

## Middle Length Stages of Meditation

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Homage to Manjusri!

### 1 The causes of omniscience

I will briefly explain the stages of meditation for those following the sutra system of the Mahayana.

Intelligent people who wish to attain omniscience very quickly must strive to cultivate its causes and conditions. Omniscience does not occur causelessly; if it did everyone would be omniscient. If it occurred without being dependent on something, there would be no obstacle to its occurring everywhere, and why then would not everyone be omniscient? However, all things are strictly dependent on causes because they only occur occasionally, at certain times and under certain conditions. Since it does not occur at all times, in all places, and for everyone, it definitely depends on causes and conditions.

Moreover, you must develop causes and conditions that are not incorrect or incomplete. If you create the wrong cause, even after a very long time you will not obtain the desired effect -- it would be like trying to milk a cow's horn. An effect will not arise if you do not cultivate all of its causes, just as a sprout -- the effect -- is not produced when any one of its causes -- the seed, etc. -- is absent.

Therefore, when you desire a particular effect you must cultivate all of its causes and conditions. Should you wonder what are the causes and conditions of omniscience, I will explain them. Just as a blind man is unable to lead others, I am unable to teach on my own. Therefore, I will explain the cause of omniscience as the Bhagavan Buddha taught them to his disciples after he attained perfect awakening. The Bhagavan said [in the Vairocanaabhisambodhi Sutra]:

Master of Secrets Vajrapani, the gnosis of  
omniscience arises on the basis of compassion,  
from the cause of the mind of awakening,  
and from the fulfillment of method.

Therefore, those who wish to obtain omniscience must train themselves in these three: compassion, the mind of awakening, and method. When they develop compassion, bodhisattvas take a vow to free all sentient beings from the world. Then ceasing to think about selfish goals, they strive continuously over a long period to acquire the accumulations of merit and gnosis. Having thus begun, they will certainly complete the accumulations of merit and gnosis.

When the accumulations are complete it is like holding omniscience in the palm of your hand. Therefore, since compassion is truly the root of omniscience you should meditate on it from the very beginning. The Dharmasangiti Sutra says:

Bhagavan, a bodhisattva does not need to train in many practices.

Bhagavan, if a bodhisattva firmly grasps one practice and understands it well he has all the qualities of buddhahood in the palm of his hand.

If you ask what that sole practice is, it is great compassion.

Even though Bhagavan Buddhas have already perfectly accomplished all of their own goals, they remain in the world until all sentient beings are liberated because they are completely controlled by great compassion. Unlike the sravakas, they do not enter the very peaceful citadel of nirvana. Buddhas consider the plight of sentient beings and stay far away from the peaceful citadel of nirvana as if it were a house of blazing iron. Thus, great compassion is the cause of the Bhagavan Buddhas' nirvana that is not fixated in either samsara or nirvana.

## 2 The stages of meditating compassion

I will explain the stages of meditating compassion from the very beginning. In the beginning you should meditate equanimity by clearing away attachment and aversion. You should develop an impartial attitude toward all sentient beings. You should think in this way:

All sentient beings desire happiness and do not desire unhappiness. samsara, which is beginningless, there is no sentient being at all who has not been my cherished friend hundreds of times. In that respect what difference is there among them that I should be attached to some and averse to others? I should have an impartial attitude toward all sentient beings.

Thinking in this way you should meditate impartiality, beginning with neutral persons, then friends and enemies.

Afterwards, upon achieving an impartial attitude toward all sentient beings, you should meditate love. The seed of compassion will easily grow if you plant it in fertile soil, the mental continuum moistened with love. Then, when you have watered your mind with love, you should meditate compassion. Compassion is the wish that all suffering sentient beings be free from suffering. Since all the sentient beings in the three realms are tormented by one or more of the three kinds of suffering, you should meditate on the suffering of all sentient beings as follows.

The Bhagavan taught that sentient beings in the hells are incessantly drowning in a river of manifold sufferings -- burning and so forth -- for a vast period of time. The hungry ghosts also experience much intense suffering: their minds are tormented and their bodies dried up by insatiable hunger and thirst. You can see that animals also endure many different kinds

of suffering: eating one another, becoming enraged, being killed, injured, etc. You can also see that humans experience countless suffering such as cheating and harming each other in failed attempts to fulfill desires, being separated from cherished persons, meeting those who are loathsome, becoming impoverished, and so forth. Some people have minds that are tied by the different bonds of desire and the other disturbing emotions. Others argue about various evil views. Since all of these are causes of suffering, they are simply painful, like a chronic disease. Also, all the gods endure the suffering of change. Since gods in the desire realm are distressed by the fear of death and of falling into a lower birth, how are they happy? Moreover, all living beings are caught up in the suffering of conditionality: they are controlled by causes that are marked by karma and defiled emotions, and by nature they change each moment.

Therefore, recognize that all living beings dwell in the midst of a great conflagration of misery. Think that all other beings are just like yourself in not wishing to suffer. Make their misery your own with the thought, "Oh! Since these beings I cherish are suffering, how can I set them free?" At all times, both while you engage in meditative concentration and in all your ordinary behavior, you should meditate compassion that wishes to free all sentient beings from suffering.

In the beginning you should meditate by recognizing that those whom you cherish are experiencing the various sufferings that have been mentioned. Then you should meditate on neutral beings. Seeing that there is no difference between them and cherished beings due to the equality of sentient beings, you should think, "All sentient beings are my friends." Once you experience compassion toward neutral beings equal to that which you feel toward those you cherish, you should meditate compassion for all the sentient beings in the universe.

When you naturally and spontaneously experience compassion toward all sentient beings -- compassion that makes you wish to free them from their misery as if you were the loving mother of a suffering small child -- compassion is perfected, and it is called 'great compassion.'

You meditate love with the wish that beings have happiness. You first meditate this toward cherished persons, then toward neutral persons, and finally toward enemies. Having conditioned yourself to be compassionate, you naturally will gradually develop the wish to free all sentient beings.

### 3 The mind of awakening

Then, having conditioned yourself to great compassion, you should meditate the mind of awakening. There are two types of the mind of awakening: the phenomenal and the ultimate. The phenomenal mind of awakening is production of the initial thought that wishes for true, perfect awakening: out of compassion you vow to emancipate all sentient beings, and think "I must become

a buddha in order to benefit beings." You should also generate this mind by taking the bodhisattva vow before a master who holds the bodhisattva precepts, following the ritual taught in the "Conduct" chapter of the Bodhisattvabhumi.

Once you produce the phenomenal mind of awakening you should strive to generate the ultimate mind of awakening. The ultimate mind of awakening is transcendent, free from all conceptual elaborations, radiant, the ultimate cognitive sphere, unmoving, unwavering like the steady flame of an oil lamp in a windless place.

#### 4 Tranquilization and insight

To achieve the ultimate mind of awakening you must continually condition yourself to the yoga of tranquilization and insight over a long period of time.

As the Samdhinirmocana Sutra says:

Maitreya, you should know that the worldly and transcendent virtuous qualities of sravakas, bodhisattvas, and tathagathas are the result of tranquilization and insight.

Yogis must devote themselves to tranquilization and insight because all meditative concentrations are included within these two. As the Bhagavan said in the Samdhinirmocana:

All of the many types of meditative concentration I have taught for sravakas, bodhisattvas, and tathagathas are included within tranquilization and insight.

Yogis do not get rid of mental obscurations solely by conditioning themselves to tranquilization. Tranquilization merely suppresses disturbing emotions for a while, it does not destroy their latent properties. The propensities cannot be destroyed without the advent of the light of wisdom. Therefore the Samdhinirmocana teaches, "Meditative concentration suppresses the disturbing emotions; wisdom destroys the latent propensities." Also, the Samadhiraja Sutra says:

Developing meditative concentration will not destroy the concept of a self; the disturbing emotions will rise again and disturb you, just like the meditative concentration non-Buddhist yogis practice. Analyze the selflessness of phenomena and then meditate on this analytical insight: this is the cause of attaining nirvana. You do not obtain peace from some other cause.

The Bodhisattva Pitaka says:

Those who have not studied the teachings of the bodhisattva's compendium, who hold meditative concentration alone to be sufficient without studying the noble Dharma and Vinaya, fall into conceit due to pride. They are not freed from birth, aging, sickness, death, misery, lamentation, suffering, unhappiness or distress. They are not freed from the six destinies of samsara. They are not freed from the suffering aggregates. Considering this the Tathagatha said, "Those who properly study will be freed from

aging and death."

Thus those who want pure gnosis through the removal of all obstruction must abide in tranquilization and meditate wisdom. This is also taught in Ratnakuta:

Through abiding in right conduct you obtain meditative concentration.

Through attaining meditative concentration you meditate wisdom.

Through wisdom you obtain pure gnosis. Through gnosis your conduct is perfected.

The Mahayanaprasadaprabhavana Sutra also says:

Noble son, if you do not abide in wisdom I cannot say how you have faith in the Mahayana of the bodhisattvas, or set forth on the Mahayana path. Noble son, reflection on the meaning and on the Dharma with an unwavering mind produces whatever faith in the Mahayana or setting forth on the Mahayana path that occurs due to this exposition of Dharma.

Mere insight without tranquilization will allow a yogi's mind to stray toward extraneous objects. Like the flame of a lamp in the wind it will not become steady, and in that way the light of the gnosis will not become very clear. Therefore you must devote yourself to both tranquilization and insight equally. Thus the Mahaparinirvana Sutra says:

The sravakas do not perceive the nature of the Tathagata because their meditative concentration is stronger than their wisdom and their wisdom is weak. The bodhisattvas perceive this nature but their perception is unclear because their wisdom is strong and their meditative concentration is weak. The Tathagata sees all objects of knowledge because he possesses equal tranquilization and insight.

