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# The Quick Path to Enlightenment

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Commentary by Venerable Geshe Lobsang Dorje

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We will continue with the third of the six preparatory practices.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Adopting the correct seating posture, taking refuge and generating bodhicitta

The third practice consists of four parts, of which we have covered the first three:

1. Sitting posture
2. Taking refuge
3. Generating bodhicitta

We will continue tonight with the fourth part.

### 4. Cultivating the four immeasurables

The reason the four immeasurables sequentially follow Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta is that they help us to enhance and develop the practices of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta. Here, we should reflect on the fact that countless sentient beings, including ourselves, have taken rebirth within cyclic existence. Unless we do something to prevent this rebirth, we will take many more rebirths in cyclic existence. The main cause that drives us through this perpetual cycle of rebirth in cyclic existence is being attached to those who we see as close to us, and hatred or aversion toward those who oppose us. So, we need to think about the causes of this continuous cycle of perpetual rebirth.

We need to also think about our situation. On one hand, we are very fortunate in terms of the excellent kind of life we have now found in our practice and the Dharma. We also have contact with the perfect Dharma of the Lord Buddha as well as meeting with perfect spiritual teachers. So, we have the opportunity to learn and put the Dharma into practice.

Furthermore, we can also say that we have seized this opportunity to apply the Dharma in our life. However, we have not yet developed sufficient realisation or experience of the Dharma because we still lack control over our minds.

Attachment can easily arise toward other beings close to us, and aversion to those who are distant. This is the situation we are all in at the moment. Because of this attachment and hatred, all sentient beings (including ourselves) cannot escape from the suffering of rebirth. With a clear recognition of this, we must free ourselves from this cycle of perpetual rebirth and suffering. With this in mind, we cultivate the four immeasurables.

#### a. Immeasurable equanimity

With the thought of compassion, think about and cultivate the thought: 'May all sentient beings be free from suffering and its causes'.

Cultivate the state of equanimity by thinking:

How wonderful if all sentient beings could abide in the state of equanimity, free from attachment to those who are close, and aversion or hatred of those who are distant.

May they abide in the state of equanimity, free from attachment and hatred.

May I be the cause for them to abide in this state of equanimity, free from attachment and aversion.

May the Guru Buddha bless me in order for all sentient beings to abide in this state of equanimity, free from attachment and aversion.

In this meditation, we find four different stages in the cultivation of equanimity.

1. With the thought of *how wonderful if all sentient beings could abide in the state of equanimity free from attachment and aversion* you cultivate a wish for equanimity. This is called wishing immeasurable equanimity.

2. *May they abide in the state of equanimity, free from attachment and hatred* is called the immeasurable equanimity of aspiration.

3. *May I be the cause for all sentient beings to abide in this state of equanimity* is called the immeasurable equanimity of superior intention.

4. *May the Guru Buddha bless all sentient beings to abide in equanimity* is called the immeasurable equanimity of supplication.

#### b. Immeasurable love

Cultivating immeasurable love also has four stages.

1. *How wonderful if all sentient beings (who are the object in this meditation on the immeasurables) could have happiness and the causes for happiness.*

2. *May they have happiness and the causes for happiness.*

3. *I will cause them to have happiness and the causes for happiness.*

4. *May the Guru Buddha bless them to have happiness and the causes for happiness.*

As in the case of the cultivation of equanimity these four stages are respectively called the immeasurable love of wishing, aspiration, superior intention and supplication.

#### c. Immeasurable compassion

Thirdly, we cultivate immeasurable compassion, again in four stages.

1. *How wonderful for all sentient beings to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.*

2. *May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.*

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<sup>1</sup> See teaching of 15 September for complete list.

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3. *I will cause them to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.*

4. *May the Guru Buddha bless them to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.*

#### **d. Immeasurable joy**

The last of the four immeasurables is immeasurable joy.

1. *How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings are never separated from higher rebirth and the supreme joy of liberation.*

2. *May they never be separated from higher rebirth and the supreme joy of liberation.*

3. *I will cause them not to be separated from higher rebirth and the supreme joy of liberation.*

4. *May the Guru Buddha bless them to never be separated from higher rebirth and the supreme joy of liberation.*

Having cultivated the four immeasurables in this way, you then imagine a stream of radiant multi-coloured nectar and light emanating from all the holy objects of merit that you have already visualised in the space in front of you. Your root guru is the central figure in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha and surrounding him are all the direct and lineage gurus, deities, buddhas, bodhisattvas, hearers and solitary realisers, *dakas*, *dakinis* and Dharma protectors.

This stream of radiant multi-coloured nectar and light enters your mind and body, and those of all other sentient beings, purifying the negativities and obscurations that have accumulated since beginningless time, specifically any obstacles that impede you and other beings from engaging in the meditation on the four immeasurables, whether in the form of sickness or some evil force.

Getting rid of all obstacles and negativities transforms your body and the bodies of other sentient beings into the nature of vivid light. At the same time, this increases lifespan, merit, knowledge, realisations and all the excellent spiritual qualities. Also imagine that, as a benefit, you and all other sentient beings abide perfectly in the four immeasurables.

