
The Middle Length Lamrim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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Everyone should cultivate the pure motivation of bodhicitta by thinking, 'I wish to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings and for this reason, I shall listen to this teaching and apply it in practice'.

One of the headings¹ in the *Middling Stages of the Path* is:

Training in generating it six times so that the actual bodhicitta increases

Those who have the commitment to do the six-session guru yoga practice generate bodhicitta six times as part of their six-session guru yoga daily practice. It is not enough to just generate bodhicitta at the time of the bodhicitta ritual ceremony. We must follow it up by generating bodhicitta six times each day to generate, sustain and increase it.

Those who possess the bodhicitta mind only think of other beings, benefiting and cherishing them. They don't have a self-concerned worrying mind, they only have the mind of cherishing and benefitting other beings. Because of this altruistic mental attitude, they are always calm, relaxed and joyful. In contrast, if instead of having a mind of cherishing others, we have a self-cherishing mind, always worrying about ourselves, we will lack inner peace and happiness.

We say bodhicitta is a precious mind. Why? Because it is an altruistic or benevolent mental attitude of wanting to help and benefit other beings wholeheartedly and unconditionally in terms of wishing them to have happiness and to be free of suffering. We need to work towards cultivating this kind of attitude of giving happiness to others and alleviating their suffering – we do have the basis and capacity to do that. What we lack is the motivation and passion for generating love and compassion for other beings and thereby generating bodhicitta.

Therefore, we need to think about and meditate to recognise the preciousness, benefits and value of developing loving-kindness and compassion, not only to extend benefits to others but also to ourselves. The more love and kindness we share with others the more satisfaction and happiness we will experience. Not just by praying or by words but if we generate an altruistic mind from the depth of our hearts towards as many other beings as we can, and habituate ourselves with that, then we can recognise how we bring benefit to others and how these benefits bounce back to ourselves, bringing an incredible sense of joy and happiness.

Love and affection is the key to the joy and stability of the family. For example, if the parents are friendly and close

to each other, work together as a good team and bring up their children with much love and affection, there will be stable peace and joy and happiness in the family.

Training in Generating it Six Times so that the Actual Bodhicitta Increases has two sections: training in not giving up mind training, and increasing their mind generation.

Training in not giving up mind training

To cultivate the mind generation or bodhicitta, you arouse an aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

The text says:

[If you take] the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and your spiritual teacher as your witnesses and, in their presence, vow to liberate the sentient beings that are not liberated and so forth, but then lay down the burden of mind generation because of discouragement due to seeing the enormous number of sentient beings and their bad actions, the long time you need to exert yourself, many eons you need to exert yourself or the necessity to train in the limitless two accumulations and difficult practices.

Having generated bodhicitta and taken the bodhisattva vows in front of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas to liberate those sentient beings who are not liberated and so forth, then later on, for whatever reason, forsaking other sentient beings mentally is a great downfall of the bodhisattva vow. It clearly stipulates here some of the causes for losing the bodhisattva spirit such as being discouraged by the enormous number of sentient beings, which is countless, the long length of time it will take to benefit them, and the enormous amount of merit required to benefit them.

The text continues:

Entering the Bodhisattva Way says that if you give up the mind you have undertaken, you will have to wander in the lower rebirths for a long time.

That same text also says:

*As a blind man finds a jewel
In a heap of dust, like that,
Effortlessly bodhicitta
Has arisen within me.*

Here the text focuses on the value of the bodhicitta mind, so we cherish it. When we cultivate bodhicitta, we should feel joy in our mind, as it says here, just as the joy of a blind man finding a jewel in a heap of dust.

In the text, it says that we should think:

"What I have found is absolutely amazing" and ...

This indicates the preciousness of the mind in cherishing other beings. But in practical terms, we should relate this to recognising the value and benefit of the loving and compassionate mind we share with those who are close to us, like our loved ones.

Then the text continues:

... "I will not give it up under any circumstances."

This line emphasises the preciousness of the mind of

¹ See page 224 of the Quarcoo translation, Wisdom 2021.

cherishing other beings. Let alone cherishing all other beings, even cherishing just one sentient being is equally very precious. On the other hand, we should try to understand how important it is to overcome harmful thoughts towards others. We train our minds so that we don't generate any harmful thoughts, even towards one sentient being. That is also important.

The text concludes:

Observing this, reinforce your heart's decision not to give it up even for an instant.

Having generated bodhicitta, which is an aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, we should reinforce it within ourselves, reminding ourselves never to forsake this mind but always cherishing it; holding it all the time, not losing it for even an instant.

Training in increasing aspiring mind generation or bodhicitta

Since it is not enough to merely not give it up, it must be reinforced

This shows that not only do we have to put an effort into maintaining and not losing the mind of bodhicitta but we must also reinforce and further develop it. If we habituate ourselves with the thought of giving happiness to others and freeing them of suffering, our happiness will automatically and naturally increase.

The text continues to show how the ritual to generate bodhicitta is performed six times.

If you can accomplish the extensive ritual explained above, you should do it according to that. If you cannot accomplish it, you should train in love and compassion, having visualized the merit field and made offerings. You should do this six times a day. The ritual for that is to say the following three times in the day and three times at night:

Here we are being given the option to either follow the extensive ritual to generate bodhicitta as explained earlier or, as it says here, simply visualise the merit field, make offerings and then engage in meditation to cultivate bodhicitta. How do we cultivate bodhicitta? As it says here, we should train in enhancing love and compassion within us because from it the superior intention of taking responsibility for the welfare of all other sentient beings will arise automatically. This superior intention is an immediate cause to produce bodhicitta.

To cultivate bodhicitta we must engage in meditation practice such as the sevenfold cause and effect method to generate bodhicitta. Here you begin by cultivating a state of equanimity. After that, you meditate on recognising all beings as your mother, remembering their kindness, and repaying their kindness. This sense of repayment is not just giving temporary aid: rather we repay all other sentient beings by giving them all happiness and removing all their suffering.

After meditating on repayment, we meditate to develop love and compassion and then the superior intention of taking responsibility for the welfare of all sentient beings. As we think about tackling this universal responsibility we realise that we must achieve complete enlightenment

or become a buddha ourselves because only a buddha has the actual power and capacity to liberate all sentient beings. So in this way, we cultivate bodhicitta, which is an aspiration to achieve buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings.

Then:

You should do this six times a day. The ritual for that is to say the following three times in the day and three times at night:

I go for refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Foremost
Assembly.
Through practicing generosity and so on,
May I attain buddhahood for the benefit of
beings.

You recite the prayer of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta three times each in the day and at night. Here we are taking refuge according to the Mahayana path². Here the Dharma refers to the Mahayana Dharma, i.e. the Mahayana truth of the path and the cessation, while the foremost assembly refers to an assembly of Mahayanaists. Likewise, with the Mahayana refuge, *I go for refuge until I am enlightened*, you take refuge until you achieve complete enlightenment. This is in contrast to the common refuge practice, where you take refuge for the duration of this life only.

The following line is, *May I attain buddhahood for the benefit of beings*. To be more specific, generating bodhicitta is characterised by two types of aspiration – the aspiration for one's own purpose and the aspiration for the purpose of other sentient beings. *May I attain buddhahood* indicates the aspiration for one's own purpose which is to achieve buddhahood. And *for the benefit of beings* indicates the other aspiration – the welfare of all other sentient beings.

Training in not mentally abandoning any sentient being for whose welfare the mind has been generated

The measure for mentally abandoning a sentient being is the occurrence of the thought: "I will not work for his welfare now or ever after" depending on some condition – for example that he has done something unacceptable.

This defines the measurement of how we lose bodhicitta. For those of you who have taken the bodhisattva vows in a tantric initiation, it is important you maintain your vows with the bodhicitta mind. We are at risk of losing the bodhicitta mind when we confront those who cause us anger. If the thought 'I never ever want to benefit this sentient being' arises as a result, then you will lose bodhicitta.

*Transcript prepared by Su Alan Foo
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Edited Version*

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² The order of the lines in the English version we chant is different to that in Tibetan. Here the commentary uses the Tibetan order.