The power of tranquilization makes the mind unmoved by the wind of thought, like a flame of a lamp undisturbed by wind. Since insight eradicates all the stains of wrong views, when you have it you cannot be misled by others. As the Candrapradipa Sutra says, "Tranquilization makes you immovable; insight makes you like a mountain." Thus you should practice both of these together.

## 5 Prerequisites for tranquilization

A yogi who wishes to accomplish tranquilization and insight easily and quickly must first devote himself to acquiring their prerequisites. The prerequisites for tranquilization are dwelling in a suitable place, having few wants, being satisfied, giving up excessive activities, having pure conduct, and giving up thoughts that are rooted in desire, etc. `A suitable place' has five favorable qualities: clothing, food, etc., are easily obtained; wild or hostile individuals do not live there; the land is free from disease; companions have good conduct and harmonious views; few people pass by in the daytime and it is quiet at night. `Few wants' means a lack of excessive attachment to having lots of fine clothing etc. `Being satisfied' means always being content with

having poor quality clothing, etc. `Giving up excessive activities' means giving up bad actions such as buying and selling, giving up idle talk with laymen and the clergy, and giving up the practice of medicine, astrology, and so forth.

`Pure conduct' is not violating either the natural or conventional moral precepts with respect to the vows. If you do break a vow out of carelessness, you should immediately feel regret and resume acting in accordance with the Dharma. It is said that even someone who violates the sravaka vow that is taught to be irreparable can restore pure contact by feeling regret, by thinking not to do the action in the future, and by analyzing the essencelessness of all phenomena. You should understand this as it is explained in the Ajatasatrukaukrtyavinodana Sutra. You should exert yourself in meditation in order to eliminate causes for regret.

You should decide that objects of desire are the source of all kinds of negative consequences both in this life and in future lives, and cease thinking about them. You should cease all thoughts of them by meditating in the following manner:

From one point of view, all samsaric things,  
whether they are attractive or unattractive, are  
subject to disintegration, they are unstable.  
Inevitably I will soon be separated from them;  
why should I be excessively attached to them?

## 6 Prerequisites for insight

What are the prerequisites for insight? They are: relying on a noble person, striving for extensive learning, and correct thought. What sort of noble person should you rely on? Someone who has extensive learning, who speaks clearly, who is compassionate, and who is patient in the face of the difficulties of teaching.

What is `striving for extensive learning'? It is respecting and extensively listening to the definitive and provisional meanings of the twelve branches of the Bhagavan's scriptures. Thus the Samdhinirmocana Sutra says, "Not studying the noble beings' discourse as much as you need is an obstacle to insight." The Narayanapariprccha says, "One who studies develops wisdom; one who has wisdom pacifies mental afflictions."

What is `correct thought'? It is determination of the definitive and provisional scriptures. When a bodhisattva has no doubt regarding this, the meditation becomes certain. Otherwise, tangled up in doubt you will never have certainty; you will be like a person who has come to a crossroads not knowing the path.

Yogis should give up fish, meat, and so forth, should not eat wrong kinds of food, and should not overeat.

A bodhisattva who has collected all the prerequisites for tranquilization

and insight should commence meditation.

## 7 Preparation for a session of meditation

At the time of meditation a yogi should first complete all his activities and go to the toilet. Then, in a quiet and agreeable place, he should think, "I will place all sentient beings in the state of awakening," producing the great compassion wishing to emancipate all living beings. He should bow down to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the universe. He should place a painting or some other images of the buddhas and bodhisattvas in front of him or in some other suitable place. He should offer whatever offerings he has, and should praise the buddhas and bodhisattvas. He should confess his sins and rejoice in the merit of all living beings. On a soft and comfortable seat he should sit in the full lotus posture of Lord Vairocana or in the half-lotus posture. His eyes, neither wide open or fully closed, should be directed toward the tip of his nose. His body should be straight, neither bent nor twisted. His attention should be drawn within. His shoulders should be even and his head should not be tilted back, forward, or leaning toward the side -- his nose and navel should be in line. His teeth and lips should be in a natural position with his tongue placed at the front of his palate. His breathing should not be noisy, panting, or agitated; rather, his inhalation and exhalation should be as imperceptible as possible, very slow and effortless.

## 8 The practice of tranquilization

First you should practice tranquilization. Tranquilization is a power of mind that pacifies distraction toward external objects and remains delighted and serviceable in continuously and naturally engaging in the internal object of meditation. "Insight" is investigation of reality when you are focused in tranquilization. The Ratnamegha Sutra says, "Tranquilization is single-pointedness of mind. Insight is correct analysis." The Samdhinirmocana Sutra says:

"Bhagavan, how does one strive for tranquilization and become skilled in insight?"

