Practice after Achieving Serenity in the *bSam gzugs chen mo*

AOHARA Akiko

1. The section of “Explanation of both serenity and insight” (*Zhi lhag gnyis bshad pa*) in the *bSam gzugs chen mo* (SZCM) written by ‘Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (‘Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson ‘grus, 1648–1721), explains the “difficult points” (*dka’ gnas*) of *Lam rim chen mo* (LRCM) and *Lam rim chung ba* (LRCB) written by Tsong kha pa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa’i dpal, 1357–1419) (SZCM 113b1). This section describes the process of practicing serenity and insight, based on LRCM and LRCB. Following Aohara 2011, 2014, and 2016, this paper views the entire process of practicing serenity and insight, and examines practice after achieving serenity. Regarding the practice after achieving serenity, SZCM describes several distinct but related methods such as the attention of the discernment of characteristics, practice of the insight of selflessness, and the four foundations of mindfulness. This paper examines the core element of practice after achieving serenity, which has not been treated in previous studies.

2. Practice before achieving serenity is briefly explained as follows: A yogi practices unguine serenity (stabilizing meditation) in a state called “nine stages of mental abiding” (SZCM 99b2–4). As the state of mental abiding persists, both meditative stabilization and pliancy increase; he accomplishes one-pointed concentration, as well as physical and mental pliancy; and he finally achieves serenity (SZCM 97b1–5).

Before achieving serenity, the yogi experiences nine stages of mental abiding by practicing unguine insight. In this practice, he meditates on one suitable object from the five “objects of meditation for purifying behavior” (*caritaviśodhanā lambana*, *spyad pa rnam par sbyong ba’i dmigs pa*) which are mentioned in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* (ŚBh 198.12–20, SZCM 71a1). Alternatively, he can meditate on the physical form of the Buddha (SZCM 84b3–86a5). When a yogi achieves serenity, he proceeds down the path to achieving insight (SZCM 65b2–66a4).

3. SZCM explains the practice after achieving serenity as follows:

After accomplishing the serenity, [a yogi] achieves the stage of “[the attention of] the discernment of characteristics” (*lakṣaṇapratīṣaṃvedī manaskāraḥ*, *mishan nyid so sor rig pa'i yid byed pa*), which is “the practice of the insight of selflessness” (*bdag med de'i lhaḡ mthong sgom pa*), and then [he] practices both serenity and insight (SZCM 50a4).

The attention of the discernment of characteristics is the first attention among the seven attentions¹⁾ which are the seven stages of practicing for achieving the first concentration of an actual meditative absorption. SZCM states that “the stage of the attention of the discernment of characteristics” means the period in which one advances from achieving serenity to achieving insight (SZCM 140b2–5). The attention of the discernment of characteristics guides a yogi to achieve insight with a focus on selflessness (SZCM 49a2–3). When a yogi achieves insight, he also achieves the union of serenity and insight (SZCM 46b3–4; 105a2–3). Moreover, regarding the practice after achieving serenity, SZCM explains “analytical meditation” (*db'ad sgom*) as follows:

Before achieving insight, first [a yogi] practices [genuine] serenity, maintains it, performs analytical meditation, and accomplishes [the latter]. Before [accomplishment of analytical meditation], the practice of analytical meditation guides [a yogi] to the pliancy through the power of analysis, the union of serenity and insight, and the practice of both [genuine] serenity and [genuine] insight (SZCM 105a2–3).

“The attention of the discernment of characteristics” and “analytical meditation” are practiced at the same period from achieving serenity until achieving insight. Therefore, the “insight” mentioned as “the practice of insight of selflessness” in SZCM is not the genuine insight; it is analytical meditation with a focus on selflessness. SZCM describes the four steps of practice as follows:

- (1) practicing the nine mental abiding, which is identical with the attention of a beginner at attention (*yid la byed pa'i las dang po pa*)
- (2) achieving serenity, which is identical with the attention of a mere beginner (*las dan po ba tsam gyi yid byed*)
- (3) practicing analytical meditation, which is identical with the attention of the discernment of characteristics, and the attention of a beginner at purifying afflictions (*nyon mongs rnam par sbyong ba'i las dang po pa*)
- (4) achieving insight, as well as the union of serenity and insight, which is identical with the attention of belief (*mos pa yid byed pa*, **ādhimokṣiko manaskāraḥ*) (SZCM 140b2–5)²⁾

According to the *Śrāvakabhūmi* (ŚBh 437.1ff.), the attention of the discernment of characteristics has two types. First is the mundane path's practice for proceeding to the up-

per level of concentrations and formless absorptions, viewing the lower stages as “coarse” (*rags pa*) and the higher stages as “calm” (*zhi ba*). Second is the supramundane path’s practice, which reflects on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. LRCM also identifies two kinds of the attention of the discernment of characteristics as follows:

In that regard, non-Buddhists who have cultivated the path of the aspects of calmness and coarseness then eradicate [only] afflictions that have become manifest, whereas Buddhists completely eradicate [all] afflictions after having practiced the meaning of selflessness (LRCM 358a5–6).³⁾

LRCM states that the practice of the supramundane path of the attention of the discernment of characteristics is to be performed as the practice of “the meaning of selflessness.” This practice refers to analytical meditation with a focus on selflessness.

SZCM also mentions the four foundations of mindfulness citing the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*:

When [a yogi] has achieved these two kinds of meditative concentrations [with a focus on repulsion and breathing] and has accomplished serenity, he should practice the [four] foundations of mindfulness, in order to accomplish insight (AKBh 341.7–9, SZCM 50a5–6).

SZCM also states that the four foundations of mindfulness are to be practiced as analytical meditation with a focus on selflessness within the period from achieving serenity until achieving insight.

4. Furthermore, LRCM discusses the attention of the discernment of characteristics as follows:

Regarding that [Śrāvakabhūmi’s statement], the insight of the mundane [path] is about viewing (*lta ba*) the lower stages as coarse and the higher stages as calm. The insight of the supramundane [path], stated in the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, is the practice of viewing (*lta ba*) the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, starting with impermanence, which is primarily the view (*lta ba*) of the knowledge of the selflessness of persons (LRCM 357a5–6).⁴⁾

In this passage, LRCM explains that the supramundane path of the attention of the discernment of characteristics is the practice of viewing the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, but it is “primarily the view of the knowledge of the selflessness of persons.” The word “primarily” demonstrates the significance of practicing the selflessness of persons with the attention of the discernment of characteristics. Moreover, LRCM explains “objects of meditation for expertise” (*kausalāyāmbana, mkhas pa’i dmigs pa*) as follows:

Because objects of meditation for expertise guide [a yogi] to attain the insight of understanding selflessness [faithfully], by renouncing the self of persons not included within the self of all

phenomena. Therefore, they are excellent objects for serenity (LRCM 320b6–321a1).⁵⁾

Regarding “objects of meditation for expertise,” a yogi practices renouncing the self of persons, by which he attains insight. It is to be noted that a yogi renounces only the self of persons and not the self of phenomena. SZCM explains the selflessness of persons and that of phenomena as follows:

The Cittamātra school and the higher [schools] claim that [a yogi] practices the selflessness of persons first, then practices that of phenomena. Because the Cittamātra and the Svātantrika claim that there is a difference between the two kinds of selflessness, which are coarse and calm, and their investigations are [correspondingly] difficult and easy, so the order [of practice] is like that. The doctrine of the Prāsaṅgika claims that there is no [difference between] coarse and calm, [but there is a difference between] difficult and easy on their investigations, so the order [of cultivation] is like that (SZCM 106a4–6).

In this passage, the phrase “the Cittamātra school and the higher schools” refers to the Cittamātra and the Mādhyamika schools. Both claim that a yogi should practice the selflessness of persons first, and then proceed to practice that of phenomena. It is also stated that the selflessness of persons and that of phenomena are not substantially distinguished in the Prāsaṅgika school. In any case, after achieving serenity a yogi should practice both the selflessness of persons and that of phenomena.

5. SZCM explains analytical meditation and the attention of the discernment of characteristics on the basis of the doctrine of the Middle Way, citing from Tsong kha pa’s *Lam rim bsdus don* (LRSD) as follows:

LRSD states: “Riding an unshakeable horse, which is serenity, [a yogi] destroys objects attached by the extremity, using a sharp weapon of the instruction which [can] separate [the objects] from the extremity through the theory of the Middle Way (LRSD 57a6–b1).” [But according to the opponent] this statement is not correct. Because [according to the opponent], having a mind which is dependent on unshakeable serenity like an [unshakeable] horse, and the power of serenity persists, there is no analytical meditation, that is, the attention of the discernment of characteristics, which can destroy all objects that are attached as the extremity of permanence of real existences, by means of resorting to the Middle Way’s theories such as dependent origination and neither one nor many (SZCM 47a6–b2).

In this passage, analytical meditation and the attention of the discernment of characteristics are stated in terms of the doctrine of the Middle Way, which constitutes the core of analytical meditation with a focus on selflessness, that is explained in the section “Insight” (*lhag mthong*) in LRCM and LRCB. After achieving serenity, a yogi should practice analytical

meditation with a focus on selflessness based on the doctrine of the Middle Way.

6. SZCM describes the process of practicing serenity and insight in the following manner: A yogi proceeds through the nine stages of mental abiding, meditating on one suitable object or the physical form of the Buddha, and then achieves serenity. After achieving serenity, he performs analytical meditation with a focus on selflessness. The attention of the discernment of characteristics, the four foundations of mindfulness, and the practice of the selflessness of persons which is followed by that of phenomena are what constitute the analytical meditation with a focus on selflessness. After achieving serenity, a yogi should perform analytical meditation with a focus on selflessness, based on the doctrine of the Middle Way, to proceed to the accomplishment of insight. Achieving insight and the union of serenity and insight will be discussed in another paper.

Notes

- 1) There are the seven attentions: (1) the attention of the discernment of characteristics; (2) of belief; (3) of thorough isolation; (4) of withdrawal and joy; (5) of analysis; and (6) of final training; (7) the attention that is the fruit of final training for the first concentration (SZCM 141a1–143a3). See Zahler 2009, 397–401. 2) This is also stated in LRCB 360a4–b1. See Zahler 2009, 398. 3) See Cutler 2002, 94. 4) See Cutler 2002, 92. 5) See Cutler 2002, 38.

Abbreviations

AKBh Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu*. Ed. P. Pradhan. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975. **LRCB** Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa'i dpal. *Lam rim chung wa*. Tohoku no. 5393. Zhol ed. Pha. **LRCM** Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa'i dpal. *Lam rim chen mo*. Tohoku no. 5392. Zhol ed. Pa. **LRSD** Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa'i dpal. *Lam rim bsdus don*. Tohoku no. 5275 (59). Zhol ed. Kha. **ŚBh** Asaṅga. *Śrāvakabhūmi*. Ed. Karuṇeśa Śukla. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1973–1991. **SZCM** 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson 'grus. *bSam gzugs chen mo*. bKra shis 'khyil ed. Na.

Bibliography

- Aohara, Akiko. 2011. "The Nine Stages of Mental Abiding in 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's "Great Exposition of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions."" *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 60(1): 505–502. ———. 2014. "Meditative Objects in the *bSam gzugs chen mo*." *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 63(1): 471–467. ———. 2016. "Meditative Objects for Serenity and Insight in the *bSam gzugs chen mo*." *Journal of Hiroshima Philosophical Society* 68: 71–83. **Cutler, Joshua W. C.** 2002. *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment by Tsong-kha-pa* (vol. 3). Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications. **Zahler, Leah.** 2009. *Study and Practice of Meditation*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.

Key words serenity and insight, 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, Lam-rim

(Graduate Student, Hiroshima University, Ph D)