

FPMT MASTERS PROGRAM - MIDDLE WAY

Illumination of the Thought *(dgongs pa rab gsal)*

By Lama Tsongkhapa

Homage to Compassion

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"UNITING WISDOM AND COMPASSION" COURSE

3A Expression of worship – a means of beginning to compose the text

This section has two parts:

- 1 Praise of great compassion without differentiating its types
- 2 Homage to that compassion within differentiating its types

3A1 Praise of great compassion without differentiating its types

The honorable Chandrakirti, having assumed the task of making a supplement to Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way*, does not state as his object of worship the hearers and solitary realizers who are taken as objects of worship in other books. Furthermore, he indicates that, rather than praising buddhas and bodhisattvas, it is suitable to praise great compassion – the most excellent cause of buddhahood, bearing the nature of thoroughly protecting all vulnerable sentient beings bound in the prison of cyclic existence; it is also the main cause called by the name of its effect, the blessed one (*bhagavati*). Chandrakirti says:

*Hearers and middling realizers of suchness
Are born from the Kings of Subduers.
Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas.
The mind of compassion, non-dual understanding,
And the altruistic mind of enlightenment
Are the causes of children of conquerors. [1.1]*

*Mercy alone is seen as the seed
Of a conqueror's rich harvest,
As water for development, and as
Ripening in a state of long enjoyment,
Therefore at the start I praise compassion. [1.2]*

The discussion of this has two parts:

- A Compassion as the main cause of a bodhisattva
- B Compassion as the root of the other two causes of a bodhisattva

3A1A Compassion as the main cause of a bodhisattva

This section has three parts:

- 1 The way hearers and solitary realizers are born from Kings of Subduers
- 2 The way buddhas are born from bodhisattvas
- 3 The three main causes of bodhisattvas

3A1A-1 The way hearers and solitary realizers are born from Kings of Subduers

[Chandrakirti's root text says:]

*Hearers and middling realizers of suchness
Are born from the Kings of Subduers. [1.1ab]*

Hearers are so called because they listen to correct precepts from others and after attaining the fruit of their meditation – the enlightenment of a hearer – they cause others to hear about that fact. They say, ‘I have done what was to be done; I will not know another birth,’ and so forth. Many such instances appear in the scriptures.

Although there are some hearers – such as those in the formless realm – to whom this etymology does not apply, there is no fault because the features of an etymology do not have to apply to all instances for a term to be used as an actual name. For instance, the term ‘lake-born’ is used for a lotus grown from dry soil.

The Sanskrit word for hearer, *shravaka*, can also mean ‘hearing and proclaiming’ in the sense that they hear from buddhas about the superior fruit or the path proceeding to buddhahood and proclaim it to those of the Mahayana lineage seeking that path. The *White Lotus of Excellent Doctrine Sutra (Saddharmapundarika)* says [in reference to bodhisattvas who merely proclaim the path without practicing it]:

O Protector, today we have become hearers.
We proclaim the excellent enlightenment
And set forth the terms of enlightenment.
Thus we are like intractable hearers.

For those two reasons these bodhisattvas are similar to hearers, but the actual meaning of hearing and proclaiming applies [only] to hearers.

[Jaya-ananda] says that because the word ‘excellent’ is absent in the third line [of the quote from the *White Lotus*] the former enlightenment is the Mahayana and the latter the hearer enlightenment. However, the thought of Chandrakirti’s commentary is that the first is the Mahayana enlightenment and the second is the path proceeding to it.

OBJECTION: Bodhisattvas would [absurdly] have to be [Hinayana] hearers because they hear the path of buddhahood from buddhas and proclaim it to trainees.

ANSWER: There is no such fault because the thought is that hearers *merely* proclaim the Mahayana path; they themselves do not achieve even a similitude of it.

[In Chandrakirti’s root text ‘middling realizers of suchness’ was translated into Tibetan as ‘middling buddhas’.] In the commentary Chandrakirti says that *tattva-buddha* applies to all three persons [hearer, solitary realizer, and buddha superiors]. With regard to the meaning of this, some identify *tattva-buddha* as realization of suchness and apply it to all three. As will be explained, this is a good interpretation because it is said, ‘*Tattva* means suchness (*tathata*), and *buddha* means realization.’ When the term *buddha* is taken to mean ‘realization of suchness’, this applies to all three persons.

Though the term ‘realizers of suchness’ also indicates ‘solitary realizers’, it was translated [into

Tibetan] as *buddha*. In general the term *buddha* should be rendered as ‘buddha’ but here this is not appropriate. For it is also explained that *buddha* is used to indicate an *opening* of lotus petals and an *awakening* from sleep; therefore ‘buddha’ is not the only translation.

