

## **MEDITATION WORKSHOP –**

### ***CALM ABIDING MEDITATION, ANALYTICAL MEDITATION ON THE LAM RIM AND TONG LEN***

**BY GESHE TENZIN ZOPA**

BEFORE GOING INTO THE SUBJECT OF MEDITATION, AS THERE MAY BE NEWCOMERS TO BUDDHISM, I'D LIKE TO GIVE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM.

#### **HOW BUDDHISM CAME ABOUT AND WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF BUDDHISM TO OUR LIFE.**

FIRSTLY THE BUDDHADHARMA THAT YOU ARE INSPIRED TO LEARN AND PRACTICE CAN BE DESCRIBED ACCORDING TO ITS RELIGIOUS ASPECT BUT AT THE SAME TIME ALSO POSSESSES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND ALSO A WAY OF LIFE. BUDDHADHARMA IS NOT JUST ABOUT BLIND FAITH AND A CREATION OF A CONTEMPORARY SCHOLAR BUT RATHER A ROADMAP, A PRACTICAL METHOD CULTIVATED BY NUMBERLESS PAST ENLIGHTENED BEINGS WHOSE LIVES BEGAN LIKE OURS, COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY DELUSION AND KARMA, TOTALLY OVERWHELMED BY CIRCLING IN SAMBARIC REBIRTH AND THEN THROUGH THE KINDNESS OF THE BUDDHA AND MEETING THE BUDDHADHARMA, THROUGH THEIR CULTIVATION OF IT, WERE ABLE TO ERADICATE THE ENTIRE SAMBARIC SUFFERING AND OBSCURATIONS TO NIRVANA AND ENLIGHTENMENT.

THE TEACHINGS GIVEN RANGED FROM THE CORRECT DEVOTION TO THE GURU , UP TO THE 6 PERFECTIONS, UP TO ENLIGHTENMENT. BUDDHA'S ATTAINING ENLIGHTENMENT WAS NOT JUST FOR SELF-CENTRED PURPOSES OF SELF-LIBERATION BUT OUT OF GREAT COMPASSION OR BODHICITTA. THE BUDDHA PROVIDED GUIDANCE TO THE 3 PRINCIPAL ASPECTS OF THE PATH NAMELY RENUNCIATION, BODHICITTA AND RIGHT VIEW OF EMPTINESS/SELFLESSNESS. WHY THESE 3 PRINCIPLE ASPECTS OF THE PATH? BECAUSE THEY FORM THE MOST COMPLETE ROADMAP TO ENLIGHTENMENT AND ARE THE FULL SET OF ANTIDOTES TO ERADICATE SAMBARA AND ITS CAUSES (WHICH ARE KARMA AND DELUSIONS). THESE TEACHINGS CAME 2600 YEARS AGO. THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT BEFORE THE TIME OF SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA, THERE WAS NO DHARMA, AS THERE WERE ALREADY BEINGS WHO HAD ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT PREVIOUSLY. THERE ARE 1000 BUDDHAS WHO WILL DESCEND INTO OUR WORLD AND SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA IS THE 4<sup>TH</sup>. WE ARE VERY FORTUNATE TO BE BORN IN THIS WORLD WEHRE THE BUDDHA HAS COME TO TEACH THE DHARMA.

WHEN THE BUDDHA TURNED THE WHEEL OF DHARMA, HE TAUGHT ACCORDING TO THE MENTAL DISPOSITIONS OF THE HINAYANA DISCIPLES, THE MAHAYANA DISCIPLES AND THE VAJRAYANA DISCIPLES. ALL THE ASPECTS OF THE TEACHINGS WERE GIVEN AND RELEVANT TO THE EFFORT TO ATTAIN ENLIGHTENMENT. IF ONE'S PURPOSE IS TO ACTUALISE ENLIGHTENMENT BUT GIVES UP LEARNING THERAVADAN TEACHINGS, THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO ATTAIN ENLIGHTENMENT. LIKewise HOWEVER, IF ONE DOESN'T CULTIVATE THE TEACHINGS OF THE MAHAYANA AND VAJRAYANA, THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY TO ATTAIN ENLIGHTENMENT, EVEN THOUGH MAY GAIN HIGH REALISATIONS.

IF OUR AIM IS TO ACTUALISE FULL ENLIGHTENMENT, THEN WE HAVE TO CULTIVATE THE TEACHINGS FOUND IN ALL THE 3 YANAS. HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS? WE DO IT GRADUALLY AND IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO ADOPT EVERYTHING AT

ONE TIME. THE TEACHINGS OF THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS, THE 8 FOLD PATH AND THE CULTIVATION OF REFUGE, WE TAKE THOSE TEACHINGS AS PRELIMINARY TEACHINGS. FROM THERE, ONE SHOULD CULTIVATE TEACHINGS ON

BODHICITTA AND EMPTINESS. THEN AS THE RESULTANT OF ONE'S LEARNING AND APPLYING THE HINAYANA AND MAHAYANA TEACHINGS, ONE SHOULD THEN ADOPT THE VAJRAYANA TEACHINGS WHICH IS ALL ABOUT THE ERADICATION OF IMPURE PERCEPTION, TO ACTUALISE PURE PERCEPTION AND TRANSFORM THE ORDINARY INTO THE DIVINE. THERE IS AN INTENSIVE PROCESS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS AREA OF KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES.

ALL THE YANAS ARE FACTUAL AND PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE BUDDHA'S DESCENT INTO THE WORLD. AFTER SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA ATTAINED FULL ENLIGHTENMENT IN BODHGAYA, HE REMAINED IN SILENCE AND IN RETREAT IN DEER PARK, SARNATH, AS THERE WAS NO INDIVIDUAL NOR ORGANISATION TO REQUEST FOR TEACHINGS. AFTER 49 DAYS, DEVA BRAHMA - DUE TO THE RIPENING OF PAST POSITIVE KARMIC IMPRINT - WAS INSPIRED TO RECEIVE GUIDANCE FROM THE BUDDHA AND THUS BLEW THE RIGHT TURNING CONCH-SHELL, CAUSING THE BUDDHA TO ARISE FROM HIS SINGLE POINTED CONCENTRATION. BRAHMA OFFERED BUDDHA A DHARMA WHEEL REQUESTING FOR THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS. THE REASON BEHIND THE IMPORTANCE OF A REQUEST FOR TEACHINGS IS BECAUSE DHARMA IS NOT JUST ORDINARY KNOWLEDGE BUT SHOWS THE ULTIMATE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT. HENCE THE BUDDHA MANIFESTED NOT REVEALING THE DHARMA UNTIL REQUESTED FOR. ALTHOUGH BRAHMA IS A WORLDLY GOD, HE IS RESPECTED AS BEING VERY KIND TO HAVE MADE THIS GREAT REQUEST. THE BUDDHA ACCEPTED THE REQUEST AND BEGAN GIVING TEACHINGS AND MET HIS KARMICALLY-CONNECTED DISCIPLES. THOSE 5 DISCIPLES WERE THE REINCARNATION OF THE FAMILY OF 5 TIGERS WHOM THE BUDDHA ENCOUNTERED DURING ONE OF THE BUDDHA'S PREVIOUS LIFETIMES IN NEPAL, AT A PLACE CALLED NAMO BUDDHA. SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA WAS AT THAT TIME A PRINCE AND WAS WALKING IN THE FOREST WITH BODHISATVA MAITREYA. THEY ENCOUNTERED THE STARVING TIGER FAMILY AND OUT OF GREAT COMPASSION, OFFERED HIS FLESH. THE TIGER WAS UNABLE TO EAT IT DUE TO IT SENSING THE FORCE OF THE BUDDHA'S GREAT COMPASSION. THEREON, THE BUDDHA MADE A PRAYER SAYING "BY YOUR CONSUMING MY FLESH, YOU WON'T COMMIT THE NEGATIVITY OF ABUSING THE BODY OF A BUDDHA BUT INSTEAD BE BORN AS A BRAHMIN AND WHEN I COME INTO THE WORLD TO TEACH THE DHARMA, YOU WILL BE MY DISCIPLES TO LEARN THE DHARMA".

