Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

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Lesson No: 8

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The three vehicles are:

- 1. The Hearers' Vehicle
- 2. The Solitary Realisers' Vehicle
- 3. The Bodhisattvas' Vehicle

We have to know that these are different from the four Buddhist tenets and their proponents. These two are different things.

When we look at the history of the presentation of the tenets and the three vehicles, there are some commentaries that said that:

- the GES and the SS belong to the Hearers' Vehicle.
- the MOS belongs to the Solitary Realisers' Vehicle.
- the MWS belongs to the Great Vehicle.
- You should know that this is incorrect.

A proponent of a Buddhist tenet is not necessarily someone who has entered the path, be it the hearers', solitary realisers', or the Mahayana path. That proponent need not necessarily have generated a path already in his mind. As such it is not necessarily someone who has entered any one of the three paths. We only talk about the three vehicles in the context of someone who has entered the path already.

There is a difference between:

- a proponent of any one of the Buddhist tenets
- someone who belongs to one of the three vehicles

There are proponents of the Buddhist tenets who have *not* generated any path in their mind.

For example: A Hinayanist is someone who has entered the Hinayana path, i.e., someone who has generated the path in his continuum. Such a Hinayanist could be a Proponent of the Great Exposition, a Proponent of Sutra, a Proponent of Mind Only, or a proponent of the Middle Way.

In the same way, someone who has entered the solitary realisers' path could be a proponent of any one of the four Buddhist tenets. He could be a Proponent of the Great Exposition, a Proponent of Sutra, a Proponent of Mind Only, or a proponent of the Middle Way.

Likewise, someone who has entered the Mahayana path, a Mahayanist, could be a Proponent of the Great Exposition, a Proponent of Sutra, a Proponent of Mind Only, or a proponent of the Middle Way.

- Therefore the proponent of Hinayana tenets is not the same thing as someone who has entered the Hinayana path. They are not the same.
- It is also wrong to think that the proponent of Mahayana tenets is the same as a Mahayanist, i.e., someone who has entered the Mahayana path. It is wrong to think they are the same thing.

Why is a proponent of Mahayana tenets not necessarily a Mahayanist?

Khen Rinpoche: I would like the new students to try and answer this, not the old students who have completed the Basic Program.

What fallacy is incurred if one posits that the proponent of Mahayana tenets is necessary a Mahayanist?

- 1. The Hearers' Vehicle
- 2. The Solitary Realisers' Vehicle
- 3. The Bodhisattvas' Vehicle (also known as the Great or Mahayana Vehicle)
- In this context, the vehicles, paths, and clear realisations are synonymous.

When we talk about the path, what exactly is it? What is the boundary between the generation of the path and the absence of the path? It is said the path is generated the moment a fully qualified renunciation is developed in the mental continuum. Renunciation is the determination to be free. On the other hand, a proponent of any one of the four Buddhist tenets need not be someone who has generated a fully qualified renunciation, the determination to be free, in his mind.

Each of the three vehicles has their own respective five paths:

- 1. The path of accumulation
- 2. The path of preparation
- 3. The path of seeing
- 4. The path of meditation
- 5. The path of no-more-learning

There are:

- 1. The five paths of the hearers
 - The path of accumulation of the hearers
 - The path of preparation of the hearers
 - The path of seeing of the hearers
 - The path of meditation of the hearers
 - The path of no-more-learning of the hearers
- 2. The five paths of the solitary realisers
 - The path of accumulation of the solitary realisers
 - The path of preparation of the solitary realisers
 - The path of seeing of the solitary realisers
 - The path of meditation of the solitary realisers
 - The path of no-more-learning of the solitary realisers
- 3. The five paths of the bodhisattvas
 - The path of accumulation of the bodhisattvas

- The path of preparation of the bodhisattvas
- The path of seeing of the bodhisattvas
- The path of meditation of the bodhisattvas
- The path of no-more-learning of the bodhisattvas

Using the example of the hearers' path:

1. Path of accumulation

Why is it called the path of accumulation? The path of accumulation refers to the time in which that individual who has entered the path is accumulating the collection of merit by primarily focussing on hearing and reflection among the threefold activity of hearing, reflection, and meditation.

