

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 8

5 July 2016

Exam Presentation for Module 8. The knower of paths (cont'd). Support for newly generating the Mahayana path of meditation.

EXAM PRESENTATION FOR MODULE 8

You have heard about the four reliances. One of them says, "Do not rely on the person but rely on the doctrine." In this context here, you should not pay so much attention to the person who is speaking. Rather you should focus on what is being said by the person. So pay attention to what is said, think about it and see whether you agree with it.

(A student presents her chosen verses from Chapter Eight of *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*).

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**THE KNOWER OF PATHS (CONT'D)**

| 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"> <li>1. Limbs of knower of paths</li> <li>2. Knower of paths that knows hearers' paths</li> <li>3. Knower of paths that knows solitary realizers' paths</li> <li>4. Mahayana path of seeing</li> <li>5. Function of the Mahayana path of meditation</li> <li>6. Mahayana path of meditation of belief</li> <li>7. Beneficial qualities of the path of meditation of belief</li> <li>8. Path of meditation of dedication</li> <li>9. Path of meditation of rejoicing</li> <li>10. Path of meditation of achieving</li> <li>11. The completely pure path of meditation</li> </ol> |

A knower of paths is essentially a path in the continuum of a Mahayana superior. There are eleven topics that illustrate the knower of paths and we have gone through:

1. limbs of the 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

After the Mahayana path of seeing is the Mahayana path of meditation, which consists of two divisions:

1. the contaminated path of meditation
2. the uncontaminated path of meditation

The contaminated path of meditation consists of:

1. the Mahayana path of meditation of belief (topic #6)
2. the Mahayana path of meditation of dedication (topic #8)
3. the Mahayana path of meditation of rejoicing (topic #9)

The uncontaminated path of meditation consists of:

1. the Mahayana path of meditation of achieving (topic #10)
2. the completely pure path of meditation (topic #11)

#### *Support for newly generating the Mahayana path of meditation*

What is the support for newly generating or attaining the Mahayana path of meditation? As we have seen, the support, i.e., the rebirth or the kind of body needed, for newly generating the Mahayana path of meditation is the support of the desire realm. Within that, specifically, humans and desire realm gods are the supports for newly generating the Mahayana path of meditation.

From the viewpoint of the continents in Buddhist cosmology, with the exception of the northern continent, humans of the other three continents are suitable supports for newly generating the Mahayana path of meditation. But of all the possible supports for newly generating the Mahayana path of meditation, the best support is being a human being of the southern continent.

There are some desire realm gods who, as human beings in their previous lives, have cultivated the path and planted very strong imprints in their mind. When such individuals are reborn as desire realm gods, it is said that they can also newly generate the Mahayana path of seeing. This means that the desire realm gods who can newly attain the Mahayana path of seeing are those who have already cultivated the path and have planted very strong imprints when they were human beings in their previous lives. Those who did not do this cannot generate newly the Mahayana path of seeing.

It is also said in the text that it is not possible to newly generate a superior path in the higher realms, i.e., the form and formless realms. This appears in the *Lamrim Chenmo* in the section on the freedoms and endowments. The *Lamrim Chenmo* also stated very clearly that most of the desire realm gods are in an inopportune state, i.e., they lack freedom. It is also said that the human body is the best support for generating a path thus pointing to the preciousness of a human rebirth.

All of us who have this human body possess the supreme basis, the best support for newly generating a superior path. On the basis of this human life, we can newly attain the realization of truth. Most desire realm gods, no matter how powerful they may be,

do not have this quality and potential. Even though the form and formless gods have calm abiding and amazing concentration, they cannot *newly* attain a superior's path.