"Maitreya, these are the categories of the Dharma I have taught to the bodhisattvas: sutra, geya, vyakarana, gatha, udana, nidana, avadana, itivrttaka, jataka, vaipulya, adbhutadharma, and upadesa. A bodhisattva should hear them, memorize them, clearly recite them, scrutinize them, and clearly understand them. The he should dwell alone in an isolated place, turn within, and fix his mind on the doctrines he has carefully thought about. He should continuously fix his mind from within by means of that mental fixation. Entering into that and dwelling repeatedly in that way he obtains the physical and mental flexibility

called 'tranquilization.' That is the way a bodhisattva strives for tranquilization.

"When he has obtained physical and mental flexibility, he abides in that and abandons distraction. Then he internally investigates and identifies the doctrines he has thought about by making them images that are objects of his meditative concentration. 'Insight' is differentiation, analysis, understanding, investigation, endurance, satisfaction, differentiation of particulars, viewing, and thinking about an object of knowledge which is used as an object of meditative concentration. That is the way a bodhisattva becomes skilled in insight."

A yogi wishing to accomplish tranquilization should initially recognize that all scriptures -- sutra, geya, and so forth -- have reached reality, tend toward reality, that they comprehend everything, and he should concentrate his mind on that. Alternatively, he should concentrate his mind on the aggregates, etc. -- an object that encompasses all phenomena. Or again, he should fix his mind on the body of the Buddha as he has seen it or heard it described. The Samadhiraja Sutra says, "A bodhisattva is concentrated when his mind is engaged in the meditative object that is the golden body of the beautiful Protector of the World."

Thus, having chosen a meditative object you should repeatedly and continually set your mind on it. Having placed your mind on it, you should examine your mind as follows: "Am I correctly holding the meditative object, or is my mind sinking, or distracted by the allure of external objects?" If you see that your mind is sinking or about to sink due to oppression by sluggishness or sleep, you should think of a delightful object like the body of the Buddha or a light. Then, when the sinking has ceased, you should immediately focus on the meditative object in your mind. You should recognize that sinking is occurring whenever you do not clearly see the meditative object, as if you were blind, in darkness, or had closed your eyes. Whenever you see that your mind has become excited or is about to become excited -- whether this is due to chasing external objects because of thinking about their qualities, due to fixating on another object, or due to a desire for a previously experienced object -- you should fix your mind on some sobering topic such as the impermanence of all constructed phenomena, suffering, and so forth. Then, when the distraction has ceased you should tie the elephant of the mind to the tree-trunk of the mental object with the rope of mindfulness and introspection. Whenever you see that sinking and excitement are absent, that your mind is naturally engaged in the meditative object, you should relax effort and abide in equanimity for as long as you wish. When you have conditioned yourself to such tranquilization you obtain physical and mental flexibility. Once your mind freely remains on the meditative object in the way that you wish, you have accomplished tranquilization.

Having accomplished tranquilization you should meditate insight, thinking like this:

Everything that Bhagavan taught is well spoken. Directly or indirectly it allows me to perceive reality; it is absorbed in reality. If I understand reality I will become free from the net of wrong views just as the appearance of light dispels darkness. Tranquilization alone will not produce pure gnosis, nor will it clear away the darkness of mental obstructions. However, if I properly meditate on reality with wisdom I will obtain pure gnosis. Only by wisdom can I realize reality. Only by wisdom can I properly abandon the obstructions. Therefore, abiding in tranquilization I will use wisdom to seek reality; I will not be satisfied with tranquilization alone.

What is reality? It is the fact that ultimately all things are empty of a self of persons or phenomena. This is realized by the perfection of wisdom, but not by any other means. As the Samdhinirmocana Sutra says:

"Bhagavan, by which perfection does a bodhisattva grasp the fact that phenomena have no essence?" "Avalokitesvara, he grasps it by the perfection of wisdom."

Thus, abiding in tranquilization you should meditate wisdom.

A yogi should examine things as follows:

The person is not perceived apart from the psycho-physical aggregates, the elements, and the perceptual spheres. Also, the person is not the essence of the aggregates and so forth. Whereas other philosophers falsely impute a nature that is permanent and unitary onto the person, the aggregates and so forth have a nature that is impermanent and complex. The person cannot be said to be either identical to or other than the aggregates, etc. It cannot exist as a real entity because real entities possess no other mode of existence apart from being identical to or other than the aggregates, etc. Therefore, the 'I' and 'mine' of worldly usage are mere deceptions. Also, you should meditate that phenomena are devoid of self as follows: In brief, so-called 'phenomena' are the five aggregates, twelve perceptual spheres, and eighteen elements. The material objects among these aggregates, perceptual spheres, and elements do not ultimately exist apart from being aspects of mind: if you break material objects down into the smallest possible particles and search for the essence of the parts of the smallest possible particles, you cannot apprehend a definite essence.

Thus, from beginningless time we have falsely conceived unreal material objects. Due to misconception, material objects, which are of the nature of mind, appear to ordinary people as though they are external, just like the appearance of material objects perceived in a dream. However, these material objects do not ultimately exist apart from being aspects of mind.

Considering it in that way, you should think, "This universe is mere mind."

Therefore, analysis of the fact that all designated phenomena are only mind is an investigation of the essence of all phenomena. Now you should examine the

essence of mind.

You should analyze this as follows:

Ultimately even mind is not real. Since the mind that grasps the unreal aspect of material objects appears in various forms, how could it be real?

Just as material objects are unreal, mind too is unreal because it does not exist apart from them. Thus mind has a nature that is like an illusion.

Like mind, all phenomena have a nature that is like an illusion.

When you use wisdom to investigate the nature of mind in this way, mind is not perceived within, without, or anywhere else; past mind is not perceived, future mind is not perceived, present mind is not perceived. When mind arises it does not come from anywhere; when it ceases it does not go anywhere. Mind is not graspable. Should you wonder what is the nature of something that is undemonstratable and ungraspable, the Ratnakuta says:

Kasyapa, when you seek mind you do not find it. That which is not found is not perceived. That which is not perceived is not past, nor present, nor future.

When you examine it in that way you do not see a real beginning of mind. You do not see a real middle of mind. You do not see a real end of mind. Just as mind has no limits or center, you should understand that phenomena have no limits have no limits or center. Having understood that mind has no limits or center, you do not perceive any nature of mind whatsoever. Also, you realize that all ideation of mind is empty. Through this understanding you see that material objects, whose nature is established by mind, have no real nature.

Thus, due to wisdom, by not seeing all phenomena as having a real nature you will not think, "form is permanent," "form is impermanent," "form is empty," "form is not empty," "form is defiled," "form is undefiled," "form arises," "form does not arise," "form exists," "form does not exist." Just as you do not think about form, you will not think about feeling, conception, construction, and consciousness. And since the individual instantiations of a thing do not exist when the general category of the thing is nonexistent, how could one think of particular real phenomena when all phenomena are unreal?

When a yogi examines things with wisdom in this way, he does not grasp at a thing as having any ultimate essence. He enters into nonconceptual meditative concentration and realizes the essencelessness of all phenomena. Someone who meditates by merely abandoning mental fixation without ever using wisdom to analyze the essence of things can never eliminate conceptualization because he does not have the lamp of wisdom. Thus, the Bhagavan said:

When the fire that knows reality as it is arises from analysis of reality, it incinerates the wood of thought just as the fire produced from spinning a fire-drill consumes the wood of the drill.

This is also taught in the Ratnamegha Sutra:

One who understands faulty thinking engages in the practice of meditation on emptiness to become free from all conceptual elaboration. Through extensive meditation on emptiness his mind takes delight in whatever objects appear, and through seeking the essence of those delightful

objects, he realizes that they are empty. And when he seeks the essence of the mind that realizes this, he understands that it too is empty.

Realizing it in that way, he enters into the yoga devoid of signs.

This shows that thoughtful reflection is the preparation for entering into the signless. It very clearly teaches that it is impossible to enter into nonconceptuality by merely abandoning mental fixation without using wisdom to analyze the essence of things.

Thus, practice concentration by using wisdom to correctly examine the true essence of things such as physical objects. Do not practice concentration by dwelling on physical objects, etc., or by dwelling on the things of this life or future lives, because these physical objects and so on are not objectifiable. In this way you are a 'practitioner of nonabiding meditative concentration.' Since you use wisdom to investigate the essence of all things, you practice concentration without objectification. Therefore, you are a 'practitioner of the concentration of supreme wisdom' as it is taught in the Gaganaganja, the Ratnacuda, and other sutras.

## 10 The path integrating tranquilization and insight

Dwelling solely in that selflessness of persons and phenomena you have nothing further to examine or view. Free from thought and analysis, without verbal expression, you should naturally, without effort, enter into a single focal point of attention and remain clearly meditating on reality. Abiding in that, you should not allow your mind to be distracted.

When on occasion your mind is distracted towards external objects due to desire and so forth, you should recognize the distraction and quickly meditate on disgust, etc. Having thus pacified the distraction, you should quickly return your mind to reality. When you see that your mind is tired, you should consider the benefits of meditative concentration and meditate enthusiasm. Also, you should pacify tiredness by considering the faults of distraction. When you see that your mind is sinking or about to sink, when its movement is unclear due to being overcome by drowsiness and sleep, you should quickly alleviate the sinking by fixing your attention on a delightful object, as previously explained. Then you should again focus very tightly on the meditative object -- reality. When you see that your mind is wandering or about to become unruly due to recollection of former sport and amusement, as previously explained you should fix your attention on a topic that gives rise to renunciation, such as impermanence, and pacify the distraction. Then once more you should strive to enter your mind into effortless meditation on reality.

When you are in equipoise free from sinking and distraction, and your mind naturally enters into reality, relax your effort and your mind naturally enters a state of equanimity. If you make effort while your mind is in equipoise your mind will become distracted. If you do not make the effort when your mind is

sinking, it will completely sink and your insight will disappear as if your mind had become blind. Therefore, when your mind is sinking you should make effort; when it is in equipoise you should not make effort.

When your wisdom becomes excessive due to meditating insight, your mind may waver like the flame of a lamp in the wind due to insufficient tranquilization. If that occurs you will not be able to see reality clearly, and you should meditate tranquilization. Likewise, when tranquilization becomes excessive you should meditate wisdom. When both are entered into equally, you should effortlessly remain in that state for as long as you experience no physical or mental discomfort. If physical or mental discomfort arises, you should suspend meditation and view the entire world as being like an illusion, a mirage, a dream, a reflection of the moon in water, and a mistaken vision. Think like this:

Sentient beings are tormented in samsara because they do not comprehend the profound Dharma. I must immediately cause them to comprehend reality.

Thinking this way you should activate great compassion and the mind of awakening. Then, having rested, you should again enter into the meditative concentration that is devoid of the appearance of all phenomena. You should also rest like this when you become depressed.

This is the path that engages tranquilization and insight in an integrated fashion: its meditative object is a conceptual and nonconceptual image. A yogi should remain meditating on reality by means of this process for an hour, a half-watch, a watch, or as long as he desires. This is the meditative concentration that correctly investigates its object; it is taught in the Lankavatara Sutra.

## 11 The path integrating wisdom and method

Then, when you wish to rise from meditative concentration, without uncrossing your legs, think as follows:

Although these phenomena are ultimately without essence, they exist phenomenally. If this was not so, how could actions be related to their effects, and so forth? As the Bhagavan has said, "Things arise phenomenally; ultimately they are devoid of inherent existence." Childish sentient beings become confused due to falsely attributing existence, etc., to essenceless things, and they wander for a long time in the cycle of samsara. Therefore, I must immediately perfect the supreme collections of merit and gnosis. Then I must achieve omniscience and cause them to understand reality.

Then slowly rise from the cross-legged position, bow to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, make offerings to them and praise them, and recite extensive prayers such as the Bhadracari. Then you should strive to accomplish the collections of merit and gnosis through the practices of giving

and so forth whose essence is emptiness and great compassion.

If you do that, your meditative concentration will accomplish the emptiness endowed with the best of all aspects. As the Ratnacuda Sutra says:

Wearing the armor of love and dwelling in great compassion, practice the meditative concentration that accomplishes emptiness endowed with all the best aspects. What is the emptiness endowed with the best of all aspects? It is not separate from giving, not separate from moral discipline, not separate from patience, not separate from effort, not separate from meditative concentration, not separate from wisdom, not separate from method.

A bodhisattva matures all sentient beings. His method, which requires having an excellent place, body, and a vast retinue, definitely depends upon his virtues of giving and so forth. If this were not the case, what would be the origin of the excellent lands and so forth that the buddhas are said to have? Therefore, since the omniscient gnosis endowed with the best of all aspects is perfected by means of method -- giving and so forth, the Bhagavan said that this omniscient gnosis is accomplished by method.

Thus, a bodhisattva must also rely on method -- giving and so forth, and not on emptiness alone. As it says in the Sarvadharmasamgrahavaipulya Sutra:

"Maitreya, this practice of the bodhisattvas' six perfections is for perfect awakening. However, foolish people say 'A bodhisattva should only train in the perfection of wisdom; what is the point of the other perfections?' In this way they may revile the other perfections. Ajita, what do you think, when I was kind of Kasi and for the sake of a dove I gave my flesh to a hawk, was that mistaken wisdom?" Maitreya said, "No, Bhagavan." The Bhagavan said, "Ajita you yourself practiced the perfection of giving for sixty eons, the perfection of moral discipline for sixty eons, the perfection of patience for sixty eons, the perfection of effort for sixty eons, the perfection of meditative concentration for sixty eons, and the perfection of wisdom for sixty eons. However, these foolish people say, 'There is only one way to awakening: the way of emptiness.' Their practice is completely flawed."

Without method a bodhisattva's mere wisdom is just like the sravakas' wisdom -- unable to perform the deeds of a buddha. But if wisdom is accompanied by method, it is able. As the Ratnakuta Sutra says:

Kasyapa, just as kings assisted by ministers are able to accomplish everything, the bodhisattva's wisdom assisted by skillful method accomplishes all the deeds of a buddha.