With respect to the meaning of ‘middling’, solitary realizers surpass hearers through their superior feature of practicing merit and wisdom for a hundred eons. However, since they do not have the two collections of merit and wisdom, nor the compassion viewing all sentient beings at all times, nor omniscience and so forth, they are inferior to perfect buddhas. Thus, they are middling.

One [Jaya-ananda] says that the meaning of solitary realizers’ surpassing hearers in terms of wisdom should be understood in accordance with Maitreya’s statement in his *Ornament for the Realizations (Abhisamayalamkara)*, ‘They abandon the conception of objects [by realizing that object and subject are not different entities].’ This is not correct because here in the Prasangika system it is said that both hearers and solitary realizers realize that all phenomena do not inherently exist. [Jaya-ananda] himself asserts this [when later he says that hearers and solitary realizers cognize the emptiness of all phenomena].

In his commentary Chandrakirti says that a solitary realizer’s wisdom surpasses in its increase that of a hearer. This ‘increase’ should be taken to mean proceeding higher and higher on the path. Solitary realizers are intent on cultivating merit and wisdom over a hundred eons; thus, unlike the hearers, they are able to continue cultivating the path for a long time.

[Chandrakirti says that solitary realizers do not collect merit and wisdom; however, they do have secondary or imputed collections.] The mere term ‘collection’ is indeed used for merit and wisdom in general, but it applies mainly to fully qualified merit and wisdom. As Haribhadra’s *Clear Meaning Commentary (Abhisamayalamkara-nama-prajnaparamitopade-shashastravrtti)* says, ‘By being entities that thoroughly achieve it, they *hold* the great enlightenment; therefore, great compassion and so forth are collections.’ Collections are said to hold their fruit through being the means of unmistakably achieving highest enlightenment. Those that are not fully qualified are secondary. This is a contextual etymology of the original Sanskrit word for collection, *sambhara*. [With letters added, *sam* comes to mean ‘thorough achievement’, *bha* ‘entity’, and *ra* ‘bearing’.]

Because solitary realizers’ progress in merit and wisdom greatly exceeds that of hearers, they are able to generate the wisdom of a foe destroyer (*arhan*) during their final lifetime in the desire realm without depending on another master’s teaching. Because they become enlightened – that is to say, attain or are in the process of attaining the state of a foe destroyer – for their own sakes alone, they are called ‘self-enlightened’ and also ‘self-arisen.’

[With respect to the phrase ‘Kings of Subduers] the term ‘subduer’ is indeed used for hearer and solitary realizer foe destroyers, but since they are not *kings* of subduers, only buddhas are so called. This is because buddhas have attained an excellent lordship of doctrine superior to hearers, solitary realizers, or even bodhisattvas and also because the word of buddha rules these three in the sphere of doctrine. That hearers and solitary realizers are born from Kings of Subduers means that they are issued forth by them.

QUESTION: How do Subduer Kings give birth to hearers and solitary realizers?

ANSWER: When buddhas come to the world, they teach dependent arising without error. Those bearing the lineage of hearers and solitary realizers listen to the modes of dependent arising, think about what they have heard, and meditate on the meaning of what they have thought. Through these stages, the aims of hearers and solitary realizers are fulfilled in accordance with the effect to which they aspire, and in this way Subduer Kings give birth to hearers and solitary realizers.

OBJECTION: Although many of the hearer lineage actualize enlightenment in the very life in which they hear the doctrine from a buddha, those of the solitary realizer lineage do not do so. Therefore, it is incorrect that their aims are fulfilled through hearing, thinking, and meditating on meanings set forth by Subduer Kings.

ANSWER: There is no fault. Some bearing the lineage of solitary realizers become skilled in cognizing the ultimate just by listening to the Teacher's setting forth dependent arising. However, they do not attain the nirvana of a solitary realizer in just that life during which they hear the doctrine. Still, a solitary realizer practitioner to whom a buddha teaches dependent arising will definitely achieve nirvana in another life. An example of this is a person's accumulating an action the effect of which must be experienced but not in the same life as when accumulated; however, the effect will definitely be experienced in another birth. Also, since solitary realizers hear, think, and meditate on just the doctrine formerly taught by a buddha, the explanation that their aims are fulfilled is not intended to refer to this life only. Aryadeva's *Four Hundred (Chatuhshataka, VIII.22)* says:

Though one who knows suchness does not achieve
Nirvana here, in another birth
He will definitely attain it
Without effort, as in the case of actions.

Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way (XVIII.12)* says:

Though the perfect buddhas do not appear
And hearers have disappeared,
A solitary realizer's wisdom
Arises without support.

One [Jaya-ananda] asserts that this section in Chandrakirti's commentary answers the doubt, 'It is seen that though dependent arising is taught, some do not achieve the state of hearers and so forth; thus, hearers and so forth do not fulfill their aims through the teaching of dependent arising.' Other [Tibetans] say that this answers the doubt that although it would be suitable for the effect to arise immediately after practicing the meaning of dependent arising and non-production, it does not, and, therefore, the effect might not arise later either.

These explanations are instances of not understanding the meaning of this section. Because there are greater doubts about the Subduer Kings' giving birth to solitary realizers, [doubts about this] should be singled out and eliminated [but according to these explanations Chandrakirti] did not do so.

3A1A-2 The way buddhas are born from bodhisattvas

QUESTION: If hearers and solitary realizers are born from Subduer Kings, from what are Subduer Kings born?

ANSWER: The perfect buddhas are born from bodhisattvas. [Chandrakirti's root text says:]

Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas. [1.1c]

OBJECTION: Are bodhisattvas not called 'conqueror children' because they are born from buddhas' teaching? Since bodhisattvas are conqueror children, how can buddhas be born from bodhisattvas? For example, the father of a child cannot be that child's child.

ANSWER: It is true that bodhisattvas are the children of certain conquerors; however, there are two reasons why bodhisattvas cause buddhas. Bodhisattvas are causes of buddhas from the viewpoint of state because the state of a tathagata buddha is the fruit of that of a bodhisattva. This indicates that bodhisattvas cause buddhas through being the substantial cause which is of the same continuum as that buddha. The state of buddhahood is only attained through one's formerly having developed the state of a bodhisattva on the path of learning.

Bodhisattvas also cause buddhas through causing them to bear the truth in the sense that, as it says in sutra, the venerable Manjushri as a bodhisattva caused our own Teacher and other buddhas to bear the altruistic mind of enlightenment at the very beginning. This establishes that buddhas are born from bodhisattvas from the viewpoint that a bodhisattva, who is of a different continuum from the buddhahood which another bodhisattva will attain, acts as a cooperative cause of that buddha.

OBJECTION: [Chandrakirti states the position of] an objector who says that since bodhisattvas are conqueror children, it is correct for them to be born from conquerors, but the opposite is not feasible. [In answer] he says it is true that bodhisattvas are conqueror children, thereby indicating that he accepts this. Though it is necessary to give the reason why, despite this assertion, there is no contradiction in saying that buddhas are born from bodhisattvas, Chandrakirti – without giving any such reason – [goes on to] establish that buddhas are born from bodhisattvas. Thus [his procedure] is wrong because a doubt has already arisen with respect to the topic and has not been eliminated.

ANSWER: There is no such fault. With respect to the first reason why the root text says that buddhas are born from bodhisattvas, Chandrakirti explains the attainment of the fruit of buddhahood through a bodhisattva's practice on the path of learning. It is thereby known that a bodhisattva is not the child of the buddha that he himself becomes. Hence, when Chandrakirti says that it is true – meaning, 'bodhisattvas are indeed born from buddhas' – how could he be referring to a bodhisattva's birth from the buddha he becomes? Furthermore, one newly born as a bodhisattva from the speech of our Teacher is a child of this buddha, but this buddha is not born from the bodhisattva. Indeed, if one has intelligence, why would one not realize from the answer given in the commentary that the objector has not distinguished these two modes? Still, many senseless explanations have appeared with respect to this.

Buddhas praise bodhisattvas because bodhisattvas are the principal causes of buddhas. There are four reasons for the praise. The first is that this excellent cause of buddhahood is very profound and precious. The second is that through expressing worship to the cause – bodhisattvas – praise of the fruit – buddhas – is intended implicitly. The third reason is that one should value and sustain the state of a novice bodhisattva, for it is the shoot of the tree of buddhahood that nourishes all beings. Just as one who has seen the shoot, trunk, and so forth of a medicinal tree bearing countless wished-for fruits would cherish and sustain the leaves of the tree when they are young and soft, so one should value and sustain the state of a novice bodhisattva with great effort. The fourth reason is that when bodhisattvas are praised in the presence of those who are established in the three vehicles, such persons thereby definitely enter into the Mahayana.

The *Pile of Jewels Sutra (Ratnakuta)* says, ‘Kashyapa, it is like this: For example, people bow down to a new moon and not to the full moon. In the same way, Kashyapa, those who have great faith in me should bow down not to tathagatas but to bodhisattvas. Why? Tathagatas arise from bodhisattvas. All hearers and solitary realizers arise from tathagatas.’ This establishes through scripture that buddhas are born from bodhisattvas. The two former reasons establish it through reasoning.

Thus, here Chandrakirti does not directly honor hearers, solitary realizers, buddhas, or bodhisattvas – who are renowned as objects of worship in other books. This is because he honors the causes that are their roots.

