



## BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY: GROUND, PATH, FRUITION

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I would like to very briefly go over general Buddhist philosophy, in a simple but comprehensive manner. Buddhist philosophy is enormous and to be quite clear and thorough about it is very difficult, so I would like to share with you the general outline of Buddhist philosophy.

Basically you have to look at general Buddhist philosophy in three parts, or three stages. The first stage is according to the Hinayana, the Theravada aspect, second is the Mahayana aspect, and third is the Vajrayana, the tantric aspect of philosophy. But clear cut Theravada, Mahayana and tantric Vajrayana philosophy is impossible for me. Why? Because I am a Vajrayana practitioner, so when I talk about Theravada philosophy it is from the philosophical point of view of the Vajrayana. For pure Theravada philosophy you have to listen to a pure Theravada person and for pure Mahayana philosophy you have to listen to a pure Mahayana person. When I talk about Theravada and Mahayana philosophy it is Theravada and Mahayana philosophy of the Vajrayana philosophy. For example, if you want to eat genuine Indian food then you have to come to India. If you eat Indian food in America it will

have an American taste. Likewise, if you eat Indian food in Japan or Taiwan it will have a Japanese or Taiwanese taste to it. So genuine Indian food, as it is, you can never find anywhere except in India. It is the same with other foods also. In the same way when I talk about Buddhist philosophy it will be from the Vajrayana point of view, no matter which philosophy I am talking about. So I wanted to say this first.

Now I want to go into a little bit of detail—ground, path and fruition, these three things are a very easy and simple outline. When Theravadans say “I want to reach nirvana,” and Mahayana and Vajrayana people say “I wish to attain Buddhahood,” we are pretty much saying the same thing, we wish to reach the realization of what is there to realize. What is there is the ground, but on what ground. I will give a very stupid example. When somebody says, “You are a thief!” Then you ask, “On what ground are you calling me a thief?” If that person is calling you a thief because they don’t like you, then it is baseless, it is groundless. So when we say, “I wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings to attain Buddhahood,” on what ground are we saying that? The ground is that all sentient beings have Buddha

nature, Buddha essence, primordial wisdom. That is the ground, so it is not baseless.

The path means the kind of methods that you implement, the kind of understanding that you try to develop, the kind of experience that you try to cultivate, and finally, the kind of wisdom that you try to manifest from within. All of that is the path, the method for achieving all of that.

Then fruition means the fruit, the result. The fruition and ground are the same thing; when your ground, the base, the original potential is totally fulfilled, then that is the fruition. So, ground, path and fruition I want to use as the backbone of going through this subject of Buddhist philosophy.



### *The Ground*

First the ground. There is relative truth and absolute truth. Cause and result is relative truth. Causes have actions and intentions. All intentions are based on self, a defilement. Self is a defilement. And defilements, the self, becomes positive or negative according to what comes out of that self. When you say, “I want to be happy,” that is okay, but when you say “I want to be happy regardless of how much suffering it causes to others,” then that is not okay. And if you say, “I want somebody to suffer because that person caused me suffering,” then that is very very wrong.

Generally there are very subtle defilements, almost dormant, underneath, and then there are very obvious defilements. Subtle defilements are almost inborn, you are born with them, and then later developed. For example, a puppy, when it is hungry it yelps, that is inborn, it is natural. Also when a puppy drinks milk from its mother it feels comfortable, it does not yap and it sleeps quietly, that is inborn. But of course that is defilement, “I am hungry now I am full.” When a puppy is drinking its mother’s milk and your child, who thinks

it is just a pet, pulls the puppy away then the puppy yalps and cries like crazy. That is inborn, that is, “I am separated from what I like and I am not able to enjoy what I am enjoying. Somebody interrupted it. So I’m very unhappy.” That is inborn. But then later, when the puppy grows up, then it is not just simple things like that, it is not just screaming and yapping and sleeping, but then it goes wagging its tail and barking and biting, it develops into all of those things. So these are things that are developed later. They are naturally there as long as the basic defilement, the self, is there, or they are further developed. Nowadays of course we intentionally develop these things—we intentionally teach people how to be attached, how to be angry, jealous, doubtful and suspicious. This is actually making this basic thing more complicated and more dangerous.

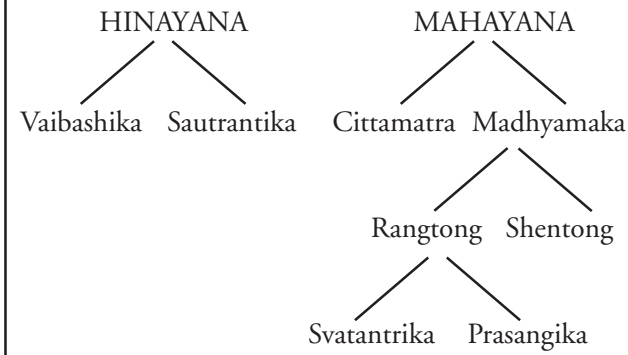
So there are intentions and then actions that are taken as the outcome of those intentions and they are what make us continue in samsara. Instead of improving ourselves we are improving our negativity, our suspiciousness, our distrust, our viciousness and our manipulateness. This way we make things worse for ourselves and worse for others. So naturally born and added upon, being created, that is about the relative truth.

The ultimate truth also has similar definitions. First is the ultimate truth which is described, the language, ‘ultimate truth’ itself. Then there is the true ultimate truth which is beyond words and description. So there are these two aspects. The first one, for example, is if you draw a beautiful flower and say, “this is a flower” or you draw a beautiful rose and say “this is a rose.” That is the first one, being described, named and titled. So, “ultimate truth is like this, ultimate truth is like that,” this is describing the indescribable.

The great Indian master Nagarjuna wrote the Middle-way text known as *Uma-tsawa-sherab (Pranjamila – The Roots of Knowledge)*—which is supposed to be and believed to be the essence of the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma, the teaching of emptiness of the Lord Buddha—to summarize the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma by Lord Buddha. In this there are quite a few philosophical characteristics which are developed and one of them is known as Rangtong, self-emptiness. In this, everything, all phenomena do not have any true existing reality, therefore it is all empty. Everything is nothing, that is the Rangtong. *Rang* means self, *tong* means empty. So everything does not have any kind of true existence in itself.<sup>1</sup> That is the ultimate truth named or titled.

1. The Madhyamaka or Middle-way school is divided into two major schools by the Tibetans: the Rangtong school which follows the teachings of Nagarjuna fairly closely and maintains that everything is empty and the Shentong school which maintains that this emptiness is indivisible from luminosity/clarity (Tib. *salwa*) and that all sentient beings possess Buddha-essence.

## The Buddhist Schools



Within the Rangtong view of Middle-way philosophy there are two main schools, the Svatantrika and Prasangika. The Prasangika is where you don't say what your stand is, you don't hold to any kind of philosophical identity but only react to the philosophical stand of others; you only answer and say something because somebody says something, but you yourself do not hold onto any kind of philosophical stand. That is called *Uma Talgyurwa* (Middle-way Prasangika), always reacting to others' philosophical stand. So whatever you say then I will say something because you say something, but I will not say something as my stand. I will only react to your philosophical stand. So that is categorized as ultimate truth, but the ultimate truth titled, labelled and described.

Next is like if you have a rose, not a painting of a rose but an actual rose, and you look at it and say it is a rose. Or if there is a mountain here and you look at it and say that is a mountain. Not a photograph or a painting of a mountain but a mountain itself. The difference is enormous, it is extremely different. In this philosophy, for example, the ultimate truth is not stained by any relative dualistic stain. Therefore, the ultimate truth is pure and perfect by itself, beyond time and beyond limitation. This can also be described as Mahamudra, Dzogpachenpo, Maha-ati, and sometimes also even Rangtong and Shentong, these titles are given to this.

So with this you get a quite clear definition of ultimate truth, because when we learn about ultimate truth we can learn from both the first (described) and second (beyond description) way. But whether we learn the first way or the second way it does not change our state of maturity. The way is specific, the philosophical way of these two are specific but it doesn't make you any different; one way is no better and no worse than the other. For example, if I am sitting here looking at a picture of a rose or looking at a real rose, as long as I am me and the rose is over there, it doesn't make much

difference; one is the real thing and the other a picture of it. For me it doesn't make much difference; if I like roses, I will like both the picture and the actual rose, but if I don't like roses I won't like either of them. But if I am allergic to roses I will definitely not be allergic to a painting or a picture of a rose. So there are kind of subtle differences, but actual differences, in my development and my maturity, it will be pretty much the same. But why there are these two differences is because this is the philosophical reality. It is not that somebody just wanted to split hairs and make simple things complicated. When you talk about philosophy you have to be accurate, and when you try to be accurate it is complicated, you can't be accurate without being complicated. You have to be accurate and you have to be complicated to be accurate; it is thorough investigation and scrutinization of the ultimate truth. So you go through all of this.

Now if I go a little bit out of the way from the basic Mahayana and Theravada and go into the Vajrayana then where will the deities like Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, Kalachakra and Vajravarahi, where do they stand? Bodhisattvas are sangha, but where would they stand? This then is pretty much the connector and combiner of these two aspects of the truth. Deities such as Chakrasamvara, Vajravarahi, all of them are the manifestations of the Buddha, the sambhogakaya, and the pictures of those deities, the text and descriptions of those deities go into the first aspect of ultimate truth, but the deities themselves go into the second aspect of ultimate truth. What binds that together is empowerment. We receive the empowerment so that the painting of the deity, the visualisation and description of the deity, becomes the real deity. That way, the equivalent to that deity, what is in me, and the equivalent to what is in me, the ultimate of that essence in me is described and represented by that deity. And that connection is made by empowerment. My body is blessed, my speech is blessed and my mind is blessed through the empowerment. But you cannot have empowerment without lineage. The blessing comes from the lineage, the Buddha Vajravarahi and its lineage, and the empowerment that I receive. This way then my Vajravarahi, my essence, and the Buddha Vajravarahi as the sambhogakaya are connected.

That is going out of the way a little from the main stream Buddhist philosophy of Madhyamaka and all of that but if you go into the tantric aspect of Buddhist philosophy then it is like that. It implies that, both aspects of ultimate truth are there.

Now when we are trying to confirm and scrutinize the ground, then these philosophies, which are using particular metaphors or the particular Pramana (dialectics) methods and principles to confirm, then it

becomes an enormous subject and very complicated, because any kind of investigation is very complicated. For example, if I was to investigate anyone of you to prove that you are who you say you are, if I had to prove that by investigation, it would be a full time job for many years with many staff. I would have to find out everything about you to confirm who you are.

This way when you go into Buddhist philosophy it is pretty much like that. Actually it is very interesting and you can get totally lost in it. There are many monks or nuns, but normally monks, who debate on small subjects, very small simple subjects. They start at maybe six o'clock in the afternoon and go until midnight. The discipline masters have to go and chase them to their rooms with sticks because they won't stop! They just go on and on. When there are three of them debating on the same subject, and one person is sitting there waiting to answer, then sometimes the bigger monks pick up the smaller monks and throw them across the room because they want to say what they are dying to say. It is very interesting. From that point of view I'd like to share some of this.

There are three main philosophical stands that I will describe so that it might help you to understand what this is all about. There is much more but these three main ones are quite simple to describe. The first one is *Rangtong Ma-gag* (Proponents of a Self-Empty, Non-affirming Negation); *rang* means self, *tong* means empty, *ma* means doesn't exist and *gag* means cessation. So you totally say there is nothing.

The second one is *Rangtong Ma-yin-gag* (Proponents of a Self-Empty, Affirming Negation); self-emptiness is the same, but it is not *ma-gag* but *ma-yin-gag*. *Ma-yin-gag* means it is not that. There is big difference. For example, saying that a bag is not there and that a bag is not just a bag is a big difference. The first one is saying that the bag is not there, that is *Rangtong Ma-gag*. The second one is saying that the bag is not exactly what it appears to be, which is *Rangtong Ma-yin-gag*.<sup>2</sup>

The third is *Shentong Ma-yin-gag*. Shentong is totally opposite to Rangtong. Rangtong means self-empty and Shentong means other-empty. *Shen* means 'other' not self and *tong* means empty. Shentong is always *ma-yin-gag*, not *ma-gag*. You cannot find Shentong *ma-gag*, which means not there. If it is Shentong it is *ma-yin-gag*. If it is Rangtong it can be *ma-yin-gag* or *ma-gag*.

I will give an example of Rangtong Ma-gag. For

example, the subject of Buddha nature, it doesn't have any true existence. Buddha nature doesn't have any existence because from form, from just simple form to Buddhahood, enlightenment, everything does not have any self, true, or dualistic existence. That is Rangtong Ma-gag.

Now the second, Rangtong Ma-yin-gag. What is the difference between Rangtong Ma-gag and Rangtong Ma-yin-gag? Rangtong Ma-yin-gag will say, "The subject, Buddha nature, is free from all descriptions, such as permanent, form, reality etc, because its quality is ineffable and indescribable, it cannot be described. The difference between Rangtong Ma-gag and Rangtong Ma-yin-gag is enormous. Rangtong Ma-gag is saying nothing is there, whereas Rangtong Ma-yin-gag is saying it is not there like anything because it is ineffable, it is indescribable. It is not saying that nothing is there.

Now going to Shentong Ma-yin-gag, what does it say about Buddha nature? I'm using the same subject because then we can get a grip on it. If I use different subjects for each one then we will get lost. So using the same subject, Buddha nature, it is permanent and unchangeable and not created by anybody, it is not created with anything, it has no limitation, it is limitless. That is Buddha nature's quality. For example, the quality of fire is hot. The quality of space is empty. The quality of sun is bright. Just like that, the quality of Buddha nature is limitless, incorruptible, and absolutely forever. That is Shentong Ma-yin-gag. Of course Shentong Ma-yin-gag, when in debate, for the purpose of philosophical debate, can describe Rangtong Ma-gag as nihilist, and Rangtong Ma-gag, for the sake of debating, can call Shentong Ma-yin-gag as eternalist. But if you ask me, what is my philosophy, I am Shentong Ma-yin-gag. For me Buddha nature is beyond nothing. Buddha nature's quality is non-dualistic, free of limitation, limitless, perfect, incorruptible, primordial, that is the essence of everyone and everything.

So that is the Shentong Ma-yin-gag. *Ma* means 'no,' doesn't have, and *ma-yin* means 'it is not'. So, 'it is not', what that means here is that Buddha nature is not like the sky, not like the sun, not like fire, because Buddha nature does not have anything equal to it except itself. But you can use each of these as an example to describe some aspect of it: Buddha nature is bright like the sun, Buddha nature is vast like space, Buddha nature is sharp and strong like a thunder bolt; it can cut through and

2. Another example is, if somebody is looking for Mr Agawul, and Mr Agawul is not here, his absence is the negation *Ma*; his not being here is *Ma*. If, on the other hand, the person looking for Mr Agawul has mistaken Mr Marter for Mr Agawul and we say, "He is not Mr Agawul, he is Mr Marter," this kind of negation is a *Ma-yin*. The first negation says he is not here, the second says he is not this. A *Ma-gag* means "not there," but a *Ma-yin-gag* means "not that." With a *Ma-yin-gag* we are saying that it is not Mr Agawul, it is Mr Marter. – *Tai Situ Rinpoche*

break through anything. Buddha nature is beautiful like a lotus and so on and so forth. You can use these examples to describe it, but it is not like that in all aspects. *Ma-yin* means it is not and *gag* means not accepting the shortcomings and limitations of the example. That is Shentong *Ma-yin-gag*. *Shen* means relative truth, *tong* means empty; so the ultimate truth is empty of the relative truth, that is Shentong.

So that is generally about the first part, which is the ground, Buddha nature, ground Mahamudra, the primordial wisdom.



### *The Path*

Now the second part, the path. When we say path in the context of Mahayana then we are talking about texts such as the Prajnaparamita. Actually there are seventeen Prajnaparamita texts.<sup>3</sup> The content and practice of those texts and understanding of those texts is the path.

When it comes to the philosophical aspect of the path there are, basically, the Particularists school, the Sutra school, the Mind-only school and the Madhyamaka school, four major schools, each one of them having their own definitive philosophical stand.<sup>4</sup> Also each one of them has many sub-branches of their philosophy. The Particularists' school has a very interesting philosophical background because one great Indian master interpreted a very important sutra in a most unique way and then

following that interpretation one whole school developed. He is an enlightened master, an arhat, and he interpreted it in this way so we all respect that but it is little bit like—I could be wrong, but when I look at Christianity this is a little bit like a Protestant, because Protestants interpret the Bible slightly different from the main stream Christians and so developed a new kind of school, right? So this is a little bit like that. But of course I'm not saying Particularists and Protestants believe in the same things, they are totally different, but the story is a little bit like that.

So this arhat interpreted the Tripitaka (the Vinaya, Abhidharma and Sutra) in a very particular way, slightly different from all the others. So that is one of the four schools, the Particularists. *Chidramawa* in Tibetan; *Chidra* means different or separate and *mawa* means describing and teaching.

The simple description of this school is that all phenomena, from samsara to enlightenment, all of it does not have any kind of outstanding true existence which can stand on its own feet, because outstanding truth in itself, each one of those things can function by themselves without having to depend on others. This means from samsara to Buddhahood, each little thing has its own reality, their own characteristics and strengths so that they can function by themselves without having to depend on other things. Other schools will never say that; they will say everything is interdependent. But this school says that they can stand and function by themselves.<sup>5</sup>

This philosophy believes in five things they say are true, that exist. The first is, from eye to body, from form to touch, five things—five subjects and five objects: eye, ear, nose, tongue, up to body, and form, sound, smell, taste, up to touch, all these ten things exist by themselves. The second thing they believe is that from an ordinary sentient being's mind to the Buddha's mind, the mind exists. Third is the by products of the mind, described

3. There are six main Sutras in this group, known as the six mothers, and eleven other Sutras, known as—let's say—the daughter Sutras. In Tibetan these seventeen texts are called the *Yumse*: *yum* means mother, *se* means child. This *se* could be short for *se-pa* and therefore mean sons or *se-ma* and refer to daughters—it doesn't say which it is. This means the six main texts are described as “mothers” and the eleven smaller texts are described as “children,” either daughters or sons. The reason some of these texts are called “mothers” and others are called “daughters” is not necessarily because of their size. It depends on whether or not the individual text includes the eight aspects of the Prajnaparamita; any text that has all eight aspects is known as a “mother” text and any text that does not have all eight aspects is known as a “daughter” text. These eight aspects are clearly enumerated by Lord Maitreya in his text called the *Abhisamayalankara*. — *Tai Situ Rinpoche*

4. In terms of resolving the view, the Buddha taught in stages. In accordance with that, various philosophical schools or tenets have come about. There are in particular four major schools. The first is the *Vaibhashika* school or Great-exposition or Particularist school, which is associated with the shravakas. The second is *Sautrantika* or Sutra school. The third is the *Chittamatra* or Mind-only school. The fourth school is known as the *Madhyamaka* or Middle-way school. The Particularists (*Vaibhashika*) and Sutra (*Sautrantika*) schools are Hinayana and the Mind-only and *Madhyamaka* schools are Mahayana.

as fifty-one mental aggregates. They say these fifty-one exist. Fourth is, they describe that there are twenty-one things which cannot be identified, things that you cannot point your finger to, but they are there. For example, if I give a book to you then it becomes yours and you say, “It is mine. I got it.” As soon as I say “I want this book from you,” and you give it to me, then it becomes ‘not yours’. So then if you take it you are stealing. But when I say “It is yours” and then you take it, you are not stealing. All of these kind of things they describe, twenty-one of them, and they believe that they exist. The fifth thing they say exist are directions, like north, west, south, east, and sky, etc, which are not really things like a book. East for us is west to the westerners and west to us is east to the westerners, and vice versa. So they are not there, but this school believe that those directions and the sky and space etc, do exist. This is the Particularists or Vaibhashikas out of the five schools.

