ornament** is a commentary on all the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras**, its principal sutric sources (Tib.: *bshad bya rtsa ba'i mdo*) are these three:

1. [The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] **One Hundred Thousand** [Verses] (Tib.: *'bum*)
2. [The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] **Twenty Thousand** [Verses] (Tib.: *nyi khri*)
3. [The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] **Eight Thousand** [Verses] (Tib.: *brgyas stong pa*)

Owing to their different lengths, the three principal sutric sources of the **Ornament** are commonly also known as the 'extensive, middling, and short Sublime Mothers'.

Furthermore, there are twenty-two Indian commentaries on the **Ornament** that were deemed most important and were therefore translated into Tibetan. These commentaries are also commentaries on the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras**. However, some of them correlate the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras**

with the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** (twelve commentaries) and some do not (nine commentaries).

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the most popular of the twenty-two Indian commentaries are Arya Vimuktisena's commentary **Illuminating the [Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]** (Skt. *Abhisamayalamkaravrtti*, Tib.: *nyi khri snang ba*) as well as Haribhadra's **Commentary Clarifying the Meaning** (Skt.: *Sphuṭārtha*, Tib.: *'grel pa don gsal*). Of these two, Haribhadra's commentary is the most prominent and studied most extensively, for it is a relatively short text that clearly presents the meaning of the **Ornament** and indicates that the **Ornament** is an 'ornament' for all three principal sutric sources.

The **Ornament** has eight chapters and each chapter presents one 'clear realization' (Tib.: *mngon par rtogs pa*). A clear realization refers to a path consciousness. Hence the five Hinayana and the five Mahayana paths (Mahayana paths of accumulation, preparation, etc.) are all clear realizations.

The eight clear realizations presented in the **Ornament** are:

1. Exalted Knower of Aspects (i.e. the omniscient mind of a Buddha) (Tib.: *rnam mkhyen*)
2. Knower of Paths (Tib.: *lam shes*)
3. Knower of Bases (Tib.: *gzhi shes*)
4. Training in Complete Aspects (Tib.: *rnam rdzogs sbyor ba*)
5. Peak Training (Tib.: *rtse mo'i sbyor ba*)
6. Gradual Training (Tib.: *mthar gyis sbyor ba*)
7. Training in a Single Instant (Tib.: *skad cig ma'i sbyor ba*)
8. Resultant Dharmakaya (Tib.: *'bras bu chos sku*)

Among the eight clear realizations, the principal clear realizations are the first three, called the 'three knowers'. They are explained below.

As mentioned above, each chapter of the **Ornament** sets forth one clear realization. It presents each clear realization by presenting other phenomena or topics that characterize that realization. For example, the first clear realization, the exalted knower of aspects, is characterized by ten topics.

Therefore:

The **first** chapter explains the **exalted knower of aspects** by way of **ten** topics.

The **second** chapter explains the **knower of paths** by way of **eleven** topics.

The **third** chapter explains the **knower of bases** by way of **nine** topics.

The **fourth** chapter explains the **training in complete aspects** by way of **eleven** topics.

The **fifth** chapter explains the **peak training** by way of **eight** topics.

The **sixth** chapter explains the **gradual training** by way of **thirteen** topics.

The **seventh** chapter explains the **training in a single instant** by way of **four** topics.

The **eighth** chapter explains the **resultant dharmakaya** by way of **four** topics.

In total the **Ornament** expounds on **seventy** different topics which is why the **Ornament** is commonly described as a treatise that presents the implicit or hidden meaning of the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras** by way of **eight clear realizations** and **seventy topics**.

## THE NAME OF THE TEXT

The Tibetan translation of the **Ornament** starts by citing the **Ornament's** full name in Sanskrit, the language in which Maitreya originally taught the text:

*In Sanskrit: Abhisamayalamkara nama prajnaparamita upadesha shastra karika*

Traditionally, Tibetan translators (who translated the Buddhist sutras, tantras and treatises from Sanskrit into Tibetan) would add the original title in Sanskrit to their translations. They did this to demonstrate the authenticity of the texts and to indicate that the original was in Sanskrit. Another reason was to leave imprints in the continuums of students of these texts since all founding Buddhas of the past, present, and future are said to teach in Sanskrit. Hence, unless one attains enlightenment before the coming of the future Buddha Maitreya, imprints of the Sanskrit language will be beneficial when receiving teachings from him and other founding Buddhas in the future.

Furthermore, by reading or hearing the title in Sanskrit, students will be reminded of the great kindness of the Tibetan translators who underwent immense hardships while traveling to India, learning Sanskrit, receiving teachings, translating the Buddhist scriptures into Tibetan, and making them available in Tibet. Without their inconceivable effort and sacrifice we would not have access to most of these teachings nowadays.

The title in Sanskrit is followed by the full name in Tibetan:

*In Tibetan: Shes rab kyi pha rol du phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan zhes bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa*

The meaning of the words in Sanskrit is:

*Abhisamaya* - clear realization, *alamkara* - ornament, *nama* - called, *prajnaparamita* - perfection of wisdom, *upadesha* - quintessential instruction, *shastra* - treatise, *karika* - verses and chapters

The meaning of the words in Tibetan is:

*Shes rab kyi pha rol du phyin pa* - perfection of wisdom, *man ngag* - quintessential instruction, *bstan bcos* - treatise, *mngon par rtogs pa* - clear realization, *rgyan* - ornament, *zhes bya ba* - called, *tshig le'ur byas pa* - verses and chapters

Therefore, the full title of the *Ornament* in English is:

*The Verses and Chapters of what is Called the 'Ornament for Clear Realizations', a Quintessential Instruction Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom*

In general, the **perfection of wisdom** can be categorized into three: (1) the textual perfection of wisdom (Tib. *gzhung sher phyin*), (2) the path (causal) perfection of wisdom (Tib.: *lam sher phyin*), and (3) the resultant perfection of wisdom (Tib. *'bras bu'i sher phyin*). Among the three, the resultant perfection of wisdom constitutes the *actual* perfection of wisdom, for it refers to the omniscient mind of a Buddha. The other two are merely called 'perfection of wisdom' because they serve as the causes of the actual perfection of wisdom. The textual perfection of wisdom refers to the Buddha's teachings that chiefly teach either Mahayana paths or Mahayana results. Examples of the textual perfection of wisdom are the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras**. The path (causal) perfection of wisdom refers to the path consciousnesses in the continuums of Bodhisattvas. Hence, by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the textual perfection of wisdom, practitioners cultivate the path (causal) perfection of wisdom, which eventually evolves into the resultant perfection of wisdom, i.e. the omniscient mind of a Buddha.

A **quintessential instruction treatise** is a commentary which in a few words gives the core insight into a whole topic. Thus, Maitreya describes the **Ornament** as a treatise which conveys the essential meaning of the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras** in very precise terms, enabling students of the **Ornament** to easily understand the meaning of these sutras.

As mentioned above, a **clear realization** refers to a path consciousness. The etymology of the Tibetan term for clear realization (*mngon rtogs*) is *mngon du phyogs pa*, which means 'to move in the direction', or *mngon sum du rtogs pa*, which means 'to realize directly'. Hence, a path consciousness moves practitioners in the direction of liberation and Buddhahood by cultivating the direct realization of the ultimate nature of phenomena.

An **ornament** is explained to be of three types: (1) a natural ornament, (2) a beautifying ornament, and (3) a clarifying ornament. A natural ornament refers to a naturally beautiful phenomenon, such as the beautiful physique of a woman. A beautifying ornament refers to the decoration that accentuates or highlights the natural beauty of the phenomenon, such as the jewels the beautiful woman wears. And the clarifying ornament refers to that which clearly shows or reflects the beauty of the phenomenon, such as a mirror that clearly reflects the woman's beauty.

The **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras** are likened to a natural ornament; the eight clear realizations and the seventy topics to a beautifying ornament; and the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** to a clarifying ornament.

Hence, the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** is explained to be like a clarifying ornament or a mirror, in that it reflects or clarifies the whole meaning of the natural ornament, the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras**, by way of presenting the sutras' beautifying ornament, the eight clear realizations and seventy topics.

And just as someone experiences pleasure when perceiving the mirror reflection of a beautiful woman adorned with jewels, likewise, the wise ones are said to experience pleasure when studying the **Ornament for Clear Realizations** which clarifies the **Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras** that are adorned with, i.e. that teach, the eight clear realizations and the seventy topics.

The **verses and chapters** refer to the eight chapters of the Ornament, which were composed in verse.

### HOMAGE BY THE TRANSLATORS

The full title of the **Ornament** is followed by a line of homage paid by the Tibetan translators:

*I prostrate to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.*

The homage by the translators is not actually part of the **Ornament** taught by Maitreya but was added later. The Tibetan translators pay homage to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in order to remove obstacles that would prevent the accomplishment of temporary goals (such as successfully translating the text) or the ultimate goal of attaining liberation and full enlightenment.

Additionally, the homage reveals the principal subject matter of the text to the reader. Following a decree passed by a former Tibetan king, many Tibetan translators traditionally pay homage to particular entities in order to indicate which of the three trainings is the principal subject matter of the text:

- a) When the principal subject matter of the text is ethics/morality, the translators pay homage to the omniscient mind of a Buddha.
- b) When the principal subject matter is meditational paths/concentrations, they pay homage to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- c) And when the principal subject matter is wisdom, they pay homage to Manjushri.

Therefore, since the principal subject matter of the **Ornament** is meditational paths, the translators pay homage to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

### THE HOMAGE

The actual text of the **Ornament** begins with Maitreya first paying homage and then explaining the purpose for composing the text.

Regarding the four lines of the homage, in the first line (the fourth line in the Tibetan text) Maitreya pays homage to the perfection of wisdom (the textual, path, and resultant perfections of wisdom) by describing it as the 'Sublime Mother' of the four types of Aryas, i.e. Arya Hearers, Arya Solitary Realizers, Arya Bodhisattvas, and Arya Buddhas - although Arya Solitary Realizers are not explicitly mentioned. In the remaining three lines he pays homage to the three knowers (Tib.: *mkhyen pa gsum*) by revealing their different qualities. And since the eight clear realizations are subsumed under the three knowers, Maitreya also implicitly pays homage to the eight clear realizations.

The purpose for composing the homage is to instill faith in the three knowers and their qualities in the mental continuums of students of the **Ornament**. In turn, the purpose of such faith is to cause students to listen, contemplate, and meditate on the **Ornament** and ultimately to attain liberation and Buddhahood.

*I prostrate to the Sublime Mother of Buddhas and of the assembly of Hearers and Bodhisattvas  
Who through the **knower of bases** leads Hearers seeking pacification to complete peace;  
Who through the **knower of paths** causes those benefitting migrators to achieve the aims of the  
world;  
And who through possession of which (i.e. through possession of the **exalted knower of aspects/**  
the omniscient mind) the Subduers set forth the varieties having all aspects. [1]*

The meaning of the verse of homage is:

[1] I, Maitreya, **prostrate to the Sublime Mother of Arya Buddhas and of the assembly of Arya Hearers, Arya Solitary Realizers, and Arya Bodhisattvas,**  
**Who through the knower of bases leads Arya Hearers and Arya Solitary Realizers seeking pacification from Samsara to the complete peace of self-liberation,**  
**Who through the knower of paths enables or causes those Arya Bodhisattvas who are benefitting migrator sentient beings to achieve the aim of the world, that is, Buddhahood,**

**And who through possession of which**, i.e. through possession of the exalted knower of **aspects** (the omniscient mind) **the Subduers**, Arya Buddhas **set forth the varieties** of different teachings which reveal **all the aspects** of the paths of the three vehicles (Hearer, Solitary Realizer, and Bodhisattva vehicle).

As mentioned above, since the perfection of wisdom gives rise to Arya beings and eventually to liberation and Buddhahood, it is called the 'Sublime Mother'.

Aryas (Tib.: *'phags pa*) are spiritually highly accomplished beings who have cultivated the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness and have therefore reached the path of seeing, the path of meditation, or the path of no more learning.

MUNDANE PATHS (Paths in the continuums of practitioners who have not yet directly realized emptiness)		ARYA PATHS (Paths in the continuums of those who have directly realized emptiness)		
Path of accumulation	→	Path of preparation	→	Path of seeing
			→	Path of meditation
				→
				Path of no more learning

Furthermore, Aryas pertain to one of the four types of Aryas (Arya Hearers, Arya Solitary Realizers, Arya Bodhisattvas, or Arya Buddhas).

### The four types of Aryas

In general, there are three types of practitioners: (1) Hearer practitioners, (2) Solitary Realizer practitioners, and (3) Bodhisattvas.

Both Hearer and Solitary Realizer practitioners have entered the Hinayana path and aspire to attain self-liberation. Even though their goal is the same, they differ in the way in which they actualize that goal. Hearer practitioners are Hinayana trainees who strive for Nirvana on the basis of listening to instructions from a teacher, whereas Solitary Realizers practitioners are Hinayana trainees who strive for Nirvana in solitude, without relying as much on a teacher.

Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, do not seek merely to attain liberation but strive to reach the state of a Buddha.

### Arya Hearers

Hearers (Skt.: *Shravaka*, Tib.: *nyan thos*) can be categorized into two types: (1) mundane Hearers and (2) Arya Hearers. Mundane Hearers are Hearer practitioners who have not yet directly realized emptiness and abide on the Hearer path of accumulation or preparation. Arya Hearers are Hearers who have directly realized emptiness and abide on the Hearer path of seeing, meditation, or no-more-learning. The Tibetan term for Hearer (*nyan thos*) is a combination of the two Tibetan syllables *listen* and *hear*, and means that Hearers listen to the teachings given by the Buddha and other masters, practice what they have heard, and then cause others to also *hear* those teachings, i.e. teach others what they have learned and understood.

The Tibetan term *nyan thos* is not a literal translation of the Sanskrit term 'Shravaka'. The literal translation of the Sanskrit term is *thob sgrogs* in Tibetan which means 'proclaiming the attained', or *thos sgrogs* which means 'proclaiming the heard'.

Therefore, Hearers proclaim or teach to others whatever personal realizations they have attained, and they proclaim or teach to those aspiring to attain enlightenment whatever Mahayana teachings they have heard (without practicing Mahayana teachings themselves).

### Arya Solitary Realizers

Solitary Realizers (Skt.: *Pratyekabuddha*, Tib.: *rang rgyal/rang sangs rgyas*) can also be categorized into two types: (1) mundane Solitary Realizers and (2) Arya Solitary Realizers. Mundane Solitary Realizers are Solitary Realizer practitioners who have not yet directly realized emptiness and abide on the Solitary Realizer path of accumulation or preparation. Arya Solitary Realizers are Solitary Realizers who have directly realized emptiness and abide on the Solitary Realizer path of seeing, meditation, or no-more-learning.



Solitary Realizer practitioners, although also aspiring for self-liberation, are different from Hearers in that they make the following prayers when they enter the Hinayana path:

- "May I be reborn in a land where there is no Buddha performing the various activities, like teaching the Dharma and so forth (here Buddha mainly refers to a founding Buddha)";
- "May I be able to teach the Dharma not verbally but by way of the movements of my body";
- "May I, in my last rebirth in samsara, attain nirvana/self-liberation without relying upon the quintessential instructions of a master."

### **Arya Bodhisattvas**

Bodhisattvas (Tib.: *byang chub sems dpa'* - literally 'Heroes of the Mind of Enlightenment') are Mahayana practitioners who, on the basis of great compassion for all sentient beings, have generated Bodhicitta and thus aspire to attain the state of a Buddha in order to be of the utmost benefit to all sentient beings. They can also be categorized into: (1) mundane Bodhisattvas and (2) Arya Bodhisattvas. Mundane Bodhisattvas are Mahayana practitioners who abide on the Mahayana path of accumulation or preparation. Arya Bodhisattvas are Bodhisattvas who abide on the Mahayana path of seeing or meditation. There are no Arya Bodhisattvas who abide on the Mahayana path of no-more-learning, for Aryas who abide on that path are necessarily Arya *Buddhas*.

Please note that Bodhisattvas who have attained the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness are not necessarily Arya Bodhisattvas, for there are Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path of accumulation or preparation who have attained such wisdom. There are Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path of accumulation or preparation who have attained the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness since there are Bodhisattvas who achieved self-liberation and became Hinayana Arhats before they entered the Mahayana path.

Therefore, Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path of accumulation or preparation who achieved self-liberation before they entered the Mahayana path are not Arya Bodhisattvas (even though they are both Aryas and Bodhisattvas), for they have not yet reached the Mahayana path of seeing.

### **Arya Buddhas**

There is a difference between an Arya Buddha (Tib.: *sangs rgyas 'phags pa*) and a Buddha (Tib.: *sangs rgyas*). According to the scriptures, an Arya Buddha is necessarily a person whereas a Buddha is not necessarily a person.

This is not the way in which the term 'Buddha' is used in English, but in Tibetan any *kaya*, i.e. any feature of an Arya Buddha that is the result of meditation, such as his omniscient mind, his truth of cessation, his physical body, etc. is explained to be Buddha. However, these features are not Arya *Buddhas*, for they are not living beings. Buddha Shakyamuni, on the other hand, is both a Buddha and an Arya Buddha. He is a Buddha because he is a *Nirmanakaya* or *Emanation body*, and he is an Arya Buddha because he is a fully-ordained monk who has overcome afflictive and cognitive obstructions.

Therefore, whoever is an Arya Buddha is necessarily a Buddha whereas whatever is a Buddha is not necessarily an Arya Buddha.

Aryas are supramundane living beings on account of the Arya paths they have cultivated. In general, Arya paths can be categorized into three knowers. These three are described as fulfilling the aspirations of the four Aryas.

The three knowers are:

- (1) Knower of bases
- (2) Knower of paths
- (3) Exalted knower of aspects

#### **(1) Knower of bases**

A knower of bases (Tib.: *gzhi shes*) refers to any Arya path in the continuums of Arya Hinayanists – Arya Hearers and Arya Solitary Realizers. The main goal of these Aryas is the complete peace of self-liberation, and they cultivate the knower of bases because it enables them to overcome afflictive obstructions (obstructions to liberation) and attain "the complete peace of self-liberation". Hence all Hinayana Arya paths (i.e. Hinayana paths of seeing, meditation, and no-more-learning) are necessarily knowers of bases.

But knowers of bases also arise in the continuums of Mahayanists. For instance, the wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the continuums of Arya Bodhisattvas or Arya Buddhas is a knower of bases because it is an Arya path that is *typical of Hinayana paths* (Tib.: *theg dman gyi rtogs rigs su gnas pa*). It is an Arya path that is typical of Hinayana paths because it is the principal object of meditation of Hinayana practitioners. Therefore, the definition of a knower of bases is: a knower in the continuum of an Arya that is typical of Hinayana paths.

'A knower in the continuum of an Arya' and an Arya path are equivalent.

Please note that the wisdom directly realizing emptiness is not only typical of Hinayana paths but also of Mahayana paths. It is typical of Mahayana paths, for it is also the principal object of meditation of Mahayana practitioners.

## **(2) Knower of paths**

A knower of paths (Tib.: *lam shes*) refers to any Arya path in the continuums of Arya Bodhisattvas, whose main goal is to help migrating sentient beings. Arya Bodhisattvas cultivate the knower of paths because it enables them to eliminate cognitive obstructions (obstructions to omniscience) and attain "the aim of the world, that is, Buddhahood". But knowers of paths do not only arise in the continuums of Arya Bodhisattvas, for any path in the continuum of an Arya Buddha is also a knower of paths.

In short, whatever is a Mahayana path of seeing, meditation, or no-more-learning is necessarily a knower of paths. Thus, the definition of a knower of paths is: a knower in the continuum of a Mahayana Arya that is conjoined with special method and wisdom.

'A knower of a Mahayana Arya' and a Mahayana Arya path are equivalent. Special method refers to Bodhicitta and special wisdom to a Mahayanist's wisdom realizing emptiness. Hence, a knower of paths constitutes a Mahayana Arya path that is conjoined with or affected by Bodhicitta and the Mahayana wisdom that realizes emptiness.

## **(3) Exalted Knower of Aspects**

An exalted knower of aspects (Tib.: *rnam mkhyen*) refers to any omniscient mind (mental consciousness) in the continuums of Arya Buddhas, the possession of which enables Arya Buddhas to "set forth the varieties of different teachings", enabling them to reveal - according to disciples' interests and predispositions - the different paths of the three vehicles.

The definition of an exalted knower of aspects is: a final exalted wisdom that directly realizes all phenomena.

Another definition that is cited particularly in the **Prajnaparamita** literature is: a final exalted wisdom that directly realizes the ten phenomena, such as Bodhicitta, and so on. Since a single phenomenon cannot have two definitions it is explained that either of the two definitions is correct. Here the ten phenomena constitute the ten topics that characterize the exalted knower of aspects in the first chapter of the **Ornament**.

In brief, knowers of bases arise in the continuums of Arya Hearers, Arya Solitary Realizers, Arya Bodhisattvas, and Arya Buddhas. Knowers of paths do not arise in the continuums of Arya Hearers and Arya Solitary Realizers but in the continuums of Arya Bodhisattvas and Arya Buddhas. Exalted knowers of aspects arise only in the continuums of Arya Buddhas.

An Arya path that is typical of Hinayana paths and manifests in the continuum of a Bodhisattva is both a knower of bases and a knower of paths. However, it is not an exalted knower of aspects since it is not a mental consciousness of an Arya Buddha. On the other hand, an Arya path that is typical of Hinayana paths and manifests in the continuum of an Arya Buddha is all three: a knower of bases, a knower of paths, and an exalted knower of aspects.

However, not all knowers of bases manifest in the continuums of Arya Bodhisattvas and Arya Buddhas. For instance, the awareness that wishes to attain self-liberation only manifests in the continuums of Hearers and Solitary Realizers; it does not arise in the continuums of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Furthermore, not all knowers of paths are knowers of bases. For instance, Bodhicitta or great compassion are not knowers of bases and do not arise in the continuums of Hearers and Solitary Realizers.

**Knower of bases:**

	<b>Arya Hearers</b>	<b>Arya Solitary Realizers</b>	<b>Arya Bodhisattvas</b>	<b>Arya Buddhas</b>
<b>Knower of bases</b>	Any path in the continuum of an Arya Hearer is necessarily a knower of bases	Any path in the continuum of an Arya Solitary Realizer is necessarily a knower of bases	Any path that is typical of the Hinayana and that manifests in the continuum of an Arya Bodhisattva is necessarily a knower of bases.	Any path that is typical of the Hinayana and that manifests in the continuum of an Arya Buddha is necessarily a knower of bases.

**Knower of paths:**

	<b>Arya Hearers</b>	<b>Arya Solitary Realizers</b>	<b>Arya Bodhisattvas</b>	<b>Arya Buddhas</b>
<b>Knower of paths</b>			Any path in the continuum of an Arya Bodhisattva is necessarily a knower of paths.	Any path in the continuum of an Arya Buddha is necessarily a knower of paths.

**Exalted knower of aspects:**

	<b>Arya Hearers</b>	<b>Arya Solitary Realizers</b>	<b>Arya Bodhisattvas</b>	<b>Arya Buddhas</b>
<b>Exalted knower of aspects</b>				Any mental consciousness in the continuum of an Arya Buddha is necessarily an exalted knower of aspects

As mentioned above, the explanations given in this handout are from the point of view of the Prasangika Madhyamika (Middle Way Consequentialist) School, the highest philosophical tenet system. According to this school, all three types of practitioners - Hearer practitioners, Solitary Realizer practitioners, and Bodhisattvas - have to cultivate the meditative equipoise that directly realizes the lack of inherent or true existence in order to eliminate their respective obstructions and reach their respective goals. In other words, Hearer and Solitary Realizer practitioners have to cultivate the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness in order to eliminate afflictive obstructions, that is, the ignorance that perceives inherent or true existence, other afflictions induced by that ignorance, and the seeds of both the foregoing. Bodhisattvas have to cultivate the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness in order to eliminate both afflictive *and* cognitive obstructions. According to the Prasangika School, cognitive obstructions constitute the imprints of the ignorance that perceives inherent existence and the imprints of all other afflictions.