The first two lines of the root text indicate that these four – hearers and solitary realizers, buddhas, and bodhisattvas – are in an effect and cause relationship respectively. This is for the sake of identifying the cause that is their ultimate root [compassion].

Though bodhisattvas are born from the teaching of buddhas, Chandrakirti does not need to explain this as he did for hearers and solitary realizers when he said that they are born from Subduer Kings. He taught that hearers and solitary realizers are born from Subduer Kings in order to show that their root ultimately derives from compassion. [In the following stanzas] he indicates separately that the root of bodhisattvas derives from compassion.

3A1A-3 The three main causes of bodhisattvas

QUESTION: If hearers and solitary realizers are born from Subduer Kings and if Subduer Kings are born from bodhisattvas, what causes bodhisattvas?

ANSWER: Chandrakirti’s root text says:

*The mind of compassion, non-dual understanding,
And the altruistic mind of enlightenment
Are the causes of Children of Conquerors. [1.1def]*

The main causes of bodhisattvas are three: a compassionate mind which will be explained [in the following stanzas], a wisdom realizing the meaning of freedom from the two extremes with regard to things, non-things, and so forth, and an altruistic mind of enlightenment.

Chandrakirti says in his commentary that the altruistic mind of enlightenment is as shown in the quoted sutra. The *Omnipresent Doctrine Sutra* says, ‘One realizes the suchness of phenomena and generates the thought, “I will cause sentient beings to understand this nature of phenomena.” This mind which is generated is called an altruistic mind of enlightenment.’ This does not indicate all the characteristics of an altruistic mind generation because it takes cognizance of only one part – its objects of intent. The definition in Chandrakirti’s commentary is also partial. He says, ‘One definitely generates an altruistic mind thinking, “I will relieve all these worldly beings from suffering and will definitely join them to buddhahood.”’ The commentary does not mention taking cognizance of the object of attainment, one’s own enlightenment.

However, Chandrakirti later shows in his commentary that an altruistic mind of enlightenment is generated in dependence on compassion; he says, ‘One wishes to attain buddhahood, which is the cause giving rise to the marvelous taste of ambrosia of the excellent doctrine, which is characterized by the disappearance of all wrong thoughts, and which has the nature of being the friend of all beings.’ Thus, he clearly mentions taking cognizance of the object of attainment, one’s own enlightenment. Therefore, the complete definition of an altruistic mind generation is asserted to be the wish to attain highest enlightenment – the object of attainment – for the sake of all sentient beings – the objects of intent.

That such appears in [Jaya-ananda’s] commentary is good. There is also no difference between what is said in Maitreya’s *Ornament for the Realizations* and this system.

Assigning these three practices as the causes of bodhisattvas is the system of Nagarjuna’s *Precious Garland* (174c-175):

If you and the world wish to gain
The highest enlightenment,
Its roots are an altruistic aspiration
To enlightenment firm like Meru, the king of mountains,
Compassion reaching in all directions,
And wisdom which relies not on duality.

This passage indicates that these three are the roots of enlightenment but does not explicitly show that these are the roots of a bodhisattva; however, since root means ‘beginning’, Nagarjuna is indicating the three main causes of the beginning, and thus it can be known from the context that these are the main causes of bodhisattvas.

Chandrakirti’s teaching these three practices as the causes of bodhisattvas occurs at the time of analyzing the doubt, ‘If hearers and solitary realizers are born from buddhas, and buddhas from bodhisattvas, then from what are bodhisattvas born?’ Therefore, these three are not suitable to be causes for positing someone as a bodhisattva; they are the causes producing a bodhisattva.

OBJECTION: Is the lowest type of bodhisattva, in relation to whom these three practices are assigned as causes, a novice bodhisattva who has just entered the path or not? If he is, then it is incorrect to assign the altruistic mind generation of the Mahayana as a *cause* because as soon as he attains such a mind generation he is a bodhisattva. Moreover, it is not feasible to assign the

wisdom that does not rely on the two extremes as a cause of a bodhisattva. This is because he initially generates a conventional mind of enlightenment and *then* trains in the bodhisattva deeds – the six perfections and thus only when training in the perfection of wisdom does he train in the wisdom not relying on the two extremes. On the other hand, if the lowest type of bodhisattva in relation to whom these three are posited as causes is not taken as a novice bodhisattva who has entered the path, then it would contradict the explanations of this lowest type of bodhisattva as like a new moon and as like the shoot of a medicinal tree.

ANSWER: The second position is not asserted because it would incur the fault as explained. Therefore, the first position is asserted, but it does not entail the faults stated above. The ‘mind generation that precedes a bodhisattva’ refers to the time of cultivating mind generation and not to an actual mind generation that has been produced through having cultivated it. The difference between these two mind generations is like that between tasting the bark and the inside of sugar cane. Because the mere thought, ‘I will attain buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings’ is just verbal understanding, it is like tasting the bark of sugar cane, and although it is *called* an altruistic mind generation, it is not. Through having trained in this mind of enlightenment in accordance with quintessential instructions, special experience is generated that can redirect the mind well. This is like tasting sugar cane itself; therefore, it is fully qualified as a mind generation. Thinking of this, Buddha said in the *Questions of Adhyashaya Sutra Adhyashayasamchodana*):

Verbalization is like the bark,
Contemplating the meaning is like the taste.

A bearer of the bodhisattva lineage with sharp faculties first seeks the view of suchness and then generates the altruistic mind. Therefore, as will be explained later, the second fault is also not incurred.

‘Non-dual understanding’ does not refer to the absence of the dualistic appearance of object and subject [which occurs later on the path of seeing]. Chandrakirti’s commentary explains it as wisdom free from the two extremes; thus, it is not contradictory for it to occur prior to becoming a bodhisattva. [Jaya-ananda’s] explanation that ‘non-dual understanding’ refers to an ultimate mind generation [which involves the non-appearance of subject and object and begins with the path of seeing] is quite senseless because ‘non-dual understanding’ must also indicate the wisdom that is a cause of a bodhisattva newly entering the path.

3A1B Compassion as the root of the other two causes of a bodhisattva

Compassion is the root of the altruistic mind of enlightenment and non-dualistic wisdom; therefore, it is the chief of the three causes. Indicating this in his root text, Chandrakirti says:

*Mercy alone is seen as the seed
Of a conqueror’s rich harvest,
As water for development, and as
Ripening in a state of long enjoyment,
Therefore at the start I praise compassion. [1.2]*

Mercy is important, like a seed, for the initial development of the marvelous harvest of a conqueror. In the middle mercy is like water for increase higher and higher. At the end mercy is like the ripening of a fruit in a state of long enjoyment for trainees. Because mercy is asserted in this way, I, Chandrakirti, rather than praising hearers, solitary realizers, buddhas, bodhisattvas, or the two other causes of bodhisattvas, praise great compassion at the start of this treatise.

It is not that Chandrakirti *will* praise compassion; the immediately preceding indication of its importance in the beginning, middle, and end with respect to growing the harvest of a conqueror is the praise. ‘Mercy *alone*’ indicates that unlike the three different examples of importance [seed, water, and ripeness] at the beginning, middle, and end for an external harvest, only compassion is important in the beginning, middle, and end for the harvest of a conqueror.

The way that compassion’s importance in the beginning is like a seed is this: Those who have great compassion generate a mind that observes their object of intent [the welfare of others] with the thought, ‘In order to protect all suffering sentient beings pained by misery, I will relieve them from the suffering of cyclic existence and definitely establish them in buddhahood.’ Seeing that [the ability to do] this depends upon their own attainment of buddhahood, they definitely generate a mind observing enlightenment with the thought, ‘For their sake I will definitely attain highest enlightenment.’ Because they understand that such a promise cannot be fulfilled if the practices of giving and so forth – illustrated [in Chandrakirti’s commentary] by non-dualistic wisdom – are forsaken, they definitely engage in these practices, the chief of which is wisdom. Therefore, the seed of all buddha qualities is great compassion. Referring to this Nagarjuna says in his *Precious Garland* (378):

Who with intelligence would deride
Deeds motivated by compassion
And the stainless wisdom as is
Taught in the Mahayana?

Nagarjuna says that all the meanings of the Mahayana are contained within the three: general practices induced by (1) the altruistic mind of enlightenment preceded by (2) compassion, and the particular practice of (3) wisdom free from the stains of conceiving the two extremes.

The importance of compassion in the middle is similar to water. For, although the seed of compassion initially grows into the shoot of an altruistic mind of enlightenment, if later it is not moistened again and again with the water of compassion, one will not amass the two extensive collections that serve as the causes of the fruit, buddhahood. In that case one would actualize the nirvana of either a hearer or solitary realizer. However, if the shoot of an altruistic mind of enlightenment is moistened again and again with the water of compassion, that will not happen; [one will actualize the enlightenment of a buddha].

The importance of compassion at the end is similar to a state of ripeness. For, if one attains the state of a conqueror but lacks the ripened state of compassion, one will not be a source of enjoyment and use by sentient beings as long as cyclic existence lasts. Also, the collection of hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattva superiors [arising from] the transmission [of Buddha’s

word] from one to the other would not increase uninterruptedly. However, when great compassion operates continually at buddhahood, the opposite occurs.

Through Chandrakirti's commentary on the meaning of these four lines you should gain firm conviction with respect to the teaching that it is necessary to train in these practices. You should think, 'If I wish to become a Mahayanist, my mind must first come under the influence of great compassion, and then in dependence on this I must generate from the depths of my heart a fully qualified altruistic mind of enlightenment. Once I have done this, I must engage in the general practices of bodhisattvas and in particular must penetrate the profound view.'

3A2 Homage to great compassion within differentiating its types

This section has two parts:

- A Homage to compassion observing sentient beings
- B Homage to compassion observing phenomena and the unapprehendable

3A2A Homage to compassion observing sentient beings

Chandrakirti says:

*Homage to that compassion for migrators who are
Powerless like a bucket traveling in a well
Through initially adhering to a self, an 'I',
And then generating attachment for things, 'This is mine.'* [1.3]

The view of the transitory collection as a real 'I' generates the view of that collection as real 'mine'. Therefore, these sentient beings initially – prior to the view of the transitory adhering to real 'mine' – adhere to an 'I' as a truth. The view of the transitory apprehending a real 'I' thinks that the self – which does not inherently exist – does so. Subsequently, the view of the transitory apprehending real 'mine' generates attachment for the truth of the 'mine', thinking, 'This is mine,' with respect to phenomena other than the 'I' such as forms and eyes.

Chandrakirti's homage to compassion observing sentient beings is: Homage to compassion for migrators wandering powerlessly like a bucket traveling in a well.

QUESTION: In what way are migrators similar to a bucket in a well?

ANSWER: Sentient beings are the bearers of similarity, and a bucket in a well is the object of similarity, both having six features such as being tied.

The first feature is that these worldly beings are bound very tightly by the rope of contaminated actions and afflictions. In Chandrakirti's commentary, the word 'these' should be applied to the other five features also.

The second is that the process [of cyclic existence] depends on being impelled by the mind, like the operator of the pulley mechanism.

The third is that these sentient beings ceaselessly wander in the great well of cyclic existence from the Peak of Cyclic Existence down to the Most Torturous Hell.

The fourth feature is that these sentient beings naturally and effortlessly go downward to bad migrations and must be drawn with great exertion upward to happy migrations.

The fifth is that they have the three sets of thorough afflictions, the order of which cannot be determined one-pointedly. The three sets are: (1) the afflictions of ignorance, attachment, and grasping, (2) the actions of compositional action and 'existence', and (3) the productions of consciousness, name and form, six sources, contact, feeling, birth, and aging and death.

The sixth feature is that every day these sentient beings are battered by the sufferings of pain and change, and the pervasive suffering of being so conditioned as to be always ready to undergo pain. Therefore, these sentient beings do not pass beyond the state of a bucket in a well.

Here the application of similarity by way of six features is not made merely for the sake of understanding the way that sentient beings wander in cyclic existence.

QUESTION: Then what is the purpose?

ANSWER: Previously Chandrakirti indicated that one who wishes to enter the Mahayana must initially generate great compassion, but he did not show how to generate compassion in meditation. Here, by showing the way that sentient beings wander powerlessly in cyclic existence he indicates how to generate great compassion through meditation.

By what agency do sentient beings enter into cyclic existence? By just this extremely unpeaceful, untamed mind. Where and how do they wander? From the Peak of Cyclic Existence to the Most Torturous Hell without the slightest interruption in their circling. By what causes and conditions do they wander? By the power of contaminated actions and afflictions. They wander in bad migrations by the power of non-meritorious actions and afflictions, and in happy migrations by the power of meritorious and unmoving actions and afflictions. To be born in bad migrations the process operates automatically and without effort, but it is difficult to be born in happy migrations because great effort must be made to achieve their causes.

The *Topics of Discipline (Vinayavastu)* says that instances of leaving either a happy or a bad migration and going to a bad one are as numerous as the particles of this great earth and that instances of leaving a happy or a bad migration and going to a happy one are as few as the particles held on the tip of a fingernail.

Whenever any of the three groups of thorough afflictions in a round of dependent arising is present, the two remaining groups are also operating in other rounds of dependent arising. Therefore, the process is uninterrupted, and every day – like ripples in water – beings are tormented more than once by the three sufferings.

If your mind has not been affected by thinking about the way that you yourself wander in cyclic existence, then when you think about these modes of suffering in other sentient beings, there is no way that you as a beginner can find their suffering unbearable. Therefore, as Chandrakirti says in his commentary on Aryadeva's *Four Hundred*, first you should think about these in yourself and afterwards meditate on them in other sentient beings.