The view of the bodhisattva path is different from the views of the paths of the non-Buddhists and the sravakas. The views of the non-Buddhists' paths are entirely without wisdom because they are mistaken with regard to the self and so forth; thus non-Buddhists do not obtain liberation. The sravakas do not have method because they do not have great compassion. As a result they become solely absorbed in nirvana. The bodhisattva path possesses both wisdom and method; thus bodhisattvas become absorbed in a nirvana without fixation. By

force of wisdom bodhisattvas do not fall into samsara; by force of method they do not fall into nirvana. Thus the Gayasirsa Sutra says, "In brief, the bodhisattva path consists of two things. What are the two? They are method and wisdom." Also, the Sriparamadya says, "The perfection of wisdom is the mother and skillful means is the father." Likewise, the Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra extensively explains this:

What is bondage and what is liberation for bodhisattvas? Clinging to life in the world without method is bondage for bodhisattvas. Living in the world with method is liberation. Clinging to life in the world without wisdom is bondage for bodhisattvas. Living in the world with wisdom is liberation. Wisdom not embraced by method is bondage. Wisdom embraced by method is liberation. Method not embraced by wisdom is bondage. Method embraced by wisdom is liberation.

If a bodhisattva relies on wisdom alone, he falls into the nirvana sought by the sravakas and is not freed through the nirvana without fixation. Therefore, wisdom without method is called 'bondage' for bodhisattvas. Thus, like a man chilled by wind resorting to a fire, a bodhisattva resorts to emptiness by means of wisdom endowed with method to alleviate the chill of mistaken views. However, a bodhisattva does not actualize wisdom in the same way as the sravakas. As the Dasadharmaka Sutra says:

Noble son, suppose there is a man who worships fire. Although he respects and reveres the fire, he does not think, "Since I respect, revere and honor fire, I ought to take it up in my hands." Why? Because he thinks, "That can cause me physical and mental pain." Likewise, a bodhisattva thinks of nirvana but does not actualize nirvana. Why? Because he thinks, "That can prevent me from achieving awakening."

Also, if a bodhisattva relies only on method he will not surpass the state of an ordinary person, he will be completely trapped in samsara. Therefore, a bodhisattva must rely on method endowed with wisdom. Just as a magic spell transforms poison, bodhisattvas are able to use the power of wisdom to meditate on the mental afflictions and transform them into the nectar of immortality. This being so, it is obvious that the practices of giving and so forth, which by their nature result in high states of existence, can be transformed. The Ratnakuta Sutra says:

Kasyapa, poison that is transformed by a magic spell and herbs cannot kill. Likewise, the bodhisattva's disturbing emotions transformed by wisdom cannot cause him to fall into the wrong way.

Therefore, due to the force of the method the bodhisattva does not forsake samsara; he does not fall into nirvana. Due to the force of wisdom he casts away all false objectification; thus he does not fall into samsara. In this way he obtains nirvana without fixation -- buddhahood. Thus the Gaganaganja Sutra says:

Because of his knowledge of wisdom he thoroughly gets rid of all disturbing emotions. Because of his knowledge of method he does not

desert sentient beings.

The Samdhinirmocana Sutra says:

I do not predict supreme, true, perfect awakening for one who is not concerned with the welfare of sentient beings, for one who is not concerned with performing all deeds. Therefore, those who wish to attain buddhahood must cultivate both wisdom and method.

While you are meditating transcendental wisdom or are strictly absorbed in meditative concentration you do not rely on method -- giving and so forth.

However, preparation for meditation and the wisdom that arises subsequent to meditation are both dependent on method. Therefore, wisdom and method are engaged simultaneously. Furthermore, this bodhisattva path engages in wisdom and method in an integrated fashion. Bodhisattvas resort to the transcendental path because they are controlled by the great compassion that looks toward the welfare of all sentient beings. Like an illusionist, when bodhisattvas practice method they rely on unmistakable giving and so forth. The Aksayamatirirredesa Sutra expands on this:

What is a bodhisattva's method? What is his practice of wisdom? His method is to focus his mind on the meditative object of great compassion -- he considers the plight of sentient beings when he engages in meditative concentration. His wisdom is absorption in peace and complete tranquility.

Also, the "Chapter on the Conquest of Mara" says:

Furthermore, with regard to the bodhisattva's supreme practice, due to their knowledge of wisdom they do not exert themselves; due to their knowledge of method they apply themselves to the collection of all virtuous qualities. Due to their knowledge of method they apply themselves to maturing all sentient beings.

The Sarvadharmasamgraha Sutra says:

A master of illusion strives to free illusory beings, but knowing they are illusions he is not attached to them. Likewise, a master of perfect awakening knows that the three worlds are like an illusion; he puts on armor to do battle for living beings, but he knows living beings are illusory.

Based on the bodhisattvas' practice of wisdom and method it is said, "Their activities remain in samsara, and their thoughts remain in nirvana."

## 12 The result of the path integrating wisdom and method

Thus you must train yourself in method -- giving and so forth -- that is dedicated to the supreme, true perfect awakening whose essence is emptiness and great compassion. As previously explained, you should constantly condition yourself as much as possible to the yoga of tranquilization and insight in order to generate the ultimate mind of awakening.

The Gocaraparisuddha Sutra teaches that you should recall the benevolence of bodhisattvas who are constantly engaged in helping other sentient beings.

In this way you should always meditate skillful means. When you meditate compassion, method, and the mind of awakening like that you will definitely see improvement in yourself. You will always see buddhas and bodhisattvas in your dreams, and you will have other auspicious dreams. The gods, being delighted in you, will protect you. Every moment you will amass an extensive accumulation of merit and gnosis. You will purify the obscurations and the karmic propensities of disturbing emotions. Your pleasure and happiness will constantly increase. Throughout many lives you will be attractive, and you will not be afflicted by illness. Your mind will be exceedingly facile, and thus you will attain special qualities such as psychic powers. Then, by means of your miraculous powers you will visit countless world systems, worship the blessed buddhas and listen to them teach the Dharma. When you die you will definitely see the buddhas and bodhisattvas. In your future lives you will be born into distinguished families in lands where buddhas and bodhisattvas are present, and you will effortlessly fully perfect your accumulation of merit and gnosis. You will be wealthy and have many servants. By means of your acute wisdom you will mature many living beings. In all your lives you will recall your previous lives. You should understand these limitless benefits as they are taught here and in other sutras.

If you continually and devotedly meditate compassion, method, and the mind of awakening for an extended period in this manner, gradually your mind will be fully matured through the occurrence of moments of complete purity. Then, like fire erupting from a fire-drill, you will attain the culmination of the highest meditation on ultimate reality. Transcendent gnosis will arise: it is free from the net of conceptual thought, it clearly realizes the sphere of phenomena without conceptual elaboration, it is stainless and unmoving, unwavering like a flame in a windless place, it is authoritative, it encompasses the path of seeing that realizes reality -- the selfless nature of all phenomena, and it is the essence of the ultimate mind of awakening.

When that occurs you are engaged in the meditative object that is the limit of things. You are born into the family of the tathagatas. You are engaged in the flawless understanding of the bodhisattvas. You have turned away from all worldly destinies and dwell in the realization of the bodhisattvas' reality and the sphere of phenomena. You have achieved the first bodhisattva stage. You should understand these benefits in more detail as they are explained in the Dasabhumika and other sutras.

This meditative concentration that focuses on reality is taught in the Lankavatara Sutra. It is the bodhisattvas' engagement in non-conceptuality free from elaboration. At the stage of practicing through mere aspiration you engage in meditative concentration on reality through your aspiration, but you do not realize it. After the previously mentioned gnosis arises you really enter into it. After you have accomplished the first bodhisattva stage, you meditate wisdom and method on the path of meditation by means of both transcendental gnosis and the gnosis of the post meditational period. Progressively meditating in this way you purify even the most subtle obscurations and obtain the highest unique good qualities. Through purifying the lower stages you eventually engage the gnosis of the tathagatas, enter the ocean of omniscience, and completely fulfill your

aims. The Lankavatara Sutra teaches the purification of mind in just this process. Likewise, the Samdhinirmocana Sutra says:

On the higher stages the mind is gradually purified like gold, and you achieve perfect buddhahood up to the supreme, true, perfect awakening.

When you enter the ocean of omniscience, like a wish-fulfilling jewel you possess amass a good qualities that sustains all sentient beings. You actualize the fruit of your former aspirations. Your nature becomes great compassion. You possess manifold spontaneous methods. With limitless emanations you fulfill every aspect of the aims of all living beings. You perfect all excellent good qualities. Having cleared away all stains together with their propensities, you remain in the world for as long as there are sentient beings. Understanding this to be so, you should develop faith in the Bhagavan Buddha as the source of all good qualities, and you should make an effort to accomplish those qualities.

Thus, [in the Vairocanabhisambodhi Sutra] the Bhagavan said: “The gnosis of omniscience arises on the basis of compassion, from the cause of the mind of awakening, and from the fulfillment of method.”

### 13 Conclusion

Noble people distance themselves from envy and the other defilements. They can never get enough good qualities, as the ocean is never filled up with water. They carefully examine good instructions and take them up, just as swans are delighted to draw milk from water.

Thus wise people cast away prejudice and contentiousness. They take up all good instructions even if they are being taught by children.

May all living beings obtain the Middle Path by the merit I have acquired from explaining it.

This completes the Bhavanakrama composed by the master Kamalashila.

### 14 Tibetan translator’s colophon

This was translated, revised, and finalized by the Indian master Prajnavarman and the Tibetan translator Ye shes sde.