

---

# The Quick Path to Enlightenment

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་ལམ་རིམ་དམར་བྲིད་ལྷུར་ལམ།།

Commentary by Venerable Geshe Lobsang Dorje

Translated by Sandup Tsering

1 September 2021

---

As usual, we begin with a short meditation. In last week's teaching I gave a brief introduction to meditation, primarily relating to the breathing meditation practice we do before beginning the Wednesday night teaching.

In the scriptures it is said that breathing meditation is an antidote to disturbing thoughts. Therefore, breathing meditation is particularly effective in getting rid of our disturbed and agitated states of mind. Also, as mentioned last week, breathing meditation is recommended for beginner meditators as the technique is so simple and easy to do. Anybody can do it; you don't need to have any experience in meditation practice. The object that you use in that meditation is just your own breathing – inhaling and exhaling. So, you don't need to look for or learn about the object. You are already familiar with it, so, this makes it easier.

## Visualisation of Tathagata image

For those of us who have some experience of meditation practice and know how to apply mindfulness, it is said that another object which is very beneficial to use is an image of the Tathagata or the Buddha. Using the Buddha as an object of meditation to develop concentration has the additional benefits of accumulating merit and purifying negativities and so forth. The benefits arise because, as we become familiar with the image of the Buddha, we will easily remember the Buddha at all times. We will remember the Buddha in whatever activities we do, such as sleeping, sitting, walking and standing or when we get sick or are facing death. At all times it will give us a sense of the Buddha being near as protection and a refuge. First, we must establish the image of the Buddha in our mind. How do we do that?

Initially we take a good look at a painting or statue of the Buddha or listen to the spiritual teacher's instructions relating to descriptions of the Buddha. We then close our eyes and sit in meditation and have a mental recollection of the Buddha based on having seen the symbol of the Buddha in the form of a painting or statue or based on the spiritual teacher's instructions and advice. Whatever image of the Buddha flashes into your mental recollection should be your object of meditation. It is important that you keep your mind on that without worrying about how clear or how much detail you see. However, that image which is the Buddha as an object of your meditation reflects the actual Buddha, it is not the external painting or statue of the Buddha.

You imagine the Buddha in the space in front of you just a bit above and in line with the centre of your forehead, at about a full arm's length or the same distance away as if you were lying on the ground in a full-length prostration. The size of the Buddha is about the width of two fingers – the index and middle fingers – and is in the form of a bright and clear light but having some weight. Imagining it in the form of light is to remove mental sinking and drowsiness in our meditation and having some weight is to get rid of mental excitement or distraction.

You can also use an image of your root guru as an object of meditation. Otherwise, the meditation details are the same as before. There are also meditations on the impermanence of things and so forth, in which case the object of your meditation is impermanence and so on.

As mentioned earlier, when you first begin the meditation on the image of the Buddha, do not try to look for the details of the Buddha's features such as his eyes, face, and colour of his skin etc. It would be difficult to get details and trying hard to get them will cause you to lose the object altogether. Rather, when you begin the meditation, you use whatever comes into your mind which is based on your knowledge of the Buddha. Instead of any particular features of the Buddha, what you expect to have in your mind as an object of meditation is some sort of ball of bright and clear illuminating light, which in reality is a buddha.

Before we start the teaching, let's do a few minutes of breathing meditation together to calm all our distracting thoughts so that our mind is at peace within us.

*[Pause for meditation]*

## The person of the great stage of the path must follow the stages of the path in common with the small and in common with the person of middling scope

By relying on lamrim teachings, like Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, we can understand that all the teachings the Buddha gave can be subsumed into three vehicles, or into Sutrayana and Mantrayana, or into the stages of the path of the three beings in accordance with their mental capacities. Through this we can understand that all the Buddha's teachings complement one another in the sense that there is absolutely no contradiction within them. These teachings are to lead us to achieve complete enlightenment. So, it is to achieve complete enlightenment that the Buddha taught the Paramitayana or the Sutrayana and the Mantrayana, and to enter into either of these two vehicles we must generate bodhicitta, an altruistic mind of enlightenment.

So, what are the causes for generating bodhicitta? Bodhicitta is rooted in great compassion. And to generate compassion for other beings, first we must generate renunciation, an aspiration to achieve liberation from cyclic existence by becoming aware of the suffering nature of cyclic existence and particularly that of the lower rebirths and feeling a deep sense of dissatisfaction and distaste. This shows that we must follow the stages of the path in common with the person of middling scope prior to following the great stages of the path of the Mahayana.

The teachings related to the middling stages of the path show how to achieve liberation from cyclic existence. Similarly, we must also follow the stages of the path in common with the person of small scope. We must continuously find a good rebirth of a human or celestial being until we reach complete enlightenment. The cause to secure a good rebirth is applying the teachings pertaining to the path in common with the person of small scope, such as the moral ethics of refraining from the ten non-virtues, which serve as a cause to achieve the higher status (Tib: *Ngon-tho go-pang*) or happy rebirth. Here, our main goal is to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings, and to reach this goal we are following the great stages of the path.

As we follow the great stages of the path, we fully realise that we must ensure a good rebirth or a higher status, and thus apply the shared teaching about the path of the person of small scope. We also recognise that we must achieve liberation and accordingly, we must follow the shared

---

teaching about the path of the person of middle scope. Nevertheless, we realise that both the stages of the path in common with the small and middle beings are not sufficient. This is because finding a higher status and definite goodness of liberation from cyclic existence is not sufficient; our ultimate goal is complete enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Therefore, it is said that the practices relating to the path in common with the person of small and middling scope are the branches or preliminary practices of the stages of the path of the person of great scope.

Then the question raised here is: if the common teachings related to the small and middling scope are considered as branches of the stages of the path of the person of great scope, why can't both the small and middling stages be part of the great stages of the path? Why is it necessary to mention the three stages of the path separately?

The text provides two main reasons or purposes for presenting the practices in terms of the three stages of the path. The first purpose is to prevent pride in the minds of those following the Great Vehicle towards others who are following the lower vehicles, and of those following tantric practice, towards the followers of Sutrayana, basing that pride on feeling that they are on the higher stages of the path.

The second reason or purpose is to indicate that they are on the spiritual path and there are three levels, in terms of mental attitude: small, middling and great mental scopes. This is also to indicate that we must progress along the path in the graduated order, beginning with the small, through the middle and then the great path. If we jump to the great stage without first following the small and middling path, then not only will we not gain any realisations of the great stage, but we will also lack any realisations of the middling and lower stages.

To be more precise, we should say that the person of the great stages of the path follows the stages of the path in common with the small and in common with the person of middling scope, but not the actual stages of the path of the person of small and middling scope. Therefore, it is essential and equally important for the person of the Great Vehicle, including those following the tantric path, to first complete the stages of the path in common with the small and middling stages of the path.

The Lord Manjushri said, 'Initially it is best we put aside all the tantric instructions of the tantric practices. Put all that aside and just focus on gaining the experience of renunciation and bodhicitta'.

And Manjushri further said that once you gain the experience of renunciation and bodhicitta, then whatever practices you do will automatically become a cause for you to achieve liberation and the state of omniscience. Therefore, you should never think that there is no benefit meditating on renunciation and bodhicitta and so on. For anyone who thinks that there is not much point, not much worth in meditating on renunciation and bodhicitta, it is an indication that they lack an understanding of the key points of the Dharma.

In terms of the outline of this lamrim text, the *Quick Path*, there are two main headings at the beginning. We have now finished the first main heading, The Explanation of How to Develop Certainty about the Number and Sequence of the Path by Elucidating the Authentic Origin of the Lineage Lama. Now we move to the second heading of the outline of the whole text, which is:

**After developing certainty about the path, the explanation of how to purify on the stages of the path.**

## **Bodhicitta is the only entry door to Mahayana and Tantrayana.**

We continue a bit further on the question we raised in the last teaching which related to a statement in this lamrim text: that bodhicitta is the only entry door to the Mahayana and the Tantrayana. I think we have already discussed how bodhicitta is an entry door to the Mahayana, and hopefully it is clear to us. It also says that bodhicitta is the entry door to the Tantrayana.

Despite this clarification, we still have room for a question: if you say that bodhicitta is really the entry door to the tantric path, then we have to say that the cultivation of bodhicitta should automatically qualify one to enter into the tantric path; is that right? Surely there are some practitioners who don't accept the tantric path, but who might possess the bodhicitta mind. There may also be some practitioners of the Cittamatra school of tenets, who possess the bodhicitta mind but do not enter the tantric path.

Are there any questions? If you don't have any questions then I will continue by giving my own view on this, and then if you have any questions on my view you are welcome to address it later.

Please note that you don't have to accept my view, which can be wrong. It is important that you always question my views or the views of any other person. The point is to develop your own view through utilising your intelligence and reasoning power. Any knowledge gained from self-analysis can be stable and healthy. So, I encourage you to raise any questions you may have regarding my views and presentations. This will also be helpful to me and to others.

So, relating to this statement that bodhicitta is the entry door to Mahayana and Tantrayana; my position is that it implies two types of bodhicitta - the level of bodhicitta as explained in the Sutrayana and as explained in the Tantrayana. I would say that bodhicitta is an entry door to Mahayana and Tantrayana; the respective level of the bodhicitta must be considered.

Bodhicitta is usually described as an aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. I would say that on the tantric path bodhicitta is an aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment, but it should also be accompanied by the thought to fulfil that aspiration by depending on the tantric path, as well as the aspiration expressing a high degree of urgency and spirit of enlightenment which resolves to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings in the quickest way possible.

In short, I would say that you enter the tantric path when you generate uncontrived bodhicitta, wishing and resolving to achieve enlightenment quickly by depending on the tantric path to benefit all sentient beings. In fact, for anyone entering the tantric path, they must have generated this type of bodhicitta. This is just my opinion; I am not going to say that this is right or wrong. You can also have your own opinion on this.

We will leave tonight's teaching here. Thank you.

*Transcribed by Kim Foon Looi  
Edit 1 by Llyse Velez  
Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering  
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute