
Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

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As usual, let us engage in our meditation practice, based on the motivation generated with the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we recited earlier. Indeed, every practice we do is preceded by reciting the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*; this serves as a reminder to generate actual refuge in the pure object of refuge and generate the bodhicitta mind to the best of one's ability. This will ensure that one's practice becomes a Mahayana practice. Therefore, we need to ensure that whatever practice or virtuous activity we engage in is preceded with this altruistic motivation.

The significance of reciting the refuge prayer - which also encompasses the bodhicitta attitude - is a way to remind ourselves that we are Buddhists. If you do not yet consider yourself a Buddhist, then that is another matter. However, for those of us who are Buddhists, reciting the *Refuge Prayer* whilst taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha becomes a means to remind yourself that 'I am a Buddhist'. The criteria of being Buddhist can be condensed into two main factors: abiding with a particular view and particular conduct - the view is of selflessness and the conduct is non-harmfulness. Bringing this to mind really encompasses what it means to be a practising Buddhist who takes refuge in the Three Jewels.

The significance of generating the altruistic mind of enlightenment means that whatever practice of virtue you engage in, you are reminded to make sure that it is not tainted with self-interest, but rather that it is dedicated wholeheartedly to the benefit of other sentient beings. As a way to benefit other sentient beings, to alleviate their suffering and lead them to ultimate happiness, you need to achieve enlightenment. Thus, the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta inspires one to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. That is the sole purpose of engaging in the practice, which will definitely make it most purposeful and meaningful.

As I emphasise regularly, the significance of this motivation is that it encompasses the whole path to enlightenment. When you take refuge wholeheartedly, that in itself can encompass the whole path. All of us are familiar with the lam-rim, or graduated path to enlightenment, so you can understand how the topic of refuge encompasses the entire path to enlightenment.

When thinking about the meaning of being a buddha, we bring to mind that a buddha is not a being that spontaneously materialises without depending on causes and conditions. Rather a buddha is dependent on particular causes and conditions, and bringing that to mind already sets the foundation for the path.

One way of understanding the causes and conditions that bring about the embodiment of a buddha, who is a supreme enlightened being, is that it is obtained by actualising the five paths and the ten grounds. That serves as the means to achieve buddhahood.

You can also think along the lines of how buddhahood is dependent on method and wisdom. The method is the generation of bodhicitta and the wisdom is the realisation of emptiness. On the basis of the two truths and with the aid of the two accumulations of method and wisdom, the result is to obtain the two bodies of a buddha. So the state of buddhahood is the result of engaging in these profound practices.

It may seem that I am repeating what I have already presented many times before, but for someone who is keen to put this all into practice, there is no fault in hearing these points again. In fact, repetition is a constant reminder that we need to be thinking about these points again and again. For those who are interested in practice this would not be seen as redundant or mere repetition, and for those not interested in practice then perhaps it might hurt your ears.

This also reminds us of what it means to be a Buddhist. As most of you are aware, the advice of the precept to be kept after taking refuge, particularly going for refuge in the Dharma means, at the very minimum, refraining from harming other sentient beings. Think about these points again and again to remember that as a Buddhist your practice is to refrain from harming other sentient beings. The Buddha has presented certain harms that one should refrain from, such as taking the life of other beings and so forth. The more we think about this, the more it will reinforce our commitment to lessen the intention to harm other sentient beings. This will be the benefit of putting the advice into practice.

If you consider yourself to be a Buddhist you should have a good understanding of what it means to be a Buddhist. The simple definition of what it means to be a Buddhist and to practise Buddhadharma is someone who practises non-harmfulness and regards the Buddha as their supreme guide and teacher.

What counteracts harmfulness or harmful intention? The best antidote for overcoming harmful intention towards other sentient beings is the cultivation of love and compassion. There is no optimal means other than this. And one of the best methods to further enhance love and compassion in your heart, is by doing the tonglen practice of giving and taking that we do here regularly. Thus, let us now engage in the tonglen meditation practice.

[Meditation]

Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will now engage in the practice of listening to the Dharma and put it into practice well.

TRAINING IN THE PRECEPT OF THE MIND¹

Earlier we covered how to engage in the training of morality. Now we look at the training of mind; how to train the mind in concentration.

This is subdivided into two

- Training in calm abiding in order to gain clairvoyance
- How to train in calm abiding

What is presented next is a meticulous way of training one's mind. The heading itself encompasses the material to be presented.

Training in calm abiding in order to gain clairvoyance

What is implied here is that the cause of obtaining clairvoyance is calm abiding, therefore as a way to gain clairvoyance one needs to first train in the cause, which is calm abiding.

The next four verses in the root text read:

34. *All Buddhas say the cause for the completion
Of the collections, whose nature is
Merit and exalted wisdom,
Is the development of higher perceptions.*
35. *Just as a bird with undeveloped
Wings cannot fly in the sky,
Those without the power of higher perception
Cannot work for the good of living beings.*
36. *The merit gained in a single day
By one who possesses higher perception
Cannot be gained even in a hundred lifetimes
By one without such higher perception.*
37. *Those who want swiftly to complete
The collections for full enlightenment,
Will accomplish higher perception
Through effort, not through laziness.*

The commentary now presents a summary of each of these verses:

Sharawa summarises these by saying that the first verse (34) shows that to fully gather two accumulations for one's own sake is dependent on clairvoyance (literally higher or heightened perception).

In the translation, clairvoyance and higher perception are used interchangeably, but the more literal meaning of the term is higher perception.

The second verse (35) shows that to fully and perfectly benefit others is dependent on clairvoyance. The third verse (36) shows that to vastly gather merits is dependent on clairvoyance. The fourth (37) shows that to quickly achieve Buddhahood is also

¹ The sequence of headings preceding this is:

Presenting the characteristics of a being of the great scope

Extensive explanation

Explanation of the path of perfection

Explaining the perfect path

Aspirational instructions

Engaging in bodhisattva precepts

Taking engaging vows

Manner of taking vows

Training in the precepts after having taken the engaging vows

Training in the precept of morality

Training in the precept of the mind

dependent on clairvoyance. Hence, these show the significance of generating clairvoyance.

The commentary goes onto explain that

Now, with reference to the line (Verse 33), "The collections for complete enlightenment, Will be thoroughly accomplished," the question is - what is the excellent means of gathering two accumulations?

As you may all know, the two accumulations refer to the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom. The question now posed is: what is the excellent means for gathering these two accumulations?

More specifically, the accumulation of merit arises from practising the perfection of generosity, the perfection of morality, the perfection of patience and the perfection of concentration. The accumulation of wisdom arises from practicing the perfection of wisdom, and the perfection of joyous effort is encompassed in both.

As mentioned earlier, the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta, is generated when one fully develops the altruistic mind that generates the aspiration to achieve enlightenment to alleviate all beings from all sufferings and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. There is a specific term called mind generation, which means generating the altruistic mind of bodhicitta. It is not sufficient to merely generate the altruistic mind and then sit around and do nothing with it; that will not benefit sentient beings. Therefore, committing to engaging in the six perfections is the optimum way to fully benefit sentient beings.

Having generated the altruistic mind of enlightenment, to be fully committed to engaging in the accumulation of merit and accumulation of wisdom, you need to actualise the six perfections. As a result, you achieve the two bodies of the Buddha, namely the wisdom truth body and the form body.

As an answer to the earlier hypothetical question the commentary further explains:

Buddhas of the three times observe that the special cause to fully gather the two accumulations which are in the nature of merit and exalted wisdom is precisely to generate the six clairvoyances. Hence, as mentioned in the Ornament (Maitreya's Ornament for Clear Realisation), there is a purpose for instructing (Bodhisattvas) on the six clairvoyances as a quintessence instruction.

An illustration from the Mother sutra is presented next to show how the accumulation of the collection of merit and wisdom is dependent on both.

The Mother (in Tibetan the Perfection of Wisdom sutra is called Yum Chenmo or Great Mother) in which it says "Subhuti, just as a bird without wings cannot fly in the sky, similarly Bodhisattvas, too, without relying on clairvoyant power cannot teach Dharma to sentient beings nor can they put those sentient beings who are on a deviated path, onto the (right) path."

The commentary then explains the meaning of this quote from the sutra where it says:

The point here is that just as a baby bird which has not yet developed wings cannot fly, likewise, without the power of clairvoyance, it is impossible to vastly

benefit sentient beings in accordance with their predisposition and needs.

In explaining how clairvoyance or higher perceptions are indeed needed to benefit other beings the commentary gives a number of examples:

Moreover, the clairvoyant power of;

- The miracle that enables one to travel to Buddha's land and wherever the sentient beings are

Through miraculous power one is able to go the Buddha's land to receive teachings and so forth from the buddhas, and also go to various different lands where sentient beings reside and to benefit those with whom one has a karmic connection, in accordance with their predisposition.

Thus, if one has the higher perception of 'clairvoyance of miracles' or miracle powers, then one would not have to rely on aeroplanes to go to various lands.

The main point here is that in order to be able to benefit other beings vastly and to a great extent, having the higher perception of a miraculous power would be an immense aid.

The commentary next explains the clairvoyance or higher perception of:

- Knowing others' mind enables one to cognise their predisposition and temperament

This is also incredibly significant because in order to benefit other beings, one definitely has to know their predisposition and also their temperament. Predisposition refers to the capacities of their mind, their inclinations and temperament. It refers particularly to their emotional stability such as for those having great desire, being able to give teachings (particularly to overcome their desire) and so forth.

- Clairvoyance of divine ear. If one were to possess the clairvoyance (or power of) the divine ear, the commentary mentions here that it: enables one to understand their varied languages

Being able to master various different languages, such beings would not have to depend on translators to be able to give teachings in accordance with the capacity of sentient beings for them to understand.

In a worldly context, knowing five languages is considered a really great skill, almost like being a genius. But here the text implies all the different languages that sentient beings would be using. An older student who used to come here called Mira apparently knew about five different languages.

When Kevin Rudd first became Prime Minister, he was highly praised as being very eloquent, and because he spoke different languages such as Mandarin etc. There was lot of talk about how he was a great scholar, but then due to circumstances he lost his power and fell from his position.

- Knowing previous lives that enables one to understand past causes and backgrounds

This power enables one to aid other sentient beings by knowing their past predispositions and past karmas. Having this higher perception enables one to really discriminate as to what is proper and what is not proper; how to engage in things properly. Maybe Kevin Rudd

could have used this! Note that there is a connotation here that some may have some sort of natural inborn ability, some limited clairvoyance, to know certain things from the past or future to a limited degree, or have some miraculous powers to a limited degree. This is not what these powers refer to; rather they refer to real, highly developed perception.

- Divine eyes enable one to see what will happen in the future

This refers to seeing subtle forms and the subtlest details of what will happen in the future.

- Knowing the exhaustion of defilements that enables one to show the path of liberation and enlightenment, and thereby drive, ripen and liberate (sentient beings) through Three Yanas (vehicles)

This last power of clairvoyance summarises that having all of these higher perceptions means that one is able to unmistakably show the path to liberation and enlightenment to other sentient beings, and thereby set them onto the right path, and for those who are already on the path, to ripen and liberate them through the three vehicles.

The great benefit of developing clairvoyance is that it is the optimum means to benefit sentient beings. By knowing their previous predispositions, mind and temperament, one is able to fully engage in benefiting them in a vast way. So, because of these great benefits, one aspires to develop higher perception or clairvoyance, which is dependent on first having developed calm abiding. Therefore, what is presented here is the need and purpose of developing calm abiding.

The commentary further explains:

Since it is very difficult, without the clairvoyant power, to actually undertake other tasks of benefiting sentient beings ...

This implies that having clairvoyance is the optimum means to benefit sentient beings because one knows their temperament and predisposition exactly and so can guide them and give them teachings, in accordance with their capacity and inclination etc. Otherwise, one may give seemingly profound teachings but if these are not in accord with the disciples' inclination or temperament, then it might not be suitable for them. They might not understand nor take that teaching to heart. If one were to have that ability to know the sentient beings' previous disposition, state of mind and inclinations, then one would be much more effective in guiding them and giving teachings. Since it is difficult to help beings fully without clairvoyant power, the next best thing is what is presented here:

it is said that the focus should be placed on (establishing) vinaya holder or sangha community in order to flourish benefit and happiness to sentient beings and Buddha-dharma. As emphatically advised by Jowo (Atisha) to establish a Sangha Community ...

Jowo, or Atisha, advised Tonpa (Dromtonpa) to establish a monastery so Dromtonpa founded the well-known monastery at Radreng. Hence Radreng Monastery was established by Dromtonpa on the direct advice of Atisha as a way to propagate and uphold the Buddhadharma in the sangha community.

In summary, that which brings about benefit and happiness for sentient beings is dependent on the flourishing of the Buddhadharma. And this is dependent on those who uphold the Buddhadharma, specifically those who observe the vinaya, which is the sangha who uphold the vinaya vows, since the propagation and flourishing of the Buddhadharma is dependent on the sangha who uphold the vinaya vows. In accordance with Atisha's advice to Dromtonpa, this shows that there is a connection between the establishment of a community of sangha and the propagation of the Buddhadharma.

Holding the vinaya refers to sangha who have the basis to practice the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom. The ability to fully utilise the three higher trainings is dependent on sangha who are able to uphold the vinaya. This is actually the Buddha's doctrine. This shows that what connotes the Buddha's teachings is those who do not engage in non-virtue; who always engage in virtue and work in subduing their own mind. When that is established, the Buddha's teaching is established.

To further expand on the meaning of 'benefiting and happiness for sentient beings' the way to bring benefits and happiness for sentient beings is, as mentioned previously, to intentionally engage in not harming other sentient beings. If, based on this non-harmfulness, one can practise benefitting sentient beings, this really encompasses the Buddhadharma. The state of mind one needs to develop is basically love and compassion, because this will enable one to bring about benefit for sentient beings, and not harm them. As a personal instruction, one should generate the thought that the optimum way to extend genuine benefit to other sentient beings is by not harming them, and by developing love and compassion for them. 'If I were to develop love and compassion, I would be committed to only benefiting sentient beings and not harming them in the slightest.' The practice of only benefiting sentient beings, and not harming them in the slightest way can be actualised by generating the mind of love and compassion. That is how one creates the personal resolve to take this as a personal practice.

As Lama Tsongkhapa has mentioned, to benefit sentient beings it is essential to have a mind of not being able to bear their sufferings and not being able to bear them being deprived of happiness. In effect, what Lama Tsongkhapa is saying is that in order to generate a genuine wish to benefit other sentient beings, one definitely needs to cultivate love and compassion for sentient beings. Love means wishing beings who are deprived of happiness to have happiness, and compassion means wishing beings who are suffering to be completely free from suffering. It is a significant point that even though we may have the noble intention 'I would like to benefit sentient beings', if we do not have the state of mind that is unable to bear others' sufferings and that they are deprived of happiness, then the genuine wish to benefit others cannot arise.

This is really the main point you need to focus on as the way to put it into practice. Really think about these points and spend time thinking about the plight of sentient beings who are suffering. Generate that genuine

wish, 'how wonderful it would be if they were free from suffering' and then contemplate on how sentient beings are deprived of happiness and generate the wish that they be endowed with happiness. I would say that if one can generate this thought and state of mind even for a few minutes, then that is the real practice of meditation. Just being able to focus on an object or something for a while does not, in itself, have much impact on one's mind. What it comes down to is really seeing that the main thing one needs to work on developing comes down to generating love and compassion.

The significance of developing love and compassion is that it will accomplish one's own purpose as well as the purpose of other sentient beings. That is the two-fold optimum benefit.

The commentary refers to a quote from *Bebhum Ngonpo*:

"the God(?) says if you can't directly benefit sentient beings as (understand) from the previous example, one must understand that the long sustenance of Buddha Dharma in the world is dependent on the sangha community. Hence, if one possesses any capacity, then direct it to that and if one does not possess any capacity then focus on not breaching one's committed pledge to benefit sentient beings."

This summarises the main point mentioned earlier.

The commentary goes on:

Any amount of merits that a Bodhisattva with clairvoyant power can accumulate within a day and night, for a bodhisattva without clairvoyant power won't be able to accumulate the same even within hundreds of aeons. This also applies to the accumulation of wisdom. On the basis of this reason, one should exert effort in cultivating clairvoyant power to quickly achieve the state of Buddhahood because clairvoyant power enables one to quickly gather the two accumulations.

The point emphasised here is that *a bodhisattva without clairvoyant power will not be able to accumulate the same amount of merit as one with such powers, even within hundreds of aeons*. As mentioned here, this also applies to the accumulation of wisdom. So, on the basis of this, *one should exert effort cultivating clairvoyant powers to quickly achieve the state of buddhahood*.

It is good to keep some of these significant points in mind.

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

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