*Khen Rinpoche: When I say "cannot newly attain," what do you understand by that? If I don't use the word "newly," what is the problem?*

*Student 1: When you say "cannot newly attain" the path, that means that there are some individuals in the form and formless realms who have the path in their mind. This is because they have acquired the path in the past and are now reborn in the form and formless realms.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Be alert to what he is saying and what I am saying.*

*Student 1: If you just say that there is no one who can attain the path on the form and formless realms, that means there will be nobody at all in the form and formless realms who has attained the path. This means there is no one who can attain it. If you say that there is no one who can *newly* attain the path, this means that there are some who have acquired it before and are now reborn there.*

*Khen Rinpoche: You got it? After getting that, do you have any examples?*

The support for generating the Mahayana path of meditation is generally a desire realm support and specifically, human beings and desire realm gods. So the Mahayana path of meditation cannot be generated with the support of the higher realms. Here, higher realms refer to the form and formless realms. This means that one cannot generate a Mahayana path of meditation with a form or formless realm support.

While you cannot newly generate a Mahayana path of meditation with a form realm support, there are individuals with a form realm support who are on the Mahayana path of meditation.

*Khen Rinpoche: Student 1 and I are saying the same thing.*

- Why is it that one cannot newly generate the Mahayana path of meditation with a form realm support? Because the support for newly generating the Mahayana path of meditation has to be the same support for generating the Mahayana path of seeing and it is said that one cannot newly generate a Mahayana path of seeing with a form realm support.
- Why can't the form realm support be the basis for newly generating the Mahayana path of seeing? Because the support for newly generating the Mahayana path of seeing has to be a support where one can generate a very strong disenchantment with samsara. The person in the form realm is abiding in single-pointed concentration. With that kind of mind, he is not able to generate the strong renunciation that is necessary for seeing the truth directly for the first time. It is stated very clearly that one cannot newly generate the Mahayana path of seeing with the support of the form and formless realms.
- What about the Mahayana path of preparation? It is also stated very clearly that one cannot generate the Mahayana path of preparation with a formless realm support. Then what about a form realm support? It is also stated clearly that one cannot

generate the supreme mundane qualities level of the Mahayana path of preparation with a form realm support. However, it is possible to generate the heat level and the peak level of the Mahayana path of preparation with a form realm support. What is not mentioned is the forbearance level of Mahayana path of preparation. That is not clear.

- Why is it that one cannot generate the supreme mundane qualities level of the Mahayana path of preparation with a form realm support? This is because the support for generating the supreme mundane qualities level of the Mahayana path of preparation has to be the same support for newly generating the Mahayana path of seeing. Why does it have to be the same support? Because one moves from path to path in the same meditative equipoise. Just as one moves from the Mahayana path of accumulation into the Mahayana path of preparation in one meditative session with the same support, likewise, when one moves from the Mahayana path of preparation to the Mahayana path of seeing, it is done in one meditative equipoise. Therefore, if it is in one meditative equipoise, then it has to be the same support.
- One can newly generate the Mahayana path of preparation with a desire realm support and with the form realm support. What about the formless realm? I think we would have to end up saying it is not possible to newly generate the path of preparation with a formless realm support.

In the lam-rim section on the freedoms and endowments, one of the eight freedoms is the freedom from being a long-life god. When we say “freedom” in a human life of freedoms and endowments, it means freedom from obstacles to cultivating the path and practising the Dharma practice. What exactly is this long-life god? This refers to two types of beings, one of which is an ordinary being of the formless realm.

Now you know roughly what are the supports and the bases upon which one can generate the Mahayana path of preparation, the Mahayana path of seeing and the Mahayana path of meditation. What about the Mahayana path of accumulation?

*Khen Rinpoche:* You have to tell me. This is the question. I kept the last one for you. Who can generate the path of accumulation? Of the beings in the three realms—the desire realms and form and formless realms—who can generate the path of accumulation?

(Student’s answer is inaudible).

*Khen Rinpoche:* Desire realm? Okay. Is that all? When you say all three realms, then you are not listening to the first sentence of what I said.

