

Transcript of the teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on *The Eight Categories and Seventy Topics*

Root Text: *The Eight Categories and Seventy Topics* by Jetsün Chökyi Gyaltsen, translated by Jampa Gendun. Final draft October 2002, updated May 2011. © Jampa Gendun & FPMT, Inc.

Lesson 5**23 June 2016**

Exalted knower of all aspects—Topics: 6. Object of intent. 7. Achieving through armour. 8. Achieving through engagement. 9. Achieving through the collections. 10. Definitely issuing achieving. The knower of paths.

EXALTED KNOWER OF ALL ASPECTS (CONT'D)

| Definiendum | Definition | Boundary | No. of topics | Topics (Seventy topics) |
|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------|---|
| Exalted Knower of all Aspects | A fully developed exalted wisdom directly realizing the ten topics, mind generation and so forth. | Only on the buddha ground | 10 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mind generation 2. Precepts 3. Four branches of definite discrimination 4. Naturally abiding lineage, the basis of Mahayana achievings 5. Observed objects of Mahayana achievings 6. Object of intent 7. Achieving through armour 8. Achieving through engagement 9. Achieving through the collections 10. Definitely issuing achieving |

Instead of defining the exalted knower of all aspects as in the chart above, we can also say that an exalted knower of all aspects is a fully developed exalted wisdom directly realizing all phenomena. The meaning is the same.

To understand the exalted knower of all aspects, we have to examine the definition closely by examining its different parts. You have to ask yourself. “Why does the definition say, ‘a fully developed exalted wisdom’? Why can’t it be just an ‘exalted wisdom’?” There must be a reason for these words to be there. The question of why it must be a fully developed exalted wisdom should at least arise in your mind. Other questions that can arise:

- Why is it defined as a fully developed exalted wisdom and not just a fully developed mental consciousness?
- Why does it have to be an exalted wisdom that directly, not simultaneously, realizes the ten topics?

In the last lesson, we went through the exercise of looking at the exalted knower of all

aspects. Perhaps the entire lesson was wasted. I am not sure whether there was any benefit.

When you are trying to understand what an exalted knower of all aspects is, it must be based on the definition that is given. At least, you must know that in order for a mind to be an exalted knower of all aspects, it must have these elements and fulfil these minimum requirements.

Synonyms

Let's say we look at the exalted knower of all aspects in a very simple way. Then we can say that any consciousness in a continuum of a buddha superior is necessarily an exalted knower of all aspects. Somebody may ask you, "If it is a consciousness in a continuum of a buddha superior, are you sure that it is necessarily an exalted knower of all aspects?"

Whether we say an exalted knower of all aspects, the wisdom truth body, the consciousness that has abandoned the two obscurations or the resultant perfection of wisdom, they all mean the same thing. These are different ways of talking about the same thing. They all have the same meaning.

Boundary

Where does the exalted knower of all aspects exist? What is its boundary? It exists *only* on the buddha ground. This means sentient beings don't have this wisdom.

Ten topics

There are ten topics that illustrate the exalted knower of all aspects. We are not going to go into each and every one of them. We have already covered:

1. mind generation
2. precepts
3. four branches of definite discrimination (or the path of preparation)
4. the naturally abiding lineage, the basis of the Mahayana achievings
5. observed objects of Mahayana achievings

~ 6. Object of intent

The object of intent of Mahayana achievings is talking about the goal for practising the bodhisattva path, which is to achieve the three objects of intent of the Mahayana achievings. Prior to the object of intent of the Mahayana achievings is the topic of the observed objects of Mahayana achieving. This includes virtue, non-virtue and so forth, i.e., all phenomena.

Why are they the objects of observation? The purpose of focussing on the observed objects of Mahayana achievings is to achieve the three objects of intent. These are:

1. the great heroic mind
2. the great abandonment
3. the great realization

In the definition of mind generation, what is the specific special intent of the mind generation? It is to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. So in order to achieve this intent, one generates the intention to achieve omniscience in order to achieve that

intent.

