

## **Transcript of the oral commentary by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on Maitreya’s *Sublime Continuum of the Mahayana, Chapter One: The Tathagata Essence***

**Root verses** from *The Tathagata Essence: Great Vehicle Treatise on the Sublime Continuum Differentiating the Lineage of the Three Jewels (mahayanottaratantra-ratnagotravibhanga)* by Maitreya, translation Jeffrey Hopkins and Joe B. Wilson, Draft, January 2007, © Hopkins and Wilson, with permission for use in FPMT Basic Programs.

Oral commentary based on Gyalsab Je’s Commentary to the First Chapter, translated by Gavin Kilty (*The Tathagata Essence, Commentary to the First Chapter* by Gyalsap Darma Rinchen © FPMT, Inc. January 2007).

### **Lesson 22**

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Eight forbearances and eight knowledges. Chapter One: *The Essence of a One Gone Thus*. Verses 131—133: The nine forms of defilements (cont’d). Verses 134: Who possesses the nine defilements. Verses 135—143: Applying the nine examples to the nine forms of defilements. The four maras.

*Question:* In Lesson 20, you mentioned that manifest attachment and manifest obscuration can motivate the accumulation of immovable karma that results in rebirth in the form and formless realms. Do these two afflictions relate to the first three dormant mental poisons or do they relate to the fourth mental poison (i.e., “the strong arousal [or manifestation] of those [three poisons]”)?

*Answer:* What I said was that the first three forms of defilements out of the nine are dormant desire, dormant anger and dormant obscuration. I said that manifest attachment and manifest obscuration can be included within the categories of dormant attachment and dormant obscuration because they can motivate the accumulation of immovable karma. That’s it. But that is *not* saying that dormant attachment is the same as manifest attachment.

The fourth defilement out of the nine is listed as “the strong arousal [or manifestation] of those [three poisons].” The manifest forms of the three poisons are not listed separately but rather they are classified as one category. Essentially, they are the strong manifestations of the three mental poisons that lead to the accumulation of the projecting karma for rebirth in the desire realm.

*Student:* When I went for a walking meditation retreat, I was told that the attachment to the pleasurable experience during that kind of retreat—where you try not to think of anything but simply observe the movement of one’s body—will result in the accumulation of immovable karma **for rebirth in** the form and formless realms. Could

attachment to the pleasurable experience of this type of meditation be an example of the manifest attachment that will lead to the accumulation of immovable karma **for rebirth** in the form and formless realms?

*Khen Rinpoche: I don't think so. What do you all think? When you meditate and you are attached to that meditation, do you accumulate the karma to be reborn in the form and formless realms?*

It is difficult to accumulate the karma to be born in the higher realms, i.e., the form and formless realms. You must have achieved one of the concentrations or an access to one of those concentrations, i.e., in order to accumulate immovable karma, you need very good concentration. In this context, good concentration means that at the very least, you need to have achieved calm-abiding.

*Question:* We have always been told that the three mental poisons are attachment, anger and ignorance. But here, there are alternative terms such as 'dormant obscuration' or 'dormant bewilderment' being used. In the context of this particular text we are studying, is there some subtle difference between ignorance, obscuration and bewilderment or can we just use 'ignorance,' the term we are most familiar with?

*Answer:* When we settle on their meaning, they are the same but there are different words in Tibetan—*ti mug* is bewilderment whereas *ma rigpa* is ignorance.

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## **EIGHT FORBEARANCES & EIGHT KNOWLEDGES**

In the last lesson we discussed the afflictive obscurations that are the path of seeing abandonments, the eight forbearances and the eight knowledges.

- From the perspective of seeing the suchness of the four noble truths, there are the four forbearances:
    1. the forbearance of true sufferings
    2. the forbearance of true origins
    3. the forbearance of true cessations
    4. the forbearance of true paths
  - From the perspective of the seeing the suchness of the wisdoms that realise the suchness of the four noble truths, there are the four subsequent forbearances.
- Altogether, there are eight forbearances that make up the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing. These eight are nominally different but one in entity, i.e., they are one entity with different isolates.

The uninterrupted path of the path of seeing is:

- the direct antidote to the afflictions that are the path of seeing abandonments.
- the direct antidote to the seeds of the afflictions that are the path of seeing abandonments.

**In the wisdom of the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing, there are no afflictions that are the path of seeing abandonments. This is because during the uninterrupted**

path of the path of seeing, as it is such a powerful antidote to the path of seeing abandonments, there is no opportunity for those afflictions to arise. As they cannot arise, they are not abandoned yet.

When we talk about the eight forbearances in the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing, this is in relation to someone who has actualised the path of seeing for the very first time.

In that same meditative equipoise, that individual achieves the path of release of the path of seeing and achieves the eight knowledges that are made up of the four knowledges and the four subsequent knowledges. These are the eight knowledges that are the path of release of the path of seeing. These are similar to the eight forbearances in that:

- from the perspective of realising the suchness of the four noble truths as the object, we have the four knowledges.
- from the perspective of seeing the suchness of the subject, i.e., the wisdom that realises the suchness of the four noble truths, there are the four subsequent knowledges.

In summary:

- The eight forbearances are the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing.
- The eight knowledges are the path of release of the path of seeing that is achieved after the intellectually acquired afflictions are abandoned.

Collectively, they are known as the sixteen moments of forbearance and knowledge.

According to the Consequence Middle Way School (CMWS), the Prasangikas, the eight forbearances are achieved simultaneously. The eight knowledges are also achieved simultaneously.

### **THE NINE FORMS OF DEFILEMENTS (CONT'D)**

Verse 131

The nine forms of defilements—(1-3) [the latencies or seeds of] desire, hatred, and obscuration [which are overcome by the exalted wisdom of a Superior], (4) the strong arousal [or manifestation] of those [three poisons],

(5) The level of] the predispositions [of ignorance which are the means of achieving the uncontaminated actions and the mental body in the continuum of a Foe Destroyer and which are to be overcome by the exalted wisdom of the great enlightenment], (6) the objects to be abandoned by the path of seeing [which obstruct a common being from seeing reality], (7) the objects to be abandoned by the path of meditation [in the continuum of a Learner Superior],

(8) The objects to be abandoned by the [seven] impure [grounds which are to be overcome by the pure grounds],

And (9) the defilements dependent on the pure grounds [which are to be overcome by the vajra-like meditative stabilization],

Among the nine defilements, we have two more to cover: the eighth defilement are the objects to be abandoned by the impure grounds and the ninth defilements are dependent on the pure grounds.

Verse 132

Are indicated by [the nine] examples  
Of the covering of a lotus and so forth,  
But the divisions of covering of afflictive emotions  
Are beyond the limits of number.

Verse 133

These nine defilements—desire and so forth—  
Are briefly indicated respectively  
By the nine examples  
Of the covering of a lotus and so forth.

Verses 132 and 133 are summaries.

### **WHO POSSESSES THE NINE DEFILEMENTS**

Who are the individuals that possess these defilements? These are identified in Verse 134.

Verse 134

[By way of possessing] impurity [mainly] through four, one,  
Two, and two of these defilements respectively  
Childish [common beings], Foe Destroyers,  
Learners and the intelligent ones.

- The first three defilements are dormant anger, dormant attachment and dormant obscuration.
- The fourth defilement is the strong manifestations of those three poisons.  
The first four defilements are possessed by ordinary beings who have not entered any path.
- The fifth defilement is the level of the predispositions of ignorance and these are possessed by the hearer foe destroyers and the solitary realiser foe destroyers, i.e., the arhats.
- The sixth and seven defilements—the path of seeing abandonments and the path of meditation abandonments—are found in the mental continua of learners that includes ordinary beings who have entered a path. It can also include the Hinayana learner superiors.

When we talk about learners and non-learners, the word 'learner' is not used for ordinary beings who have not entered a path. It is used for those beings who have entered a path and would include ordinary beings who have entered the path. In Verse 134, the word 'learner' is used. What kind of defilements are in their mental continua? Their defilements are the path of seeing abandonments and the path of meditation abandonments.

- In Verse 134, “the intelligent ones” are the bodhisattvas. What are the defilements that are found in their mental continua? These are the defilements of the seven impure grounds and “the defilements dependent on the pure grounds,” (the eighth and ninth defilements).

| THE NINE FORMS OF DEFILEMENTS                                                                                                                    | BEINGS WITH THE DEFILEMENTS                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The first to the fourth defilements: dormant anger, dormant attachment, dormant obscuration and the strong manifestation of those three poisons. | Ordinary beings that have not entered any path.                                                                                                           |
| The fifth defilement: the level of the predispositions of ignorance.                                                                             | Hearer foe destroyers and solitary realiser foe destroyers.                                                                                               |
| The sixth and seventh defilements: the path of seeing abandonments and the path of meditation abandonments.                                      | Learners that include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ordinary beings who have entered a path.</li> <li>• Hinayana learner superiors.</li> </ul> |
| The eighth and ninth defilements: The abandonments of the seven impure grounds and the abandonments dependent on the pure grounds.               | The bodhisattvas or “the intelligent ones.”                                                                                                               |

Next follows a long explanation on the examples that exemplify the defilements. I am going to explain the verses from the root text so you have to refer to them as we go along.

When you read Verse 134 and if you have understood what I just said, that fulfils the purpose of explaining that verse.

Verses 135 to 138 are explanations of the first four defilements—the three dormant poisons and the strong arousal or manifestations of them.

Verse 135

Just as a lotus born from mud  
Pleases the mind when it is [newly] present,  
But later [when old] does not please,  
So [when the latencies of] desire [become manifest attachment  
through improper mental application, one is] happy [but when it  
ceases one is unhappy, due to which it is like the pleasure of  
seeing a lotus]

Here the example is exemplifying the meaning that is referring to dormant desire: “[When the latencies of] desire [become manifest attachment through improper mental application, one is] happy, but [when it ceases one is unhappy].”

The next verse is where anger is likened to the bees.

Verse 136

Just as bees, having become greatly disturbed,  
Sting [and thereby generate pain],  
So [manifest anger] is generated [from the latencies of hatred]  
Whereby [pangs of] suffering are generated in [one’s own and  
others’] hearts.

When bees are disturbed, they will attack and sting. After the bees have stung their

victim, they themselves will die so bees may cause others to lose their life and they themselves will lose their lives as well. In the same way, anger destroys or hurts others and ourselves.

Next is an exemplification of ignorance or obscuration.

Verse 137

Just as a kernel of rice and so forth is [not seen  
When] obstructed on the outside by the husk,  
So perception of the factuality of the essence [of a One Gone To  
Bliss]  
Is obstructed by the egg-shell of ignorance.

We cannot see the kernel of rice because there is a husk covering it. Likewise, our apprehension of true existence, ignorance, obscures our tathagata essence and obstructs us from seeing it.

The next verse explains the fourth defilement—the strong manifestation of the three mental poisons—by likening it to filth.

Verse 138

Just as filth is disagreeable,  
So, because of being a cause of [many faults such as] reliance [on  
the attributes of the Desire Realm  
Through] the desires of those having attachment [to the Desire  
Realm],  
That which is aroused [by the three poisons is a source of  
renunciation] like a pile of filth.

How does one relate the example of filth to the strong arousal of the three mental poisons? “Desires” here primarily refer to sexual desire, which comes about in dependence on semen and blood, substances that are considered undesirable and filthy. Likewise, strong arousal of the three mental poisons is likened to filth as these unclean substances obstruct the achievement of the path of seeing.

I am trying to see the relationship between the example and the meaning here. “Filth” is referring to the substances, semen and blood, that one depends on for the arousal of sexual desire. Likewise, by depending on the strong arousal of the three mental poisons then one is obscured from achieving the Path of Seeing. Because of the strong arousal or manifestation of the three mental poisons, we cannot achieve the arya paths. If one cannot achieve the arya paths, then one continues to accumulate the karma to reborn in the cyclic existence.

Next is applying the example to the defilement of the level of predispositions of ignorance.

Verse 139

Just as [a great treasure of] wealth is obstructed [by the earth]  
And therefore [the poor] do not know of it and do not obtain the

treasure [as an object of use],  
 So for beings [bereft of the wealth of good qualities] the self-arisen  
 [exalted wisdom of inexhaustible] good qualities  
 Is obstructed by the level of the latencies of ignorance [and thereby  
 is not seen].

Just as we would not be able to see a treasure that is buried underground because it is covered by the earth, likewise the self-arisen, i.e., referring to the tathagata essence, is obstructed by the level of the predispositions of ignorance. Hence we are unable to uncover this tathagata essence in that we cannot separate the defilements from the tathagata essence. There is a time when we can see the tathagata essence that is free from all defilements but what obstructs us from doing so now is the level of the predispositions of ignorance.

The next two verses connect the examples to the next two defilements—the path of seeing abandonments and the path of meditation abandonments.

#### Verse 140

Just as through the gradual growing of the sprout [of a tree] and so  
 forth  
 The covering over the seed is gradually rent asunder,  
 So through [gradually generating the exalted wisdom] seeing  
 suchness  
 [The afflictive emotions] which are to be abandoned by the path of  
 seeing are overcome.

“Just as through the gradual growing of the sprout”: There is a seed that has the capacity to transform into the sprout. The sprout issues forth from the seed gradually and then becomes the sprout. When that happens, the covering of the seed is torn apart.

Likewise, through seeing emptiness directly for the first time, one achieves the path of seeing and one realises selflessness directly. One enters the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing. When one breaks through that realisation and goes on to the path of release of the path of seeing, then the intellectually acquired afflictions are abandoned.

In the next verse, the path of meditation abandonments are likened to tattered garments.

#### Verse 141

From relation with the path of Superiors [directly seeing the reality  
 of the four truths],  
 The objects of abandonment by the exalted wisdom of the path of  
 meditation  
 Of those who have overcome the essence [or main of the objects of  
 abandonment—the false view of] the transitory collection [as  
 inherently existent I and mine and so forth]—  
 Are indicated as like tattered garments [in that they lack a core of

hardness].

When one achieves the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing, that uninterrupted path acts as the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictions, i.e., the intellectually acquired view of the transitory collection. These are abandoned by the path of seeing.

From the perspective of the Hinayana, the defilements that remain to be abandoned are likened to tattered garments. These remnant defilements are to be abandoned by “the vajra-like meditative stabilization” (Verse 131) of the path of meditation.

The next two verses relate to the last two defilements—the defilements dependent on the impure grounds and the defilements dependent on the pure grounds.

#### Verse 142

The defilements dependent upon the seven [impure] grounds  
Are similar to the defilement of the covering of a womb [since what  
one has is not seen or since those defiled states of mind involve  
exertion].

Like being freed from the covering of the womb, [the arising of] the  
exalted non-conceptual wisdom [without exertion on the pure  
grounds]

Is like [the birth of] a developed [universal monarch, in that such  
does not depend upon exertion].

This verse refers to the defilements that are dependent upon the seven impure grounds. In order to achieve the non-conceptual wisdom of the eighth ground, first one must be free of the defilements related to the seventh ground. It is only when one is freed from those defilements that one can achieve the exalted non-conceptual wisdom of the eighth ground. This achievement is likened to the birth of a universal monarch emerging from the womb.

#### Verse 143

The defilements related with the three [pure grounds]  
Are to be known as like an earth [mold] that covers [a golden  
statue].

They are overcome by the vajra-like meditative stabilization  
Of those great beings [at the end of the continuum of being a  
sentient being].

The defilements related with the three pure grounds—the eight, ninth and tenth grounds—are likened to the mould in which a statue of the Buddha is cast. Let's say you are making a golden statue. You would have a mould in which the statue is cast. Once the statue is formed, in order to reveal that statue, you have to break open the mould and release the statue from it.

Likewise, one has to overcome the defilements that are related with the three pure grounds by overcoming the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum of a sentient being.



Verse 144 is a summary.

Verse 144 a, b

In that way, the nine defilements - desire and so forth –  
Are similar to the examples of the lotus and so forth.

Up to here, we have been talking about the objects that obscures, i.e., the obscurer. What follows is the discussion of that which is obscured.

So far we have been talking about the nine obscuring factors or obscurers, the defilements. You have to know what they are and when they exist. When you have some idea of the nine obscuring factors, the defilements, then when we talk about the four maras, you will understand better the explanation given.

### **THE FOUR MARAS**

Buddhahood is about being victorious over the four maras. That is why the buddhas are the victorious ones.

#### *The mara of the aggregates*

The mara of the aggregates can be explained in their coarse form and subtle form.

- The coarse mara of the aggregates refers to the contaminated appropriated aggregates that arise from karma and afflictions.
- The subtle mara of the aggregates refers to the mental body that arises from the level of predispositions of ignorance and uncontaminated karma.

#### *The mara of afflictions*

Earlier, we said that the afflictive obscurations obstruct the achievement of liberation. The second mara is the mara of afflictions that can also be explained in the terms of the coarse and subtle.

- The coarse mara of afflictions refers to the manifest afflictions—the six root afflictions and twenty secondary afflictions.
- The subtle mara of the afflictions is the seeds that are deposited by these afflictions.

#### *The mara of the Lord of Death*

The third mara is the mara of the Lord of Death.

- The coarse mara of the Lord of Death is the death that occurs uncontrollably due to karma and afflictions.
- The subtle mara of the Lord of Death is the inconceivable transference of death that happens when one has a mental body. Even those who have achieved the mental body are not free from death because they still undergo this inconceivable transference of death.

#### *The mara of Devaputra*

The fourth mara is the mara of Devaputra. *Deva* means god and *putra* means son.

In some texts, this mara of Devaputra refers to the hindrances that prevent one from being free of the first three maras.

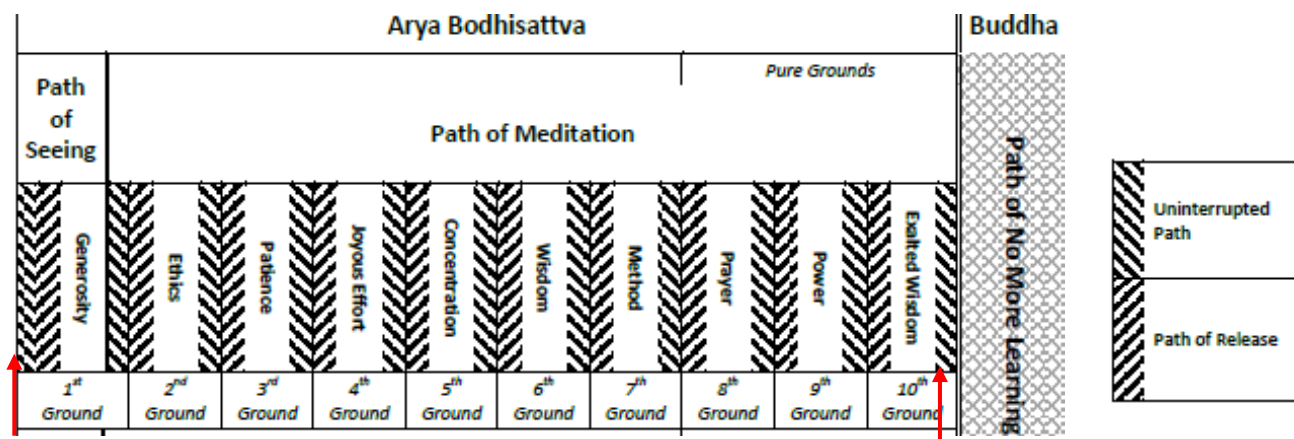
The course mara of Devaputra refers to the god that shoots the five arrows of anger, attachment, ignorance, pride and jealousy. When one is hit by these arrows then there is the condition for manifest anger, desire and so forth to arise that interrupt one’s practice of virtue.

In the *Golden Rosary of Excellent Explanations*, Je Rinpoche explicitly mentioned that once one has achieved the path of seeing, one is free of this mara of Devaputra. What does this statement mean? Does it mean that when one has achieved the path of seeing, one is free of the coarse form of the mara of Devaputra?

If you look at this from the perspective of the Mahayana, in relation to the sharp-facultied trainees, the bodhisattvas on the path of preparation who have achieved the signs of irreversibility can overcome this mara. The person of sharp faculties achieves freedom from this mara of Devaputra on the Mahayana path of preparation.

In the *Ornament of Essential Explanation*, Gyalsap Je said that as long as one possesses the other three maras, one will not be free from the mara of Devaputra. This means that one can only be free of the mara of Devaputra when one has achieved enlightenment.

So now you have some understanding of what the four maras are and what being victorious over the four maras means.



Directly realises emptiness for the first time

Uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum of a sentient being

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