The second one is *Dodepa*, the Sautrantika or Sutra school. But first I want to talk about *Sem Tsampa*, the Chittamatra or Mind-only school. *Sem* means mind and *tsam* means only, ‘the mind only’. This philosophy believes that all phenomena, everything, is not separate from the mind and that mind is the only factor. According to the mind then everything is perceived. They make a Pramana verse for this which says that all phenomena are there, but that they are inseparable from the mind, one with the mind, because they manifest as the result of the karma that one accumulates through the intention of one’s mind. Because of that everything comes into existence. Therefore everything is mind. So that is Mind-only.

The Mind-only school holds onto three particular points very strongly: *kuntag* (imaginary nature), *zhenwang* (dependent nature) and *yongdrub* (perfectly existent nature).

The first one, *kuntag*, means like a name, described, not really true. So all phenomena, everything that is happening here is an illusion, it is not real. This imaginary nature is something that is only a projection of mind. For example, we call the things we put our feet in ‘shoes.’ We could call them hat or jacket but in the beginning the English people decided to call them shoes. Tibetans call them *lham* and in India we use the Hindi

word *jut*. These labels are all *kuntag*, imaginary natures.

The second thing, *zhenwang*, means by the power of others. These ‘dependent natures’ are things that come into existence due to something else, another force. These phenomena are nothing within themselves but are perceived, utilized, consumed and affected positively and negatively by the mind. The other power is the power of the mind; all phenomena are influenced by the power of the mind.

The third is *yongdrub*, the ‘perfectly existent nature’, which is that there is nothing other than the projection of the mind. This is the Mind-only school’s definition of emptiness.

An imaginary nature is also void of a dependent nature. They are not the same thing. When I say this is a nice long table, this idea is an imaginary nature. My seeing this as ‘a nice long table’ is influenced by my perception of what ‘nice,’ ‘long’ and ‘table’ are. There is nothing more to it, and nothing less to it, than my idea, it is not the dependent object—the thing that is a table—itsself. These three aspects are the Mind-only school’s basic philosophy.

The fourth school is the *Umapa*, Madhyamaka. This emphasizes the view very deeply and also emphasizes vast action and activity. This has several schools but the main two are Rangtong—Svatantrika-Madhyamaka (*Uma Rang-gyupa*) and Prasangika-Madhyamaka (*Uma Talgyurwa*)—and Shentong. All of these particular schools of the Madhyamaka follow the Middle-way, but out of all of them the one that is really technically or terminologically the most correct and clearly representing the Madhyamaka is the Uma Talgyurwa because the Uma Talgyurwa doesn’t hold onto any philosophical stand of their own. They only react to others’ limitation, to others’ stand. Therefore they are the true Middle-way.

But as far as I am concerned, because I am follower of Shentongpa, therefore out of all the Madhyamaka philosophy, the most comprehensive, the most sacred and most complete and the highest aspect of Madhyamaka is Uma Shentongpa. That is my belief. All Shentongpas will say that. We have a text written on Shentong which describes it very proudly as the ‘Lions Roar’, the roar of the lion. The lion is the king of all animals, so out of all the Middle-way philosophy the

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5. The Buddha first taught about the skandhas or aggregates, indicating that a person is a collection of many different parts, that external phenomena are also collections of many different things: they are not single, solid objects. External appearances, then, are just a collection of many very tiny particles that we could call ‘atoms.’ As for internal apprehending consciousness, it is a collection of indivisible moments of mind. This is the view of the Particularists or Vaibhashikas, who say that the minute partless particles and irreducible moments of mind are truly existent and it is through a collection of such inseparable particles or a continuum of such irreducible moments of mind that the gross phenomena that we ordinarily apprehend come about. It is only through a continuum that, for instance, something such as a year or a month comes about. There is no large, hard thing that exists in the way in which things ordinarily appear. – *Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche*

Uma Shentogpa is described as the most profound and the comprehensive. That is what we, the Shentong followers, will say. So that is about the Umapa.

Then Dodepa, the Sutra school, their philosophy is based on the sutras. Actually, most of the other three schools (the Particularists school, Mind-only school and Madhyamaka) are following commentaries written by great masters, such as Nagarjuna. We have eight main masters. Out of them, four of them wrote root texts and four of them wrote commentaries.<sup>6</sup> These root texts and commentaries are part of the Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, out of which so many Tibetan Buddhist philosophical schools have developed. So the Dodepa is following the sutras correctly, pretty much, and their philosophical stand is pretty much similar to Madhyamaka but they will go very much according to, referring to the sutras rather than referring to the commentaries and texts written by all these great masters. There are differences between all these schools and the Dodepa, but in essence it is pretty much the same, so I will not go into details here.<sup>7</sup>



### *The Fruition*

Now the third part of the subject here is the fruition. When it comes to fruition, actually the Theravada's fruition is arhat—that is nirvana, nirvana free from the suffering of samsara. Then the Mahayana fruition is from the first level of a bodhisattva to the tenth level

bodhisattva. A first level bodhisattva can manifest perfectly at all times in one hundred places, a second level bodhisattva ten thousand, a third level bodhisattva one million, a fourth level bodhisattva one hundred million, a fifth level bodhisattva ten billion, a sixth level bodhisattva one trillion, a seventh level bodhisattva one hundred trillion, and an eighth level bodhisattva ten thousand trillion. This way each one of them is a hundred times more perfect than the previous one. Then a tenth level bodhisattva can manifest millions of times in millions of galaxies at the same time, perfectly, but is not Buddha. Buddhahood is the ultimate goal of the Mahayana. At the same time, in Vajrayana, Buddhahood is the goal—reaching the realization of the dharmakaya and manifesting the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya for the benefit of all sentient beings, that is the fruition in Vajrayana.

Now you can say, 'the result or the fruition of the cause', 'the fruition of the fruition', or 'the manifestation of the fruition.' The fruition of the cause is reaching the realization of an arhat in the Theravada and reaching the first eight levels of a bodhisattva in Mahayana. That is the Theravada aspect. The Mahayana aspect is the first ten levels of a bodhisattva. This way the bodhisattva has ten levels and in the Theravada eight levels. There are some similarities between the eight levels of Theravada, but the eight levels of Theravada arhat realisation are not 100% equal to the eight levels of realization of a bodhisattva. So the result of the cause in the Theravada is all eight levels and the result of the cause in the Mahayana is the bodhisattvas' ten levels.

Now the bodhisattvas' ten levels are the result of the cause; a bodhisattva reaches those levels because of bodhicitta, which is the cause. The Theravada's realisation is the result of their cause, which is, "I wish to reach Nirvana." A Theravadan will never say "I wish to become Buddha." If you say "I wish to become Buddha," you are not Theravada. So a Theravadan will say "I wish to reach nirvana. I wish to be free from the suffering of samsara." Therefore, that result is achieved, as a result of that cause. The Mahayana reaches all ten levels of a

6. The eight are, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubhandu, Dignaga, Dharmakirti, Gunaprabha and Sakyaprabha. The first of the four to write a root text was Nagarjuna, Lündrup in Tibetan. Then there was Asanga, whose name is Togme in Tibetan and Chog-gi-langpo, Dignaga in Sanskrit. Dignaga's name means 'Elephant,' or 'Great master of all directions:' he wrote a root text on Valid Cognition. The last of these masters to write a root text was Yön-ten-wö, Gunaprabha in Sanskrit; his name means 'The Light of Knowledge.' The four who wrote commentaries were Aryadeva, Pak-ba-lha in Tibetan, Vasubhandu, Ignyen in Tibetan, Dharmakirti, whose name is Chöji-drakpa in Tibetan, and Sakyaprabha, Sakya ö in Tibetan. Vasubhandu was Togme/Asanga's half brother.

Nagarjuna wrote six main Madhyamaka root texts. Asanga wrote five texts on Abhidharma and then two texts that summarized his previous works, for a total of seven. Dignaga wrote 108 texts on Pramana then collected their essence into the *Tse-ma-kun-du*, *Pramana Samuccaya*, *The Compendium of Valid Cognition*. Each one of Dignaga's 109 texts is quite sizeable. Gunaprabha wrote the root text on Vinaya, the *Dulwa-do-tsawa*, Vinayasutra and a commentary on his own text. Actually, many of these masters wrote commentaries on their own works.

Aryadeva, Vasubhandu, Dharmakirti and Sakyaprabha wrote commentaries on these root texts. – *Tai Situ Rinpoche*

bodhisattva because in the Mahayana we say, “I wish to reach Buddhahood.” So it is a result of that cause.

Now we go to the second stage, which is the fruition of the fruition, or the result of the result. The result of the result is the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. Why? Because you reach the dharmakaya, then the result of the dharmakaya is sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. You will not have sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya without dharmakaya. Therefore, the result of the dharmakaya is sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. We, as a practitioner who has not reached the result, then our body is nirmanakaya, our speech and expression is sambhogakaya, and our mind dharmakaya—backwards. But when we reach the realization of the dharmakaya, then how the dharmakaya spontaneously and non-dualistically manifests is the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, the result of the result. I hope that makes sense.