When the path of accumulation is divided, there are three divisions:

- 1. Small path of accumulation
- 2. Middling path of accumulation
- 3. Great path of accumulation

2. Path of preparation

In Tibetan, the path of preparation is *sbyor lam; sbyor* literally meaning connecting or linking to.

As opposed to the path of accumulation that primarily focuses on hearing and reflection, the focus here is on cultivating the wisdom arisen from meditation. It is meditating on or familiarising the mind with the meaning of the scriptures, in particular, the meaning of selflessness that has been ascertained through the earlier activities of hearing and reflection.

The meditation on the meaning of the scriptures that had been ascertained earlier and, in particular, meditating on the meaning of selflessness, is done through the medium of a mental image or meaning generality.

This stage of spiritual development prepares the person to actualise the path of seeing and will connect or link this person to the path of seeing where this person will see selflessness directly as opposed to seeing or realising it via a meaning generality.

When the path of preparation is divided, there are four divisions:

- 1. Heat stage of the path of preparation
- 2. Peak stage of the path of preparation
- 3. Forbearance stage of the path of preparation
- 4. Supreme mundane qualities stage of the path of preparation

3. Path of seeing

The third path is the path of seeing. Why is it called the path of seeing? This is because the individual is seeing truth directly for the first time.

Ven Gyurme: Rinpoche always says, "rising path, rising path." It sounds like that, right? It is the "right seeing path!"

Khen Rinpoche: I remember one time Rinpoche was talking about dependentarising. There was an English lady whose English pronunciation was very good. When she heard Rinpoche's teachings on dependent-arising, she heard "Tibetan uprising." For one year, she heard Rinpoche say "Tibetan uprising." So she could not get the teachings. I hope that you are not hearing this in the same way!

There are different ways of dividing the path of seeing. One way is talking about the path of seeing in terms of:

- the wisdom of meditative equipoise of the path of seeing and
- the wisdom of subsequent attainment of the path of seeing.

4. Path of meditation

On the path of seeing, the individual has seen the truth directly for the first time. Once one has seen the object directly, with respect to that object, there is no higher mode of apprehending it than that.

What happens then on the path of meditation? On the path of meditation, the individual familiarises his mind with what he has seen on the path of seeing, i.e., the truth. He is familiarising himself with that realisation over and over again.

5. Path of no-more-learning

This refers to the time when there is no need to train further on one's respective path, regardless of the vehicle one has entered. There is nothing more to train or to learn.

So when we talk about the five hearers' paths, there are:

- 1. The hearers' path of accumulation
- 2. The hearers' path of preparation
- 3. The hearers' path of seeing
- 4. The hearers' path of meditation
- 5. The hearers' path of no-more-learning

On the path of accumulation, the individual is focused on accumulating merit. Among the threefold activities of hearing, reflection, and meditation, the individual on the path of accumulation focuses primarily on hearing and reflection on the meaning of the scriptures, and particularly on the meaning of selflessness in order to gain the correct understanding of selflessness.

On the path of preparation, that individual primarily meditates on the meaning of selflessness that had been settled in his own mind through the earlier hearing and reflection. He meditates on selflessness through the medium of a mental image or meaning generality. This meditation will bring him closer to and prepares him for realising selflessness directly, i.e., seeing the truth directly. He is primarily meditating on the wisdom arisen from meditation. This meditation can counter or stop many manifest afflictions such as manifest anger, manifest attachment, and so forth. Through meditating over and over again on selflessness via a mental image or meaning generality, his mind is prepared for the eventual direct perception of selflessness.

When the individual sees the truth directly for the first time, then that individual, for the first time, comes to possess in his hand the actual antidote to the afflictions.

In the previous class we talked about the two types of obscurations:

- 1. Afflictive obscurations
- 2. Non-afflictive obscurations

This wisdom directly perceiving selflessness becomes the actual antidote to the afflictive obscurations.

An afflictive obscuration can be seen in terms of:

- a path of seeing abandonment
- a path of meditation abandonment

There are some afflictive obscurations that have to be abandoned by the path of seeing, while other afflictive obscurations are abandoned by the path of meditation.

- What is a path of seeing abandonment? The afflictive obscurations that are abandoned by the path of seeing are the intellectually acquired afflictions. When an individual directly perceives the truth for the first time, that is when he enters and achieves the path of seeing. At that time, the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations are abandoned.
- The innate afflictive obscurations are abandoned by the path of meditation when one is familiarising one's mind with and meditating over and over again on what has been realised earlier.

After abandoning all the innate afflictive obscuration on the path of meditation, this hearer achieves the hearers' path of no-more-learning and he achieves the respective enlightenment of his own path. In this case, he achieves the result of the foe destroyer, a hearer arhat.

When we look at the presentation of the path according to the GES, this is how the five paths are generally explained.

7B Actual presentation of the grounds and paths

It is asserted that there are differences in the way in which the persons of the three vehicles traverse the path.

Those of the hearer lineage conjoin the view realizing the person to be empty of being self-sufficient substantially existent with a small collection of merit and, having cultivated that for at least three lifetimes, attain the small enlightenment.

Those of the solitary realizer lineage conjoin the view realizing the person to be empty of being self-sufficient substantially existent with a middling collection of merit and, having cultivated that for at least one hundred eons, attain the middling enlightenment.

Bodhisattvas conjoin the view realizing the person to be empty of being selfsufficient substantially existent with a great collection of merit and, having cultivated that for at least three countless great eons, attain the great enlightenment.

There are differences in the way in which they accumulate merit.

Bodhisattvas, having accumulated merit for at least three countless great eons on the great stage of the path of accumulation and below, actualize the heat stage of the path of preparation through to the path of no-more-learning on one seat. Those of the solitary realizer lineage, having accumulated merit for at least one hundred great eons on the great stage of the path of accumulation and below, actualize the heat stage of the path of preparation through to the path of nomore-learning on one seat.

Those of the hearer lineage accumulate merit on all four learning paths and, even after having attained a superior's path, must also train on the learning paths for up to fourteen lifetimes (Page 5).

According to the GES:

- The object of meditation of the three vehicles is the same: the emptiness of a self-sufficient substantially existent person.
- In terms of the object of negation, the apprehension of the self-sufficient substantially existent person is also the same.
- But the time that they spend in accumulating the collection of merit differs:
 - The hearer with a small collection of merit cultivated over at least three lifetimes attains the hearers' enlightenment.
 - The solitary realiser with a middling collection of merit cultivated over at least one hundred eons attains the solitary realisers' enlightenment.
 - The bodhisattva with a great collection of merit cultivated over at least three countless great eons attains full enlightenment.

According to the GES, the bodhisattva accumulate merit over three countless great eons. On which path among the five paths does these three countless great eons occur? It happens on the great stage of the path of accumulation and below. According to the GES, the collection of merit happens primarily on the path of accumulation. Based on that, there is some meaning behind the term, "the path of accumulation."

After having accumulated this huge amount of merit, the bodhisattva, within the same meditative equipoise, actualise and manifest:

- the heat stage of the path of preparation
- the peak stage of the path of preparation
- the forbearance stage of the path of preparation
- the supreme mundane qualities stage of the path of preparation and
- the path of seeing
- the path of meditation
- the path of no-more-learning.

All these occur within one meditative equipoise in one sitting. According to the GES, this is how a bodhisattva achieves enlightenment. The very start of the path of preparation, i.e., the heat stage of path of preparation, all the way up to the path of no-more-learning is achieved in one meditative equipoise in one sitting.

They assert that a buddha's form aggregate is not a buddha because it is an object to be abandoned. This is so because it is included in the same lifetime as the bodily support of the earlier bodhisattva on the path of preparation. This is necessarily so because the bodily support of the bodhisattva on the path of preparation is an aggregate projected by previous karma and afflictions. A complete enjoyment body (*Skt. sambhogakaya*) is not accepted, and it is asserted that, at the time of a nirvana without remainder of a supreme emanation body, the continuum of awareness is severed.

Although a buddha superior has abandoned all sufferings and their origins without exception, it is not contradictory that he still has true sufferings in his continuum. This is because abandoning every single affliction that observes true sufferings is posited as abandoning true sufferings.

From the point of attaining the state of foe destroyer until they give up their compositional factor of life [i.e., until they die], hearer and solitary realizer foe destroyers are posited as being with remainder, whereas from the point of giving up their compositional factor of life [i.e., having died] they are posited as having passed beyond sorrow without remainder [i.e., having attained a nirvana without remainder].

Although at the time of a nirvana with remainder they have abandoned the afflictive obscurations without exception, they have not abandoned the non-afflictive obscurations. Although at the time of a nirvana without remainder the non-afflictive obscurations are not destroyed by the power of an antidote, they do not exist because at that time, their support – the continuum of awareness – is severed (Pages 5 - 6).

You may have heard of the twelve deeds of the Buddha, starting from the deed of birth all the way up to the deed of passing away. According to the GES:

- The first deed of being born up to the deed of subduing the maras are considered to be the deeds of an ordinary person.
- The deed of achieving enlightenment, the deed of turning the Wheel of Dharma, and the deed of passing away into parinirvana are considered to be the deeds of the Buddha.

According to what is commonly accepted with regard to the life of the Buddha, he finished the accumulation of merit, then he sat under the bodhi tree. After subduing the hosts of maras under the bodhi tree, he entered meditative equipoise and within that meditative equipoise, in one sitting, he achieved enlightenment.

That moment of entering meditative equipoise is the heat stage of the path of preparation. In that one sitting, he progressed from the heat stage of the path of preparation all the way up to the path of no-more-learning. From the perspective of the Hinayana, this is how the Buddha achieved enlightenment in one sitting under the bodhi tree. After subduing the maras, he entered meditative equipoise and then he actualised enlightenment. The time he entered meditative equipoise is where the heat stage of the path of preparation started.

When we analyse from this perspective, who then is that person who entered meditative equipoise under the bodhi tree after having subdued the maras? Isn't that person an ordinary being? A person who is on the path of preparation is an ordinary being, not a superior being. An ordinary being has a contaminated body and mind. On the basis of that same body, in one meditation session and in one sitting, that person progresses all the way up to enlightenment.

After having achieved enlightenment, according to this Hinayana perspective, the body is still there. It is the same body that the Buddha had when he was an ordinary being on the path of preparation. Therefore, according to this Hinayana perspective, the Buddha's body is not the Buddha Jewel because it is true suffering.

According to the Hinayana perspective, after having attained enlightenment, that body is the same body that the Buddha had when he entered meditative equipoise under the bodhi tree. At that time, he was not a buddha but an ordinary being. Being an ordinary being means having a contaminated body. That body that entered meditative equipoise is the result of karma and afflictions. He achieved enlightenment in one sitting but, after having achieved enlightenment, the body is still there. From the Hinayana perspective, that body is contaminated and it is true suffering. It is not the Buddha but is an object of abandonment.

According to the Hinayana perspective, they do assert a supreme emanation body, i.e., the form body of the Buddha. After having achieved enlightenment up to the point before manifesting the deed of passing into parinirvana, the form body during that period is the supreme emanation body. After passing into parinirvana, the continuum of matter, i.e., the body is severed. The continuum of the Buddha's mind is also severed, just like the flame of a butter lamp going out of existence. This is the Hinayana explanation.

In the Mahayana, there is a presentation of the complete enjoyment body, one of the form bodies of the Buddha. This is not accepted however from the Hinayana perspective because, once the Buddha passed into parinirvana, the continua of the Buddha's consciousness and body were severed.

You may have heard the term, "nirvana with remainder." According to the Hinayana perspective, this refers to the time when the Buddha had his contaminated body up to just before he passed into parinirvana. At that time, the Buddha had a contaminated body from before. That period is called nirvana with remainder.

After passing into parinirvana or passing beyond the sorrowless state, the continua of both the body and consciousness were severed. We have to think about this particular perspective with regard to the Buddha going out of existence. The continua of both matter and consciousness were severed. Was there something that remained behind? What remained was the non-compositional factor. We have to think about what it really means when it is said that the Buddha goes out of existence.

The solitary realisers also accumulate merit. They accumulate merit for at least one hundred great eons. This happens on the great stage of the path of accumulation and below. The solitary realisers also actualise their own enlightenment in one sitting starting from the heat stage of the path of preparation through to the path of no-more-learning.