Why are these three posited as the objects of intent of the Mahayana achievings? Because these three are the ultimate methods to achieve the welfare of sentient beings.

~~ *The qualities of the Buddha Jewel*

In the module on *The Tathagata Essence*, when we looked at the eight qualities of the Buddha Jewel, the first two qualities are the quality of being uncompounded and the quality of being spontaneous.¹

These two qualities refer to the two divisions of the nature body of the Buddha respectively. The nature body that is pure from the beginning (the factor of purity or natural purity) and the nature body that is free from adventitious defilements (the factor of adventitious purity or purity from the adventitious defilements) are the two aspects of the nature body. Among the three objects of intent of the Mahayana achievings, the great abandonment refers to these two purities.

The third quality of the Buddha Jewel—the quality of not being realized through the cause of others—refers to the mind that directly realizes these two purities, natural purity and purity from the adventitious defilements. It is a mind that directly realizes the mode of phenomena, i.e., it is an exalted knower that directly realizes emptiness. This third quality also refers to the truth body that is a fulfilment of one's own purpose. On that basis, there is then the truth body that is the fulfilment of the purpose of others' purpose. This is why there are the great heroic mind and the great realization.

Another quality of the Buddha Jewel is its quality of knowledge, i.e., its quality of knowing all conventionalities. As I have mentioned before, the knower of conventionalities is the knower of the varieties of phenomena. There is the knower of the mode of phenomena and the knower of the varieties of phenomena. I think the knower of the varieties of phenomena refers to the mind that sees the presence of the tathagata essence in all sentient beings. In my opinion, this mind that sees the presence of the tathagata essence sees the presence of the natural purity in the mind of each and every sentient being, which at the same time is obscured by their adventitious defilements.

Due to being this knower of the varieties of phenomena, the next quality of the Buddha Jewel is the quality of mercy. Due to the power of these two qualities—the quality of knowledge and the quality of mercy—buddhas can work for the benefit of sentient beings.

¹ The eight qualities of the Buddha are:

1. The quality of being uncompounded
2. The quality of being spontaneous
3. The quality of not being realized through the cause of others
4. The quality of knowledge
5. The quality of mercy (or compassion)
6. The quality of power
7. The quality of fulfilling the purpose of oneself
8. The quality of fulfilling the purposes of others

As mentioned before, the observed objects of Mahayana achievings cover all phenomena. When divided, there are:

1. virtue—that which is to be adopted
 2. non-virtue—that which is to be abandoned
 3. unspecified—that which is to be left in equanimity
- The purpose of focussing on the observed objects of Mahayana achievings is to achieve the three intents of the Mahayana achievings—the great heroic mind, great abandonment and great realization.
 - For the purpose of actualizing the three objects of intent of the Mahayana achievings, one must engage in the four Mahayana achievings (topics 7—10):
 7. Achieving through armour
 8. Achieving through engagement
 9. Achieving through collections
 10. Definitely issuing achieving

The Mahayana achievings

If we were to ask what a path in the continuum of a bodhisattva or a Mahayana achieving is, then it is a path that is based on mind generation. With mind generation as the basis, this path enables an individual to accomplish the two purposes—the purpose of oneself and the purpose of others.

~ *The six greatneses*

In order for it to be a path in the continuum of a bodhisattva, it has the following qualities:

1. Great abiding: The path in the continuum of a bodhisattva is a mind that relies on mind generation.
2. Great perseverance or great effort: It is the mind of joyously persevering in achieving the two purposes.
3. Great result: In dependence on such a path, it brings about the result of great enlightenment.
4. Great undertaking: This is the great undertaking whereby the bodhisattvas promise to work to achieve the great purposes of all sentient beings.
5. Great forbearance: The bodhisattvas willingly take on hardships while working for sentient beings.
6. Perfect practice: Then the bodhisattvas work to eliminate all the suffering of sentient beings. They work to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. This means they are able to work perfectly to accomplish the goals of sentient beings.

