

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 11

14 July 2016

Exam Presentation for Module 8. The knower of paths (cont'd). The eleven topics: 8. Path of meditation of dedication – review. 9. Path of meditation of rejoicing. 10. & 11. Path of meditation of achieving & the completely pure path of meditation.

EXAM PRESENTATION FOR MODULE 8

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

We try very hard to work for our own happiness. Even when we do achieve some happiness by looking out for our own interest, that happiness is not really special. It is not great compared to the happiness we experience when we are able to extend some help to the destitute and those who are truly in need. When we help and succeed in bringing them some joy and happiness as a result of our actions and we see the joy in their faces, we will also experience some kind of satisfaction and joy. I think this kind of satisfaction and joy is very different from the joy we may experience from working for our own welfare.

Let's say at the time of our death, if we remember the joy we experience from helping others, perhaps, it may bring about some real satisfaction and be a cause for us to rejoice and feel even more joyful. I don't think that, at the time of death, by remembering the happiness we achieved from working for our own purpose will bring about that same level of satisfaction and joy. This is quite obvious. We should look at our own experiences and see this for ourselves.

Physically and mentally, we work very hard to achieve our own happiness and we put in so much time and effort. If we can apply that same amount of time and effort into helping others, then that will bring about a joy and happiness that is really incomparable.

In order for us to remember the joy and happiness that come from benefitting and helping others and to be able to rejoice especially at the time of death, first, we must experience the joy that comes from benefitting others in this life. If we can prioritize others over ourselves, help and benefit them and do all this sincerely from the heart, then the bliss, joy and happiness we experience will be very different. If that happens, then one will get a good rebirth.

You have to know the point of why we have to help and benefit others. We have to try as much as possible to cultivate the thought of benefitting others and to do something at a practical level.

Two days ago, I remembered that today would be Guru Rinpoche’s birthday. This year is the year of the monkey and Guru Rinpoche was born in a monkey year. Not only that. He was also born in a monkey month. In the Tibetan calendar, every month is different. The Tibetan fifth month is the monkey month. Monkey month. Monkey year. Then Tibetan 10th is tsog day, which is a special day for Guru Rinpoche’s birthday. The 10th day of the fifth month of Tibetan is tsog day and is Guru Rinpoche’s birthday. I saw on the news that today His Holiness is going to Tso Pema to do Guru Rinpoche’s tsog and teachings.

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

| Definiendum     | Definition                                                                                                                                     | Boundary                                          | No. of topics | Topics<br>(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> |

*8. Mahayana path of meditation of dedication—review*

In the last lesson, we looked at the path of meditation of dedication. In order for there to be a dedication, there must be a substance to be dedicated. In this case, it is all the roots of virtue that are accumulated by others and oneself.

Simply speaking, the path of meditation of dedication refers to the dedication that is performed by bodhisattva superiors on the Mahayana path of meditation. Their dedications are conjoined with the special method and wisdom possessed by them in their continua. These bodhisattva superiors on the path of meditation dedicate the roots of virtue while non-objectifying the roots of virtue to be dedicated, the dedication itself and the person making the dedication. While knowing that these do not exist truly, they do exist conventionally. They dedicate the roots of virtue so as to ripen the three types of trainees—the hearers, the solitary realizers and the bodhisattvas.

We have gone through the etymology of the knower of paths. The knower of paths has the full understanding of the hearers' path, the solitary realisers' path and the Mahayana path. The bodhisattva superiors know these paths and through experience, they teach the three types of trainees to enable them to achieve their own goals. The bodhisattva superiors dedicate their roots of virtue towards achieving this.

One of the sutras states that one dedicates one's roots of virtue together with the roots of virtue of others. What it is saying here is that one deposits one's roots of virtue together with the roots of virtue of the buddhas and bodhisattvas with the intention that they become aids to benefit others. So when we deposit our roots of virtue together with the roots of virtue of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, we can dedicate these collective roots of virtue for the fulfilment of the welfare of all sentient beings and, in particular, for them to achieve the state of full enlightenment.

The roots of virtue are the substance to be dedicated. There are also the witnesses of the dedication, in this case, the buddhas and the bodhisattvas. So we dedicate the roots of virtue as a cause for all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, by taking them as our witnesses. Why do we need to think of the buddhas and bodhisattvas as our witnesses when we dedicate the roots of virtue towards the enlightenment of all sentient beings? It is said that if we do that, then the buddhas and bodhisattvas will grant their blessings and as such, the goal of the dedication will be actualized quickly.

What is the object of intent of the dedication? One dedicates the merit for the welfare of others, for all sentient beings and for the teachings of the Buddha to flourish. Whether we say we are dedicating the merit for the welfare of all sentient beings or for the Buddhadharma to flourish, essentially at the end of the day, the meaning is the same. The whole point of dedicating the merit is for the Buddha's teachings to flourish.

The bodhisattvas are always working for sentient beings and likewise, whatever they dedicate is always for sentient beings. Even when one achieves enlightenment, whatever one does is for sentient beings. So, at the end of the day, dedication is about that. That is the substance of the dedication.

We have the witnesses of the dedication and the objects of intent of the dedication.

What is the purpose of the dedication? One of the purposes of dedication is that it can transform an inferior result into a perfect result. Without dedication, a particular root of virtue may bring forth only a very small or insignificant result. But if the dedication is done **properly**, then something that would otherwise have been transformed into an inferior result will transform into a perfect result.

An example given in the sutra is when one puts a drop of water into the ocean. For as long as the ocean exists, it is said that the drop of water that we put in will also **exist and it will not cease to exist**. Likewise, the roots of virtue that are dedicated towards enlightenment will not be exhausted. You must understand how the analogy applies to the meaning here. How does dedicating our roots of virtue towards full enlightenment make our roots of virtue inexhaustible? Our roots of virtue are like the drop of water. The roots of virtue of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas are like the ocean. When we mix

Comment [Wp1]:

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Comment [C4R1]:

our roots of virtue together with the roots of virtue of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, then that will make our roots of virtue inexhaustible. You have to understand how, by putting a drop of water into the ocean, that drop of water will become indistinguishable from the rest of the ocean.

How do we mix our roots of virtue with the roots of virtue of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas?

*Student 1:* Let's say we meditate on emptiness. All sentient beings, the buddhas and the bodhisattvas don't exist inherently. With the meditation of emptiness as the basis, we then dedicate the merits that are also empty and send them off together.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Can you mix your virtue with that of the virtues of the bodhisattvas?

*Student 1:* If you meditate on emptiness, you can.

*Khen Rinpoche:* So if you don't meditate on emptiness, you cannot?

*Student 1:* I have to stand my ground. If I say it works even if you don't meditate on emptiness, then my basis will not work!

*Student 2:* I think you rejoice at the virtues that the buddhas and bodhisattvas have accumulated. Then by rejoicing, you dedicate that merit so it becomes merged as one. Maybe I should not use the word "merged." I think that by rejoicing at the virtue that the buddhas and bodhisattvas have accumulated, you also accumulate some merit. When you dedicate that merit, it becomes one.

***Khen Rinpoche:*** This analogy is to help you understand the meaning. In this instance, it is more analogous of the way to think rather than taking the analogy so literally—a drop of water is put inside the ocean, therefore the merit must also be put in there. We should understand the spirit of the analogy.

What if we were to say that when we dedicate our merit towards enlightenment, our little merit becomes an aid for the buddhas and bodhisattvas to work for the welfare of sentient beings? As such, our merit is mixed with the roots of virtue of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. This is what the buddhas and bodhisattvas want. Can we say that that is the meaning?

In this discussion now, do you think that there is any relationship to another discussion we had in the module on the *Tathagata Essence* where it was said that all roots of virtue in the continua of sentient beings are the enlightened activities of the dharmakaya?

In the first place, we also need to think whether it is correct to dedicate somebody else's roots of virtue towards enlightenment? Is this even possible? If you can dedicate the roots of virtue of others towards enlightenment, does this really happen? This means that just through our thoughts and prayers, do the roots of virtue in the continua of other sentient beings actually become a cause and have the effect of contributing to enlightenment, be it our enlightenment or somebody else's enlightenment.

When we say we dedicate the roots of virtue of others towards full enlightenment, we also need to think about whose enlightenment we are referring to? When you dedicate the roots of virtue of others,

- is it for your own enlightenment alone or
- is it for the enlightenment of others alone, i.e., for all others to be enlightened except you or
- for both yourself and others?

The hearers accumulate merit for their own liberation, the hearers' enlightenment.

Then a bodhisattva superior on the path of meditation comes along and dedicates the hearer's roots of virtue for that hearer to become a buddha. Is that possible?

If you were to say yes—i.e., the bodhisattva superior on the path of meditation can dedicate the hearer's roots of virtue towards enlightenment—do the hearer's roots of virtue suddenly become a cause for that hearer to gain enlightenment? Does that happen?

*Student 3: Yes.*

Therefore, there is no need for you to dedicate your own merit. Why do you need to dedicate your merit? Because all the numberless buddhas and bodhisattva have been doing this for you since beginningless time. It follows that there is no need to dedicate your own merit because your merit has been dedicated by others towards your own full enlightenment. After all, the dedicators are not some ordinary beings. They are bodhisattva superiors on the path of meditation. Their dedications are very powerful. This is why there is no need to dedicate your own merit. Then what are you going to say?

*Khen Rinpoche: Do you understand what I am saying?*

*Student 4: The other person can dedicate but if it is not according to my wishes, then it won't work! One's own prayers are the condition. One needs to create the substantial cause for enlightenment oneself for it to happen. The buddhas can do their part by continuing to push you. But if you don't act on it, the buddhas can't do anything.*

The buddhas are actually creating the conditions for you to engage in virtue but the actual virtue and the accumulation of merit has to be done by oneself.

*Khen Rinpoche: That is correct.*

A bodhisattva on the path of meditation dedicates the roots of virtue in the continuum of a hearer towards the hearer's full enlightenment. After the dedication, do the roots of virtue in the continuum of that hearer become a cause for his enlightenment?

The same bodhisattva then dedicates the roots of virtue in that hearer's continuum towards the bodhisattva's own full enlightenment. Will the roots of virtue in the hearer's continuum become a cause for the bodhisattva's enlightenment?

In other words, the bodhisattva can either dedicate the hearer's roots of virtue towards the hearer's full enlightenment or the bodhisattva's own full enlightenment. Is that possible?

*Student 5:* Perhaps we can explain it in the form of how the Buddha's enlightened activities actually work. The Buddha's enlightened activities manifest eventually as a qualified guide to a disciple. So we are talking about karmic connection here. In many sutras, the Buddha always talked about the karmic connections he had in his past life with certain persons and disciples. Eventually, the time will come for that karmic connection to manifest in the person he had met and benefitted before. He had dedicated merit for that person when that person was a fish, a deer or whatever. Now that person has in this life become his disciple. His hair drops away and his mental continuum is ripened. So, I guess even though the countless buddhas and bodhisattvas or rather the Buddha manifested into parinirvana and attained the state of the dharmakaya, we cannot do away with this very important karmic connection that we have accumulated between the superior person and the inferior person in the past.

When the superior person becomes a buddha, eventually the inferior person under his care in the past will become his disciple one day. Because of that, his continuum is ripened and guided by the qualified teacher.

To answer the question, whether you dedicate toward the lower trainee's enlightenment or you dedicate his virtue towards your own enlightenment, I think it works that way. Eventually, the Buddha's enlightened activities manifest as an actual guide to the disciple. This is how it works all the time. You look at the Buddha's story. From the disciple's side, he must have his own substantial cause of the aspiration to achieve enlightenment. Then there is also this cooperative condition of the qualified guide. With these two acting together, the disciple can become enlightened.

Let's say if you benefited somebody as cited in the Buddha's sutras. When the Buddha was a bodhisattva, he sacrificed himself to the tigress and her cubs and he dedicated his merit towards their enlightenment. The five tigers became arhats and bodhisattvas.

*Khen Rinpoche: This can be discussed further.*

Why is dedication possible in the first place? Because the tathagata essence (tathagatagarbha) is the substantial cause of enlightenment. This is why enlightenment is possible. In this case, this is why dedication is possible. But having that alone is not enough. You need to have the conditions (for that tathagata essence) to be activated.

The Buddha can appear in all kinds of forms. For example, the Buddha is not going to turn the Wheel of Dharma for us as the dharmakaya. The buddhas come in different aspects such as our friends. We need this external condition for the buddhas and bodhisattvas to cause us to develop virtuous thoughts like remembering impermanence, death and so forth.

So we need both the substantial cause and cooperative conditions. In this context here, the substantial cause is our own buddha nature and the cooperative condition is the buddhas. It is not possible without the buddhas either.

### *9. Path of meditation of rejoicing*

Because of their belief, the bodhisattvas are able to accumulate an immeasurable heap of merit. Because they have accumulated an immeasurable heap of merit, they have the substance to be dedicated. As such, they dedicate the merit accumulated.

Because they have the opportunity to accumulate so much merit, they rejoice at that fact, “I have the opportunity to accumulate so much merit.” As such, because of the Mahayana path of meditation of belief, then there is the path of meditation of dedication. Because of that, then there is the path of meditation of rejoicing which is said to be the method to increase the roots of virtue that has already been accumulated.

When there is a stable belief, one is able to accumulate a great amount of merit. Having that belief is likened to finding a gold mine. When we find a gold mine, we can fashion the gold into jewellery and all kinds of statues. How the gold is fashioned depends on the person who possesses the gold. In the same way, dedication transforms the roots of virtue. Just as we can use that gold to fashion it into the most wonderful things—the finest jewellery, the best ornaments—likewise, with dedication, one can transform one’s roots of virtue into the cause of full enlightenment.

Though the roots of virtue that we accumulate may be inferior in quality and, if left to their own devices, only bring about an inferior result, with dedication, one can transform those small, perhaps insignificant, roots of virtue into the cause of full enlightenment. This is made possible by dedication. Dedication transforms a cause which otherwise would lead to an inferior result into something that yields a perfect result instead.

However, it doesn’t mean that once you dedicate your roots of virtue towards full enlightenment those roots of virtue will necessarily continue all the way up to enlightenment. Why is this so? You may dedicate your roots of virtue as a cause for full enlightenment but along the way, they can be destroyed by anger. When they are destroyed by anger, they do not go all the way up to enlightenment and are no longer causes for enlightenment. Therefore, when dedicating merits towards full enlightenment, the dedication should be performed by non-objectifying the three spheres. It is said that roots of virtue dedicated in that way, i.e., conjoined with the wisdom realizing emptiness, can never be destroyed.

So to recap, it is said that merely dedicating the roots of virtue towards full enlightenment doesn’t necessarily guarantee that those roots of virtue will become a cause for enlightenment and will go to enlightenment. But if the dedication of the roots of virtue towards full enlightenment is conjoined with the wisdom realizing emptiness, then it is guaranteed that the roots of virtue dedicated in that way can never be destroyed.

As such, you can see the reason why the wisdom that realises the ultimate nature of reality is so important. Until we have this wisdom, there is no way that any dedication we do can be conjoined with it because that wisdom is not there in the first place! For the time being, even if you don’t have the wisdom realizing emptiness, it is not so bad if you are not the angry type. But aren’t we all like that? When it comes to virtue, we really have to work very hard at it. After trying so very hard, we get some virtue but then we

get angry. When we get angry, it is not some small little anger but a full-blown anger that has great power. This is how we destroy our roots of virtue all the time.

This is why when Lama Zopa Rinpoche leads us in dedicating merit, he always includes the emptiness of the three spheres. The dedication is conjoined with emptiness. This is why he does that. This is the point.

This is why it is so important for us to try to gain at least some idea of emptiness as much as we can. We then use whatever we know and put it into practice. When we dedicate the merit, as much as possible, we should non-objectify the three spheres, i.e., we recognise that the dedicator, the act of dedication and the merit that is dedicated do not exist inherently.

- It is said that when we rejoice in the roots of virtue of somebody who is inferior, i.e., lower than us in some way, the merit we accumulate from rejoicing in that person's merit is more than the merit he has accumulated.
- If we rejoice in the roots of virtue of our peers, i.e., people who are roughly on the same level as ourselves, we will get a similar amount of merit.
- If we rejoice in the roots of virtue of somebody who is superior to or better than us, we will get a fraction of the merit. For example, it is said that if we rejoice in the merit of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, we get ten percent of their merit.

I don't know who said this but I seem to remember it is written somewhere that if you want to accumulate merit and, at the same time, want to remain lazy and have a relaxed life, e.g., you want to accumulate merit while you are lying down or sleeping, then it is said that you should rejoice.

The lam-rim mentions that if you rejoice, this is what you will get. The fact is that when you rejoice, it acts against your jealousy. If you are able to rejoice in other's merit (it doesn't matter who), it is a practical solution to our negative sense of competitiveness and jealousy. At that time, if we are able to genuinely feel happy in the merit of others, right there and then, that negative sense of competitiveness and jealousy will just go away. If we are able to feel how wonderful it is that so-and-so is creating merit, we will experience peace and happiness in the heart.

But in order for it to be rejoicing, there must be real joy in our hearts. Otherwise, it is not real rejoicing. The meaning of rejoicing is that the happy mind arises through observing the merit, virtue or enjoyments of others. We feel wonderful in the heart and there is real joy. At the same time, there is no room for negative competitiveness and jealousy to arise. Rejoicing is something that we have to work at. As much as possible, we have to try to feel a sense of happiness while observing the merit of others and ourselves. In this way, we increase our own roots of virtue.

#### *10. & 11. Path of meditation of achieving & the completely pure path of meditation*

The path of meditation of achieving and the completely pure path of meditation are the uncontaminated path of meditation. They mean the same thing but conceptually, there are two isolates. In meaning, they are the same thing in that:

- from the perspective of that which establishes the imprint of the final realization, it is posited as the path of meditation of achieving.



- from the perspective of that which establishes the imprint of the final abandonment, it is called the completely pure path of meditation.

So that is about it for the knower of paths. We will start on the knower of bases in the next lesson.

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