The body of the person who has achieved the solitary realiser's enlightenment is also contaminated due to the same reasons mentioned before. That body is the continuation of the body that he had when he entered the heat stage of the path of preparation. Between that time, after having achieved the solitary realiser's enlightenment up to just before passing into nirvana, is called the nirvana with remainder.

When this solitary realiser passes away, he achieves the nirvana without remainder. It is the same thing. The continua of matter and consciousness are severed. When the aggregates of that solitary realiser go out of existence, since the continua of the body and consciousness are severed, there isn't any question of getting another set of aggregates.

Those of the hearer lineage are said to accumulate merit on all four learning paths. The four learning paths are all the paths excluding the path of no-more-learning. The path of accumulation, the path of preparation, the path of seeing, and the path of meditation are the four learning paths. The hearers do not only accumulate merit on the path of accumulation but, in fact, they accumulate merit on all the four learning paths.

Those of the hearer lineage, even after having attained the path of a superior, must train on the learning paths for up to fourteen lifetimes. So those of the hearer lineage accumulate merit on all four learning paths over at least three lifetimes after which they actualise the hearer's enlightenment. After having actualised the hearer's enlightenment, there is also the hearer's nirvana with remainder and nirvana without remainder. After achieving the nirvana without remainder, similar to the previous explanation, the continua of both the consciousness and body are severed.

According to the GES, there are three final vehicles. This means that there are three final fruits of attainment. Why? Because sentient beings have different dispositions, there are three final vehicles and therefore three final fruits of attainment.

For those of the hearer lineage, once they have achieved their hearer's enlightenment, i.e., after having achieved the nirvana without remainder, there is nothing more or higher than that. For them, that is their final fruit of attainment. It is similar for the solitary realiser. For those of the bodhisattva lineage, once they have achieved buddhahood, there is nothing more to achieve.

In summary, when we look in more detail, what exactly is abandoned when one achieves either the hearer's nirvana with remainder or the solitary realiser's nirvana with remainder? Of the two obscurations, the object of abandonment is the afflictive obscurations. The non-afflictive obscurations are not abandoned. But when they achieve the nirvana without remainder, the non-afflictive obscurations also cease to exist. That cessation happens not because of the force of an antidote but because the basis for the non-afflictive obscurations has ceased to exist. Therefore the non-afflictive obscurations also cease to exist.

It is different for someone who has achieved the Mahayana path of no-morelearning. The person who achieves the Mahayana path of no-more-learning is a buddha, the nirvana with remainder. Nevertheless, a buddha is someone who has completely abandoned both the afflictive obscurations and the non-afflictive obscurations.

For someone who has achieved the Hinayana nirvana with remainder, whether it is a hearer or solitary realiser, as discussed in the previous lesson, we said that although they have achieved their respective nirvanas, they still have the four Lesson 8 causes of non-knowingness that are due to the complexity and subtlety of phenomena, distance, time, place, and so forth. They are not all-knowing, but a buddha is not like that. Someone who has achieved buddhahood is someone who realises all phenomena directly as they are.

According to the GES, a buddha is all-knowing but their understanding of allknowingness and omniscience is not like that of the Mahayana. According to the GES, the convention, obscuration to knowledge, does not exist. The GES asserts that a buddha knows everything but a buddha has to focus on the object to be able to know it. The Mahayana understanding, however, is that a buddha, in any one moment, cognises every phenomena. According to the Hinayana, a buddha knows everything but a buddha has to know everything serially, i.e., object by object, in stages. In the Mahayana presentation, a buddha cognises all phenomena directly in any one moment.

When the proponents of things, [i.e., the Great Exposition, Sutra, and Mind Only schools,] differentiate definitive and interpretive sutras, they differentiate them by means of whether or not they are suitable to be accepted literally.

[Some¹ among] the two schools that propound objects, [i.e., the Great Exposition and Sutra schools,] do not assert the Great Vehicle (*Skt. Mahayana*) scriptural collection to be the Buddha's word because most Proponents of the Great Exposition accept that the sutras are necessarily sutras of definitive meaning (Page 6).

