

Grounds and Paths

The two principal goals of Buddhist study, contemplation, and meditation are:

- (1) liberation and
- (2) Buddhahood

In order to attain these two goals, practitioners must remove two types of obstructions:

- (1) afflictive obstructions (obstructions to liberation) and
- (2) cognitive obstructions (obstructions to omniscience)

The obstructions are removed by progressively attaining five paths, which means developing five levels of mind that serve as pathways to liberation and Buddhahood.

There are also two types of Buddhist practitioners, depending on the goals they aspire to reach:

- (1) practitioners who *only* seek liberation and
- (2) practitioners who seek Buddhahood (which includes the attainment of liberation)

In order to attend to the two types of practitioner, the Buddha taught two categories of practice:

- (1) the Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle and
- (2) the Mahayana/Universal Vehicle

Thus there are also two types of paths:

- (1) the five Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle paths and
- (2) the five Mahayana/Universal Vehicle paths.

The criterion for entering the Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle paths is having generated a spontaneous and uncontrived awareness that *only* aspires to attain liberation, *i.e.*, self-liberation. Such an awareness is called 'renunciation'. The criterion for entering the Mahayana/Universal Vehicle paths is having generated 'Bodhicitta', a spontaneous and uncontrived awareness that aspires to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The five Hinayana paths are:

1. The Hinayana path of accumulation
2. The Hinayana path of preparation
3. The Hinayana path of seeing
4. The Hinayana path of meditation
5. The Hinayana path of no-more-learning

Each of the Hinayana paths can be subdivided into:

1. The Hearer path of accumulation and the Solitary Realizer path of accumulation
2. The Hearer path of preparation and the Solitary Realizer path of preparation
3. The Hearer path of seeing and the Solitary Realizer path of seeing
4. The Hearer path of meditation and the Solitary Realizer path of seeing
5. The Hearer path of no-more-learning and the Solitary Realizer path of no-more-learning

The five Mahayana paths are:

1. The Mahayana path of accumulation
2. The Mahayana path of preparation
3. The Mahayana path of seeing
4. The Mahayana path of meditation
5. The Mahayana path of no-more-learning

	Hinayana / Fundamental Vehicle	Mahayana / Fundamental Vehicle
Practitioner	Practitioners who only aspire to attain liberation (Hearers and Solitary Realizers)	Practitioners who aspire to attain Buddhahood which includes the attainment of liberation (Bodhisattvas)
Types of practice	Hinayana / Fundamental Vehicle practices	Mahayana / Universal Vehicle practices which are based on the Hinayana practices
Paths	The five Hinayana paths (the five Hearer and five Solitary Realizer paths)	The five Mahayana paths (four Bodhisattva paths and one path in the continuum of a Buddha)
Obstructions to be removed	Afflictive obstructions (obstructions to liberation)	Afflictive obstructions (obstructions to liberation) and cognitive obstructions (obstructions to omniscience)
Goal / Result	Liberation (<i>i.e.</i> , self-liberation)	Buddhahood (which includes the attainment of liberation)

The five paths discussed next are the five Mahayana paths.

The presentation of each of the five Mahayana paths is preceded by a description of afflictive and cognitive obstructions as well as by a description of the 'entryway' to the Mahayana path.

Please note that all the explanations given here apply to practitioners who engage in the Mahayana path from the outset, and who have not previously removed afflictive obstructions by first attaining self-liberation in dependence on a Hinayana path (a Hearer or Solitary Realizer Hinayana path).

Afflictive and cognitive obstructions

Practitioners who *only* aspire to attain liberation and who follow the Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle only need to remove the afflictive obstructions, whereas practitioners who aspire to attain enlightenment, and thus follow the Mahayana/Universal Vehicle, have to successively eliminate both types of obstructions: (1) afflictive and (2) cognitive obstructions.

The elimination of afflictive obstructions precedes the elimination of cognitive obstructions. The reason for this is that afflictive obstructions are coarser than cognitive obstructions and thus easier to remove.

Afflictive obstructions

Afflictive obstructions refer to the root ignorance perceiving inherent existence, to the other afflictions (such as anger, attachment, etc.) induced by that ignorance, and to the seeds of both the foregoing.

In the context of afflictions, seeds hold the potential for afflictions to recur. When afflictions are not present in an ordinary person's mental continuum they lie dormant, *i.e.*, they abide on an unconscious level in the form of subtle potencies. These subtle potencies are called "seeds". For instance, when anger is not active in an ordinary person's mental continuum, it remains in the form of a seed of anger in his continuum, with the seed of anger holding the potential for anger to arise again. When the conditions for anger to arise come together (e.g. feeling tired and encountering an annoying object) the seed of anger transforms into manifest anger, *i.e.*, anger becomes manifest or present in that person's continuum.

This is why, until the seeds of afflictions are eliminated, the potential for them to arise is ever-present.

The only direct antidote that can irrevocably remove any of the afflictive or cognitive obstructions is the meditative equipoise directly realizing the ultimate nature of phenomena, *i.e.*, emptiness. Bodhisattvas generate this meditative equipoise for the first time on the path of seeing, and they start to eliminate obstructions once they reach that level of the Mahayana path.

Afflictive obstructions are further categorized into:

1. Intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions and
2. Innate afflictive obstructions

1. Intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions

Intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions are intellectually- or ideologically-acquired afflictions and the seeds of those afflictions.

Intellectually-acquired ignorance perceiving inherent existence, for instance, although rooted in innate ignorance, is a misperception that is not innate or inborn but is developed under the influence of philosophical, religious, scientific, or cultural views and beliefs. There are also other types of intellectually-acquired ignorance or misperception.

For example, at the time of the Buddha there were a number of philosophical systems that postulated a *permanent, partless, independent self*. Likewise, many religions accept the existence of a soul, a permanent entity that exists independently of mind and body. There are also the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's descriptions of the ego and the super-ego as well as popular attitudes that encourage us "to be someone in the world", "to be true to ourselves", and to "find ourselves". All these notions lead to intellectually-acquired misperceptions of a solid and independent self.

Another intellectually-acquired view is the acquired ignorance that apprehends the non-existence of past and future lives. This misconception is based on the current, widely accepted scientific view that our mind is just the product of chemical reactions within our brain and body, and that it ceases to exist at the time of death, when those chemical reactions come to an end.

Other intellectually-acquired afflictions, such as intellectually-acquired attachment, anger, arrogance, and so forth, are afflictions induced by intellectually-acquired ignorance.

Bodhisattvas remove intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions on the Mahayana path of seeing. These are the coarsest obstructions and are therefore eliminated first.

Mahayana practitioners are unable to eliminate intellectually-acquired obstructions during the Mahayana paths of accumulation and preparation. The reason is that, as explained above, the direct antidote to the obstructions is the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, which is attained for the first time on the path of seeing.

2. Innate afflictive obstructions

Innate afflictive obstructions refer to innate afflictions and the seeds of those afflictions. Innate afflictions arise naturally; they are inborn and thus not conditioned by the culture and environment we live in. For instance, regarding the innate ignorance apprehending the non-existence of the law of karma, we may have developed a firm conviction in the working of karma and live in a community that holds that same conviction. Yet when we encounter problems and difficulties, we instinctively blame other people or the environment for our problems. We spontaneously ascribe to them the main responsibility for all our trouble.

Similarly, even though we rationally know that our mind and body change moment by moment, we tend to have a sense that we ourselves and others do not change, but always remain the same. Intellectually, we understand that some day we are going to die; nonetheless we plan and live our lives as if we were immortal.

Furthermore, even if we have realized the lack of an inherently existent "I" and "mine", until we have overcome the seeds of the *innate* ignorance apprehending inherent existence, the spontaneous and instinctive misperception grasping onto an inherently existent self, etc. will continue to arise in our mental continuum.

Other innate afflictions such as innate anger, attachment, arrogance, jealousy, and so forth are induced by innate ignorance (in particular by the root ignorance perceiving inherent existence).

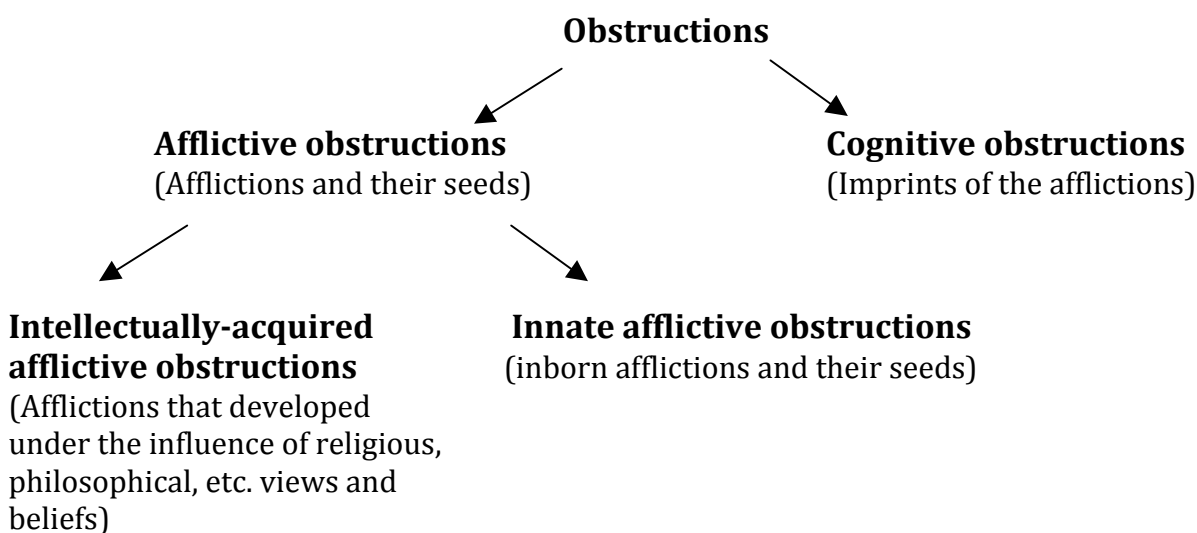
Innate afflictive obstructions are subtler than the intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions, but coarser than cognitive obstructions. They are removed after having eliminated the intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions, but before starting to eliminate the cognitive obstructions. They are gradually eliminated by the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness during the first eight Bodhisattva *bhumis*/grounds of the Mahayana path of meditation. This means that when Bodhisattvas reach the path of meditation they progress through the first seven Bodhisattva *bhumis*/grounds, during which they gradually remove most of the innate afflictive obstructions. Thereafter they achieve the eighth *bhumi*/ground, during which they remove the subtlest afflictive obstructions and attain liberation. However, they do not stop there: they continue to generate yogic direct perceivers realizing emptiness which eliminate cognitive obstructions.

Cognitive obstructions

Cognitive obstructions refer to the *imprints* of the root ignorance perceiving inherent existence and to the *imprints* of all other afflictions. These imprints are subtle propensities or predispositions that are left every time an affliction arises in a person's mental continuum. The imprints of the ignorance perceiving inherent existence, for instance, prevent sentient beings from explicitly realizing the two truths with a single awareness. They are responsible for the appearance of inherent existence to the sense consciousnesses and other awarenesses. And they obstruct sentient beings' mental consciousnesses from becoming omniscient.

As explained before, cognitive obstructions are the subtlest obstructions and thus the last to be removed. After Bodhisattvas have removed all the afflictive obstructions, they eliminate cognitive obstructions on the eighth, ninth, and tenth Bodhisattva *bhumis*/grounds. Thereafter, they simultaneously attain the *cessation* of the subtlest cognitive obstructions and the full enlightenment of a Buddha.

This completes the description of afflictive and cognitive obstructions. More detailed accounts of their elimination will be provided during the presentation of the Mahayana paths of seeing and meditation.



Next follows a description of the entryway to the Mahayana path.

The entryway to the Mahayana path

Practitioners must first attain the first of the five paths, the Mahayana path of accumulation (which also constitutes attaining or entering the Mahayana path in general). As mentioned above, the criterion for entering this path is the spontaneous and uncontrived awareness that aspires to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. A main mind that is such an awareness is called the 'mind of enlightenment' or 'Bodhicitta'.

Bodhicitta is defined as:

A special mental main mind (*i.e.*, mental consciousness that is a main mind) which is the entryway to the Mahayana path and which is concurrent with its assistant aspiration, (a mental factor) that focuses on complete enlightenment for the welfare of others.

The meaning of the different aspects of the definition is:

- Bodhicitta is **special** because it is one of the principal awarenesses required to attain enlightenment.
- Bodhicitta is a **mental main mind** because it is a mental consciousness (as opposed to a sense consciousness) and a main mind (as opposed to a mental factor). Of the two, sense and mental consciousnesses, Bodhicitta is a mental consciousness because it is cultivated in dependence on meditation.
- Bodhicitta is **the entry-way to the Mahayana path** because practitioners on the Mahayana path are characterized by having generated Bodhicitta. This means that

whether someone is on the Mahayana path or not depends primarily on whether that person has Bodhicitta or not. The moment he generates Bodhicitta he enters the Mahayana path and becomes a Bodhisattva, whereas the moment his Bodhicitta deteriorates, he loses his Mahayana path and is no longer a Bodhisattva or Mahayanist.

Yet, even though Bodhicitta is the criterion that determines whether practitioners are Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path, this does not mean that Bodhicitta must always be present in their continuum. At times (for example during deep sleep or when realizing emptiness directly) Bodhicitta lies dormant so that it exists in the form of a seed (*i.e.*, a potential) and is not an active awareness. Nonetheless, even then it influences the physical, verbal, and mental actions of Bodhisattvas. Therefore, the scriptures explain that the factor that determines whether practitioners are Bodhisattvas is not whether Bodhicitta is present in their continuum, but whether Bodhicitta “has been attained and has not deteriorated”.

Also, not only is Bodhicitta the criterion for entering the Mahayana path in general, it is also the criterion for entering the Mahayana *path of accumulation* because a practitioner’s first moment of Bodhicitta and a practitioner’s first moment of the Mahayana path of accumulation are attained simultaneously.

- Bodhicitta is **concurrent with its assistant aspiration** because as a main mind it is associated or concurrent with different functions, *i.e.*, mental factors. Therefore, in addition to being concurrent with the five omnipresent mental factors Bodhicitta is also concurrent with the mental factor of aspiration.
- **Its concurrent** mental factor of **aspiration focuses on complete enlightenment for the benefit of others** because its main objective is the enlightenment of a Buddha, which it strives to attain in order to be of the utmost benefit to all sentient beings.

Therefore, as will become clearer below, Bodhicitta is a special awareness that is the result of intense and prolonged meditation. It is driven by great compassion for all sentient beings, and once it has been cultivated it arises spontaneously, profoundly affecting the actions of body, speech, and mind of those who have cultivated it in their mental continuum.

Furthermore, Bodhicitta has two components, one which is its cause and the other which is its concurrent mental factor. These two components constitute two types of aspiration that are vital to the generation of Bodhicitta and hence to becoming a Buddha:

- a) The aspiration to benefit others
- b) The enlightenment aspiration

The aspiration to benefit others

The *aspiration to benefit others* is a mental factor that aspires to achieve the benefit of others.

Here '*others*' refers to sentient beings other than oneself, whereas 'benefit' is of two types: (1) temporary benefit, which refers to the liberation of an Arhat and (2) ultimate benefit, which refers to the enlightenment of a Buddha.

The *aspiration to benefit others* is a component of Bodhicitta because it constitutes the mental factor of aspiration that is one of Bodhicitta's main causes. It therefore precedes the cultivation of Bodhicitta and arises as a result of meditating on the two principal methods for generating Bodhicitta: (1) the 'Seven-fold Cause and Effect Method' and (2) 'Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others' (which will be explained below). The main focus of the *aspiration to benefit others* is

other sentient beings' liberation from suffering in general and their enlightenment in particular. Thus, the aspiration that must precede Bodhicitta is a mental factor that aspires to other sentient beings' lasting happiness, *i.e.*, their liberation from suffering and complete enlightenment.

The enlightenment aspiration

The *enlightenment aspiration* refers to the above-mentioned mental factor, concurrent with Bodhicitta, that focuses on complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. It arises as a *result* of wishing for the liberation and enlightenment of all sentient beings, *i.e.*, it arises as a result of the *aspiration to benefit others*.

The enlightenment of a Buddha refers to two features or *kayas*: (1) the *Dharmakaya* (*Truth-body*) and (2) the *Rupakaya* (*Form-body*).

The *Dharmakaya* constitutes the omniscient mind, the cessation of cognitive obstructions, etc. in the continuum of a Buddha.

The *Rupakaya* refers to an actual Arya Buddha who gives teachings and manifests in whichever way is most beneficial to sentient beings. Since sentient beings cannot communicate with or perceive the omniscient mind and the cessations of a Buddha, it is the *Rupakaya* that is most beneficial to them. Thus, when aspiring to attain enlightenment - as a result of aspiring to benefit sentient beings - Mahayana practitioners mainly aspire to attain the *Rupakaya* of a Buddha.

In short, the *aspiration to benefit others* must precede the generation of Bodhicitta and thus the generation of the *enlightenment aspiration*, because the main objective of a practitioner of the Mahayana is the benefit of others, *i.e.*, others' liberation and enlightenment.

Hence, based on the 'Sevenfold Cause and Effect Method' or 'Equalizing and Exchanging Self and others', practitioners first generate great compassion for all sentient beings. Then they cultivate the *aspiration to benefit others*, that is, the aspiration that wishes for all sentient beings to attain liberation and Buddhahood. However, since one is able to lead others to enlightenment only *after* one has become a Buddha oneself, once they generate the *aspiration to benefit others*, practitioners generate the aspiration that focuses on their own enlightenment (*i.e.*, the *enlightenment aspiration*). Hence, the aspiration to attain enlightenment oneself arises out of the aspiration that seeks the enlightenment of all sentient beings and thus arises in dependence on the latter.

Also, of the two objectives - others' enlightenment and one's own enlightenment - others' enlightenment is the principal or immediate objective, whereas one's own enlightenment is merely the secondary or indirect aim.

An analogy for this is someone having the wish to get a glass in order to drink some water. Drinking water is that person's principal or immediate aim. In order to be able to drink the water, he then wishes for a glass. Getting the glass is his secondary or indirect objective, for the glass merely serves as the means to accomplish his principal aim of drinking water.

Therefore, wishing for one's own enlightenment compares with the wish to get a glass, for it merely serves as the means to accomplish others' welfare.

However, even though the aspiration for others' enlightenment must precede the aspiration to one's own, in order to fulfil the two aspirations, one's own enlightenment must precede the enlightenment of others.

The *aspiration to benefit others* (the wish for others' enlightenment) —————> LEADS TO The *enlightenment aspiration* (the wish for one's own enlightenment)

One's own enlightenment —————> LEADS TO The enlightenment of others

Owing to our habitual self-centred attitude, it is extremely difficult to cultivate Bodhicitta and enter the Mahayana path. Developing Bodhicitta requires the prior generation of numerous different types of awarenesses (besides the *aspiration to benefit others*) that function as the causes of Bodhicitta. These causal awarenesses, in turn, are the outcome of intense and prolonged study, contemplation, and meditation on the Buddha's teachings.

The most important causal awarenesses are:

- The awareness that aspires to attain liberation (also called 'renunciation' or 'the wish for definite emergence')
- Equanimity
- The awareness that understands that all sentient beings have been one's mother, the awareness that recognizes their kindness, and the awareness that seeks to repay their kindness (these three are part of the *Sevenfold Cause and Effect Instruction*, explained below)
- The awareness that equalizes and exchanges self and others
- Affectionate love
- Great compassion
- The special attitude

The awareness that aspires to attain liberation

In this case, the awareness that aspires to attain liberation or renunciation differs from the awareness that *only* aspires to attain liberation, which is the entryway to the Hinayana path. Here, the awareness that aspires to attain liberation, and must precede the cultivation of Bodhicitta, is a mind which does not confine itself to only aspiring to attain self-liberation. Instead, it is a mind that is conjoined with an affinity for the Mahayana vehicle and thus with an interest in developing great compassion and Bodhicitta.

Nonetheless, as in generating the renunciation that serves as an entryway to the Hinayana path, generating this mind depends on listening, contemplating, and meditating on teachings common to the Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle, in particular, the teachings on the four noble truths, the twelve links of dependent arising, and so forth.

The awareness that aspires to attain liberation refers to the sincere wish to overcome cyclic existence and hence the three types of suffering (*i.e.*, the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and the pervasive conditioned suffering). This is an awareness that has overcome attraction to the pleasures of *samsara* and it must precede the cultivation of great compassion and Bodhicitta. This is because one cannot wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering if one does not wish to be free from suffering oneself.

However, before one can overcome attraction to the pleasures of *samsara*, one needs to cultivate the awareness that has overcome attraction to the pleasures of this lifetime and instead wishes for happiness in future lifetimes.

Equanimity

The next awareness practitioners develop is equanimity, which must precede the two principal techniques for generating Bodhicitta. Those two techniques will be explained below.

Equanimity refers to impartiality towards all sentient beings and serves as a basis for great compassion and Bodhicitta. It is a state of mind that feels it is pointless to become prejudiced towards others, *i.e.*, to discriminate between friend and enemy or agreeable and disagreeable, and to act under the sway of attachment and anger. Therefore, practitioners who have developed this type of equanimity reduce the coarser forms of those undesirable responses; once free from acting under their influence, they gain some mental equilibrium.

In order to cultivate such equanimity one should contemplate the following points, based on two reasons given by Kamalashila in his ***Middling Stages of Meditation*** to justify why it makes sense to have equanimity towards all sentient beings:

- i. From their own side, sentient beings are equal: they all want to be happy and do not want to experience suffering.
- ii. There is no reason to discriminate from our side:
 - a) Regarding our relationship with other sentient beings, we are attached to some, have aversion towards others and feel indifferent towards the rest. As soon as we meet people, we immediately judge them to be agreeable, disagreeable or uninteresting.
 - b) There are numerous disadvantages to such attachment, aversion, and so forth.
 - c) Our preference or dislike for particular sentient beings is often based on very superficial reasons, many of which are not in accordance with reality.
 - d) Regarding sentient beings who have really benefitted or harmed us in this lifetime, our relationships with those beings are not as clear-cut and fixed as they seem. Just within this lifetime there can be many changes. The ever-changing relationships we have with sentient beings are even more apparent when we consider past and future lives.

The remaining awarenesses that function as causes of Bodhicitta are set forth in the context of presenting the methods or techniques for cultivating Bodhicitta. As mentioned above, there are two techniques. They are explained separately but are combined in practice.

The two techniques are:

- a) The sevenfold cause and effect instruction
- b) Equalizing and exchanging self and others

The sevenfold cause and effect instruction originated with Shakyamuni Buddha and has come down to us from the great masters Maitreya, Asanga, Chandrakirti, Chandragomin, Kamalashila, and so forth.

Equalizing and exchanging self and others also originated with Shakyamuni Buddha and has come down to us from the great masters Manjushri, Nagarjuna, Shantideva, and so forth. The Indonesian master Serlingpa held both traditions and passed them on to his disciple Atisha who disseminated them in a combined form in Tibet.

Furthermore, both techniques include the cultivation of affectionate love, great compassion, and the special attitude, which are cited separately in the above enumeration of the causes of Bodhicitta.

a) *The sevenfold cause and effect instruction*

The six causes are:

1. Understanding that all sentient beings have been one's mother
2. Recognizing their kindness
3. Wishing to repay their kindness
4. Affectionate love
5. Great compassion
6. The special attitude

In dependence on these causes the effect is:

7. Bodhicitta

1. Understanding that all sentient beings have been one's mother

Meditating on all sentient beings having been our mother is based on the fact that we have been taking birth in cyclic existence since beginningless time and that each and every sentient has thus been our mother limitless times.

Through continuous and prolonged familiarity with this fact, we come to a point where we have an automatic ascertainment that anyone we encounter has acted as our mother during countless lifetimes.

2. Recognizing their kindness

Having developed a deep understanding that all sentient beings have been our mother countless times, we come to recognize that not only has each and every sentient being displayed the same, or even more devotion and kindness towards us as our mother in this present life, each of them has done so *infinite* times.

3. Wishing to repay their kindness

After having developed a strong sense of our mothers' kindness, we develop the strong wish to repay all sentient beings for everything they have done for us.

4. Affectionate love

In general, the definition of love is a caring attitude that wants a sentient being/sentient beings to be happy. However, affectionate love is not love in the sense that it is not a mental factor that wants sentient beings to be happy. Rather, it is a caring affection that finds *all* sentient beings endearing, and feels close to them.

5. Great compassion

The definition of great compassion is a caring attitude that wants all sentient beings to be free from suffering. Great compassion is different from ordinary compassion since it wishes for *all* sentient beings to be free from suffering.

6. The special attitude

Having cultivated great compassion and thus the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering, we now generate the wish to free all sentient beings from suffering *by ourselves*.

7. Bodhicitta

Having developed the superior intention, wanting to free all sentient beings by ourselves, we then come to the understanding that we will only be able to free all sentient beings from suffering and lead them to Buddhahood if we become enlightened. Therefore, we cultivate the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

b) *Equalizing and exchanging self and others*

The method of *equalizing and exchanging self and others* also consists of a number of sequential steps that lead to the generation of Bodhicitta:

1. Equalizing and exchanging self and others
2. Affectionate love
3. Great compassion
4. The special attitude

In dependence on these causes the effect is:

5. Bodhicitta

1. Equalizing and exchanging self and others

Equalizing and exchanging self and others can be further categorized into the following meditational steps:

- a) Identifying the self-cherishing/self-centred attitude
- b) The shortcomings of the self-cherishing attitude
- c) The qualities of cherishing others
- d) Self and others are equal
- e) Exchanging self and others

a) *Identifying the self-cherishing/self-centred attitude*

Here the self-cherishing attitude refers to a type of attachment which clings to "I" and "mine" and considers our personal happiness and well-being to be more important than that of others. This attachment is induced by the ignorance or misperception that perceives "I" and "mine" to exist inherently. Therefore, the ignorance perceiving "I" and "mine" to exist inherently comes first, and then, induced by that misperception, the self-cherishing attitude arises.

That attitude causes an avoidance of short-term problems and an unwillingness to strive towards long-term happiness. From attachment to the self and an exaggerated sense of its importance, we are unable to bear even the slightest harm. Even minimal difficulties are considered extremely disconcerting, while there is a constant sense of impending personal loss.

b) *The shortcomings of the self-cherishing attitude*

The self-cherishing attitude is described as the door to suffering since it is responsible for our problems and difficulties. Unhappiness, depression, worry, dissatisfaction, pain,

illness, etc. are all the result of our self-centeredness, our attachment and clinging to "I" and "mine".

c) *The qualities of cherishing others*

Cherishing others, on the other hand, is described as the basis of all positive qualities, for it is responsible for all our happiness. Everything good in life, our positive experiences with family and friends, our well-being, possessions, comfort, and so forth are the result of cherishing others.

d) *Self and others are equal*

Contemplating just a few facts enables practitioners to get a deep sense of the equality of self and others. Those facts stress the importance of *other* sentient beings, since we ordinarily feel that we ourselves and our happiness are more important than others and their happiness:

- i. Sentient beings are extremely crucial to our basic survival. Our food, clothing, shelter and everything required to sustain us is provided by other sentient beings. It is in dependence on them that we derive resources and enjoyments. Even something as insignificant as a bowl of rice depends on the effort of numerous sentient beings.
- ii. Furthermore, everything we know, our education, skills and abilities, depend on others since we acquired them by directly or indirectly relying on other sentient beings.
- iii. From the point of view of the Dharma, any positive qualities we possess depend on other sentient beings. We can generate love and compassion only when there are other beings who are the focus of those wholesome mental states. The same is true for qualities such as generosity, morality, patience, and so forth. This is why it is said that we should respect sentient beings the way we respect Buddhas.
- iv. Moreover, self and others are equal because everyone wants to be happy and free from misery. No one wants to experience the slightest suffering, and everybody constantly strives to experience happiness. This is the one characteristic we have in common with all sentient beings.
- v. Lastly, from the point of view of ultimate reality, all sentient beings are equal for they equally lack inherent, intrinsic existence. Therefore, "I" and "others" are merely imputed, relative and dependent on one another, just as "here" and "there", or "this" and "that".

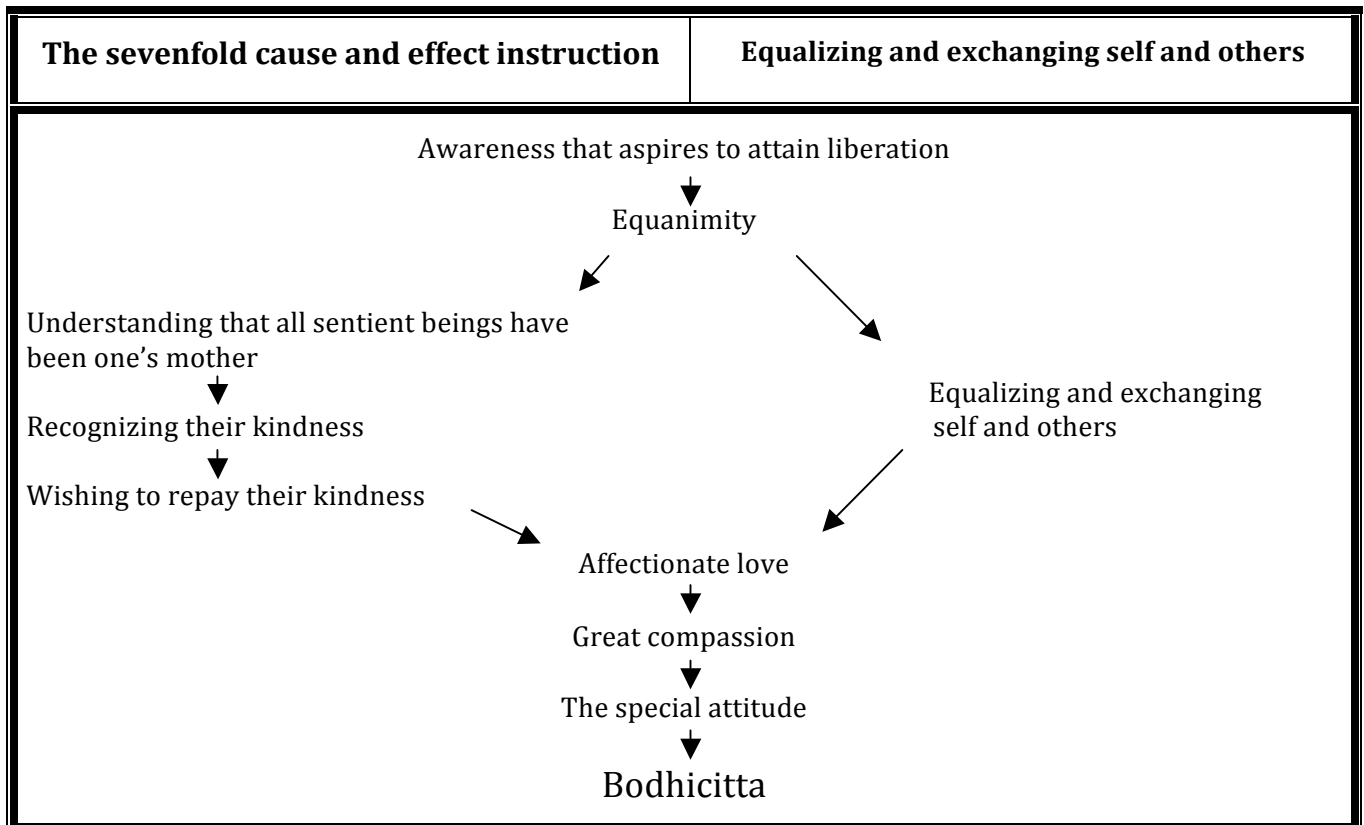
e) *Exchanging self and others*

Having realized the faults of cherishing oneself, the benefits of cherishing others, and the fact that self and others are equal, now we are able to replace the mind that cherishes the self and our own happiness with the mind that cherishes others and their happiness. The latter, unlike the mind that cherishes one's own self, is a mental state that accords with reality and is responsible for our own and others' welfare.

However, this does not mean that we should totally neglect ourselves. Instead, it means that our primary focus shifts to the happiness and well-being of others. If we neglect ourselves, we cannot effectively work for the welfare of others and thus it is crucial that we assure our personal physical and mental well-being.

Reversing our focus from "I" and "mine" to "others" is very difficult initially, owing to the strong imprints of the self-cherishing attitude, and requires continuous effort and mindfulness. However, with prolonged meditation we will eventually be able 'to exchange self and others'.

Once we are able to do so, we move on to develop the remaining causes of Bodhicitta that were explained during the description of the *sevenfold cause and effect instruction* – affectionate love, great compassion, and the special attitude – before cultivating Bodhicitta itself.



This completes the presentation of Bodhicitta, the entryway to the Mahayana path.

Next follows a detailed presentation of the five paths:

The Mahayana Path of Accumulation

Regarding the etymology of the path of accumulation (Tib: *tshogs lam* / *tshog* = accumulate, accumulation, *lam* = path), Bodhisattvas who have entered this path must accumulate sufficient merit and wisdom to be able to proceed to the next level, the path of preparation. However, since practitioners also have to accumulate merit and wisdom on the path of preparation, the path of seeing, and the path of meditation, this explanation does not serve as a definition of the path of accumulation. Instead, 'path of accumulation' here means that this path is the first of the four learner paths that accumulate merit and wisdom in order to achieve the path of no-more-learning.

The Mahayana path of accumulation is also referred to as:

- ‘Mahayana partial concordance with liberation’ (Tib: *theg chen gyi thar pa cha mthun*, *theg chen* = Mahayana, *gyi* = genitive, *cha* = part, segment, *mthun* = concordance, conformation, *cha mthun* = partial concordance, partially concordant) and
- ‘Mahayana clear realization of Dharma’ (Tib: *theg chen gyi chos mngon rtogs* / *theg chen* = Mahayana, *gyi* = genitive, *chos* = Dharma, *mngon rtogs* = clear realization)

The etymology of ‘Mahayana partial concordance with liberation’ is as follows: liberation refers to a truth of cessation that is the elimination of all afflictive obstructions. A truth of cessation that is the elimination of only the *intellectually-acquired* afflictive obstructions is a part or a segment of liberation. Hence, the Mahayana path of accumulation is a ‘Mahayana partial concordance with liberation’ because it is a Mahayana path that is concordant with or akin to the path that attains only a part or segment of liberation, the path of seeing.

Regarding the etymology of ‘Mahayana clear realization of Dharma’, ‘Dharma’ here refers to the twelve branches of the Buddha’s teachings (Tib: *gsung rab yan lag bcu gnyis* / *gsung rab* = Buddha’s teachings, *yan lag* = limb, branch, division, *bcu gnyis* = twelve). The twelve branches of the Buddha’s teachings refer to twelve different types of teachings of the Buddha, such as his general teachings, prophecies, Jataka tales, teachings in verse, and so forth. The Mahayana path of accumulation is a ‘Mahayana clear realization of Dharma’ because it is a Mahayana clear realization, *i.e.*, a Mahayana path that follows the words of the twelve limbs of the Buddha’s teachings, and in reliance mainly on a *wisdom arisen from listening* and a *wisdom arisen from contemplation*, advances towards the attainment of the ‘Mahayana clear realization of the meaning’, *i.e.*, the Mahayana path of preparation.

Here, a *wisdom arisen from listening* refers to a correctly assuming consciousness apprehending emptiness, while a *wisdom arisen from contemplation* refers to an inferential cognizer realizing emptiness. Practitioners on the Mahayana path of accumulation (who entered the Mahayana path from the outset) do not yet realize emptiness with a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight (*i.e.*, a *wisdom arisen from meditation*) since such a union of calm abiding and special insight realizing emptiness marks the attainment of the path of preparation. Therefore, Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation rely mainly on correctly assuming consciousnesses and inferential cognizers for their perception of emptiness.

As explained above, the first moment of the Mahayana path of accumulation is marked by the cultivation of the first moment of Bodhicitta. The first time practitioners generate Bodhicitta, they enter the Mahayana path and become Bodhisattvas.

Yet, out of the five Mahayana paths, only the first four are Bodhisattva paths, whereas the last path, the path of no-more-learning, is an omniscient mind that arises only in the continuum of a Buddha.

Furthermore, even though Bodhicitta is the criterion that determines whether Bodhisattvas are on the Mahayana path, as mentioned above, this does not mean that Bodhicitta must always be present in their continuum. Therefore, the factor that determines whether practitioners are Bodhisattvas is whether Bodhicitta “has been attained and has not deteriorated”.

Bodhicitta can be divided into:

- (1) aspirational Bodhicitta and
- (2) engaging Bodhicitta

The first moment of Bodhicitta on the path of accumulation refers to aspirational Bodhicitta, for it is Bodhicitta that is not conjoined with the Bodhisattva vow. Engaging Bodhicitta, on the other hand, is Bodhicitta that is conjoined with the Bodhisattva vow. In other words, engaging Bodhicitta is the mind of enlightenment present in the continuum of a Bodhisattva who has received the Bodhisattva vow and not transgressed it.

Therefore, Mahayana practitioners first cultivate Bodhicitta (aspirational Bodhicitta) and then receive the vow, thereby converting their aspirational Bodhicitta into engaging Bodhicitta. The reason for this is that practitioners do not receive the Bodhisattva vow *before* generating Bodhicitta. They can only receive it when they are already Bodhisattvas.

The meaning of a Mahayana path is: a virtuous awareness that is conjoined with Bodhicitta.

Please note that all paths are mental consciousnesses since sense consciousnesses are neutral (*i.e.*, neither virtuous nor non-virtuous). A virtuous awareness that is conjoined with Bodhicitta refers to a virtuous awareness that is enhanced and strengthened by Bodhicitta, irrespective of whether Bodhicitta is present at the time when the virtuous consciousness is present. This means that Bodhicitta can enhance and strengthen virtuous awarenesses such as generosity, morality, patience, and so forth, even when Bodhicitta lies dormant.

The Mahayana path of accumulation consists of three levels:

- 1) The small Mahayana path of accumulation
- 2) The middling Mahayana path of accumulation
- 3) The great Mahayana path of accumulation

The small Mahayana path of accumulation

The following awarenesses are attained simultaneously: the first moment of the Mahayana path of accumulation, the first moment of Bodhicitta, and the first moment of the *small* Mahayana path of accumulation. The reason for this is that the first moment of Bodhicitta is both the first moment of the Mahayana path of accumulation and the first moment of the *small* Mahayana path of accumulation.

Therefore, the criterion for entering the *small* Mahayana path of accumulation is Bodhicitta, because when Bodhicitta arises for the first time in the continuum of practitioners, they newly enter that path.

However, during the period of the small path of accumulation, Bodhicitta may still deteriorate and practitioners can lose the Mahayana path.

Also, Bodhicitta can be categorized into two: (1) aspirational Bodhicitta and (2) engaging Bodhicitta. The first moment of Bodhicitta in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the first moment of the small Mahayana path of accumulation is necessarily *aspirational Bodhicitta*.

Aspirational Bodhicitta refers to Bodhicitta in the continuum of practitioners who have not yet obtained the Bodhisattva vow, while engaging Bodhicitta refers to Bodhicitta in the continuum of practitioners who have obtained the vow.

To have obtained the Bodhisattva vow means to have received and not transgressed the Bodhisattva vow which consists of eighteen major and forty-six minor vows. Since one of the main vows is not to give up Bodhicitta, only Bodhisattvas are able to receive those vows.

Practitioners first generate Bodhicitta and then receive the Bodhisattva vow which they must take on the small path of accumulation, for there are no Bodhisattvas on the middling path of

accumulation who do not have the vow. Therefore, Bodhicitta on the middling path of accumulation is necessarily *engaging Bodhicitta*.

Bodhicitta on the small path of accumulation is called 'Earth-Like Bodhicitta' because just as the earth is the foundation for crops, trees, houses, etc. likewise the mind of enlightenment on this level serves as the basis from which all subsequent realizations can grow and all higher paths are cultivated.

Regarding their practice, unless they have cultivated a correct assumption perceiving emptiness (a 'wisdom arisen from listening') and an inferential cognizer realizing emptiness (a 'wisdom arisen from contemplation') *before* they entered the small path of accumulation, Bodhisattvas on this level must now train in generating those awarenesses.

In other words, unless practitioners attained a correct apprehension of emptiness (without *realizing* the lack of inherent existence) in dependence on receiving teachings, and thereafter trained in realizing emptiness by contemplating and reflecting on the various reasons that establish the ultimate nature of reality *before* they entered the Mahayana path, they must do so now. This is because Bodhisattvas must *realize* emptiness conceptually at the latest on the *middling* Mahayana path of accumulation.

In addition to meditating on emptiness, practitioners also meditate on love, compassion, the six perfections, and so forth – as they do during all the levels of the Bodhisattva paths.

The middling Mahayana path of accumulation

On this level of the path of accumulation, Mahayanists attain "Gold-Like Bodhicitta", *i.e.*, Bodhicitta which has become so strong and stable that it cannot deteriorate anymore. Once Bodhisattvas proceed to the middling Mahayana path of accumulation they can no longer lose the aspiration to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings and thus they can no longer lose the Mahayana path in their mental continuum.

Similarly, on this level of the path, there is no longer any transgression of the Bodhisattva vow and Bodhicitta is necessarily *engaging Bodhicitta*.

Also, as mentioned above, unless they had realized emptiness before they cultivated Bodhicitta or when they were on the small Mahayana path of accumulation, Bodhisattvas have to realize emptiness at the latest on this level, otherwise they are unable to move to the next level.

Of the three categories of phenomena (manifest, slightly hidden, and very hidden), emptiness is a slightly hidden phenomenon and thus newly realized by an inferential cognizer. Inferential cognizers are conceptual consciousnesses that realize their hidden objects of engagement in dependence on correct reasons.

An example of a correct reason that establishes the emptiness of a person is:

The subject, the person, is empty of inherent existence because he/she is dependently arisen.

Having reflected on this correct reason (as well as on other reasons) establishing selflessness, now Bodhisattvas newly generate an inferential cognizer that conceptually realizes the lack of inherent existence of the person. In dependence on other correct reasons they also come to inferentially realize the lack of inherent existence, *i.e.*, the selflessness of phenomena other than the person.

Furthermore, the next level, the *great* Mahayana path of accumulation is characterized by the attainment of a special meditative stabilization called "*Mental Stabilization of Continuous Dharma*" which will be explained below. In order to facilitate this attainment, Bodhisattvas on

the *middling* level of the path of accumulation have to achieve (unless it was achieved before) a meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight.

In turn, the attainment of such a union must be preceded by developing calm abiding.

Etymologically, calm abiding refers to a mental stabilization abiding single-pointedly on an object, after distractions have been calmed.

For the development of calm abiding, practitioners choose an object of focus that leads neither to excitement nor to mental sluggishness, such as the image of a Buddha or the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. By single-pointedly focusing on that object, they progress through nine states: (1) setting the mind, (2) continuous setting, (3) resetting, (4) close setting, (5) disciplining, (6) pacifying, (7) thorough pacifying, (8) making one-pointed, and (9) setting in equipoise.

When meditators have reached the ninth state (*setting in equipoise*), they are able to focus effortlessly on an internal or imagined object without mental laxity or excitement for at least four hours.

However, this is not yet sufficient, because calm abiding is only attained when the ninth state is conjoined with physical and mental pliancy. Hence, practitioners continue with their single-pointed meditation until they first achieve mental pliancy. Such pliancy makes the mind serviceable by pacifying the detrimental states that cause the awareness to be heavy and inflexible, and prevent it from engaging in virtue at will.

Thereafter, they achieve a physical pliancy which makes the body serviceable and is a pacification of physical heaviness and inflexibility.

Calm abiding is defined as a mental stabilization that engages its focal object effortlessly and spontaneously through being conjoined with pliancy.

The cultivation of calm abiding is followed by the development of special insight, with special insight being generated based on or conjoined with calm abiding. Please note that special insight and the meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight are attained simultaneously.

Etymologically, special insight means a special ability to see, or perceive, that endows the mind with a degree of clarity through analysis that differs from non-analytical calm abiding.

In order to develop special insight, practitioners initially harmonise calm abiding and analytical meditation by alternating from one to the other, because too much concentration would disrupt the process of analysis, while too much analysis would reduce the factor of stabilization.

For the analytical meditation, one may take the image of a Buddha as an object, and then analyse its features, characteristics, and so forth. When, through introspection, practitioners sense that excitement is about to arise, they shift to meditative stabilization (calm abiding) which focuses single-pointedly on the same object (i.e. the image of a Buddha), and they alternate back to analysis when the mind has stabilized.

Through this process of repeatedly alternating between analytical and stabilizing meditation, meditators are eventually able to combine the mental factor of calm abiding with the mental factor of analytical wisdom. This means that calm-abiding and analytical wisdom now operate in parallel at the same time, with equal power, one assisting the other. They have become concomitant mental factors and they perceive the same object.

When analytical wisdom further induces a mental and physical pliancy, imparting special stability and clarity to the analytical mind, practitioners attain the mental stabilization which is

a union of calm abiding and special insight, with the image of a Buddha as the object. This enables them to gain a deep, clear and intense perception, free from mental distraction and sluggishness.

Special insight is defined as a wisdom that thoroughly analyzes its objects and is conjoined with a pliancy induced by analyzing focal objects from within calm abiding.

The great Mahayana path of accumulation

As mentioned above, Bodhisattvas on the great Mahayana path of accumulation attain the *Mental Stabilization of Continuous Dharma*. Etymologically this awareness is a mental stabilization that is able to perceive continuously or uninterruptedly the words and meaning of Dharma discourses.

The *Mental Stabilization of Continuous Dharma* is usually described as: a mental stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight that yields a special potential to listen to instructions from *Supreme Emanation Bodies*, having purified the obstructions to directly seeing Buddhas and receiving Dharma teachings from them.

