



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

Teacher:- Venerable Geshe Jampa Tenzin

Title:- Lobjong Mind Training

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Please set out the highest motivation to achieve Buddhahood for the sake of helping sentient beings on the path to Buddhahood.

Tonight it is Mind Training turn and I remember talking about Seven Point Mind training as the basis of our discourse here, and I wonder what the seven points of the Seven Point Mind Training are. There is not much basis to talk about if you don't retain what is being taught. All teachings about Mind Training are subsumed under 7 points, that is why it is called Seven Point Training of the Mind. I am going to enumerate the 7 points and try to retain them as much as possible so they become important synopsis for the training of your own mind.

There are 7 points:

1. Preliminaries: they include the entirety of practice for practitioners of the small and middling capacity.
2. Actual practice: training to develop Bodhicitta. This is done in training the mind in ultimate and relative Bodhicitta. When you train your mind in relative Bodhicitta then there are 5 points.
3. Transmuting misfortunes in life into uplifting spiritual opportunities or path.
4. Revealing or explaining one lifetime practice in an integrated manner, or explaining the integrated practice in one lifetime.
5. The measurement or benchmark that you know your mind is trained, the criteria of having trained the mind.
6. Samaya: commitments of this training.
7. Precepts of mind training practice.

The 1st is Dharmas pertaining to preliminaries – literally translated. What it means is some practices that you do before the actual training of the mind.

The actual training is the second one which is training the mind in Bodhicitta.

The 3rd one is transmuting misfortunes into paths to Buddhahood.

The 4th one is integrating practice in one lifetime, wrap it in a cohesive manner and reveal it. How do you summarise one life's practice into an easy-to-relate practice, a simplified version.

The 5th one is the benchmark.

The 6th one is commitments.

The 7th are the precepts.

Can someone tell me what lojong means: practically when you immerse the mind in Buddhism, any teaching is training of the mind. There is no teaching of the Buddha that is not training of the mind. Training of the mind here refers to training to develop Bodhicitta in your heart. I did cover this briefly but I will recap some of the things that I have covered before.

Everybody says in reality it is the gathering merits and clearing obstacles that is the essence of practice. When you consider Bodhicitta, it has two elements. They are the goal that you achieve and who do you achieve that goal for. The goal that you achieve is worked for by training the mind in the ultimate Bodhicitta of wisdom understanding emptiness. Who do you achieve Buddhahood for? It is not for your sake at all. It is entirely for the sake and benefit for sentient beings. You have the highest interest of sentient beings at your heart. When

you try to achieve that state of Buddhahood solely for the sake of sentient beings then you could not do it without going through training in the conventional Bodhicitta.

When you train the mind to develop Buddhahood for the sake of sentient beings, you train the mind considering two points: the first is, you spend time reflecting on how sentient beings in mundane existence are afflicted by and with psychological and physical distress. The second point is how this highly and incessantly distressed sentient beings are very close to your heart, how you find them extremely adorable, lovable and something your heart goes for. You spend time reflecting on suffering of sentient beings when you train the mind in the path or the practice of practitioners of small and middling capacity, who think primarily about how life is extremely distressed in the three lower realms of existence. That is the concern of practitioners of small capacity. If you think of life in the entire existence is nothing but suffering you develop a strong aversion to suffering in mundane existence. Now it is easy to see how all sentient beings like one are in the same boat. The second point is how do we learn to see that sentient beings are extremely adorable and lovable? For that we need to see that sentient beings are very special to us, very significant and precious and something that we cannot live without. Precious Bodhicitta that you need to develop if you have not yet and enhance it, can only become perfect and strong if you have seriously considered how precious all sentient beings are.

There are two ways of training the mind in seeing sentient beings extremely dear to you and therefore extremely precious and can't do without. The first is called six cause one effect approach and the second is called equalising and exchanging self for others. Between these two the second is considered more advanced because it has to be an advanced mind to have empathy with someone unrelated to one but whose suffering one cannot bear. When you see someone suffering your heart goes out naturally. That person is not in any way related to one, or done anything of benefit for one, yet one feels empathy. And when the heart goes out to people who are related to one and are suffering your heart feels pain as well but only because they are related to one and one is the centre of consideration. The second point does not take the self as a starting point for such consideration. For example, when you see a chicken being killed, you find it abhorrent, painful and your heart goes out to the chicken. When you develop some kindness and empathy and it grows not because the chicken has been kind to you but because you would have found it extremely painful if you had been in that situation. That way you bring yourself and others onto the same level. We have this seed indeed. Each time you see someone suffering and in distress, you feel uncomfortable and you can't stand somebody suffering like that. But that does not become Bodhicitta, it is the starting point and therefore like a seed.

To make this seed strong then we need to talk about and train the mind in the second approach. Training the mind in the relative Bodhicitta has five parts.

1. Consider the sameness of self and others.
2. Consider the drawbacks of self-centredness from various angles.
3. Consider the virtues and the goodness of cherishing others from many points of view.
4. The actual process of exchanging self with others.
5. How to practice *tonglen*, giving and taking, based on that

The natural empathy that you have when you see someone in pain and suffering is the seed. It happens instinctively because we all have a degree of humanity. This seed needs to be reinforced, strengthened, and fired based on reason.

1. Consider the sameness of self and others. (9 sub-points)

Now to talk about how self and others are the same and equal. We can establish that point in three ways, objectively (point 1 to 3 below) when you considering sentient beings, subjectively (point 4 to 6) when you put yourself in their place, and in the ultimate way (point 7 to 9).

1. The way one detests suffering and the way sentient beings also detest suffering is the same, there is no difference. On your part, let alone finding the suffering of birth, ageing, sickness, separation from beloved one, you almost find it hard to bear the suffering of having a single hair from your body as unpleasant and undesirable. In the same way all other sentient beings detest, not only would they find that unpleasant of the above suffering, but also when you try to pull a hair from their head. In that way we are all the same. From the point of view of sentient beings all of them are the same in not wanting any kind of suffering yet in terms of experience of the pleasant they remain insatiable. The more pleasant things they have they never reach a point of satisfaction and remain insatiable. In these two points they are the same. Yet if we exercise any degree of discrimination when you are in a position when we try to alleviate the suffering of some and not others, that would be utterly wrong as they are all in the same boat. That is the first point of establishing sameness.

2. The second point is all sentient beings are the same because when you check carefully nobody has found real, genuine, lasting peace and happiness. They think they have peace and happiness, what most ordinary beings think of peace of happiness are nothing but different types of unpleasant experiences. What has been actually nothing more than suffering or suffering of change has been taken as pleasurable. It has been taken as peace when they actually have been undergoing suffering and mistaken it as happiness. When you take 10 beggars in dire straits they are identical. They are all without basic necessities and they turn up and ask for your help and if you are in the position to help then it would be utterly wrong on one's part in trying to give something more to at least one or two of the 10 beggars and not so much to the others. If you exercise any type of discrimination then it would be one's fault. All sentient beings in *samsara* are beggars lacking happiness and peace. If you find yourself in a position to help and if you exercise any hint of prejudice at all then it would be one's fault. How could one do that when all sentient beings are in the same boat as pointed out earlier. In that respect all sentient beings are the same.

I give you an account. Kangyur-wa Khensur Rinpoche teaches and talked about *samsara*'s suffering. A student challenged him. There is not suffering in *samsara*, when you feel cold turn the heater on; when you are hot then turn the air-conditioner on. What do you think of his answer? When you talk about suffering of cold, we seem to be able to identify the rough state of suffering of cold. But when you go into the finer points of being hot it is hard to pinpoint it. The moment you turn the air conditioner on, the first moment the air touches your body and in the second moment that experience of coolness has already started its journey to be the suffering of cold. How do we know that the suffering of cold started then? That is because if you remain in front of the air conditioner for some time after a while you find that it is now unpleasant. The unpleasantness is a cumulative effect of a collection of many moments of cold air touching one's body. If the blast of cold air in the first moment were real state of pleasure and if something that is really pleasurable then the more you enjoy it the more degree of pleasurable it would reach. But that is not the case and it turns into unpleasant experience and it is only a phase of suffering that we undergo.

3. The third point here is all sentient beings not only lack happiness but in fact they are afflicted with distress, and that is all sentient beings in *samsara* are invariably undergoing being born again and again. Each time they are reborn they get older constantly leading to old age and death. This goes on and on and on. Not only do they not have happiness, to make things worse, they are afflicted with suffering that tortures them that ultimately kills and robs them of all well-being. When they are afflicted you cannot exercise any prejudices to any of these sentient beings.

These are the three reasons that we need to consider when we consider sentient beings from their side they are exactly the same in terms of the three sub-points that I have just pointed out. Secondly there are three sub-reasons for the second reason: thinking subjectively from your point of view then there are three reasons why sentient beings are the same.

4. Think of how one as a subject has received immense benefit, kindness from all sentient beings across lifetimes. They have been as kind as these two people who happen to be your parents. All sentient beings have

been one's own mother. Not only have they been kind during mother's role time but also when they are not one's mothers. Let's think about kindness of sentient beings in an immediate way. Think about the house you live in, foods you eat, different clothes you wear, everything that supports life and gives you pleasure. Everything that is good for you invariably comes from others. We ourselves cannot do anything without the contribution that we receive from them. We have had beginning-less existences throughout beginning-less time. When we were reborn, each time we depended on two sentient beings to be one's parents. Sentient beings have been in that way most kind. We owe it to sentient beings for everything we have and our existence. How much longer are we going to be in *samsara*. That we don't know. As long as we remain the *samsara*, just as we have depended on them in the past, we keep relying on them. Without them it is impossible.

5. Finally when you are Buddha and have an omniscient mind, even that is dependent on sentient beings. Sentient beings are the source of mundane and trans-mundane existence. Since it would be wrong now with regard to the sameness of kindness of sentient beings and exercise kindness, to prefer some sections of sentient beings it would be wrong, we need to treat them equally and exercise the sameness.

Here some misgiving crops up: sentient beings have not been kind at all times because they have been my enemies and they have harmed me. If sentient beings have been one's enemy it was not that they are inertly cruel and harmed you in a sadistic way, they would have done so for some temporary reason. If one's mother becomes possessed by a spirit and may attack you but you never get angry with her because she is possessed. What you try to do is help your mother. In the same way, when mother sentient beings who have been one's mother countless times, come under the sway of anger and some other delusions, they are possessed by them, what we need to do is rather than attack them, is to exorcise them and rid their mind of the disturbing emotions. One could not be in the position of harming sentient beings due to some temporary hurtful positions.

6. The third way to seeing all sentient beings from one's own point of view, is to see that sentient beings including oneself are in the jaws of death. We live a precarious existence and we never know when death clamp its jaws one is gone. Therefore, that being the case, it is pointless to fight about things when we don't have much time to live. For example: There are 10 people due to be executed in a matter of a week. In the meantime they are in prison. When they are prison-mates, rather than spending the remaining time peacefully and happily among themselves, if one of them creates a fight, someone who is watching them fighting for a better place in the prison when they only have one week, then that is seen as a pointless exercise. In the same way, we are all in the jaws of death and have not much time, then why fight and cause trouble rather than seeing all the same and live peacefully.

With this I have explained 6 sub-points.

7. The third point is considering that one and all are the same. Although we are the same yet we suffer from a perception of seeing people as distant and close, enemies and friends, such a way that we categorise people in different groups. If what we see, enemies and friends, were truly or intrinsically that, then Buddhas who are enlightened and see them as what they are, they would have also been able to see that some are naturally enemies of all, or friends of all. Buddha's omniscient mind has not done so. In that regard all sentient beings including one are the same, neither foes nor friends.

8. The second point there is no certainty of enmity and friendship. Someone who was a friend one day is your enemy the other. Even in one day human relationship in trivial matters can blow out of proportion and vary widely. Even more so across lifetimes, everything is out of order and they will end up with a changed relationship.

For example, in Buddha's own time there was a couple who had a son who was married and the wife gave birth to a child. There were five people in the family. One of the means of livelihood was to fish in the lake behind the house. While they were alive that was their lifestyle. The father died but was attached to the family's surrounding and he was reborn as a fish in the lake. The mother also died and came back as a dog that hung

about the house and was fed by the son and his wife. This child that the young couple had in fact was the child of the first husband of the wife. While she had this husband, relationship developed between the son of the couple that died, her first husband was killed in the fight. When he died, he was reborn as her son. That was the situation of their *samsara*. One day like they used to do, the son had gone and caught a fish. They ate it and gave the bones to the dog. Shariputra was in the area on an alms round and saw their situation. The fish was the father in the previous life. Shariputra couldn't help making a statement of the bizarre situation of *samsara*, of eating the flesh of the father and feeding the bones to the dog and yelling at it. The former wife eats her former husband's bones. And the bitter enemy is now lovingly cared for in the lap. He saw this where everything had changed so dramatically, nothing in *samsara* is ever dependable and reliable and was on his way. This is a true anecdote shared by Shariputra during Buddha's lifetime, and we can learn that relationships change across lifetimes and thus it is wrong to categorise people when things change all the time. Let's forget the sense of enmity and friendship and nothing is worth the effort. Let's see all as the same.

9. The final point is that everything and every phenomenon are nothing but figments of imagination or the constructs of disturbed minds out of attachment and enmity. No one is inherently enemy or friends, short of being labelled depending on circumstances. If there are two hills: x and y. When you are on hill x you say 'this side and pointing to hill y saying 'that hill'; and vice versa. This and that was just nothing but relative thing depending on where the naming person is. In the same way, what you call enemy and friend is utterly dependent on naming concept.

We need to consider these three points with three sub-points, these nine points, it is clear that on all accounts one and all are exactly the same in all accounts. Thus now resolve to – if you are in the position - alleviate everybody's suffering and not just a few. If you are in the position to promote everybody's well-being then do it for all. Do not discriminate in the face of the utter sameness of all. How could one possibly do that? If you have access of guru puja with a stanza that says, 'we do not want even the smallest suffering but we remain insatiable in the experience of joy. In this regard there is no difference between self and others. Therefore may I only do things that will please others.' Think about these 9 points and recite the stanza in the process. Visualise the guru seated above your head and pray to him, thinking these point and reciting this stanza, think that the guru responds by sending you light rays with nectar entering your crown aperture filling your being, and ridding you of all residence and filling you with altruism. It also flushes out all residence. The guru injects a new sense of inclusiveness, universal, and elimination of suffering and injection of happiness. Feel that the guru has removed all hindrances preventing you from doing this practice well. If mind training is important to one then going through these is crucial for you are testing whether your mind is up to the principle of mind training. With this I have covered the first section which is seeing that self and others are the same.

2. Consider the drawbacks of self-centredness from various angles.

Next I will talk about drawbacks of self-centredness, reflecting from various angles on the drawbacks of self-cherishing. The force of this pervades all minds ranging from the mind of beings in the deepest hell, animals, humans and even in Bodhisattvas on the 8th Ground, even their mind is subtly affected by self-cherishing. All harm and unpleasant experiences that afflict one comes from 10 negative actions, like three negative actions of body, killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. When they kill it is with the view to gain something for self, stealing is the same and sexual misconduct is the same. The three negative actions of the body emanate from self-cherishing thought. Suffering that people have due to excessive lifestyle, like eating for pleasure, they overeat and result in health issues. Others under-eat and starve themselves to be beautiful and their health suffers. This suffering also emanates from wanting to look good. All suffering due to lifestyles, substance abuse etc. is a matter of a problem coming from self-centredness. Self-centredness, self-pampering is so ruinous and harmful to the point that when the issue of this becomes strong it is likely that someone easily gives up their religious principles, gurus and spiritual friends. When that happens, it is a very serious matter.

And these serious matters come to be serious actions as these are taken when self-centredness rules the mind. Self-centredness is extremely destructive. In the past it has done nothing but harm. It has blinded one so much so that one has given up all values, yet we feel or think nothing of it. When ruled by self-centredness we thought that we were doing it for ourselves but this is the kind of deception it brings and we fall for it. If it were the right approach then we would have had real tangible outcomes but we don't. Unless we wake up to this we would be again influenced by this mind. In our case, while we are so profoundly and ignorantly and unconsciously badly affected by self-centredness, we don't have antidotes. Let alone us, even arahats and Bodhisattvas on highest grounds who have wisdom understanding emptiness and powerful Bodhicitta, are subtly influenced by self-cherishing attitude and fall for it, then we don't have an armament at all.

Let's say self-cherishing is ruinous and has a delaying effect, Hinayana arahats who practice meditation and wisdom of understanding emptiness, reach Nirvana and get stuck there being oblivious to the suffering in the world. When they are stuck there for eons they have at a time when neither their own ends are met perfectly nor in any position to help others, they remain there due to self-cherishing thoughts and forgetting other sentient beings. Even when they emerge and enter Mahayana they will take much longer time to go through this path compared to other Bodhisattvas who had not gone for personal liberation to start with. Self-cherishing thought is nothing but evil and is like a prison guard who never lets you out. It would never let you out and it is worse than cancer, a psychological cancer and permeates your thinking process and brings nothing but trouble. It is like the prison guard who takes you to the execution place. Or it is like a butcher who takes animals to the freezing works.

There is another stanza in the guru puja: 'by seeing the chronic sickness of self-cherishing as the doorway of all suffering, may I from now hold a grudge against this mischievous character and may I be blessed and energised to vanquish this great demon.' Again you need to appeal to the guru above your head, then guru again emits light rays and nectar and flushes self-centredness in the form of tarry fluid from different parts of the body. Secondly, feel that this self-centredness is replaced by other-cherishing thoughts or altruism and finally feel that they free you of all obstacles, outer and inner, from evicting the demon of self-centredness from your heart. At the end it is vital to resolve, 'I have realised this mistake and now I will not allow myself to come under the influence of such thoughts.' Make a decision not to do so is quite important.

3. Consider the virtues and the goodness of cherishing others from many points of view.

The third is, reflecting on the merits of cherishing others in many ways. Cherishing others is the only way of going about. If one has cherishing others then others become most important for one. Because of that, one would not harm them, kill them, or rob them etc. It really stops all kinds of negative actions and crimes. As you develop respect for others it stops you from killing etc. and when you stop this it shuts the door of being reborn in lower realms but one is reborn in higher realms as humans etc. Higher rebirth comes from respect and care for others. Socially speaking such a person then has a pure conscience for he has not wronged anyone because of respect and being driven by cherishing others. To achieve Nirvana liberation, yet again you need to depend on cherishing others.

You need to train in the three: ethics, concentration and wisdom. Training in ethics is the foundation of the next two and that comes from respect for others. With concentration you have right wisdom and with that you sever negative thoughts at their source never to return and consequently you make it to Nirvana. To achieve Mahayana qualities, then cherishing others is indispensable, without it no iota of Mahayana qualities will take root. Developing Bodhicitta is the highest expression of cherishing others. When you work to develop it, you are saying I cherish others absolutely more than myself. That is when Bodhicitta takes root and every practice that you do is done for you by Bodhicitta, purification, gathering merit, fulfilling one's own goal unwittingly happens. Buddhahood which was one of the aims, also happens due to Bodhicitta. Everything culminates from

Bodhicitta. The moment you develop the ability to cherish all sentient beings throughout space whose number are as vast as space and spontaneously do so as much as you cherish yourself, you never know a moment of suffering. Should suffering befall you they are not a problem but boost your practice. You feed on them and your practice will grow and as a result there is joy in the face of suffering.

Think this way and there is a stanza to recite and pray to the guru and then feel that the guru does the same thing as described above. He removes obstacles development of other-cherishing attitude. As a resolve think you will hold other-cherishing thoughts in your heart as if it were a precious jewel and you would really look after it and nurture it and cherish it.

4. The actual process of exchanging self with others.

The 4th is the actual exchange of self for others. Having considered the pros and cons of cherishing self and others, then you feel like really exchanging the two perspectives in your mind. Yet when you have some reservation that resists in doing so, then think this way: use Buddha as an example and recall that in the past before Buddha became Buddha he was exactly as us, he had self-cherishing thoughts. He was the embodiment of self-cherishing thought but he woke up to the evils of self-cherishing thoughts and he cultivated the interest in others more and his own less. He reached the state of perfection so that he developed true, genuine Bodhicitta. This is the highest expression of cherishing others. With that he reached the state of Buddhahood. If he could do that, while he was like us in the past, then why can't we as well? This will loosen the residence. If we put the pressure of familiarity, nothing is impossible to achieve. We make what belongs to others, our own, so much more that we think that this body is me, while it came from egg and sperm from others. When something that came from others and when your mind took shelter in that, you made it your own. In the same way, those who are others now can be your own. Sentient beings, who you call others, make them your own and cherish them like your own body. They become part of you and then cherish them as your body. The mind follows the pressure of training and familiarity. In the beginning there is someone who is your enemy, let alone seeing when you hear his name, you cringe and you can't tolerate that. However, relationships are ephemeral and thus they change with a change of situation, and maybe you develop some relationship with that person, friendship grows and then they become so close to you that you cannot be without them, you can't bear separation from them. These things do happen and become a reality because the mind bends to the pressure of familiarity.

Then thinking in this way, you recite guru puja, 'self-cherishing thought is the doorway of all evils, cherishing others is the doorway to all good, seeing the difference between the two, may I be able to exchange self-cherishing for other-cherishing' and then the guru will help you as described above.

5. How to practice *tonglen*, giving and taking, based on that

How to do tonglen practice based on this: tonglen works principally in three ways; first you recall your compassion and empathy and let it surge strongly in you, then use it to extract and remove others' suffering and take it upon yourself. When you take things from others, you take others' suffering, delusions and karma, the cause of suffering, and finally the causes of delusions which are knowledge obstruction. When you give you let a sense of love grow strongly and it has a sense of giving. When you give you can give your life, body, resources and your merit.

Next time I will elaborate on this more.