QUESTION: Can great compassion be induced merely by meditating on the way that other sentient beings are tortured in cyclic existence by suffering and by the sources of suffering or is another aid needed?

ANSWER: In the world when suffering is seen in an enemy, not only is it not unbearable, but one delights in it. When a person who has neither helped nor harmed one is seen to suffer, one will in most cases pay no attention to that person. These [reactions] are due to not having a sense of pleasantness with respect to these persons.

When one sees a friend suffer, it is unbearable [in the sense that one must do something about it], and the degree of unbearability is just as great as one's sense of pleasantness toward him. Therefore, it is an important essential that one must generate a sense of strong cherishing and affection for sentient beings.

Among the kings of scholars, there are two systems concerning the means for generating a sense of pleasantness. Of the first, Chandrakirti says in his commentary to Aryadeva's *Four Hundred* that if sentient beings are considered to have been friends – such as parents – from beginningless time, then one can bear to plunge into cyclic existence for their sake. The great being Chandragomin and the king of scholars, Kamalashila, also presented it this way. The second is the system of the glorious Shantideva. These can be known from my explanations elsewhere [in the *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path*].

Those who strive to train in great compassion through strongly cherishing sentient beings and reflecting on the ways in which those beings are tortured in cyclic existence make meaningful Chandrakirti's uncommon expression of worship. Those who otherwise claim to be skilled in this are like prattling parrots. This analogy applies to other situations as well.

Later I will explain how this comes to be called compassion observing sentient beings.

3A2B Homage to compassion observing phenomena and the unapprehendable

In order to illuminate the compassions observing phenomena and the unapprehendable from the viewpoints of the objects observed, Chandrakirti says in his root text:

[Homage to that compassion for] migrators seen as evanescent and Empty of inherent existence like a moon in rippling water. [1.4ab]

Chandrakirti's homage to compassion observing phenomena is: Homage to compassion viewing migrators as evanescent or momentarily disintegrating, like a moon in water stirred by a breeze.

His homage to compassion observing the unapprehendable is: Homage to compassion viewing migrators as empty of inherent existence though they appear to exist inherently, like the reflection of the moon in water.

In commenting on this, Chandrakirti says, ‘Homage to that compassion’ omitting ‘for migrators’, but his thought is that the ‘migrators’ [of the previous stanza] are included as the objects observed by the latter two compassions.

An image of the moon appears in a portion of very clear water that is covered by ripples from a mild breeze. The water that serves as the basic object is [actually] apprehended prior to the reflection, but the reflection is manifestly apprehended as a real moon that disappears each day. The excellent ones, namely, beings who are skilled in these ways, see momentary impermanence and the emptiness of the nature of the moon as it appears to be. As in the example, bodhisattvas who have come under the influence of compassion also see sentient beings in an ocean – the view of the transitory – which is filled by a vast blue river of ignorance. They see that this ocean in which sentient beings abide is stirred by the winds of improper thought and that the reflections of the beings’ own wholesome and unwholesome actions which are like the moon in the sky are reflected in front of them. Bodhisattvas see sentient beings with the suffering of composition – momentary disintegration – descending on them, and they see beings as empty of inherent existence. Observing them, bodhisattvas generate great compassion, and, as explained earlier, their great compassion arises from reflecting on the pleasantness of sentient beings and on the ways in which they wander in cyclic existence.

Even though the view of the transitory is ignorance, Chandrakirti explains ignorance separately [as a river flowing into the ocean of the view of the transitory] because he is referring to the ignorance that induces the view of the transitory – the conception of a self of phenomena.

At this point in his commentary Chandrakirti says that the three compassions are distinguished by the objects that they observe, not by their subjective aspects. Therefore, all three types of compassion have as their subjective aspect the wish to free sentient beings from suffering; they are thereby similar in that they observe sentient beings. In discussing the first type of compassion Chandrakirti says (stanza 1.3a), ‘Compassion for migrators’, and in discussing the latter two types of compassion he says (1.4ab), ‘Evanescent migrators.’ In this way he shows that sentient beings are the objects observed.

Still, compassion observing phenomena does not observe just sentient beings, but those who momentarily disintegrate. Therefore, the objects of observation are sentient beings qualified by momentary impermanence. When one determines that beings disintegrate momentarily, the existence of a permanent, partless, and independent person is eliminated in one’s mind. Thereby, one can ascertain the non-existence of sentient beings who are different entities from their mental and physical aggregates. At that time one understands that they are *designated* to the mere collection of the mental and physical aggregates. Sentient beings who are designated to the mere phenomena of the aggregates and so forth serve as the objects of observation, and thus this is called ‘compassion observing phenomena’.

