

Uniting Wisdom and Compassion

Kadampa Center – July 1 - 22, 2021

Handout 1 of 4: Background and Introduction to the Text; Discussion of Compassion

Background and Introduction to the Text

(A) The Four Buddhist Tenet Systems:

Hinayana Tenets:

1. Vaibhashika - Great Exposition
2. Sautrantika - Sutra

Mahayana Tenets:

3. Chittamatra - Mind Only
4. Madhyamika - Middle Way:
 - a. Svatantrika-Madhyamika - Autonomy Middle Way
 - b. Prasangika-Madhyamika - Consequence Middle Way

(B) The Three Vehicles:

Hinayana Paths (Result = Foe Destroyer):

1. Hearer (*sbravaka*)
2. Solitary Realizer (*pratyekabuddha*)

Mahayana Path (Result = Buddha):

3. Bodhisattva

(C) Chronology:

0 A.N. (After Nirvana)

- * Death/Nirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha
 - * Buddha taught both the Hinayana (Individual Vehicle) and the Mahayana (Universal Vehicle)
 - * Expounded the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras (Prajnaparamita Sutras)*
- After Buddha's nirvana, the Hinayana proliferated while the Mahayana declined

400 A.N. - 1000 A.N.

- * Nagarjuna, Founder of the Madhyamika (Middle Way) School
- * Prophesied by the Buddha as one who would reinstate the Mahayana teachings
- * Wrote *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way, Called Wisdom (Prajnanamulamadhyamakakarika)* based on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*

900 A.N. - 1050 A.N.

- Asanga, Founder of Chittamatra (Mind Only) School
- * Buddhapalita wrote a commentary on *Fundamental Wisdom*
- * Founder of Prasangika-Madhyamika (Middle Way Consequence) School
- * Bhavaviveka wrote a commentary on *Fundamental Wisdom*
- * Refuted the views of both Asanga and Buddhapalita
- * Founder of Svatantrika-Madhyamika (Middle Way Autonomy) School

975 A.N. - 1275 A.N.

- * Chandrakirti - Wrote *Madhyamakavatara (Supplement to the Middle Way)*, a commentary on Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*, to counter the views of both Chittamatra and Svatantrika-Madhyamika, and to establish the Prasangika-Madhyamika view
- * His text supplements *Fundamental Wisdom* in both:
 - 1) The profound stages of the path - the view of selflessness (wisdom)
 - 2) The vast stages of the path - the many practices that lead to buddhahood (method)

1357 – 1419 CE

- Lama Tsongkhapa - In 1418, wrote *Illumination of the Thought...*, a commentary on Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*

Discussion of Compassion

(A) Terminology

Compassion (*nying je*) or Mercy (*rtse ba*):

- Compassion is the heartfelt wish that sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Great Compassion (above terms followed by *chen po*):

- Great compassion is distinguished not only by embracing *all* sentient beings as its object, but also this compassion is greater or more than mere compassion in that it also encompasses a second aspect of aspiring to actually protect them from suffering, i.e., to remove them from that state of suffering. This is the compassion that Chandrakirti is paying homage to in the beginning of his text.

Loving-kindness or Love (*byams pa*):

- Love is the counterpart to compassion, the wish for sentient beings to have happiness and the causes of happiness. When it has the aspect of aspiring to place all beings in happiness and the causes of happiness, it becomes great love.

(B) Compassion and the Three Types of Suffering

The basis of compassion is twofold: there is first a factor of empathy or closeness to all other beings, and secondly, the recognition of the suffering of those beings.

1) **Manifest Suffering:**

- This includes both mental and physical suffering
- It encompasses the misery and pains of illness, aging and death, as well as separation from people or objects that we love, and so forth.
- It is obvious to most people so it is easily recognized as suffering.

2) **Suffering of Change:**

- This suffering refers to what we usually call "pleasure" or "happiness," and it is identified as suffering because such pleasure has the ability to turn into pain.
- Because all objects of enjoyment and pleasure lack any inherent nature to bring happiness, their continued experience has the potential to eventually lead to suffering.
- This is generally not recognized as suffering and so is more difficult to realize as such.

3) **Pervasive Conditioned Suffering:**

- Essentially this refers to our "unenlightened existence," wherein we are under the influence of a process that is not under our own control.
- It involves the fact that we are ruled by our karma and afflictive emotions and their underlying root cause, i.e., our basic ignorance of the nature of reality.
- This is the most difficult of the three types of suffering to realize.

To develop any lasting compassion or wisdom, it is especially important to understand this third level of suffering. With that understanding, in conjunction with developing loving-kindness for all beings, one can proceed to develop great compassion.