



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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Title:- Lob.jong Mind Training

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Please listen to this discourse with the highest motivation of attaining Buddhahood in order to help free all sentient beings who are said to have been our mothers in the annals of our existence.

Tonight we are going to talk about Mind Training. To talk about Mind Training I laid out 7 points:

1. Preliminaries that include the small and middling capabilities of lam rim
2. Practice
3. Turning obstacles into path
4. Integration of one's life practice
5. Criteria of
6. Commitments
7. Precepts

The second point was training the mind to develop conventional and ultimate Bodhicitta. The training in relative Bodhicitta has 5 points.

1. Establishing the sameness of self and others: equal suffering, wish for happiness and freedom from suffering, same delusions, impermanent, Buddha-nature etc. This is a sense of equanimity in terms of the 2nd approach of developing Bodhicitta: 6 cause 1 effect, equalising and exchanging self with other. Both these approaches are preceded by their own version of equanimity or sameness. The sameness in the first approach is that all sentient beings are the same. They have been all your best friends or mother and enemies or neutral people. In that respect there is no difference. They have all played these three key roles. In the 2nd approach, the sameness is in the sense of wanting happiness, there is no difference between self and others, and wanting freedom from suffering. Therefore our effort to eliminate suffering should extend to all beings because like you they want to eliminate suffering. Your effort to accomplish the state of well-being and happiness should include all in that scope. With regard to sameness we are the same to some interpretation because we are all impermanent, selfless, we do not have intrinsic nature in terms of our existence. There are other forms of equanimity. Here the sameness is a sense of universality in accomplishing temporal and ultimate good for one and all, in the elimination of pain and suffering. Such a degree universal and seamless sameness between self and others develops by going through the 9 reasons, you train your mind and the ideas in these seep through your consciousness leading to the development of universality in your attitude in your accomplishment and elimination of suffering.
2. Drawbacks of self-cherishing attitude
This refers to reflecting on self-cherishing at various angles. Is there a difference between grasping as a person and self-cherishing thoughts? Generally speaking there is a difference: grasping at a person thinking that one as a person has intrinsic nature. Self-cherishing attitude is self-centredness and refers to self as the centre. Arya Bodhisattvas are Mahayana practitioners on the Path of Seeing, the 3rd Path and above. These Bodhisattvas have no self-cherishing thoughts but they have grasping at self as a person. On the other hand, Arahts – who have achieved Nirvana of the Hinayana system – are free of grasping of self as a person (which is ignorance) but they suffer from self-cherishing thoughts.

I will talk briefly about the five points.

1. Sameness:

Regarding the sameness of self and others, there are nine reasons but these are subsumed under 3 headings. The first is self and others are the same in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering and pain. The second main reason is the kindness of all being when they have played the role of a mother in specific lifetimes and the kindness of all beings when they are not our mothers. The third main section is whilst we cannot help having the notions of inherent friends and foes, the person seems to be an enemy inherently from the person's own side. When someone acts like our friend then we cannot help but believe that they have an inherent friend-ness about them. However, when viewed by omniscience of the Buddha, his enlightened mind, he does not see who is friend and who is enemy. Also if something exists at all it would be findable if you looked for it, especially friends and enemies. However, when you look for them you just can't find them.

These are the 3 main sections and each has 3 small reasons. As you go through these and when you come to the end of the 9th reason then you need to have developed a strong resolve of universality of your attitude towards them, in that when it comes to accomplishing good, then you accomplish what is good for all living beings throughout universe and space. When it comes to elimination of pain and suffering you would do that with regard to all beings. You need to do a single-pointed concentration that you will remove everybody's suffering and accomplish everybody's happiness.

2. The crippling drawbacks of self-cherishing attitude

The second point is considering for many points of view the crippling drawbacks of self-cherishing attitude. Then consider how self-cherishing attitude under the guise of accomplishing good for you has led you to do things that have been nothing but negative actions. Although self-cherishing attitude wears this mask in fact it has done nothing but ruined the prospect of any lasting happiness. Any misfortune or ruination, disadvantage and decline one may suffer are put down to self-cherishing attitude or self-centredness. Considering this chronic attitude from various points of view and then resolve to see this as highly detrimental and the enemy who is in the inner sanctuary of your heart and then resolve to evict it. The drawbacks of self-cherishing attitude become apparent when we consider what we have achieved through our relentless effort to achieve happiness throughout beginning-less time. We have tried to achieve the best for us. If self-cherishing attitude is the valid, non-mistaken approach by now it is high time that we have something to show for it. Evaluate what you have achieved in terms of qualities that may liberate us and weaknesses and downsides – the outcomes of these two – how much happiness and suffering do we have following the dictates of self-cherishing attitude. Taking Buddha who was like us found the path there was a paradigm shift and he has forsaken self-cherishing attitude and embraced all sentient beings as dear to him. Having trained himself on the path of universal altruism what degree of qualities or suffering does he have? If you compare and contrast these two then the drawbacks of self-cherishing attitude and the benefits of other-cherishing are only too obvious. Having realised this, think to yourself, 'now I understand and I will never allow myself being ruled by this ruinous mind' and then stay in equipoise on that decision for some time.

3. Developing conventional Bodhicitta – cultivate other-cherishing attitude

The third section in order to develop conventional Bodhicitta is cultivating other-cherishing attitude or altruism. Here we need to make a blanket statement that any good that anyone experiences from fleeting comfort of a gentle breeze for being in hell realm to the endless and seamless state of well-being that Buddhas experience, and everything else in between comes only from an attitude of cherishing others. Although there are a lot of explanations given, to sum up say to yourself, 'Buddha has forsaken self-cherishing attitude in return what has he received? We have forsaken other-cherishing attitude and what have we got in return?' Again everything becomes clear. Then resolve that you will never forsake other-cherishing attitudes.

There are various Buddhist scriptures that teach the process of ridding our mind of self-cherishing attitude and the process of enriching and furnishing our mind with other-cherishing attitude. Yet the one text that stands out the writing of Shantideva. His work is called the Guide to a Bodhisattvas Way of Life and it is extremely exhaustive in the treatment of this subject. Yet one stanza sums it up:

What good there is in the world
Arises from a mind cherishing others.
Whatever pain and misery there is in the world
Arises from a mind wanting happiness just for itself.

4. Exchanging self for others

This does not mean that you are other and others are you. It means exchanging self-cherishing attitude that we have had deep inside us throughout beginning-less time for cherishing others, switching the place of two attitudes. In the place of self-cherishing attitude which has done nothing but bad, we learn to cherish others in its place. That is called actual exchange. This has to be done on the basis of the first, second and third step. If one has considered the first three steps and remained in equipoise, at the end when you arrived at certain conclusion and resolve then this would be easier to do.

5. *Tonglen*

This is the visualisation practice in order to enhance and heighten this sense of cherishing others. It means visualisation practice of taking and giving. When we do this practice, it has to be done in relation to the process of one's breathing in and out. You mechanise this practice using biological mechanism of breathing in and out. For that body posture is considered important. The 7 posture for ease of breathing are:

1. Legs are in vajra-cross legged position which can be painful if we are not trained.
2. Hands in meditation: the back of right hand in the palm of the left hand, the thumbs meeting and the hands placed below one's naval.
3. Ideally the legs should be vajra-crossed position with the instep of the left leg on the right thigh and vice versa. If this is found difficult allowances are made and one can sit in simple cross-legged position
4. The spine should be vertical
5. The head is slightly bent downwards
6. The eyes are not totally shut or widely open but shut in such a way that they are minimally open so the eye casts straight down to your lap via the tip of your nose. Teeth and lips should be in a natural position, not too tight or loose. The tongue is curled up to touch the palette
7. Shoulders are balanced not tipping either way.

This is the 7 point meditation posture of Buddha Variashana. If you add breathing meditation it makes it eight points. We do this as an effective way of drawing attention of the mind to an object that disturbs one. When we concentrate on our breath it is extremely effective in neutralising strong passions in the mind. If we observe this body posture then this has a strong inter-dependent serendipity reasons. These are meditation postures maintained by Tathagata Variashana. He was in fact enlightened aspect of our physical aggregate. We have got five physio-psychological aggregates, the first is body aggregate. Variashana represents a degree of perfection of physical bodies of Buddha. When we achieve Buddhahood our body would attain a state of perfection and this is expressed by that Buddha, the physical archetypal Buddha of our body. For us to have this postures of enlightened body we cultivate these posture at the time of training. The second significance of this posture is, once we have a straight upright body it will straighten our nerves and channels. If our nerves and channels are straight they are highly conducive to smooth flow of wind. This is the flipside of our consciousness and a vehicle of consciousness. When consciousness moves it does so thanks to the mobility of the wind, energy. When the flow is smooth through the body it helps the mind achieve high efficiency in its function.

How do we do the actual *tonglen* – send and extract and heap them upon yourself. *Tonglen* is done in dependence of heightened accentuated degree of true, heart-felt love felt for all beings, extraction of their suffering and heaping them onto your own is done as a result of heightened state of compassion. First of all we need to make these two extremely strong. In generating strong love and compassion, we need to feel that we are in the middle and surrounded by all living beings who have been your mothers. During the time when they play the role of a mother and other times, we were utterly dependent on them for all that we needed. All these

immeasurable helpful kind beings are in the mundane suffering. All beings, from hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, gods, demi-god and humans, all are now surrounding one in human form but undergoing their respective species suffering. Although in practice we extract and receive and we need to let a strong sense of compassion overflow in our hearts. How do we do this? All have been visualised through your concentration in human form undergoing their species specific suffering, then you imagine extracting their pain and their pain and misery now comes through their right nostrils in the form of a band of black beam or rays of light. They enter you and receive these through your left nostril. As you do this their pain then is heaped upon one's self-cherishing attitude that is visualised in the form of a black lump at the heart level of the chest. As soon as these black light rays touch the lump it is dispelled instantly much like the darkness of a room is dispelled when the light is turned on. Or the lump is washed away by a strong current, like a pile of loose rubbish is swept away with a current of water. In the same way feel your self-cherishing attitude has disappeared and vanished. This is to remove the suffering of others and heap on self-cherishing attitude. With a heightened sense of love – love has the function of doing good deeds for others – it is time to give. For that you imagine your body has turned into a wish-granting jewel. From your right nostril a white beam of light goes out and it represents everything good you have ranging from material to spiritual. Then the white beam of light falls on a mammoth gathering of sentient beings around you. As soon as it touches the bodies of sentient beings in human form they and their environment undergo a sudden change. Their bodies become bodies with a precious human life which is most conducive in practicing spiritual matters. The environment changes into a perfect environment where there is no suffering. To be specific there are three extractions or takings and three givings. What we take is suffering, delusions and obstructions to omniscience. When we give we give three things, body or our life, our resources, material and whatever we have housing, clothes and money, and our root of virtues.

That is the first round of taking and giving. The second round of taking is their underlying delusions or negative emotions which are mainly three poisons of mind. When we classified them in detail then there are 84 000. We sincerely and genuinely feel that we are now removing their three poisons of mind which leaves them from their right nostril in the forms of black light rays and you receive them and as soon as they enter your left nostril, they change into a heavy downpour of hail and sleet that bombard the black lump of self-cherishing attitude that hates being bombarded with this or any suffering. You deliberately strike it with this and feel that your self-cherishing attitude once again has been evicted. The second round of giving is giving your resources. Imagine that all your resources that you have gathered through positive actions from now until the state of Buddhahood, go out in the form of white light rays. As soon as they touch sentient beings, then feel that they receive all the material resources that they would need to sustain their lives and the resources that they would need to do their spiritual practice.

The third thing that you free sentient beings of by way of your extraction, are the subtle obstructions to omniscience which are the residue of the three poisons of mind, delusions and so on. They may have been removed but a remnant remains. These are received from the right nostril from the sentient beings and are received through the left nostril and changed into scorpions and other creepy crawlies and they attack the black lump of self-cherishing attitude. The point is in believing that it is taking place. When you receive the three bad things from sentient beings, you do so from your left nostril and you give with your right nostril. One needs to be convinced that this is taking place. The third round is giving your root of virtues ranging from simple practice of offering of light and flowers to profound practices. All these leave you from your right nostril in the form of white light rays and sentient beings receive from their left nostril. As soon as they receive these root virtues then this gives them so much energy and boost in their wealth of merit so that the root of virtue places sentient beings on the threshold of Buddhahood and almost bursting into it. Alternatively think to yourself that they have become Buddhas.

What is important now in giving and taking in this practice, there are three takings and three givings. When you take bad elements from sentient beings you do so because your compassion cannot bear sentient beings having them and then suffering as a result of these. Thus your strong compassion draws these from them and the respective changes will take place. As you draw the bad elements from sentient beings in the form of black

light rights, creepy crawls and a storm of hail, and feel some discomfort of wanting to take these on and feel reluctance, it is not yours but self-cherishing attitude reluctance. This shows that the practice is hitting the bull's eye which is self-cherishing attitude. Rather than resisting receiving them you should allow this to come to you. However, as said before, initial reluctance is a good sign that the practice is having its desired effect. If you feel terribly uncomfortably when you imagine this and have a strong resistance it will not be good to repeat. Then imagine the bad elements come in a less horrible appearance in the form of black light rays. In giving and taking for example, each has three visualisations to do. If you have difficulties with taking three visualisations you can concentrate on giving if you feel more comfortable with that and vice versa.

Then the next thing is how to mechanise *tonglen* by way of considering breathing in and out in the process of taking and giving and then transforming *tonglen* as the resultant state of Buddha. There are many other things to talk about.

It is better if we start practicing the content of the teachings soon after receiving them without consulting the notes. If one then gets stuck one can check the notes, but what is in the notes should be in the mind. We need to stop putting off the practice and giving the likes of self-cherishing attitude a helping hand. When you do meditation on this in your own time there is a five line stanza in the guru puja that are very important. Meditators in the past would recite these so many times.

Stanza 95:

And thus, O venerable compassionate Gurus, we seek your blessings,
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings
Of mother beings may without exception ripen upon us right now,
And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others and thereby invest all beings in bliss.