

# Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Try to reinforce the bodhicitta motivation that you have just cultivated. Also generate the strong intention that not only do you wish to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings by listening to these lam rim teachings, but you also wish to put these teachings into practice for the ultimate goal of full enlightenment.

We have finished discussing the four preparations as cited by the root text.

Possess the four preparations, the highest of means. The previous line of the text said:

Utilise every immediate circumstance for meditation. This means applying Thought Transformation to transform any immediate obstacle or problem that we confront, as a result of suffering physical illness or mental hardship or some other suffering. We do this by thinking of all the suffering that exists, and that affects all living beings in this world, and through this we try to generate sympathy and compassion. Then, through cultivating this compassion we try to accommodate the suffering we personally face, by seeing it as a personal sacrifice for the benefit of all sentient beings. We also generate a genuine wish that through our own personal suffering all other beings will be free of suffering. Our suffering then becomes a positive experience.

## 422.321.24 Consolidating Into A Lifetime Personal Practice

ཚོ་གཅིག་གི་ཉམ་ལེན་བསྐྱེད་ནས་སྦྱོར་བ།

We now go onto the fourth main section of the *Seven Verses of Thought Transformation*, Consolidating Into A Lifetime Personal Practice.

To quote the root text:

Gather together the abridged quintessence of this advice.  
Blend the practice of one life with the Five Forces.

The Five Forces are:

1. Force of Motivation
2. Force of Familiarity
3. Force of White Seed
4. Force of Destruction
5. Force of Prayer

### 1. Force of Motivation

This means always reminding and motivating ourselves to only perform right actions. Generally it is said that all our actions are regulated by our thoughts. If the preceding thought is positive, then we can be assured that the action will also be positive. Whereas if the preceding thought is faulty, we can be assured the action will also be faulty. The Force of Motivation means that day-by-day we should try to motivate ourselves that right now, or for this day, or even for a whole month or year, or for this whole lifetime, or even until enlightenment is achieved that our self-cherishing mind will not be allowed to rule over our thoughts.

Rather we shall engage in the two types of bodhicitta mind and always hold them [as the dominant thought]. It is so very important to cultivate this bodhicitta mind over and over again, even if it is only a very artificial bodhicitta mind. If we do this we find that it can be very effective in actually cultivating, and developing the true bodhicitta mind. Also, whatever actions we do shall be of some benefit to other beings.

To make this teaching very explicit, if upon waking in the morning of one single day we make some effort to cultivate a very peaceful and positive state of mind, then this can be a cause to find more peace and positive events in that day. Whereas if from first thing in the morning our mind is unchecked, our first thought will be very agitated and distracted, particularly if we have many problems. This kind of mind will then affect all our actions during the day, and we shall lose our focus. Here our practice is to check ourselves over and over again and remind ourselves of the benefit of cultivating bodhicitta, and if there is any self-cherishing in the mind, then generate the motivation to overcome it, and replace it with the mind that cherishes others - the bodhicitta mind.

### 2. Force of Familiarity

As Shantideva said:

There is no action or object which cannot become easier when we become familiar with it.

If through the Force of Familiarity we become very familiar and used to this bodhicitta mind, then without any effort, in even a second, we can give birth to true genuine bodhicitta. In other words bodhicitta can spontaneously arise in our mind.

On the other hand, when we are unused to doing something, then even simple tasks become very difficult and complicated let alone very difficult ones. In order to generate the Force of Familiarity with this bodhicitta practice, we should integrate bodhicitta mind into all our actions as much as possible. The more we integrate it into all our actions, whether they be walking, sleeping, or talking, then the more familiar with bodhicitta we become, and then the more easily it will arise in our mind.

The word ‘familiarity’ in Tibetan is ‘kom<sup>1</sup>’. It has the same meaning as ‘gom<sup>2</sup>’ which means ‘meditation’ or ‘to become familiar with’. Thus this continuous practice of making the mind familiar with bodhicitta is by definition meditation.

### 3. Force of White Seed

This concerns practices of increasing our merit and purifying our negativities. In this practice we aim to give rise to the bodhicitta mind if it has not arisen, and if it has already been generated, the aim is to further increase the bodhicitta mind. Therefore it is important in any practice to

1 ཚོམས།

2 རྒྱུ་ལ།

purify negativities or to accumulate merit, that our motivation is not tainted by self interest, or the aim of worldly benefit.

#### **4. Force of Destruction**

This concerns the practice of destroying the self-centred mind, or self-cherishing attitude. Whenever this selfish attitude arises we should try to contemplate how, because of this self-cherishing we have suffered in beginningless past lifetimes, as well as in this current life and even at this present moment. Also we try to see how even in the future suffering is unavoidable because of this. In this way we make ourselves aware of the pitfalls of self-cherishing, and then for all these reasons we destroy and counteract self-cherishing by engaging in meditation practice.

#### **5. Force of Prayer**

The Force of prayer is wishing and praying that whatever virtuous practice that is undertaken will be a cause for the two types of bodhicitta to be present in one's mind throughout all lifetimes. Think also 'May any adverse conditions in my life become favourable conditions to enhance this bodhicitta mind'.

The practice of the above Five Forces are to be applied during one's lifetime.

#### **The Five Forces at the Time of Death**

The Five Forces can also be practised at the time of death. As the root text says:

The instruction of the great vehicle transmigration of consciousness is to apply these very Five Forces [at death], while lying in the perfect position.

While the names of the Five Forces at the time of death are the same, there is a different approach.

#### **1. Force of Motivation At The Time Of Death**

At the time of death cultivate a strong motivation to not be parted from the bodhicitta mind either during death, or after death in the intermediate state of being. This means reinforcing a strong resolve to not discontinue this practice of the two bodhicittas especially at death or in the intermediate state.

#### **2. Force of White Seed At The Time Of Death**

This practice is to remove attachment and grasping at possessions, especially material ones, so that at the moment of death one will be very peaceful, with no attachment to possessions serving as a cause of worry and distraction.

So prior to death, get rid of possessions as much as possible, by offering them to the Three Jewels, or giving them to those in need. In Western culture some parents and grandparents practise this. For those without much wealth there is not much to worry about with wills and so on, but for those with a lot of wealth it can be a big issue. Some people even try to control their children in this way, forcing obedience with threats of changing the Will! As a spiritual practitioner there is benefit in giving away possessions, so that wealth will not be a distraction at the time of death. Do this practice of dedicating your possessions, so that mentally you have given them up before you actually die.

#### **3. Force of Destruction At The Time Of Death**

This means undertaking a specific practice in order to purify negativities, and to restore any broken vows and pledges. This is a very powerful and effective practice to do prior to death. Those following the secret mantra path should engage in self-initiation practice at this time, so that they take the bodhisattva and tantric vows again, thus purifying any vows or pledges that have been breached or which have degenerated. It is said that if you have a great store of negativities in your mind, these can be an obstruction to a very peaceful death. So doing a purification practice at death, such as applying the four means of purification, the

practice of confession and so on is very beneficial. The specific purification practice is the one to destroy the self-grasping attitude, wherein you investigate what we call the self or 'I', which we grasp very strongly and tightly. If we investigate that self we realise that neither the mind is that self, nor are our aggregates that self. In this way we realise that the self has no solid concrete existence despite the way we see it, and that there is attachment to this self because there is a notion in the mind that the self is concrete. Through this meditation we try to destroy this concept of self grasping, and the strong attachment we have to this self.

#### **4. Force of Prayer At The Time Of Death**

This is the practice which we do at death, where after making offerings to the gurus and all the objects of refuge we pray that we may not be separated from the bodhicitta mind, and the bodhisattvas' deeds during the intermediate state of being, and all future lifetimes. We pray that all the gurus and refuge objects send us blessings and that all the adverse conditions that we may face in the future will become favourable conditions to increase the bodhicitta mind. We also pray to be able always to meet with our spiritual teachers again, who can [continue to] teach us about bodhicitta.

#### **5. Force of Familiarity At The Time Of Death**

Through this Force of Familiarity one can die or pass from this life with the bodhicitta mind. Becoming familiar with bodhicitta, by practising it over and over again is not just a practice for this life. It is also so that at death we are able to engage in the bodhicitta practice, and die with bodhicitta in the forefront of the mind. Try to understand that the force of familiarity is something that can only be generated by doing the same practice over and over again. To do this practice easily and comfortably at death, we have to become used to doing it in our lifetime. If we do that then there will be no difficulty doing it at the time of death, and we shall die with a bodhicitta mind.

The root text says:

The instruction of the great vehicle transmigration of consciousness is to apply these very Five Forces [at death], while lying in the perfect position.

The 'perfect position' in which we die should be the same as that of the Lord Buddha's position, when he passed into paranirvana. This is the lion position where one lies on the right side, with one's head in the right hand.

In doing this try to recollect the life of Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, then if possible as one dies practise the technique of Giving and Taking, integrating it with the breathing meditation, and through this cultivating love and compassion for all beings. If at death a virtuous frame of mind can be maintained by undertaking practices such as taking refuge, or cultivating renunciation or bodhicitta, then it is said that the benefit of cultivating bodhicitta makes it possible to take rebirth even in a pure land.

In one of our past teachings we learned the story of how when a mother and child were drowning, because the mother's thoughts were only of rescuing her child, this thought caused her to be reborn in a pure land. When Geshe Chekawa was very close to death, he said to his students 'Now you can begin your practice of offering. I have always prayed to be reborn in the realm of 'Hell without Respite' but there is instead every indication that I shall go to a pure land.' This shows the result of the bodhicitta mind.