
Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

༄༅། བྱུང་ལྡན་ལམ་གྱི་སྒྲོན་མ་བཟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 October 2017

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice. *[Meditation]*

As we all have an understanding of the bodhicitta motivation, it is important that we develop that motivation prior to receiving a teaching or engaging in any practice.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE PERFECT METHOD

Aspirational instructions

The preliminary

Training in the three minds (cont.)

Loving kindness

In our last session we left off at this passage in the commentary:

Again, Langri Tangpa said, "Although one doesn't know which of the six rebirths one will take rebirth, it doesn't matter where one is born as long as one doesn't forget to benefiting other sentient beings."

Then the commentary explains:

One needs to be like that (not losing the thought of benefiting sentient beings). Upon the cultivation of loving kindness, a sense of endearment is felt strongly at one's heart through reflecting on - recognition of all beings as one's mother, remembering their kindness and wanting to repaying their kindness, one is moved to meditate on compassion.

In the text, the emphasis is on this loving kindness as being a strong and heartfelt experience, rather than just a mere intellectual understanding. As stated, this sense of endearment must reside *strongly at one's heart*. So, the emphasis is on a really deep feeling of loving kindness, followed by developing strong compassion. Holding all sentient beings as being very dear to one's heart and feeling strong affection for them has to be on an experiential level. This is in line with the tradition of receiving an experiential commentary on the lam-rim. First, one recognises that all beings have been one's mother. Then one meditates on that until one actually has that feeling in the depths of one's heart. Then one moves on to remembering their kindness, and after generating that experience in one's mind, one then moves on to generating the mind of wishing to repay their kindness. This is how it is to be practised.

The key point is that *loving kindness, a sense of endearment* has to precede the development of compassion, because without first developing this loving kindness of endearment one cannot develop compassion. Therefore, from the very outset one needs to ensure that one really understands the loving kindness with a sense of endearment, before contemplating and meditating on it. You would be missing the point if you were to just skim over this and then try to develop compassion. The main point is that you cannot develop compassion if it has not

been preceded with cultivating the loving kindness that has that sense of endearment.

This is how we need to actually incorporate our understanding into our practice in all topics, such as those presented in the lam-rim. Prior to engaging in the actual practice of the three scopes, we need to contemplate the rarity of the precious human rebirth and the difficulty of obtaining it. When that is developed strongly one moves onto the next topic of death and impermanence which, as a result of the previous contemplation, becomes really relevant and develops with great strength as a result of this contemplation. Paying careful attention and taking the time to really cultivate an earlier thought before preceding onto the next level is crucial for every practice that we do.

With single-pointed meditation, for example, if one is not able to focus for one minute on a chosen object then it is not possible to assume that we can meditate single-pointedly on an object for three or four minutes, leading up to an hour. How is it possible to assume that we are focusing on an object single-pointedly for an hour, if that has not been preceded by actually being able to meditate single-pointedly on the object for a minute?

The instruction is to begin with maintaining a single-pointed focus on a chosen object beginning with one minute, then there is a hope of being able to proceed to focusing on it for two minutes, and then three and four minutes and so forth. Being able to focus single-pointedly on a chosen object for two minutes is dependent on having first been able to focus on it for one minute. This is the systematic and logical way to proceed. Sometimes we take a wrong turn and assume that we can meditate single-pointedly on an object for a long period of time, when in fact we have not really paid attention to developing a proper attention and focus from the very beginning. When our approach is like that, then whether it is single-pointed meditation or the cultivation of the meditation topics in the lam-rim, our understanding will remain very superficial. Since this point is emphasised in the teachings, we need to really pay attention to it.

The objects of compassion

This refers to great compassion. As mentioned earlier, the loving kindness that has the sense of endearment specifically refers to the love that focuses on all beings, without discrimination, and this is the type of love that has to be cultivated in order to develop great compassion. If we make a genuine attempt to develop this loving kindness and follow that by contemplating and making an effort to develop compassion, then it can definitely move our mind. We may not be able to generate actual bodhicitta just yet, as generating bodhicitta is dependent on having first developed calm abiding. And in order to develop calm abiding we need to have the basic condition of overcoming the afflictions of the desire realm. Although at our level right now that might be a bit difficult, nevertheless we can begin by making a genuine effort with the causes of developing bodhicitta. This consists of meditating on loving kindness with the sense of endearment, followed by meditating on compassion. We can definitely make genuine attempts to develop this at our level. As mentioned earlier, there is no question that meditating on love and compassion

makes the mind more at ease, more joyous, and happier. Indeed, with every attempt we make to develop love and compassion, we are creating the causes and conditions to get closer and closer to enlightenment. So, we really need to pay attention to practices like the *tong-len* meditation that we did earlier.

Having attempted to meditate on, for example, the *tong-len* practice, we need to see if it has made any difference in our minds. What differences are there in our mind prior to engaging in it and after having engaged in the practice? If we can see significant differences in our mind where some transformation is taking place, then that is a good sign that the practice has been fruitful.

We can also assess whether any long-term transformation is taking place, by comparing our state of mind this year to that of last year. Has our mind become more imbued with kindness? Having engaged in the *tong-len* practice, is there a bit more compassion now compared to last year? If there has been no change at all then that is a sign that we have not really paid careful attention to the practice. We need to check our mind periodically, to see if any changes are taking place? Are there any significant changes or not? These are very important instructions which are very good to incorporate into our practice.

As presented in the commentary, the objects of compassion are:

- The beings of the three lower rebirths are tormented over an extended period by a strong wave of suffering
- The human world is plagued with the sufferings of birth, ageing, sickness, death, meeting, separation and not finding. In short, the acquired aggregates (life) are miserable.
- Gods of the desire realm are subjected to the suffering of dying and falling into a lower rebirth
- Gods of the Upper realms (of Form and Formless) are subject to the suffering or intoxication of concentrative stabilisation, depriving them of any thought of Dharma and self-freedom.

Then the commentary goes on to explain:

In short, through the eyes of compassion one gazes upon all sentient beings being subjected to any of the three types of sufferings, such as the beings in the lower rebirths are subject to the suffering of suffering, whereas the Gods in the desire realm and humans are subject to the suffering of change and the Gods in the upper realm are subject to the all pervasive suffering of conditioning. Hence, with compassion one wishes all migrating sentient beings to be liberated from these sufferings together with the causes of suffering which are karma and delusions.

As the commentary indicates, by focusing on the various sufferings of sentient beings one generates a strong unbiased compassion for all sentient beings regardless of their status. If we meditate by focusing on all sentient beings in a general sense it might seem that we are cultivating such compassion. However, if one were to focus on someone who one dislikes then one might find some difficulties in feeling compassion for them. It might seem that there is a sense of compassion for all beings in general, but when it comes to a particular individual then

one might find it is actually difficult to genuinely wish them to be happy and free from suffering.

That is why the teachings emphasise the instructions of particular masters who mention that one needs to intentionally focus on an object for whom it is difficult to feel compassion, and really make a genuine attempt to feel compassion for them. Otherwise at our level, because of our unruly mind, the danger is that when we see a particular person who we dislike experiencing suffering we might actually start feeling glad – ‘Oh good, it serves them right! They deserve it’ – rather than wishing them to be free from suffering. This sort of attitude would be the complete opposite of compassion.

Therefore, you really need to make a genuine attempt to develop compassion for others regardless of whether they are close to you or not, or whether you favour them or not. Focus on all beings in an unbiased manner, and pay particular attention to those beings that you have difficulty with and who you dislike. Then gradually, through familiarisation as a result of meditating in this way again and again, you can definitely reach a point where you comfortably feel compassion for those you dislike or of have had conflicts with in the past and so forth. This is how we need to train our mind to develop genuine compassion.

We need to check our own mind regularly to see whether that genuine wish and intention to benefit others is increasing. If the wish to benefit others is increasing and the intention to harm is decreasing, then that is a true mark of progress.

I don’t need to give a detailed explanation of the commentary, as we have covered the topic of suffering in detail in the past. The main point is that when one has a good understanding of the sufferings of all of the six realms then one will be able to develop an unbiased compassion for all. From a normal, limited worldly perspective, it is easy to develop feelings of compassion for those who are poor or destitute, but when it comes to rich and wealthy people we might feel, ‘Oh, I don’t need to feel compassion for them!’.

This is especially the case with the gods. When we hear about the mighty gods such as Brahma and so forth who are extremely wealthy, we might feel, ‘Oh, I don’t need to feel compassion for them, as they have got everything they want’. At this point we need to remember the teachings; despite all their wealth and achievements, they have not yet abandoned delusions and karma and so they are experiencing the all-pervasive suffering that is the very cause for being in samsara. Because of that they are an object of compassion as well. This is what we need to understand.

As presented in the *Four Hundred Verses*, which we studied in the past, the suffering of the lowly is mostly physical suffering, while those of the higher status mostly experience mental suffering. Thus, all beings within cyclic existence experience some level of suffering. These are succinctly stated points for reflection.

The commentary further reads:

As noted by Rom po, the root cause from which suffering arises is karma and the condition of karma are the delusions. Driven by that, (compassion) one

should then also undergo training in cultivating an aspiration to achieve enlightenment.

Driven by compassion, one should then also undergo training and cultivating an aspiration to achieve enlightenment. This incorporates the detailed explanation of the six causes for cultivating bodhicitta that we have gone through previously. As you will recall, first meditate on recognition of all beings as one's mother, followed by remembering their kindness, and following that the wish to repay their kindness. Then one cultivates great affectionate love or loving kindness with a sense of endearment, followed by generating great compassion.

Having developed and strengthened that very strong love and the compassion that is the spontaneous and very strong wish for all beings to be endowed in happiness and to be free from all suffering, then one will naturally come to a point where one cannot bear to see beings being deprived of happiness and see them experiencing great suffering. At that point, one will be moved to feeling that it is not enough just to wish for other beings to be happy and free from suffering, but that one needs to take full responsibility for bringing that about. 'I need to do everything possible to lead all beings to happiness and free them from all suffering.' At that point, one is cultivating the mind of superior intention. When superior intention is further developed it becomes the immediate preceding cause for developing bodhicitta, and the stronger that mind of superior intention, the closer one is to actually developing bodhicitta.

When one reaches the level of generating that superior intention, one has come to the point where one is not satisfied with only the wish for beings to be placed in happiness and be free from suffering. Rather one is moved to the point where one is adamant that one has to take full personal responsibility to ensure that all beings are placed in happiness and free from all suffering. After that genuine wish has been developed, then one naturally ponders as to whether one has the ability to lead all beings to the state of happiness and freedom from suffering right now. One comes to the recognition that one doesn't have that ability. So who does have that ability. Do foe-destroyers or arhats have that ability? Do hearers and solitary realisers have that ability? No, they don't have that ability because they have not yet reached the ultimate state of enlightenment themselves. From this investigation comes the clear recognition that only a fully enlightened being, an omniscient buddha, has that capacity.

When one develops a heartfelt aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, then one has developed what is called 'aspiring bodhicitta'. This is what *training in cultivating an aspiration to achieve enlightenment* means. When that initial aspiring bodhicitta is further developed through this logical reasoning and specific steps of contemplation, it develops into what is called 'contrived bodhicitta'. As it is still based on having to put in a lot of effort and work through many reasons, it is not yet actual bodhicitta. Then through that familiarity one reaches the stage where one spontaneously and unceasingly has that wish of aspiring to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings at all times. That is when one actually develops

the mind of uncontrived bodhicitta, and becomes a bodhisattva.

At this point, one actually enters into the Mahayana path and from then on one's activities will be to engage in the six perfections. When one's activities while engaging in the six perfections are based on the cultivation of that spontaneous and effortless aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, then the practice of the six perfections actually becomes a means to benefit sentient beings, and are therefore deeds of a bodhisattva, and a cause for enlightenment. Without bodhicitta any practice of generosity and so forth will not be a practice of a bodhisattva. This is how we need to understand the distinction between the practices of generosity and so forth in general, and the six perfections practised by a bodhisattva.

If we incorporate this into our practice, then our meditation will be fruitful. We can be assured that half an hour spent meditating on these reasons is time spent in virtue. We might focus single-pointedly on an object, but if it is devoid of meditating on love and compassion then we cannot be certain that our mind is in a virtuous state. However, if we incorporate the bodhicitta attitude into our meditation we can be certain that we are in a virtuous frame of mind. We definitely have the capacity to meditate in this way for half an hour, and even up to an hour.

I was once in hospital in India for a long time and to pass the time I would go over the outline of the lam-rim which I had memorised. I found that was very, very helpful as it really moved my mind. From my limited experience, I have found that spending half an hour or an hour in meditation, going over the outline of the lam-rim and thinking in this way, makes my mind much clearer and less prone to anger or attachment when I come out of that session. The when I go about my normal activities my mind is much more at ease.

On the basis of this experience I feel that the instructions given in the teachings are very compelling. There are two types of meditation: analytical meditation and placement meditation. It is explained that analytical meditation is much more important for beginners. If too much attention is placed on placement meditation at the beginning, there is a danger of spending a lot of time in it without gaining any significant result and transformation of our mind.

The commentary now quotes a sutra:

As Gathering the True Qualities Sutra (Pagpa Cho Yang Daga Dupa) states: "Bodhisattvas should not learn many instructions but should uphold one teaching and realise it. What is that one teaching? It is this: Great Compassion," ...

This is a very significant point. The emphasis here really is on how the cultivation of compassion is the most essential practice as it forms the basis for all other practices. Even practices such as renunciation can be encompassed by meditating on love and compassion. Then the commentary continues:

... it then says, "also whoever has a head, has (the demand of) livelihood; whoever has great compassion, has the complete state of Buddhahood."

What is being emphasised here is that without cultivating compassion, one cannot possibly achieve buddhahood. The example used here is that anyone *who has a head* has to depend on a *livelihood*; likewise, whoever *has compassion* will naturally develop the conditions for achieving buddhahood. This is also emphasised with this quote from Chandrakirti:

Chandrakirti mentioned that the completion of the cause, the path and the effect of Mahayana is dependent on compassion.

It is explained in detail in the teachings on the *Madhyamaka* or *Middle Way* text that compassion is important at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. This is supported with the analogy that to obtain a good crop seeds, soil and water are essential. Likewise, compassion is essential at the beginning of a practice of the path, in the middle and at the end.

As explained in the teachings, without having developed strong compassion one will face a lot of adverse conditions in one's practice. The number of sentient beings is vast and some of them are very unruly, ungrateful, and unappreciative. If one has not cultivated strong compassion at the beginning, then in the middle, when one is engaging in ways to benefit sentient beings, there is a great danger of giving up when one encounters such beings. In order to engage in the accumulation of merit and wisdom, which is the main cause for achieving enlightenment, one needs to have compassion to help these beings. Then, at the very end when one has achieved buddhahood, the ability to spontaneously and effortlessly engage in virtuous activities as a way to benefit sentient beings is a result of having developed and perfected compassion. This is how we need to understand that compassion is important in the beginning, in the middle and at the end.

Therefore, one should whole-heartedly make concerted effort to meditate on compassion.

The Actual¹

This refers to the actual of way of generating aspiring bodhicitta. The commentary begins by quoting the last two lines of verse 11 in the root text.

The text says, "Arouse immutably the resolve, to attain enlightenment."

Then the commentary explains:

Having trained oneself well in meditating upon the mental observation and aspect (attitude) of loving kindness and compassion, one should generate the precious mind of enlightenment.

A more literal translation of the root text is 'generate the mind of enlightenment', which refers to actually generating bodhicitta, and this is explained first.

Having trained oneself well in meditating upon the mental observation and aspect (attitude) of loving kindness and compassion, one should generate the precious mind of enlightenment.

How does one *generate the precious mind of enlightenment*?

This is where the commentary explains the first line of the root text:

One generates it by arousing immutably the resolve.

At this point, one takes the precepts of aspiring bodhicitta, and the commentary then goes on to present the way to take these precepts.

Generally speaking, it is not necessary to depend on the ceremonial ritual formula to generate aspirational bodhicitta.

However, one should generate aspirational bodhicitta through the ritual by resolving never to waver from this precious mind, and never to forsake it even for a second until achieving the state of enlightenment. This must be then followed by practising the five precepts as explained below.

As explained earlier, when one initially develops the wish to achieve enlightenment, it is called aspiring bodhicitta because it is just an aspiration. There is no pledge, and one is not necessarily making any promise or taking any precepts. This is like, for example, bestowing a subsequent initiation (or *jenang*). At the point where aspirational bodhicitta is developed, one can just generate that aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings, and leave it as just an aspiration without taking any precepts.

The precepts are taken following the generation of aspirational bodhicitta. As explained:

This must be then followed by practising the five precepts as explained below. Nonetheless, the All-Knowing Je Tsongkhapa said in the lam rim that if one has simply generated an aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings through the ritual ceremony, but do not take the five precepts, one is not committing any downfall.

The main point to be understood here is that if one is just generating aspirational bodhicitta then one does not have to keep the five precepts. If, however, following the aspirational bodhicitta one resolves or makes a pledge to keep the precepts then one needs to practice the five precepts.

This can be related to the Six Session Guru Yoga practice that many of you do on daily basis. As you are aware, the practice includes the generation of aspirational bodhicitta, and if one has made the pledge then one goes over that point there. In fact, the Six Session Guru Yoga practice really encompasses the main points of the entire path to enlightenment.

Just as in the Six Session Guru Yoga practice, the resolve in the ritual is to generate aspirational bodhicitta, followed by the actual bodhisattva vows. Specifically, after generating the four immeasurables it is followed by the resolve to generate aspirational bodhicitta, which is followed by taking the bodhisattva vows and going over the commitments.

The commentary further explains:

Despite this, the main point in this text is in accordance with the former statement because immediately after that (generating the precious mind through the ritual), the text goes on to present the practice of the precepts.

¹ This heading is the second part of the Aspirational Instructions. See teaching of 12 September 2017 for the full structure of headings.

The text then explains the precepts that one needs to observe when making the pledge following the generation of aspiring bodhicitta.

Regarding the details of the actual manual for generating aspirational bodhicitta through the ritual ceremony, one should refer to the extensive lam rim which is indeed explained in great detail. Nartangpa's root text and the commentary on the Supreme Path.

Here the commentary explains that this is a general explanation and indicates where more details can be found.

Next the commentary explains the ritual ceremony for making the pledge of aspirational bodhicitta.

First, make an offering of whatever objects are at one's disposal to the Refuge Objects and Lamas.

This refers to making offerings to the actual objects of refuge themselves, and the lama who will be the ritual master or preceptor. The commentary explains:

Then, say the following lines to accumulate merit, purify negativities, and make a supplication by engaging in the elaborate seven limb practice.

As explained here, after presenting the offering one makes a *supplication* following *the seven limb practice*. The supplication is:

"Just as past Tathagata-Arhat-Samyaksam-Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas on the great level, first produce the mind of unsurpassable, perfect and complete enlightenment, I, named such and such shall also produce the mind of unsurpassable, perfect and complete enlightenment. Please Preceptor, help me." Repeat this request three times.

Here, we need to understand that *the past Tathagata Arhat, Samyaksam Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the great level, first produce the mind of unsurpassable perfect and complete enlightenment*, does not mean that actual tathagatas are in the process of generating bodhicitta, because tathagatas and bodhisattvas have already generated bodhicitta. Rather it relates to the time when they were engaged in their training on the path. Just as these supreme beings first developed bodhicitta when they were training on the path, one makes the pledge to follow their example. So that is what one needs to understand. This understanding should be incorporated when taking the eight Mahayana precepts, for example when doing Nyung Nye or any other practice that begins with taking the eight Mahayana precepts.

Then the commentary explains that one needs to generate extraordinary refuge.

Then repeat the following, three times to take Extraordinary Refuge.

If there is a preceptor the supplication is made to the preceptor, but if there is no preceptor then one makes the supplication in front of the visualised objects of refuge in front of oneself. The presentation here is based on a preceptor being present.

"Preceptor, please pay attention to me. I, named so and so, from now until achieving the essence of enlightenment, I go for refuge to the Bhagawan Buddhas, who are the supreme amongst all those with two legs. Please pay attention and so forth is the same as before. I go for refuge to the Dharma, which is the peace, the supreme amongst dharmas

(phenomena) without desire. I go for refuge to the sangha, the assembly of arya sangha Bodhisattvas on irreversible levels, the supreme amongst all the assemblies."

After that the preceptor explains the precepts for taking refuge. Since we have already covered the precepts we don't need to explain them in detail here.

Extraordinary refuge is basically the Mahayana refuge. Going for *refuge to Bhagawan Buddhas* basically refers to the same buddhas as in the Mahayana refuge. Going for *refuge to Dharma* is which the peace and the supreme amongst Dharmas without desire relates to the Mahayana cessation and path. Going for *refuge to the assembly of arya Sangha Bodhisattvas on irreversible* path refers specifically to the arya bodhisattva Sangha. Taking refuge in these three objects is the Mahayana refuge.

The *sangha bodhisattvas* refers to the arya bodhisattvas while, as mentioned earlier, the Dharma is the Mahayana path and cessation. As explained in the teachings, the Sangha referred to here as *being the supreme amongst all the assemblies*, are really supreme objects and thus making offerings to the Sangha is one of the great means to accumulate merit. The teachings actually explain that in comparison to the Buddha Jewel and Dharma Jewel, one accumulates greater merit by making offerings to the Sangha Jewel. This makes sense as the Sangha Jewels are the ones who are upholding and preserving the doctrine of Buddhadharma.

One needs to understand the completely exalted perfected qualities of the Buddha and that which is dependent on the Dharma, the path and the cessation is cultivated by the Sangha Jewel. So it is the Sangha Jewel who are actually the cause to achieve this exalted state of a buddha. This is how we can understand the Sangha as being supreme.

The commentary further explains that:

The preceptor explains the precepts of taking refuge. Once again, offer the seven limbs such as the limb of offering in accordance with the verses from Samantabhadra's aspirational prayer which is The King of Prayers or Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life

Then, as explained here,

Recognising the Lama as the Teacher or the supreme teacher, the Buddha, and regarding all sentient beings with love and compassion ...

As presented here, *recognizing the Lama as the Teacher* refers to recognising the lama as being the actual Buddha. Therefore, as the lama is the preceptor, one needs to regard this preceptor as being the actual Buddha, and *regard all sentient beings with great love and compassion*. One needs to have the mind of love and compassion towards all sentient beings.

Then the commentary adds:

... and oneself as a dream or an illusion, ...

This refers to the need to incorporate the understanding of emptiness, that oneself is like an illusion; while appearing to exist inherently in fact there is not even an atom of inherent existence. So one needs to recognise the lack of inherent existence of oneself.

The commentary further explains:

... one should hold bodhicitta by repeating the following lines three times. "Buddhas and Bodhisattvas residing in the ten directions, please pay attention to me; Preceptor, please pay attention to me.

After that one's own name is proclaimed, with:

I, named so and so ...

This is the point where one makes the personal pledge.

... in this life, and in all other lives, whatever root virtues of the nature of generosity, the nature of morality and the nature of meditation that I have created, caused others to create or rejoiced in those created by others; ...

Here we can also recall that one needs to encompass both the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom. This reminds us of how His Holiness mentions that in the refuge and generating bodhicitta prayer when we say, 'through the act of generosity and so forth' we should be saying, 'through the act of accumulation and so forth' which includes the accumulation of both merit and wisdom. If we only say, generosity and so forth, then the only explicit reference is to generosity, or the accumulation of merit. This is one point that he often mentions.

What is being incorporated into the ritual is the recollection of the root of one's virtue, because one can only generate aspirational bodhicitta on the basis of a virtuous mind. So at this point one brings to mind the virtues one has accumulated.

From the roots of virtue that one has accumulated, one then pledges that:

... just as the past Tathagata-Arhat-Samyaksam-Buddhas, and the great Bodhisattvas dwelling on the great ground, at the outset generated their holy minds into the Unsurpassed Perfect Enlightenment; likewise, I, named so and so, from now until achieving the essence of enlightenment, will generate my mind into the Unsurpassed Perfect Enlightenment.

The next part of the ritual indicates the purpose of generating that mind of enlightenment. Why does one generate that mind of *unsurpassed perfect enlightenment*? What activity would one engage in to generate that mind? This is followed by the next part of the ritual, which is the pledge.

I pledge to ferry sentient beings who are stranded, release those who are bound, revive those who are breathless, and lead those who have not yet gone, to the state beyond sorrow."

This is the actual pledge that one makes. Then the commentary says:

Repeat this three times.

Next, the commentary explains:

If you do not have a preceptor, then you should make prostrations and offerings to the holy objects (on the altar), skip the word "preceptor" but follow all the other parts of the ritual as instructed earlier, this is mentioned in the ritual also.

Then there is a specific explanation about the meaning of leading those who are not liberated to liberation, which we can leave for our next session.

The translation of the commentary on *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* called *Joy of the Blossomed Excellent* by Panchen Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen is used with the kind permission of Samdup Tsering.

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute