

The Three Types of Persons

So how to do you take full advantage of this precious life of leisure and opportunity?

You follow the path realized and taught by the Buddha and all of the Buddha's and Bodhisattva's in the past and the path that will be followed by those in the future.

First, you should develop certain knowledge of a general presentation of the path. This has 2 parts:

1. How all scriptures are included within the paths of the three types of persons.
2. Why students are led in stages using the trainings of the 3 types of persons.

1. How all scriptures are included within the paths of the three types of persons.

In the beginning, the person who is to become a buddha develops the spirit of enlightenment; in the middle, this person accumulates the collection of merit and sublime wisdom; and in the end, this person actualizes perfect buddhahood.

All of these actions are for sole welfare of living beings. All the teachings given by a Buddha simply accomplish the welfare of living beings. This being the case, the welfare of living beings is what you should accomplish as well.

This welfare is 2 fold:

1. the provisional goal wish status as a human or deity
2. the final goal of the certain goodness of liberation or omniscience

Between these 2, many of the Buddha's teachings are included in the teachings for a person of small capacity, because persons of small capacity do not work very much on behalf of this lifetime, but they diligently strive for the excellent high states of human or divine rebirth in future lifetimes by engaging in the cultivation of their causes.

Know to be 'the least' those persons
Who diligently strive to attain
Solely the joys of cyclic existence
By any means for their welfare alone

-Atisha

There are 2 kinds of certain goodness:

1. liberation that is freedom from cyclic existence
2. the sublime state of omniscience

Many of the Buddha's teachings pertain to the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddha's and Sravakas. These are included in the teachings for a person of middle capacity, because people of middle capacity develop disenchantment with all of cyclic existence, and then make their final goal their own liberation from cyclic existence. They then enter the path of the 3 higher trainings, the method for attaining liberation.

This persons are called 'medium'
Who stop sinful actions,
Turn their backs on the joys of cyclic existence,
And diligently strive just for their own peace

-Atisha

According to Atisha's 'Lamp for the Collection of Deeds', the method of attaining omniscience is twofold:

1. Mahayana of perfections
2. Mahayana of mantra

These 2 are included in the teachings of a person of great capacity, because a person of great capacity under the influence of Great compassion, make buddhahood their goal in order to extinguish all the suffering of all living beings -- they then train in the 6 perfections, the 2 stages, and the like.

Those persons are called 'superior'
Who sincerely want to extinguish
all the suffering of others
By understanding their own suffering

-Atisha

2. Why students are led in stages using the trainings of the 3 types of persons.

This has 2 parts:

1. The purpose of leading students by means of the paths of the three types of persons
2. Why one guides students through such stages

The purpose of leading students by means of the paths of the three types of persons

The stages of the path for persons of great capacity also include the paths for the other two types of persons in their entirety. Thus, these 2 lower paths are branches/ parts of the Mahayana path.

So, the teachers don't lead you to these 2 lower paths, rather, they take some of the paths that are common to these 2 types of persons and make them prerequisites for leading you to the path for persons of great capacity. Thus they make them components of the training in the path for persons of great capacity.

Therefore, once you have developed the desire to take full advantage of this life of leisure and opportunity, you must know how to take advantage of it. With regard to this:

These bodies are insubstantial,
Like banana trees and bubbles.
Who would not give them a substance that is like Mount Meru
By making them conditions for helping others?

These bodies are a basis for sickness, old age, and death.
Those who have good character and compassion
Make them in each moment
A basis for promoting happiness in others.

This life of leisure is free from the 8 conditions of non-leisure.
With the lamp of the sublime teaching
Make good use of this leisure
Through the deeds of a person of great capacity.

-Bhavavika 'Heart of the Middle Way'

Thus, enter the Mahayana with the thought, "Day and night I will conduct myself as a person of great capacity, making good use of this body of mine, which is a home for illness, a basis for the sufferings of old age and the like, and which lacks an essence like a banana tree or a water bubble."

Why one guides students through such stages

This is explained in terms of actual reason and purpose.

Actual Reason

The entrance to the Mahayana is solely the spirit of enlightenment. Once this is produced in

your mind stream, it is as Shantideva says:

The moment helpless beings, bound in the prison of cyclic existence,
Develop this spirit of enlightenment
They are called "children of the sugars"

Thus they become Bodhisattva's. If they ruin their Bodhichitta, they expel themselves from the company of Mahayana practitioners.

So, practitioners of the Mahayana must develop Bodhichitta by making many forms of effort.

The supreme texts that teach the stages of the bodhisattva path, Santideva's *Compendium of Trainings* and the *Guide to the Bodhisattvas Way of Life*, speak of how to develop it. They say:

1. First, you need to meditate on it's benefits.
2. Then you intensify your delight in these benefits from the depths of your heart.
3. This must be accompanied with practicing the 7 branches of worship along with the practice of refuge.

If you condense the benefits spoken of in this way, they are two-fold:

1. Temporary

Once you have developed the spirit of enlightenment, you clear away many many previously accumulated causes for miserable realms, and you end the accumulation of them in the future. You also vastly increase your previously accumulated causes of happy rebirths since they are imbued with this spirit. Furthermore, because you are motivated by this spirit, the causes that you create anew will be inexhaustible.

2. Final

Relying on this spirit of enlightenment, you will easily achieve the final aims, liberation and omniscience.

From the outset, you must have an uncontrived aspiration that seeks to attain these final and temporary benefits. If you do not have this, you may say "I will strive to develop the spirit", on account of the benefits that arise from developing the spirit of enlightenment, but it will be mere words. The hollowness of this is very clear once you examine your mind.

Therefore, first you must train in the thought that is common to persons of small and medium capacities in order to develop a wish to attain the 2 benefits, high status, and liberation / omniscience. After you have developed such a wish, you engage in cultivating the spirit of enlightenment, the attitude that produces these benefits.

As you do this, you must develop the great compassion and love that are foundation of this attitude.

When you contemplate how you wander through cyclic existence, bereft of happiness and tormented by suffering, your body hairs should stand on end. Without this experience it would be impossible for you to become unable to tolerate other beings torment while they suffer and are bereft of happiness as they wander through cyclic existence.

These beings have yet to dream
Of such an attitude
Toward even their own welfare;
How then could they produce it for other's welfare?

-Shantideva 'WOTB'

Consequently you reflect in these ways:

smaller scope - you reflect on how you are harmed by the suffering of the miserable realms.

middle scope - how even in high status, there is suffering and there is no peaceful bliss

Then, you foster the development of love and compassion by cultivating a sense of empathy for living beings., whom you hold as close to you. -- From this you develop the spirit of enlightenment.

Therefore, training in the small and middle scopes is the method for producing an uncontrived spirit of enlightenment; it is not some separate path.

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Accordingly, you work at many ways of purifying yourself of non-virtue and accumulating virtue using the practices for developing the attitude of persons of small and medium scope. These are practices such as going for refuge and thinking about karma and its effects. Understand that these too help you develop the spirit of enlightenment, because they correspond to either the 7 branches of worship or the practice of refuge, which are methods of training that are prerequisites for the spirit of enlightenment in the context of the great scope.

At this point, you reach certain knowledge of how these 2 lower scopes serve as components for developing bodhichitta.

It is very important that whenever you sustain a meditation, it is extremely important for you to keep this understanding in mind, and train in these teachings as components for developing Bodhichitta. Otherwise, the 2 lower scopes would be separate and unrelated.

So, if you don't train in these 2 lower scopes it will either prevent you from developing bodhichitta, or cause you to deviate from developing it. -- therefore, this is important.

So..

Train in the 2 lower scopes, and then to the best of your ability develop an uncontrived Bodhicitta in your mind stream.

Then do this:

1. to stabilize the spirit make a special practice of refuge and then perform the rite of the aspirational spirit of enlightenment
2. develop a great yearning to learn the Bodhisattva deeds - 6 perfections and 4 ways of gathering disciples
3. Once your yearning arises from the depths of your heart, take up the pure vow of the engaged spirit of enlightenment
4. at the risk of your life, avoid being polluted by the root infractions and strive to not have any downfalls.
5. train broadly in the 6 perfections, in particular train well in meditative stabilization so that you can set your mind on a virtuous object of meditation according to your wish.
6. achieve shamata for the sake of producing insight
7. in order to cut the bonds of the selves, make a philosophical determination of the meaning of emptiness, which is selflessness
8. after sustaining an unmistakable method of meditation, achieve insight, the heart of wisdom

All the practices up to and including concentration are factors of enlightenment called method, the part of the path that relies on conventional truths. The development of the 3 types of wisdom constitute the wisdom aspect of the path.

You don't achieve enlightenment by either method or wisdom alone... you need both wings to fly.

After you have trained your mind by means of the ordinary path, you must certainly enter the mantra path. Because when you do, you will quickly complete the 2 collections.

Even the 2 persons of Higher capacities must seek high status and liberation, so it is not wrong to teach them the practices that develop attitudes of persons of small capacity and middle. They will develop good qualities.

The persons of least capacity can train in higher practices, but this will lead to them giving up their lower perspective w/o rising to a higher perspective so they would be left with nothing.