However, according to the Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamika School (the point of view from which the Ornament is traditionally presented), the three types of practitioners have to realize different objects in order to reach their respective goals (i.e. not all of them have to realize emptiness). Hearer practitioners have to cultivate the wisdom that directly realizes the 'lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent self' in order to eliminate afflictive obstructions and attain the Hearer Nirvana because the ignorance that perceives 'a self-sufficient, substantially existent self' is considered to be the root of cyclic existence and to induce other afflictions, such as anger, attachment, etc. This root ignorance, all the other afflictions, and the seeds of both the foregoing constitute afflictive obstructions. Solitary Realizer practitioners have to eliminate not only afflictive obstructions but also the *coarse* cognitive obstructions. Coarse cognitive obstructions refer to the ignorance that perceives 'subject and

object to be different substantial entities' (i.e. that phenomena exist externally) and the seeds of that ignorance. Please note that this tenet system is similar to the Chittamatra/Mind-Only School in that its proponents assert the lack of external phenomena.

Therefore, Solitary Realizers have to cultivate the wisdom that directly realizes the 'lack of subject and object being different substantial entities', with which they eliminate afflictive obstructions *and* coarse cognitive obstructions.

Bodhisattvas have to cultivate the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness, i.e. the lack of true existence, in order to eliminate afflictive obstructions as well as coarse and *subtle* cognitive obstructions. According to this tenet system, subtle cognitive obstructions refer to the ignorance that perceives true existence as well as the seeds and the imprints of that ignorance.

Furthermore, the proponents of the Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamika School assert that a Hearer becomes an Arya when he directly realizes the 'lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent self' and reaches the Hearer path of seeing, a Solitary Realizer becomes an Arya when he directly realizes the 'lack of subject and object being different substantial entities' and reaches the Solitary Realizer path of seeing, and a Bodhisattva becomes an Arya when he directly realizes emptiness (the lack of true existence) and reaches the Mahayana path of seeing.

### Hearers:

	<b>Obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of the Hearer Nirvana</b>	<b>The wisdom that eliminates the obstructions to the Hearer Nirvana</b>
<b>Prasangika Madhyamika</b>	The ignorance that perceives inherent/true existence, all other afflictions induced by that ignorance, and the seeds of both the foregoing are afflictive obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of the Hearer Nirvana.	The wisdom that directly realizes the lack of inherent/true existence eliminates afflictive obstructions.
<b>Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamika</b>	The ignorance that perceives 'a self-sufficient, substantially existent self', all other afflictions induced by that ignorance, and the seeds of both the foregoing are afflictive obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of the Hearer Nirvana.	The wisdom that directly realizes the 'lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent self' eliminates afflictive obstructions.

### Solitary Realizers:

	<b>Obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of the Solitary Realizer Nirvana</b>	<b>The wisdom that eliminates the obstructions to the Solitary Realizer Nirvana</b>
<b>Prasangika Madhyamika</b>	The ignorance that perceives inherent/true existence, all other afflictions induced by that ignorance, and the seeds of both the foregoing are afflictive obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of the Solitary Realizer Nirvana.	The wisdom that directly realizes the lack of inherent/true existence eliminates afflictive obstructions.
<b>Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamika</b>	The ignorance that perceives 'subject and object being different substantial entities' and the seeds of that ignorance are <i>coarse</i> cognitive obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of the Solitary Realizer Nirvana.	The wisdom that directly realizes the 'lack of subject and object being different substantial entities' eliminates <i>coarse</i> cognitive obstructions.

**Bodhisattvas:**

	<b>Obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of Buddhahood</b>	<b>The wisdom that eliminates the obstructions to Buddhahood</b>
<b>Prasangika Madhyamika</b>	The imprints of the ignorance that perceives inherent/true existence and the imprints of all other afflictions induced by that ignorance are cognitive obstructions that mainly prevent the attainment of Buddhahood.	The wisdom that directly realizes the lack of inherent/true existence eliminates cognitive obstructions.
<b>Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamika</b>	The ignorance that perceives true existence and the seeds of that ignorance are <i>subtle</i> cognitive obstructions that prevent the attainment of Buddhahood.	The wisdom that directly realizes the lack of true existence eliminates <i>subtle</i> cognitive obstructions.

It is important to understand that proponents of both tenet systems assert that there is no common locus between a path that is typical of *Hinayana method* paths (e.g. the wish to attain self-liberation) and a path that is typical of *Mahayana method* paths (e.g. Bodhicitta).

However, the proponents of the Prasangika Madhyamika accept that a path that is typical of *Hinayana wisdom* paths and a path that is typical of *Mahayana wisdom* paths are synonymous, while the proponents of the Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamika hold that they are contradictory.

Regarding the sequence in which Maitreya prostrates to the three knowers, there is a reason why Maitreya first prostrates to the knower of bases, then to the knower of paths, and lastly to the exalted knower of aspects. Panchen Sonam Drakpa explains in his *Decisive Analysis* that Maitreya's intent is to teach the students of the *Ornament* the order in which to engage in Mahayana practice.

The knower of bases is associated with Hinayana practices, i.e. it is typical of Hinayana paths. Therefore, Mahayana trainees must first develop their minds with practices that are common to the Hinayana, for without them it is impossible to generate great compassion. Without great compassion it is impossible to cultivate Bodhicitta, without Bodhicitta it is impossible to develop the knower of paths, and without the knower of paths it is impossible to attain the exalted knower of aspects.

Hence it is important to understand that is not possible to engage in effective Mahayana practice without first building a sound foundation in the practices that are common to the Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle.

**THE PURPOSE FOR COMPOSING THE ORNAMENT**

Following the homage, Maitreya explains in two verses the purpose for composing the *Ornament*:

*The paths of the exalted knower of all aspects  
Are what the teacher explained here;  
That which is not experienced by others,  
And has the nature of the ten Dharma activities. [2]*

*The meaning of the sutras is placed within one's mindfulness.  
Then those with intelligence will see.  
Therefore, "easily realizing"  
Is the purpose of this composition. [3]*

The meaning of these two verses is:

[2] **The teacher**, the Buddha, **explained here** in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* **the paths** leading to enlightenment, i.e. the paths leading to **the exalted knower of aspects** - the knower that **has the nature** of, or is distinguished by, the **ten Dharma activities** (the ten topics) and **which is not experienced by others** such as non-Buddhists, Hearers and Solitary Realizers.

[3] **The meaning of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras is placed within the trainee's mindfulness** through repeated study and contemplation. **Then those with intelligence will come to see the meaning of these sutras. Therefore, "easily realizing the meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*" is the purpose of this composition: the *Ornament for Clear Realization*.**

### THE SUMMARY OF THE ORNAMENT

The homage and the explanation of the purpose are followed by a summary of the **Ornament** in fifteen verses.

These fifteen verses set forth the topics of the **Ornament**, which can be summarized into:

- i. the eight clear realizations and
- ii. the seventy topics

### The summary of the eight clear realizations

Maitreya summarizes the eight clear realizations in two verses:

*The Perfection of Wisdom (Sutras)  
Are well explained through the eight clear realizations,  
The exalted knower of all aspects, the knower of paths,  
Then the knower of all (bases), [4]*

*Completely clear realization of all aspects,  
Reaching the peak, gradualism,  
Actual complete enlightenment in a single moment,  
And the Dharmakaya are the eight aspects. [5]*

The meaning of the two verses is:

In the *Ornament*, the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras are well explained through the eight clear realizations**: (1) **the exalted knower of all aspects**, (2) **the knower of paths**, (3) **the knower of all bases**, (4) **the completely clear realization of all aspects** (Training in Complete Aspects), (5) **reaching the peak** (Peak Training), (6) **gradualism** (Gradual Training), (7) **actual complete enlightenment in a single moment** (Training in a Single Instant), and (8) **the resultant Dharmakaya** – those eight are the **eight aspects**, i.e. the eight clear realizations.

### The summary of the seventy topics:

As explained above, each clear realization is further distinguished by different topics. Hence, the eight chapters present seventy topics which the **Ornament** summarizes in thirteen verses. The first two of the thirteen verses present the ten topics of the first chapter, which characterize the exalted knower of aspects:

*Mind generation, practice instructions,  
The fourfold branches of definite distinction,  
The foundation of practice -  
The natural Dharmadhatu, [6]*

*The focal objects, the objectives,  
Armor-like, activities of engagement,  
Accumulation and definite emergence:  
These are the exalted knower of all aspects of the Conqueror. [7]*

Since the thirteen verses merely list the seventy topics, with more extensive explanation given in subsequent verses of the **Ornament**, only the first two verses are cited here.

The meaning of the two verses is:

(1) **Mind generation**, i.e. Bodhicitta, (2) **Mahayana practice instructions**, (3) **the fourfold branches of definite distinction**, i.e. the Mahayana path of preparation, (4) **the foundation of Mahayana practice** - the **naturally** abiding Buddha-nature of **Dharmadhatu**, (5) **the focal objects** of Mahayana practice, (6) **the three great objectives** of Mahayana practice, (7) **armor-like practice**, (8) **activities of engagement**, i.e. engaged practice, (9) practice of **accumulation**, and (10) practice of **definite emergence**. **These are the ten topics that characterize the exalted knower of all aspects of the Conqueror.**

The ten topics that characterize the exalted knower of aspects are:

1. **Bodhicitta** - Bodhicitta is explained first because it is the entry-way to the Mahayana path. It refers to a mental consciousness that aspires to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. The moment such a mind is newly generated, the practitioner enters the Mahayana path of accumulation.
2. **Mahayana practice instructions** - Yet aspiring to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings is not enough; one needs to engage in the practice of study, contemplation, and meditation on the Mahayana practice instructions given by the Buddha and other masters.
3. **The Mahayana path of preparation** - Having generated Bodhicitta (and thus entered the Mahayana path of accumulation), having studied, contemplated, and meditated on the two truths, etc. by relying on the Mahayana practice instructions, and having conceptually realized emptiness with an inferential cognizer, the Bodhisattva then enters the Mahayana path of preparation. The path of preparation is attained when the practitioner achieves a union of calm abiding and special insight that realizes emptiness conceptually.
4. **Buddha-nature/essence/lineage** - The nature of the mind that engages in Mahayana practice is the mind's *lack of true existence/ inherent existence*. This lack of true/ inherent existence of the mental consciousness is called 'Buddha-nature' and serves as the basis for Mahayana practice. Having reached the Mahayana path of accumulation, etc. one is now also able to realize that one possesses Buddha-nature.
5. **Focal object of Mahayana practice** - Having explained the basis of Mahayana practice, which is Buddha-nature, the *Ornament* proceeds to explain the focal objects of Mahayana practice.
6. **The three great objectives of Mahayana practice** - This topic is concerned with the objectives or purposes of Mahayana practice, i.e. the purpose for studying, contemplating, and meditating on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.
7. **Armor-like practice** - Having discussed the basis, focal objects, and objectives of Mahayana practice, the *Ornament* subsequently explains the actual practice starting with armor-like practice. Armor-like practice deals with the development of the right motivation, which serves as armor or protection against unfavorable conditions.
8. **Engaged practice** - After the motivation for practice, the engaged practice is explained. Engaged practice is concerned with the development of calm abiding, the six perfections, the Arya paths such as the path of seeing, etc., the four immeasurables and so forth.
9. **Practice of accumulation** - This topic is concerned with the practice of accumulating great merit and great wisdom.
10. **Practice of definite emergence** - This consists of practicing eight different 'definite emergences' such as the practice of the three great objectives, of equally realizing the emptiness of all phenomena, of endlessly working for the benefit of sentient beings, and so forth.

### THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE ORNAMENT

As mentioned before, the first chapter of the *Ornament* presents the first of the eight clear realizations, the *exalted knower of aspects*. Thus, the first chapter explains the meaning of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* by means of presenting the omniscient mind. The reason for presenting the omniscient mind in the beginning of the *Ornament* is to generate interest and enthusiasm in the continuums of practitioners. By studying, contemplating, and meditating on the first chapter, practitioners generate faith and the aspiration to attain the result of the Mahayana path – the omniscient mind of a Buddha (i.e. the exalted knower of aspects). This aspiration in turn motivates them to continue to study, contemplate, and meditate on the remaining chapters of the *Ornament*, which expound the variety of different paths that lead to the enlightened state of a Buddha.

However, instead of explaining the *exalted knower of aspects* itself (its definition, division, and so forth), the first chapter presents the *exalted knower of aspects* by presenting ten topics that characterize the *exalted knower of aspects*.

Therefore, the question arises, how do the ten topics characterize the omniscient mind of a Buddha?

Some of the earlier Tibetan translators assert that the ten topics characterize the exalted knower of aspects by way of being its causes. In other words, by comprehending those ten topics as the causes of

the omniscient mind of a Buddha one is effortlessly able to also comprehend the result - the omniscient mind itself.

Lama Tsongkhapa and his followers assert that the ten topics characterize the exalted knower of aspects by way of being its objects. The exalted knower of aspects is omniscient and therefore simultaneously realizes all the ten topics, i.e. realizes all the practices required to attain Buddhahood, making the Buddha the perfect guide to lead sentient beings to enlightenment. Thus, by comprehending the ten topics as the objects of the omniscient mind one is effortlessly able to comprehend the object-possessor - the omniscient mind.

## **BODHICITTA**

The first of the ten topics that characterize the *exalted knower* of aspects is Bodhicitta, which in English is called *Mind of Enlightenment* (Skt.: *Bodhicitta*, Tib.: *byang chub sems*) or *Mind Generation* (Skt.: *Chitta utpada*, Tib.: *sems bskyed*).

Maitreya explains Bodhicitta in three verses. The first verse (verse 19 of the *Ornament*) describes the definition and the two 'limbs' or components (Tib.: *yan lag*) of Bodhicitta:

*Mind Generation is the wish for  
Complete enlightenment for the benefit of others.  
Just as in the sutra, the one and the other  
Are explained briefly and extensively. [19]*

The meaning of the verse is:

The definition of **Mind Generation** or Bodhicitta is: a special mental main mind which is the entry-way to the Mahayana path and is concomitant with its assistant aspiration, **the intense wish** that focuses on **complete enlightenment for the benefit of others**.

**Just as the one** (the *enlightenment aspiration*) **and the other** (the *aspiration to benefit others*) are explained **in the middling sutra** (the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Twenty Thousand Verses*) likewise they **are explained briefly and extensively** in the short (the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Verses*) and the extensive sutra (the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in One Hundred Thousand Verses*) respectively.

Therefore, the first two lines of the verse 19 present the definition of Bodhicitta, while the third and fourth lines present the two 'limbs' or components of Bodhicitta.

### **The definition of Bodhicitta**

The definition of Bodhicitta is: a special mental main mind (mental consciousness that is a main mind) which is the entry-way to the Mahayana path and is concomitant with its assistant aspiration that focuses on complete enlightenment for the benefit of others.

The meaning of the different aspects of the definition:

- ❖ **Special:** Bodhicitta is special because it is one of the principal states of awareness required to attain enlightenment
- ❖ **It is a main mind:** from the point of view of function, consciousness or awareness can be divided into a main mind and mental factors. Every main mind is concomitant with or accompanied by various different mental factors (i.e. mental functions). Bodhicitta itself is a main mind, for even though it is dependent on its concomitant mental factors, it is nonetheless a main mind, the principal function of which is to apprehend its object
- ❖ **It is a mental consciousness:** of the two, sense and mental consciousnesses, Bodhicitta is a mental consciousness because it is cultivated in dependence on meditation.
- ❖ **It is the entry-way to the Mahayana:** It is the entry-way to the Mahayana since having Bodhicitta is the criterion that determines whether or not one has entered the Mahayana path and has become a Bodhisattva. Therefore, the generation of the first moment of Bodhicitta marks the first moment of the Mahayana path of accumulation.
- ❖ **It is concomitant with its assistant aspiration:** Even though Bodhicitta itself is a main mind, it is concomitant with or accompanied by different mental factors. One of the principal mental factors accompanying Bodhicitta is the mental factor of aspiration.



- ❖ **Its assistant aspiration focuses on complete enlightenment:** the aspiration that is concomitant with Bodhicitta in the continuums of Bodhisattvas focuses on their own complete enlightenment in that it *aspires* to complete enlightenment. The aspiration that is concomitant with Bodhicitta in the continuums of Buddhas focuses on complete enlightenment in that it *realizes* complete enlightenment. Even though Buddhas possess aspiration and the *function* of aspiration, their aspiration does not aspire to anything anymore because they have attained all the positive qualities a living being can possibly attain, and because an awareness that aspires must be a conceptual consciousness whereas a Buddha has overcome all conceptual consciousnesses.

Therefore, Bodhicitta is a special awareness that is the result of intense and prolonged meditation. It is driven by great compassion for all sentient beings, arises spontaneously, and profoundly affects the actions of body, speech, and mind of those who have cultivated it in their mental continuum.

### **The two limbs/components of Bodhicitta**

Bodhicitta has two components, one which is its cause and the other its concomitant mental factor:

- a) The aspiration to benefit others
- b) The enlightenment aspiration

#### ***The aspiration to benefit others***

The *aspiration to benefit others* (Tib.: *gzhan don 'dun pa*) is a mental factor that focuses on the benefit of others. Particularly in the continuum of a Mahayana practitioner, it is a mental factor that *aspires* to the benefit of others.

Here '*others*' refers to sentient beings other than oneself, whereas 'benefit' can be of two types: (1) temporary benefit, which refers to the liberation of an Arhat and (2) ultimate benefit, which refers to the enlightenment of a Buddha

The *aspiration to benefit others* is a component of Bodhicitta because it constitutes the mental factor of aspiration that is one of Bodhicitta's main causes. It therefore precedes the cultivation of Bodhicitta and arises as a result of meditating on the two principal methods for generating Bodhicitta: (1) the 'Six Causes and One Effect Instruction' (understanding that all sentient beings have been one's mother, recognizing their kindness, and so forth) and (2) 'Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others'. The main focal object of the *aspiration to benefit others* is other sentient beings' liberation from suffering in general and their enlightenment in particular. Thus, the aspiration that must precede the *Mind of Enlightenment* is a mental factor that aspires to other sentient beings' liberation from suffering and their complete enlightenment.

#### ***The enlightenment aspiration***

The *enlightenment aspiration* refers to the above-mentioned mental factor concomitant with Bodhicitta that focuses on complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. It arises as a *result* of wishing for the liberation and enlightenment of all sentient beings, i.e. it arises as a result of the *aspiration to benefit others*.

The enlightenment of a Buddha refers to two bodies or *kayas*: (1) the *Dharmakaya* (*Truth-body*, Tib.: *Chos sku*) and (2) the *Rupakaya* (*Form-body*, Tib.: *gzugs sku*). The *Dharmakaya* constitutes the omniscient mind, the cessation of cognitive obstructions, and so forth. The *Rupakaya*, on the other hand, refers to an actual Arya Buddha who gives teachings and manifests in whichever way is most beneficial to sentient beings. Since sentient beings cannot communicate with the omniscient mind or the cessations of a Buddha, it is the *Rupakaya* that is most beneficial to them. Thus, when aspiring to attain enlightenment - as a result of aspiring to benefit sentient beings - Mahayana practitioners mainly aspire to attain the *Rupakaya* of a Buddha.

In short, the *aspiration to benefit others* must precede the generation of Bodhicitta and thus the generation of the *enlightenment aspiration*, because the main objective of a practitioner of the Mahayana is the benefit of others, i.e. others' liberation and enlightenment.

Hence, based on the 'Sevenfold Cause and Effect Method' or 'Equalizing and Exchanging Self for Others', practitioners first generate great compassion for all sentient beings. Then they cultivate the *aspiration to benefit others*, that is, the aspiration that wishes for all sentient beings to attain liberation and Buddhahood. However, since one is able to lead others to enlightenment only *after* one has become a Buddha oneself, after generating the *aspiration to benefit others* practitioners generate an aspiration that

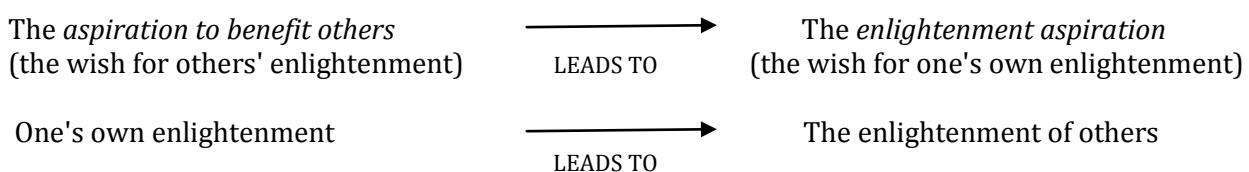
focuses on their own enlightenment (i.e. the *enlightenment aspiration*). Hence, the aspiration to attain enlightenment oneself arises from the aspiration that seeks the enlightenment of all sentient beings and thus it arises in dependence on the latter.

Furthermore, of the two objectives - others' enlightenment and one's own enlightenment - others' enlightenment is the principal or immediate objective whereas one's own enlightenment is merely the secondary or indirect aim.

An analogy for this is someone having the wish to get a glass in order to drink some water. Drinking water is that person's principal or immediate aim. In order to be able to drink the water, he then wishes for a glass. Getting the glass is his secondary or indirect objective, for the glass merely serves as the means to accomplish his principal aim of drinking water.

Therefore, wishing for one's own enlightenment compares with the wish to get a glass, for it merely serves as the means to accomplish others' welfare.

However, even though the aspiration for others' enlightenment must precede the aspiration to one's own, in order to fulfill the two aspirations one's own enlightenment must precede the enlightenment of others.



The three sutras referred to in the third and fourth lines of the first verse of the *Ornament's* three verses on Bodhicitta are the extensive, middling, and short ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*** (i.e. the extensive, middling, and short Sublime Mothers). As mentioned before, the extensive sutra refers to the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in One Hundred Thousand Verses***, the middling sutra to the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Twenty Thousand Verses***, and the short sutra to the ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Verses***.

Thus, Maitreya says in these two lines that the two components of Bodhicitta, the *aspiration to benefit others* and the *enlightenment aspiration* are explained in the three principal sutric sources of the ***Ornament***.

### **Bodhicitta's categories from the point of view of similes**

Having presented the definition and the two components of Bodhicitta, Maitreya sets forth twenty-two different types of Bodhicitta, described by way of twenty-two similes. The ***Ornament*** enumerates the twenty-two similes in two verses (verses 20 and 21):

*As for this: earth, gold, moon, fire,  
Treasure, jewel mine, ocean,  
Vajra, mountain, medicine, spiritual friend,  
Wish-fulfilling jewel, sun, song [20]*

*King, store-house, great path,  
Riding mount, spring,  
Pleasant sound, river, and cloud.  
Thus, these are the twenty-two aspects [21]*

The meaning of the two verses is:

**As for this**, the categories by way of similes refer to twenty-two different types of Bodhicitta: (1) **earth-like** Bodhicitta, (2) **gold-like** Bodhicitta, (3) **moon-like** Bodhicitta, (4) **fire-like** Bodhicitta, (5) great **treasure-like** Bodhicitta, (6) **jewel mine-like** Bodhicitta, (7) great **ocean-like** Bodhicitta, (8) **Vajra-like** Bodhicitta, (9) king of **mountain-like** Bodhicitta, (10) **medicine-like** Bodhicitta, (11) **spiritual friend-like** Bodhicitta, (12) **wish-fulfilling jewel-like** Bodhicitta, (13) **sun-like** Bodhicitta, (14) pleasant Dharma **song-like** Bodhicitta, (15) great **king-like** Bodhicitta, (16) **store house-like** Bodhicitta, (17) **great path-like** Bodhicitta, (18) **riding mount-like** Bodhicitta, (19) **spring-like** Bodhicitta, (20) **pleasant sound-like** Bodhicitta, (21) **river-like** Bodhicitta, (22) **cloud-like** Bodhicitta. **Thus, these are the twenty-two different aspects** of Bodhicitta.

The twenty-two types of Bodhicitta that the twenty-two similes represent are:

(1) Bodhicitta endowed with aspiration, (2) Bodhicitta endowed with resolve, (3) Bodhicitta endowed with a special attitude, (4) Bodhicitta endowed with training in the similitude of the three knowers, (5) Bodhicitta endowed with generosity, (6) Bodhicitta endowed with ethics, (7) Bodhicitta endowed with patience, (8) Bodhicitta endowed with joyous effort, (9) Bodhicitta endowed with concentration, (10) Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of wisdom, (11) Bodhicitta endowed with skillful means, (12) Bodhicitta endowed with prayer, (13) Bodhicitta endowed with power, (14) Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of exalted wisdom, (15) Bodhicitta endowed with clairvoyance, (16) Bodhicitta endowed with merit and exalted wisdom, (17) Bodhicitta endowed with the thirty-seven harmonies of enlightenment, (18) Bodhicitta endowed with compassion and special insight, (19) Bodhicitta endowed with retention and confidence, (20) Bodhicitta endowed with a festival of the four seals of Dharma, (21) Bodhicitta endowed with the one path traveled, and (22) Bodhicitta concomitant with the truth body which emanates the twelve enlightened deeds and benefits sentient beings.

Next follows a detailed explanation of the twenty-two types of Bodhicitta and their similes. Please note that the former types of Bodhicitta are the causes of the latter types.

### **1. Earth-like Bodhicitta**

*Earth-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with aspiration*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the small Mahayana path of accumulation. *Bodhicitta endowed with aspiration* is like the earth, for just as the earth is the foundation for houses, crops, etc., *Bodhicitta endowed with aspiration* serves as the basis from which all wholesome qualities can grow and all higher paths be induced.

### **2. Gold-like Bodhicitta**

*Gold-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with resolve*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the middling path of accumulation. *Bodhicitta endowed with resolve* is like refined gold, for just as refined gold's nature does not change even after being cut, rubbed and burned, *Bodhicitta endowed with resolve* cannot degenerate anymore. This means that once Bodhisattvas reach the middling path of accumulation and cultivate *gold-like Bodhicitta*, their Bodhicitta - and consequently their Mahayana path - can no longer degenerate.

### **3. Moon-like Bodhicitta**

*Moon-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with the special attitude*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the great path of accumulation. *Bodhicitta endowed with the special attitude* is like the waxing moon, for just as the new moon waxes until it is full, with *Bodhicitta endowed with the special attitude* a Bodhisattva's Dharma qualities increase continuously. Those Dharma qualities are, for instance, the thirty-seven harmonies of enlightenment (the four mindfulnesses, etc.). The reason for such increase is that on the great path of accumulation Bodhisattvas cultivate a special meditative stabilization called '*Meditative Stability of Continuous Dharma*', which enables them to directly perceive the Nirmanakaya/Emanation bodies of Buddhas in distant places and receive teachings from them.

### **4. Fire-like Bodhicitta**

*Fire-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with training in the similitude of the three knowers*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the path of preparation. *Bodhicitta endowed with training in the similitude of the three knowers* is like fire because with *Bodhicitta endowed with training in the similitude of the three knowers*, Bodhisattvas "start to burn the firewood of obstructions to the three exalted knowers".

Bodhisattvas reach the path of preparation when they generate the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness conceptually. With the attainment of this union conjoined with *Bodhicitta endowed with training in the similitude of the three knowers*, Bodhisattvas start to undermine the obstructions to omniscience and in this way the obstructions to the attainment of the three exalted knowers of a Buddha. The three exalted knowers are the 'knower of bases', 'the knower of paths', and the 'exalted knower of aspects' in the continuum of a Buddha. Please note that Bodhicitta on the path of preparation is called *Bodhicitta endowed with training in the similitude of the three knowers* because Bodhisattvas on the path of preparation, who did not become Hinayana Arhats before they entered the Mahayana paths, have only *similitudes* of the three

knowers in their continuums. They have only similitudes of the three knowers in their continuums because they will only generate the first two of the three knowers - the knower of bases and the knower of paths - once they reach the path of seeing (i.e. the first Bodhisattva bhumi) and the last of the three knowers - the exalted knower of aspects - once they reach full enlightenment.

#### **5. Great treasure-like Bodhicitta**

*Great treasure-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with generosity*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the first Bodhisattva bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with generosity* is like a treasure because it satisfies sentient beings through resources, etc. Even though Bodhisattvas engage in the practice of the six or ten perfections on all four Bodhisattva paths (i.e. from the Mahayana path of accumulation to the Mahayana path of meditation), on the first Bodhisattva bhumi they engage especially in the practice of the perfection of generosity. Bodhisattvas reach the first bhumi (and the path of seeing) once they realize emptiness directly. When they arise from the meditative absorption realizing emptiness directly, they enter the subsequent attainment period of the Mahayana path of seeing. During that period they especially engage in the practice of the perfection of generosity. Therefore, on the first bhumi Bodhisattvas obtain a special confidence in the practice of the perfection of generosity; they are able to easily give away their body and to place others in the practice of generosity.

#### **6. Jewel mine-like Bodhicitta**

*Jewel mine-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with ethics*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the second bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with ethics* is like a jewel mine because with *Bodhicitta endowed with ethics* Bodhisattvas obtain excellent qualities. Bodhisattvas on the second bhumi engage especially in the practice of the perfection of ethics/morality. Owing to the emphasis on controlling and purifying themselves, Bodhisattvas on this bhumi become the source of many great qualities that are compared to a jewel mine providing great riches. Furthermore, on the second bhumi, Bodhisattvas do not even dream about engaging in non-ethical conduct; they obtain a special confidence in the practice of the perfection of ethics and are able to place others in the practice.

#### **7. Great ocean-like Bodhicitta**

*Great ocean-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with patience*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the third Bodhisattva bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with patience* is like a great ocean, for just as a great ocean is not disturbed when objects are thrown into it, with *Bodhicitta endowed with patience* Bodhisattvas are not swayed or affected by disturbing factors such as aggression and suffering. Bodhisattvas on the third bhumi especially engage in the practice of the perfection of patience. Therefore, they obtain a special confidence in the practice of the perfection of patience and are able to place others in the practice.

#### **8. Vajra-like Bodhicitta**

*Vajra-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with joyous effort*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the fourth bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with joyous effort* is like a vajra, for just as a vajra has the quality of indestructibility, with *Bodhicitta endowed with joyous effort* a Bodhisattva's resolve is indestructible. Bodhisattvas on the fourth bhumi emphasize the practice of the perfection of joyous effort. Therefore they do not become discouraged or depressed by any obstacles they encounter; they obtain a special confidence in the practice of the perfection of joyous effort and are able to place others in the practice.

#### **9. King of mountain-like Bodhicitta**

*King of mountain-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with concentration*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the fifth bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with concentration* is like the king of mountains because just as the king of mountains possesses great solidity, likewise with *Bodhicitta endowed with concentration* a Bodhisattva's mind is very firm and stable. Bodhisattvas on the fifth bhumi emphasize the practice of the perfection of concentration. Therefore, their minds remain unmoved by distracting objects; they obtain a special confidence in the practice of the perfection of concentration and are able to place others in the practice.

### **10. Medicine-like Bodhicitta**

*Medicine-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of wisdom*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the sixth bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of wisdom* is like medicine because just as medicine pacifies illnesses, with *Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of wisdom* Bodhisattvas are able to pacify the illness of afflictive and cognitive obstructions. Bodhisattvas on the sixth bhumi especially engage in the practice of the perfection of wisdom. Therefore, they are able to enter into and arise from an absorption that perceives a cessation within the shortest amount of time in which an action can be completed. Further, they obtain a special confidence in the practice of the perfection of wisdom and are able to place others in the practice.

### **11. Spiritual friend-like Bodhicitta**

*Spiritual friend-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with skillful means*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the seventh bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with skillful means* is like a virtuous spiritual friend because just as a virtuous spiritual friend never gives up seeking the welfare of sentient beings, with *Bodhicitta endowed with skillful means* Bodhisattvas enhance their mastery and attain confidence in skillful means. Thus, they never forsake the welfare of a single sentient being.

### **12. Wish-fulfilling jewel-like Bodhicitta**

*Wish-fulfilling jewel-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with prayer*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the eighth bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with prayer* is like a wish-fulfilling jewel because just as a wish-fulfilling jewel actualizes all material dreams and aspirations, with *Bodhicitta endowed with prayer* Bodhisattvas possess the five clairvoyances and are able to actualize many of their prayers and aspirations for the welfare of sentient beings.

### **13. Sun-like Bodhicitta**

*Sun-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with power*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the ninth bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with power* is like the sun because just as the sun shines equally on everything and just as it ripens crops etc., with *Bodhicitta endowed with power* Bodhisattvas obtain the four means of gathering disciples, which enable them to gradually lead trainees to the practice of the perfections and to ripen their continuums.

The four means of gathering disciples are: (1) giving necessities such as food, drink, clothes and so forth, (2) speaking pleasantly, (3) giving teachings according to disciples' needs, and (4) practicing in accordance with what one teaches.

### **14. Pleasant Dharma song-like Bodhicitta**

*Pleasant Dharma song-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of exalted wisdom*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the tenth bhumi. *Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of exalted wisdom* is like a pleasant Dharma song because just as a pleasant Dharma song inspires those who hear it, with *Bodhicitta endowed with the perfection of exalted wisdom* Bodhisattvas, having trained in the 'Four Specific Understandings', greatly inspire trainees through teaching the Dharma. The 'Four Specific Understandings' (four ways in which Bodhisattvas know the distinct features, characteristics and states of phenomena) are: (1) specific perfect understanding of Dharma, (2) specific perfect understanding of the meaning, (3) specific perfect understanding of definitive words, and (4) specific perfect understanding of confidence.

The following five types of Bodhicitta pertain to all three pure bhumis - the eighth, ninth and tenth bhumis. As before, the former types are the causes of the latter types:

### **15. Great king-like Bodhicitta**

*Great king-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with clairvoyance*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the three pure bhumis. *Bodhicitta endowed with clairvoyance* is like a great king because just as a great king accomplishes the welfare of his subjects through his power and status, Bodhisattvas with *Bodhicitta endowed with clairvoyance* obtain great power through clairvoyance. Owing to the power of their clairvoyance their realizations do not degenerate and they are able to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings in the numerous worlds of the ten directions.

### **16. Store house-like Bodhicitta**

*Store house-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with merit and exalted wisdom*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the three pure bhūmis. *Bodhicitta endowed with merit and exalted wisdom* is like a store house from which wealth can be distributed because with *Bodhicitta endowed with merit and exalted wisdom* Bodhisattvas possess the treasury of the two great collections of merit and exalted wisdom.

### **17. Great path-like Bodhicitta**

*Great path-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with the thirty-seven harmonies of enlightenment*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the three pure bhūmis. *Bodhicitta endowed with the thirty-seven harmonies of enlightenment* is like a great path or highway because all Arya Bodhisattvas of the three times have traveled and will travel the path of the practices of the thirty-seven harmonies of enlightenment.

### **18. Riding mount-like Bodhicitta**

*Riding mount-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with compassion and special insight*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the three pure bhūmis. *Bodhicitta endowed with compassion and special insight* is like a riding mount because just as a riding mount takes its rider to his destination, with *Bodhicitta endowed with compassion and special insight* Bodhisattvas are taken to full enlightenment. In order to reach full enlightenment, Bodhisattvas must avoid the extreme of Samsara and the extreme of Nirvana/solitary peace. Thus, by cultivating special insight Bodhisattvas overcome Samsara and by cultivating compassion they avoid Nirvana.

### **19. Spring-like Bodhicitta**

*Spring-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with retention and confidence*, which refers to Bodhicitta on the three pure bhūmis. *Bodhicitta endowed with retention and confidence* is like a spring because just as a spring spouts water and is inexhaustible, with *Bodhicitta endowed with retention and confidence* Bodhisattvas are able to retain the Dharma without exhaustion. By means of retention Bodhisattvas are able to retain previously heard and unheard Dharmas and by means of confidence they are able to retain them inexhaustibly.

The last three types of Bodhicitta pertain to the three Buddha bhūmis. (Please note that the first of those three types actually manifests in the continuums of sentient beings. Nonetheless it is explained to *pertain* to the Buddha bhūmi):

### **20. Pleasant sound-like Bodhicitta**

*Pleasant sound-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with a festival of the four seals of Dharma*, which refers to Bodhicitta at the end of the continuum as a sentient being. *Bodhicitta endowed with a festival of the four seals of Dharma* is like a pleasant sound because with this mind, Bodhisattvas pleasantly proclaim the Dharma of the four seals to those aspiring to liberation. Even though Bodhisattvas at the end of the continuum as sentient beings abide in the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness and are thus unable to teach the Dharma, they send out numerous emanations who teach.

### **21. River-like Bodhicitta**

*River-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta endowed with the one path traveled*, which refers to Bodhicitta in the continuum of a Buddha who has newly attained enlightenment. *Bodhicitta endowed with the one path traveled* is like a river because just as a river flows effortlessly, indiscriminately and continuously, likewise with *Bodhicitta endowed with the one path traveled* Buddhas effortlessly, indiscriminately and continuously work for the benefit of sentient beings.

### **22. Cloud-like Bodhicitta**

*Cloud-like Bodhicitta* represents *Bodhicitta concomitant with the truth body that emanates the twelve enlightened deeds and benefits sentient beings*, which refers to Bodhicitta in the continuums of Buddhas who emanate a supreme Nirmanakaya/emanation body. *Bodhicitta concomitant with the truth body that emanates the twelve enlightened deeds and benefits sentient beings* is like a cloud because it enables Buddhas to rain down the twelve enlightened deeds.

The twelve enlightened deeds are (1) descent from Tushita pure realm, (2) entering the womb of his mother, (3) taking birth, (4) displaying his skill in the worldly arts, (5) enjoying the company of his wife, (6) becoming a monk, (7) practicing austerity, (8) meditating under the Bodhi tree, (9) defeating Mara, (10) attaining full enlightenment, (11) turning the wheel of Dharma, and (12) passing away.

This completes the presentation of Bodhicitta. What follows is a presentation of **Mahayana practice instructions**, which is the second of the ten topics of the *Ornament's* first chapter.

### MAHAYANA PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

As mentioned above, aspiring to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, i.e. cultivating Bodhicitta is not enough; trainees need to engage in the practice of study, contemplation, and meditation on the Mahayana practice instructions given by the Buddha and other masters.

Maitreya's *Ornament* sets forth ten Mahayana practice instructions which expound ten different topics. The ten topics are:

1. The two truths
2. The four noble truths
3. The three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha)
4. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of non-involvement
5. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of tirelessness
6. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of thoroughly applying oneself to the path of practice
7. Five sublime eyes
8. Six clairvoyances
9. Path of seeing
10. Path of meditation

The *Ornament for Clear Realization* describes the ten topics of the ten Mahayana practice instructions in two verses:

*Practice, the truths,  
The three jewels such as the Buddha,  
Non-involvement, tirelessness,  
Thoroughly upholding the path, [22]*

*The five sublime eyes, clairvoyance's  
Six qualities and what are called "the paths of seeing  
And meditation": these practice instructions  
Should be known as having a tenfold character. [23]*

The meaning of the two verses is:

Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation should now listen, contemplate and meditate on the Mahayana practice instructions. This will enhance their practice and their progress on the path to enlightenment.

**These practice instructions should be known as having a tenfold character** since they describe the following ten topics:

1. The two truths: the two truths are explained in order to understand the nature and the aspect of **practice**
2. The four noble truths: **the** four noble **truths** are the focal object of practice
3. The three Jewels: going for refuge to **the three jewels such as the Buddha** and so forth serves as the basis of one's practice
4. The diligence of non-involvement: the diligence of **non-involvement** counteracts the laziness of engaging in non-virtuous actions and assists practitioners in stabilizing their practice
5. The diligence of tirelessness: the diligence of **tirelessness** counteracts the laziness of sloth/procrastination and assists practitioners in increasing their practice

6. The diligence of thoroughly upholding the path of practice: the diligence of **thoroughly upholding the path** of practice counteracts the laziness of self-contempt/faintheartedness and assists practitioners in averting the deterioration of their practice
7. The five sublime eyes: **the five sublime eyes** are special powers that practitioners need in order to become more self-sufficient
8. The six clairvoyances: **clairvoyance's six qualities**, i.e. the six types of clairvoyance, are needed in order to quickly complete the accumulation of merit
9. The path of seeing: practitioners on the **path of seeing** have newly cultivated the meditative absorption directly realizing emptiness. The principal function of this meditative absorption is to permanently eliminate the *intellectually acquired* ignorance etc (i.e. the objects of elimination of the path of seeing).
10. The path of meditation: practitioners on the **path of meditation** have achieved the cessation of the intellectually acquired ignorance etc. and their meditative absorption directly realizing emptiness now eliminates the *innate* ignorance etc. (i.e. the objects of elimination of the path of meditation).

The first three topics (the two truths, the four noble truths, and the three Jewels) are from the point of view of practice itself; the next three topics (the three types of diligence) are from the point of view of avoiding the manifestation of negativities in the continuums of practitioners; the following two topics (the five sublime eyes and the six clairvoyances) are from the point of view of increasing practitioners' qualities, and the last two topics (the path of seeing and the path of meditation) are from the point of view of irreversibly eliminating negativities in the continuums of practitioners.

This completes the presentation of the Mahayana practice instructions. As an auxiliary topic to the third of the ten topics of Mahayana practice instructions (the three Jewels), Maitreya then expounds on the Sangha Jewel by setting forth the **Twenty Sangha**.

### THE TWENTY SANGHA

Having set forth the ten topics of the Mahayana practice instructions, particularly the three objects of refuge, the three Jewels, next follows an extensive presentation of the Sangha Jewel. The Sangha Jewel here refers to the Sangha in the strictest sense, that is, the Arya beings who have directly realized the lack of true existence. Therefore, the extensive presentation of the Sangha Jewel is in fact an extensive presentation of different types of Aryas.

The ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in One Hundred Thousand Verses*** lists 48 Sangha. As it is difficult to understand these 48 types they are condensed into 20 types. The twenty Sangha represent a classification of Hinayana Aryas (i.e. chiefly Hearer Aryas) who differ in terms of the realms where they are reborn, their attainments, the number of lives remaining before they attain the state of a foe-destroyer, and so on. They are also called the metaphorical Sangha (Tib.: *mtshon byed dge 'dun*) because they illustrate particular Mahayana Aryas. The Mahayana Aryas illustrated here are called the 'actual' Sangha (Tib.: *don gyi dge 'dun*) - 'actual' in the sense that they are the Sangha that is illustrated.

Maitreya's **Ornament** sets forth the twenty Sangha in two verses:

*Weak and sharp mental faculty;  
Believers-by-faith, attainers-by-seeing; from type to type;  
One obstacle; intermediate state and upon rebirth,  
[Compositional] factor and without [compositional] factor; proceeding to Not Low,[24]*

*Three jumpers; eventually proceeding to the Peak of Cyclic Existence,  
Destroyed attachment to form: pacifying  
[During] the Dharma of seeing, actualizing a body;  
And the rhinoceros are the twenty.[25]*

According to the eighth century Indian scholar Haribhadra, the **Ornament** reveals seventeen types of Sangha explicitly, and three types implicitly.



The meaning of the two verses of the **Ornament** is:

**The twenty Sangha are:** (1) approachers to the result of stream-enterer who are of **weak mental faculty**, (2) approachers to the result of stream-enterer who are of **sharp mental faculty**, (3) stream enterers born **from** celestial **type to** [celestial] **type**, (4) stream enterers born **from** human **type to** [human] **type**, (5) approachers to the result of once-returner who are either **believers-by-faith** or **attainers-by-Dharma**, (6) once-returners [who have] one life, **one obstacle**, (7) approachers to the result of non-returner, (8) non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond in the **intermediate state**, (9) non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond in the **birth state**, (10) non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond with a compositional **factor**, (11) non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond **without** a compositional **factor**, (12) - (14) the **three types of jumpers** who are non-returners who progress to a higher [level] by eventually **proceeding to** the **Not Low Level**, (15) - (16) non-returners who will **pacify [during] the Dharma of seeing** and non-returners who will **actualize a body** - in this case they are both non-returners who have **destroyed attachment to** the **Form Realm**, called, "those who **eventually proceed to the Peak of Cyclic Existence**", and (17) and rhinoceros-like solitary realizers. These are the seventeen types of Sangha who are revealed explicitly.

The three types of Sangha who are revealed implicitly are: (18) simple abiders in the result of stream-enterer, (19) simple abiders in the result of once-returner, and (20) approachers to the result of foe-destroyer.

Therefore, the Twenty Sangha are:

1. Approachers to the result of stream-enterer who are of weak mental faculty
2. Approachers to the result of stream-enterer who are of sharp mental faculty
3. Stream enterers born from celestial type to [celestial] type
4. Stream enterers born from human type to [human] type
5. Approachers to the result of once-returner
6. Once returners [who have] one life, one obstacle
7. Approachers to the result of non-returner
8. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond in the intermediate state
9. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond in the birth state
10. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond with a compositional factor
11. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond without a compositional factor
12. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and who are jumpers
13. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and who are half-jumpers
14. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and transmigrate to all abodes
15. Non-returners who will pacify [during] the Dharma of seeing and who have eliminated attachment to the Form Realm (i.e. attained a formless absorption)
16. Non-returners who will actualize a body and attain Nirvana in the Peak of Cyclic Existence Level
17. Rhinoceros-like solitary realizers
18. Simple abiders in the result of stream-enterer
19. Simple abiders in the result of once-returner
20. Approachers to the result of foe-destroyer

This completes the summary of the verses of the **Ornament** we discussed during previous courses. Next follows an extensive description of the first topics of this year's spring course, the **Mahayana path of preparation**.

## THE MAHAYANA PATH OF PREPARATION

The following presentation is according to Panchen Sonam Drakpa's **General Meaning**, which is a commentary on Gyaltsab je's **Ornament of the Essence**. The **Ornament of the Essence**, in turn, is a commentary on **Clarifying the Meaning**, a short and precise text composed by the eighth century Master Haribhadra and, as mentioned before, considered to be one of the best Indian commentaries on Maitreya's **Ornament**.

However, only some of the passages presented below are literal translations of the **General Meaning's** exposition on the Mahayana path of preparation, while the remainder are modified and interspersed with additional explanations.

Panchen Sonam Drakpa starts his exposition by citing a conjunctive or introductory passage (Tib.: *mtshams sbyor*) that explains why the presentation of the ten types of practice instruction is followed by the presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation:

Having set forth the ten types of Mahayana practice instructions, next follows a detailed presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation (the second of the five Mahayana paths).

The reason for presenting the Mahayana path of preparation after having set forth the ten practice instructions is that on the Mahayana path of accumulation, practitioners come to a true understanding of emptiness (the lack of true/inherent existence of phenomena) with 'an awareness arisen from hearing' and 'an awareness arisen from contemplation' by relying on the ten practice instructions. 'An awareness arisen from hearing' refers to a correctly assuming consciousness and 'an awareness arisen from contemplation' to an inferential cognizer. A correctly assuming consciousness apprehending emptiness correctly perceives emptiness but does not realize it, while an inferential cognizer apprehending emptiness not only apprehends emptiness correctly but also realizes it.

Hence Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation first cultivate a correctly assuming consciousness apprehending emptiness and thereafter an inferential cognizer realizing emptiness. Both awarenesses are cultivated in reliance on the ten practice instructions.

As a result of these two awarenesses they cultivate the Mahayana path of preparation that is 'an awareness mainly arisen from meditation' realizing emptiness. 'An awareness mainly arisen from meditation' refers to a *meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight*. The attainment of the first moment of a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness marks the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation. (This explanation is from the point of view of Bodhisattvas who entered the Mahayana path from the outset and did not realize emptiness directly while abiding on the Hinayana path.)

Therefore, since the Mahayana path of accumulation apprehending emptiness is the cause of the Mahayana path of preparation realizing emptiness and since the Mahayana path of accumulation realizing emptiness is generated in reliance on the ten practice instructions, the Mahayana path of preparation realizing emptiness is also generated in reliance on the ten practice instructions.

Haribhadra says in his **Clarifying the Meaning**:

Beginners have thus obtained the [Mahayana] practice instructions. Since the elements of definite differentiation (i.e. the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation) come forth, the elements of definite differentiation [will be explained].

Gyaltsab je says in his **Ornament of the Essence**:

Beginners abiding on the [Mahayana] path of accumulation, owing to having thus obtained the [Mahayana] practice instructions, meditate on the meaning of the practice instructions so that the elements of definite differentiation (i.e. the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation) come forth. Therefore, subsequent to [the Mahayana practice instructions] the elements of definite differentiation - the path that is a similitude of generating the path of seeing - will be explained.

After Panchen Sonam Drakpa gives the reason why the presentation of the Mahayana practice instructions is followed by the presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation, he cites the following sutric passages which teach the Mahayana path of preparation:

*A Bodhisattva, a great heroic being, having not lapsed into the fault of the Bodhisattva's peak [training] (Tib.: rtse mo'i sbyor ba) and seeking to fully perfect all such root virtues, trains in the perfection of wisdom.*

(and:)

*Then the Venerable Shariputra asks the Venerable Subhuti, "Venerable Subhuti, how does one lapse into the fault of the peak [training] of a Bodhisattva, a great heroic being?" Venerable Subhuti replies by*

*saying to the Venerable Shariputra, "Venerable Shariputra, a Bodhisattva, a great heroic being who is not skillful practices the six perfections. Not knowing how to be skillful he relies on the meditative stabilizations of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, and even though he does not fall to the level of Hearers and Solitary Realizers he does not engage in not having the fault of a Bodhisattva. Such is the fault of the peak [training] of a Bodhisattva, a great heroic being."*

(and:)

*Shariputra says, "Venerable Subhuti, why does one incur the fault of a Bodhisattva, a great heroic being?" Subhuti says, "Venerable Shariputra, when a Bodhisattva, a great heroic being, practices the six perfections, he strongly adheres to [the true existence of] the impermanence of sound, fully abides, knows all...*

and so forth.

Here the title 'Venerable' is a translation of the Tibetan term *tshe dang ldan pa* which literally means 'possessing life'. This is the title that is used to address junior monastics and according to Geshe Palden Drakpa (a contemporary master from Drepung Loseling Monastery), means "possessing a meaningful life".

'Not having the fault of a Bodhisattva' (Tib.: *byang chub sems pa'i skyon med pa*) signifies a Bodhisattva realizing emptiness directly. Hence, the fault of the peak training of a Bodhisattva refers to a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation who, owing to strong grasping at true existence, is unable to realize emptiness directly and thus proceed to the path of seeing. Please note that *peak training* refers to the fifth of the eight clear realizations - the eight clear realizations being the main subject matter of the **Ornament**. The first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation marks the first moment of *peak training*.

The citation of the sutric passages is followed by Panchen Sonam Drakpa quoting the first line of the first two verses of the **Ornament**:

*Just as the focal object and the aspect...*

and so on.

These two verses set forth the Mahayana path of preparation by way of briefly presenting the five characteristics of (1) *focal object*, (2) *aspect*, (3) *cause*, (4) *special tutor*, and (5) *mode of association* by which the Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation. According to another interpretation, the two verses present a further sixth characteristic by which the Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation: the characteristic of (6) *division*.

Thereafter, Panchen Sonam Drakpa quotes the first line of the next ten verses of the **Ornament**:

*The focal object, impermanent, and so forth,...*

and so on. These ten verses set forth the Mahayana path of preparation by way of providing extensive descriptions of the above-mentioned five or six characteristics.

The twelve verses together with their meaning will be presented below.

The **General Meaning** elucidates the Mahayana path of preparation by way of six subtopics:

1. The support (of the Mahayana path of preparation)
2. The nature (of the Mahayana path of preparation)
3. The categories (of the Mahayana path of preparation)
4. The process of generating (the Mahayana path of preparation)
5. The meaning of each category (of the Mahayana path of preparation)
6. The type of awareness (that constitutes the Mahayana path of preparation that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness)

But before setting forth the six subtopics, the following explanation may help to develop a general understanding of the Mahayana path of preparation and its four levels:

Etymologically, the path of preparation (Tib.: *sbyor lam*) is a path that serves as a *preparation* for the path of seeing, i.e. for the meditative equipoise *directly* realizing emptiness.

The Mahayana path of preparation consists of four levels, which are attained successively:

- 1) Heat
- 2) Peak
- 3) Forbearance
- 4) Supreme Dharma

As mentioned above, the first moment of 'the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, *conceptually* realizing emptiness' in the continuum of a Bodhisattva marks the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Such a union is an awareness that, unlike the inferential cognizer conceptually realizing emptiness, is free from mental distraction and mental sinking. It is a deep, clear, and intense perception, which has overcome *coarse* dualistic appearances. Furthermore, with each of the four levels (heat, peak, etc.) dualistic appearances become increasingly subtle.

Nonetheless, the path of preparation's clear appearance of emptiness is not the same as the clear appearance of emptiness of the path of seeing, since on the path of seeing emptiness is realized directly and non-dualistically, whereas on the path of preparation it is realized by means of a generic image (meaning-generality) of emptiness.

### 1) **Heat**

Tibetan: *drod* (= heat, warmth)

The first moment of the **heat** period of the Mahayana path of preparation and the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation are equivalent.

Regarding the etymology of this level of the path of preparation, the meditative equipoise *directly* realizing emptiness (which is newly attained on the path of seeing) is described as a fire that *burns* or eliminates obstructions. Therefore, when Bodhisattvas reach the 'meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' they are getting closer to the direct realization of emptiness, which is why the heat level is a sign that practitioners are approaching the fire of the meditative equipoise of the path of seeing.

### 2) **Peak**

Tibetan: *rtse mo* (= peak/summit/foremost)

Etymologically, this level of the path of preparation is called 'peak' because it exceeds and is superior to the heat level.

### 3) **Forbearance**

Tibetan: *bzod pa* (= forbearance/endurance/patience)

Regarding the etymology, during this level Bodhisattvas achieve a type of forbearance or endurance that is free from the fear of emptiness.

Also, from the forbearance level onwards, Bodhisattvas can no longer be reborn in the lower realms (hell-realm, preta realm, and animal realm) through the force of afflictions and contaminated karma – even though once they reach the path of seeing they may still choose to be reborn in those realms for the sake of sentient beings.

### 4) **Supreme Dharma**

Tibetan: *chos mchog* (*chos* = Dharma/phenomenon, *mchog* = supreme/utmost/highest)

Etymologically, this level is called supreme Dharma because it is supreme among *mundane* virtues. It is supreme among mundane virtues since it is the highest level of the two mundane paths. The two mundane paths are the path of accumulation and the path of preparation.

The path of accumulation and the path of preparation are mundane paths because Bodhisattvas who entered the Mahayana path from the outset do not *directly* realize emptiness on those two paths. The attainment of the mind that *directly* realizes emptiness (i.e. the attainment of the path of seeing) marks the first moment of the supramundane or Arya path and of becoming an Arya. From this point onwards, Bodhisattvas will no longer be reborn uncontrollably by the power of afflictions and

contaminated karma, but deliberately through the power of compassion and prayer, in order to benefit sentient beings.

Hence the former two are mundane paths and the latter three Arya or supramundane paths.

Mundane paths		Arya paths / Supramundane paths		
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Path of accumulation	Path of preparation	Path of seeing	Path of meditation	Path of no-more-learning

The four levels of the path of preparation (heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme Dharma) are the same in conceptually realizing the lack of true existence and in having a clear appearance of emptiness. Yet they are not the same regarding the length of time during which the practitioners have familiarized with emptiness. As a result, they also differ with regard to the type of misperception (together with its imprints) they are able to undermine or weaken. This is explained below.

### 1. The support (of the Mahayana path of preparation)

Returning to the six subtopics presented in the *General Meaning*, the first of the subtopics, the support, is categorized into two:

- i. The physical support
- ii. The mental support

#### i. The physical support

The physical support of the Mahayana path of preparation refers to the rebirth in one of the realms in which a practitioner must abide, to be able to *newly* cultivate each of the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation.

According to Vasubhandu's *Abidharma-kosha* (written from the point of view of the Vaibashika and Sautrantika philosophical tenet systems), the physical support of practitioners who newly attain the heat, peak, or forbearance level of the Mahayana path of preparation is one of three out of the four generally recognized human states of existence:

1. Humans of the Eastern Continent called 'the Continent of [Those With] Superior/Large Bodies (Skt.: *purvavideha*, Tib.: *shar lus 'phags po*),
2. Humans of the Southern Continent called 'the Continent of the Rose-Apple or Jambu Fruit' (Skt.: *jambudvipa*, Tib.: *lho 'dzam bu gling*)
3. Humans of the Western Continent called 'the Continent of Using Cattle' (Skt.: *aparagodaniya*, Tib.: *nub ba blang spyod*)
4. Humans of the Northern Continent called 'the Continent of Unpleasant Sound' (Skt.: *uttarakuru*, Tib.: *byang sgra mi snyan*)

Here, the physical support which serves practitioners to newly attain the heat, peak, or forbearance level of the Mahayana path of preparation refers to a human state of existence on the Eastern, Southern, or Western Continent. Please note that humans on the Southern Continent refer to humans born on planet Earth. Therefore, according to Vasubhandu's *Treasury of Knowledge* (Skt.: *Abhidharma-kosha*, Tib.: *mngon pa mdzod*), a Bodhisattva who newly attains the heat, peak, or forbearance level of the path of preparation is necessarily a human being of one of those three continents.

There are no Bodhisattvas who newly attain one of the first three levels of the path of preparation as humans of the Northern Continent. The reason for this is that humans of the Northern Continent have great karmic distractions which prevent them from generating the degree of renunciation that is necessary to cultivate any of the three levels.

Bodhisattvas who newly attain the fourth level of supreme Dharma of the path of preparation are either human beings of one of the three human states of existence or celestial beings of the Desire Realm.

From the point of view of the Mahayana tenet schools (Chittamatra and Madhyamika tenet systems), Bodhisattvas who newly attain the heat, peak, or forbearance level of the Mahayana path of preparation are humans of one of the three continents, celestial beings of the Desire Realm, or celestial beings of the Form Realm. However, the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation can only be obtained by Bodhisattvas who are either humans of the three continents or celestial beings of the Desire Realm. There are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the supreme Dharma level of the path of preparation because there are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the Mahayana path of seeing, and because the physical support of the two, the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation and the Mahayana path of seeing is necessarily the same.

The physical support of the two, the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation and the Mahayana path of seeing is the same, for Vasubhandu says in the *Treasury of Knowledge* (Skt.: *Abhidharma-kosha*, Tib.: *mngon pa mdzod*)

*That [the supreme Dharma level] is the same level as the path of seeing*

Gyaltsab je says in his *Ornament of the Essence*:

Men and women of the three [human] continents as well as celestial beings of the Desire Realm constitute the physical support [for generating the Mahayana path of preparation]. Even though [beings of the Form Realm are] not the physical support for directly generating the supreme Dharma level, apparently some beings of the Form Realm [newly] generate the heat and peak levels.

## ii. *The mental support*

The mental support refers here to the type of meditative absorption with which practitioners newly attain each of the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation. Of the eight absorptions (i.e. the four concentrations and the four formless absorptions), Bodhisattvas newly attain each of the four levels of the path of preparation with one of the four concentrations.

## 2. *The nature (of the Mahayana path of preparation)*

In general, the 'nature' (Tib.: *ngo bo*) of a phenomenon refers to its meaning or possibly its definition. However, citing the nature of something in the *General Meaning* is often intended to provide students with just a general idea of the phenomenon it delineates and not with a definition that withstands logical analysis. Definitions that withstand logical analysis are provided in Panchen Sonam Drakpa's *Decisive Analysis* (although the nature of the Mahayana path of preparation as stated below can also serve as its definition).

The nature of the Mahayana path of preparation is:

A mundane Mahayana path that arises subsequent to the completion of its cause, the 'path of concordance with liberation' (i.e. the path of accumulation), and is a similitude of the 'clear realization of the truth'.

The meaning of the different aspects of the nature is:

- ❖ **A mundane Mahayana path:** It is a *Mahayana* path because it is a path in the continuum of a Bodhisattva. It is a *mundane* Mahayana path because it is a path in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who has not yet reached the Mahayana path of seeing.
- ❖ **It arises subsequent to the completion of its cause, the path of concordance with liberation:** The 'path of concordance with liberation' (Tib.: *thar pa cha mthun*) is another name for the path of accumulation. Therefore, the path of concordance with liberation and the path of accumulation are equivalent. The Mahayana path of preparation arises subsequent to the completion of its cause, the path of concordance with liberation (i.e. the path of accumulation), because it cannot arise before the

path of concordance with liberation is completed and because it is produced by the path of concordance with liberation (i.e. the path of accumulation); thus it is generated after it.

- ❖ **It is a similitude of the 'clear realization of the truth'**: The 'clear realization of the truth' is another name for the path of seeing. Hence, the 'clear realization of the truth' and the path of seeing are equivalent. The Mahayana path of preparation is similar to the path of seeing, for instance, with regard to its realization of emptiness, for even though it does not realize emptiness directly, it does so with a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight. Therefore, it is a similitude of the path of seeing, i.e. the 'clear realization of the truth'.

Please note that whatever is a Mahayana path of preparation is not necessarily an awareness arisen from meditation because there are also Mahayana paths of preparation that are awarenesses arisen from hearing and awarenesses arisen from contemplation.

Asanga says in his *Summary of Manifest Knowledge* (Skt. *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, Tib.: *mngon pa kun btus*):

*Whatever exists on the [path of] accumulation also exists on the [path of] preparation*

Vasubhandu says in his commentary on *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* (Skt.: *Dharma Dharmata Vibhanga*, Tib.: *chos nyid rnam 'byed kyi 'brel ba*):

*All are thoroughly distinguished by [awarenesses arisen from] hearing, contemplation, and meditation*

Gyaltsab je says in the *Ornament of the Essence*:

[The nature of the Mahayana path of preparation is:] a mundane Mahayana path [that arises] subsequent to the completion of a concordance with liberation, and that is a similitude of the 'clear realization of the truth'. [The Mahayana path of preparation] is not solely limited to being wisdoms arisen from meditation, because there are many cases of [Mahayana paths of preparation that are] wisdoms arisen from hearing or contemplation.

### 3. The categories (of the Mahayana path of preparation)

As mentioned above, the Mahayana path of preparation can be categorized into:

- 1) The heat level of the Mahayana path of preparation
- 2) The peak level of the Mahayana path of preparation
- 3) The forbearance level of the Mahayana path of preparation
- 4) The supreme Dharma level of the Mahayan path of preparation

These four levels are described in the scriptures as 'categories from the point of view of the nature' of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Each of the four levels can be further divided into:

- a) Small
- b) Middling
- c) Great

Hence, there is a small, middling, and great **heat** level of the Mahayana path of preparation, a small, middling, and great **peak** level of the Mahayana path of preparation, and so forth - in total twelve levels.

The threefold subdivision can be interpreted in two ways. Small, middling, and great may refer to practitioners of different mental faculties, with *small heat* referring to Bodhisattvas on the **heat** level of the path of preparation who are of weak mental faculty, *middling heat* to those of middling faculty, and *great heat* to those of sharp faculty. Similarly, *small peak* refers to Bodhisattvas on the **peak** level of the path of preparation who are of weak mental faculty, *middling peak* to those of middling mental faculty, and so forth.

Another possibility is that small, middling, and great refer to the time when they were generated, with *small heat* referring to the level generated in the beginning of the **heat** level, *middling heat* to the level generated in the middle, and *great heat* referring to the level generated at the end.

Panchen Sonam Drakpa asserts only the latter interpretation to be correct. The latter interpretation also corresponds to the scriptures describing these three levels as being 'categories from the point of view of temporary states'.

Gyaltsab je says in his *Ornament of the Essence*:

The categories [from the point of view of] temporary states are the three: small, middling, and great.  
The categories [from the point of view] of nature are the four: heat, and so forth.

#### 4. The mode of generating (the Mahayana path of preparation)

As mentioned before, the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation is attained when Bodhisattvas newly generate 'an awareness mainly arisen from meditation' conceptually realizing emptiness. In other words, they attain the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation when they newly generate the first moment of the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness.

However, 'awarenesses mainly arisen from meditation' also arise in the continuums of Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation; they arise in the continuums of Bodhisattvas who prior to entering the Mahayana path entered the Hinayana path and became Hinayana Arhats, as well as in the continuums of Bodhisattvas who prior to entering the Mahayana path did *not* enter the Hinayana path (i.e. Bodhisattvas who entered the Mahayana path from the outset). Yet in the case of Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation who entered the Mahayana path from the outset, 'awarenesses mainly arisen from meditation' take to mind only *conventional truths*. Examples of such awarenesses are meditative stabilizations that are a union of calm abiding and special insight perceiving the suffering nature of the contaminated aggregates, impermanence, unpleasantness, and so forth. The meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight apprehending emptiness (i.e. the ultimate truth) does not manifest in their continuums.

Gyaltsab je says in the *Ornament of the Essence*:

Although on the path of accumulation a fully-qualified training in complete aspects that thoroughly practices the aspects of the three knowers, a wisdom arisen from meditation that focuses on impermanence and suffering, a wisdom arisen from meditation that meditates on unpleasantness, and so forth manifest, a wisdom [mainly] arisen from meditation that focuses on emptiness does not manifest because when that [wisdom mainly arisen from meditation that focuses on emptiness] is generated for the first time [Bodhisattvas who entered the Mahayana path from the outset] progress to the path of preparation.

Please note that there are three types of awareness:

- (a) An awareness arisen from hearing (Tib.: *thos byung gi blo*)
- (b) An awareness arisen from contemplation (Tib.: *bsam byung gi blo*)
- (c) An awareness arisen from meditation (Tib.: *bsgoms byung gi blo*)

'An awareness arisen from hearing' refers to a correctly assuming consciousness, 'an awareness arisen from contemplation' to an inferential cognizer, and 'an awareness arisen from meditation' to either an awareness that is *concomitant* with the mental factor of calm abiding or to the mental factor of calm abiding itself.

Similarly, there are three types of wisdom:

- (a) A wisdom arisen from hearing (Tib.: *thos byung gi shes rab*)
- (b) A wisdom arisen from contemplation (Tib.: *bsam byung gi shes rab*)
- (c) A wisdom arisen from meditation (Tib.: *bsgoms byung gi shes rab*)

'A wisdom arisen from hearing' refers to the mental factor of wisdom that is a correctly assuming consciousness, 'a wisdom arisen from contemplation' to the mental factor of wisdom that is an inferential cognizer, and 'a wisdom arisen from meditation' to the mental factor of wisdom that is concomitant with calm abiding. Therefore, there is a difference between 'an awareness arisen from hearing' and 'a wisdom arisen from hearing'. 'A wisdom arisen from hearing' constitutes a mental factor that is both, 'an awareness arisen from hearing' *and* the mental factor of wisdom. For instance, the mental factor of



feeling that is concomitant with 'a wisdom arisen from hearing' is *an awareness* arisen from hearing but not 'a *wisdom* arisen from hearing'.

Also, there is a difference between '*an awareness* arisen from contemplation' and '*a wisdom* arisen from contemplation'; 'a wisdom arisen from contemplation' constitutes a mental factor that is both, 'an awareness arisen from contemplation' and the mental factor of wisdom.

Likewise, there is a difference between '*an awareness* arisen from meditation' and '*a wisdom* arisen from meditation' because 'a wisdom arisen from meditation' constitutes a mental factor that is both, an awareness arisen from meditation and the mental factor of wisdom.

Additionally, the scriptures mention 'an awareness *mainly* arisen from meditation' which is different from 'an awareness arisen from meditation'. 'An awareness *mainly* arisen from meditation' refers to an awareness that is the union of calm abiding and special insight. However it is not listed as a fourth type of awareness, for it is an instance of and thus *subsumed* under 'an awareness arisen from meditation'. It is an instance of 'an awareness arisen from meditation' because whatever is 'an awareness *mainly* arisen from meditation' is necessarily 'an awareness arisen from meditation'.

However, whatever is 'an awareness arisen from meditation' is not necessarily 'an awareness *mainly* arisen from meditation'. An example of 'an awareness arisen from meditation' that is not 'an awareness *mainly* arisen from meditation' is the mental factor of calm abiding in the continuum of a practitioner who has not yet cultivated the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight. Therefore, the cultivation of 'an awareness arisen from meditation' precedes the cultivation of 'an awareness *mainly* arisen from meditation', for (as explained below) the cultivation of calm abiding must precede the cultivation of the union of calm abiding and special insight.

Also, as before, there is difference between '*an awareness* *mainly* arisen from meditation' and '*a wisdom* *mainly* arisen from meditation', for '*an awareness* *mainly* arisen from meditation' refers to any awareness that is a union of calm abiding and special insight while '*a wisdom* *mainly* arisen from meditation' refers to the mental factor of wisdom that is a union of calm abiding and special insight.

<b>An awareness arisen from hearing</b>	→	<b>a correctly assuming consciousness</b>
<b>An awareness arisen from contemplation</b>	→	<b>an inferential cognizer</b>
<b>An awareness arisen from meditation</b>	→	<b>the mental factor of calm abiding or an awareness that is concomitant with the mental factor of calm abiding</b>
<b>An awareness <i>mainly</i> arisen from meditation</b>	→	<b>an awareness that is a union of calm abiding and special insight</b>

<b>Wisdom arisen from hearing</b>	→	<b>the mental factor of wisdom that is a correctly assuming consciousness</b>
<b>Wisdom arisen from contemplation</b>	→	<b>the mental factor of wisdom that is an inferential cognizer</b>
<b>Wisdom arisen from meditation</b>	→	<b>the mental factor of wisdom that is concomitant with the mental factor of calm abiding</b>
<b>Wisdom <i>mainly</i> arisen from meditation</b>	→	<b>the mental factor of wisdom that is a union of calm abiding and special insight</b>

With regard to the three types of wisdom focusing on emptiness, 'the wisdom arisen from hearing that focuses on emptiness' refers to the mental factor of wisdom that is a correctly assuming consciousness apprehending emptiness. 'The wisdom arisen from contemplation that focuses on emptiness' refers to the mental factor of wisdom that is an inferential cognizer realizing emptiness. And 'the wisdom arisen from meditation that focuses on emptiness' refers to the mental factor of wisdom that is concomitant with calm abiding realizing emptiness.

Also, 'the wisdom *mainly* arisen from meditation that focuses on emptiness' refers to the mental factor of wisdom that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness.

In order to fully comprehend the process of newly cultivating 'the wisdom mainly arisen from meditation focusing on emptiness' and therefore the Mahayana path of preparation that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness, it may be helpful to give the following explanation. (Please note that this explanation is from the point of view of Bodhisattvas who entered the Mahayana path from the outset):

On the path of accumulation, Bodhisattvas first cultivate the wisdom arisen from hearing that focuses on emptiness, i.e. a correctly assuming consciousness apprehending emptiness. Such cultivation is followed by developing the wisdom arisen from contemplation that focuses on emptiness, i.e. an inferential cognizer realizing emptiness (unless practitioners cultivated those two types of awareness before they entered the Mahayana path of accumulation). If they do not realize emptiness with an inferential cognizer *at the latest* on the path of accumulation they cannot move on to the next level. Mahayana practitioners attain such inferential realization of emptiness by reflecting on the various reasons that establish the lack of true/inherent existence.

Additionally, on the path of accumulation, Bodhisattvas cultivate a special meditative stabilization that is called 'a union of calm abiding and special insight' (unless they already cultivated such a stabilization before they entered the path of accumulation). In order to *newly* cultivate this union, practitioners take as the object of meditation a phenomenon that is not difficult to focus on, such as the image of the Buddha, for at this stage practitioners would be unable to focus on a subtle phenomenon such as emptiness, subtle impermanence, and so forth while cultivating this meditative stabilization.

In turn, the attainment of such a union must be preceded by developing calm abiding. Etymologically, calm abiding refers to a mental stabilization *abiding* single-pointedly on an object, following the *calming* of distractions.

For the development of the mental stabilization of calm abiding, practitioners choose a focal object that leads neither to mental distraction nor to mental sinking, such as the image of a Buddha or the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. By single-pointedly focusing on that object they progress through nine stages: (1) setting the mind, (2) continuous setting, (3) resetting, (4) close setting, (5) disciplining, (6) pacifying, (7) thorough pacifying, (8) making one-pointed, and (9) setting in equipoise.

When meditators have reached the ninth state (*setting in equipoise*), they are able to focus effortlessly on an internal or imagined object without mental distraction or mental sinking for at least four hours.

However, this is not yet sufficient, because calm abiding is only attained when the ninth state is conjoined with a special physical and mental pliancy. Hence, practitioners continue with their single-pointed meditation until they first achieve a special mental pliancy. Such pliancy makes the mind serviceable by pacifying the detrimental states that cause awareness to be heavy and inflexible, and prevent it from engaging in virtue at will. Thereafter, they achieve a special physical pliancy which is a pacification of physical heaviness and inflexibility and makes the body serviceable.

The attainment of calm abiding marks the attainment of 'the wisdom arisen from meditation', for calm abiding is concomitant with the mental factor of wisdom that is arisen from meditation.

After attaining calm abiding, practitioners develop the union of calm abiding (meditative stabilization) and special insight (meditative analysis), so that special insight is generated based on or conjoined with calm abiding.

In order to develop such union, practitioners initially harmonize calm abiding and analytical meditation by alternating from one to the other, since too much concentration would disrupt the process of analysis, while too much analysis would reduce the factor of stability.

If during the cultivation of calm abiding a practitioner focused on the image of the Buddha for instance, he now also focuses on the image of the Buddha as the object of the analytical meditation, analyzing the image's features, height, color, and so forth.

When, through introspection, practitioners notice that excitement is about to arise during the analytical meditation, they shift to meditative stabilization (calm abiding), alternating back to analysis when the mind has stabilized.

Through this process of repeatedly alternating between analytical and stabilizing meditation, meditators are eventually able to combine the mental factor of calm abiding with the mental factor of analytical wisdom. This means that calm abiding and the analytical wisdom now operate in parallel at the same time, with equal power, one assisting the other. They have become concomitant mental factors, they perceive the same object, and arise and cease at the same time. When analytical wisdom further induces a special mental and physical pliancy, imparting special stability and clarity to the analytical mind, practitioners attain 'a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight' conceptually realizing the image of a Buddha. This enables them to gain a deep, clear, and intense perception, free from mental distraction and mental sinking.

The attainment of the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight marks the attainment of the 'wisdom *mainly* arisen from meditation'. Please note that the 'mental stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight' constitutes the mental factor of calm abiding and 'the wisdom *mainly* arisen from meditation' is the mental factor of special insight that is concomitant with the mental factor of calm abiding.

After the cultivation of this union, instead of taking to mind the image of a Buddha, practitioners then focus on emptiness. Through continuous familiarity, they first cultivate calm abiding conceptually realizing emptiness (which marks the attainment of 'the wisdom arisen from meditation' that focuses on emptiness) and eventually the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness. The first moment of such a union conceptually realizing emptiness is attained when, while absorbed in calm abiding, a special mental and physical pliancy is induced by the power of analyzing emptiness with the mental factor of special insight. That moment also marks the first moment of 'the wisdom *mainly* arisen from meditation that focuses on emptiness' and therefore the onset of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Mahayana path of accumulation	Mahayana path of preparation
Wisdom arisen from hearing focusing on emptiness  Wisdom arisen from contemplation focusing on emptiness  Wisdom arisen from meditation focusing e.g. on the image of a Buddha  Wisdom <i>mainly</i> arisen from meditation focusing e.g. on the image of a Buddha  Wisdom arisen from meditation focusing on emptiness	Wisdom <i>mainly</i> arisen from meditation focusing on emptiness

Please note that the five awarenesses mentioned in the section of the Mahayana path of accumulation of the above chart (wisdom arisen from hearing focusing on emptiness, etc.) can be cultivated before entering the Mahayana path but have to be cultivated at the latest on the Mahayana path of accumulation.

Now one may wonder what the difference is *with regard to dualistic appearance* between (1) the wisdom arisen from hearing that focuses on emptiness, (2) the wisdom arisen from contemplation that focuses on emptiness, and (3) the wisdom *mainly* arisen from meditation that focuses on emptiness.

The difference is that in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation who entered the Mahayana path from the outset, both (1) the wisdom arisen from hearing and (2) the wisdom arisen from contemplation perceive emptiness conjoined with a coarse dualistic appearance of the object emptiness and the object-possessor, the wisdom itself. This means that to these consciousnesses, the object emptiness and the wisdom appear as if they were unrelated and distant from one another. On the other hand, (3) the wisdom mainly arisen from meditation conceptually realizes emptiness conjoined with only a subtle dualistic appearance [of object and object-possessor], the coarse dualistic appearance that characterizes the former two types of awareness having been overcome. However, since the awareness arisen from meditation on the Mahayana path of preparation still possesses subtle dualistic appearance, emptiness and the wisdom arisen from meditation are merely on the brink of appearing like water being poured into water.

It is only when one reaches the Mahayana path of seeing and realizes emptiness directly and non-conceptually that one overcomes even the subtlest dualistic appearance of the object emptiness and the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness. At that time, emptiness and the meditative equipoise appear like water being poured into water.

Gyalsab je says in his ***Ornament of the Essence***:

If someone asks, "what is the difference among the three types of wisdom focusing on emptiness?" [The reply is:] when a wisdom arisen from hearing or contemplation focuses on emptiness - [with emptiness being] a mere negation of elaborations of true existence - even though the generality of the object [emptiness] appears well, owing to very coarse dualistic appearance of the object [emptiness] and the object-possessor [the wisdom], [object and object-possessor] appear as though unrelated. However, when a wisdom [mainly] arisen from meditation focuses on [emptiness], although there is dualistic appearance, having overcome the coarse dualistic appearance of the former two [types of wisdom], it seems as if one has penetrated the object [emptiness]. Also, owing to [emptiness and the wisdom mainly arisen from meditation] being on the brink of appearing like water being poured into water, the meaning-generality [of emptiness] appears in such a manner that it is said that 'dharmata [i.e. emptiness] appears clearly'. However, [that type of clear appearance] is not the clear appearance that is free from conceptuality.

Furthermore, when one is able to induce the bliss of mental and physical pliancy through the power of correctly analyzing the meaning of emptiness while being absorbed in calm abiding, one attains the fully qualified special insight that focuses on emptiness, and hence one is said 'to attain the union of [calm abiding and special insight]'. Yet one should know that a mere union of calm abiding and special insight [which does not realize emptiness] also manifests on the path of accumulation and [in the mental continuums] of some non-Buddhists.

Corresponding to the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation (heat, peak, etc.), there are also four types of meditative stabilizations that are a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness. They also differ slightly in the strength of the subtle dualistic appearance. Even though the meditative stabilizations that are a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness of the heat and peak levels have overcome coarse dualistic appearance, Bodhisattvas on these two levels can still detect subtle dualistic appearance.

However, once practitioners reach the forbearance level of the path of preparation they can no longer detect such subtle dualistic appearance.

Asanga says in his ***Shravaka-bhumi***:

*It seems as though dualistic appearance subsided but it did not subside.*

Gyalsab je says in the ***Ornament of the Essence***:

When one initially generates such a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness, one is said to have 'generated the heat level of the path of preparation'.

At that time, while absorbed [in the realization of emptiness] one is able to ascertain dualistic appearance through the force of one's experience. However, since one is not able to ascertain such [dualistic appearance] when one attains the forbearance level, and so forth, [Asanga] says in the ***Shravaka-bhumi***, "it seems as though dualistic appearance has subsided but it did not subside".

## 5. The meaning of the individual categories (of the Mahayana path of preparation)

The meaning of the individual categories (i.e. of the four levels of heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme Dharma) is set forth by way of describing the differences among the four levels.

- Someone asserts that the four levels differ with respect to the strength of the clear appearance of emptiness. This means that although emptiness clearly appears to the four levels' awarenesses arisen from meditation that realize emptiness, that clear appearance is enhanced on each successive level. Therefore, on the **heat** level the clear appearance of the emptiness of the objects of perception is weak, (2) on the **peak** level the clear appearance of the emptiness of objects of perception is middling, (3) on the **forbearance** level the clear appearance of the emptiness of objects of perception is great, and (4) on the **supreme Dharma** level the clear appearance of the emptiness of perceivers is complete.

According to our own system this is not correct because each of the four levels' awarenesses that are single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness are the same with regard to being absorbed in the lack of true existence of both objects of perception and perceivers, and with regard to having clear appearance of the meaning-generality of emptiness and thus of emptiness itself. In other words, the four levels are the same in conceptually realizing the emptiness of phenomena and in having a clear appearance of emptiness.

Gyalsab je says in the *Ornament of the Essence*:

It is very difficult to differentiate between the four levels of the path of preparation by way of [positing] them to have weak, middling, and great clear appearance of the lack of inherent existence of objects of perception, and having complete clear appearance of the lack of inherent existence of perceivers [respectively]. The reason is that at the time of absorption [in emptiness, the four levels] do not differ with regard to simultaneously withdrawing objects of perception and perceivers, being absorbed in the lack of inherent existence, and having clear appearance of the meaning-generality of emptiness.

Our own system asserts the difference between the four levels to be from the point of view of the capacity to eliminate obstructions.

However, this does not mean that Bodhisattvas on the path of preparation are now able to irreversibly eliminate any of the afflictive or cognitive obstructions, for they are not able to do so until they directly realize emptiness, i.e. once they attain the Mahayana path of seeing. Instead, it means that the four levels differ with regard to the type of misperception (together with its imprints) they are able to undermine (or weaken) as a result of their different degree of familiarity with emptiness.

Maitreya says in his *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* (Skt.: *Mahayanasutraalamkara*, Tib.: *mdo sde rgyan*):

*At that time, the distraction with regard to objects of perception will be eliminated*

(and:)

*In this way, subsequent to that, the distraction with regard to the perceiver will be eliminated.*

The meaning of these two quotes is that on the two levels of **heat** and **peak**, Bodhisattvas' capacity to eliminate manifest *intellectually acquired* awarenesses grasping at the true existence of objects of perception increases. Then, while absorbed in the realization of emptiness on the **forbearance** level of the path of preparation, Bodhisattvas are able to decrease the coarse strength of manifest *innate* awarenesses grasping at the true existence of objects of perception. During the subsequent attainment period of the **forbearance** level (after having arisen from their absorption in emptiness) they are able to understand objects of perception to be unreal like a magician's illusion. Thereafter, on the **supreme Dharma** level, through the power of familiarity, they are also able to understand perceivers to be unreal like a magician's illusion.

The reason for this sequence is that there are differences between awarenesses adhering to truly existent *objects of perception* and awarenesses adhering to truly existent *perceivers* in terms of how easy or difficult it is to eliminate them. This is explained in detail below.

Gyaltsab je also says in the *Ornament of the Essence*:

Therefore, at the time of the first two levels [**heat and peak**], the capacity to eliminate [awarenesses] grasping at the true existence of objects of perception becomes more and more outstanding. When the forbearance level of the path of preparation is generated [while being absorbed in the realization of emptiness] the coarse strength of manifest innate [awarenesses] grasping at the true existence of objects of perception also decreases. After having arisen from the absorption in emptiness, the generality of objects of perception appearing like a reflection in a mirror appears well. When the **supreme Dharma** level is generated, perceivers also appear that way through the power of familiarity. Such a sequence unfolds because of the degree of ease or difficulty in eliminating [awarenesses] adhering to truly existent objects of perception and [awarenesses] adhering to truly existent perceivers. [Maitreya] says in the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* (Skt.: *Mahayanasutralamkara*, Tib.: *mdo sde rgyan*), "At that time, the distraction with regard to objects of perception will be eliminated," and "In this way, subsequent to that, the distraction with regard to the perceiver will be eliminated." Hence, the four levels of the path of preparation differ with respect to eliminating [obstructions]. The claim that, "[the four levels differ] owing to having or not having clear appearance of exalted wisdom" is a claim that is clearly leaves one without anything to say.

## 6. The type of awareness (that constitutes the path of preparation that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness)

This section examines the type of awareness that constitutes a Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness (i.e. a Mahayana path of preparation that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness) in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset.

- Someone asserts that a Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is non-conceptual with regard to emptiness, i.e. it directly realizes emptiness.

Our response to this assertion is that it is not correct, because from the perspective of a mundane person, emptiness is a hidden phenomenon and therefore a mundane person is not able to realize emptiness directly. A Bodhisattva on the path of preparation who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is a mundane person, for he has not yet entered the supramundane Mahayana path of seeing.

Also, if the Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset were non-conceptual with regard to emptiness, the following question would arise: is that mind a mistaken awareness with regard to emptiness or a non-mistaken awareness?

If one were to say that it is a mistaken awareness with regard to emptiness, then it would follow that it does not realize emptiness because it is a non-conceptual *wrong* consciousness. It would follow that it is a non-conceptual *wrong* consciousness because it would be a mind that is both non-conceptual and mistaken with regard to emptiness.

Please note that there is a difference between a *mistaken* consciousness and a *wrong* consciousness. A mistaken consciousness is an awareness that is mistaken with respect to its appearing object whereas a wrong consciousness is an awareness that is mistaken with respect to its object of engagement.

Therefore, whatever is a mistaken consciousness is not necessarily a wrong consciousness.

For instance, all conceptual consciousnesses are mistaken awarenesses, yet they are not necessarily wrong consciousnesses. A conceptual consciousness apprehending a car, for example, is not a wrong consciousness because it is not mistaken with respect to its object of engagement, the car. It is not mistaken with respect to its object of engagement because its object of engagement, the car, exists. However, the conceptual consciousness apprehending the car is mistaken because it is mistaken with respect to its appearing object. It is mistaken with respect to its appearing object because conceptual consciousnesses can apprehend the car only by way of the appearance of a generic image (a meaning-generality) of the car, and because that generic image of the car appears to be the actual car while it is not the actual car. The generic image is not the actual car because it is merely a subjective representation

of the car in that it encompasses what we *mean* when we say "car"; it serves as an intermediary object that allows the conceptual consciousness to get at the car.

Therefore, even though the generic image of the car is not the actual car, since to a conceptual consciousness apprehending the car the generic image of the car appears to *be* the actual car, the conceptual consciousness is a mistaken awareness.

But according to the Madhyamika Prasangika system not only conceptual consciousnesses, *all* ordinary awarenesses are mistaken. They are mistaken because their objects appear to exist truly/inherently (while of course it is impossible for them to exist that way). Hence, an eye consciousness apprehending a sunset, for instance, is a mistaken consciousness because it is mistaken with respect to its appearing object. It is mistaken with respect to its appearing object because the sunset appears to exist truly/inherently. However, it is not a wrong consciousness since its object of engagement, the sunset, does exist.

Therefore, even though our ordinary awarenesses can correctly perceive the different phenomena of the world around us, they are nonetheless mistaken with respect to the ultimate nature of these phenomena, their lack of true existence.

The only non-mistaken awareness in the continuum of sentient beings is the awareness that directly realizes emptiness, i.e. the yogic direct perceiver that realizes the lack of true existence of all phenomena. It is not mistaken with regard to the appearance of the generic image of emptiness because it realizes emptiness *directly* without having to rely on the appearance of a generic image of emptiness; nor is it mistaken with regard to the appearance of true existence, because all phenomena appear to it to be *empty* of true existence.

However, if the Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset were non-conceptual *and* mistaken, it could only be mistaken with regard to emptiness. It could only be mistaken with regard to emptiness because as a direct perceiver realizing emptiness, it can neither be mistaken with regard to the appearance of a generic image nor with regard to the appearance of true existence.

In case it were mistaken with regard to emptiness, it would be mistaken with regard to its object of engagement and thus be a wrong consciousness.

If in response to the question above (whether the Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is a mistaken awareness with regard to emptiness or a non-mistaken awareness) one were to say that it is a non-mistaken awareness, then it would absurdly follow that it is an awareness that is a direct antidote to the objects of elimination of the path of seeing and irreversibly eliminates these objects of elimination because it is a non-conceptual and non-mistaken awareness with regard to emptiness (and because these objects of elimination have not yet been previously eliminated).

However, it is not such a direct antidote, because it is not a path of seeing but a path of preparation.

Gyalsab je says in the ***Ornament of the Essence***:

It is not reasonable to assert this path of preparation absorbed [in emptiness] to be a non-conceptual [consciousness] with regard to emptiness, which apprehends a sound [-generality] and a meaning [-generality] as suitable to be mixed because (i) for a mundane person emptiness is hidden and because (ii) such a non-conceptual consciousness cannot possibly comprehend a hidden [phenomenon].

If it were mistaken with regard to dharmata it would not be correct [to assert] that it clears away manifest superimpositions because it would be a non-conceptual wrong consciousness. If it were non-mistaken, it follows that even the seeds of the object of elimination of the path of seeing would be eliminated [by it], because it would be an awareness that is free from conceptuality and non-mistaken with regard to dharmata.

- Someone asserts that a Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is an inferential cognizer that is the result of reflecting on correct reasons such as:

"The subject sprout is empty of being truly existent because it is empty of being truly existent one

or truly existent many."

According to our own system, such an assertion means that one does not understand the difference between the three types of wisdom (wisdom arisen from hearing, wisdom arisen from contemplation, and wisdom arisen from meditation). This is because whatever is an inferential cognizer is necessarily an awareness arisen from contemplation whereas a Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is an awareness arisen from meditation.

Gyalsab je says in his ***Ornament of the Essence***:

Someone who does not know the difference between the three [types of] wisdom asserts that [such a path of preparation] is an inferential cognizer that relies on the 'free-from-one-or-many-reason'.

Therefore, our own system asserts that a Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is a subsequent cognizer. It is a subsequent cognizer because it is a conceptual knower that realizes emptiness through the power of having previously realized emptiness (with an inferential cognizer).

Gyalsab je says in his ***Ornament of the Essence***:

Therefore, having become 'a wisdom arisen from meditation' through the power of having familiarized with the continuum of a subsequent cognizer, such an absorbed path of preparation is of the nature of analysis to which the meaning-generality of emptiness clearly appears.

- Someone asserts that emptiness does not appear clearly to a Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset because such a path of preparation is a conceptual consciousness. This is a correct reason because whatever is a conceptual consciousness cannot have clear appearance of emptiness, for Dharmakirti says in his ***Pramanavartika***:

*[To an awareness that] depends on a conceptual consciousness  
The meaning does not appear clearly.*

According to our own system, this is not the meaning of the quote from the ***Pramanavartika*** because it is explained in the ***Ornament of the Essence*** that to that type of Mahayana path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness both emptiness and the generic image of emptiness appear clearly. If they both appear clearly they necessarily both appear clearly as if mixed into one.

Hence, the meaning of the quote from the ***Pramanavartika*** is that emptiness does not appear as clearly to a conceptual mind apprehending emptiness as it does to a non-conceptual mind apprehending emptiness.

### **An auxiliary presentation of conceptions of true existence**

Having set forth the six subtopics of the Mahayana path of preparation, the following is an auxiliary presentation of conceptions of true existence that are *explicitly* indicated during the ***Ornament's*** presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation. These conceptions can be categorized into two types of conceptions which in turn can be further categorized into four types.

It is essential to understand these four types of conceptions since they (together with their imprints) are consecutively undermined by the meditative stabilizations absorbed in emptiness on the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation. As mentioned above, the differences among the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation are from the point of view of the capacity to eliminate obstructions. This means that the four levels (i.e. their meditative stabilizations absorbed in emptiness) differ with regard to which of the four types of misconception together with their imprints they are able to undermine (or weaken) as a result of their familiarity with meditating on emptiness.



Conceptions of true existence refer to conceptual consciousnesses that misperceive true existence. The conceptions of true existence that are explicitly indicated during the **Ornament's** presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation can be categorized into:

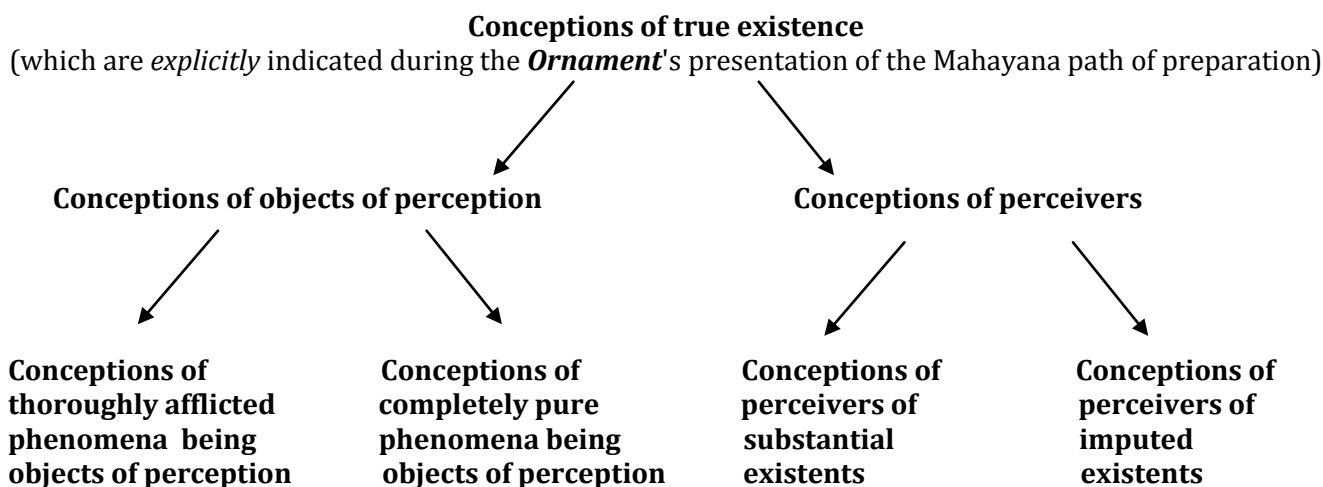
1. Conceptions of objects of perception (Tib.: *gzung rtog*)
2. Conceptions of perceivers (Tib.: *'dzin rtog*)

These two types of conceptions are the same in adhering to true/inherent existence but they differ with regard to the bases of their misperception, i.e. the phenomena which they perceive to exist truly/inherently.

'Conceptions of objects of perception' apprehend truly existent objects of experience (Tib.: *longs spyad bya*) and 'conceptions of perceivers' apprehend truly existent experiencers (Tib.: *longs spyod byed*). Please note that here 'perceivers' and 'experiencers' have the same meaning; they both refer either to awarenesses or to living beings. Likewise, 'objects of perception' and 'objects of experience' have the same meaning; they both refer to the *objects* of those awarenesses or living beings. Therefore, the bases of misperception (i.e. the phenomena they perceive to exist truly/inherently) of 'conceptions of objects of perceptions' are *objects of experience* and the bases of misperception of 'conception of perceivers' are *experiencers*.

Furthermore, conceptions of objects of perception can be categorized into: (1) conceptions of **thoroughly afflicted phenomena** being objects of perception and (2) conceptions of **very pure phenomena** being objects of perception.

Likewise, conceptions of perceivers can be categorized into (1) conceptions of perceivers of **substantial existents** and (2) conceptions of perceivers of **imputed existents**.



Thus, the four types of conceptions are:

1. Conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception (Tib.: *kun nas nyon mongs gzung rtog*). They refer to conceptual awarenesses which focus on **phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side** and apprehend them to be truly existent objects of experience (Tib.: *kun nas nyon mongs phyogs kyi bden pa la dmigs nas longs spyad byar bden par 'dzin pa'i zhen rig*)
2. Conceptions of pure phenomena being objects of perception. (Tib.: *rnam byang gzung rtog*) They refer to conceptual awarenesses which focus on **phenomena on the very pure side** and apprehend them to be truly existent objects of experience (Tib.: *rnam byang phyogs kyi bden pa longs spyad byar bden par 'dzin pa'i zhen rig*)
3. Conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents (Tib.: *rdzas 'dzin rtog pa*). They refer to conceptual awarenesses which focus on **perceivers of substantial existents** and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers (Tib.: *rdzas 'dzin la dmigs nas longs spyod byed du bden par 'dzin pa'i zhen rig*)

4. Conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents (Tib.: *btags 'dzin rtog pa*). They refer to conceptual awarenesses which focus on **perceivers of imputed existents** and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers (Tib.: *btags 'dzin la dmigs nas longs spyod byed du bden par 'dzin pa'i zhen rig*)

As before, even though the four types of misconceptions are the same in apprehending true/inherent existence they differ with regard to the bases of their misperception, i.e. the phenomena which they perceive to exist truly/inherently.

But this does not mean that the first two types of misconceptions only apprehend truly existent *objects of experience* while the latter two types only apprehend truly existent *experiencers*. Instead, the first type apprehends **phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side** (Tib.: *kun nas nyon mongs phyogs kyi bden pa*) to be truly existent *objects of experience*, the second type apprehends **phenomena on the very pure side** (Tib.: *rnam byang phyogs kyi bden pa*) to be truly existent *objects of experience*, the third type apprehends **perceivers of substantial existents** (Tib.: *rdzas 'dzin*) to be truly existent *experiencers*, and the fourth type apprehends **perceivers of imputed existents** (Tib.: *btags 'dzin*) to be truly existent *experiencers*.

Therefore, the bases of the first type of misconceptions are **phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side** being *objects of experience*.

The bases of the second type of misconceptions are **phenomena on the very pure side** being *objects of experience*.

The bases of the third misconception are **perceivers of substantial existents** being *experiencers*.

And the bases of the fourth misconception are **perceivers of imputed existents** being *experiencers*.

From the point of view of the Madhyamika Prasangika, the four types of misconceptions are afflictive obstructions which Bodhisattvas irreversibly eliminate while they progress through the first eight Bodhisattva bhumis/grounds (with the Mahayana path of seeing constituting the first bhumi), while the imprints of these misconceptions are cognitive obstructions which Bodhisattvas irreversibly eliminate while they progress through the three pure bhumis - the eighth, ninth, and tenth bhumis.

Even though on the Mahayana path of preparation the 'meditative stabilizations, which are a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' are unable to *eliminate* the four types of misconceptions, they are able to *undermine* them (together with their imprints). The undermining of those conceptions and their imprints facilitates their complete removal by the yogic direct perceivers realizing emptiness on the path of seeing and the path of meditation.

Furthermore, out of the four types of misconceptions, the first is easier to undermine than the second, the second is easier to undermine than the third, and so forth.

Hence, the 'meditative stabilizations which are a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **heat** level of the path of preparation are able to undermine the first type of misconceptions together with its imprints but not the second, third, and fourth. The 'meditative stabilizations which are a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **peak** level are able to undermine the second type together with their imprints but not the third and fourth. The 'meditative stabilizations which are a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **forbearance** level are able to undermine the third type together with their imprints but not the fourth. And the 'meditative stabilizations which are a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **supreme Dharma** level are able to undermine the fourth together with their imprints.

The reason for these different abilities is that the four levels differ regarding the degree of familiarity with emptiness - on the heat level Bodhisattvas are less familiar with emptiness than on the peak level, on the peak level less familiar than on the forbearance level, etc.; their familiarity with emptiness increasing at each level.

Moreover, the reason why the first type of misconceptions is easier to undermine than the second, the second easier to undermine than the third, etc. is as follows:

As mentioned above, the first two types of misconceptions apprehend the true existence of *objects of experience*, whereas the latter two apprehend the true existence of *experiencers*. In this context,

experiencers mainly refer to awarenesses or living beings, and objects of experience to the objects of these awarenesses or living beings.

Since it is easier to understand objects of experience than to understand the experiencers themselves, it is also easier to realize the *lack of true existence* of objects of experience than to realize the *lack of true existence* of the experiencers themselves. Therefore, it is also easier to undermine misconceptions apprehending objects of experience to be truly existent (the former two types of misconceptions) than to undermine conceptions apprehending the true existence of experiencers (the latter two types of misconceptions).

Similarly, it is easier to realize that **phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side** are *empty* of being truly existent objects of experience than to realize that **phenomena on the very pure class** are *empty* of being truly existent objects of experience. Examples of **phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side** are the five aggregates of an ordinary person. They are **phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side** because they are under the control of afflictions and contaminated karma and do not serve as an antidote to Samsara. Examples of **phenomena on the very pure class** are the five aggregates of a Buddha, which are free from all faults and impurities. Since practitioners consider the five aggregates of an ordinary person to be phenomena that need to be overcome and the five aggregates of a Buddha, phenomena to be attained, it is easier to realize the *lack of true existence* of the five aggregates of an ordinary person than to realize the *lack of true existence* of the five aggregates of a Buddha. Likewise, it is also easier to realize that the five aggregates of an ordinary person are *empty* of being truly existent objects of experience than to realize that the five aggregates of a Buddha are *empty* of being truly existent objects of experience. Hence it is easier to undermine misconceptions which apprehend **phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side** to be truly existent objects of experience than to undermine misconceptions which apprehend **phenomena on the very pure class** to be truly existent object of experience.

Regarding the latter two types of conceptions (both of which apprehend truly existent experiencers) it is easier to undermine misconceptions which apprehend **perceivers of substantial existents** to be truly existent experiencers than to undermine misconceptions which apprehend **perceivers of imputed existents** to be truly existent experiencers. This is because it is easier to realize that **perceivers of substantial existents** are *empty* of being truly existent experiencers than to realize that **perceivers of imputed existents** are *empty* of being truly existent experiencers.

Regarding the meaning of perceivers of substantial existents and perceivers of imputed existents, according to the Madhyamika Prasangika tenet school, all phenomena are empty of true/inherent existence; instead, they are merely imputed or merely 'imputedly existent'. The opposite of being imputedly existent is to be substantially existent. Therefore, since whatever exists is imputedly existent there is nothing that is substantially existent. In fact, being substantially existent is the object of negation of emptiness, and thus equivalent to being truly/inherently existent.

Examples of perceivers of substantial existents are awarenesses perceiving a truly/substantially existent self, while examples of perceivers of imputed existents are awarenesses realizing the self to be merely imputed on the basis of the five aggregates. Since awarenesses perceiving a truly/substantially existent self are afflictive obstructions and thus need to be removed, whereas awarenesses realizing that the self is merely imputed are awarenesses to be cultivated and deepened, it is easier for Buddhist practitioners to realize the *lack of true existence* of awarenesses perceiving a truly/substantially existent self than to realize the *lack of true existence* of awarenesses realizing that the self is merely imputed. Likewise, it is easier to realize that awarenesses perceiving a truly/substantially existent self are *empty* of being truly existent experiencers, than to realize that awarenesses realizing that the self is merely imputed are *empty* of being truly existent experiencers.

Therefore, it is easier to undermine misconceptions which apprehend **perceivers of substantial existents** to be truly existent experiencers than to undermine misconceptions which apprehend **perceivers of imputed existents** to be truly existent experiencers.

This completes the auxiliary presentation of the four misconceptions.

Regarding the actual root text (i.e. Maitreya's **Ornament**), as mentioned above, two verses set forth the Mahayana path of preparation by way of briefly presenting the five characteristics by which the Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation while ten verses provide an extensive description of these characteristics:

### The Ornament's brief presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation:

*Just as the focal object and the aspect  
And the cause and the special tutor  
A protecting Bodhisattva's  
Embodiment of heat, and so forth; [26]*

*Dependent on being associated with four conceptual consciousnesses,  
The small, middling, and great,  
Are superior to those of  
Hearers and Rhinoceros-like ones. [27]*

The meaning of the two verses is:

**A protecting Bodhisattva's small, middling, and great heat, peak, and so forth are superior** to the Hinayana path of preparation of **Hearers and Rhinoceros-like** Solitary Realizers because they are superior with regard to being **dependent on being associated with** the elimination of the **four conceptual consciousnesses just as** they are superior with regard to **the focal object, the aspect, the cause, and the special tutor.**

The five characteristics by which the Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation are:

- (1) Focal object
- (2) Aspect
- (3) Cause
- (4) Special tutor
- (5) Mode of association

But there is another way to interpret these two verses, mentioned in Arya Vimuktisena's commentary on the **Ornament**. According to the other interpretation, the second line of the above-cited second verse of the **Ornament** ("the small, the middling, and the great") presents a sixth characteristic of the Mahayana path of preparation, namely the characteristic of the three subdivisions of each of the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation, i.e. small, middling, and great.

Hence, the meaning of the two verses according to the second interpretation is:

**A protecting Bodhisattva's heat, peak, etc. are superior** to the path of preparation of **Hearers and Rhinoceros-like** Solitary Realizers because they are superior with regard to possessing the three subdivisions of **small, middling, and great**, and with regard to being **dependent on being associated with** the elimination of the **four conceptual consciousnesses just as** they are superior with regard to **the focal object, the aspect, the cause, and the special tutor.**

### The Ornament's extensive presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation:

Verses 28 - 37 set forth the Mahayana path of preparation by providing extensive descriptions of the five or six characteristics. In particular, the first six and half verses (verses 28 until 33, and the first two lines of verse 34) explicitly describe the characteristics of the *focal object* and *aspect* and implicitly the characteristic of the *cause* with regard to each of the twelve types of Mahayana path of preparation (i.e. the small, middling, and great heat level, the small, middling, and great peak level, the small, middling, and great forbearance level, and the small, middling, and great supreme Dharma level).

Please note that the sequence in which the characteristics are cited in the **Ornament's** brief presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation differs slightly from the sequence in the **Ornament's** extensive presentation. According to Lama Tsongkhapa's **Golden Rosary**, the two verses of the **Ornament's** brief presentation (verses 26 and 27) reveal the characteristic of the *special tutor* prior to the characteristic of the *mode of association*, for this sequence complies better with the basic rhythmic structure of the two verses. In the ten verses of the **Ornament's** extensive presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation the characteristic of the *special tutor* is presented after the characteristic of the *mode of association* (and thus subsequent to the other characteristics) in order to indicate that these characteristics of *focal object*, *aspect*, *cause*, (*division*), and *mode of association* all arise in dependence on the *special tutor*.

## FOCAL OBJECT, ASPECT & CAUSE

### SMALL, MIDDLING, AND GREAT HEAT LEVEL:

The first two lines of verse 28 present the *focal object* (the first characteristic) of the small heat level:

*The focal object, impermanence and so forth,  
Endowed with the support of the truths.*

The meaning of these lines is:

The sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, **impermanence, and so forth**, which are **endowed with the support of the four noble truths**, are **the focal object** of the small heat level because they are the basis of eliminating superimpositions on the small heat level.

The sixteen aspects of the four noble truths are 'endowed with the support of the four noble truths' because they are aspects or attributes of the four noble truths. Please note that depending on the context, the word 'aspect' (Tib.: *rnam pa*) has different meanings. Here in the context of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, it refers to the sixteen *attributes* of the four truths; it does not refer to the aspect that is the second of the five characteristics of the Mahayana path of preparation, which is explained below.

The sixteen aspects of the four noble truths are 'the basis of eliminating superimpositions' because they are the basis of the wisdom that realizes the lack of true existence of the sixteen aspects. They are the basis of the wisdom that realizes the lack of true existence of the sixteen aspects because the wisdom that realizes the lack of true existence of the sixteen aspects does so *based* on the sixteen aspects.

Furthermore, since the wisdom that realizes the lack of true existence of the sixteen aspects eliminates the superimpositions that grasp at true existence of the sixteen aspects, the sixteen aspects are the *basis* of eliminating those superimpositions.

Hence, on account of being the basis of the wisdom that realizes the lack of true existence of the sixteen aspects, the sixteen aspects are also its *focal object*, for such wisdom realizes emptiness by focusing on the sixteen aspects.

The third line of verse 28 presents the *aspect* (the second characteristic) of the small heat level:

*The aspect stops strong adherence to those, and so forth.*

The meaning of these words is:

The wisdom on the small heat level that realizes the lack of true existence of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths is **the aspect** of the small heat level because it is the small heat wisdom that **stops strong adherence to** the true existence of **those** sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, **and so forth**.

As mentioned above, the word 'aspect' has different connotations. Here in the context of the second of the five characteristics, the aspect refers to a meditative stabilization absorbed in emptiness on the Mahayana path of preparation that realizes the lack of true existence of its focal object.

The fourth line of verse 28 presents the wisdom on the small heat level to be the *cause* of a special result (the third characteristic):

*It is the cause of attaining all three vehicles [29]*

The meaning of this line is:

The wisdom on the small heat level that realizes the lack of true existence of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths acts as **the cause of** a special result because it is the cause of **attaining** the Mahayana path of seeing which encompasses paths that are typical of **all three vehicles** (Hearer, Solitary Realizer, and Bodhisattva vehicle).

The Mahayana path of seeing comprises paths that are typical of all three vehicles because in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who has reached the path of seeing, paths arise that are typical of the Hearer vehicle (knowers of bases), of the Solitary Realizer vehicle (knowers of bases), and of the

Bodhisattva vehicle (knower of paths). An example of a path that is typical of the Hearer and Solitary Realizer vehicle is the path that realizes the four noble truths. An example of a path that is typical of the Bodhisattva vehicle is Bodhicitta.

Please note that the **Ornament** explicitly describes only the wisdom on the small heat level to be the cause of a special result. Even though the other verses present the focal object and the aspect of each of the remaining eleven levels of the Mahayana path of preparation (i.e. small, middling, and great peak level, small, middling, and great forbearance level, and so forth) they do not explicitly describe the wisdom on these levels to be the cause of a special result. However, the line, "it is the cause of attaining all three vehicles", implies that the remaining nine types of the Mahayana path of preparation are also the causes of a special result because they are also causes of attaining the Mahayana path of seeing.

The first line of verse 29 presents the *focal object* and *aspect* of the middling heat level:

*Forms, and so forth being free of assembling and establishment,*

The meaning of this line is:

The four noble truths characterized by forms, and so forth being **free of** truly existent **assembling and establishment** are the focal object of the middling heat level.

According to Lama Tsongkhapa's **Golden Rosary**, here, forms and so forth being free of truly existent assembling and establishment refers to forms, etc. lacking truly existent production and cessation.

The second line of verse 29 presents the *aspect* of the middling heat level, the *focal object* of the great heat level, and the *aspect* of the great heat level:

*Abidance, designation, and not describable.*

The meaning of this line is:

The wisdom on the middling heat level that realizes the lack of true existence of the non-**abidance** of the continuum of the name and the lack of true existence of the abidance of the continuum of the name is the aspect of the middling heat level. The four noble truths characterized by forms, and so forth being terminologically **designated** is the focal object of the great heat level. And the wisdom on the great heat level that realizes that forms, and so forth, are **not** truly **describable** is the aspect of the great heat level.

Regarding the lack of true existence of the non-**abidance** of the continuum of the name and the lack of true existence of the abidance of the continuum of the name, Gyaltsab je explains that since names lack true existence there is no truly existent dissimilar continuum of a name and no truly existent similar continuum of a name.

With regard to the four noble truths characterized by forms, and so forth being terminologically **designated**, Gyaltsab je explains that all phenomena, from forms up to the Buddhas, are terminologically designated; they are mere nominal conventions (i.e. merely imputed).

Also, forms, and so forth, are **not** truly **describable** because there is not a single phenomenon that can be described as being an ultimately existent virtue, and so on.

#### SMALL, MIDDLE, AND GREAT PEAK LEVEL:

There are two ways in which to present the *focal object* and the *aspect* of the small peak level:

- (i) The presentation of the *focal object* and *aspect* of the small peak level from the point of view of not positing the four noble truths
- (ii) The presentation of the *focal object* and *aspect* of the small peak level from the point of view of positing the four noble truths

#### **(i) The presentation of the focal object and aspect of the small peak level from the point of view of not positing the four noble truths**

The third and fourth lines of verse 29 describe the *focal object* of the small peak level and the first line of verse 30 the *aspect* of the small peak level:

*Those forms and so forth not abiding,  
Their entities have no nature. [29]*

*They are each other's nature*

The meaning of these lines is:

That which is characterized by **those forms, and so forth not abiding** ultimately and their **entities having** ultimately **no nature**, is the focal object of the small peak level. The wisdom on the small peak level that realizes that forms, and so forth, and their dharmata (emptiness) **are not truly each other's nature** is the aspect of the small peak level.

**(ii) The presentation of the focal object and aspect of the small peak level from the point of view of positing the four noble truths**

The second and third line of verse 30 describe the *focal object* of the small peak level and the fourth line of the verse 30 the *aspect* of the small peak level:

*Not abiding as being impermanent, and so forth,  
Those being empty of such entity.  
They are each other's nature [30]*

The meaning of the three lines is:

The four noble truths characterized by forms, and so forth **not** ultimately **abiding as being impermanent, and so forth**, owing to **those forms, and so forth being empty of such entity** (i.e. ultimate impermanence) are the focal object of the small peak level.

The wisdom on the small peak level that realizes that impermanence, and so forth, and its dharmata (emptiness) **are not truly each other's nature** is the aspect of the small peak level.

The next verse (verse 31) describes the *focal object* and *aspects* of the middling and great peak level, with the first line presenting the *focal object* of the middling peak level, the second line the *aspect* of the middling peak level, the third line the *focal object* of the great peak level, and the fourth line the *aspect* of the great peak level.

*Phenomena not being apprehended,  
Since those features are not perceived,  
Wisdom fully investigating,  
All are not observed. [31]*

The meaning of this verse is:

The four noble truths characterized by **phenomena not being apprehended** as having ultimate features are the focal object of the middling peak level. The wisdom on the middling peak level that realizes that **those** truly existent **features** of form, and so forth cannot be **perceived** is the aspect of the middling peak level. The four noble truths characterized by the **wisdom** - which analyzes the ultimate - **fully investigating** phenomena are the focal object of the great peak level. And the wisdom on the great peak level that realizes that the three spheres (agent, action, and object) are ultimately unobservable is the aspect of the great peak level.

**SMALL, MIDLING, AND GREAT FORBEARANCE LEVEL:**

The first line of verse 32 presents the *focal object* of the small forbearance level and the second line the *aspect* of the small forbearance level:

*Forms and so forth lacking an entity,  
Their lack of existence is [their] very entity*

The meaning of these two lines is:

The four noble truths characterized by **forms, and so forth lacking** an ultimate **entity** is the focal object of the small forbearance level. The wisdom on the small forbearance level realizing that the **lack of ultimate existence** of forms, and so forth is not *truly their* nominal **entity** is the aspect of the small forbearance level.

The third line of verse 32 describes the *focal object* of the middling forbearance level and the beginning of the fourth line its *aspect*:

*Those lack production and lack definite emergence,  
Purifies,...*

The meaning of these words is:

The four noble truths characterized by the **lack** of the ultimate existence of the **production** of form, and so forth being Samsara and the **lack** of the ultimate existence of the **definite emergence** being Nirvana is the focal object of the middling forbearance. The aspect on the middling forbearance level refers to the wisdom on the middling forbearance level realizing the lack of true existence of completely purifying the body etc., after having focused and meditated on the four noble truths in the above way.

The remaining words of the fourth line of verse 32 present the *focal object* of the great forbearance level and the first two lines of verse 33 its *aspect*:

*...Those having no features, [32]  
Since they are not dependent on their features,  
Neither aspire nor discern.*

The meaning of these words is:

The four noble truths characterized by **those** forms, and so forth **having** ultimately **no features** are the focal object of the great forbearance level. The aspect of the great forbearance level refers to the wisdom on the great forbearance level realizing that - since forms, and so forth are ultimately not dependent on their features - **neither** the awareness called 'aspirational mental engagement' **nor** the awareness called 'mental engagement of suchness' ultimately **aspire** or **discern** features.

According to Gyaltsab je's *Ornament of the Essence*, 'aspirational mental engagement' (Tib.: *mos pa yid la byed pa*) refers to an awareness conceptually realizing emptiness and 'mental engagement of suchness' (Tib.: *de kho na nyid yid la byed pa*) to an awareness directly realizing emptiness.

#### SMALL, MIDDLING, AND GREAT SUPREME DHARMA LEVEL:

The third line of verse 34 presents the *focal object* and *aspect* of the small supreme Dharma level:

*Meditative stabilization, the very activity of that,*

The meaning of this line is:

The four noble truths being of one nature with the object of meditation, the **meditative stabilization** of a Buddha is the focal object of the small supreme Dharma level. The aspect of the small supreme Dharma level constitutes the awareness on the supreme Dharma level realizing the spontaneous engagement in **the very activity of that** meditative stabilization.

According to Gyaltsab je's *Ornament of the Essence*, the wisdom on the small supreme Dharma level refers to the small supreme Dharma level wisdom realizing the engagement in the activity of the meditative stabilization in the continuum of a Buddha who works spontaneously for the welfare of all sentient beings.

The fourth line of verse 34 describes the *focal object* and *aspect* of the middling supreme Dharma level:

*Prediction and extinguished grasping. [34]*

The meaning of this line is:

The four noble truths characterized by being of one nature with the cause of the hidden **prediction** are the focal object of the middling supreme Dharma level. The wisdom on the middling supreme Dharma level realizing that the Bodhisattva on the middling supreme Dharma level did not truly **extinguish grasping** at the true existence of the three spheres (agent, action, and object) is the aspect of the middling supreme Dharma level.



Gyaltsab je explains that here the hidden prediction refers to the prediction that is made by a Buddha when a Bodhisattva reaches the middling supreme Dharma level. A Buddha predicts the time and location of the Bodhisattva's future enlightenment and since it is not done in public it is called 'hidden prediction'.

The first line of verse 35 presents the *focal object* of the great supreme Dharma level and the second line the *aspect* of the great supreme Dharma level:

*The three, being of one nature with one another,  
Not conceptualizing meditative stabilizations*

The meaning of the two lines is:

The four noble truths characterized by the lack of true existence (i.e. emptiness) of each of **the three spheres being of one nature with one another** is the focal object of the great supreme Dharma level. The wisdom on the great supreme Dharma level refers to the wisdom on the great supreme Dharma level realizing that **not conceptualizing** the true existence of the **meditative stabilizations** that realize emptiness is the method to achieving enlightenment.

The three spheres here refer to (1) meditative stabilization, (2) wisdom, and (3) the Bodhisattva him or herself.

This completes the extensive description of the first three characteristics of the Mahayana path of preparation, *focal object*, *aspect*, and *cause*.

Please note that even though the four levels of the Hinayana path of preparation - the Hinayana heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme Dharma level - also focus on the four noble truths and realize emptiness, the Mahayana path of preparation is nonetheless superior since (as indicated in the above cited verses of the **Ornament**) it focuses on the numerous different facets of the four noble truths while the Hinayana path of preparation does not. Likewise, it realizes the lack of true existence in dependence on numerous logical reasons while the Hinayana path of preparation does not.

## DIVISION

The third and fourth lines of verse 35 present the fourth characteristic, the characteristic of the *division*, which refers to the threefold subdivision of each level of the Mahayana path of preparation (small, middling, and great):

*In such a way, the concordance with definite discrimination  
Is small, middling, and great.*

The meaning of the two lines is:

**In such a way**, each of the four levels of **the concordance with definite discrimination** (i.e. the path of preparation) is subdivided into a **small**, a **middling**, and a **great** level.

The term 'concordance with definite discrimination' (Tib.: *nges 'byed cha mthun*) is another term for the 'path of preparation'. Hence, the *characteristic of the division* refers to the fact that each of the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation is subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level. This is different from the Hinayana path of preparation, for even though the Hinayana heat, peak, and forbearance levels can each be subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level, the Hinayana **supreme Dharma** level does not have such subdivisions. The Hinayana supreme Dharma level does not have such subdivisions because it is explained that both the Hinayana *great* forbearance level and the Hinayana supreme Dharma level last only for one 'final moment in time' (Tib.: *dus mtha' skad cig ma*). According to the **Abidharmakosha**, the length of one 'final moment in time' refers to the sixty-fifth of the time it takes a healthy person to snap his fingers.

## MODE OF ASSOCIATION

Verses 36 and 37 present the fifth characteristic, the characteristic of the *mode of association*. The characteristic of the mode of association describes the four misconceptions mentioned above.

Verse 36 presents the first two types of misconceptions: (1) conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception and (2) conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception:

*Since there are bases and antidotes to those,  
Conceptions of objects of perception are of two types.  
Since there are instances of confusion and aggregates, and so forth,  
They each have nine types.*

The meaning of this verse is:

Since there are conceptions of objects of perception that focus on **bases** (i.e. phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side) **and** conceptions of objects of perception that focus on **antidotes to those bases** (i.e. phenomena on the very pure side) **conceptions of objects of perception** (Tib.: *gzung rtog*) **are of two types**: (1) conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception and (2) conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception.

Furthermore, **since there are instances** of conceptions of objects of perception focusing on **confusion** (i.e. ignorance), completely pure **aggregates, and so forth** 'conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' and 'conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception' **each have nine types**.

In other words, as mentioned above, 'conceptions of objects of perception' can be categorized into (1) conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception and (2) conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception, for there are 'conceptions of objects of perception' that focus on phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side (bases) and apprehend them to be truly existent objects of experience, and 'conceptions of objects of experience' that focus on phenomena on the very pure side (the antidotes to those thoroughly afflicted phenomena) and apprehend them to be truly existent objects of experience.

Moreover, 'conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' can be classified into nine different types, such as conceptual consciousnesses which focus on ignorance and apprehend it to be a truly existent object of experience, conceptual consciousnesses which focus on the contaminated form aggregate, etc. and apprehend it to be a truly existent object of experience, and so forth. These two conceptions are 'conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' because ignorance and the contaminated form aggregate are both phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side, and because the two conceptions are conceptual consciousnesses that apprehend such phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side to be truly existent objects of experience.

Similarly, 'conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perceptions' can also be classified into nine different types, such as conceptual consciousnesses which focus on very pure aggregates and apprehend them to be truly existent objects of experience, conceptual consciousnesses which focus on emptiness and apprehend it to be a truly existent object of experience, and so forth. These two conceptual consciousnesses are 'conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception' because pure aggregates and emptiness are phenomena on the very pure side, and because the two conceptions are awarenesses that apprehend such phenomena on the very pure side to be truly existent objects of experience.

Verse 37 describes the third and fourth types of misconceptions: (1) conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents and (2) conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents:

*Since they are endowed with the support of the substantial and imputed,  
Conceptions of perceivers are also asserted to be of two types.  
Since there is the entity of an independent self, and so forth,  
As well as the support, the aggregates and so forth, they are similar.*

The meaning of this verse is:

**Since conceptions of perceivers** (Tib.: *'dzin rtog*) are **endowed with the support** of focusing on perceivers of **substantial and imputed existents**, they **are also asserted to be of two types**: (1)

conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents and (2) conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents.

Moreover, **since there** are conceptions of perceivers focusing on **the entity of an independent, truly existent self, and so forth, as well as on** that which is endowed with **the support, the aggregates, and so forth**, 'conceptions of substantial existents' and 'conceptions of imputed existents' **are similar** to the first two conceptions, for they can each be classified into nine types.

In other words, 'conceptions of perceivers' can be categorized into (1) conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents and (2) conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents, since there are 'conceptions of perceivers' that focus on perceivers of substantial existents and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers, and 'conceptions of perceivers' that focus on perceivers of imputed existents and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers.

Furthermore, 'conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents' can be classified into nine different types of conceptions, such as conceptual consciousnesses which focus on perceivers of an independent, truly existent self and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers, conceptual consciousnesses which focus on perceivers of a unitary truly existent self and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers, and so forth. These two conceptions are 'conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents' because perceivers that apprehend an independent, truly existent self or a unitary truly existent self are awarenesses that perceive substantial existents, and because the two conceptions apprehend these perceivers of substantial existents to be truly existent experiencers.

Similarly, 'conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents' can also be classified into nine different types of conceptions, such as conceptual consciousnesses which focus on perceivers of a person being imputed on the aggregates and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers, conceptual consciousnesses which focus on perceivers of a person being imputed on the path of seeing and apprehend them to be truly existent experiencers, and so forth. These conceptual consciousnesses are 'conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents' because perceivers that apprehend a person to be imputed on the aggregates or imputed on the path of seeing are awarenesses that perceive imputed existents, and because the two conceptions apprehend these perceivers of imputed existents to be truly existent experiencers.

Verses 36 and 37 present the characteristic of the *mode of association* by way of implicitly indicating that the four conceptions are associated with the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation. They are associated with the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation because the four conceptions and their imprints are objects of elimination and the four levels are their antidotes. This means, as explained above, that:

- (i) meditative stabilizations absorbed in emptiness on the heat level undermine 'conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perceptions' and their imprints;
- (ii) meditative stabilizations absorbed in emptiness on the peak level undermine 'conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perceptions' and their imprints;
- (iii) meditative stabilizations absorbed in emptiness on the forbearance level undermine 'conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents' and their imprints;
- (iv) meditative stabilizations absorbed in emptiness on the supreme Dharma level undermine 'conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents' and their imprints

## SPECIAL TUTOR

Verse 38 sets forth the Mahayana path of preparation's characteristic of the *special tutor*. The first, third, and fourth lines present the inner special tutor and the second, third, and fourth lines the outer special tutor:

*Mind that is undaunted, and so forth,  
Who teaches the lack of entities,  
Casts aside the unfavorable factors of those,  
Are in every respect the special tutor.*

The meaning of this verse is:

On the path of preparation a Bodhisattva's **mind that is** conjoined with Bodhicitta and **undaunted, unafraid, and so forth**, of emptiness, and a Bodhisattva's wisdom that **casts aside unfavorable factors**, such as the aspiration to attain self-liberation and grasping at true existence, **are in every respect the inner special tutor** of the Mahayana path of preparation because they are accomplishments on the Mahayana path of preparation that counteract the two extremes of Samsara and Peace (i.e. self-liberation).

The *Supreme Emanation Body* **who teaches** a Bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of preparation **the lack of ultimate entities**, and so forth and who **casts aside unfavorable factors**, such as *Maras* and bad companions, is **in every respect the outer special tutor** of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation because he is a spiritual guide who perfectly teaches method and wisdom.

This verse presents the characteristic of the *special tutor*, since it indicates that a Bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of preparation has an outer and an inner special tutor. The inner special tutor refers to the Bodhisattva's great compassion, Bodhicitta, and so forth while his outer special tutor refers to the *Supreme Emanation Body* who guides him. Of the inner and outer special tutor, the inner special tutor is most important.

This completes the *Ornament's* extensive presentation of the characteristics of the Mahayana path of preparation.

To summarize this extensive presentation:

1. The Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation from the point of view of the *focal object* because it focuses on the numerous different facets of the four noble truths whereas the Hinayana path of preparation does not.
  2. The Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation from the point of view of the *aspect* because it realizes the emptiness of the four noble truths by means of countless different logical reasons whereas the Hinayana path of preparation does not.
  3. The Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation from the point of view of the *cause* because it acts as the cause of the Mahayana path of seeing which encompasses paths that are typical of all three vehicles (Hearer, Solitary Realizer, and Bodhisattva vehicle) whereas the Hinayana path of preparation does not.
  4. The Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation from the point of view of the *division* because each of its four levels is subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level whereas each of the four levels of the Hinayana path of preparation is not.
  5. The Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation from the point of view of the *mode of association* because each of the four levels is associated with one of the four conceptions, as it undermines one of those conceptions as well as its imprints whereas each of the four levels of the Hinayana path of preparation is not.
  6. The Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation from the point of view of the *special tutor* because practitioners on the Mahayana path of preparation possess an inner special tutor of great compassion, Bodhicitta, etc. and an outer special tutor that perfectly teaches them the method and wisdom required to attain Buddhahood, whereas practitioners on the Hinayana path of preparation do not possess such special tutors.
- Someone has an objection to the way the *Ornament* presents the focal objects and aspects of the different levels of the Mahayana path of preparation. His objection is as follows:  
When presenting the focal object of the small heat level the *Ornament* says:

*The focal object, impermanence and so forth,  
Endowed with the support of the truths.*

Hence, when the two lines describe the focal object of the small heat level to be the sixteen aspects (impermanence and so forth), the *Ornament* explicitly mentions that the sixteen aspects are the

characteristics or attributes of the four noble truths by saying that the sixteen aspects are "endowed with the support of the truths". However, the subsequent verses that present the focal objects and aspects of the remaining eleven levels of the Mahayana path of preparation fail to explicitly state that the focal objects of these levels are attributes of the four noble truths. Therefore, students of the **Ornament** will not understand that the focal objects of the middling heat level, the great heat level, the small peak level, and so forth are also attributes of the four noble truths, i.e. that the four noble truths are the basis of these attributes, and thus they will not understand that the focal objects and aspects of the remaining levels of the Mahayana path of preparation depend on the four noble truths.

Our response to this objection is that even though the other verses do not *explicitly* indicate that the focal objects of the remaining levels are attributes of the four noble truths, they do so *implicitly*. The other verses indicate that the remaining levels are attributes of the four noble truths because they are 'sound expressing the attribute' (Tib.: *chos brjod kyi sgra*) with regard to the four noble truths. The two lines that present the small heat level of the Mahayana path of preparation, on the other hand, are 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' (Tib.: *chos can brjod pa'i sgra*) with regard to the four noble truths.

In order to comprehend the above response it is important to understand that from the point of view of the mode of indicating attributes and the bearers of these attributes, there are two types of expressive sound: 'sound expressing the attribute' and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute'.

For instance, the two statements: "impermanent vase" and "impermanence of vase" are similar in that they both indicate impermanence and vase. Yet they differ in terms of the mode of indication.

In the statement "impermanent vase" *vase* is the principal phenomenon and *impermanent* its attribute. Therefore, the statement "impermanent vase" is (1) 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to *impermanent* and (2) 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *vase*, for it indicates that (1) *impermanent* is the attribute and (2) *vase* the basis of the attribute. Furthermore, since the statement "impermanent vase" is 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to *impermanent* it is also 'sound that eliminates other qualifications' (Tib.: *khyad par gzhan spong gi sgra*) with regard to *impermanent*. It is 'sound that eliminates other qualifications' with regard to *impermanent* because from the perspective of the awareness that perceives the statement "impermanent vase" *impermanent* qualifies vase but no other phenomenon.

Similarly, since the statement "impermanent vase" is 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *vase*, it is also 'sound that does not eliminate other qualifications' (Tib.: *khyad par gzhan mi spong gi sgra*) with regard to *vase*. It is 'sound that does not eliminate other qualifications' with regard to *vase* because from the perspective of the awareness that perceives the statement "impermanent vase" *vase* does not qualify impermanent.

In the statement "impermanence of vase", on the other hand, *impermanence* is the principal phenomenon and *vase* its attribute. Hence, the statement "impermanence of vase" is (1) 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to *vase* and (2) 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *impermanence* because it indicates that (1) *vase* is the attribute and (2) *impermanence* the basis for the attribute. Moreover, since the statement "impermanence of vase" is 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to *vase* it is also 'sound that eliminates other qualifications' with regard to *vase*. It is 'sound that eliminates other qualifications' with regard to *vase* because from the perspective of the awareness that perceives the statement "impermanence of vase" *vase* qualifies impermanence but no other phenomena. Similarly, since the statement "the impermanence of vase" is 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *impermanence*, it is also 'sound that does not eliminate other qualifications' with regard to *impermanence*. It is 'sound that does not eliminate other qualifications' with regard to *impermanence* because from the perspective of the awareness that perceives the statement "the impermanence of vase" *impermanence* does not qualify vase.

Returning to the verses of the **Ornament**, as mentioned above, the first two lines of verse 28 that describe the focal object of the small heat level are 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *the four noble truths* and 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to *the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths*. However, the other verses of the **Ornament** that present the focal objects of the remaining levels of the Mahayana path of preparation are 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to

*the four noble truths* and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regards to *the attributes of the four noble truths*. Therefore, by way of being 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to the four noble truths, the other verses indicate *implicitly* that the focal object of the remaining levels are attributes of the four noble truths.

This completes a general description of the Mahayana path of preparation based on Panchen Sonam Drakpa's **General Meaning**.

Next follows a presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation according to Panchen Sonam Drakpa's **Decisive Analysis** which reveals a number of different debates.

Elaborating on the verses of the **Ornament** that present a brief description of the five or six characteristics of the Mahayana path of preparation:

*Just as the focal object and the aspect ...*

and so forth, Panchen Sonam Drakpa sets forth (1) a syllogism and (2) analysis.

### **The syllogism:**

Regarding the subject, the Mahayana path of preparation, it is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation by way of six characteristics because it is superior by way of the *focal object*, the *aspect*, the *cause*, the *special tutor*, the *mode of association*, and the *division*.

- Someone says that it is incorrect that the Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation by way of the characteristic of the *division* because the Hinayana path of preparation can also be subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level.

Our response to this argument is that there is no pervasion, i.e. even though the Hinayana path of preparation can be subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level, this does not mean that it is incorrect that the Mahayana path of preparation is superior to the Hinayana path of preparation by way of the characteristic of the *division*. The reason is that although the heat, peak, and forbearance levels of the Hinayana path of preparation can each be subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level, the supreme Dharma level of this path cannot be subdivided in such a way. The supreme Dharma level of the Hinayana path of preparation cannot be subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level because (as mentioned above) both the great forbearance level and the supreme Dharma level of the Hinayana path of preparation last only for one 'final moment in time' (Tib.: *dus mtha' skad cig ma*).

### **Analysis:**

The section of the analysis consists of:

- (1) The support (of the Mahayana path of preparation) and
- (2) The nature (of the Mahayana path of preparation)

#### **(1) The nature**

The support of the Mahayana path of preparation is subdivided into:

- i. The physical support
- ii. The mental support

##### *i. The physical support*

As mentioned before, the physical support of the Mahayana path of preparation refers to the type of rebirth in which a practitioner abides so as to be able to *newly* cultivate the heat, peak, forbearance, or supreme Dharma levels of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Bodhisattvas who are humans of one of the three continents or celestial beings of the Desire Realm are able to newly attain the heat or peak levels of the Mahayana path of preparation. But they can also newly reach these two levels of the path of preparation as celestial beings of the Form Realm because Gyaltzab je says in his **Ornament of the Essence**:

Even though [beings of the Form Realm are] not the physical support for directly generating the

supreme Dharma level, apparently some beings of the Form Realm [newly] generate the heat and peak levels.

Also, Bodhisattvas who are celestial beings of the Form Realm can newly attain the heat and peak levels of the Mahayana path of preparation because there are Bodhisattvas who are celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the *great* Mahayana path of accumulation. There are celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the *great* Mahayana path of accumulation because there are celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the Mahayana path of accumulation.

However, there are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the forbearance and supreme Dharma levels of the Mahayana path of preparation because there are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation. There are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation because there are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the *great* supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation. There are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the *great* supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation because there are no celestial beings of the Form Realm who newly attain the Mahayana path of seeing.

ii. *The mental support*

As mentioned above, the mental support here refers to the type of awareness with which practitioners newly attain any of the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Whatever is the mental support of any of the four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation is necessarily one of the four concentrations because whoever is a Bodhisattva who has reached the great Mahayana path of accumulation has necessarily attained one of the four concentrations, and because if one has attained a preferable awareness such as one of the four concentrations, there is no reason to rely on a less desirable awareness such as, for instance, the preparatory stage of the first concentration.

Whoever is a Bodhisattva who reached the great Mahayana path of accumulation has necessarily attained the first concentration because such a Bodhisattva has necessarily attained the 'Mental Stability of Continuous Dharma' (Tib.: *chos rgyun gyi ting nge 'dzin*) - a prerequisite of which is the cultivation of the first concentration.

In general, there are different types of awareness that can serve as the mental support of a Mahayana path: (1) an awareness that pertains to the Desire Realm, (2) an awareness that pertains to the preparatory stage of the first concentration, (3) an awareness that pertains to one of the four concentrations, or (4) an awareness that pertains to one of the four absorptions of the Formless Realm.

However, with regard to the mental support of the Mahayana *path of preparation*, an awareness that pertains to the Desire Realm cannot serve as the mental support of any of the levels of the Mahayana path of preparation because it is too scattered. One of the four absorptions of the Formless Realm cannot serve as such a mental support because its factor of calm abiding is too strong. The preparatory stage of the first concentration does not serve as such a mental support because practitioners who attain the Mahayana path of preparation must have previously attained the *great* Mahayana path of accumulation and have thus attained at least the first concentration. If practitioners have attained the first concentration they do not utilize the preparatory stage of the first concentration because of the two, the preparatory stage of the first concentration and the first concentration itself, the first concentration is a more stable mental support.

Please note that the attainment of the first concentration is preceded by the attainment of the preparatory stage of the first concentration, the attainment of the second concentration is preceded by the attainment of the preparatory stage of the second concentration, and so forth.

The preparatory stages of each of the four concentrations have a relatively high degree of mental stability and thus the preparatory stage of the first concentration can serve as the mental support of paths in the continuums of practitioners who have not yet cultivated the first concentration. However, since the first concentration's level of mental stability is greater than that of any of the four preparatory stages and since the cultivation of the first concentration precedes the cultivation of any of the remaining preparatory stages (as well as of the second, third, and fourth concentrations),

practitioners who have attained the first concentration (but none of the remaining concentrations) utilize the first concentration as the mental support rather than the first or second preparatory stage. Practitioners who have attained the second concentration (but not the third and fourth concentrations) utilize the first or second concentration rather than the first, second, or third preparatory stages, and so forth.

## **(2) The nature**

In Panchen Sonam Drakpa's *Decisive Analysis* the nature of a phenomenon refers to its definition.

- Regarding the definition of the Mahayana path of preparation, someone asserts that 'a mundane path that arises subsequent to the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation (i.e. the path of accumulation)' is the definition of the Mahayana path of preparation.

This definition is not correct because whatever is a Mahayana path of preparation is not necessarily a 'mundane path that arises subsequent to the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation (i.e. the path of accumulation)'. For instance, the Mahayana path of preparation in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who prior to entering the Mahayana path of accumulation achieved the state of a Hearer Foe Destroyer is a Mahayana path of preparation but does not accord with this definition. It does not accord with this definition because it is not a mundane path. The Mahayana path of preparation in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who prior to entering the Mahayana path of accumulation achieved the state of a Hearer Foe Destroyer is not a mundane path because it is a supramundane path. It is a supramundane path because it is a path in the continuum of an Arya. It is a path in the continuum of an Arya because it is a path in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who prior to entering the Mahayana path attained the Hinayana paths of seeing, meditation, and no-more-learning (which are Arya/supramundane paths).

Another example of a Mahayana path of preparation that does not accord with the definition is: the Mahayana path of preparation that is a cause of the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation. It does not accord with the definition because it does not arise *subsequent* to the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation. It does not arise subsequent to the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation because it arises *prior* to the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation. It arises prior to the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation because it is a cause of the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation.

- Someone asserts that the Mahayana path of preparation realizing emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is a supramundane path.

This assertion is not correct because a Mahayana path of preparation realizing emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is a mundane path, and here, a mundane or a supramundane path is posited, respectively, from the point of view of a path in the continuum of an ordinary person or an Arya; it is not posited from the point of view of a path the main object of which is a conventional or an ultimate truth.

In other words, a mundane path refers to a path in the continuum of an ordinary person, whereas a supramundane path refers to a path in the continuum of an Arya. An ordinary person is someone who has not yet attained a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness and an Arya is someone who has attained such a meditative equipoise.

In the case of the above assertion, the opponent asserts that a mundane path refers to a path the main object of which is a conventional truth while a supramundane path refers to a path the main object of which is an ultimate truth. Yet this is not correct because an awareness the main object of which is a conventional truth in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of seeing is not a mundane but a supramundane path.

- Someone holds that 'a Mahayana clear realization mainly arisen from meditation' is the definition of the Mahayana path of preparation.

This is not correct because whatever is a Mahayana path of preparation is not necessarily 'a Mahayana clear realization mainly arisen from meditation' because there are Mahayana paths of preparation that



are wisdoms arisen from listening or contemplation, and because wisdoms arisen from listening or contemplation are not mainly arisen from meditation. Wisdoms arisen from listening or contemplation are not mainly arisen from meditation, because the three types of wisdom - wisdom arisen from listening, wisdom arisen from contemplation, and wisdom arisen from meditation - do not have a common locus.

Furthermore, there are Mahayana paths of preparation that are wisdoms arisen from listening or contemplation because in Asanga's *Abhidharmasamucchaya* (Tib.: *mngon pa kun btus / Compendium of Knowledge*), etc. it is explained that there are Mahayana paths of *accumulation* that are wisdoms arisen from listening or contemplation.

- Someone else says that *in general*, the Mahayana path of preparation is not mainly arisen from meditation because there is a Mahayana path of preparation that is a wisdom arisen from listening or contemplation and such a wisdom arisen from listening or contemplation is not mainly arisen from meditation.

There is no pervasion: even though there is a Mahayana path of preparation that is a wisdom arisen from listening or contemplation and such wisdom is not mainly arisen from meditation, this does not mean that *in general*, the Mahayana path of preparation is not a wisdom that is mainly arisen from meditation. If there were a pervasion and your reason were correct, it would absurdly follow that *in general*, the Mahayana path of accumulation is not mainly arisen from listening or contemplation because there is a Mahayana path of accumulation that is a wisdom arisen from meditation and such wisdom is not mainly arisen from either listening or contemplation.

In other words, *in general*, the Mahayana path of accumulation is mainly arisen from listening and contemplation while the Mahayana path of preparation is mainly arisen from meditation. However, this does not contradict the fact that in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of accumulation a wisdom arisen from meditation (which is not mainly arisen from listening and contemplation) may manifest, and in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of preparation a wisdom arisen from listening or contemplation (which is not mainly arisen from meditation) may manifest.

According to our own system, the definition of the Mahayana path of preparation is:

The Mahayana 'clear realization of the meaning' that arises subsequent to the completion of its cause, the Mahayana path of concordance with liberation (i.e. the path of accumulation).

The meaning of the different aspects of the definition is:

- ❖ **The Mahayana 'clear realization of the meaning'**: As mentioned before, a clear realization refers to a path consciousness. The 'clear realization of the meaning' (Tib.: *don mgon rtogs*) is another name for the path of preparation. Hence the Mahayana 'clear realization of the meaning' and the Mahayana path of preparation are equivalent.
- ❖ **It arises subsequent to the completion of its cause, the path of concordance with liberation**: As mentioned above, the 'path of concordance with liberation' (Tib.: *thar pa cha mthun*) is another name for the path of accumulation. Therefore, the path of concordance with liberation and the path of accumulation are equivalent. The Mahayana path of preparation arises subsequent to the completion of its cause, the path of concordance with liberation (i.e. the path of accumulation), because it cannot arise before the path of concordance with liberation is completed and because it is produced by the path of concordance with liberation; thus it is generated after it.

### **The categories of the Mahayana path of preparation**

The Mahayana path of preparation can be classified into four levels: heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme Dharma.

- Someone asserts that the meaning of the four levels is as follows: the heat level newly attains clear appearance of the lack of true existence of objects of perception; the peak level has advanced clear appearance of the lack of true existence of objects of perception; the forbearance level newly attains

clear appearance of the lack of true existence of perceivers, and the supreme Dharma level has advanced clear appearance of the lack of true existence of perceivers.

This is not correct because whatever is a Mahayana path of preparation does not necessarily realize emptiness. For instance, great compassion or Bodhicitta in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation do not realize emptiness. They do not realize emptiness because their object of engagement is not the direct opposite to the object of engagement of a mind that grasps at true existence. The object of engagement of great compassion or Bodhicitta in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not the direct opposite to the object of engagement of a mind that grasps at true existence because Dharmakirti says in his *Pramanavartika* (Tib.: *tshad ma rnam 'grel*):

*Since love, and so forth, are not the opposites of confusion  
They do not annihilate the utmost fault.*

The four levels of the Mahayana path of preparation can each be subdivided into a small, a middling, and a great level.

- With regard to this subdivision, someone asserts that from the point of view of *one* mental continuum, the path of preparation that is generated first is a small path of preparation, the path of preparation that is generated in the middle is a middling path of preparation, and the path of preparation that is generated towards the end is a great path of preparation. But from the point of view of *different* mental continuums the path of preparation in the continuum of a practitioner of weak mental capacity is a small path of preparation, the path of preparation in the continuum of a practitioner of middling mental capacity is a middling path of preparation, and the path of preparation of one with sharp mental faculty is a great path of preparation. Furthermore, whatever is a small path of preparation from the point of view of *different* mental continuums is necessarily a small path of preparation, whatever is a middling path of preparation from the point of view of *different* mental continuums is necessarily a middling path of preparation, and whatever is a great path of preparation from the point of view of *different* mental continuums is necessarily a great path of preparation. However, from the point of view of *one* mental continuum, whatever is a path of preparation that is generated at the beginning is not necessarily a small path of preparation, whatever is a path of preparation that is generated in the middle is not necessarily a middling path of preparation, and whatever is a path of preparation that is generated towards the end is not necessarily a great path of preparation. Therefore, whether a path of preparation is a small, middling, or great path of preparation depends on whether a practitioner is of weak, middling, or sharp mental faculty.
- In response to this assertion another person puts forth the following debate: regarding the subject, the path of preparation that is generated at the beginning and that arises in the continuum of a Bodhisattva of sharp mental faculty, it follows that it is a *great* path of preparation, because it is a path of preparation in the continuum of a Bodhisattva of sharp mental faculty. If one accepts, the response is: regarding the subject, the path of preparation that is generated at the beginning and that arises in the continuum of a Bodhisattva of sharp mental faculty, it follows that it is not a *great* path of preparation, because it is a *small* path of preparation. It is small path of preparation because it is a path of preparation that is generated at the beginning.

Our own response to the second debate is that the debate is not based on the first person's assertion, for the first person asserts that if it is a small path of preparation from the point of view of *one* mental continuum it is not necessarily a small path of preparation. Therefore, the first person does not accept that whatever is a path of preparation that is generated at the beginning is necessarily a small path of preparation.

Our response to the first assertion ("With regard to this subdivision, someone asserts that from the point of view of *one* mental continuum...") is that if a path of preparation being a small, middling, or great path of preparation were to depend on whether a practitioner is of weak, middling, or sharp mental faculty the following absurdity would ensue:

Regarding the subject, paths of meditation on the three pure bhumis (i.e. the eighth, ninth, and tenth bhumi) in the continuum of a Bodhisattva of weak mental capacity, it follows that they are not great paths of meditation, because they are small paths of meditation. They are small paths of meditation because they are paths of meditation in the continuum of a Bodhisattva of weak mental capacity. However, it is not correct to assert that paths of meditation on the three pure bhumis in the continuum of a Bodhisattva of weak mental capacity are *small* paths of meditation because they are *great* paths of meditation. They are great (or strong) paths of meditation because their objects of elimination are small (or subtle) obstructions. Their objects of elimination are small obstructions because their objects of elimination are subtle cognitive obstructions.

When the object of elimination of a path is small, then the path is necessarily great, whereas if the object of elimination of a path is great, then the path is necessarily small. The reason for this is that the relationship between objects of elimination and the path that eliminates them is described in dependence on the analogy of a person washing clothes: the great or coarse dirt can be cleaned by a person who does not scrub hard (i.e. a small or weak washer) while the small or subtle dirt can only be cleaned by someone who scrubs hard (i.e. a great or strong washer).

According to our own system, the subdivision of each of the four levels of the path of preparation into a small, a middling, and a great level is from the point of view of a path of preparation generated at the beginning, middle, and end. It is not from the point of view of a practitioner of weak, middling, or sharp mental faculty.

### **Examining the type of awareness**

This section examines the type of awareness that constitutes the path of preparation that is a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness.

- Someone asserts that the path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is an inferential cognizer.

This is not correct because the path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is not an awareness arisen from contemplation. It is not an awareness arisen from contemplation because it is an awareness arisen from meditation. It is an awareness arisen from meditation because it is a meditative absorption that is a Mahayana path of preparation.

- Someone holds that the path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is a direct perceiver.

This is also not correct because a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation who entered the Mahayana path from the outset does not realize emptiness directly. He does not realize emptiness directly because he is an mundane person. Furthermore, the path of preparation single-pointedly absorbed in emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who entered the Mahayana path from the outset is not a direct perceiver because it is a conceptual subsequent cognizer. It is a conceptual subsequent cognizer because it is a conceptual knower that realizes emptiness through the power of having previously realized emptiness (with an inferential cognizer).

- Someone says that emptiness does not appear clearly to such a path of preparation because it is a conceptual consciousness. There is a pervasion (i.e. if it is a conceptual consciousness, emptiness necessarily does not appear clearly to it) because Dharmakirti says in the ***Pramanavartika***:  
*[To an awareness that] depends on a conceptual consciousness  
The meaning does not appear clearly.*

Our response to this is that there is no pervasion (i.e. despite Dharmakirti's statement, emptiness does not necessarily not appear clearly to a conceptual consciousness) because the meaning of Dharmakirti's

two lines is that emptiness does not appear *as clearly* to a conceptual mind apprehending emptiness as it does to a non-conceptual mind apprehending emptiness (although it does appear clearly).

### **The characteristics of the Mahayana path of preparation**

Elaborating on the verses of the *Ornament* that present an extensive description of the characteristics of the *focal object* and the *aspect* of the Mahayana path of preparation:

*The focal object, impermanence and so forth,...*

and so on, Panchen Sonam Drakpa sets forth the following syllogisms:

Regarding the subject, the four noble truths, they are the focal object of the heat level of the Mahayana path of preparation because they are the basis of eliminating superimpositions on the heat level of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Regarding the subject, the aspects of the heat level of the Mahayana path of preparation, there are several because there is a small, a middling, and a great level.

Regarding the subject, the four noble truths, they are the focal object of the peak level of the Mahayana path of preparation because they are the basis of eliminating superimpositions on the peak level of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Regarding the subject, the aspects of the peak level of the Mahayana path of preparation, there are several because there is a small, a middling, and a great level.

Regarding the subject, the four noble truths, they are the focal object of the forbearance level of the Mahayana path of preparation because they are the basis of eliminating superimpositions on the forbearance level of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Regarding the subject, the aspects of the forbearance level of the Mahayana path of preparation, there are several because there is a small, a middling, and a great level.

Regarding the subject, the four noble truths, they are the focal object of the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation because they are the basis of eliminating superimpositions on the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation.

Regarding the subject, the aspects of the supreme Dharma level of the Mahayana path of preparation, there are several because there is a small, a middling, and a great level.

- With regard to the aspect of the Mahayana path of preparation, someone cites the following debate: It follows that whatever is the aspect of the Mahayana path of preparation is necessarily a Mahayana path of preparation itself because the aspect of the Mahayana path of preparation has a small, a middling, and a great level. If one accepts this, it follows that whatever is the aspect of emptiness is necessarily emptiness itself. However, this is unacceptable because the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing is the aspect of emptiness. The uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing is the aspect of emptiness because it is an awareness to which the aspect of emptiness appears.

There is no pervasion: even though the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing is an awareness to which the aspect of emptiness appears this does not mean that such an uninterrupted path is the aspect of emptiness. If there were a pervasion it would absurdly follow that pleasant and unpleasant would not be contradictory. They would not be contradictory because their aspects would not be contradictory. The aspect of pleasant and the aspect of unpleasant would not be contradictory because the awareness to which the aspect of pleasant and the awareness to which the aspect of unpleasant appears are not contradictory. The awareness to which the aspect of pleasant appears and the awareness to which the aspect of unpleasant appears are not contradictory because there is an awareness to which both the aspect of pleasant and the aspect of unpleasant appear.

### **The focal object of the Mahayana path of preparation**

The next section is concerned with the verses of the *Ornament* that present the focal objects of the

eleven levels other than the *small heat* level of the Mahayana path of preparation.

As mentioned above, the two lines that describe the focal object of the *small heat* level are 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to the four noble truths and they *explicitly* indicate that the focal object of the *small heat* level (i.e. the sixteen aspects) refers to the attributes of the four noble truths. However, the verses that describe the focal objects of the remaining eleven levels (*middling heat* level, *great heat* level, *small peak* level, and so forth) do not *explicitly* indicate that the focal object of each level refers to the attributes of the four noble truths, for these verses are not 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to the four noble truths.

Yet, there is no fault, because the verses *implicitly* indicate that the focal objects of the remaining eleven levels are attributes of the four noble truths by means of being 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to the four noble truths. They implicitly indicate this by means of being 'sound expressing the attribute' because both, 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to the four noble truths and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to the four noble truths indicate the four noble truths, even if the mode of indication may differ.

Therefore, students of the *Ornament* first comprehend that the focal object of the *small heat* level refers to the attributes of the four noble truths in dependence on the first two lines of verse 28. Thereafter, in dependence on the later verses that describe the focal objects of the remaining levels of the Mahayana path of preparation, they understand that these focal objects are also attributes of the four noble truths.

- Someone says that the definition of 'sound expressing the attribute' is: an object of hearing causing one to understand the object of expression by way of eliminating other attributes. The definition of 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' is: an object of hearing causing one to understand the object of expression by way of not eliminating other attributes.

These definitions are not correct because the two definiendums 'sound expressing the attribute' and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' are not contradictory, but the two definitions are contradictory. 'Sound expressing the attribute' and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' are not contradictory because the statement "impermanent form" is both 'sound expressing the attribute' and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute'. The statement "impermanent form" is 'sound expressing the attribute' because it is 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to *impermanent*. It is 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to *impermanent* because it is an object of hearing causing an awareness to understand that of the two, attribute and bearer of the attribute, *impermanent* is the attribute.

Also, the statement "impermanent form" is 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' because it is 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *form*. It is 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *form* because it is an object of hearing causing an awareness to understand that form is the basis of the attribute, impermanent.

- Someone asserts that 'sound expressing the attribute' and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to the same phenomenon are contradictory.

This is not correct because the statement "a light *light*" is 'sound expressing the attribute' with regard to light and 'sound expressing the bearer of the attribute' with regard to *light*.

### The four conceptions

Elaborating on the verses of the *Ornament* that describe the characteristic of the *mode of association*:

*Since there are bases and antidotes to those...*

and so forth, Panchen Sonam Drakpa presents (1) syllogisms and (2) analysis.

### Syllogisms:

Regarding the subject, conceptions of objects of perception, they are categorized into two, because they are categorized into (1) conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception and (2) conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception.

Regarding the subject, conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception, they are categorized into nine different conceptions because they are categorized into nine different conceptions from the point of view of their (focal) objects.

Regarding the subject, conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception, they are categorized into nine different conceptions because they are categorized into nine different conceptions from the point of view of their (focal) objects.

Regarding the subject, conceptions of perceivers, they are categorized into two because they are categorized into (1) conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents and (2) conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents.

Regarding the subject, conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents, they are categorized into nine different conceptions because they are categorized into nine different conceptions from the point of view of their (focal) objects.

Regarding the subject, conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents, they are categorized into nine different conceptions because they are categorized into nine different conceptions from the point of view of their (focal) objects.

### **Analysis:**

According to our own system, whatever is a conception that is indicated in the *Ornament's* verses on the Mahayana path of preparation is not necessarily either 'a conception of objects of perception' or 'a conception of perceivers'. It is not necessarily one of the two because the conceptual consciousness that focuses on Hearers' and Solitary Realizers' paths and results, and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of disengagement of Bodhisattva paths, is neither 'a conception of objects of perception' nor 'a conception of perceivers'.

- Someone asserts that the definition of 'a conception of objects of perception' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on its focal object, objects of perception, and apprehends them to be truly existent. The definition of 'a conception of perceivers' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on its focal object, perceivers, and apprehends them to be truly existent.

These two definitions are not correct because if they were correct, it would absurdly follow that the two conceptions (the conception of objects of perception and the conceptions of perceivers) would not be contradictory. They would not be contradictory because the conception that focuses on eye consciousnesses and apprehends them to be truly existent would be both a conception of objects of perception and a conception of perceivers. It would be both, because eye consciousnesses are both objects of perception and perceivers. Therefore, the conceptual consciousness that focuses on eye consciousnesses and apprehends them to be truly existent would be a conception of objects of perception because it accords with the definition asserted above (of a conception of objects of perception). It accords with that definition because it is a conceptual consciousness that focuses on objects of perception (i.e. eye consciousnesses) and apprehends them to be truly existent. Likewise, the conceptual consciousness that focuses on eye consciousnesses and apprehends them to be truly existent would be a conception of perceivers because it accords with the definition asserted above (of a conception of perceivers). It accords with that definition because it is a conceptual consciousness that focuses on perceivers (i.e. eye consciousnesses) and apprehends them to be truly existent.

According to our own system, the definition of conceptions of objects of experience is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on objects of perceivers and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of experience. The definition of conceptions of perceivers is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on perceivers and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers.

- Someone holds that these definitions are not correct because if they were correct it would absurdly follow that a conceptual consciousness that focuses on eye consciousnesses and apprehends them to be both truly existent objects of experiences and experiencers, would be both (1) a conception of objects of perception and (2) a conception of objects of perceivers. A conceptual consciousness that focuses on eye consciousnesses and apprehends them to be both, truly existent objects of

experiences and experiencers, would be both (1) a conception of objects of perception and (2) a conception of objects of perceivers because it is both (1) a conceptual consciousness that focuses on objects of perceivers and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of experience and (2) a conceptual consciousness that focuses on perceivers and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers.

According to our own system, a conceptual consciousness that focuses on eye consciousnesses and apprehends them to be both, truly existent objects of experience and experiencers, is neither (1) a conception of objects of perception nor (2) a conception of perceivers. It is neither (1) a conception of objects of perception nor (2) a conception of perceivers because it is neither (1) a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly existent objects of experience nor is it (2) a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly existent experiencers. If it were both (1) a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly existent objects of experience and (2) a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly existent experiencers, it would absurdly follow that a conceptual consciousness that focuses on eye consciousnesses and apprehends them to be both truly permanent and impermanent would be a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly impermanent.

However, a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be both truly permanent and impermanent is not a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly impermanent because it is not an awareness grasping at true existence, whereas a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly impermanent is necessarily an awareness grasping at true existence.

A conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be both truly permanent and impermanent is not an awareness grasping at true existence, because *the lack* of eye consciousnesses being both truly permanent and impermanent is not emptiness. The lack of eye consciousnesses being both truly permanent and impermanent is not emptiness because proponents of the Chittamatra School realize the lack of eye consciousnesses being both truly permanent and impermanent but do not realize emptiness. Proponents of the Chittamatra School do not realize emptiness because they do not assert the lack of true/inherent existence. But proponents of the Chittamatra School realize the lack of an eye consciousness being both truly permanent and impermanent because they realize the lack of eye consciousnesses being both permanent and impermanent.

Please note that eye consciousnesses are impermanent, not *both* permanent and impermanent. There is nothing that is both permanent and impermanent. Therefore, 'eye consciousnesses being both permanent and impermanent' does not exist, which is why 'eye consciousnesses being both permanent and impermanent' cannot serve as the basis of emptiness since the basis of emptiness must be something that exists.

However, a conceptual consciousness that apprehends eye consciousnesses to be truly impermanent is necessarily an awareness grasping at true existence because *the lack* of eye consciousnesses being truly impermanent is emptiness. The lack of eye consciousness being truly impermanent is emptiness because 'eye consciousness being impermanent' exists.

- Someone says that a conceptual awareness that focuses on a conceptual consciousness perceiving vases and apprehends it to be *truly* impermanent is a conceptual awareness that focuses on the conceptual consciousness perceiving vases and apprehends it to be impermanent.

This is not correct because whatever is a conceptual consciousness that focuses on a conceptual consciousness perceiving vases and apprehends it to be impermanent is necessarily a correct awareness, whereas whatever is a conceptual awareness that focuses on a conceptual consciousness perceiving vases and apprehends it to be *truly* impermanent is necessarily a wrong consciousness.

- Someone asserts that a conceptual consciousness that focuses on an independent self and apprehends such a self to be a truly existent object of perception is 'a conception of objects of perception'.

It is not correct that a conceptual consciousness that focuses on an independent self and apprehends such a self to be a truly existent object of perception is 'a conception of objects of perception' because a conceptual consciousness that focuses on an independent self and apprehends such a self to be a truly existent object of perception is not an awareness grasping at true existence. It is not an awareness grasping at true existence because an inherently existent self is not an object of perception. An inherently existent self is not an object of perception because it does not exist.

- Someone says that a conceptual consciousness that focuses on vases and apprehends them to be truly existent perceivers is 'a conception of perceivers'.

That is not correct because a conceptual consciousness that focuses on vases and apprehends them to be truly existent perceivers is not an awareness grasping at true existence. It is not an awareness grasping at true existence because vases are not perceivers.

Conceptions of objects of perception can be categorized into (1) conceptions of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception and (2) conceptions of very pure phenomena being objects of perception.

- Someone asserts that the definition of 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on truths of suffering and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of perception.

According to our own system, this definition is not correct because whatever is a conceptual consciousness that focuses on truths of suffering and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of perception is not necessarily a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena. For instance, a conceptual consciousness focusing on the faculty of faith that is a truth of suffering and apprehending such a faculty to be a truly existent object of perception accords with that definition but is not 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception'. It is not 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' because the faculty of faith that is a truth of suffering is not a phenomenon on the thoroughly afflicted side. It is not a phenomenon on the thoroughly afflicted side because it is a faculty of faith that is on the very pure side.

- Someone says that the definition of 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on afflictions and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of perception.

This is not correct because whatever is 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' does not necessarily accord with the definition. For instance, a conceptual consciousness that focuses on main minds that are on the thoroughly afflicted side and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of perception is 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' but not a conceptual consciousness that focuses on afflictions and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of perception. It is not a conceptual consciousness that focuses on afflictions and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of perception because main minds that are on the thoroughly afflicted side are not afflictions. Main minds that are on the thoroughly afflicted side are not afflictions because whatever is an affliction is necessarily a mental factor.

According to our own system, the definition of 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on phenomena on the thoroughly afflicted side and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of experience.

As mentioned above, 'a conception of thoroughly afflicted phenomena being objects of perception' can be categorized into nine different types such as a conceptual consciousness that focuses on afflicted ignorance and apprehends it to be a truly existent object of perception.



The definition of 'a conception of very pure phenomena being objects of perception' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on phenomena on the very pure side and apprehends them to be truly existent objects of experience.

Conceptions of perceivers can be categorized into (1) conceptions of perceivers of substantial existents and (2) conceptions of perceivers of imputed existents.

The definition of 'a conception of perceivers of substantial existents' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on perceivers of substantial existents and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers.

The definition of 'a conception of perceivers of imputed existents' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on perceivers of imputed existents and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers.

- Someone holds that the definition of 'a conception of perceivers of substantial existents' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on substantial existents or on perceivers of substantial existents, and apprehends either one to be truly existent experiencers.  
The definition of 'a conception of perceivers of imputed existents' is: a conceptual consciousness that focuses on imputed existents or on perceivers of imputed existents, and apprehends either one to be truly existent experiencers.

These two definitions are not correct because whatever accords with the first definition is not necessarily 'a conception of perceivers of substantial existents' and whatever accords with the second definition is not necessarily 'a conception of imputed existents'. An example of a conception that accords with the first definition but is not 'a conception of perceivers of substantial existents' is a conceptual consciousness that focuses on substantial existents and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers. A conceptual consciousness that focuses on substantial existents and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers is not a conception of perceivers of substantial existents because substantial existents are not experiencers.

An example of a conception that accords with the second definition but is not 'a conception of perceivers of imputed existents' is a conceptual consciousness that focuses on imputed existents and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers. A conceptual consciousness that focuses on imputed existents and apprehends them to be truly existent experiencers is not a conception of perceivers of imputed existents because imputed existents are not experiencers.

Substantial existents and imputed existents are not experiencers because they are not object-possessioners (i.e. awarenesses, living beings, or expressive sounds).

Elaborating on the verse of the **Ornament** that presents the characteristic of the *special tutor*:

*Mind that is undaunted, and so forth,*

and so on, Panchen Sonam Drakpa posits the following syllogisms:

The subject, great compassion in the continuum of a Bodhisattva is a Bodhisattva's inner special tutor because it is a clear realization of a Bodhisattva which has not fallen to the extreme of Samsara nor to the extreme of Peace (i.e. self-liberation).

The subject, a Bodhisattva's empowering condition, a *Supreme Emanation Body*, is a Bodhisattva's outer special tutor because it is a Bodhisattva's empowering condition, a virtuous guide who thoroughly teaches method and wisdom.

Therefore, the definition of an inner special tutor is: a clear realization of a Bodhisattva which has not fallen to the extreme of Samsara nor to the extreme of Peace (i.e. self-liberation).

The definition of an outer special tutor is: a Bodhisattva's empowering condition, a virtuous guide who thoroughly teaches method and wisdom to a Bodhisattva.

- Someone asserts that the definition of an outer special tutor is not correct because a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation may have an outer special tutor who is a proponent of the Chittamatra School. A Bodhisattva on the path of preparation may have an outer special tutor who is a proponent of the Chittamatra School because he may have a special tutor who is a proponent of the Chittamatra

School. A Bodhisattva on the path of preparation may have a special tutor who is a proponent of the Chittamatra School because he may have a lama who is a proponent of the Chittamatra School.

There is no pervasion, i.e. even though a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation may have a lama who is a proponent of the Chittamatra School, this does not mean that he has a special tutor who is a proponent of the Chittamatra School. The reason is that whoever is an inner lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily an inner special tutor of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation.

Whoever is an inner lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily an inner special tutor of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation because whoever is an inner lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily an inner special tutor of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation, and whoever is an outer lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily an outer special tutor of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation.

Whoever is an inner lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily an inner special tutor of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation because whoever is an inner lama is necessarily a person.

Also, whoever is an outer lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily an outer special tutor of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation because whoever is an outer lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily his empowering condition, whereas whoever is an outer special tutor of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is necessarily his empowering condition.

If the opponent were to object to the statement that whoever is an outer lama of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is not necessarily his empowering condition, we would respond: it follows that whoever is an outer lama of a practitioner is necessarily his cause. If the opponent were to accept we would reply: regarding the subject, Buddha Shakyamuni, it follows that he is the cause of his father King Suddhodana, because he is his father King Suddhodana's outer lama.

This completes the presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation.