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To Buddha, Dharma and the Supreme Assembly
I go for refuge until enlightenment.

Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta

The first prayer that we usually recite before a practice is the refuge and bodhicitta prayer. Refuge and bodhicitta are the motivations that we generate at the beginning of each teaching. Refuge is the door to the Buddhist path and bodhicitta is the door to the Mahayana path. Refuge protects one from following a wrong path, while bodhicitta protects one from falling into a lesser path.

Refuge

The Objects of Refuge

The first line identifies the three objects of refuge. When reciting the word *Buddha* we meditate that in addition to Shakyamuni Buddha it includes one's teachers, the deities, the eight Medicine Buddhas, the Thirty-five Buddhas and so forth. That is something to contemplate without fail when going for refuge.

The word *Dharma* contains both the scriptural dharma and the actual dharma. The scriptural dharma was taught by the Buddha through his kindness and is comprised of the different categories of the scriptural dharma. The actual dharma is the truth of cessation and the truth of the path. These points should be included in one's contemplation.

The Supreme Assembly includes the different beings who are actual sangha, such as the Mahayana sangha, and the Hearer and Self-liberator sangha.

The Way of Going for Refuge

The buddha refuge is that which shows one the dharma. One goes for refuge to the Buddha as the person who shows one the dharma. The dharma refuge is the actual refuge. The supreme assembly are those one takes as examples. While one is going for refuge, one also visualises that one is surrounded by all sentient beings who, together with oneself, go for refuge to the Triple Gem on the basis of the two-fold motivation.

The second line identifies the time span for which one is going to take refuge, and the basis that is going for refuge. The word '*l*' identifies the basis that is going for refuge.

Until the attainment of *enlightenment* identifies the time period for which one goes for refuge. This is the uncommon Mahayana refuge. General refuge is taken for the time period of this life, as in the prayer that is done during the formal refuge ceremony, and also when one is taking lay vows, where one says, 'until the end of my life.'

The specific Mahayana refuge is until the attainment of enlightenment. Here the meaning of *enlightenment* is two-fold. It can either mean the place of Bodhgaya, meaning that one will take refuge until attaining the state of the complete supreme emanation body in Bodhgaya. Or it means dharmakaya, meaning one takes refuge until one attains the dharmakaya.

In these first two lines we have the two causes for refuge, the objects of refuge, the time period for which one is going for refuge and the basis that is going for refuge. That completes all elements of refuge.

May I, by the merits of practising generosity
and so forth,
Become a buddha for the benefit of migrators.

Bodhicitta

Explanation of the Lines

Here again, the word 'I' identifies the person who is generating the motivation. *The merits of practising generosity and so forth* identifies the merits through which one wants to attain the aim of enlightenment:

- Merits of generosity
- Merits of morality
- Merits of patience
- Merits of enthusiasm
- Merits of mental stabilisation
- Merits of wisdom

The fourth line identifies the purpose of generating bodhicitta. *Migrators* refers, of course, to sentient beings, so sentient beings are the objective, while *benefit* is the purpose of others, and *buddha* refers to enlightenment.

These lines identify the nature of bodhicitta as existing in the nature of prayer, in accordance with the explanation in both the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* and *Explanation Illuminating the Meaning*. By the merits that one accumulates with one's three doors through the practice of generosity, morality, patience and so forth, may one attain the state of a buddha, so as to be able to place all sentient beings in the state of liberation and complete enlightenment.

Mind, Not Mental Factor!

The *mind of enlightenment* is exactly what it says, a mind and not a mental factor. If something is awareness then it is either a mind or a mental factor, and the mind of enlightenment is a mind, as it is a primary mind. Yet it is often labelled *aspiration* or *wish*, as in the *Ornament of Clear Realisation*:

Mind generation wishes complete enlightenment
For the purpose of others.

These labels are merely nominal, and the reason for them is to show that the mind of enlightenment has to be endowed with the following two aspirations:

1. The aspiration wanting to achieve other's welfare.
2. The aspiration wanting to attain complete enlightenment.

One reason the mind of enlightenment is labelled *wish* or *aspiration* is that the name of the cause is applied to the effect, since the aspiration of wanting to achieve the welfare of others is the causal aspiration. The other reason is to show that the mind of enlightenment has the aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment within its entourage of mental factors - it is the accompanying aspiration.

So the mind of enlightenment is labelled *aspiration* or *wish* both from the point of view of one of its accompanying mental factors, as well as from the point of view of its cause.

Seven-Point Cause and Effect Meditation

The aspiration of wanting to achieve the welfare of sentient beings is the causal aspiration, which precedes the aspiration wanting to achieve complete enlightenment. If you look at the seven-fold sequence of the meditation with which we generate bodhicitta, then this becomes clearer.

Generation of the Causal Aspiration

1. On the basis of having first meditated on equanimity one meditates on recognising all sentient beings as one's mother.
2. One meditates on the kindness of the mother.
3. One meditates on the necessity of repaying the kindness of one's mother.

