

# Mind-generation (སེམས་བསྐྱེད་/semknye)

in Maitreya's *Ornament of Clear  
Realizations*  
and its commentaries

# Points covered

- Definition of mind-generation (bodhicitta)
- The two aspirations
- Who can generate bodhicitta?
- Aspiring and engaging bodhicitta
- Does a buddha have bodhicitta?
- Conventional and ultimate bodhicitta
- Can bodhicitta be lost?
- When do we get rid of self-cherishing?
- The 22 kinds of bodhicitta



# Mahayana Paths & Grounds

1. Path of Accumulation = uncontrived bodhicitta, on top of uncontrived renunciation
  - 3 stages: small, middle, great
2. Path of Preparation = union of calm abiding and special insight observing emptiness
  - 4 stages: heat, peak, forbearance, supreme mundane quality
3. Path of Seeing = first direct realization of emptiness
  - 1<sup>st</sup> ground/bhumi
4. Path of Meditation = continuing to meditate on emptiness and gradually eliminating obscurations
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> grounds
5. Path of No More Learning = Buddhahood. You've made it!

# MG in Maitreya's root text

“Mind-generation is desire for  
Perfect complete enlightenment for others' welfare.”  
(verse 1.1ab of the *Ornament*)

སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པ་ནི་གཞན་དོན་ཕྱིར།  
ཡང་དག་ཇོགས་པའི་བྱང་ཆུབ་འདོད།



# Jetsun Chökyi Gyaltzen's definition of Mind-generation

The definition of Mahayana conventional mind-generation is:

A **Mahayana** special main mental knower that arises concomitant with an assisting aspiration observing complete enlightenment for others' welfare and is distinguished by abiding in a class of paths that serves as the door of entry into Mahayana paths.

[Alternate definition from Jamyang Shepa's *Seventy Topics*: a special awareness that is induced by its cause, an aspiration seeking the welfare of others, and is associated with an accompanier, which is a wish for enlightenment.]

# The two aspirations

- Aspiration for others' welfare = causal aspiration
- Aspiration for full, complete enlightenment = assisting aspiration
- Do both aspirations accompany bodhicitta? Some say yes, some say no.
- From between the two—enlightenment and others' welfare—enlightenment occurs first, then others' welfare. But the *aspiration* for others' welfare must be generated first, *then* the aspiration for enlightenment.

# Who can generate bodhicitta?

- Body support/basis: any of the six types of migrators (e.g. it's said that Shakyamuni Buddha first generated bodhicitta as a hell being)
- Mind support/basis: a preparation of a concentration (i.e. at least calm abiding) or an actual concentration

# Wishing bodhicitta & engaging bodhicitta

- Wishing MG is the mind wishing to become a buddha to benefit all sentient beings
- Engaging MG is, in general, the type of bodhicitta one has when engaging in bodhisattva deeds
- ~~When a person initially generates bodhicitta, it could be either wishing or engaging bodhicitta, depending on the circumstances.~~ When one first generates bodhicitta, it is wishing bodhicitta
- These two types of bodhicitta are mutually exclusive, and are part of a single stream or continuity of mind-generation.





# The criteria of engaging bodhicitta

- Gyaltsabje says it must be “actually conjoined with the activity of the practice of the deeds”
- This means that two things must be manifest: 1. mind-generation, and 2. actively practising bodhisattva deeds
- For example, when a bodhisattva is engaged in giving, both are manifest, so her mind-generation is engaging MG
- However, when a bodhisattva is in meditative equipoise on emptiness, his MG is non-manifest, therefore it's wishing MG, even though he's engaged in bodhisattva deeds
- Engaging MG must always be manifest; wishing MG can be manifest or non-manifest.

# Does a buddha have bodhicitta?

- No wishing bodhicitta
- Some scholars say there's also no engaging bodhicitta, because bodhicitta seeks enlightenment, and that has already been attained
- Other scholars (e.g. JCG) say there IS engaging bodhicitta, because a buddha seeks the enlightenment of others

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Part 2

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# Further thoughts

- Both wishing and engaging bodhicitta are the same in entity (a primary mind aspiring to attain full, complete enlightenment for the benefit of others)
- The difference between them is only in terms of what the bodhisattva is doing at any given time:
- When the bodhisattva is actively engaged in bodhisattva deeds and their bodhicitta is manifest, it is “engaging bodhicitta”
- When the bodhisattva is not actively engaged in bodhisattva deeds, or is in meditative equipoise on emptiness (such that their bodhicitta is non-manifest), it is “wishing bodhicitta”

# Further information

- Sze Gee: Lama Tsongkhapa's explanation of the two minds in *Golden Rosary* is different from Gyaltsab's and is based on Prasangika tenets.
- According to him, on the small level of the path of accumulation, a bodhisattva has wishing bodhicitta, but from the middling level onwards, the bodhicitta is always engaging.
- This may be why some people think that the former is inferior to the latter.

# Conventional & ultimate MG/bodhicitta

- This is just a terminological division, because ultimate bodhicitta is not really bodhicitta.
- Conventional bodhicitta is as explained before. It exists from the Mahayana Path of Accumulation through buddha ground.
- Ultimate bodhicitta is a Mahayana arya's main mental knower directly realizing the emptiness of true existence (the ultimate mode of abidance) of enlightenment. It exists from the first ground through buddha ground.
- Ultimate bodhicitta is free of the three types of dualistic appearances.
- Conventional and ultimate bodhicitta represent method and wisdom.



# Boundaries of the different types of bodhicitta

Type of bodhicitta	Path of Accumulation	Path of Preparation	Path of Seeing	Path of Meditation	Buddha ground
Conventional MG	x	x	x	x	x
Ultimate MG			x	x	x
Wishing MG	x	x	x	x	
Engaging MG	x	x	x	x	x



# Presence of bodhicitta on learner arya paths

Type of bodhicitta	Meditative equipoise on emptiness	Subsequent attainment
Wishing	Exists, non-manifest	Does not exist
Engaging	Does not exist	Exists, manifest
Ultimate	Exists, manifest	Exists, non-manifest

# Can bodhicitta be lost?

- Bodhisattvas who are *definite* in the Mahayana lineage will not lose their bodhicitta and fall from the Mahayana path once they attain the small level of the Path of Accumulation.
- Bodhisattvas who are *indefinite* in the Mahayana lineage will not lose their bodhicitta and fall from Mahayana once they attain the middle level of the Path of Accumulation.
- From the Mahayana Path of Preparation through the 8<sup>th</sup> ground, bodhisattvas attain a sign of irreversibility, indicating that they are irreversible from complete enlightenment.
- The stains of self-cherishing still exist up to the 8<sup>th</sup> ground, but not after that.

# The 22 types of bodhicitta

- 1.2 Further, earth, gold, moon, fire,  
Treasure, jewel-mine, ocean,  
Vajra, mountain, medicine, spiritual guide,  
Wish-granting gem, sun, song,
- 1.3 King, treasury, highway,  
Mount, geyser,  
Pleasant sound, river, and cloud:  
These are the twenty-two types.

1. Earth-like bodhicitta—small level of the Path of Accumulation. Just as the Earth is the foundation from which everything is produced (crops, minerals, etc.), this bodhicitta is the source from which all the attainments of the bodhisattva paths and grounds arise.

❖ Companion: aspiration

2. Gold-like bodhicitta—middle level of the Path of Accumulation. Just as gold never rusts, this bodhicitta is unchangeable and remains stable until the bodhisattva attains enlightenment.

❖ Companion: intention / resolve (bsam.pa)

3. New-moon-like bodhicitta—great level of the Path of Accumulation. As the new moon waxes, its color, shape and luminosity grow clearer and stronger. Similarly, this bodhicitta continues to grow in strength, while the bodhisattva's mind gets clearer & more pure, and the accumulations of merit & wisdom develop ever more.

❖ Companion: extraordinary resolve

4. Fire-like bodhicitta—Path of Preparation. Just as fire burns all in its path, this bodhicitta empowers the bodhisattva's mind to engage in analytical and stabilising meditation on emptiness so that it destroys manifest obstructions to the direct realization of emptiness.

❖ Companion: application

5. Treasure-like bodhicitta—Path of Seeing/1<sup>st</sup> ground. Just as a treasure is able to satisfy the needs of many beings, this bodhicitta (in the mind of an arya bodhisattva) is able to satisfy the needs of numberless sentient beings

❖ Companion: perfection of generosity

6. Jewel-mine-like bodhicitta—second ground. Just as a jewel mine is the source of many precious jewels, this bodhicitta is the source of all realizations and happiness.

❖ Companion: perfection of ethics

# 3 ways of generating bodhicitta

- King-like
- Boatman-like
- Herdsman-like