Please note that *Supreme Emanation Bodies* refer to emanations of Buddhas who are also called 'Founding' or 'Historical Buddhas' and who display the twelve enlightened deeds, like Buddha Shakyamuni and Buddha Maitreya. Although Buddha Shakyamuni passed away in our world about 2600 years ago and Buddha Maitreya has not yet been born, there are other *Supreme Emanation Bodies* in other world-systems who are turning the Wheel of Dharma right now and who can be directly perceived by those who have attained the *Mental Stabilization of Continuous Dharma*.

Therefore, once Bodhisattvas have reached the great Mahayana path of accumulation, they are able to directly perceive *Supreme Emanation Bodies* in far-away places and receive teachings from them.

At the same time, along with wisdom, compassion, love, etc., Bodhicitta in the continuum of practitioners on the great Mahayana path of accumulation has grown stronger (as it grows stronger on each level of the Bodhisattva paths). Bodhicitta on this level is called 'Moon-like Bodhicitta', because with Bodhicitta on the great Mahayana path of accumulation, Bodhisattvas' Dharma qualities increase continuously just as the new moon waxes until it is full. Those Dharma qualities are, for instance, the thirty-seven factors to enlightenment (such as the four mindfulnesses).

One of the reasons for this increase is the attainment of the *Mental Stabilization of Continuous Dharma*, which gives Bodhisattvas the opportunity to directly receive Dharma teachings from Buddhas and thereby to engage intensely in the practice of listening, contemplating, and meditating on the teachings they receive.

Also, since the criterion for entering the next path, the Mahayana path of preparation, is the cultivation of the 'mental stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' (a 'wisdom arisen from meditation'), Bodhisattvas on the *great* path of accumulation need to engage in *training* in the development of such a union.

As before, they alternately generate calm abiding and analytical wisdom. Yet at this time, instead of focusing on the image of a Buddha, each of the two mental factors focuses on emptiness.

After prolonged alternation (while on the path of accumulation), calm abiding and the analytical wisdom eventually become concomitant mental factors, both of which conceptually realize the ultimate nature of phenomena. Once the analytical wisdom induces a special mental and

physical pliancy, practitioners attain the ‘mental stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness’. This marks the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation. Hence when the ‘mental stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness’ is attained for the first time, the great path of accumulation has become the path of preparation.

Mahayana path of accumulation			
Small path of accumulation	Middling path of accumulation	Great path of accumulation	
B O D H I C I T T A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bodhicitta can still deteriorate. It is called ‘Earth-like Bodhicitta’. ▪ Unless emptiness has been apprehended with a correct assumption and realized with an inferential cognizer before, practitioners develop a correct apprehension of emptiness and then <i>train</i> in the different types of reasoning that establish the lack of true existence. ▪ Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bodhicitta cannot deteriorate anymore. It is called ‘Gold-like Bodhicitta’. ▪ Unless taken before, practitioners take the Bodhisattva vow. ▪ Unless realized before, practitioners realize emptiness with an inferential cognizer. ▪ Unless attained before, practitioners attain the mental stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight (focusing, for instance on the body of a Buddha). ▪ Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners attain the <i>Mental Stabilization of Continuous Dharma</i>. ▪ Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Moon-like Bodhicitta’. ▪ Practitioners <i>train</i> in the development of the union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness. ▪ Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc.

The Mahayana Path of Preparation

Etymologically, the path of preparation (Tib: *sbyor lam* / *sbyor* = preparation, *lam* = path) is a path that serves as a *preparation* for the path of seeing, *i.e.*, for the meditative equipoise *directly* realizing emptiness.

The Mahayana path of preparation is also referred to as:

- ‘Mahayana partial concordance with definite discernment’ (Tib: *theg chen gyi nges ‘byed cha mthun*, *theg chen* = Mahayana, *gyi* = genitive, *nges ‘byed* = definite discernment, = part, segment, *cha mthun* = partially concordant) and
- ‘Mahayana branch of definite discernment (Tib: *theg chen gyi nges ‘byed yan lag*, *theg chen* = Mahayana, *gyi* = genitive, *nges ‘byed* = definite discernment, *yan lag* = branch, limb) and

- 'Mahayana clear realization of the meaning' (Tib: *theg chen gyi chos mngon rtogs / theg chen* = Mahayana, *gyi* = genitive, *don* = meaning, *mngon rtogs* = clear realization)

Regarding the etymology of the 'Mahayana partial concordance with definite discernment' and the 'Mahayana branch of definite discernment', here definite discernment refers to the path of seeing. The path of seeing is called 'definite discernment' because it realizes emptiness directly.

The Mahayana path of preparation is a 'Mahayana partial concordance with definite discernment' because it is partially concordant with the path of seeing. It is partially concordant with the path of seeing because although it does not realize emptiness directly, it realizes emptiness with a meditative stabilisation that is a union of calm abiding and special insight.

The Mahayana path of preparation is a 'Mahayana branch of definite discernment' because it is the direct cause of the Mahayana path of seeing and therefore leads directly to the attainment of that level of the Mahayana path.

Regarding the etymology of the 'Mahayana clear realization of the meaning', here the meaning refers to the meaning of the Buddha's teachings. The Mahayana path of preparation is a 'Mahayana clear realization of the meaning' because it is a Mahayana clear realization - or Mahayana path - that has attained *an experience arisen from meditation* with regard to emptiness.

An experience arisen from meditation with regard to emptiness refers to a 'wisdom arisen from meditation' that is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness.

As mentioned above, the first moment of the 'mental stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight *conceptually* realizing emptiness' in the continuum of a Bodhisattva is the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation.

The Mahayana path of preparation consists of four levels which are attained progressively:

- 1) Heat
- 2) Peak
- 3) Forbearance
- 4) Supreme Dharma

Each of the four levels is again subdivided into three:

1. Small
2. Middling
3. Great

The 'meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' is a meditative stabilization that, unlike the inferential cognizer conceptually realizing emptiness, is free from mental distraction and sluggishness. It is a deep, clear, and intense perception, which has overcome *coarse* dualistic appearances. Furthermore, with each of the four levels (heat, peak, etc.) dualistic appearances become increasingly subtle. Nonetheless, the path of preparation's clear appearance of emptiness is not the same as the clear appearance of emptiness of the path of seeing, since on the path of seeing emptiness is realized directly and non-dualistically, whereas on the path of preparation it is realized by means of a generic image of emptiness.

Heat

(Tib: *drod* = heat, warmth)

The first moment of the *heat* period of the Mahayana path of preparation and the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation are equivalent.

Regarding the etymology of this level of the path of preparation, the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness (which is newly attained on the path of seeing) is described as a fire that burns away or irrevocably eliminates obstructions. Therefore, when Bodhisattvas reach the 'meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' they are getting closer to the direct realization of emptiness, which is why the heat level is a sign that practitioners are approaching the fire of the meditative equipoise of the path of seeing.

As mentioned above, the heat level of the Mahayana path of preparation is further categorized into:

1. Small heat
2. Middling heat
3. Great heat

This threefold category can be interpreted in two ways. Small, middling, and great may refer to practitioners of different mental faculties, with small heat referring to those of weak faculty, middling heat to those of middling faculty, and great heat to those of sharp faculty. Another possibility is that small, middling, and great refer to the time when they were generated, with small heat referring to the level generated in the beginning, middling heat to the level generated in the middle, and great heat referring to the level generated at the end.

Peak

(Tib: *rtse mo* = peak, pinnacle)

Etymologically, this level of the path of preparation is called peak because it exceeds and is superior to the heat level.

On the peak level of the path of preparation anger can no longer destroy any root virtue.

It can be further categorized into:

1. Small peak
2. Middling peak
3. Great peak

Similar to the threefold division of the heat level, the division into small, middling, and great peak is either with regard to practitioners of different mental faculties, or with regard to the time when those three levels were generated.

Forbearance

(Tib: *bzod pa* = forbearance, patience, tolerance)

Regarding the etymology, during this level Bodhisattvas achieve a type of forbearance or endurance that is free from the fear of emptiness.

From the forbearance path of preparation onwards, Bodhisattvas can no longer be reborn in the lower realms (hell-realm, preta realm, and animal realm) through the power of afflictions and contaminated karma – although (once they reach the path of seeing) they may still choose to be reborn in those realms in order to benefit sentient beings.

Similar to the heat and peak level, the forbearance level is further categorized into:

1. Small forbearance
2. Middling forbearance
3. Great forbearance

As before, this division may be with regard to practitioners of different mental faculties, or with regard to the time when those three levels were generated.

Supreme Dharma

(Tib: *chos mchog* / *chos* = Dharma, *mchog* = supreme)

Etymologically, this level is called 'supreme Dharma' because it is supreme among *mundane* virtues. It is supreme among mundane virtues since it is the highest level of the two mundane paths. The two mundane paths are the path of accumulation and the path of preparation.

The path of accumulation and the path of preparation are mundane paths because Bodhisattvas who entered the Mahayana path from the outset are not able to *directly* realize emptiness on those two levels. The attainment of the mind that *directly* realizes emptiness (*i.e.*, the attainment of the path of seeing) marks the first moment of the supramundane or Arya path and of becoming an Arya.

From the path of seeing onwards, Bodhisattvas are no longer reborn uncontrollably through the power of afflictions and contaminated karma, but deliberately through the power of compassion and prayer, in order to benefit sentient beings.

Hence the former two paths are mundane paths and the latter three Arya or supramundane paths.

Mundane paths		Arya paths / Supramundane paths		
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Path of accumulation	Path of preparation	Path of seeing	Path of meditation	Path of no-more-learning

Similar to the first three levels, the supreme Dharma level is divided into:

1. Small supreme Dharma
2. Middling supreme Dharma
3. Great supreme Dharma

This category is also either with regard to practitioners of different mental faculties, or with regard to the time when those three levels were generated.

The four levels of the path of preparation (heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme Dharma) are the same in conceptually realizing the emptiness of inherent existence and in having clear appearance of emptiness. Yet they are not the same regarding the length of time during which the practitioners have familiarized with emptiness. As a result, they also differ with regard to the type of misperception they are able to undermine or subdue.

There are four types of misperceptions which refer to four types of conceptual consciousnesses that grasp at inherent existence.

These four are:

1. Conceptions which apprehend that 'thoroughly afflicted phenomena are *inherently* objects of experience'

2. Conceptions which apprehend that 'completely pure phenomena are *inherently* objects of experience'
3. Conceptions which apprehend that 'perceivers of substantial existence are *inherently* experiencers'
4. Conceptions which apprehend that 'perceivers of imputed existence are *inherently* experiencers'

The four types of conceptions are afflictive obstructions which Bodhisattvas irrevocably eliminate while they progress through the eight Bodhisattva *bhumis*/grounds.

Even though on the Mahayana path of preparation the 'meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' is unable to *eliminate* the four types of conceptions, it is able to *undermine* or weaken them. The undermining of those conceptions in turn enables their complete removal by the meditative equipoise on the path of seeing and the path of meditation.

Furthermore, out of the four types of conceptions, the first is easier to undermine than the second, the second is easier to undermine than the third, and so forth.

Hence, the 'meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **heat** level of the path of preparation is able to undermine the first type of conceptions but not the second, third, and fourth. The 'meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **peak** level is able to undermine the second type but not the third and fourth. The 'meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **forbearance** level is able to undermine the third type but not the fourth. And the 'meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness' on the **supreme Dharma** level is able to undermine the fourth. The reason for these different abilities is that the four levels differ regarding their familiarity with emptiness - the heat path of preparation being least familiar with emptiness while supreme Dharma is the most familiar.

Next follows a detailed description of the four types of conceptions, to illustrate why some of the conceptions are easier to undermine than others:

The first two types are conceptions which apprehend '(particular phenomena) *inherently being* objects of experience', whereas the latter two are conceptions which apprehend '(particular phenomena) *inherently being* experiencers'.

Here in this context, experiencers mainly refer to awarenesses, while objects of experiencers refer to the objects of awarenesses.

In general, it is easier to realize that '(something) is not *inherently* an object of experience' than to realize that '(something) is not *inherently* an experiencer'. Therefore, it is also easier to undermine conceptions apprehending '(particular phenomena) *inherently being* objects of experience', (the first two types of conceptions) than to undermine conceptions apprehending '(particular phenomena) *inherently being* experiencers' (the latter two types of conceptions).

Similarly, out of the first two conceptions, it is easier to realize that 'thoroughly afflicted phenomena are not *inherently* objects of experience' (the first type of conceptions) than to realize that 'completely pure phenomena are not *inherently* objects of experience' (the second type of conceptions).

Examples of thoroughly afflicted phenomena are the five aggregates of an ordinary person. They are thoroughly afflicted because they are under the control of afflictions and contaminated karma. Examples of completely pure phenomena are the five aggregates of a Buddha, which are free from all faults and impurities.

Even though thoroughly afflicted phenomena are (*conventionally*) objects of experience, they are not *inherently* objects of experience. Thoroughly afflicted phenomena are not *inherently* objects of experience because thoroughly afflicted phenomena *being* objects of experience is *merely imputed*.

Likewise, even though completely pure phenomena are (*conventionally*) objects of experience, they are not *inherently* objects of experience.

Since it is easier to realize the lack of *inherent existence* of thoroughly afflicted phenomena (such as the five aggregates of an ordinary person) than to realize the lack of *inherent existence* of completely pure phenomena (such as the five aggregates of a Buddha) it is also easier to realize that 'thoroughly afflicted phenomena are not *inherently* objects of experience' than to realize that 'completely pure phenomena are not *inherently* objects of experience'.

Therefore, it is easier to undermine conceptions which apprehend that 'thoroughly afflicted phenomena are *inherently* objects of experience' than to undermine conceptions which apprehend that 'completely pure phenomena are *inherently* objects of experience'.

Regarding the latter two of the four types of conceptions which apprehend '(particular phenomena) *inherently being* experiencers', it is easier to realize that the 'perceivers of substantial existence are not *inherently* experiencers' than to realize that 'perceivers of imputed existence are not *inherently* being experiencers.

Examples of perceivers of substantial existence are awarenesses perceiving impermanent phenomena. Examples of perceivers of imputed existence are awarenesses perceiving that a person is imputed.

Even though perceivers of substantial existence and perceivers of imputed existence are (*conventionally*) experiencers, they are not *inherently* experiencers.

Furthermore, since it is easier to realize the *lack of inherent existence* of awarenesses perceiving impermanent phenomena than to realize the *lack of inherent existence* of awarenesses perceiving that a person is imputed, it is also easier to realize that 'awarenesses perceiving impermanent phenomena are not *inherently* experiencers' than to realize that 'awarenesses perceiving that a person is imputed are not *inherently* experiencers'.

Therefore, it is easier to undermine conceptions which apprehend that 'perceivers of substantial existence are *inherently* experiencers' than to undermine conceptions which apprehend that 'perceivers of imputed existence are *inherently* experiencers'.

Even though the path of preparation is characterized by its realization of emptiness in dependence on a conceptual meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, Bodhisattvas on this level of the Mahayana path (as on all other Bodhisattva levels) do not merely meditate on emptiness but also on love, compassion, the six perfections, and so forth.

Bodhicitta on the Mahayana path of preparation is called 'Fire-like Bodhicitta' because, although Bodhisattvas on this level are not yet able to irrevocably eliminate any of the obstructions, they start to burn the 'firewood of the obstructions', for they undermine the different conceptions of inherent existence.

Please note that there is no contradiction to the above explanation that the *path of seeing* is like a fire that burns or irrevocably eliminates intellectually-acquired obstructions, for here the analogy of fire is used differently in the sense that a path of preparation is like a fire since it burns or *undermines* misperceptions of reality.

