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# The Quick Path to Enlightenment

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## Review of the outlines of the teaching

### Explanation of how to purify the mind on the stages of the path

This has two sub-headings:

1. How to serve your spiritual teacher as the root of the path
2. How to purify your mind in the stages of the path.

### How to serve your spiritual teacher as the root of the path

Again, this has two subheadings:

1. The actual meditation session
2. What we do in the break between sessions.

### The actual meditation session.

The actual meditation session is explained under three subheadings:

1. Preparation
2. Actual practice
3. Conclusion.

### Preparation

We are currently discussing preparation, which is a very important factor for the success of our practice. The preparation involves things that we need to know and do before beginning the actual task. Therefore, it can also be called a prerequisite or preliminary. Preparation is very important; how well we tackle a task is dependent on how well we are prepared for the task. Even to successfully achieve mundane work we need to prepare well.

The preparation here for the actual practice is elaborated under a list of six preparatory practices. Of these six, we have finished the first two. The third one is sitting properly on a comfortable seat in the eightfold body posture of Vairochana Buddha or in whatever manner is comfortable, and then cultivating taking refuge, bodhicitta and the four immeasurables. We have been talking about taking refuge in the Three Jewels and in last week's teaching we finished the explanations on taking refuge in the Guru, Buddha and Dharma; now we continue with taking refuge in the Sangha.

### Taking refuge in the Sangha

In taking refuge in the Sangha, we must remember to visualise in the space in front of us a throne the height of which is not too high or too low. Upon the throne is seated our root guru who is in reality or nature in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha and in the form of clear and radiant light, surrounded by all the direct and lineage gurus, the deities, buddhas, bodhisattvas, hearers, solitary realisers, *dakas*, *dakinis* and so forth.

To take refuge in the Sangha we repeat this line as many times as we can, or at least three times: 'I take refuge in the Sangha'. Along with the prayer, we imagine a stream of multi-coloured nectar and light coming forth primarily from the assembly of Sangha refuge objects, of bodhisattvas, hearers and solitary realisers, who are associated with Sutrayana, as well as the

*dakas*, *dakinis*, Dharma protectors and so forth associated with Tantrayana.

This stream of nectar light goes into your body and the bodies of all other sentient beings and purifies the negativities and obscurations of all of us. The negativities include those which we have accumulated since beginningless time, and particularly the ones associated with the Sangha refuge, such as denigrating the Sangha, causing a schism in the Sangha community, taking away the livelihood of Sangha and so forth.

In short, the nectar light purifies all the negativities accumulated in relation to the Sangha refuge object. As an effect of the purification, our body and that of all other sentient beings turns into the nature of bright, clear and pure light. This enhances and increases our longevity, merit, knowledge and realisations and all receive the protection of the Sangha refuge object.

The Sanskrit term 'Sangha' is *gendun* in Tibetan, which literally means one who is intent on engaging in virtuous actions. In English, we sometimes call the Sangha 'the virtuous or spiritual community'. There are superior Sangha and individual Sangha and either can be an ordained person or a layperson.

What qualifies a person as a superior being is the direct realisation of emptiness. Sangha also connotes a spiritual community or assembly; hence it is said that Sangha refers to a minimum of four Sangha members. More specifically, when we take refuge in the Sangha by saying, 'I take refuge in the Sangha' we are referring to a minimum of four Sangha members. Likewise, purifying the negativities that we have accumulated in association with the Sangha – such as the negativity of causing a division or schism in the Sangha – refers to the minimum of four Sangha members.

We should therefore take special note here that, just because we see some faults with an individual monk or nun, we should not assume the monastery or nunnery or organisation he or she is associated with also have the same fault and then say bad things about that organisation. Criticising the Sangha organisation or group will accrue a negativity towards the Sangha refuge object. I am not saying that you are not allowed to criticise a particular monk or bhikkhu if he has a fault. I am saying that to assume all the monks also have the same fault is very wrong, and this will accrue a greater amount of negativity. We need to be very careful about this.

Regarding negativity in relation to the Sangha, there is mention of denigrating or criticising the Sangha and also causing a schism or division in the Sangha, which means causing a division within the Sangha through slander. As to the meaning of another negativity called 'taking away the livelihood of Sangha', this includes, for example, telling a benefactor to make a smaller offering to the Sangha or encouraging the benefactor to make an offering to one group rather than another group of Sangha.

### Condensed refuge practice

Having finished talking about taking refuge in the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, next we discuss taking refuge in the Three Jewels together in a condensed refuge practice. You can do this by repeating the first two lines of the refuge prayer: 'To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, I go for refuge until I achieve complete enlightenment'. When saying this line, you imagine a stream of five coloured nectar and

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light coming forth which goes into your mind and body and the minds and bodies of all other sentient beings.

As a benefit, you purify all the negativities and obscurations accumulated since beginningless time, particularly those which are associated with the three refuge objects. Having purified all the negativities, your body and mind and the bodies and minds of all other sentient beings transform in nature into the form of clear and pure light, increasing lifespan, merit, knowledge and realisations. Then you cultivate the sense that you have received the protection of the refuge of the Three Jewels.

This completes the detailed and condensed explanation of taking refuge in the Three Jewels. We will now do a few minutes of meditation together: you can choose the detailed or condensed practice of taking refuge.

[Meditation]

As to the nectar purifying the negativities and obscurations, the early masters advised that we think of the nectar and light stream entering into us forcefully in a gush; not like dripping in drop by drop. It is said that this way is more effective in cleansing or getting rid of negativities and obscurations. This makes sense because when we think of nectar dripping on us, the effect is that it is gradually wetting us and so it is a slow process, whereas when we think of a forceful stream of nectar gushing down on us, the effect of washing away negativities is fast and forceful.

We are now discussing the third preparatory practice which has a few elements. We have finished the topic of the features of the sitting posture, cultivating the right motivation and taking refuge. The next two are cultivating a bodhicitta mind and the four immeasurables. As part of taking refuge in the Three Jewels, His Holiness the Dalai Lama instructed in his commentary on the *Middling Exposition of the Stage of the Path*, that you can include the meditation on the two truths or the four noble truths. Both these meditations constitute taking refuge in the Dharma in the sense that they cause us to internalise and cultivate the Dharma within us. When we actualise the true Dharma within, we become a Sangha. As a Sangha, as we progress along the path to reach complete enlightenment; we will become a buddha. Hence, this meditation gives us insight into the meaning of taking refuge in the Three Jewels, as well as enhancing more faith and conviction in the qualities of the Three Jewels.

### Generating bodhicitta

Next, we will look at how to generate the bodhicitta mind. To generate bodhicitta you repeat the last two lines of the common refuge prayer: 'Through the accumulating practice of giving and so forth, may I achieve complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings'. As instructed in these two lines, we cultivate a wish or pray to quickly achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all other sentient beings by depending on the roots of all the virtues we have created through our practice of giving, moral ethics and so forth. This is called wishing bodhicitta, which simply aspires to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all beings.

Then there is the engaging bodhicitta, which not only aspires to enlightenment but fulfilling that aspiration means a resolution to engage in the practice of the six perfections, the four means of gathering disciples and so on.

The four means are primarily to ripen the continuum of other sentient beings. The four means of gathering disciples are:

giving material aid to others as a way to win their hearts; pleasant speech which means teaching the Dharma in a way that suits and pleases others; engaging in the purpose, which means helping them to engage in the practice so that through their Dharma knowledge they manage to overcome mental afflictions and obscurations; and accord with the purpose which means, not only do they advise others, but bodhisattvas themselves also practise so that they are the perfect model and inspiration for others. These are the four means of gathering disciples.

Thus, having generated bodhicitta, you imagine that the visualised guru buddha in front of you emanates a replica that dissolves into you. You then instantly arise in the form of a guru buddha. At that point, you cultivate a sense of divine pride in yourself being in the state of guru buddha. This is said to have the special effect of implanting the very auspicious cause of dependent arising. If your primary meditation is on calm abiding or *shamata*, then you can use the guru buddha as the object for your calm abiding meditation. Then, from your body, which is being cultivated in the form of the guru buddha, rays of light emanate to all sentient beings around you. And then, like yourself, think of establishing all other sentient beings in the state of buddhahood as well.

### Bodhicitta is essential to all practices

In the order of the lamrim road map, first, we follow the stages of the path in common with the person of small scope, and then in common with the middling scope, and then the great scope. However, here we are learning about cultivating bodhicitta which is a part of the training for the person of great scope, and we haven't yet begun the stages of the path for the person of small scope or the middling scope. So, the question is: why is bodhicitta mentioned here? Doesn't this go against the sequence of the lamrim practice?

No, there is no contradiction because the lamrim or the stages of the path is a graduated path for an individual being to achieve complete enlightenment, and bodhicitta is an essential ingredient for whatever practices we do to serve as a cause to achieve complete enlightenment. When a practice, such as refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions, which is a practice of the person of small scope, and the four noble truths, which is a part of the middling scope practice is infused with bodhicitta, it then becomes a cause and a path to achieve supreme enlightenment. For this reason, bodhicitta is indispensable in all the stages of the path and practice. As an example, if you were to climb to the peak of a mountain, it is important that when you begin to climb from the bottom that you have the thought and determination to reach the peak.

Next week we will discuss the four immeasurables.

*Question: With respect to visualising other sentient beings; are the sentient beings humans or not?*

It is instructed that we imagine all sentient beings around us in the form of human beings.

Thank you.

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Edited Version  
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