These three meditations establish the basis for the aspiration that wants to achieve the welfare of sentient beings.

4. Near and dear love
5. Great compassion

These train the mind in the actual motivation that is concerned with the welfare of sentient beings. Here the aspiration to achieve the welfare of sentient beings is increased and refined.

6. The superior intention

Here one takes one personally the responsibility to establish the welfare of all sentient beings by oneself

alone. Through this the aspiration to achieve the welfare of sentient beings is refined further.

Generation of the Resultant Aspiration

7. The mind of enlightenment

Only after all these meditations is the actual aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment born. The actual aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment is a result of the preceding meditations where one meditates on the welfare of sentient beings, and generates a concern for the welfare of sentient beings in different stages.

Both bodhicitta and its accompanying aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings have superior intention as their basis. Superior intention has as its basis great compassion, which has as its basis near and dear love, which has as its basis making the determination to repay one's mother's kindness, which has as its basis recognising the kindness of the mother. This in turn has as its basis recognising that all sentient beings were one's mother.

Here one can clearly see that first one meditates on generating a concern for the welfare of sentient beings. So the aspiration of wanting to achieve the welfare of sentient beings is generated first and acts as the basis for the aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment.

One has to relate these words to the enlightenment that one is going to personally attain in the future and not to some kind of general enlightenment, because that would not be actual bodhicitta. To be actual bodhicitta, one has to relate it to the enlightenment that oneself is going to attain in the future.

Relating This to the Lam-rim

You can see that to generate bodhicitta one needs to engage in these step-by-step meditations. One cannot generate bodhicitta merely through reciting a prayer. Rather, one has to engage in these sequential meditations to initially generate an effortful experience of bodhicitta, and then increase the effortful bodhicitta so that it becomes sooner or later an effortless experience of bodhicitta.

The meditation on bodhicitta needs to be preceded by the generation of pure renunciation, which is attained through the meditations common to the being of medium capacity. This in turn has to be preceded by meditation on the law of cause and effect, which then in turn has to be preceded by meditation on refuge, which in turn is preceded by meditation on the lower realms, which in turn is preceded by meditation on death and impermanence, which in turn is preceded by meditation on the precious human rebirth, which is preceded by meditation on proper reliance on the spiritual friend.

By meditating in this way, one places an incredibly valuable imprint of the whole path on one's mind.

The Divisions of Bodhicitta

Division by Nature

Bodhicitta is divided by nature into wishing bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta.

Wishing bodhicitta is the bodhicitta that is not directly held by the practices of the perfections of generosity and so forth. Engaging bodhicitta is the bodhicitta that is directly held by the practice of the perfections of generosity and so forth. For example the bodhicitta in the continuum of a person in meditative equipoise is wishing bodhicitta and not engaging bodhicitta.

Divisions Related to Analogies

Here we have the twenty-two bodhicittas that are related to twenty-two examples, like ground-like bodhicitta, gold-like bodhicitta and so forth.

Divisions According to Their Mode of Generation

Here we have the king-like bodhicitta, the ferryman-like bodhicitta, and the shepherd-like bodhicitta. This division is very meaningful.

The king-like bodhicitta is the bodhicitta that has the motivation of wanting to first attain enlightenment oneself and then to subsequently lead all other sentient beings to enlightenment. It is called king-like bodhicitta because the king is always the foremost person in the realm and everybody follows him.

Shepherd-like bodhicitta is the bodhicitta where the person has the motivation of first wanting to place all other sentient beings in the state of enlightenment, with oneself attaining enlightenment last.

Here the analogy of a shepherd is used because a shepherd always has all the sheep and goats in front of him with the shepherd bringing up the rear. That is why this bodhicitta is called the shepherd-like bodhicitta. The practitioner wants to first bring all other sentient beings to enlightenment, and then, and only then, attain enlightenment for themselves.

With ferryman-like bodhicitta the practitioner has the motivation of wanting to attain enlightenment together with all other sentient beings. When the ferryman ferries his passengers over the river, they all go together on the same boat.

Divisions According to Boundary

1. The bodhicitta of wish and practice, which is the bodhicitta on the level of the path of accumulation and preparation.
2. The bodhicitta of superior thought, which is the bodhicitta from the first ground to the seventh ground.
3. The ripening bodhicitta, which is the bodhicitta on the eighth, ninth and tenth ground.
4. The bodhicitta abandoning obscurations, which is the bodhicitta in the continuum of a buddha.

Conclusion

Pure refuge and bodhicitta is something we should always practice and base all our activities on.

By this merit may His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his emanation Geshe Doga have long and healthy lives and continuously turn the wheel of sutra and tantra.

Sarva Mangalam

To Buddha, Dharma and the Supreme Assembly
I go for refuge until enlightenment.
May I, by the merits of practising generosity and so forth,
Become a buddha for the benefit of migrants.

Atisha

Geshe Doga explains the words of this important prayer, which contains the two most important motivations of a Mahayana buddhist, in a clear and succinct manner.

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