

The second point.

## Practising Wisdom and Compassion.

The Seven Points of Mind Training

Part 4 Thursday, 2nd February 2012

Colin Moore

In the sanskrit language “Bodhicitta” has two components: “bodhi” means enlightened and “citta” means heart/mind. (these two are not separated as they usually are in our culture) Although “bodhicitta” has “many levels and dimensions of meaning it is essentially the experience of limitless compassion and wisdom that we are trying to cultivate through training the mind”. RTR

Lojong (Mind training) has two main aims:

1. the development of compassion in relative bodhicitta which frees us from our cocoon of self importance and the narcissistic gaze of self reference.
2. the development of ultimate bodhicitta which is the understanding of ultimate wisdom, clarity and awareness.

Really 1 and 2 are interrelated (two wings of a bird) and as one grows so does the other. Relative bodhicitta utilises our relationships with other people and the natural empathy we feel towards them whilst ultimate bodhicitta has to do with the ultimate nature of reality and involves a deep shift in perspective based on experience.

### Ultimate bodhicitta

The mind training starts with ultimate bodhicitta so as to give us a sense of how things are in ultimate reality. The following slogans prepare us for the work of relative compassion and the practice of Tonglen (exchanging self for others).

It is important to have both existential (stable personality, having sorted out one’s own issues etc aware of how to deal with one’s conditioning) and theoretical stability ( an understanding of cause and effect, virtue and how it effects the mind and an understanding that an insight into emptiness in no way undermines karma and its result)

The first of these slogans is:

*“Regard all phenomena as a dream”*

The objects we encounter and our reactions to them are as transitory and unreal as dreams. They seem so real while we are undergoing them but when we wake up they disappear and no trace is left. True the world is there in one way but also it is not there in the way we habitually think about it. This is because our reality, including our self, is constructed by the mind.

1. Any phenomena, a tree, a galaxy, a person, an electron depends on our mental designation of it.
2. All phenomena that participate in natural laws, affecting other entities and themselves being affected, depend for their existence on the causes that give rise to them. Eg of sprout

3. For any entity we can identify certain attributes : it's component parts, facets or qualities. The entity depends for it's existence on these attributes and does not exist without them. Neither is it equivalent to their sum total.

If you have had any lucid dreams, this can be very helpful in so far as it gives you a feeling for what it is like to regard the every day world "as a dream". When you know you are dreaming it is a very vivid and energised state. In a similar way we can recall that feeling and see the moment in a similar way. This helps us to let go our habitual conditionings of attachment and aversion and remain lightly but vividly and energetically aware. In that way we are more able to respond to situations with compassion and wisdom. But even if we have not had any lucid dreams if we can recall the feeling of dreaming we may be able to lighten the sense of solidity and stuckness we can often feel in situations. Remember though that waking reality is not a dream in the way that sleeping dreams are but that they do have dreamlike properties.

Thus phenomena do exist as dependently related events but they do not appear that way.

The second of these slogans is:

*"Examine the unborn nature of mind."*

The understanding of the dreamlike and provisional nature of external reality is here turned inward when we investigate the inner nature of our minds. What is the mind? Can we experience it directly? Is it an object or not? What is consciousness?

"We have the idea that our mind remains unchanged from birth through childhood to old age. This is not so. The word unborn in this slogan counters our tendency to think of the mind in this tangible and permanent way. The true nature of the mind is beyond the conditions of birth or death. It comes from nowhere and it goes nowhere. We cannot find the beginning or the end of mind. There is no mind apart from our awareness of the stream of thoughts flowing through our consciousness. The enormous volume and speed of these thoughts gives the impression of a fixed, continuous and independent mind. The mind is transient and without categories or qualities. We encounter it briefly and spontaneously but only in the present. .... In the meditative state when our mind is quite still, its unborn, pure and enlightened quality is briefly perceptible. This is a fleeting and inexpressible experience. We have to leave it at that. We rest in the here and now in the timeless moment between past and future." RTR

The third of these slogans is:

*"Self-liberate even the antidote and free yourself from the findings of the meditation ."*

This a caution against becoming attached to meditative experiences. It is not difficult to get a glimpse of emptiness in our meditation but it is important to keep balance. One glimpse is just that and does not mean that we have attained ultimate enlightenment. We should draw no conclusions from our meditations because both the meditator and the meditations are intrinsically empty. There is no insight even in emptiness and so we can not search or find anything in it. If we did find anything in it then that would be an object of awareness. We need to ask ourselves "Who is meditating and searching for the mind?" "What is it that has been found?"

The fourth of these slogans is:  
“*Rest in the nature of alaya .*”

Beneath the consciousness which comes from the five senses, our mind and our sense of self there is alaya, the universal ground of mind. It is the state of simply being and is the most subtle level of awareness. When it is awakened it is said to be our Clear Light or Buddha Nature expressed directly without distortion. It is the simple present. The here and now unadulterated by conditioning. Suchness. Eating just eating. Sleeping just sleeping. Etc

The clarity of alaya is usually obscured by all the turbulence of the discursive mind. In sleep we may briefly dissolve into it but then emerge in dreams so that it is yet again obscured. To meditate on ultimate bodhicitta is to trace the subtle awareness through the three states of sleeping, dreaming and waking. To do this requires great clarity of mind, free from the superficialities of daily life and is best attempted on a cloistered retreat.

However the process can be started by bringing attention to the breathing and indeed it is the breath that we ride when we come to practicing Tonglen.

## Meditation instructions

Rainbow Meditation from Taming the Tiger by Akong Rinpoche:

In this meditation we will look at outer objects with a focussed mind, attempting to see their true nature.

When at home we could choose an actual object from one of three different categories. (You might like to alternate).

- a) objects which have a material value (eg a gemstone)
- b) objects which have no cash value (eg a pebble or a blade of grass)
- c) objects which belong to us, whether of material worth or not; anything we think of as ours or mine.

The value of the exercise is threefold:

- 1) to look at the mind’s tendency to cling to objects and the way clinging interferes with seeing things as they are.
- 2) To contemplate the non-solid and impermanent nature of all things – even those which appear solid. (This view accords with the understandings of contemporary science).
- 3) To overcome the fear, which many people have, that they cannot visualise. At home if you had difficulty visualising keep the object always before your eyes, so there is no need to strain. In this way we learn naturally how to build up a visualisation and how to let go of it again.

The exercise:

- ❖ The aim is to take an object and turn it into a rainbow in your mind.
- ❖ First of all, select something belonging to you but of no great value.
- ❖ Place it in front of you so that you can see the whole thing.
- ❖ Think of its value and reflect on this.
- ❖ With the eyes still open, next visualise another one just like it before you in space.

- ❖ Now imagine you are breaking it into little pieces.
- ❖ Gradually it is broken down into smaller and smaller pieces which you systematically destroy.
- ❖ Finally think of the tiniest pieces being ground down to dust.
- ❖ The particles are so small they are almost invisible.
- ❖ Put the particles together in a heap so that not a speck is lost. Then ask: “Where is the object?”
- ❖ Now reflect: “When I began there was an object, a name and a value. Now where is the object, name and value?”
- ❖ Next in your mind, turn the dust into a rainbow. It can be a rainbow of one colour of many colours. From this rainbow of dust recreate the object as a rainbow object. It is back to being just the same as the original object, but you can see it has no solidity – it is a rainbow.
- ❖ Reflect that now it has no material worth.
- ❖ Finally melt the rainbow object into the original object before you.
- ❖ Note how your appreciation of it may have changed.

While doing the exercise the eyes should remain open looking, not too fixedly, at the object. During meditation, if you begin to feel tired or tense, you should take short breaks and do the “Golden gate” meditation.

Each time you do the exercise, use a different object. Begin with an object which has relatively little value for you and work up to something of great value. Also select a variety of types of objects.

Do this meditation for one hour in total each day if you can.

### *The postmeditative stage of Ultimate Bodhicitta.*

There are two stages to Tibetan meditation; the actual meditation and the post meditation stage when we try to put the experience gained in meditation into practical use.

The fifth of these slogans is:

*“In postmeditation view everything as an illusion .”*

The awareness of alaya has an influence on our everyday experience. Because we see that everything is impermanent and insubstantial we are not pushed and pulled so much by attachment and aversion and we can afford to relax. We become more childlike, creative and playful. “Be like a child of illusion” Trungpa

### Relative Bodhicitta

The instructions on ultimate Bodhicitta will help us now because give us the confidence to begin to undo the attachment and aversion based on the false self, the ego.

## Tonglen Meditation (Taking and receiving)

“One who wishes swiftly to protect oneself and others should engage in the secret and holy practice of exchanging self for others.” Shantideva in *A guide to the Bodhisattvas Way Of Life*.

This is the heart of the mind training and helps to release us from our own suffering whilst generating compassion for others. Both fear and desire are provoked by this meditation and it is a particularly effective way of dealing with aversion. We deliberately face all the things that bring up the most fear in us so this takes courage. We use our imagination to take in all the painful and difficult things that we have previously run away from or avoided through fear and dread. As we do this it eliminates the pain. As we do this we give away all the pleasurable things we are attached to and wish for ourselves like health, wealth and power. Of course this totally goes against what we usually wish for ourselves and highlights our ego clinging. By accepting, undergoing and enduring negative things and being prepared to let them happen to us we dispel both their power over us, their harmful effects and our own anger and hatred based on them. Thus it makes difficult situations more bearable and less frightening. Note that we do not seek out suffering and difficult situations but rather when we encounter it in the situations we find ourselves in we are able to transform it by this practice, reduce injury to our selves and others by it and reduce negativity in the world.

Thinking of the ones dear to us first, our family and friends, people we love both dead and alive, and then slowly including all others even to the point of including our enemies we make a determined heartfelt wish to free one and all from all misery and bad karma.

The more we do this the more we feel that something in us is the source of all this positive energy, this healing and happiness. Indeed it would not be possible to do this meditation without such a feeling. Our openness and concern for others pacify every kind of negativity and slowly we become accustomed to feeling strong and kind.

All the negativity in the world is visualised as a cloud of black smoke or dust which we breathe into our bodies through our nostrils. As we breathe this in it settles in the heart and there purifies and eats away all our own negativity, our own fear, aversion, and ignorance. Like the sun arising at dawn our own alaya nature arises as bright radiant light which disperses all the negativity. This heals and purifies every negative conditioning that we have and releases us from its effects.

On the outward breath all our own good karma, good conditioning, fortunate circumstances, positive energy, joy, wisdom and purity stream from our heart toward all beings, including ourselves and they are released from negativity becoming well, happy and free.

Our first attempts at Tonglen may go better if we bring to mind someone that it easy to love. So much so that we are willing to take on any negativity and give them our own good fortune.

We must remember that negativity is an illusion and we cannot be harmed or put at risk by this practice. Quite the contrary we will feel more protected and more unshakeable in our being. Fear itself is what we are working on so although fear always looks for an object which to fear we find that by confronting our fears in this way we become more fearless. Any anxiety we may feel is because we have become aware of an aversion and we work to dispel it. Our focus is not suffering but rather creating the complete freedom from suffering both for oneself and others. We become the cause for healing.

- ❖ If you do tonglen in your everyday life, you simply breathe in and breathe out, taking in any pain or suffering you come across and sending out spaciousness and relief. You may need to do this for yourself also – so if, for example when you attempt this you feel yourself tightening and feeling fear or terror just realise that there are countless other beings who feel just like you and feel that you are relieving them of their suffering at that moment. Then as you breathe out feel that any relief you feel is also relieving them of their suffering.
- ❖ When you tonglen as a formal practice, it has four stages:
- ❖ First, rest your mind briefly in a state of openness or stillness. You might like to do the openness meditation of Akong Tulku first if it helps.
- ❖ Then when you are ready think of someone you are close to, traditionally your mother, and cultivate loving kindness and compassion for her. If for any reason it is difficult to feel love and compassion for your mother note that and be aware that maybe there is some work to do there. In the meantime it is OK to think of someone else or even a pet that it is easy to feel love for.
- ❖ Breathe in a feeling of all the negativity from that person visualised as a cloud of black smoke or dust which we breathe into our bodies through our nostrils. As we breathe this in it settles in the heart and there purifies and eats away all our own negativity, our own fear, aversion, and ignorance. Like the sun arising at dawn our own alaya nature arises as bright radiant light which disperses all the negativity. This heals and purifies every negative conditioning that we have and releases us from its effects.
- ❖ On the outward breath all our own good karma, good conditioning, fortunate circumstances, positive energy, joy, wisdom and purity stream from our heart toward your chosen person first feeling they are released from negativity becoming well, happy and free. Breathe in and out in this way “riding the waves of the breath” with the “taking and sending” until it feels synchronized with your in-and out-breathe.
- ❖ When you’re ready, in your own time, you might like to work with any painful personal situation that is real to you.
- ❖ Finally, make the taking in and the sending out larger. Whether your doing tonglen for someone you love or for someone else, do it for all the others in the same boat.
- ❖ You could even do tonglen for people you consider your enemies--those who have hurt you or others. Do tonglen for them, thinking of them as having the same confusion and stuckness as your friend or yourself.

## Homework

Reflect on and practice the slogans above both in meditation and post meditation.

See things as process, appearances which in their true nature are dependently arisen and impermanent.

Practice the Tonglen meditation as above.

If anyone needs to contact me for any reason my email address is [colinrmoore@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:colinrmoore@yahoo.co.uk)

Enjoy the process and relax!

If at any time you become too tense practice the following Openess Meditation of Akong Rinpoche:

Focus only on the out-breath.

As you breathe out, imagine a gate opening, out into space. See all your thoughts and feelings flow through it. Feel that this continuous flow of thoughts, emotions and sensations, whatever the original form, changes into universal compassion in the form of golden light as it passes through the gate to all who live. Feel that this light of compassion fulfills the needs and wishes of everyone.

Do this for twenty minutes.