I have covered the fruition of the cause and the fruition of the fruition, now the manifestation or activities of the fruition. Who reaches the realization of the three kayas, the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, is called Buddha. That is Sanskrit, in Tibetan it is Sangye. The activity of Sangye is stainless, it is a spontaneous manifestation. For example, if you put one thousand containers filled with water in the light of the full moon, then in each container you will see one moon. But that does not break the moon in the sky into one thousand. But perfectly one thousand moons manifest in one thousand containers. Just like that, however many sentient beings from however many places are a ripened enough vessel to manifest Buddha’s

sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, to them it will manifest. It is not that Buddha’s dualistic thoughts make him or her manifest for him or her. It is spontaneous. The cause and condition for that was long before the Buddha’s enlightenment; the motivation of the Buddha, “I wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings to attain Buddhahood,” that made it happen. So the result is achieved by manifesting exactly as was aspired to right at the beginning. That is the activity of the fruition. This way I think dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya are described in a simple way, and I hope ground, path and fruition, this brief description, is not that complicated for you.

But this is just like the tip of the iceberg of Buddhist philosophy. One way it is very simple, because the Theravada philosophy is all based on “I wish to be free from suffering. Samsara is no good, samsara is full of suffering. There is nothing in samsara worthy spending my time and energy on.” That is the Theravada, all Theravada philosophy is based on that.

The Mahayana philosophy agrees with that, but at the same time there is nobody in samsara who deserves to suffer in samsara. Every sentient beings’ ultimate essence is Buddha. Therefore, they can be free from the suffering of samsara. They must be free from the suffering of samsara. They will be free from the suffering of samsara. They will never stop struggling to be free from the suffering of samsara, many times by making mistakes and many times doing the right thing, but nevertheless, no matter how ignorant they are, they do their best to be free from the suffering of samsara. For example, if

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7. The Sutra or Sautrantika school differentiates between 1) what is a mere abstraction, having only general characteristics: objects of our thoughts or abstract images that we can construct conceptually, and 2) what is a specifically characterized thing, something that has its own unique characteristics, an actual thing that appears before us which is there whether we think about it or not. For example, when we think ‘fire,’ the fire we’re thinking about can’t burn anything, it doesn’t do anything, it cannot perform the function of burning. What actually does something is the actual thing that is there beyond our names and concepts, to which we give the name fire: it has its own totally unique characteristics unlike anything else. It is a unique object and it is performing the function of being hot and burning whether we think it burns us or not. That’s what the Sautrantika school say, that there is an object there which really does exist beyond our concepts about what it is, and that the concepts are mere fabrications that don’t really exist. The Sautrantikas also say that external, material phenomena have the nature of being established as particles, which are the cause of appearances.

If you look then at the specifically characterized object itself, it doesn’t have any name, it doesn’t have any conceptually fabricated characteristics at all. It is its own unique entity, and what that is is completely indescribable and inconceivable. Our own mental experiences are precisely the same. When we feel happy or we feel down then we give it those labels but if you really examine the experience, it’s inexpressible. It can’t be named or labeled by any conceptual term, and that in the Sautrantika school is evidence of a specifically characterized thing. Therefore the inexpressible, specifically characterized thing truly exists, according to the Sautrantikas.

There are various differences between the Particularist (Vaibhashika) school and the Sutra (Sautrantika) school, but in terms of their view, it is basically the same. Both hold that apparent and gross phenomena are, in fact, merely collections of truly existent partless particles and truly existent irreducible moments of mind. The important point of these views is that ordinarily we apprehend coarse or gross phenomena and these viewpoints show this is a great mistake. If we are able to realize that phenomena are not the massive, solid things that they appear to be, then that is the first step on the staircase towards a more profound understanding. – *Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche*



you put a monkey in a cage, the second thing that the monkey will do is to try to get out of it. Similarly, even if you made somebody the king or queen of Planet Earth, the next thing that person wants is something that he or she does not have. They will find out very soon what they are missing, even as the owner of the whole world, still there are so many things one cannot have and one does not have. This way the struggle will not stop and for that reason one has to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. All Mahayana philosophy boils down to that.

Then the Vajrayana philosophy is very simple: the essence of everything is the same, equal. The essence of good and the essence of bad cannot be two separate essences; one essence for good and one essence for bad, it cannot. The ultimate of good and the ultimate of bad, the ultimate of so and so, of everything, is equal. By realizing the ultimate, you are free from good, you are free from bad, you are free from so and so. That can only happen if you are above and beyond dualistic clinging. You have to be free from dualistic clinging. When you are free from dualistic clinging then you are free from dualistic domination. When you are free from dualistic domination then you are half way to enlightenment. From there, to reach enlightenment, is to be free from that freedom. When you are free from that freedom you become limitless. The definition of freedom is compared with some other thing, like measuring the height of a building by measuring the length of its shadow. So when you say 'free' you are measuring it by 'not being free.' So you have to be free from freedom itself, then you reach the ultimate essence, the dharmakaya. Then the dharmakaya will manifest sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya.

A Vajrayana practitioner will try to overcome doing bad things, but not because the essence of bad is different from the essence of good. Because bad is itself the opposite of good therefore you do good things to overcome bad things. So you stop doing bad things and instead do good things. Then once you are nothing but good, then what? Still you are dualistic, you are not free, you have to overcome good as well. When you reach above and beyond bad and above and beyond good, then you reach the realization and the essence of everything. That is the dharmakaya. Dharmakaya is not only the essence of good, but the essence of everything.

Why such things as attachment and anger exist is because they are the other side of the coin of wisdom. The other side of the coin of the wisdom of compassion is anger. The other side of the coin of the wisdom of contentment is attachment. The other side of the coin of wisdom of appreciation and joy is jealousy. The other

side of the coin of generosity is stinginess. These are the defilements. When you overcome the negative aspect of the same thing, then you manifest the positive aspect of the same thing. But in order to reach Buddhahood you have to transform the positiveness as well. Otherwise you will end up becoming a limited Buddha—a limited Buddha who has so much power and glory but who likes those who are nice to him or her and who gives him or her lots of presents but dislikes those who are not nice to him or her and gives punishment. That is not Buddha. Buddha, by definition of Vajrayana, the realization of dharmakaya has to reach beyond that. And the activities of a Buddha should not be limited to anything, not any kind of limitation. That is Vajrayana philosophy. When you look at these three in a very simple way they are very similar. But if you really go into Buddhist philosophy with the blessing of Pramana, then it can be very entertaining.

If you have some questions I can take a few.

*Question:* What is the concept of duality?

*Rinpoche:* The concept of duality means 'I' and 'you.' I can talk about non-duality but I can not act on non-duality because 'me' talking to 'you' is dualistic. 'You' asking 'me' a question is dualistic. I can't do anything non-dualistic right now because I'm not Buddha. But when I reach Buddhahood I will be manifesting non-dualistically, and when I reach the first bodhisattva level I will be minus 100 times non-dualistic, and when I reach arhat, maybe 100% non-dualistic. This way, right now, I can only talk about non-dualism. I can pray for it, but I cannot act on it. When I meditate, maybe on good days I reach the non-dualistic state for a split second, or bad days actually. Sometimes in order to reach that kind of state bad days are better than good days; some kind of shock or pressure, in that state if you are able to reach a good state of meditation then you might find it easier to reach a non-dualistic state. And one has to be able to remain in it, but it is an impossibility for most of us at present.

*Question:* Is the result of the Mahayana and Vajrayana different?

*Rinpoche:* The Mahayana and Vajrayana are very difficult to separate that way. The only difference is in the methods. The Mahayana methods are the six paramitas and the Vajrayana methods are visualization of deities, rituals, meditation on the nature of mind, etc. Other than that it is very difficult to separate between the Mahayana and Vajrayana. In the Vajrayana the description of enlightenment is transformation. Reaching one state, another state, it is not like that, but transformation.



*Question:* Are the Vajrayana methods from Tibet?

*Rinpoche:* No, from India, from Buddha Shakyamuni. Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings can be divided into four: Vinaya, Abhidharma, Sutra and Tantra. The Vinaya is all Theravada, Abhidharma is almost all Theravada, Sutra, a few are Theravada. Abhidharma, some are Mahayana, Sutra, many of them are Mahayana, and Tantra, all of them Vajrayana. We as Tibetan Buddhists practice all four of them, therefore, our respect and appreciation and honour towards Theravada and Mahayana is impeccable. But some Mahayana and Theravada people's appreciation towards Vajrayana is sometimes questioned. Many of them think quietly, and nowadays loudly, that we are Hindu influenced, that we are more Hindus than Buddhists. But this is not publicly said. But we have no problem with the Mahayana and Theravada.

*Question:* Is Vajrayana just in Tibet?

*Rinpoche:* All of the Himalayas, all of Tibet, all of Mongolia and some parts of Russia are Vajrayana. Some aspects of Vajrayana are also in Japan, China and Korea. Actually also in Northern Laos I was told. Also in Thailand there is some Vajrayana practices done by some forest monks, they practice mantra and according to tantra.

In the old days in India, such as in Nalanda they practised Vajrayana. In ruins at Varanasi you can see

Vajrayana deities, you can see them carved in the ruins. On one of the walls in one of the ruins excavated by anthropologists there I saw a Tara. So Vajrayana was there in India, very wide spread. But because the way Buddha taught it, it was practised more secretly than in Tibet. In India, when Buddhism was thriving, the Vajrayana aspect was practised quietly. For example, the vajra and bell were not shown to the public. Also the paintings of the deities, the sambhogakaya aspect of Buddha was not shown in public. Practitioners kept this secret because that was how it was supposed to be. But when it went to Tibet, then Tibet itself, the whole country was secret I think, so then it became very public. For a long time empowerments were only given by a guru to a disciple. But now there are mass empowerments performed for as many people as there are wishing to participate. This is in Tibet as well as Mongolia, all over the Himalayas and now all over the world actually. The Vajrayana is all over the world right now. Vajrayana was not developed in Tibet. I would like that credit but unfortunately that is not true.

Let us dedicate the merit for the benefit of all sentient beings.

*Teachings given in Palpung Centre in Noida, India, March 2004: with kind thanks to Ani la Sherab and Rokpa Finland for transcribing and offering these teachings for publication.*