

---

# The Middle Length Lamrim

༄༅། །ལམ་རིམ་འབྲིང་། །བྱང་སེམས་སྣོད་བའི་རིམ་པ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

30 July 2024

---

As usual please cultivate a good motivation. It is important to generate a strong and sincere wish to achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings. For this reason, we should think 'I shall listen to this teaching and do my best to put it into practice'.

We return to teaching on Middling Treatise on the Stages of the Path.

## Deceit and shiftiness

The text explains the difference between deceit and shiftiness.

*According to the Compendium of Trainings, deceit is to feign qualities one does not possess, and shiftiness is to take measures to hide one's faults.*

Deceit is to display qualities that we do not actually have, and shiftiness is to take measures so our faults will not be evident. If we are not careful can engage in both of these negative traits in order to protect our self-interest. Pretending to have qualities or qualifications that we do not possess is deceit. Shiftiness is covering up or hiding any faults we possess. We all know that the people whom we rely on, trust and admire are those who are very open and show no such negative traits or hypocrisy.

On the other hand, it is saying here that being sincere, honest and open-minded is a to have a very good human nature. We can demonstrate this by overcoming deceit and shiftiness. Deceit in Tibetan is *gyu* which means pretending to have qualities, that we do not possess, while shiftiness *yo* in Tibetan is hiding our own faults. If you want to be a good human being, then you have to overcome these two faults. To do that and become a better person, we should always focus on and be mindful of our own thoughts and actions, rather than being judgemental about other people including our friends, telling them how short-tempered they are and so on, as if we do not have such a negative trait. We need to check our own continuum to ensure it is not hypocritical and corrupted with deceit and shiftiness.

Dipamkara Atisha said in *The Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland*, (also known as the *Jewel Rosary of an Awakening Warrior*):

*Proclaim your own faults,  
But do not look for the mistakes of others.  
Hide your own good qualities,  
But proclaim the good qualities of others.*

This is what we must put into practice to abandon deceit and shiftiness. By overcoming deceit and shiftiness we will become a trustworthy person. We know we cannot rely on, or trust someone who is hypocritical, not honest, sincerely open to us, for example, a person who is cunning and deceitful. I advise people especially younger ones to take their time to get to know each other well before committing to a long-term relationship. Over a period, people change including yourself. When a male and female meet and are attracted to each other, initially there is an intense emotion that gets in the way of knowing each other's true self. For example, if you have a strong attachment to a person, then

you won't be able to see their downsides. Because of attachment, and fear of losing the other person, people will do whatever it takes to conceal their problems and weaknesses. So, sometimes people tell me that they never know that the person in their relationship for a long time, had such a problem of anger.

Dharma is a guide to living a good life. We can apply the Dharma at all times, for example, the care of children, or improving our relationships with others. I am the same as all other beings – I never consider myself to be a special being even as I sit on this throne. Sometimes I feel as if I'm a parent to other people because some young people have said that the advice they have received from me was more useful than what they received from their parents.

The reason I have stable peace and joy in my life is because I have an equal attitude towards all other beings regardless of how they see me, or whether they like me or dislike me. So, holding a state of equanimity without attachment to some and hatred towards others is an important part of my practice. On top of that, throughout all my life I have tried to practise having less desire and be contented with whatever I have.

I have found these practices to be most beneficial and effective in ensuring stable peace and happiness in my everyday life. It is important that you maintain your practice of holding a mental state of equanimity or neutrality regardless of how others treat you, even if they hate and abuse you. It is even possible to show love and care towards them. Indeed, if we think about it, most time the people with whom we normally interact are those with whom we have a close relationship such as family or friends, so it is essential to always maintain a positive mental attitude when we interact with them.

This is how we can prevent damage to our relationships and support our loved ones. For example, when they behave abnormally, try to understand things from their perspective. They are disturbed and unhappy, so focus on them rather than on yourself. Maybe they need more space. Try to find out the cause. If possible, think of helping them. This is the time to practise patience and kindness. We should not hate them and become angry with them, because anger will destroy our peace, and harm them and our relationship with them even more.

## Adopting the four virtuous practices that do not allow bodhicitta to degenerate

First of all, we need to make sure we understand what 'virtuous practices' means. What we know is that a virtuous action, which is *gewei-le* in Tibetan, refers to any action that brings about desirable results, while non-virtuous actions, which is *mige-wei-le* in Tibetan, bring about undesirable results. This means that we must adopt or practise virtuous actions and abandon non-virtuous actions because we all want desirable results not undesirable ones. Another Tibetan term for non-virtue is *dikpa* which indicates something is 'evil' or 'bad'. Obviously, nobody wants that.

As we consider ourselves to be spiritual practitioners, we have some faith and understanding of what virtue is and what non-virtue is. Hence, it must occur to us that we must put that faith into practice by adopting virtue and abandoning non-virtue. Those who do not believe in spirituality or those who do not recognise virtue and non-virtue, don't adopt virtues and abandon non-virtues, we can understand that because they just don't see any point in it for

---

---

they don't see virtues as the source of happiness and non-virtues as the source of suffering.

We just need to do our best to engage with virtues and avoid non-virtues, and if we happen to accumulate non-virtues, we must purify them by applying the four remedial forces.

- The application of the **force of base** means taking refuge in the Three Jewels, cultivating compassion for other beings and so on.
- The **force of antidote** means engaging in meditation and practices that counteract non-virtues.
- The **force of regret** means generating a deep sense of remorse in having accumulated non-virtues because we do not want the result of those non-virtues to ripen on us.
- The **force of resolution** means affirming to not commit non-virtues again which is an effective preventative measurement.

So, we can understand here that if we accumulate non-virtues we can purify or get rid of them; in other words stop them from yielding results. This, of course, doesn't mean that it is okay to commit non-virtues because we can purify them later. We should always think that it is in our best interests to not commit any non-virtues in the first place. But we do commit non-virtuous actions, so we must purify them by engaging in purification practices.

Adopting virtues and abandoning non-virtues is the fundamental Dharma practice. So from the practical perspective, it means adopting the ten virtues and abandoning the ten non-virtues. For example, the first of the ten virtues is refraining from killing which is a virtuous action – it is a Dharma practice because it brings benefit to other beings. Whereas committing an act of killing is a non-virtue and it is against Dharma because it brings harm and suffering to other beings. So, we can say that Dharma practice or engaging in virtue means benefiting other beings. Although non-virtuous actions bring harm and suffering to other beings, it doesn't necessarily mean that the undesirable result will occur soon after the non-virtue is created. They remain in the mind stream as a seed or latency until they meet the right conditions to ripen the result.

### **The first virtuous practice: abandoning lying**

*The object of the first virtuous practice is all sentient beings. The action is to eliminate knowingly lying to them even for the sake of one's own life or for as little as a joke. If you act in this way you should be sure not to cheat special objects such as your abbot, master and so forth through lies.*

### **The second virtuous practice: abiding in honesty**

As the text says:

*The object of the second virtuous practice is all sentient beings. The action is to abide with the extraordinary attitude towards them without deceit or shiftiness. Abiding in honesty is the antidote to the fourth non-virtuous practice.*

This was covered earlier.

### **The third virtuous practice: developing positive perceptions of others**

*The object of the third virtuous practice is all bodhisattvas. The action is to generate a perception of them resembling the Teacher and to proclaim truthful praise about them in the four directions.*

Transforming our mind is the essence of the lamrim teaching. The third virtuous practice is about cultivating a pure perception towards others. Otherwise, it becomes so easy for

us to commit non-virtuous or black actions like criticising others, putting them down and so on. To maintain a pure perception we should not be judgemental about other beings based on how they seem to us, because we never know who that person is.

Bodhisattvas are those who possess the bodhicitta mind and who are on the path of learning. You are familiar with this prayer which indicates the stages of the development of bodhicitta:

May the supreme jewel bodhicitta  
That has not arisen, arise and grow,  
And may that which has arisen never diminish,  
But increase more and more.

When bodhicitta first arises, you enter into the first Mahayana path of accumulation at the small level. When you move to the middling level of the path of accumulation, your bodhicitta becomes stable in the sense that it will never diminish. Then, as you move towards the great level of the path of accumulation, you progress towards the path of preparation and the path of seeing, the bodhicitta will continuously keep growing and growing.

The essence of lamrim teaching is also about subduing the mind. I have memorised the whole outline of the great Tsongkhapa's *Great Treatise on the Stages of Path*, as well as the outline of the Panchen Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltzen's lamrim text called *The Easy Path*, which is not as extensive. I used the *Easy Path* lamrim outline to go over all the lamrim topics in a reflective meditation, beginning with the topic of the precious human rebirth, through death and impermanence, the law of karma, the six perfections and so on. It takes me about 35 minutes. If you are interested in lamrim meditation I strongly recommend that you memorise the outlines of a lamrim text, which will give you a good framework for reflective meditation.

To continue with the text:

*Sharawa said that although we have created a little bit of virtue, there is no sign of its increase and many signs of its exhaustion. Virtue is exhausted through hatred, disdain and offence towards bodhisattvas, and our companions, through offending them.*

*Therefore if we can eliminate offending our companions or bodhisattvas, we will no longer experience what is referred to in the Compendium of Trainings as "harm based on persons". since we do not know in whom bodhicitta is present, we act from the perspective of training in pure appearances, generating the perception of all sentient beings as in accordance with the Kasyapa Chapter (Kasyapaparivarta).*

It is not good enough to teach and listen to the Dharma. It is far more important to practise the Dharma, which means keeping a positive or virtuous state of mind. We must practise the Dharma every day when we have the opportunity and all the necessary conditions, and practise it from a young age.

*Transcript prepared by Chelsea Shi  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett  
Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering  
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute