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# The Middle Length Lamrim

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## Bodhicitta motivation

As usual, we will cultivate a bodhicitta motivation, thinking, 'I must achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. And for this reason, I will listen to this teaching, which I will apply in practise'.

Beginning with the bodhicitta motivation makes your practice very profound, beneficial and forceful. This is because your motivation captures why, what and for whose purpose you are practising Dharma. Bodhicitta is the aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. It defines the goal, which is to achieve complete enlightenment or buddhahood, a perfect state free of all faults and endowed with all excellent qualities. It also specifies for whose sake you want to achieve buddhahood - all other sentient beings - and the practice you are engaging in is, in this case, listening to the teaching.

To cultivate the motivation, we recite a prayer such as the taking refuge and generating bodhicitta prayer. This prayer adds the further important elements of taking refuge in the Three Jewels which aligns our practice with the Lord Buddha's doctrine.

It is said that taking refuge in the Three Jewels distinguishes the path from the wrong path, and generating bodhicitta distinguishes the path from the lesser path, which is merely for one's own sake, instead of for the sake of all sentient beings.

Furthermore, we should make our bodhicitta motivation and refuge practice as strong as possible so that our actual practice is infused with bodhicitta and taking refuge, even though at the time of practice it is not explicitly present.

## Actual practice to generate bodhicitta

As a Buddhist, we take refuge in the Three Jewels and follow the teachings of the Lord Buddha, based on the principle of non-violence. If we follow the Mahayana path, then in addition to taking refuge we must cultivate bodhicitta which is an aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings - we cannot think of just our own welfare. So, it is necessary to train our mind to cultivate bodhicitta as our mind is normally self-centred and is not used to the thought of benefitting others.

There are two main instructions for training our mind to cultivate bodhicitta. If we think of the causal link of how bodhicitta arises in the reverse order, then according to both these instructions, the direct cause is the special or superior intention whereby we ourselves shoulder the responsibility of freeing all other beings from suffering and of placing them in happiness.

For an aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, which characterises bodhicitta, the immediate cause for the special intention, or *lak-sam* in Tibetan, is in accordance with the **sevenfold cause and effect method** - great compassion, or *nying-je chenmo* in Tibetan, which wishes all sentient beings to be free from suffering. This in turn arises from the loving attitude or sense of endearment and attraction which is *yi-wong jamp-pa* in Tibetan.

While there is no fixed order in which to generate the loving attitude and great compassion, in terms of the sevenfold cause and effect method, the loving attitude arises first as a byproduct of the cultivation of recognising all sentient beings as mother, remembering their kindness and a sense of wanting to repay their kindness.

We must study these sevenfold cause and effect instructions. Of course, the most important thing is to engage in the practice, not just once, but repeatedly, to cultivate bodhicitta. If we combine our study and practice, we will definitely see the arising of bodhicitta and positive changes in our mind as more loving kindness and compassion arises. In this way we receive the true blessing that flows from the Dharma. So, what brings joy and peace in our mind is the Dharma.

The other profound method to generate bodhicitta is called **equalizing and exchanging self and others** - *dak-shen nyam je* in Tibetan. According to this instruction, we meditate on the equality of ourself and other sentient beings. Just as we want happiness and do not want to suffer, other sentient beings are the same. Most importantly, we need to cultivate a sense of equality with others in respect to our mental attitude whereby we wish others to have happiness and not to suffer, just as we only wish for happiness and no suffering. This is what arouses 'special intention' which leads to generating bodhicitta.

The special intention, as a pure, strong, and intuitive sense of taking upon ourselves the responsibility of extending benefit to all sentient beings, leads us to think about our capacity to benefit all other beings. We can ask ourselves, 'who has all the qualities or capacity to benefit all sentient beings perfectly and without any impediments?'

We realise that right now we do not have this capacity, and that even arhats of the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas who have achieved liberation from samsara, do not have it, nor do bodhisattvas on the tenth bhumi. The only ones who possess the capacity to perfectly benefit all sentient beings are buddhas. Hence, we generate bodhicitta which is a wish or an aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings. Bodhicitta fulfills the temporary and ultimate goals of ourselves and all other sentient beings.

## The fourth white action

Quote:

*By means of this virtuous practice you abandon the second non-virtuous practice, for if you wish, from the bottom of your heart, to establish others in the ultimate of all types of happiness, you do not accomplish it in order to connect them to the generation of mental unhappiness for the sake of generating mere regret which*

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*is still mental unhappiness.*

This line resonates with the essential meaning of bodhicitta. As mentioned here, if you wish others to have all happiness, including ultimate happiness, from the bottom of your heart, then you will never want to do anything contrary to that wish. You will wish that others only have happiness and that they create the causes of happiness. Hence, the fourth white action is a remedy to the second black action.

Do we have this genuine wish for others to have happiness? Forget about the people we do not know, but do we even have this genuine wish for those who are close to or related to us? In terms of training our mind with love and compassion, Lama Tsongkhapa advises to first meditate on love and compassion with respect to those people who are close to us as it is easier with them. After that we meditate on it with respect to strangers and enemies. In this way we can eventually extend love and compassion to all sentient beings, without any discrimination. We can find the same instruction on cultivating love and compassion for all sentient beings, and engaging in the practices to benefit them in whatever way we can, in Lama Tsongkhapa's small and great length treatises on the stages of the path.

Quote:

*The explanation in three scriptures, the Compendium of Trainings and so forth*

A. *The advantage of establishing others in mind generation*

The meaning of the heading itself shows that not only do we generate loving-kindness and bodhicitta ourselves, but we also cause others to generate it in their mind. By helping others to generate bodhicitta we are engaging in the practice of giving Dharma which surpasses the giving of material objects in terms of the extent of benefit to others.

It is important to think of giving Dharma as a way to benefit others. Normally when we think in terms of what to give, we mainly think of material aid when we think of helping others. Here we learn that giving Dharma is a supreme way of benefitting others as well. Therefore, we should consider helping our loved ones, including our parents, not only with material or physical support but also with the giving of Dharma so that they generate loving-kindness and compassion and become kinder and better people.

Then the text continues.

*In the Sūtra Requested by a Lion it says: "By means of what is bodhicitta Not given up in all one's lives, If not even in one's dreams, Much less while one is not asleep?" He spoke: "In cities or in villages In the countries where you live, Guide others correctly to enlightenment. Through that, bodhicitta will not be abandoned.*

It says here that helping others to generate bodhicitta is also a cause to maintain one's own bodhicitta. With a strong determination to keep one's own bodhicitta, wherever you are, whether in a town or a remote village, always help others to generate love, compassion and bodhicitta. By doing that you naturally make an effort not

to lose your own bodhicitta, but to increase it. You must practise what you teach to others. For example, if you don't practise to be a good person, but advise others to be a good person, who will listen to you? This would be like an alcoholic person advising others to stop drinking. It's not going to be effective if parents themselves drink a lot but advise their children to stop drinking. Therefore, when we give Dharma to others, we must practise it ourselves so that it will become effective and beneficial to others.

A. *The statement that by abandoning pride and the like mind generation will not be abandoned.*

*Furthermore, in Array of Qualities in Mañjuśrī's Buddha-realm it is taught that the aspiration is not abandoned if one possesses four qualities: having abandoned pride, having abandoned envy, having abandoned miserliness, and being mentally joyful when seeing others' wealth.*

It says here that whenever we engage in any virtuous practice, we must make sure that we conjoin it with bodhicitta mind. At the same time, we must ensure that we do not allow any afflictive emotions to arise such as pride in our own practice, envy or jealousy towards other fellow practitioners, miserliness with our Dharma knowledge etc. Rather, we should practise humility, generosity and rejoicing with respect to the wealth and knowledge of ourselves and others. This will help us to increase our bodhicitta, rather than degenerating it.

In short, by infusing bodhicitta into all our practices we will make them more profound and beneficial. This will also cause bodhicitta to grow, never be separated from us and to never degenerate.

And then the text continues.

C. *If all actions and conduct are done conjoined with mind generation, one will not be separated from bodhicitta in all lives. This is clearly taught in the Cloud of Jewels of Sūtra: [194] If you train in bodhicitta in all behaviors and generate bodhicitta before starting any virtuous activity, you will not be separated from this precious mind in other lives either. If you do not investigate time and time again how...*

If all our actions and conduct are conjoined with mind generation, that is bodhicitta, we will not be separated from bodhicitta in all our lives. In this middling lamrim text that I am using, all the headings provided in small font are added by the late tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kyabje Trichang Rinpoche, but all other headings are from Lama Tsongkhapa's great lamrim text.

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