After this, you can then cultivate a special intention to engage in the lamrim meditation through enhancing strong love and compassion by meditating on taking upon yourself the suffering of all sentient beings and its causes and giving your happiness and the cause of happiness to others. Propelled by a strong force of great compassion that finds seeing sentient beings enduring suffering unbearable, you say:

*I resolve to quickly and quickly achieve the precious, perfect and complete state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.*

And for this reason, you decide:

*I will engage in meditating on the instructions of the stages of the path in conjunction with the profound practice of guru deity yoga.*

We will take a little pause from the teaching to do a few minutes of meditation on what we have covered in taking refuge, generating bodhicitta and the four immeasurables. If you can include both refuge and bodhicitta, that is great, but if you prefer, just focus on one aspect such as

bodhicitta or the four immeasurables. Remember that in doing this practice we have to imagine the assembly of gurus, buddhas, bodhisattvas and so on in front of us, just as described in the teaching. Now we will engage in meditating on taking refuge, generating bodhicitta and the four immeasurables in the presence of the assembly of these holy beings.

*[Pause for meditation]*

In cultivating our motivation to engage in the lamrim meditation, we generate the thought: 'I resolve to quickly, quickly achieve the complete state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.' There are two different interpretations of the meaning of repeating the word 'quickly'. According to the conqueror, the great master Wensapa, the first 'quickly' indicates achieving complete enlightenment by meditating on the instruction of the stages of the path. The second 'quickly' indicates taking guru yoga as the life force of the path and practising the lamrim path.

According to another explanation, the first quickly implies that you will achieve complete enlightenment in one body and one lifetime, without depending on the accumulation of merit for three countless eons. The second 'quickly' indicates achieving complete enlightenment within a very short lifetime of this degenerate age.

As mentioned here, the reason for taking guru yoga as the life force of your practice makes progress on the path very quick. Geshe Dromtonpa says:

The supplication of [my own lama,] Lord Atisha, is a greater blessing than the supplication to any other object of worship.

According to the Great Lord (Je Tsongkhapa):

When you listen you cannot catch the word, when you think, you cannot understand the meaning, when you meditate you don't produce any realisation in your mental continuum. At that time your power of mind is very weak and, you are instructed to rely on the power of your field of supplication [i.e. your lama lord].

Tilopa said to Naropa:

Oh, yogi, of all the aids to your practice, guru yoga is the most excellent.

This advice from Tilopa also indicates that to develop inner realisation there is no greater help or cause than relying on the guru yoga practice.

Mogchogpa said:

I doubt liberation is possible by relying solely on strong meditation, but there is no doubt liberation comes through faith and devotion. If the Great Compassionate One [Avalokiteshvara] is white, let him be white. If the Sovereign Lady [Vajrayogini] is red, let her be red. If Hevajra is blue, let him be blue. Wherever I stay, I am never separated from the presence of the lama. With it becoming a buddha in one lifetime as if it has arrived now.

This also implies that without relying on the guru, then no matter how hard you work in meditation, gaining realisations is not guaranteed. However, with guru yoga,

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there is no doubt you will gain realisations through your practice.

With this, we shall finish the third preparatory practice and move to the fourth preparatory practice, which is Visualising the Supreme Assemblies

Before we begin the fourth preparatory practice, I want you to discuss the meaning of repeating the word 'quickly'. There is one explanation as we discussed before, which is that the first 'quickly' means achieving complete enlightenment in one body and one lifetime, without depending on the accumulation of merit for three countless eons. The second 'quickly' refers to achieving enlightenment within one very short lifetime of this degenerate age.

Here, we can raise questions such as: What does 'not depending on the accumulation of merit for three countless eons, but within a single body mean?' Let's say it is one body and one lifetime. What exactly does all of this mean? The second quickly refers to one very short lifetime of this degenerate age. What does that mean?

Relating to the first 'quickly', the question is: Is it actually possible to achieve enlightenment without accumulating merit for three countless eons? When we achieve enlightenment, don't we have to achieve it in one body or one lifetime? So, the phrase doesn't contribute any new meaning to this.

Here are some explanations. For example, 'three countless eons' indicates a very lengthy period of time. So, here we are talking about accumulating the required merit but not needing to take three great countless eons to achieve that. How is this possible?

We know the tantric path offers the quick path in the sense of an ability to accumulate the same amount of merit but not taking three countless aeons to do so. But, in the sutric path, we need to accumulate merit for three great countless aeons.

We also need to think over the meaning of achieving enlightenment in one life. What does that mean? Take the example of the last continuum of a bodhisattva as a sentient being, who will definitely achieve enlightenment in that life. Would that life be counted as one life? If that is the case, then we have to say that everyone must achieve complete enlightenment in one lifetime. We can also raise the question: Does that mean that in accordance with the Perfection of Wisdom or Sutrayana system it is possible to achieve enlightenment within one lifetime?

Maybe you can discuss the meaning of 'not depending on the accumulation of merit for three countless eons but within one body and one lifetime' with others. Also, what does 'one very short lifetime of this degenerate age' mean?

You are welcome to bring further questions to the next teaching session.

*[Question:] There is one question here about the order of the four immeasurables. It is different in different practices. What is the reason for that?*

*[Answer:] Immeasurable equanimity comes first. This order accords with the order of the cultivation of the four*

immeasurables. For example, prior to applying the method to cultivate bodhicitta, we first need to cultivate the state of equanimity. So, the order also depends on the purpose of the meditation on the immeasurables.

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright*

*Edit 1 by Cynthia Karena*

*Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering*

*Edited Version*

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