The last moment of the Mahayana path of preparation (on the *supreme Dharma* level) is a ‘meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness’. A moment later, this last moment of the path of preparation transforms into a ‘meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding *directly* realizing emptiness’, and thus becomes the first moment of the Mahayana path of seeing.

Mahayana path of preparation												
Heat			Peak			Forbearance			Supreme Dharma			
Small	Middling	Great	Small	Middling	Great	Small	Middling	Great	Small	Middling	Great	
C O N C E P T U A L U N I O N *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This level gets closer to the fire of the path of seeing Practitioners undermine conceptions which apprehend that ‘thoroughly afflictive phenomena are <i>inherently</i> objects of existence’. Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Fire-like Bodhicitta’. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This level exceeds the heat level. Anger can no longer destroy any root virtue. Practitioners undermine conceptions which apprehend that ‘completely pure phenomena are <i>inherently</i> objects of existence’. Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Fire-like Bodhicitta’. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During this level practitioners attain a type of forbearance that is free from the fear of emptiness. Practitioners are no longer reborn in the lower realms through the power of afflictions and contaminated karma. Practitioners undermine conceptions which apprehend that ‘perceivers of substantial existence are <i>inherently</i> experiencers’. Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Fire-like Bodhicitta’. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This level is supreme among mundane paths. Practitioners undermine conceptions which apprehend that ‘perceivers of imputed existence are <i>inherently</i> experiencers’. Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Fire-like Bodhicitta’. 			C O N C E P T U A L U N I O N *

*Please note that here “conceptual union” refers to the ‘meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight *conceptually* realizing emptiness’.

The Mahayana Path of Seeing

The criterion for having attained or entered the Mahayana path of seeing is a ‘meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special insight *directly* realizing emptiness’.

Therefore, the third Mahayana path is called path of seeing (Tib: *mthong lam / mthong = see, lam = path*) since the criterion for entering this path is the meditative equipoise that for the first time *sees* or *directly* realizes the emptiness of all phenomena.

The Mahayana path of seeing is also referred to as:

- ‘Mahayana clear realization of the truth’ (Tib: *theg chen gyi bden pa mngon rtogs / theg chen* = Mahayana, *gyi* = genitive, *bden pa* = truth, *mngon rtogs* = clear realization)

Etymologically ‘truth’ refers to the ultimate truth or ultimate mode of existence of all phenomena. Therefore, the Mahayana path of seeing is a ‘Mahayana clear realization of the truth’ because it is a Mahayana clear realization or Mahayana path, the attainment of which marks the attainment of the meditative equipoise directly realizing the ultimate truth of all phenomena.

For Bodhisattvas, the attainment of the mind that directly realizes the ultimate truth of all phenomena also marks the beginning of the supramundane or Arya path, and of becoming an Arya Bodhisattva. From this point onwards, Bodhisattvas no longer accumulate propelling karma, *i.e.*, the type of karma that is responsible for rebirth in samsara. Also, as mentioned before, from this point onwards, practitioners will no longer be reborn uncontrollably through the power of afflictions and propelling karma (through the power of propelling karma that was accumulated *before* attaining the path of seeing), but in a deliberate manner through the power of compassion and prayer, in order to benefit sentient beings.

The attainment of the Mahayana path of seeing further marks the attainment of the first Bodhisattva *bhumi* or Bodhisattva ground. The Mahayana path of seeing and the Mahayana path of meditation are classified into ten Bodhisattva *bhumis*.

The first *bhumi* consists of two parts:

- (a) The first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of seeing and
- (b) The first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of meditation.

The reason for this twofold division of the first *bhumi* is that while on the path of seeing, Bodhisattvas are on the first *bhumi*. However, practitioners proceed to the second *bhumi* only *after* they have entered the path of meditation. Hence, Bodhisattvas who *newly* attain the path of meditation are still on the first *bhumi*. Thereafter they gradually progress through the remaining nine *bhumis*, which all pertain to the path of meditation.

Furthermore, the first moment of the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of seeing is the first moment of *ultimate Bodhicitta*. *Ultimate Bodhicitta* refers to a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness in the continuum of an Arya Mahayanist (*i.e.*, a Mahayanist on the path of seeing, meditation or no-more-learning).

However, please note that *ultimate Bodhicitta* is not *actual* Bodhicitta, for it is not a mind that is concomitant with the enlightenment aspiration (*i.e.*, with the aspiration that wishes to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings). *Actual* Bodhicitta is equivalent to *conventional Bodhicitta*.

From the Mahayana path of seeing onwards, all paths that do not directly realize emptiness are conjoined with *ultimate Bodhicitta*. This means that even when the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness in the continuum of Bodhisattvas on the path of seeing or meditation lies dormant, it affects other paths such as *conventional Bodhicitta*, great compassion, the practice of the perfection of generosity, and so forth, by enhancing their capacity and strength.

Thus, just as *conventional Bodhicitta* is the entryway to the Mahayana path in general, *ultimate Bodhicitta* is the entryway to the Arya Mahayana path.

Also, *conventional Bodhicitta* and *ultimate Bodhicitta* are similar in that they both focus on one’s own enlightenment. However, *conventional Bodhicitta* is characterized by a mind that focuses on

one's own enlightenment and aspires to that enlightenment, while *ultimate Bodhicitta* is characterized by a mind that focuses on one's own enlightenment and directly realizes the ultimate mode of existence of that enlightenment.

The Mahayana path of seeing can be divided into two:

- 1) The meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of seeing
- 2) The subsequent attainment path of the Mahayana path of seeing

Meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of seeing

The first moment of the *meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of seeing* and the first moment of the Mahayana path of seeing are equivalent.

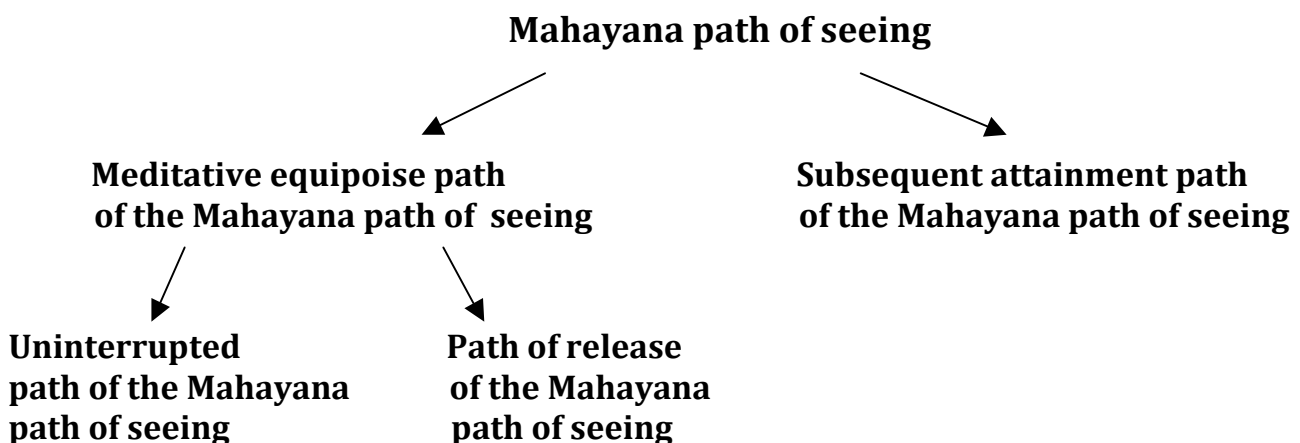
In general, a *meditative equipoise path* (or literally "exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise" / Tib: *mnyam bzhag ye shes* / *mnyam bzhag* = meditative equipoise, *ye shes* = exalted wisdom) refers to a 'meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight *directly* realizing emptiness'.

It is a non-dualistic awareness because it is free of the appearance of inherent existence, of the appearance of conventional truths, and of the sense that the subject (the meditative equipoise) and its object (emptiness) are separate and cut off. For this meditative equipoise, all appearances of subject and object have become indistinguishable, like water being poured into water.

The meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of seeing can be subdivided into:

- 1) The uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing
- 2) The path of release of the Mahayana path of seeing

Both the *uninterrupted path* and the *path of release of the Mahayana path of seeing* are meditative equipoise paths directly realizing emptiness.



The uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing

The following awarenesses are equivalent: the first moment of the Mahayana path of seeing, the first moment of the *meditative equipoise path* of the Mahayana path of seeing, and the first moment of the *uninterrupted path* of the Mahayana path of seeing.

In general, an *uninterrupted path* (Tib.: *bar chad med lam / bar chad* = interruption, hindrance, obstacle, *med* = without, not there, *lam* = path) refers to a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness that eliminates particular objects of elimination, *i.e.*, any of the different layers of afflictive or cognitive obstructions.

The *uninterrupted path* of the Mahayana path of seeing is a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness which eliminates the objects of elimination of the path of seeing, *i.e.*, intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions.

It is called 'uninterrupted' because this meditative equipoise remains present, without interruption or intervals, until whatever obstructions it is to eliminate are eliminated. The moment they are eliminated and the cessation of the particular obstructions is achieved, the uninterrupted path becomes a *path of release*.

Please note that whatever is an uninterrupted path is necessarily either a path of seeing or a path of meditation. There are no uninterrupted paths on the Mahayana path of no-more-learning because Buddhas have attained the complete cessation of all obstructions.

The path of release of the Mahayana path of seeing

In general, a *path of release* (Tib: *rnam grol lam / rnam grol* = completely free, completely releases, *lam* = path) is a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness that arises immediately after an uninterrupted path. As mentioned above, it arises when the obstructions (to be eliminated by the preceding uninterrupted path) *are eliminated*, *i.e.*, when the elimination or cessation of those obstructions is attained. It is called 'path of *release*' because it is completely released or freed from whatever objects of abandonment were removed by the uninterrupted path that preceded it.

Moreover, whatever is a path of release is necessarily one of the three: a path of seeing, a path of meditation, or a path of no-more-learning.

In the case of the Mahayana path of seeing, the path of release of that level arises immediately after the uninterrupted path, when the intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions to be eliminated by the preceding uninterrupted path are indeed eliminated, *i.e.*, when their cessation is attained.

Therefore, as explained above, the *uninterrupted path* of the Mahayana path of seeing arises first and eliminates the intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions. The moment they are eliminated, the uninterrupted path becomes the *path of release* of the Mahayana path of seeing.

Both the uninterrupted path and the path of release of the path of seeing are *direct* antidotes to the intellectually-acquired obstructions, since both are responsible for their elimination.

Please note that whatever is a *direct* antidote to an obstruction is necessarily a meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and is responsible for the irrevocable elimination of that obstruction.

The analogy cited in the scriptures for the uninterrupted path and the path of release is that of disposing of a thief who has broken into one's house. The uninterrupted path is compared to removing the thief from the house, and the path of release, to closing the door to ensure that he will not get back in.

Bodhisattvas attain the last moments of the path of preparation (which is a union of calm abiding and special insight *conceptually* realizing emptiness), the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing, and the path of release of the path of seeing in a single meditative session.

Lasts moments of the supreme Dharma of the Mahayana path of preparation	Mahayana path of seeing		
	Uninterrupted path	Path of release	Subsequent attainment path
Union of calm abiding and special insight that conceptually realizes emptiness	Union of calm abiding and special insight that directly realizes emptiness and eliminates intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions	Union of calm abiding and special insight that directly realizes emptiness and attains the elimination of intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions	Path of seeing that does not directly realize emptiness. Examples are Bodhicitta, great compassion, wisdom that realizes impermanence, etc.



ONE MEDITATIVE SESSION

Subsequent attainment path of the Mahayana path of seeing

The *subsequent attainment path* (or literally “exalted wisdom of subsequent attainment”/ Tib: *rjes thob ye shes / rjes thob* = subsequent attainment, *ye shes* = exalted wisdom) of the Mahayana path of seeing arises after the meditative equipoise paths of the path of seeing (*i.e.*, after the uninterrupted path and the path of release), which is why it is called “*subsequent* attainment”.

This level of the path of seeing is a path that does not directly realize emptiness and to which conventional truths appear. Examples are Bodhicitta, great compassion, generosity, the wisdom directly realizing subtle impermanence, the wisdom *conceptually* realizing emptiness, etc. in the continuum of Bodhisattvas on the path of seeing.

Please note that even after the attainment of the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, awarenesses conceptually realizing emptiness nonetheless still arise. These conceptual consciousnesses are awarenesses to which a conventional truth appears because the generic image of emptiness (which is a conventional truth) appears to them.

When practitioners who have attained the subsequent attainment paths of the Mahayana path of seeing enter once again into a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness that serves as the antidote to the coarsest *innate* afflictive obstructions, they cease to be Bodhisattvas on the path of seeing and enter the Mahayana path of meditation.

Therefore, the first moment of the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, which irrevocably eliminates the coarsest *innate* afflictive obstructions, and is generated after the subsequent attainment paths of the Mahayana path of seeing, marks the first moment of the Mahayana path of meditation.

Bodhicitta on the first *bhumi* and thus on the Mahayana path of seeing is called ‘Treasure-like Bodhicitta’. It is called ‘Treasure-like Bodhicitta’ because the first *bhumi* is characterized by Bodhisattvas focusing specifically on the practice of the perfection of generosity.

Although Bodhisattvas practice the ten perfections on all four Bodhisattva paths, during the subsequent attainment paths of each of the ten *bhumis*, they focus specifically on practicing *one* particular perfection.

The ten perfections are the six perfections (*generosity, ethical conduct, patience, etc.*) along with the perfections of *skilful means, prayer, power, and exalted wisdom*.

Bodhicitta on the first *bhumi* is like a treasure because Bodhisattvas on this level focus specifically on the practice of generosity, and satisfy sentient beings by providing resources, etc.

Bodhisattvas on the first *bhumi* obtain a special confidence in the practice of generosity; they are able to easily give away their body and place others in the practice of generosity.

Mahayana path of seeing		
Meditative equipoise path		Subsequent attainment path
Uninterrupted path	Path of release	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and eliminates intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and achieves the cessation of intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A path of seeing that does not realize emptiness directly and to which conventional truths appear. For instance, Bodhicitta, compassion, generosity, the wisdom that directly realizes subtle impermanence, the wisdom that <i>conceptually</i> realizes emptiness, etc. in the continuum of Bodhisattvas on the path of seeing.

The Mahayana Path of Meditation

As mentioned above, the first moment of the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness that serves as the direct antidote to the coarsest *innate* afflictive obstructions, and is generated after the subsequent attainment path of the Mahayana path of seeing, marks the first moment of the Mahayana path of meditation.

Etymologically, the path of meditation (Tib: *sgom lam / sgom* = meditation, familiarize, habituate, *lam* = path) is a path that continuously *meditates* on or familiarizes itself with the direct realization of emptiness that was newly achieved on the path of seeing.

The Mahayana path of meditation is also referred to as:

- ‘Mahayana subsequent clear realization’ (Tib: *theg chen gyi rjes la mngon rtogs / theg chen* = Mahayana, *gyi* = genitive, *rjes la* = later, subsequent, *mngon rtogs* = clear realization)

The Mahayana path of meditation is a ‘Mahayana subsequent clear realization’ because it is a path which directly realizes the ultimate truth and arises subsequent to the path of seeing.

Please note that unlike Bodhisattvas on the path of seeing, who settle only once into a meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and eliminates any of the obstructions, Bodhisattvas on the path of meditation repeatedly settle into such a meditative equipoise. The reason for this is that the meditative equipoise paths on the path of meditation serve as direct antidotes to one of the *innate* afflictive or cognitive obstructions. However, as opposed to intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions, which can be removed in one meditative session, innate afflictive and cognitive obstructions are more difficult to eliminate. Hence, they are

removed in stages by first eradicating the coarser types of innate afflictive obstructions and then step by step the subtler types.

Only after attaining the cessation of the subtlest innate *afflictive* obstructions are Bodhisattvas able to gradually eliminate the coarser and subtler layers of the *cognitive* obstructions. Through familiarity, that is, meditation (as well as the increasing force of Bodhicitta and the increasing force of merit accumulated by engaging in the practices of particularly the first four perfections, etc.), the uninterrupted paths in the continuum of Bodhisattvas on the path of meditation become increasingly powerful and thus able to serve as the antidote to increasingly subtle obstructions.

The Indian Master Vasubhandu compares this process to removing the stains on a cloth. Since it is easier to wash out the larger or coarser stains on a cloth, they are removed first. For the smaller or subtler stains one requires a stronger cleaning agent. Likewise, for the subtler obstructions Bodhisattvas require stronger uninterrupted paths.

Therefore, Bodhisattvas gradually cultivate uninterrupted paths that are increasingly fortified by familiarity with the direct realization of emptiness and the strengthening of Bodhicitta.

Yet not all paths of meditation realize emptiness directly which is why the path of meditation (like the path of seeing) can be divided into two types:

- 1) The meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of meditation
- 2) The subsequent attainment path of the Mahayana path of meditation

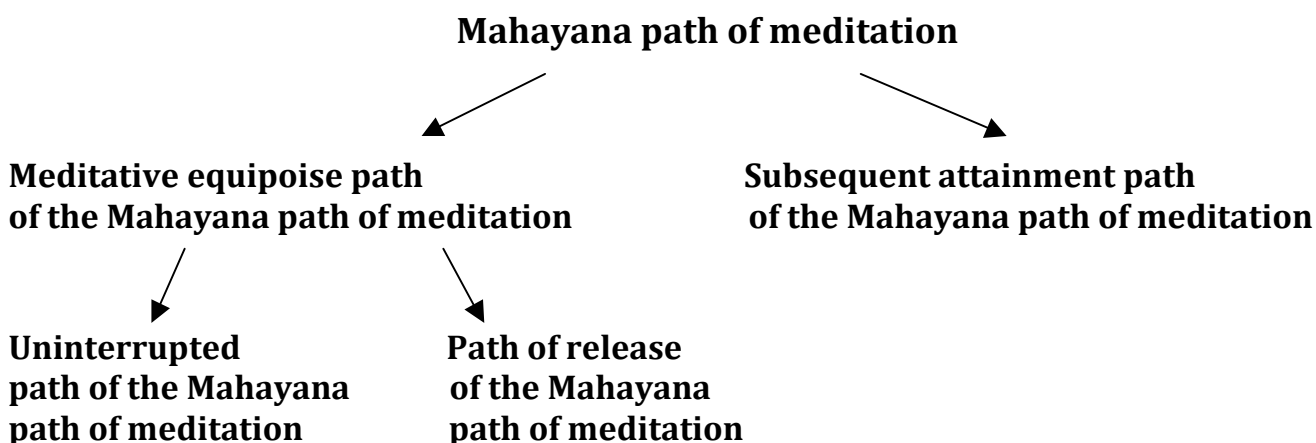
Meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of meditation

The first moment of a *meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of meditation* and the first moment of the Mahayana path of meditation are equivalent.

A meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of meditation refers to a meditative stabilization (in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of meditation) that is a union of calm abiding and special insight directly and non-dualistically realizing emptiness of all phenomena.

A meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of meditation can be subdivided into:

- 1) An uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of meditation
- 2) A path of release of the Mahayana path of meditation



Uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of meditation

The following awarenesses are equivalent: the first moment of the Mahayana path of meditation, the first moment of the first meditative equipoise path of the Mahayana path of meditation, and the first moment of the first uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of meditation.

An uninterrupted path of the path of meditation is a meditative equipoise path that eliminates any of the different layers of *innate* afflictive or cognitive obstructions.

Path of release of the Mahayana path of meditation

A path of release of the Mahayana path of meditation is a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, which arises when any of the *innate* afflictive or cognitive obstructions to be eliminated by a preceding uninterrupted path have been eliminated, *i.e.*, when their cessation is attained.

Subsequent attainment path of the Mahayana path of meditation

A subsequent attainment path is a path that does *not* realize emptiness directly. It arises after a path of release of the path of meditation, when Bodhisattvas rise from the meditative equipoise. Examples of these paths include Bodhicitta, great compassion, generosity, the wisdom directly realizing subtle impermanence, the wisdom *conceptually* realizing emptiness, etc. on the path of meditation.

Please note that on the path of meditation meditative equipoise paths and subsequent attainment paths arise alternately. Bodhisattvas settle into a meditative equipoise (which generally consists of an uninterrupted path and a path of release and eliminates one of the different layers of innate afflictive or cognitive obstructions) during one meditative session. When they rise from the meditative equipoise they enter a subsequent attainment path during which they engage in the accumulation of merit by, for instance, looking after their disciples, teaching, meditating on Bodhicitta, and so forth. After some time, they enter again into a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness.

Also, as mentioned above, the Mahayana path of seeing and the Mahayana path of meditation are divided into ten Bodhisattva *bhumis*, with the first *bhumi* consisting of (1) a first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of seeing and (2) a first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of meditation. Hence Bodhisattvas who newly attain the path of meditation are still on the first *bhumi*.

Each *bhumi* further consists of an uninterrupted path, a path of release, and a subsequent attainment path. These three are generated in succession, starting with an uninterrupted path, which is followed by a path of release, and thereafter a subsequent attainment path.

On each *bhumi*, different layers of obstructions are eliminated. As mentioned above, on the first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of seeing, the *intellectually-acquired* afflictive obstructions (the 'objects of elimination of the path of seeing') are eliminated.

From the first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of meditation until the tenth *bhumi*, the 'objects of elimination of the path of meditation' are eliminated. The 'objects of elimination of the path of meditation' refer to:

- (a) *Innate* afflictive obstructions and
- (b) Cognitive obstructions

Innate afflictive obstructions are eliminated from the first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of meditation until the eighth *bhumi*, and cognitive obstructions are eliminated from the eighth to the tenth *bhumi*.

Even though afflictive obstructions are classified into (a) intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions and (b) innate afflictive obstructions, cognitive obstructions are not classified in such a way.

Mahayana path of seeing	Mahayana path of meditation									
1. <i>bhumi</i>	2. <i>bhumi</i>	3. <i>bhumi</i>	4. <i>bhumi</i>	5. <i>bhumi</i>	6. <i>bhumi</i>	7. <i>bhumi</i>	8. <i>bhumi</i>	9. <i>bhumi</i>	10. <i>bhumi</i>	
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>The uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing eliminates intellectually-acquired afflictive obstructions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓</p> <p>Different levels of uninterrupted paths on each of the first eight <i>bhumis</i> of the Mahayana path of meditation eliminate the different layers of innate afflictive obstructions</p>							<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓</p> <p>Different levels of uninterrupted paths on each of the last three <i>bhumis</i> of the Mahayana path of meditation eliminate the different layers of cognitive obstructions</p>		

Innate afflictive obstructions can be divided into nine types (with the first obstructions being coarser and easier to eliminate than the last ones):

1. **Big-big** innate afflictive obstructions
2. **Middling-big** innate afflictive obstructions
3. **Small-big** innate afflictive obstructions
4. **Big-middling** innate afflictive obstructions
5. **Middling-middling** innate afflictive obstructions
6. **Small-middling** innate afflictive obstructions
7. **Big-small** innate afflictive obstructions
8. **Middling-small** innate afflictive obstructions
9. **Small-small** innate afflictive obstructions

Big-big afflictive obstructions are further divided into:

- 1.1. **Coarse big-big** innate afflictive obstructions
- 1.2. **Subtle big-big** innate afflictive obstructions

Hence there are ten types of innate afflictive obstructions that are gradually eliminated by the uninterrupted paths of each of the first eight *bhumis*:

- (1) The uninterrupted path of the **first *bhumi*** that pertains to the path of meditation eliminates **coarse big-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (2) The uninterrupted path of the **second *bhumi*** eliminates **subtle big-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (3) The uninterrupted path of the **third *bhumi*** eliminates **middling-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (4) The uninterrupted path of the **fourth *bhumi*** eliminates **small-big** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (5) The uninterrupted path of the **fifth *bhumi*** eliminates **big-middling** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (6) The uninterrupted path of the **sixth *bhumi*** eliminates **middling-middling** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (7) The uninterrupted path of the **seventh *bhumi*** eliminates **small-middling** innate afflictive obstructions.
- (8) The **eighth *bhumi*** has two uninterrupted paths. The first of the two simultaneously eliminates **big-small, middling-small, and small-small** innate afflictive obstructions.

Please note that the innate afflictive obstructions are increasingly subtle and thus more difficult to eliminate, so the corresponding uninterrupted paths that function as their respective direct antidotes are increasingly strong. Therefore, **coarse big-big** innate afflictive obstructions are the coarsest innate afflictive obstructions and the easiest to remove, while **small-small** innate afflictive obstructions are the subtlest and thus the most difficult to remove.

Likewise, of the uninterrupted paths eliminating innate afflictive obstructions, the uninterrupted path of the first *bhumi* is the weakest and the uninterrupted path of the eighth *bhumi* the strongest.

On the path of release that immediately follows after the first uninterrupted path of the eighth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas attain liberation or Nirvana because they have eliminated afflictive obstructions. They are now Arhats or Foe-destroyers, for they have overcome the foe of afflictive obstructions.

On the eighth *bhumi*, once the innate afflictive obstructions have all been removed, Bodhisattvas proceed to eliminate cognitive obstructions.

Cognitive obstructions can be divided into three types:

1. **Big** cognitive obstructions
2. **Middling** cognitive obstructions
3. **Small** cognitive obstructions

Small cognitive obstructions are further divided into:

- 1.1. **Coarse small** cognitive obstructions
- 1.2. **Subtle small** cognitive obstructions

Therefore, there are four types of cognitive obstructions (**big, middling, coarse small** and **subtle small**) that are gradually eliminated by the uninterrupted paths of the eighth, ninth, and tenth *bhumis*:

- 1) As mentioned above, the eighth *bhumi* has two uninterrupted paths, the second of which eliminates **big** cognitive obstructions.
- 2) The uninterrupted path of the ninth *bhumi* eliminates **middling** cognitive obstructions.
- 3) The tenth *bhumi* also has two interrupted paths. The first eliminates **coarse small** cognitive obstructions.
- 4) The second uninterrupted path of the tenth *bhumi* (called the “*Uninterrupted Path at the End of the Continuum*”) eliminates **subtle small** cognitive obstructions.

The path of release that immediately follows the second uninterrupted path of the tenth *bhumi* marks the cessation of **subtle small** cognitive obstructions and thus the attainment of the Mahayana path of no-more-learning and complete enlightenment.

The ten Bodhisattva *bhumis* are not only characterized by the obstructions that are removed but also by the practice of the ten perfections. During the subsequent attainment path of each of the ten *bhumis*, Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of *one* of the perfections:

- 1) During the subsequent attainment paths of the **first *bhumi*** they focus specifically on the practice of the **perfection of generosity**
- 2) During the subsequent attainment path of the **second *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of morality**
- 3) During the subsequent attainment path of the **third *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of patience**
- 4) During the subsequent attainment path of the **fourth *bhumi***, on the practice the **perfection of diligence**
- 5) During the subsequent attainment path of the **fifth *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of concentration**
- 6) During the subsequent attainment path of the **sixth *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of wisdom**
- 7) During the subsequent attainment path of the **seventh *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of skilful means**
- 8) During the subsequent attainment path of the **eighth *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of prayer**
- 9) During the subsequent attainment path of the **ninth *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of power**
- 10) During the subsequent attainment path of the **tenth *bhumi***, on the practice of the **perfection of exalted wisdom**

Next follows a detailed description of each of the ten *bhumis* that pertain to the path of meditation.

The first *bhumi* (of the Mahayana path of meditation)

The first *bhumi* of the Mahayana path of meditation (like the other *bhumis*) is divided into:

- 1) A meditative equipoise path and
- 2) A subsequent attainment path

The meditative equipoise path is further subdivided into:

- 1) An uninterrupted path and
- 2) A path of release

The first moment of the first Bodhisattva *bhumi* of the path of meditation and the first moment of the *uninterrupted path* of the first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of meditation are equivalent.

The uninterrupted path of the first *bhumi* eliminates **coarse big-big** innate afflictive obstructions, and the path of release achieves the cessation of those obstructions.

When Bodhisattvas rise from the meditative equipoise they enter the subsequent attainment path of the first *bhumi*.

During the subsequent attainment period of both the first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of seeing and the first *bhumi* that pertains to the path of meditation, Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of generosity.

The first *bhumi* is called 'the Extremely Joyous' (Tib: *rab tu dga' ba* / *rab tu* = extremely, utterly, absolutely, *dga' ba* = joy, delight, happy) because Bodhisattvas on this level are approaching Buddhahood and find great delight in benefitting sentient beings.

In order to proceed from the first to the second *bhumi*, practitioners enter again into a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness. This meditative equipoise constitutes the last moment of the first Bodhisattva *bhumi*. As it is neither an uninterrupted path nor a path of release, it is called a "*simple meditative equipoise*" (Tib: *mnyam gzhang tsam po ba*, *mnyam gzhang* = meditative equipoise, *tsam po ba* = simple, ordinary, not authentic).

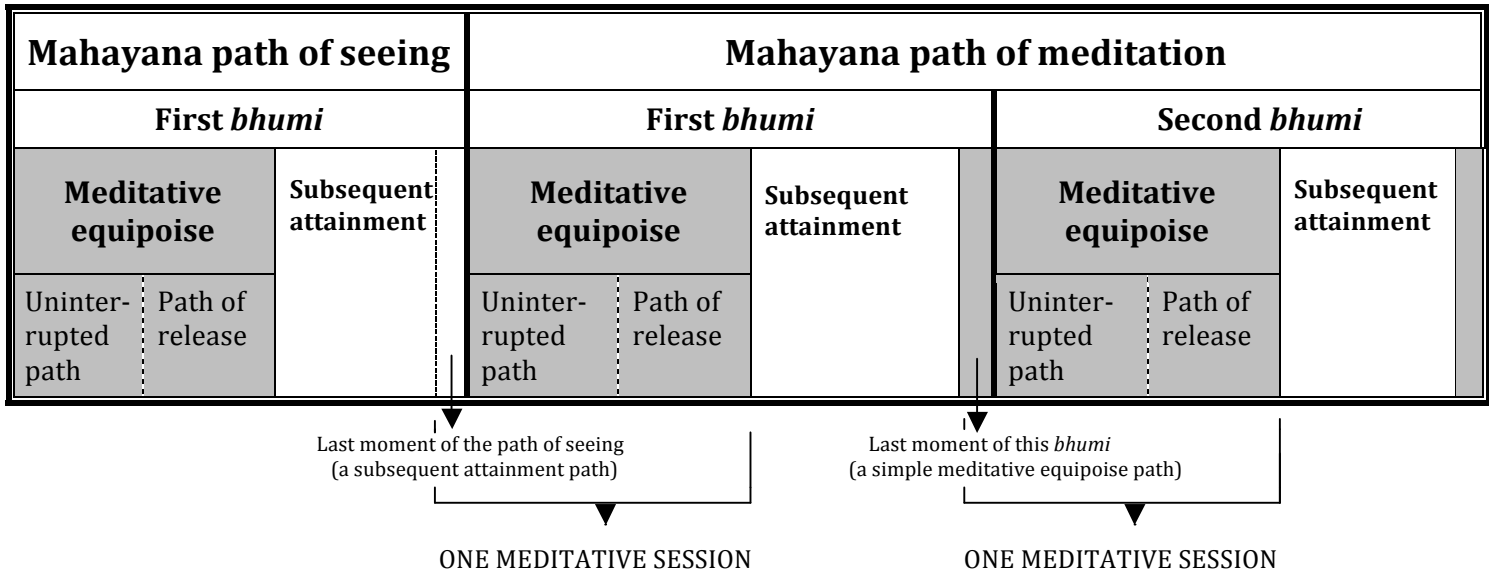
Practitioners then generate the meditative equipoise path of the second *bhumi*. Hence, the last moment of the first *bhumi* and the first moment of the second *bhumi* are both meditative equipoise paths. The difference between the two meditative equipoise paths is that the last moment of the first *bhumi* is a simple meditative equipoise path, since it does not serve as the direct antidote to any of the obstructions, while the first moment of the second *bhumi* is an uninterrupted path because it eliminates **subtle big-big** innate afflictive obstructions.

Please note that the process of progressing from the first *bhumi* to the second differs from the process of progressing from the Mahayana path of seeing to the Mahayana path of meditation, because the last moment of the Mahayana path of seeing is not a meditative equipoise but a path of subsequent attainment realizing emptiness conceptually.

The scriptures state that practitioners progress from one Arya learner path to the next (*i.e.*, from the path of seeing to the path of meditation) by way of proceeding from a subsequent attainment path to a meditative equipoise path. However, practitioners progress from one Bodhisattva *bhumi* to the next by proceeding from one meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness to another meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness.

According to some scholars' interpretation of this statement, the last moment of each *bhumi* (with the exception of the tenth *bhumi*) constitutes a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness that does not serve as a direct antidote to any of the obstructions, while the first moment of the next *bhumi* constitutes an uninterrupted path that directly realizes emptiness and eliminates one of the layers of innate afflictive or cognitive obstructions.

Bodhisattvas attain the *simple meditative equipoise* of the first *bhumi*, the uninterrupted path of the second *bhumi*, and the path of release of the second *bhumi* in one meditative session. The same applies to the *simple meditative equipoise*, uninterrupted path, and path of release of the other *bhumis*.



The second *bhumi*

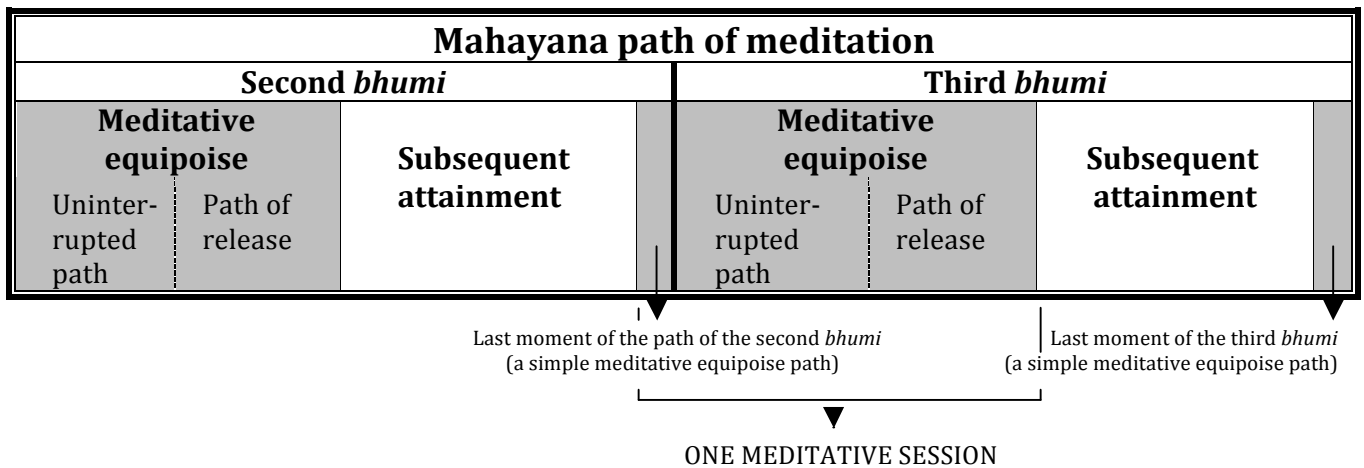
The first moment of the second *bhumi* refers to the uninterrupted path that removes **subtle big-big** innate afflictive obstructions. Thereafter, the path of release attains the cessation of those obstructions.

Bodhisattvas on the subsequent attainment path of the second *bhumi* focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of ethics. They obtain a special confidence in the training in ethics, place others in the practice, and become free from dreams about engaging in non-ethical conduct;

Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Jewel-mine-like Bodhicitta’, for practicing the perfection of ethics is a source of many outstanding qualities, which are compared to a jewel mine providing great riches.

The second *bhumi* is called ‘Stainless’ because practitioners on this level are free from the stains of engaging in distorted ethics.

In order to proceed to the third *bhumi*, practitioners enter again into a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness.



The third *bhumi*

The uninterrupted path of the third *bhumi* eliminates **middling-big** innate afflictive obstructions, while the path of release attains the cessation of these obstructions.

Bodhisattvas on the subsequent attainment path of the third *bhumi* focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of patience. They obtain a special confidence in training in patience and place others in the practice.

Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Ocean-like Bodhicitta’ because, just as a great ocean is not disturbed by objects such as stones being thrown into it, likewise practitioners on the third *bhumi* are not unsettled by disturbing factors such as aggression, misery, and so forth.

The third *bhumi* is called ‘the Illuminating One’ because practitioners on this level satisfy sentient beings by giving them the light of Dharma.

Before proceeding to the fourth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas enter into a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness.

The fourth *bhumi*

The uninterrupted path of the fourth *bhumi* eliminates **small-big** innate afflictive obstructions while the path of release attains the eliminations of these obstructions.

On the subsequent attainment path of the fourth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of joyous effort. They do not become discouraged or depressed when they encounter any sort of obstacles and they obtain a special confidence in training in joyous effort and are able to place others in the practice.

Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Vajra-like Bodhicitta’ because, just as a vajra has the quality of being indestructible, Bodhisattvas’ resolve on this level is indestructible.

The fourth *bhumi* is called ‘the Radiant One’ because practitioners radiate the splendour of the fire-like exalted wisdom that burns away the afflictive and cognitive obstructions by teaching Mahayana.

Before progressing to the fifth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas enter into a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness.

The fifth *bhumi*

The uninterrupted path of the fifth *bhumi* eliminates **big-middling** innate afflictive obstructions and the path of release attains their elimination.

On the subsequent attainment path of the fifth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of concentration. Their minds are unmoved by distracting objects; they obtain a special confidence in the practice of the perfection of joyous concentration and are able to place others in the practice.

Bodhicitta on this level is called 'Mountain-like Bodhicitta' because, just as a mountain is very sturdy and robust, Bodhisattvas' minds on this level are very firm and stable.

The fifth *bhumi* is called 'Difficult to Overcome' because practitioners on this level are able to be patient with sentient beings who are ungrateful even after having been led to spiritual maturity.

In order to proceed to the sixth *bhumi*, practitioners enter into a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness.

The sixth *bhumi*

The uninterrupted path of the sixth *bhumi* eliminates **middling-middling** innate afflictive obstructions and the path of release attains the elimination of these obstructions.

On the subsequent attainment path of the sixth *bhumi* Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of wisdom. During the period of one short instant that lasts as long as it takes to complete an activity, they are able to enter in and rise again from a meditative absorption that perceives the cessations they attained. Also, they obtain a special confidence in the training of wisdom and are able to place others in the practice.

Bodhicitta on this level is called 'Medicine-like Bodhicitta' because just as medicine cures illness Bodhisattvas' wisdom pacifies afflictive and cognitive obstructions.

The sixth *bhumi* is called 'Becoming Manifest' because practitioners on this level are getting closer to overcoming samsara (*i.e.*, to attaining liberation).

Before proceeding to the seventh *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas enter into a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness.

The seventh *bhumi*

The uninterrupted path of the seventh *bhumi* eliminates **small-middling** innate afflictive obstructions and the path of release attains the elimination of these obstructions.

On the subsequent attainment path of the seventh *bhumi* Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of skilful means.

Bodhicitta is called 'Virtuous-friend-like Bodhicitta' because just as a virtuous friend never gives up the welfare of sentient beings likewise owing to Bodhisattvas' skilful means they never forsake the welfare of a single sentient being.

The seventh *bhumi* is called 'Gone Afar' because practitioners on this level have advanced far beyond the state of samsara.

Before proceeding to the eighth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas enter into a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness.

The eighth *bhumi*

The eighth *bhumi* has two uninterrupted paths, two paths of release and two subsequent attainment paths.

The first moment of the eighth *bhumi* is marked by the first uninterrupted path of the eighth *bhumi* that eliminates **big-small, middling-small, and small-small** innate afflictive obstructions. With the attainment of the first path of release of the eighth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas simultaneously achieve the cessation of those obstructions and attain liberation (*i.e.*, become Arhats). This is because **big-small, middling-small, and small-small** innate afflictive obstructions are the subtlest afflictive obstructions, the cessation of which marks liberation from cyclic existence.

Yet Bodhisattvas do not stop there. During the first subsequent attainment path of the eighth *bhumi* they accumulate merit by meditating on Bodhicitta, the wisdom conceptually realizing emptiness, compassion, and so forth.

Then after some time, practitioners settle in the second uninterrupted path of the eighth *bhumi* which eliminates **big** cognitive obstructions.

During the path of release they attain the cessation of those cognitive obstructions, and during the subsequent attainment path continue to accumulate merit.

Also, on the two subsequent attainment paths of the eighth *bhumi* Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of prayer.

Bodhicitta on this level is called 'Wish-fulfilling-Gem-like Bodhicitta' because just as a wish-fulfilling gem actualizes all dreams and aspirations Bodhisattvas have attained the six clairvoyances, etc., and are able to actualize many of their prayers and aspirations concerning the welfare of sentient beings.

The eighth *bhumi* is called 'Immovable' because Bodhisattvas who have reached this stage dwell firmly in their realization of emptiness and cannot be perturbed by different ideas and appearances.

As before, the last moment of the eighth *bhumi* is a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness, which then becomes the uninterrupted path of the ninth *bhumi*.

Eighth <i>bhumi</i>					
Meditative Equipoise		Subsequent attainment	Meditative Equipoise		Subsequent attainment
Uninterrupted path	Path of Release		Uninterrupted path	Path of Release	
Uninterrupted path	Path of Release		Uninterrupted path	Path of Release	

↓
Last moment of the eighth *bhumi*
(a simple meditative equipoise path)

The ninth *bhumi*

This *bhumi* has only one uninterrupted path the first moment of which marks the first moment of the ninth *bhumi* and which removes **middling** cognitive obstructions. Its path of release then attains the cessation of those obstructions.

On the subsequent attainment path Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of power.

Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Sun-like Bodhicitta’ because just as the sun shines equally on everything and ripens crops etc. Bodhisattvas equally work for the benefit of all sentient beings and obtain the four means of gathering disciples.

The four means of gathering disciples are: (1) giving necessities such as food, drink, clothes and so forth, (2) speaking pleasantly, (3) giving teachings according to disciples' needs, and (4) practicing in accordance with what one teaches.

The ninth *bhumi* is called ‘Good Intelligence’ because Bodhisattvas attain the four types of correct knowledge, providing them with exceptional eloquence and skill in presenting the Buddha Dharma. The four types of correct knowledge are (1) knowledge of the meaning, (2) knowledge of Dharma, (3) knowledge of definite words, and (4) and knowledge of inner strength.

During the path of release they attain the cessation of those cognitive obstructions, and during the subsequent attainment path they continue to accumulate merit.

Also, on the two subsequent attainment paths of the eighth *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of prayer.

Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Wish-fulfilling-Gem-like Bodhicitta’ because, just as a wish-fulfilling gem actualizes all dreams and aspirations, Bodhisattvas have attained the six clairvoyances, etc., by this time and can actualize many of their prayers and aspirations concerning the welfare of sentient beings.

The eighth *bhumi* is called ‘Immovable’ because Bodhisattvas who have reached this stage dwell firmly in their realization of emptiness and cannot be perturbed by different ideas and appearances.

As before, the last moment of the eighth *bhumi* is a *simple meditative equipoise* directly realizing emptiness, which then becomes the uninterrupted path of the ninth *bhumi*.

Eighth <i>bhumi</i>					
Meditative Equipoise		Subsequent attainment	Meditative Equipoise		Subsequent attainment
Uninterrupted path	Path of Release		Uninterrupted path	Path of Release	
Uninterrupted path	Path of Release		Uninterrupted path	Path of Release	

↓
Last moment of the eighth *bhumi*
(a simple meditative equipoise path)

The ninth *bhumi*

This *bhumi* has only one uninterrupted path, the first moment of which marks the first moment of the ninth *bhumi*; it removes **middling** cognitive obstructions. Its path of release then attains the cessation of those obstructions.

On the subsequent attainment path, Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of power.

Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Sun-like Bodhicitta’ because, just as the sun shines equally on everything and ripens crops etc., Bodhisattvas work equally for the benefit of all sentient beings and obtain the four means of gathering disciples.

The four means of gathering disciples are: (1) giving necessities such as food, drink, clothes and so forth, (2) speaking pleasantly, (3) giving teachings according to disciples' needs, and (4) practicing in accordance with what one teaches.

The ninth *bhumi* is called ‘Good Intelligence’ because Bodhisattvas attain the four types of correct knowledge, which provide them with exceptional eloquence and skill in presenting the Buddha Dharma. The four types of correct knowledge are (1) knowledge of the meaning, (2) knowledge of Dharma, (3) knowledge of definite words, and (4) and knowledge of inner strength.

The tenth *bhumi*

The tenth *bhumi* is the last Bodhisattva *bhumi*. Like the eighth *bhumi*, it has two uninterrupted paths. But it has only one path of release and one subsequent attainment path.

The first uninterrupted path of the tenth *bhumi* marks the first moment of the tenth *bhumi* and eliminates **coarse small** cognitive obstructions. It is followed by the path of release, which achieves the cessation of those obstructions.

During the subsequent attainment path, Bodhisattvas focus specifically on the practice of the perfection of exalted wisdom.

Bodhicitta on this level is called ‘Song-like Bodhicitta’ because, just as a pleasant Dharma melody inspires those who hear it, Bodhisattvas greatly inspire trainees by teaching the Dharma.

The tenth *bhumi* is called ‘Dharma Cloud’ because practitioners on this level cause Dharma to fall like rain from the cloud of their fully-realized mind.

After the subsequent attainment path, Bodhisattvas enter the second uninterrupted path of the tenth *bhumi*, called “*the Uninterrupted Path at the End of the Continuum*” because it is the final path at the end of the continuum as a sentient being. This meditative equipoise eliminates the subtlest obstructions, **subtle small** cognitive obstructions.

The succeeding path of release, which attains the cessation of those obstructions, marks the first moment of the path of no-more-learning and hence the first moment of the omniscient mind of a Buddha.

Tenth <i>bhumi</i> of the path of meditation		Path of no-more-learning	
Meditative equipoise		Subsequent attainment	Meditative equipoise: <i>Uninterrupted Path at the End of the Continuum</i>
Uninterrupted path	Path of release		

This completes the presentation of the ten *bhumis*. Please note that as Bodhisattvas progress through those *bhumis*, not only do they come closer to attaining the state of a Buddha, they also gain more and more abilities and powers that enable them to be of greater benefit to sentient beings.

On the subsequent attainment path of the first *bhumi*, Bodhisattvas are able to perceive a hundred Buddhas, receive the blessings of a hundred Buddhas, go to a hundred Buddha Lands, illuminate a hundred lands, shake a hundred worlds, live for a hundred aeons, see the past and future of a hundred aeons, enter into and rise from a hundred meditative absorptions, open a hundred different doors of doctrine, ripen a hundred sentient beings, emanate a hundred emanations, cause each of the hundred emanations to be surrounded by a hundred Bodhisattvas.

On the second *bhumi*, the number is a thousand; on the third, a hundred thousand; on the fourth, a hundred ten million; on the fifth, a thousand ten million, and so forth.

In order to gradually attain these qualities and eventually attain the fully enlightened state of a Buddha, Bodhisattvas have to accumulate merit for three countless aeons.

On the Mahayana paths of accumulation and preparation, they accumulate merit for the first countless aeon; on the seven impure *bhumis* (the first to the seventh) they accumulate merit for the second countless aeon; and on the three pure *bhumis* (the eighth to the tenth) they accumulate merit for the third countless aeon.

According to one interpretation, Bodhisattvas literally have to accumulate merit for a period of three countless aeons, while according to another interpretation, they have to accumulate a store of merit equal to the merit accumulated (by an ordinary person) over three countless aeons.

The Mahayana Path of No-More-Learning

As explained above, the *Uninterrupted Path at the End of the Continuum* (the last Bodhisattva or 'learner path') is followed by the path of release, which attains the cessation of the **subtle small** cognitive obstructions and thus the cessation of all afflictive and cognitive obstructions. The first moment of that path of release marks the first moment of the omniscient mental consciousness of a Buddha that directly realizes all phenomena and is completely free from all faults and shortcomings. It also marks the first moment of the path of no-more-learning.

Etymologically, the path of no-more-learning is a path that does not require any learning, i.e. any more practice, since it has actualized its fullest potential.

The path of no-more-learning, *i.e.*, the mental consciousness of a Buddha, is both a meditative equipoise path and a subsequent attainment path, for it directly realizes all ultimate truths (the emptiness of all phenomena) as well as all conventional truths.

The qualities of a Buddha are usually explained by way of presenting his *kayas*.

Buddha's kayas

A Buddha's *kayas* can be classified in different way. The most common are the classifications into two *kayas*, three *kayas*, or four *kayas*.

The two kayas of a Buddha

The two kayas are:

- 1) The own-benefit kaya
- 2) The other-benefit kaya

Or:

- 1) Dharmakaya (Truth body)
- 2) Rupakaya (Form body)



The *own-benefit-kaya* is defined as:

A final object of attainment, mainly attained through the power of the collection of wisdom

The *other-benefit-kaya* is defined as:

A person who is a final object of attainment, mainly attained through the power of the collection of merit

The own-benefit *kaya* primarily benefits the Buddha, for it cannot be perceived by the sense consciousnesses of sentient beings. Examples of own-benefit kayas are the omniscient mind and the cessation of afflictive and cognitive obstructions in the continuum of a Buddha.

The other-benefit *kaya* primarily benefits sentient beings since it can be perceived by their sense consciousnesses. Examples include Buddha Shakyamuni and Maitreya Buddha.

Another way to classify the kaya of a Buddha is:



The Dharmakaya of a Buddha is an *own-benefit kaya* and mainly refers to a Buddha's omniscient mental consciousness, the lack of inherent existence of the omniscient mental consciousness, and a Buddha's cessation of afflictive and cognitive obstructions.

In general, the Rupakaya is an *other-benefit kaya* that includes the Samboghakaya and the Nirmanakaya of a Buddha.

The Samboghakaya (Enjoyment body) is in general, a person, an Arya Buddha who is the continuum of a person who was formerly a Bodhisattva and who progressed through the four 'learner paths' (the Mahayana path of accumulation, preparation, seeing, and meditation).

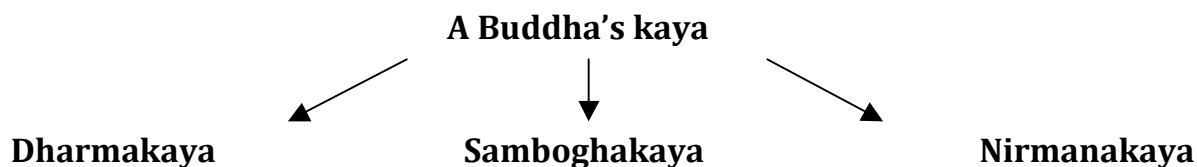
A Samboghakaya has five characteristics: (1) he resides in a highest pure realm, (2) he can only be perceived directly by Arya Bodhisattvas, (3) he is adorned with the 32 major and 80 minor marks of a Buddha, (4) he gives only Mahayana teachings, and (5) he remains until the end of samsara.

A Nirmanakaya is a kaya that is emanated by a Samboghakaya to benefit sentient beings, and it can be perceived directly by ordinary sentient beings. Examples are Buddha Shakyamuni himself, his body, a Buddha's emanation of a bridge, and so forth.

The three kayas of a Buddha

From the point of view of classifying the kaya of the Buddha into three kayas, they are:

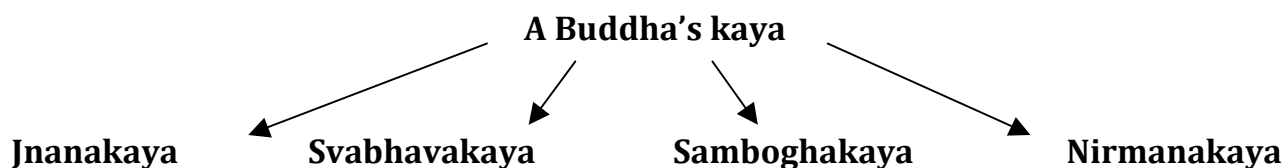
- 1) Dharmakaya
- 2) Samboghakaya
- 3) Nirmanakaya



The four kayas of a Buddha

The division of the kayas of a Buddha into four is as follows:

- 1) Jnanakaya (Wisdom body)
- 2) Svabhavakaya (Nature body)
- 3) Sambhogakaya (Enjoyment body)
- 4) Nirmanakaya (Emanation body)



Both the Jnanakaya and the Svabhavakaya are *own-benefit kayas* as well as Dharmakayas.

The Jnanakaya (Wisdom body) refers to the omniscient mental consciousness of a Buddha (*i.e.*, a path of no-more-learning). Although an omniscient consciousness simultaneously realizes all phenomena and thus simultaneously realizes conventional and ultimate truths, the Jnanakaya can be categorized into:

- (1) An omniscient consciousness realizing ultimate truths
- (2) An omniscient consciousness realizing conventional truths

The Svabhavakaya (Nature body) is permanent, *i.e.*, it does not change moment by moment. The Svabhavakaya can be classified into two types, both of which are also permanent since they are merely absences:

- (1) Svabhavakaya of natural purity
- (2) Svabhavakaya of adventitious purity

The *Svabhavakaya of natural purity* refers to the absence or lack of inherent existence of the mental consciousness of a Buddha. The emptiness of the mental consciousness of a Buddha is a *Svabhavakaya of natural purity* because it is the ultimate truth of the mental consciousness of a Buddha that is free of 'natural impurity'. Here 'natural impurity' refers to inherent existence.

The *Svabhavakaya of adventitious purity* refers to the cessation (*i.e.*, the elimination) of afflictive and cognitive obstructions in the mental continuum of a Buddha. The cessation of afflictive and cognitive obstructions in the mental continuum of a Buddha is a *Svabhavakaya of adventitious purity* because it is a cessation that is free of 'adventitious impurity', *i.e.*, the obstructions.

As mentioned above, the Nirmanakaya of a Buddha refers to emanations of a Buddha that can be perceived by the sense consciousnesses of ordinary sentient beings. Nirmanakayas can be categorized into three:

- (1) Silpa Nirmanakaya (Artisan emanation body)
- (2) Janma Nirmanakaya (Incarnated emanation body)
- (3) Uttama Nirmanakaya (Supreme emanation body)

Silpa Nirmanakayas (Artisan emanation bodies) refer to emanations of Buddhas who are skilled in the arts. For instance, the king of artisans named Bisho Karma was particularly skilled in making religious statues and is renowned for constructing the statue of Jowo Rinpoche in Lhasa. Another example is the artisan emanated by Shakyamuni Buddha in the form of a lute player in order to tame the king of celestial musicians, Raja Pramudita.

King Raja Pramudita was extremely arrogant; he believed that no one played the lute better than he did, and this attitude became a serious obstacle to his spiritual development. When the king heard the Artisan Emanation Body of Shakyamuni Buddha play the lute, he asked him to play. The musician removed one of the strings of his lute, yet he could still play as well as before. He continued to remove strings until there were no strings left, but he was still able to play beautiful music. As a result, the king's arrogance subsided and he became the Buddha's disciple. In fact, he became his last disciple before the Buddha passed into Parinirvana.

Janma Nirmanakayas (Incarnated Emanation Bodies) refer to emanations of Buddhas who take rebirth in various forms in order to benefit sentient beings. They may manifest in the aspect of being born as humans, celestial beings, animals, and so forth. This category of emanation bodies includes emanations of Buddhas in the form of bridges, boats, and other inanimate objects.

Uttama Nirmanakayas (Supreme emanation bodies) are emanations of Buddhas who possess the 32 major marks and the 80 minor signs of a Buddha, and who display the twelve deeds. These emanations are also called 'Founding' or 'Historical' Buddhas. Examples include Buddha Shakyamuni and Buddha Maitreya.

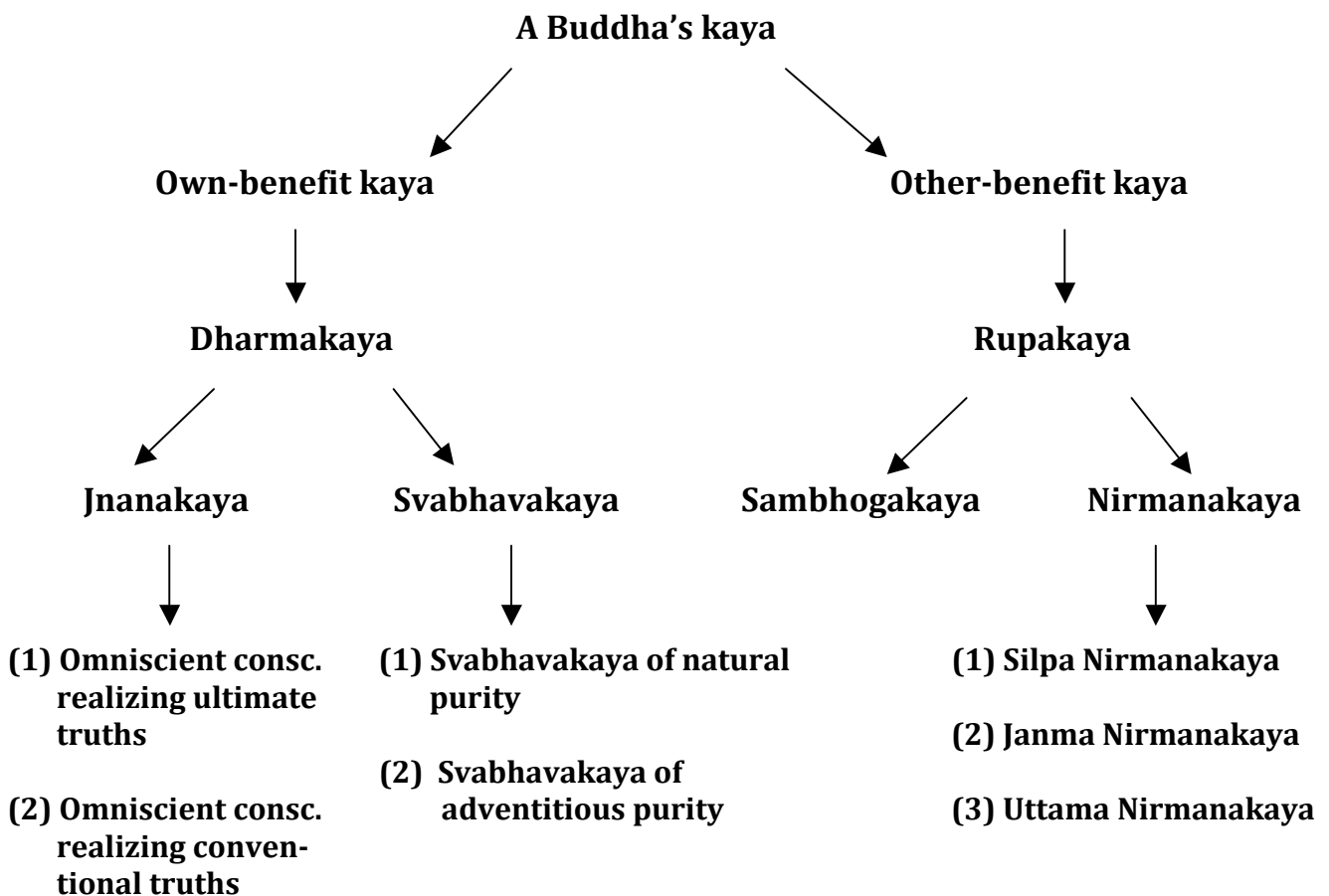
The twelve deeds are: (1) Descending from the pure land Tushita, (2) Entering his mother's womb, (3) Taking birth in the Lumbini garden, 4) Displaying skill in worldly arts and youthful sports, 5) Engaging in the amusements of a prince in the company of queens, 6) Becoming a renunciate as a result of encountering the four sights (the sight of a sick person, an old person, a corpse, and a renunciate), 7) Engaging in ascetic practices for six years by the Nairanjana River, (8) Approaching and sitting beneath the Bodhi tree, (9) Defeating all malevolent forces, (10) Becoming a fully enlightened Buddha on the full moon day of the fourth month, (11) Turning the wheel of Dharma of the Four Noble Truths on the fourth day of the sixth month, (12) Passing into Parinirvana in the city of Kushinagar.

In general, the Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya are attained simultaneously. An analogy for the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya being attained at the same time is the moon that appears at the same time as the moon's reflection in a lake. However, the Uttama Nirmanakaya (Supreme emanation body) is attained only after having attained the Sambhogakaya.

The kayas differ from the point of view of their perception by disciples:

- a) The *Svabhavakaya of natural purity* is directly perceived only by Arya beings (*i.e.*, those who have directly realized emptiness and thus reached the path of seeing, the path of meditation, or the path of no-more-learning)
- b) The *Svabhavakaya of adventitious purity* and the Jnanakaya are directly perceived only by Buddhas
- c) The Sambhogakaya is directly perceived only by Arya Bodhisattvas (*i.e.*, Bodhisattvas who have directly realized emptiness and thus reached the Mahayana path of seeing or the Mahayana path of meditation)
- d) The Uttama Nirmanakaya (Supreme Emanation Body) is directly perceived only by sentient beings with pure karma
- e) The remaining Nirmanakayas can in general, directly be perceived by any sentient being.

The following chart presents all the kayas explained above:



MAY ALL SENTIENT BEINGS BE HAPPY.