



Namgyal Yangzab Buddhist Community of Canada

Essential Points of Buddhadharma

Excerpts from "Covid-19-Online-Dharma-Teachings 2020" by Drikung Lho Ontul Rinpoche

"The purpose of all knives is to cut. You can cut bread with a meat knife, and you can also cut meat with a bread knife. But the effect of using the right tool is more helpful, is more beneficial. For different purposes, for different mental disturbances or imbalances, outer and inner, you have these different deities."

Lho Ontul Rinpoche

Saturday, May 16, 2020 - Excerpt of a Dharma Teaching by Zoom-meeting

Lho Ontul Rinpoche

On the Basis of Secret Tantrayana, Development and Completion Phase Practice and an introduction to the Sādhana Practice of Parnashavarī.

By Zoom-conference. Live translation by Lho Ratna Rinpoche

This is the third Saturday evening that we all are gathering here. The reason why we have gathered here virtually tonight is because of our diligence towards the *Dharma*.

In Sanskrit, the term is *Dharma*. In Tibetan terminology *Dharma* is *Chö*. *Chö* means *Dharma*, the profound *Dharma* that the Buddha taught. Basically, what *Dharma* means, what the Tibetan term *Chö* particularly means, is to change, and to transform this ignorant and unwholesome mind into a pure mind. Or to change or transform our mind into this pure Path. This is what is meant by the Tibetan term *Chö* meaning *Dharma*.

The nature of our mind is not impure, is not pernicious. Its nature is not dangerous. Because of the gross and subtle conceptual thoughts, our mind becomes pernicious, dangerous, or impure. It is similar to a pond. Depending on how much the pond is disturbed or is stirred, you will have

this muddy, unclear water. But the very nature of water itself is pure. In that sense, the nature of our mind is pure.

So, the nature of water is pure, but the earth and the particles in the water are these impurities. When disturbed or stirred, these impurities make the water impure and dirty. The nature of our mind is like the nature of the water. It is pure; its fundamental nature is enlightened and is Buddha. But like the pond, at its bottom, you have these residues of earth and other things. Similarly, there are the obscurations of mind. These obscurations are categorized in different ways.

The most common ones are these Four Obscurations:

- The obscuration of *karma*
- The obscuration of afflictive emotions
- The obscuration of knowledge
- The obscuration of habitual tendencies

These four kinds of obscurations can be subsumed in these two:

- The obscuration of afflictive emotions
- The obscuration of knowledge

The obscuration of afflictive emotions is the conceptual ignorance or the imputed ignorance. And the obscuration of knowledge is the co-emergent ignorance. As a result of these four obscurations or of these two obscurations, we are wandering in cyclic existence.

Gampopa, in his book known as *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, said that the very cause of the delusion of sentient beings is co-emergent ignorance and conceptual ignorance.

Buddha taught in *Sutras*, *Tantras*, and in *Shastras*. The reason why Buddha taught these various levels of *Dharma* is basically to subdue one's afflictive emotions because the root of this suffering is these afflictive emotions or this ignorance. The *Sutras*, *Tantras*, and *Shastras* are taught only for this reason: to tame one's mind, to abandon or suppress these afflictive emotions, or to liberate these afflictive emotions. The Dharma that the Buddha taught serves no other reason than this.

Because of this reason, because of this purpose, Buddha turned the wheel of *Dharma* three times. In his first turning of the wheel of *Dharma*, he taught about the Four Truths. The first among these Four Truths, the very first thing that Buddha spoke of, is about suffering. And he began with the sentence, "Recognize the suffering!".

The Second Truth is the origin of suffering. The root of all this suffering is the afflictive emotions. Because of our *karma* and because of afflictive emotions and ignorance we are engaged in unwholesome action, in unwholesome *karma*. Unless you abandon the root, one will experience these various kinds of suffering.

To give an example: You have a very nice garden in the backyard of your house and behind it a very big tree. And when the wind blows the leaves all fall down on your lawn. As a result of that your lawn does not have good grass. So, no matter how much you rake, the effect of your raking is temporary. It will only help for some period of time. But if you cut the tree, if you really cut it from its root you are solving this problem once and for all. But this is just an analogy, we are not promoting that you cut down trees!

So, first is recognizing the suffering and then abandoning the origin. Third is cessation, actualizing the cessation of suffering. This cessation is what we know as, or call enlightenment, the fruition.

How do we abandon this origin, and how do we actualize the cessation? By simply relying on the Path! By relying on the Path, we will be able to recognize the suffering, to abandon the origin, and to actualize the cessation; by mixing or mingling one's mindstream with the Path.

From between the two *yanas* (vehicles), Tibetan Buddhist practice follows the *Mahayana* way or the *Mahayana* vehicle. And within the *Mahayana* vehicle, Tibetans practice the *Vajrayana*, also called the *Secret Tantrayana*.

For those who are following this Path, there are these stages: 1) The creation stage, also translated as the generation or development stage; 2) then there is the completion stage, also translated as dissolution stage, and 3) is the inseparability of the generation and the completion stages, or the union of generation and completion stages. So, those who are practicing *Secret Tantrayana* have to rely on this Path, and the Path is these three stages.

First is the ripening, then there is liberation. So, first is the ripening of our mindstream by *abhishekas*, by empowerment. Then there is engaging in the Path. The fruition of the Path is attaining enlightenment.

Especially at this time, by the practice of *Parnashavarī* we are meditating and generating the deity. When we are meditating upon the deity, that is the generation stage. And when we generate our self as the deity, one has to have this understanding that one is generating something that oneself primordially is, that one's mind already is. One is not generating something that one is not. One's body is the deity. The outer container is the celestial palace, and the inner contents are the *dakas* and the *dakinis*, the *devas*, and deities.

As said earlier, when we are meditating on the deity, when we are generating the deity, it is not like you have a piece of stone, and you keep that stone to yourself and start to think this is not an ordinary stone, but this is a diamond. It is not something like that. Here, when you are generating yourself as the deity, you are the deity. You are not generating something other than the nature of one's mind. No matter how much you contemplate that this stone is a diamond, it will not turn into a diamond. Its value will remain of a stone because the nature of a stone is not the nature of a diamond. So, when we generate the deity, we are generating it because the nature of our mind is the nature of the deity.

There is a story between a *Nagpa* and an ordained monk. The ordained monk says to the *Nagpa*: "You *Nagpas* are accumulating a lot of unwholesome deeds by consuming *chang* (beer)." The *Nagpa* replied to the ordained monk: "We *Nagpas*, we generate ourselves as the deity. Then we

imagine this *chang* as nectar; then we consume it. By doing that, we are not accumulating any kind of sins, but we are accumulating merit through changing our perception!” . Then the ordained monk says: “Ok, when that is the case, then I will visualize myself as a *yak*, and I visualize the *chang* as water and consume it!” This is just an analogy, just an example, like cutting down the tree...

There are various deities that you meditate upon that you generate. And when you generate the deity, one is imagining, or one is visualizing one’s body as the body of the deity.

And that too, you do in the manner of appearance and emptiness. Often the analogy used for appearance and emptiness is that of a rainbow: appearing but inherently being non-existent. Also, you generate the deity in the manner of clarity and emptiness.

When we speak of appearance and emptiness, there are these appearances, yet their nature is of emptiness. Appearance is the appearing aspect of emptiness. Other than that, it is emptiness. It is inherently non-existent. What is basically meant by “appearance-emptiness” and “clarity-emptiness” or by “apparent but inherently non-existent” is generating one’s body as a “wisdom body,” as a “luminosity body.”

At the beginning of today’s class, we did the opening prayers. In these prayers, we did the part called the Guru Yoga, where we make a supplication to accomplish the rainbow body. And this rainbow body, which we make supplications to accomplish, is this wisdom body. “Rainbow body” is just a name, just a word, and just a label to introduce you, to make you recognize, or to make you understand. This supplication to accomplish the rainbow body and what we are meditating on, or contemplating in the generation stage, are the same.

Next, we will do the practice of *Parnashavarī* together. As said before, the practice of generation and completion stage is the Path of *Secret Tantrayana*. And this specific practice of *Parnashavarī* is especially for epidemic diseases, for plagues and for pandemics.

The activity of the Buddha is boundless. It is immeasurable. And all the activities of the Buddha are to dispel the suffering of sentient beings.

But to understand the purpose of the specific practice of *Parnashavarī* for pandemics and plagues I have to give an analogy:

You have different knives. And the purpose of all the knives is to cut. You can cut bread with a meat knife, and you can also cut meat with a bread knife. But the effect of using the right tool is more helpful, is more beneficial. For different purposes, for different mental disturbances or imbalances, outer and inner, you have these different deities. So, the purpose of these deities and the activities of all these deities is basically the same. But choosing a specific deity is—as mentioned in the analogy—like using the right knife for cutting the right thing.

When we are generating the deity, we are generating primordially what we are. For this we need confidence and trust. And to develop and have confidence and trust that oneself is the deity—not just because I said so, or a certain Lama said so—is very important!

First, we go for Refuge, raise *Bodhicitta*, do the offerings, make praises and so on. Then there is this Path of generating the deity. If we are able to generate the deity with confidence, with trust, then the antidote has been applied to the essential point.

One starts with going for Refuge because one is helpless. Then there is the part of generating *Bodhicitta* through the practice of generating the Four Immeasurables. When we recite this sentence “May all mother sentient beings limitless as space have happiness and the causes of happiness;” within this sentence all the sentient beings are included. Everything is included: all the happiness, the different and various kinds of happiness.

The second sentence is, “May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.” Again, in this sentence, one is making this aspiration, and one is contemplating the suffering of all sentient beings, all the various kinds and levels of suffering. In these two sentences, you make the aspiration that limitless numbers of sentient beings experience all the happiness that there is and that sentient beings be free from these different kinds of suffering.

If one has a pure heart, that itself is the deity. That is the manifestation of the quality of the deity!

When we are proceeding with this practice, the very base or the foundation of this practice has to be this generation of pure intention, the generation of *Bodhicitta*. The reason why we are generating ourselves as the deity and so on is for the sake of all sentient beings, to experience limitless happiness, and wanting these sentient beings to be free from suffering. That is the whole purpose. That is the motivation, that is the intention and attitude that one should have when proceeding with this practice, or with any kind of practice!

Edited August 30, 2020, by the NYBCC Editing Team

*May any errors and omissions do not obscure the essence, and may they be forgiven.
May these teachings, so generously offered, help lead to the cessation of suffering and the full awakening of all
beings!*