So these are the six greatneses as mentioned in the *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutra*.

~ *7. Achieving through armour*

The definition says that achieving through armour is a bodhisattva yoga conjoined with a vast intention desiring to practice inclusively the entire six perfections such as generosity and so forth within each of the six perfections.

In fact, there is more to this definition. It means that when the bodhisattva engages in the practice to achieve the objects of intent, they do so with a mind that is very vast and expansive, courageous and strong. They have a very strong intention to practise the

Buddhadharma in order to achieve their goal. It is a forceful energy akin to mental armour.

The sutras give the example of a king who is about to go to war. This king will prepare himself by putting on the correct attire, armour and so forth. Likewise, when the bodhisattvas go about practising the Dharma in order to accomplish the objects of intent, they do so with a very strong mind and intention. They apply this to their practice and bring it to fruition.

What is an achieving through armour? As indicated in the definition, when a bodhisattva practises, let's say, the perfection of generosity, his practice of this perfection must include all the other perfections as well. The bodhisattva must possess this intention and desire to practise the entire six perfections inclusively within each perfection. It is a *desire* to engage in such a practice, but it doesn't necessarily necessitate doing so.

Let us look at the example of a bodhisattva practising the perfection of generosity, such as offering the gift of the Dharma.

- When he is offering the gift of the Dharma, which is a practice of the perfection of generosity, he is also practising the perfection of ethical discipline. In this context, it refers to the bodhisattva stopping the arising of any selfish interest while offering the Dharma. This is ethical restraint.
- If the bodhisattva encounters any criticism from others while he is offering the gift of the dharma, he is supposed to practise forbearance by bearing and putting up with it. This is the practice of patience.
- While he is offering the Dharma, the bodhisattva does so enthusiastically. This is joyous effort.
- When the bodhisattva is offering the gift of the Dharma, he should do so with a single-pointedness of mind. If he is talking about the Mahayana, he should focus on the Mahayana and make sure he stays on the topic with mindfulness and vigilance. He should not talk suddenly about something else.
- While the bodhisattva is offering the gift of the Dharma, he should bring to mind that he, himself, the giver of the Dharma, the recipient of the gift of the Dharma and the Dharma that he is delivering do not exist inherently. Dedicating the roots of virtue from that act of offering the Dharma can also be the practice of the perfection of wisdom.

So in summary, what is achieving through armour? It is the strong desire to practise the entire six perfections inclusively within each of the six perfections.

Achieving through armour exists from the Mahayana path of accumulation. After wearing the great mental armour, one proceeds to do something. This is why achieving through engagement comes after achieving through armour.

~ 8. *Achieving through engagement.*

Why does the king dress for war? After putting on his war attire, he goes off to war. He doesn't just sit down!

From the start of the Mahayana path of accumulation, there is achieving through

armour, which is essentially a strong resolve to practise inclusively all the six perfections within each of the six perfections.

Achieving through engagement starts from the Mahayana path of preparation. When the bodhisattva moves on to the path of preparation, he then engages in joyous effort.

The path of preparation starts with the achievement of the union of calm abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness. Once the path of preparation starts, the bodhisattva gains the ability to suppress the manifest conception of the apprehended and the apprehender to be truly existent. His ability to be able to engage in that comes from the realization of special insight. Prior to attaining that realization, he is unable to do so. The war against the afflictions is not about waging war per se. It entails being able to inflict some real damage to the enemy, the afflictions. This only starts with the path of preparation when one has achieved the union of calm abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness.

~ 9. *Achieving through the collections*

In dependence upon achieving through engagement—that is, by applying joyous effort—the bodhisattva is able to accumulate the vast collections. Therefore, what comes after achieving through engagement is achieving through the collections.

The process of being able to inflict some damage to the afflictions only starts on the path of preparation due to the special insight focussing on emptiness. Through that, the bodhisattva is able to accumulate the vast collections and that gives the mind the power to be able to realize emptiness soon.