One of the characteristics of a perfect human rebirth is the freedom from being a long-life god. One type of long-life gods is the ordinary beings in the formless realm. Why are they in an inopportune state that lacks freedom? It is because they cannot generate the path. If they cannot generate the path, won’t we have to say that ordinary beings of the formless realm cannot newly generate the path of accumulation?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Can beings in all the three realms generate the path of accumulation?

This is why I said that you have to revisit your lam-rim. Many people often think that they know the lam-rim. It is clear that perhaps some of you do not really know the lam-

rim at all. Here, we are just talking about the human life of freedoms and endowments, an entry-level topic.

One of the freedoms is the freedom from being a long-life god. There are two types of long-life gods, one of which are ordinary beings of the formless realm. It is said that such beings are in an inopportune state, i.e., they lack the freedom, in general, to practise the Dharma. As such, the lack of freedom means that they do not possess the freedom to newly generate a path.

You need to connect together all that you have learnt so that when I ask you a question such as “Is it possible to newly generate the path of accumulation in the form realm?” you should be able to say something right away. I have given you many different pieces of information. So, if you have thought about and understood what I have said, when you put all of the pieces of information together, you should be able to provide the answer quickly.

*Khen Rinpoche: With all the information I have given you, are you able to say immediately yes or no to the question?*

Is it possible to generate the path of accumulation in the form realm? How about the desire realm?

*Khen Rinpoche: Everybody, think! What is the conclusion? You have to say yes or no.*

Pertaining to the form realm, you are not able to say yes right away?

*Khen Rinpoche: Having arrived at your conclusion, you should be able to answer yes immediately and with confidence!*

Are you able to say right away, “Yes! It is possible to generate the path of accumulation with a form realm support”?

*Khen Rinpoche: I think you should be able to say, “Yes” based on what I have said. The conclusion, the answer is there.*

(Khen Rinpoche asks students on the mezzanine floor).

*Yes? Good. Why?*

*Student 2: Because the lam-rim doesn't say no!*

*Khen Rinpoche: Does the lam-rim say yes? The lam-rim didn't say yes or no.*

You should be able to figure the answer out quickly. Why? Didn't I say earlier that it is possible to newly generate the path of preparation with a form realm support?

*Khen Rinpoche: Didn't I say that? You remember?*

Having said that, then is it possible to newly generate the path of accumulation with that

same support?

If one can newly generate the path of preparation with a form realm support, there is no reason to say that one cannot newly generate the path of accumulation with a form realm support.

*Khen Rinpoche: This is very clear.*

Then what about the desire realm? Can one newly generate the path of accumulation in the desire realm?

There shouldn't be any doubt that this is the case with the path of accumulation. If it is possible to generate almost every other single path including enlightenment in the desire realm, then what is there to stop one from generating the path of accumulation in the desire realm? So there is no doubt about that.

There are six types of migrators in the desire realm. Human beings are not the only inhabitants of the desire realm. Is it possible then to newly generate the path of accumulation on the basis of these six types of migrators?

*Khen Rinpoche: You are supposed to have studied for a long time. If you were asked this question, what will be your answer? You are not beginners. I am talking to the senior students here.*

*There is no doubt about the humans and gods. We have already made this clear, so there is no doubt about them.*

The question is: Are all six types of migrators of the desire realm supports for newly generating the path of accumulation?

*Khen Rinpoche: Give examples. This type of migrator cannot do it. Only these other migrators can.*

(Student's responses are inaudible).

*Student 1: I would like to refute you. When Buddha Shakyamuni was in the hell realm, he saw the suffering of his fellow hell beings. Because of that, he generated bodhicitta for the first time and immediately, he was reborn in the upper realm. So it is possible to generate bodhicitta in the lower realms. Once you generate bodhicitta, you enter the path of accumulation. So I think that the hell being is able to newly generate the path.*

*Student 3: It follows then that the hell realm is not an inopportune state.*

*Khen Rinpoche: Hup Cheng (Student 3) is good. I think the minds of the others are not functioning. Only Hup Cheng's mind is functioning. Very good. Very good. I am surprised that the minds of the others are not functioning.*

(Student's response is inaudible).

