

1. The Stages of The Path For Persons of Great Capacity

After developing renunciation and engaging in the 3 trainings you will attain liberation from cyclic existence. However, your elimination of faults and attainments of good qualities will be incomplete. Thus, you will only have accomplished your own aims and can only accomplish the goods of others in a limited way. So, a Buddha will eventually exhort you. **So intelligent people should enter the Mahayana from the beginning.**

Seeing how others are stumbling blind with their eye of wisdom closed, you should shoulder the responsibility of others welfare... focusing only on your own welfare is a trait shared by animals.

The fundamental orientation of a person of great capacity is to focus solely on achieving the happiness and benefit of others.

Thus enter the Mahayana after you have developed great respect for it induced by seeing its good qualities from various perspectives.

Training the Mind in Stages of the persons of Great Capacity

1. Showing that developing the spirit of enlightenment is the only entrance to the Mahayana
2. How to develop the spirit of enlightenment
3. How to learn the Bodhisattva deeds after developing the spirit of enlightenment

a. Showing that developing the spirit of enlightenment is the only entrance to the Mahayana

There are no mahayana vehicles other than the perfection vehicle and the mantra vehicle. Whichever vehicle you enter, the only entrance is the spirit of enlightenment.

Once you have developed the spirit of enlightenment, you are considered a mahayana practitioner, no matter what other good qualities you may or may not have. When you separate from this spirit you fall from the mahayana to the sravakas. You become a conquerors child immediately after developing this spirit.

Once you have generated this spirit you are called a Bodhisattva.

It is not sufficient that the teaching be a mahayana teaching; it is crucial that the person be a mahayana practitioner.

O child of good lineage, the spirit of enlightenment is like the seed of all the buddha's qualities

-Array of Stalks Sutra

You must fully comprehend this statement.

A barley seed is the specific cause of a barley sprout.. water, dirt, etc are its general causes.. because these can be causes of a pea sprout as well. So the spirit of enlightenment is like the seed, the specific cause among the general causes of the sprout of buddhahood. **The wisdom that knows emptiness is the general causes of the three types of enlightenment of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattva.**, just as water and manure are the general cause of the sprouts.

Aspiration to the supreme vehicle is the seed;
Wisdom is the mother for generating the Buddhas good qualities.

Maitreya 'Sublime Continuum'

The perfection of wisdom is the mother of both hinayana and mahayana disciple. So do not distinguish hinayana and mahayana by the wisdom that knows emptiness, but by the spirit of enlightenment and the greatly effective bodhisattva deeds.

You differentiate these vehicles not by philosophical views but by deeds.

Hence it is a clear indication that you have very little familiarity with the teachings when after you have taken the spirit of enlightenment to be the crucial instruction, you do not practice it, but, after recalling it at the beginning of a session only in words, you intently make great effort at some single, small portion of the path.

Just as both father and mother are needed to have a child, you need the entire complement of method and wisdom to have a complete path. In particular you need the main method -- bodhichitta and main wisdom -- the knowledge of emptiness.

If you claim to be a practitioner of the Mahayana you must be practicing the spirit of enlightenment as well. Why?

You need wisdom to prevent falling to the extreme of cyclic existence, and you need compassion to prevent falling to the extreme of peace [nirvana], so wisdom does not prevent you from falling into the extreme of peace.

Through knowledge you do not abide in cyclic existence.
Through compassion you do not abide in peace.

Maitreya 'Ornament for Clear Knowledge'

In the hinayana you do not even fall into the extreme of cyclic existence and the main thing not the bodhisattva path is to not fall into the extreme of peace.

The spirit of enlightenment is the supreme instruction, extracting the quintessence of the scriptures.

Why did Atisha take Serlingpa to be the kindest of his gurus even though Atisha held the Madyamaka view?

If through great effort you develop bodhichitta even giving a crow a small handful of food will be a bodhisattva deed, but if you don't have it then offering a 3 bill worlds would not even be a bodhisattva deed. Likewise actions such as ethical discipline, generosity, mediation would be bodhisattva deeds with this bodhichitta. **With this fully actualized spirit of enlightenment, in each instant you are able to easily clear away obscurations and accumulate the collections merit and sublime wisdom. Even small virtues become extensive, and those that would otherwise be lost after a certain period of time do not end.**

The force of sin is great and extremely intense;
Besides the spirit of enlightenment,
What virtue can overcome it?

Shantideva

b. How to develop the spirit of enlightenment

1. How the spirit of enlightenment depends of certain causes to arise
2. The stages of training in the spirit of enlightenment
3. The measure of producing the spirit of enlightenment
4. How to adopt the spirit of enlightenment through its ritual

1. How the spirit of enlightenment depends of certain causes to arise

This is explained in three parts:

1. The development of the spirit through the 4 conditions
2. The development of the spirit through the 4 causes
3. The development of the spirit through the 4 strengths

a. The development of the spirit through the 4 conditions

1. You develop the spirit of enlightenment either by seeing for yourself the inconceivable power of buddhas and bodhisattvas, or about hearing about them from a reliable person, and then thinking, "This enlightenment in which they abide or which they pursue is very powerful"
2. Even though you have may not have seen or heard of such power in this way, you can develop this spirit by listening to the scriptural collections which take unsurpassed enlightenment as a point of departure, and then aspiring to the sublime wisdom of a buddha.
3. Although you may not have heard the teachings, you can develop the spirit by understanding that the excellent teaching of the Bodhisattvas is about to disappear, and then thinking, "I will definitely develop the spirit of enlightenment so that the bodhisattvas teaching will remain for a long time, because the existence of such teaching removes suffering from innumerable living beings"
4. Although you have not seen the decline of the teaching, you think "It is difficult to generate the spirit of enlightenment of even the shravakas and pratyakabuddhas in these terrible times in which there is a predominance of ignorance, shamelessness, lack of embarrassment, jealousy, stinginess, and the like. Then what need is there to speak of developing the spirit of highest enlightenment. If I were, at some point, to develop the spirit of enlightenment, others would surely follow." Thus you generate the spirit of enlightenment through seeing the difficulty required to develop it.

Concerning *how* the bodhichitta arises from these 4 conditions, it is said that they inspire to you attain great enlightenment, so a desire to attain great enlightenment arises. The ways in which this happens are as follows:

1. After you see or hear about supernatural powers, you are awed, thinking, "I will attain such an enlightenmnt", and then generate the spirit of enlightenment.
2. Through hearing about the good qualities of a buddha from an instructor, you first develop faith and then there arises a desire to attain these qualities
3. On finding the thought the decline of the mahayana teachings unbearable, you develop the desire to attain a buddhas sublime wisdom.-- You see that if the teachings does not disappear, the suffering of living beings can be stopped. So even though your objective is indeed to remove suffering, nevertheless, the principal condition for the spirit of enlightenment arising is you inability to bear the fact that the teachings might disappear. Otherwise this way of developing bodhichitta would repeat how the bodhichitta arises in dependence on great compassion.

4. After you see how rare this most purposeful spirit is, you develop a desire to attain buddhahood, spurred on principally by this awareness.

Without the desire to attain buddhahood that comes from cultivating faith in a buddha's good qualities, you cannot overcome the sense of contentment that thinks peace[nirvana] alone is sufficient to fulfill your own aims. Training in love and compassion can eradicate the sense of contentment that thinks your peace alone is enough to fulfill the aims of *others*, but cannot stop the contentment that thinks peace is enough for you *own aim*.

Besides this desire to attain buddhahood that comes from the faith in a buddha's good qualities, there is no other way to stop the sense of contentment that thinks your own peace is sufficient to fulfill your own aims. You do need to overcome this contentment since:

1. Hinayana practitioners who are merely liberated from cyclic existence, have only a partial elimination of faults and partial knowledge, and thus lack the perfect fulfillment of their own aims.
2. The practitioners are liberated from the problems of cyclic existence but not from the problems of peace
3. The perfect fulfillment of one's own aims, it is said, is a buddha's embodiment of truth.

Therefore, once you cultivate faith in the good qualities of a buddha you will see that you must attain buddhahood to accomplish even your own aims, let alone the aims of others.

Understanding this is important for causing you not to turn back to the hinayana

Among the 4, the first 2 are not induced by great compassion and love. In other treatises, there are many explanations of the development of the spirit of enlightenment as the desire to attain buddhahood induced by just seeing the good qualities of the buddha's embodiment of truth and embodiment of form. The determination to establish all beings in buddhahood is also said to be the development of this spirit.

You must consider each of these 2 to be counted as simply "developments of the spirit of enlightenment".

With regard to developing a completely perfect spirit of enlightenment it is not sufficient merely have the desire to attain buddhahood upon the necessity of fulfilling others' aims. You must have the desire to attain buddhahood that sees that it is indispensable even for your own aims. Furthermore, this intention must not reflect others' welfare but be for others' sake as well.

The development of the spirit of enlightenment
Is the desire for perfect enlightenment of others' welfare

Maitreya

b. The development of the spirit through the 4 causes

1. a perfect lineage
2. being sustained by a teacher
3. compassion towards living beings
4. not being disheartened by the difficulties of cyclic existence

C. The development of the spirit through the 4 strengths

You develop the spirit by relying on the four strengths:

1. **the strength of yourself** -- the desire to attain perfect enlightenment through your own power
2. **the strength of others** -- the desire to attain perfect enlightenment through others' power
3. **the strength of the cause** -- developing the spirit by having been familiar with the mahayana and now merely hearing praise of buddhas and bodhisattvas
4. **the strength of application** -- in this life, being accustomed for a long time to such virtuous activities as relying upon an excellent being and reflecting on the teaching you have heard

Asanga's *Bodhisattva Levels* says that after you depend on the 4 causes and 4 conditions (whether individually or collectively), you generate a firm spirit of enlightenment if you develop it from your own strength or from the strength of the cause. It is not firm if you develop it from others strength or from the strength of application.

Once you realize that the teaching in general and the mahayana teachings in particular are about to disappear, and that the time is particularly degenerate, you realize that a spirit of enlightenment developed from the depths of your heart is extremely rare.

Rely on an excellent teacher and make an effort to practice -- studying and reflecting, etc. upon the mahayana scriptural collections and plant the root for developing the spirit in the depths of your heart, not forced by others, nor mindlessly following others, nor through habit custom, but through your own strength. **All the bodhisattva deeds are necessarily based on it.**