When one goes to war, one must have strong resolve and be adequately prepared by putting on the right attire. Only then does one go to war. Going to war is one thing but being able to accomplish one's goal is another matter. So, in order to accomplish one's goal in war, many conditions must come together. One must be adequately prepared with the right weapons and the right strategy in order for one's army to be effective.

Likewise, achieving through the collections refers to the wisdom that is conjoined with the two vast collections that prepares the mind to be able to realize emptiness directly on the path of seeing soon. Achieving through the collections starts from the level of the supreme mundane quality of the Mahayana path of preparation.

~ 10. *Definitely issuing achieving*

Definitely issuing achieving refers to the power that is able to bring forth without doubt the exalted knower of all aspects. This means full enlightenment. Its definition is: a yoga of the pure grounds that definitely yields without doubt an exalted knower of all aspects. This refers to the time when one knows for sure that enlightenment will be achieved. Definitely issuing achieving exists on the three pure grounds.

From the perspective of the Consequence Middle Way School, afflictive obscurations are abandoned on the eighth ground. So, it is only when the bodhisattva achieves the eighth ground that the enemy, the afflictions, is destroyed. From then onwards, the bodhisattva is working towards enlightenment.

Khen Rinpoche: Are you following or are you totally lost? Are you making some sense of this?

We are looking at these topics in an extremely superficial way. We are not anywhere near to examining or analysing them. There is no way we can go into the details even if we wanted to.

For example, when one studies achieving through engagement in depth, one of its many details is the presentation of the form and formless absorptions and concentrations. It talks about the ways to achieve calm abiding and special insight on the basis of having achieved calm abiding and then the way of achieving the form and formless absorptions. There are different levels of the form and the formless realms as well as their concentrations. It also talks about how these are achieved through meditating on the path that meditates on coarseness and many other meditations.

If we were to study achieving through the collections in detail, then there is an extensive discussion of the paths and grounds, how the different paths act as an antidote to the different objects of abandonment and how objects of abandonment are abandoned by the path that abandons them.

THE KNOWER OF PATHS

| Definiendum | Definition | Boundary | No. of topics | Topics (Seventy topics) |
|-----------------|--|---|---------------|---|
| Knower of Paths | Mahayana superior's clear realizer conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness within the continuum of the person who possesses it. | Mahayana path of seeing through the buddha ground | 11 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limbs of knower of paths 2. Knower of paths that knows hearers' paths 3. Knower of paths that knows solitary realizers' paths 4. Mahayana path of seeing 5. Function of the Mahayana path of meditation 6. Mahayana path of meditation of belief 7. Beneficial qualities of the path of meditation of belief 8. Path of meditation of dedication 9. Path of meditation of rejoicing 10. Path of meditation of achieving 11. The completely pure path of meditation |

By looking at the definition, it is not sufficient that the mind is conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness. That doesn't make it a knower of the paths. It has to be a Mahayana superior's clear realizer. If it is a Mahayana superior's clear realizer conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness, then it is a knower of paths.

To make it simple, the knower of paths is a path in the continuum of a Mahayana superior. An exalted knower in the continuum of a Mahayana superior is mutually inclusive with the knower of paths.

There is a difference in the limit of pervasion between a bodhisattva superior and the Mahayana superior. The limit of pervasion of a Mahayana superior is bigger than the limit of pervasion of a bodhisattva superior. A bodhisattva superior is necessarily a Mahayana superior but a Mahayana superior is not necessarily a bodhisattva superior.

Khen Rinpoche: Yes? Who said yes? Isn't a Mahayana superior necessarily a bodhisattva superior?

(Student's reply is inaudible).

Khen Rinpoche: What she said is correct. What you all said is correct. I just wanted to push a little bit to see how confident you are with your answer.

Student 1: A Mahayana superior includes a buddha.

Khen Rinpoche: As such, you are saying that a buddha superior is not a bodhisattva superior, right?

Student 1: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: What you said is correct. I am not saying that it is incorrect.

Is there mind generation in the continuum of a buddha superior?

Student 1: Yes, there is.

Khen Rinpoche: Is there bodhicitta?

Student 1: No. In the continuum of a buddha, there is no bodhicitta but there is mind generation.

Khen Rinpoche: Is there a conventional mind generation?

Ven. Gyurme: Instead of saying bodhicitta, we can say, conventional mind generation.

Student 1: There is no bodhicitta. There should be no conventional mind generation if it is related to bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is necessarily mind generation but mind generation is not necessarily bodhicitta. It is the same as the difference between the Mahayana superior and the bodhisattva superior.

Khen Rinpoche: Yes, correct. Then what is the measure of bodhicitta?

Student 1: The measure of bodhicitta is up to the end of the tenth ground. You have bodhicitta during the path. Once you reach the path of no more learning, you don't have bodhicitta.

Khen Rinpoche: Yes, correct.

This is to give all of you an idea. When somebody says “Yes,” don’t stop there. You can continue to ask questions in different ways to the person. Then you can make sure that what you are saying is correct. This is important.

Does a knower of paths necessarily realize emptiness?

Khen Rinpoche: Is this true? This is why you must think deeply.

Does a knower of paths necessarily realize emptiness? You have to analyse this based on the definition. What does the definition says or what does the definition not say?

The definition doesn’t say, “A Mahayana superior’s clear realizer directly realizing emptiness.” Rather it is “A Mahayana superior’s clear realizer *conjoined with* the wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the continuum of the person who possesses it.”

So, the definition says “*conjoined with* the wisdom directly realizing emptiness.” It doesn’t only say, “directly realizing emptiness.” If that is the case, does a knower of paths necessarily realize emptiness directly?

You cannot forget what was said at the beginning. What is mutually inclusive with the knower of paths? It is the exalted knower in the continuum of a Mahayana superior. Whatever your answer is—yes or no—you must always have an example to back up your position.

Student 2: An example would be the mind of a bodhisattva superior during post-meditative equipoise, engaging in the collection of merit. In post-meditative equipoise, isn’t it the case that this bodhisattva superior won’t see emptiness directly?

Khen Rinpoche: First things first. You must be confident of what you are saying.

Student 2: During post-meditative equipoise, the bodhisattva superior doesn’t realize emptiness directly but his mind is conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness.

Khen Rinpoche: You said earlier that the bodhisattva superior does not see emptiness directly at this time. If the wisdom directly realizing emptiness doesn’t exist, then how do you conjoin with a non-existent.

Khen Rinpoche: You all have to think. She said it is conjoined but the mind is not there in the first place. How to conjoin then?

What I am saying is to give you some idea of how to think about the definition in a deeper way.

If it is a knower of paths, does it necessarily realize emptiness directly?

Student 3: I don’t have an example but I saw that the boundary is from the Mahayana path of seeing through to the buddha ground. So, you must have the direct realization of emptiness.

Khen Rinpoche: I am asking everyone, including you. You must listen very carefully to the question that I am asking.

Student 3: You asked whether the knower of the paths necessarily realizes emptiness directly?

Khen Rinpoche: So, what has that got to do with its boundary?

Student 3: Doesn't it mean that it has to be within this boundary before it can be considered a knower of paths?

Khen Rinpoche: We are not asking whether it is a knower of paths. We are asking if it is a knower of paths, which exists from the path of seeing to buddhahood, does it necessarily realize emptiness directly?

Student 3: If it does, then "conjoined" doesn't make sense. It sounds like that to me but I don't have an example.

Khen Rinpoche: If you don't have an example, it means you don't know.

Student 3: Can you please explain what a clear realizer is?

Khen Rinpoche: Path, exalted knower and clear realizer all have the same meaning and are mutually inclusive. It is understandable that at times, we will experience some difficulties due to these different terms. Nevertheless, we have to know them. Now you know that a path, an exalted knower and a clear realizer are mutually inclusive. A Mahayana clear realizer is a Mahayana path.

Student 4: The definition says, "A Mahayana superior's clear realizer conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness within the continuum of the person who possesses it." I am wondering what is the significance of saying, "who possesses it" Because when you say, "conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness within the continuum," isn't it understood that it is in the mind of the person who possesses it? I am just wondering whether those extra words, "of the person who possesses it," have some special significance.

Khen Rinpoche: In the definition of the knower of paths, it ends with "within the continuum of the person who possesses it." So, it is saying that in order to qualify to be in possession of the knower of paths, that person must possess the wisdom directly realizing emptiness. Just because the wisdom directly realizing emptiness exists in the continuum of another person, this is not a criteria that determines whether oneself possesses the knower of paths. The point is that in order for an individual to possess the knower of the paths, that individual must possess the wisdom directly realising emptiness.

Khen Rinpoche: If you understood that, then that is the point. What else?

Student 4: But isn't that already understood? It seems repetitive to me. It is like saying, "The handbag belongs to Cecilia who possesses the handbag." To me, I will say, "The handbag belongs to Cecilia." It is understood that I possess the handbag. It is kind of like that. Every single word in the definition is there for a reason. It is not because they want to put in extra words. That is why I think it is repetitive. If the realization is in my mind, I don't have to say, "The realization is in the mind of Cecilia who possesses the realization."

Khen Rinpoche: Just because it is included in the continuum of a person does not necessarily necessitate it being in your continuum. Just because it is conjoined with the wisdom directly realizing emptiness within the continuum of a person, it doesn't mean that it is included in your continuum.

~~~~~

### **SUBMISSION OF EXAM PAPER FOR MODULE 8**

*Khen Rinpoche:* You are supposed to hand in your exam paper today but it is not over. I want you to do more. You have another week to choose the best ten verses. I hope you have already thought about and chosen your ten verses. But I don't think you know all the reasons for your choice by heart.

You have selected ten verses and have written your answers pertaining to the ten verses that you have chosen. Are you able to explain them without looking at your paper right now? You know what you have chosen and you know what you have written. Are you able to deliver a presentation on your paper without looking at it or the text?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Yes? No? Well, for those who want to study, I want that from you.

The next level is that you should be able to talk about the ten verses you have chosen and explain them without looking at your paper.

*Khen Rinpoche:* If you don't want to do that, I will stop here. I will just collect your paper but this is not the point.

Ideally if you can talk about all the ten verses that you have chosen, that will be very good. But at the very least, you should be able to talk about one verse and do it well. Whatever verse you choose, please give a good presentation without looking at your paper. Just choose one out of the ten verses and make sure that you are able to talk about it for at least 10 minutes.

There will be a very lucky draw. Whoever's name is picked, the chosen one will be invited to share the Dharma with the rest of us for ten minutes. Next Thursday will be the very lucky draw day. This also becomes a practice. You will gain some experience. In the future if you have to teach or share the Dharma with others, this is the preparation. It will let you have a feel of what it is like. Yes, you will have to memorize in order to inspire your students. The teacher has to come across as knowing what he or she is talking about.

*Khen Rinpoche: If you would really want to do that, then we do it. If you don't want to do it, then I will collect your paper now.*

*In or out? The British referendum is today. Put up your hand if you do not want to do it. I am serious. If you don't want to do it, then put your hand up. Simple.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Those who don't want to talk, it is OK. Those who put your hand up. I think many of you want to do this. Those who didn't put up their hand, please do this. Those who don't want to do it, hand over your paper now. Those who want to do it, take your paper back to prepare. Those who want to talk, hand over your paper next Thursday. I will choose from there.*

### **CHANGE OF PROGRAMME**

We are not going to do Tantric Paths and Grounds this year. We will continue with this topic. If we finish the *Eight Categories and 70 Topics* and there is still some time left, then we may go through quickly Chapter Nine of Shantideva's text. Not all the verses but just to have an idea of what Chapter Nine covers.

Interpreted by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme; transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng and Aki Yeo; edited by Cecilia Tsong.