*Khen Rinpoche:* Lama Tsongkhapa is not wrong. If Lama Tsongkhapa is not wrong, then obviously, you can't generate the path as a hell being because it is an inopportune state.

*Student 1:* When it says that you have the freedoms and endowments in the human realm, this means that it is the best opportunity for generating the path. But this doesn't mean that in the other states, you cannot generate the path at all.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Based on what you said, then the formless realm god is not a supreme basis because the human life is the supreme basis. But even though the formless realm god is not the supreme basis, they can still do it if they want to.

*Student 1:* The formless realm is very special. Beings born there enter straight away into a state of concentration. From then on, the next time they are aware of what is happening is when they are going to leave that state. They are in a state of meditative concentration. I think it should be a very blissful experience so it will be quite impossible for them to newly generate renunciation in that state.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Why is it that when those formless realm gods are born, they immediately enter this state of meditative bliss?

*Khen Rinpoche:* What's your reason?

*Student 1:* Due to the throwing karma from their previous practice of calm abiding.

They cannot generate renunciation because they are in a very blissful meditative state. How can they generate renunciation when they are blissed out? They are formless and they do not experience gross suffering. This is my thinking. Can you imagine a mind without suffering being able to generate renunciation and enter the path? I think it is not possible for beings in the formless realm.

*Khen Rinpoche:* But there are individuals in the form realm who do generate the path.

*Student 1:* Not newly acquired.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Didn't I just say five minutes ago that it is 100 percent certain that you can newly generate the path of accumulation in the form realm.

*Student 1:* Now you are talking about the form realm? In the form realm, you can do so.

*Khen Rinpoche:* If it can happen in the form realm, then why not in the formless realm? The gods of the formless realm do not experience the suffering of pain, the suffering of change. Many gods of the formless realm do not even experience the suffering of change.

*Student 1:* You said, "many," right? So there are some who can experience it. If they do experience it, then they can generate renunciation.

*Khen Rinpoche:* All of them in the formless realm don't have suffering of change.

*Student 1:* I don't get the point that you are driving at. Sorry. My mind is not working.



It is said clearly in the text that the six types of migrators of the desire realm can newly generate bodhicitta. Of the six, the best support for generating bodhicitta is the human being. If you can generate uncontrived bodhicitta, does it not mean that the Mahayana path of accumulation can be generated?

For example, there are accounts in the sutras where during one of the Buddha's past lives, while he was on the path as a sentient being, he generated bodhicitta for the first time in the hell realm. There are also accounts of the generation of bodhicitta as a preta and as a naga, which I think are under the animal category.

This is what is said in the teachings but we can always discuss these points further. For example, we had that short discussion as to whether being born as a hell being is an inopportune state or not? If you can generate bodhicitta as a hell being, then does that make a hell rebirth *not* an inopportune state?

We also have to think about the reasons why it is not possible to generate a path in the formless realm, i.e., why is it that one cannot generate bodhicitta with a formless realm support?

It is said that the best support for newly generating a superior path, i.e., the path for newly seeing the truth directly, is to be a human being. Who can newly generate a superior path? It is human beings and the desire realm gods. This means that the beings in the form and formless realms who have not attained the path of seeing will have to take rebirth in the desire realm in order to newly attain the path of seeing.

In our earlier discussion, we saw how one can newly generate the path of accumulation and the path of preparation with a form realm support. But even a person on the path of preparation who has a form realm support would still have to take rebirth in the desire realm in order to newly attain the path of seeing that has yet to be achieved.

*Khen Rinpoche: Do you understand what I'm saying?*

If you understand all of this, then one of the lessons that you can draw from this discussion is that the human rebirth that we have is very precious indeed. Because on the basis of this human support, one can generate the path of seeing and the path of meditation. You cannot newly attain the superior path, the path of seeing, in the form or formless realm. Of all the different kinds of bodies one can take in the desire realm, a human body is supreme for generating these paths.

Those bodhisattvas in the form realm, who have a form realm support and who are on the path of preparation need to get a desire realm support in order to newly attain the path of seeing. How do they take rebirth in this case? Is it through the force of karma and afflictions?

(Student's response is inaudible).

We have to think about how the bodhisattvas in the form realm actually take rebirth in



the desire realm? Mind you that when they are in the form realm, they have already achieved calm abiding and special insight. They have also achieved an actual concentration. Because those who are in the form realm have achieved an actual concentration, for example, the gods, they have suppressed the manifest afflictions of the desire realm.

Because the bodhisattvas of the form realm on the path of preparation have achieved an actual concentration, the afflictions of the desire realm does not manifest in their mental continuum. If these afflictions don't manifest, then can you see where this is heading?

If they take rebirth under the control of karma and afflictions, their process of taking rebirth have to be included within the twelve links of dependent origination. This means that prior to dying and taking rebirth in the desire realm, the actualizing karma has to be nourished by the craving and grasping of the desire realm.

It is explained that these bodhisattvas take rebirth in the desire realm through the force of their prayers for they see how important it is to get the desire realm support in order to newly attaining the path of seeing. Therefore, they make many aspirational prayers to be born in the desire realm. So you can see how precious the desire realm support is.

*Question:* Is the entire supreme mundane qualities level of the Mahayana path of preparation a meditative equipoise or is it there a post meditative equipoise in that level?

*Answer:* I cannot say for sure but I think one may have to say it is entirely a meditative equipoise.

*Student 4:* It is entirely a meditative equipoise because you have to account for the crossing over to the path of seeing.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Yes.

*Student 4:* If that is the case, how would one account for this Mahayana achieving through collections where they accumulate the two vast collections including the collection of method (or merit) at the great level of the supreme mundane quality level of the Mahayana path of preparation?

*Khen Rinpoche:* Achieving through the collections is one of the topics that illustrate the exalted knower of aspects. The boundary for the achieving through collections starts from the great level of the supreme mundane qualities level of the path of preparation. The supreme mundane qualities level of the path of preparation itself has three divisions—small, middling and great.

Within that, achieving through collections starts from the great level of the supreme mundane qualities level of the path of preparation. His question is that since the supreme mundane qualities level is necessarily a meditative equipoise, how then does one accumulate the collections? Here, the collections will have to include the collection of merit.

You can find the answer in the definition. The definition of achieving through collections ends with “by way of being conjoined with the two vast collections.” It doesn’t say that one has to accumulate the collection of merit during meditative equipoise. Since that mind is already conjoined, then one has accumulated some of the collection of merit and wisdom. Therefore, there is no problem once we look at the definition of achieving through collections.

*Khen Rinpoche: If you think about, that was a good question.*

*Student 5:* If I heard correctly, in one of the lessons, it was stated that the female body is not a suitable basis for newly entering the path of seeing but both the male and female bodies are suitable bases for entering the path of meditation. There seems to be a contradiction here.

*Khen Rinpoche:* I didn’t say that you necessarily have to be a male in order to newly generate the path of seeing. I said that there are texts that state one has to be a male. But it is clearly stated that one can newly attain the path of meditation whether you are male or female. If that is the case, there is no reason why you cannot newly attain the path of seeing as a female. However, there are texts that say that you have to be a male in order to newly attain the path of seeing.

*Khen Rinpoche: You have to be very wise and very intelligent. The Buddha said everything—yes, no, yes, no. You have to be very intelligent. Otherwise, you will be confused.*

Interpreted by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme; transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Patricia Lee and Julia Koh; edited by Cecilia Tsong.