Impermanent sentient beings are just an illustration. Observing those who do not substantially exist in that they are not self-sufficient is also called ‘observing phenomena’. Therefore, giving the name, ‘observation of phenomena’, to observation of sentient beings who are designated to mere phenomena is a contraction.

Compassion observing the unapprehendable also does not observe mere sentient beings. It observes a special object, sentient beings who are empty of inherent existence. ‘Unapprehendable’ means ‘not truly existent’ and refers to the referent object’s not existing in the way that it is conceived to exist by a consciousness grasping at signs [of inherent existence]. Giving the name, ‘observing the unapprehendable’ or ‘unapprehendable compassion’ to the observation of sentient beings qualified by non-true existence is a contraction.

Many Tibetan commentators say that the second compassion observes momentary disintegration and the third non-inherent existence. These are explanations of those who have not understood well the subjective aspects and objects of observation of these two compassions. For, it is necessary to assert that both have the aspect of wishing to free sentient beings from suffering, and if momentariness and non-inherent existence were asserted as the objects of these aspects, then one compassion would have two discordant aspects as its mode of apprehension [because it would also have the aspect of realizing momentariness or non-inherent existence].

Sentient beings qualified by momentariness and non-inherent existence are put as the objects of observation of these two compassions. Thus, before a person can have these two in his mental continuum, he must ascertain that sentient beings are momentary and do not inherently exist. Then, in dependence on his previous ascertainment, the aspects of these two qualities must appear to his mind. However, it is not necessary that these compassions themselves apprehend sentient beings as impermanent or not inherently existent. [The appearance of these qualities to a compassionate mind due to previous ascertainment is sufficient.]

In both the basic text and the commentary Chandrakirti explains that the latter two compassions observe sentient beings qualified by the qualities explained above and says that mere sentient beings – who are not so qualified – are the objects of observation of the first compassion. Therefore, his giving the name, ‘compassion observing sentient beings’, to the first compassion is a convenient contraction.

It is wrong to assert that the first compassion must observe permanent, partless, and independent sentient beings. As for compassion in the continuums of those who have not found the view of selflessness, there are many instances of their generating compassion observing only sentient beings. There are also many instances of it observing sentient beings, not qualified by either of the two qualities explained above, in the continuums of those who have found the view of common personal selflessness or the view of suchness. For instance, even though someone has completely refuted the referent object of a consciousness apprehending a pot to be permanent and has understood that the pot is impermanent, not every instance of his observing it is posited as an observation of a pot that is qualified by impermanence. Also, even though someone might not have understood that a pot is impermanent, not every instance of his observing it is put as an observation of a pot that is qualified by permanence.

No matter which of the three objects of observation these three compassions observe, each has the aspect of wishing to protect all sentient beings from all suffering. Therefore, they differ greatly from the compassion generated by hearers and solitary realizers. When [practitioners] generate such compassions, they generate an altruistic mind of enlightenment, thinking, 'For the sake of sentient beings I will definitely attain the state of a buddha.'

The compassion to which Chandrakirti offers worship is mainly initial compassion, but it is also the other compassions of bodhisattvas. Thus, there is no contradiction in Chandrakirti's saying in his commentary at this point that bodhisattvas generate compassion.

QUESTION: Can all three types of compassion be a cause of bodhisattvas when they first enter the path?

ANSWER: Those bearing the Mahayana lineage who are followers of fact [and not just words] initially seek knowledge of the true suchness [emptiness]. Once they have ascertained the ultimate well, they generate an altruistic mind of enlightenment, which is founded on generating great compassion for sentient beings, and then train in the discipline of a Subduer – the bodhisattva deeds. Those bearing the Mahayana lineage who are followers of faith cannot realize suchness first.

They generate an altruistic mind of enlightenment after which they train in the bodhisattva deeds such as searching for knowledge of the meaning of reality. Shantirakshita's *Ornament of the Middle Way (Madhyamakalamkara)* says:

First searching to know reality
They ascertain well the ultimate
And then generate compassion
For the world obscured by bad views.
Heroes effecting migrants' welfare,
Skilled in the vast mind of enlightenment,
They practice the Subduer's discipline
Adorned with wisdom and compassion.
Followers of pure faith generate
The mind of perfect enlightenment,
Assume the discipline of the Subduer,
And strive for knowledge of reality.

Thus, there are two types of practitioners, and among them there are cases of generating all three compassions prior to becoming a bodhisattva. [The followers of fact realize emptiness before becoming a bodhisattva and thus can generate compassion observing sentient beings qualified by non-inherent existence.]

Even though one has previously found the view of suchness, it is not contradictory that when training in the bodhisattva deeds [which include training in wisdom] one ascertains and trains in the meaning of suchness. Not only is that not contradictory, it is the way it must be done.