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Article

Bodhichitta: A Quintessential Spiritual Practice of Mahāyāna Buddhism

Dr Lobsang Tsultrim Bhutia

HoD, Department of Kargyud Sampradaya Shastra, Central Institute of Buddhist Studies
(Deemed to be University), Choglamsar, Leh 194104, India

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Introduction

Historically, it is very obvious and open in the public domain of each part of the world that transition and transformation in the society comes into existence when a new kind of idea set and promote for the welfare of people. As asserted by Mahayanist, similarly, for the welfare of all sentient beings in general and human beings in particular, the historical aspect of Buddha known by the name of Buddha Sâkyamuni, left the palace and vihâra or walked towards the desolate forest not to get relaxed from the boredom of princely life but to fulfill his aim that is to find a path to happiness for both other and self. In his journey for searching the path, at last, it is stated that he got enlightenment under the banyan tree planted in the vicinity of Mahabodhi Temple of Bodhagayâ. According to Mahâyânist, it is said that out of compassionate mind and the spontaneous mind motivated for helping other, he gave three kinds of utterance in the name of turning of wheel of Dharma. He turned the first wheel of Dharma which is named as the four noble's truths to a set of five disciples at Sârñâth, Varanasi. Accordingly, the second was turned at the paramount of Gridakûta Mountain, near Râjgir and the third wheel was turned in Vaishali and other uncertain places as well. But these three kinds of turning of wheel of Dharma directly and indirectly convey that the Bodhichitta (The altruistic mind) is the only compact form of path comprising of both idea and practice which provides benevolent result for all sentient beings. As it is stated by the Buddha in his text named as Gur: There is no sentient beings and Buddha Without this precious mind. Thus, Bodhichitta is the quintessential spiritual practice of Mahâyâna Buddhism.

Mahâyâna Buddhism

Mahâyâna Buddhism is a kind of Buddhism which emphasis more on practicing on generating Bodhichitta or a mind wishing for and subsequently engaging in the action for getting Buddhahood for the sake of other sentient beings. A word Mahâ and Yâna is Sanskrit language both carry a different meaning. Etymologically, words Mahâ and Yâna both have connotation of Great and Carrier respectively. Together it comprehends and indicating that the idea and practice/Yâna mentioned in this particular tradition called as Mahayana is the great and apex or nothing is there above it. With respect to the meaning of Mahâ in the context of Mahâyâna Tradition, a word Mahâ or great has seven characteristics in being great than Hinayana (lower vehicles). They are:

Great in Intention

In Mahâyâna, every kind of practice is motivated or influenced by the selfless intention attempting to help primarily to others. Therefore, Mahâyâna, is great in intention.

Great in Practice

Every practice such as practice of six perfection of Generosity, Morality, Forbearance, perseverance, Meditative stabilization and wisdom in Mahâyâna whether it is temporarily benefited for oneself, it is primarily or centrally focused to alleviate the suffering and its cause, and benefits of others. Therefore, it is great in practice.

Great in Wisdom

In Mahāyāna, wisdom should be complete in actualizing both selflessness to person and selflessness to phenomena but Hinayana doesn't agree to it. According to them, realizing only the selflessness of person is considered as actualization of wisdom.

Great in perseverance

In Mahāyāna, a practitioner needs three innumerable aeons to realize Buddhahood but in lower vehicles, a practitioner put efforts and take maximumly one hundred kalpa/aeon to get realize Arhatship, then again, they need to enroll in Mahayana and by practicing practice according to Mahayana at last, the concerned becomes Buddha or realize Buddhahood.

Great in skillful means

In Mahāyāna, there are lots of skillful means mentioned in the directives of Mahāyāna texts for a practitioner such as using negative emotion like attachment as a means to benefiting others, but in lower vehicles, attachment is considered all the time as object of abandonment. This five greatness distinguish the causal path of Mahāyāna is far better or exalted than the causal path practiced which is mentioned in lower vehicles.

Great in completely accomplished

Mahāyāna is known and have complete package of path for Buddhahood. Due to practicing it without any remaining, a practitioner accomplishes completely that is the perfect Buddhahood.

Great in action: A practitioner performs any kinds of action thinking of all sentient beings without any exception in the motivation during practice and before practice, but in the lower vehicle, there are mere mentioning about action and to act it within certain limitation.

Understanding Bodhichitta

In general, and the most mundane sense, it is a kind of mind cherishing and concerning not mainly for oneself but primarily for other sentient beings. Bodhichitta is a Sanskrit version and each fractional parts of a word Bodhi and Chitta carry a meaning. A word Bodhi refers to completely awakened and a Citta denotes as mind and together it forms a meaning that A mind that is completely awakened or Buddha. In Bodhichitta, there are two classifications: Relative Bodhichitta and Ultimate Bodhichitta. The first kind of Bodhichitta, that generates through the support of or relying on outer condition such as teacher, by accumulating virtuous action, listening about Bodhicitta etc. are called relative Bodhichitta. The second kind of Bodhichitta generates as one realizes empty nature of one's own mind. So, ultimate Bodhichitta is a kind of understanding that actualizes nature of mind. Eventually, when this ultimate bodhicitta realizes thoroughly the holistic features of mind that is characterized as awareness and emptiness, that state of mind is known by the name of Buddha and to represent the state of Buddhahood, the historical aspect of Buddha name as Sakyamuni

Buddha is presented in the form of different paraphernalia. Thus, Bodhichitta is the potential seed to get resultant aspect of Buddhahood.

Understanding Spiritual practice in accordance with different cultures and concepts

A word spiritual agriculture or cultivation carries a connotation of cultivation of some kinds of practice that is directly or indirectly helped and meant for the development of actualizing actual state of spirit in the context of Abrahamic concept and culture or Ātmā according to proponents those who assert Ātmā as an ultimate attainment. Similarly, in accordance with the concept and culture of Buddhism, cultivation of Bodhichitta for actualizing the nature of mind.

Spiritual Agriculture particularly in Mahayana Buddhism

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are various kinds of spiritual agricultures or practices primarily motivated with generating Bodhichitta. There are spiritual agricultures such as six practices which are centrally focused on actualizing the refined and perfected nature of mind. Those are: practice of generosity for refinement of mind, practice of morality exclusively oriented to subdue the mind, practice of forbearance for purification of mind, practice of perseverance for the rapid development of mind to be purified, practice of concentration for the attainment of mind to be non-distractive, practice of wisdom for getting insight of selfless mind. In completing those practices, a practitioner becomes a buddha that who understands without any obstruction one's own mind clearly as it is.

How Bodhichitta can be called a significant spiritual practice

In all kinds of practice followed as mentioned in Mahāyāna text of Buddhism, it cannot be fulfilled to gain ultimate result without motivated in the beginning with Bodhichitta. If generating Bodhichitta lacks in practices, whatsoever practices it may be which is claimed to be precious and rare, that will not help one in actualizing perfect Buddhahood. Without actualizing the perfect Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas are not been able to help and do welfare to all sentient beings unconditionally. Therefore, generating Bodhichitta in the beginning before initializing the practice and maintaining it in the middle of the practice and dedicating all the virtue accrued through practicing for the welfare and all-round benefits of all sentient beings at the end, Bodhichitta plays as role of accelerating all its practices towards Buddhahood. Thus, the great Tibetan Scholar and the practitioner Je Gampopa (1079- 1153) clearly stated in the book named as “The Jewel Ornament of Liberation” as, “From the time one starts taking refuge until one meditates on the meaning of true selflessness, or from the paths until the ten Bhumis, all Dharma teachings are included in the cultivation of Bodhicitta”

How to cultivate Bodhichitta in one's mind

In the Mahāyāna tradition, there are broadly two accepted traditions in regard to cultivating Bodhichitta. Wyl. zabmo ltawa brgyud pa (Eng. Tradition of Profound view) and Wyl. rgya chen spyod brgyud pa (Eng. Tradition of Vast methods). According to Wyl. zabmo ltawai brgyud pa (Eng. Tradition of the Profound view), two kinds of practice are introduced through which one may generate Bodhichitta within. They are: Practice on treating self and

other equal in all aspects. Normally, we treat oneself so important than other and give more priority to oneself. Due to this self-cherishing attitude, it bears bad consequences and in turn, we suffer a lot in every aspect of walk of life. When we change this attitude of cherishing for oneself first in every aspect of life, it provides us peace of mind and thus, we experience every moment a moment of peace and harmony. Therefore, practicing in this way regularly and continually, we are able to generate Bodhichitta in the course of time. Secondly, there is practice of exchanging self to other and other to self. This practice is designed for the advanced level of practitioner who has already practiced something about purification of mind. The practice goes like this. Normally, we give much more important to oneself in every aspect of life and see no importance to other, in the continuation of this practice, we are so much into oneself and consequently, we become so limited and everything what happens within and around, we are not being able to see it largely or infinitely. Owing to it, we react everything through the specs of oneself. Therefore, we experience lots of problems even when we come across thing like drinking tea etc. On the other hand, if we change this attitude of scaling every good and bad from oneself instead measure it from other, we see and react a thing that comes across in our life differently, even we are able to make oneself satisfy and appreciate, and stop rushing for something else. According to Wyl. zabmo ltawai brgyud pa (Eng. Tradition of the Profound view), there are seven ways of practice called as “Seven-fold Pith Instructions of Cause and Effect”. They are:

Recognize the mother

Think about her kindness

Repay her Kindness

Reflecting on Loving Kindness

Reflecting on Compassion

Pure Intention Bodhichitta

When following this seven-fold pith instructions of cause and effect in align as instructed, the practitioner get used to it and in succession all those seven types of practices generate in the mind of practitioner and ultimately, the practitioner mind gets changed into the nature of Bodhichitta or his/her mind turns into the Bodhichitta/mind. In that manifested Bodhichitta or mind, the practitioner can start the practice of one's own choice aiming to get rid of from the ignorance and make the mind free of all extremes of dual perception such as attachment and animosity, good and bad, yes and no etc.

What consequences can be attained if Bodhichitta is practiced in regular basis in one's life

This practice of cultivating Bodhichitta or Bodhi mind is practiced not to get some kinds of certain goal such as getting job or recruited in one's desire positions, it is primarily got in completely one with one's own nature of self mainly to benefit others to make them completely cease from the root of suffering. On the other way, particularly, in the most

academic way, it will help and support to realize Buddha within. Therefore, Je Gampopa (1079-1153) clearly stated in the book named as “The Jewel Ornament of Liberation” as: “Cultivating the supreme Bodhichitta is the antidote for not understanding the method by which to achieve enlightenment”.

Conclusion

To sum up this lengthy elaboration about Bodhichitta being a quintessential significant agriculture or practice of Mahāyāna Buddhism, at first, what actually a Mahāyāna is known for and with respect to it, a word Mahā as described in the text called Sūtralankāra has been discussed at length. It is followed by the discussion on Bodhichitta with special reference to understanding the meaning of a word Bodhichitta actually meant in the context of Mahāyāna. In this continuation, how a word spiritual agriculture is understood and known according to the tradition of different concepts and cultures in general and in accordance with Mahāyāna Tradition in particular. Similarly, how Bodhichitta could be called and practiced as spiritual agriculture in Mahāyāna Tradition for the attainment of Buddhahood. In connection to it, the detail about way to cultivate Bodhichitta has been discussed and ultimately, the discussion has been made more properly that what kinds of accepted result would be gained after Bodhichitta is cultivated in the mind of practitioner.

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