



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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Title:- Lob.jong Mind Training

Venue: D.B.C. Dunedin

Thursday 21 July 2011

Before I start it is time for you to ask any question.

Q: The refuge and Bodhicitta prayer it says 'until the enlightenment' - whose enlightenment is referred to here, mine or that of all sentient beings?

A: The meaning is 'until I achieve the state of Buddha for the sake of all sentient beings.'

Q: Please explain why Arya Bodhisattvas have no self-cherishing thought but they are not free of grasping of self as a person and arahats have self-cherishing thoughts but are free of grasping at self as a person. What is the difference between self-cherishing thought and grasping at self.

A: Self-cherishing attitude is an attitude that rates oneself above everybody else and considers self as most important. It is not a distorted awareness but a prejudicial mind. In the context of mind training self-centredness and grasping at self needs to be treated the same way. This does not mean that they are seen as the same. Self-centredness emanated from grasping of self as a person and they go together. Self-centredness cannot exist without the source of grasping at self. Whilst they are considered similar in the context of mind training, they are not the same because grasping at self of person is distorted in the sense that it believes in the existence of an inherent 'I' or person when in fact no one and nothing is inherent. Self-cherishing considers self whether that self exists inherently or not, regardless of that self-cherishing attitude considers self as the most important, the holy centre. Between self as a person and other people self-cherishing attitude considers self as more important. It could be accurate in its perception because self-cherishing attitude observes self that exists except it considers it the most important and there is nothing wrong with its perception of its object.

You don't have to be very diplomatic and nice about things. You have had a lot of teachings from different lamas whilst the basic ideas and principles are the same, there could be a different slant in terms of interpretation. If you think 'oh how is it Geshe-la, when we had a teaching from the other lamas he said this or that and it is different.' If that happens, feel free to ask.

According to the proponents of the 4th school of Buddhism, the highest school of thought, Arya Bodhisattvas on the 1st Bodhisattva Ground and even Bodhisattva on the 7th Ground to which they have advanced so far have grasping at self or person.

Q: And Arahats don't?

A: Somebody who achieved Arahat is a person who entered Hinayana path and therefore seeks their own emancipation and liberation. The one thing that prevents anyone to do that is grasping at self, the king of all delusions. As they enter Hinayana path they develop the right wisdom to counteract grasping at self as a person and succeed in that. They uproot the ignorance of grasping at self. With that they achieve the liberation and all delusions come to an end with that. However Bodhisattva enter Mahayana vehicle and aim not so much to rid themselves of delusions as to overcome obstructions to omniscience. Their primary concern is to overcome that. In the process incidentally they overcome grasping at self as a person and so on. It is most unlikely that any Bodhisattva has self-cherishing attitude because if they did have that they would cease to be a Bodhisattva. Someone is called a Bodhisattva because they have achieved Bodhicitta, ordinary being Bodhisattvas are on the Path of Accumulation and Preparation. Even Bodhisattvas on the Path of Accumulation cannot have self-cherishing attitude if they are to be Bodhisattva. If they can't then it is obvious that Arya Bodhisattva can't have self-cherishing attitude.

(end of questions)

We have been talking about giving and taking in *tonglen* practice. What things do we imagine giving to sentient beings? We imagine giving all our merits, our life, and resources. These are the three main categories that we give. What do we take? We take from sentient beings suffering, delusions and subtle obstructions to omniscience. We covered the practice of *tonglen*, giving and taking. These are all at visualisation level without an outcome. However, one should not think that these are mere mental exercise without outcome. We are training and with that we achieve a degree of spontaneity of doing these things when the time comes.

Tonight I want to talk about considering taking Bodhicitta as the final effect on the path. Secondly how to mechanise the process of giving and taking using wind which means using one's breathe. The process is of how to use biological mechanism of breathing in and out as a process of giving and taking. Taking result on the path via Bodhicitta. Once you are done taking of underlying suffering and karma of sentient beings upon yourself, and their delusions and then finally you imagine that you have also taken the deep seated subtle obstructions to omniscience, it is as if you have freed sentient beings of all obstruction to liberation and omniscience. Feel that sentient beings are at the threshold on Buddhahood and at the next moment they are going to enter into Buddhahood. At that point imagine a replica of the Buddha who is among the sublime merit field comes to you and enters you from your crown aperture and dissolves into you. As he does that think there and then that you immediately transform yourself into a Buddha. Then from your heart you emit or send forth light rays which carry at their tip a replica of Buddha again – yourself who is now in the state of a Buddha – and they permeate and fall on all sentient beings. They in turn receive Buddhas. Each sentient being receives one Buddha on the crown of their head. That Buddha then causes light rays and nectar to enter the body of each sentient being and with that completely eradicates any obstructions left in them. They are on the verge of attaining Buddhahood. As soon as this happens think that through your agency as a Buddha these sentient beings have now attained the state of a Buddha. At that point, feel a great joy because you have been able to translate your wish to help sentient beings attain the state of Buddhahood and translate your long-held Bodhicitta into actual deed and therefore your Bodhicitta has come to complete fruition and therefore feel joyous about it. This has special significance. This is called taking the fruit of Bodhicitta as path. The ultimate outcome of Bodhicitta or universal altruism is Buddhahood. Your future Buddhahood is brought forward and it is used as a path or vehicle to help sentient beings reach the state of a Buddha in this concentration or visualisation. This practice of taking the outcome of Bodhicitta as path will go a long way in honing your skill in tantric practice called the Elaborate Projection of Mandalas and replicas as yourself as deities and so on. Doing this paves the way to this special way of practicing *tantra*.

Next is mount-*tonglen* practice on wind – is the literal translation. Up until now the *tonglen* practice that has been described so far is a mental visualisation, while the biological mechanism of breathing is not transformed into the process of *tonglen*. The way you do this practice is this: as you breathe out think that you are driven by strong, true, untainted love for all beings. Therefore love has the function of bestowing the good and beneficial. As you breathe out feel that you are giving to sentient beings what they need like material resources or your life or body parts. You also let go of your spiritual wealth. You leave nothing for yourself and give everything to sentient beings. As you inhale feel that you are taking things off sentient beings like suffering, delusions and obstructions to omniscience. Why would you do that? Because you are driven by great compassion and with that you have this understanding that these things afflict them and you can't bear the suffering and thus your compassion compels you to remove these from them and then take them onto yourself. At this stage of common perfection vehicle, if you do *tonglen* practice or mount it on the biological mechanism of breathing in and out, it will go a long way in honing your skill in *tantra* in what is called Vajra wind recitation. It is a very advanced level of practice. The entire breathing system becomes an incessant recitation of three syllable mantra. As you imagine and do the visualisation of taking things from sentient beings, you don't throw them anywhere but heap the afflictions onto your self-cherishing attitude. As you try to do that, think your self-centredness is trying to resist that something is heaped onto it. You won't give it a choice and you simply put these onto self-cherishing attitude. Therefore then feel the suffering and these horrible things you have taken off sentient beings have now smothered your self-centredness.

When it comes to taking, who do we take things from? We take things from all beings. You don't include gurus and Buddhas among categories of beings we give to because gurus and Buddhas are in a state of perfection and they don't need anything. As opposed to this, when we take things then you can include gurus and Buddhas too. What do we take from Bodhisattvas on the very high level since they are not Buddhas. How can we help them? We can help them by way of removing obstacles that prevent them attain higher realisations that prevent them from reaching Buddhahood. We imagine our merit goes to them to help them reach their higher goals. For the arahat who don't have delusions to take from as they are without delusions, but they have obstructions to omniscience, and some degree of self-centredness. We imagine that they are freed and as a result they wake up from bliss slumber of Nirvana and your merits help them enter Mahayana.

If you feel this is mentally very tiring and it is therefore difficult to imagine taking actual suffering of body and mind, underlying karma and delusions and underlying obstructions to omniscience from sentient beings, you may think this is too much. Don't let this deter you from doing any practice but train by and by. When you face this resistance to want to take suffering of other people then that means there is a strong resistance or wall and that needs to be gradually brought down. For that there is a step by step process. Since you will be willing to remove your own suffering by yourself, then what you imagine in your morning *tonglen* practice, 'whatever suffering I will bear later in the day I pre-empt in the morning and imagine my own evening problems now onto myself'. Since they are yours there will be less resistance and your mind is slightly opening to receive the problem. Then when you are comfortable with that think 'I will take upon myself all my future problems now that I am going to face before I achieve Buddhahood'. Since they are problems but they are mine, there is less resistance, but the magnitude has increased. Once you succeed in this you think 'I will take the suffering of body and mind of my mother, of one day, this life, future lives'. This is suffering of someone else. Since it is your mother, the kindest person in this life, you are happy to do that. Once you succeed in this, the process gets easier and you then increase the scope to your family, then the extended family, because they are related, then friends and maybe even neutral people and your mind is broader and it is trained, it is willing to take on their suffering. Once you have done that, see if you can take on the suffering of your enemy onto yourself. Imagine your enemy and your sense of compassion that goes out to him, you remove his suffering onto yourself etc. When you train step by step in this way, you increase the width of your mental horizon and it is then trained.

Mind training needs to be done as often as possible. One of the ways to help reinforce mind training is to memorise and to recite – not mechanically – some stanzas from different sources such as the guru puja and sutras. They are apt, concise and incisive stanza and try to memorise them and then recall and recite. You will be reminded of the mind training. Most people have no access to these but in the guru puja stanza 95 it says:

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 virtues to others
And thereby invest all beings in bliss.

Remember that and recite it and think along the meaning and that will remind you in brief of the mind training precepts.

The main thrust of mind training is training in the development of relative Bodhicitta. There are a lot of precepts and I will talk about them later. At the beginning I had 2 main sections, training in the development of relative and ultimate Bodhicitta. Relative Bodhicitta is roughly concluded. Although I said we have concluded my discourse or talk on the techniques and instructions about how to develop relative Bodhicitta that does not mean we have all developed it. We only had an initial exposure and that is not going to bring overnight result. The visualisation, the steps that I have explained need to be gone through on a daily basis. If you know the guru puja, particularly mind training part of it, if you can go through the stages of mind training, how one and all sentient beings are the same in many ways, for that I have talked about 9 round visualisation practice. Next one is how to develop the actual Bodhicitta. For that you need to see the many drawbacks of self-centredness, the many benefits of other-cherishing attitude or universal altruism and then begin to exchange self-centredness

for other-cherishing, substitute or replace self-centredness with other-cherishing. Go through the steps on a daily basis for one to have some moving feelings as you go through these.

Up until I had to come to New Zealand I had done this visualisation every day for over 2 years. Once on the plane disruptions took place and I lost the track. The garden throne holder came and visited me in my retreat room and gave me the transmission of this teaching. He told me he had to account for the line of transmission as he received this special instruction from the Junior Tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who is widely considered Atisha in the 20th century. His Holiness had vision in dream how he was Atisha and thus attested to this. Atisha was the source of mind training who took it from Indonesia to India to Tibet. Having received this special explanation of Rinpoche who got it from the Junior Tutor, the power of the blessing is very strong. I shared this teaching with you and described it to you. Even if you cannot do this many prayers etc., if only you can do these 9 round steps that would be very beneficial and think about these and this does not take any time to recall Bodhicitta so that Bodhicitta is almost at your fingertips as a result of your reflection on these then that would be a handsome provision that you could fall back on at death and more importantly beyond death. This will be your talent that you can take to your next life. I would strongly suggest and urge that you do this and see that something happens to your mind as you go through these. Unless we think about this and train the mind now and lend it a sense of great ease in arousing Bodhicitta in us and make it easy. If you leave it to the last minute it will be a very difficult time because not many people die easily in peace but with pain in the body. The pain takes hold of your mind and thus it will be too disturbed and cannot think about it. If these things have been given due consideration they have become part of your thinking and you would not have much difficulties.

The next Bodhicitta is Ultimate Bodhicitta which is the right view. Training the mind in Ultimate Bodhicitta is training the mind in emptiness of all phenomena particularly regarding objects of desire and hate. You say to yourself they do not exist inherently desirably or beautifully. The person who feels attachment also has no inherent nature. The act of desire is dependent on the object and the person, without these there is no desire. If you apply an ultimate analysis to see how they exist, the three objects all lack any true intrinsic nature and lack any existence at all. Yet there is desire and a person with desire and they are there almost like an illusion. It has no real substance yet you cannot deny the delusion and its impact on you. The same applies to the object of hate. Therefore everything is just like an illusion. If this part of the teaching that is emptiness of inherent nature of the three factors of attachment and hate is difficult to relate to then at least you think that people and objects that you are attached to or hate are like a dream. When you wake up you know it was a dream. While it seemed real in the dream but when you wake up they are not there. In the same way, people and objects of attachment and hate do not have any lasting substance. For example, when you are about to breathe your last, you may be able to have a quick review of your life, the scenes pass you by but they are not real. In the same way, just consider these as unreal.

The third main subject – there were 7 points in mind training – transforming misfortune in life into a spiritual path or vehicle. I will start the explanation tonight briefly. Transforming misfortune into path to Buddhahood has two parts: You do that at a mental level and at an action level.

Transforming misfortunes through Bodhicitta into path (conduct/practice and view): conduct can be done in three ways:

1. Training the mind so that obstructions or misfortunes do not become hindrances on the path.
2. Training to transform misfortunes or obstructive conditions as aid to the path.
3. Training the mind to transform obstructive conditions into causes of Buddhahood.

1. Training the mind that obstructive conditions become hindrances to your practice of virtue.

What do we need to do? We need to think this way: when things go wrong much against your wishes, health problems, your business fails, your relationship fails, you lose your job and things and the boat of your life is upside down. Why has this befallen you? You are undergoing this not because someone gave them to you but because they are karmic consequences from a past life. They stem from actions that oneself has done in the past. Where did the karma come from for one to do this? Karma has arisen from various negative emotions and

disturbing emotions particularly grasping at self as a person as existing self-sufficiently or inherently. Then you think to yourself, I am undergoing all this suffering and these difficulties in the course of my Dharma practice ultimately because of grasping of self as a person. Now I have woken up to the reality of harm caused by grasping at self. I won't let these difficulties drop my practice or be a justified excuse to drop my practice. If I did that then I would have given into grasping at self of person and I would have boosted its strength. You rise to the occasion and you put your foot down and say no to these difficulties and you are determined not to give in to difficulties. If you develop that resolve not to give in, then you have not allowed obstructive conditions to be hurdles in your practice.

Another point related to this is to make a mental note to be vigilant, to train the mind to be in a state of readiness so that when these obstacles befall you then you are fully prepared. That is if you are in a state of readiness and when these obstacles do arise and afflict you then can call upon the extra reserve of your determination. I will rise to the occasion and I will fight them even stronger. That is similar to military training. Soldiers undergo daily drill and training and they remain in a state of readiness. When they are sent to the front and on the basis of their training and state of readiness, and they see the enemy, there is an extra boost of determination not to give in. Make a mental note to do the same.

Transforming these obstructive conditions into moral boost or aid is this. If you do a practice on a good sunny day and if you do it on a bad day or difficult situation, the latter will bear more merit. This knowledge should give you extra encouragement not to give into these challenges in the knowledge that if I don't give in now, I know that the practice will be more meritorious.

2. Training to transform misfortunes or obstructive conditions as aid to the path.

The second way of transforming these into supporting factors or aids is the knowledge that these misfortunes that I face, are of my own doing in the past, now the consequences of my past karma have ripened. Although they are painful, it is manageable, and much more so if they were the causes in the lower realms where the suffering would be much greater. They have manifested as human problems in the human world are easily managed and one will manage. As you go through this you are purifying your mind of that karma through the painful experienced that is manageable. Then you will be spared of more dreadful consequences had they not manifested. This will give you another point of encouragement.

Another point to transform these into aids is this: When misfortunes befall you, don't feel depressed, instead think, 'it is great these have befallen me right now. When they befall me then they challenge me and my pride and arrogance.' Had you not experienced these you had thought that you were above others. Misfortunes hit your arrogance and you don't think you are superior to others.

Secondly these misfortunes are consequences of past karma and delusions and knowing that all unpleasant experiences invariably arise from karma and delusions then you find another opportunity to resolve not to create any more negative action and thoughts. This gives you a chance to have an active restraint from these and it promotes ethical behaviour. When they befall you, you think that you are not the only person with these predicaments but there are a huge number of people with the same problems. Much as you hurt, the suffering of all other beings hurt them just as badly. You develop a true sense of empathy that turns into compassion. Your suffering helps you develop compassion.

3. Training the mind to transform obstructive conditions into causes of Buddhahood.

The third one is training the mind as cause of Buddhahood. It makes sense. Up until this point remember you have been doing *tonglen* practice where you visualise of taking suffering of others onto yourself. Apart from doing that visualisation you have not actually experienced pain and suffering. As opposed to that at this stage of transforming obstructions to path at a time when real physical and mental pain and problem have now manifested in response to your previous *tonglen* practice where you visualised to take these onto yourself. As you have visualised they are actually coming onto you like an avalanche of misfortune. As a result it is time to celebrate that your wishes are coming to fruition as real tangible results and think 'great, things are looking up'

and ask for more problems etc. so that your *tonglen* practice becomes real rather than just a visualisation. Think that sentient beings are relieved and this is the way.

Of these three ways, the most capable practitioner should do that last one. The average should do the second and the least able should do the first visualisation. Whichever one you feel, do one or all of them so that your mind is trained and immersed in the teaching of Bodhicitta and the content of Bodhicitta is developed when you die. When you breathe your last, rather than depending on drugs, what you experience is welcomed and you thrive. It will help one and all at such critical juncture.