"Proponents of things" or proponents of truly existent things primarily refer to the GES and the SS. Perhaps it is all right to include the MOS because they do assert that the thoroughly established nature and other-powered nature are truly existent.

According to the GES and the SS, the Buddha does not talk about things that are untrue or false. That being the case, whatever the Buddha had said can be taken literally. Therefore, for them, the sutras are necessarily of definitive meaning. For them, you have to take the Buddha's words literally. For the proponents of these Hinayana tenets, the GES and the SS, when they look at the Mahayana scriptural collections, it cannot fit their minds. Therefore they assert that the Mahayana scriptural collections are not the Buddha's words. It cannot fit their mind because their worldview is that, as long it is the Buddha's words, you can take them literally. When you look at the Mahayana teachings, you cannot take them literally all the time. According to their perspective, because it doesn't fit into reality of the situation, it is not the sutras of definitive meaning. Therefore they are not the Buddha's words.

We have finished the GES now.

As long as you have (1) the understanding of the two truths according to the GES, (2) the meaning of the two selflessnesses of person, (3) how the five paths of the three vehicles are traversed, and (4) what is the object of abandonment, I

¹ Jamyang Shayba's *Great Exposition of Tenets* says: 'Even most Proponents of Sutra Following Scripture and Proponents of Sutra Following Reasoning assert that the Great Vehicle scriptural collections are the word of the Buddha requiring interpretation.'

think that is sufficient. As long as you have an idea of what I have just mentioned, then it is enough. It helps if you can do this little exercise on your own: summarise your understanding of the GES's presentations of the two truths, the three vehicles, and the five paths in your own words:

- With regard to the two truths, posit an illustration for each. Using the illustrations, highlight the difference between the two truths. That is for the two truths.
- With regard to the two selflessnesses of persons, summarise in your own words what the non-existence of the permanent, unitary, and independent self is. What is the problem if such a self is said to exist?
- You can do the same thing with the non-existence of the self-sufficient substantially existent person. What exactly is the non-existence of the self-sufficient substantially existent person? What is the problem if we were to say that such a person exists? What are the reasons given and logic used to establish that a self-sufficient substantially existent person does not exist?
- With regard to the three final vehicles, you have to be clear in your own mind what the three final vehicles and their respective five paths are. It is very clear in the root text. For example, the main object of meditation is the emptiness of the self-sufficient substantially existent person. Then there are the differences in which merit is accumulated. Therefore the method of traversing the path is different. It also said that when you achieve nirvana without remainder, you go out of existence due to the continua of the body and mind being severed.

When we look at the next school, the SS, we will focus on their presentation of the two truths. We are not going to talk about the selflessnesses of persons because their assertions are the same as the GES. If you have understood all the discussions up to now, then that is enough. We are not going to talk about that.

As for the presentation of minds, the valid cogniser and the different kinds of mind, that was already covered in the previous module on lo-rig, so we will not talk about it again.

If you have questions on the GES, think about it and prepare to bring them up in the next class. Only questions pertaining to the GES.

GREAT EXPOSITION SCHOOL: ACTUAL PRESENTATION OF THE GROUNDS AND PATHS				
	Hearer Vehicle	Solitary Realiser Vehicle	Bodhisattva Vehicle	
Object of meditation	Emptiness of a self-sufficient substantially existent person			
Collection of merit	Small	Middling	Great	
Length of time of accumulating the the collection of merit	At least three lifetimes	At least one hundred eons	At least three countless great eons	
Attainment	Small enlightenment	Middling enlightenment	Great enlightenment	
The manner of accumulating	 Accumulate merit on all four learning paths and 	Having accumulated merit for at least one hundred great	Having accumulated merit for at least three countless	

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merit Even after ha attained a su path, must t the learning for up to four lifetimes The four learning are 1) the path of accumulation, 2 path of preparat 3) the path of see 4) the path of meridian 	perior's stage of the path of accumulation and below, actualise the heat stage of the path of preparation through to the path of no-more-learning in one sitting.	great eons on the great stage of the path of accumu- lation and below, actualise the heat stage of the path of preparation through to the path of no- more-learning in one sitting.
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