THE FIRST TEACHING GIVEN BY THE BUDDHA WAS ON THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS. THESE ARE THE COMMON TEACHINGS IN RELATION TO THE HINAYANA, MAHAYANA AND VAJRAYANA TRADITIONS AND ARE THE FOCUS OF THE HINAYANIC PRACTITIONERS. THESE WERE GIVEN AT SARNATH. AMONGST THOSE RECEIVING THESE TEACHINGS WERE BODHISATTVAS WHO DESCENDED FROM THEIR PURELANDS AND REQUESTED THE BUDDHA TO TURN THE WHEEL OF DHARMA OF THE MAHAYANIC TEACHINGS. FOR THIS, THE BUDDHA TRAVELLED TO RAJGIR, INDIA AND ON VULTURE'S PEAK, THERE WERE THOUSANDS OF BEINGS IN ATTENDANCE - HUMANS AS WELL AS NON-HUMANS - TO LISTEN TO THESE TEACHINGS ON GREAT COMPASSION/BODHICITTA. HERE THE BUDDHA REVEALED THE (PERFECTION OF WISDOM) TEACHINGS ON THE HEART SUTRA WHICH IS THE COMMON PRACTICE FOR ALL PRACTITIONERS BUT SPECIFICALLY TO THE MAHAYANIC PRACTITIONERS. SIMULTANEOUSLY, SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA MANIFESTED IN THE TANTRIC DEITY FORM OF KALACHAKRA AT AMRAVATI, SOUTH INDIA AND GAVE THE TANTRA TEACHINGS WHICH ELABORATED ON THE 4 CATEGORIES OF TANTRA - NAMELY, ACTION TANTRA, PERFORMANCE TANTRA, YOGA TANTRA AND HIGHEST YOGA TANTRA. THE HIGHEST YOGA TANTRA TEACHINGS INVOLVE THE

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PRACTICE OF THE 3 KAYAS. TIBETAN BUDDHISM THEREFORE CONTAINS THE TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES SHARED BY THE 3 YANAS.

IN TIBETAN BUDDHISM, THE ASPECTS OF PRACTICE COMMON TO THE HINAYANA TRADITION IS THE PRESERVATION OF THE VINAYA VOWS . THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF MANY PRACTITIONERS WHO CULTIVATE THESE VOWS FOR THEIR ENTIRE LIFETIME. EVEN THE SANGHA WHO PRACTICE CELIBACY DO SO FROM UNDERSTANDING THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS AND THEREFORE RENOUNCE SAMASARA AND ELIMINATE THE CAUSES OF SAMASARA BY GUARDING THE ACTIONS OF THEIR BODY, SPEECH AND MIND THROUGH THE PROTECTION OF THE VOWS. SIMILARLY IN LAY LIFE, THE MORE VOWS WE TAKE, THE BETTER AND WE SHOULD SEE THEM AS RESTRICTIONS TO FREE BUT RATHER, RESTRICTIONS FROM COMMITTING NEGATIVE ACTIONS AND AFFLICTED STATES OF MIND SUCH AS ANXIETY, FEAR, DOUBT, LAZINESS, LACK OF MINDFULNESS. AS LONG AS WE ARE INFLUENCED BY SUCH ASPECTS OF MIND, WE WILL CONSTANTLY ACCUMULATE NEGATIVE KARMA AND EXPERIENCE THEIR SUFFERING RESULTS. BY PRACTISING VINAYA, WE CULTIVATE GOOD KARMA WHICH IS THE CAUSE OF HAPPINESS. AS IT IS IN OUR NATURE TO WANT HAPPINESS, THE ONLY WAY IS TO FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE BUDDHA AND THE PATH OF THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS.

JUST STUDYING DHARMA IS NOT ENOUGH. HAVING SCHOLARLY UNDERSTANDING OF DHARMA IS NOT ENOUGH AND BEING A MONK IS ALSO NOT ENOUGH AND LIVING IN ISOLATION IN RETREAT OR JUNGLE IS NOT ENOUGH. WE NEED TO HABITUATE OURSELVES WITH THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA ONLY THEN,

WILL THE DHARMA BRING BENEFIT TO US AS IT BECOMES PART OF OUR LIVES.

### WHY IS MEDITATION NECESSARY?

IT IS NECESSARY BECAUSE WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR FULFILLING OUR INNATE INSTINCT TO SEEK AND OBTAIN HAPPINESS AND NOT SUFFERING. FROM THE MOMENT WE ARE BORN, WE HAVE THAT INSTINCT. EVEN ANTS HAVE THAT INSTINCT – OBSERVE THEM - THEY WORK VERY HARD FOR THE WHOLE DAY SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WANT HAPPINESS; SIMILAR WITH US – WE SURRENDER 20 YEARS OF OUR LIVES TO STUDY IN ORDER TO GET A GOOD JOB AND AFTER GETTING A GOOD JOB, WE GET INTO RELATIONSHIPS AND HAVE FAMILIES – THIS IS ALL TO GET HAPPINESS. WE MAY GAIN MORE FRIENDS AND WEALTH AND HAVE CHILDREN IN THE HOPE FOR MORE HAPPINESS BUT OFTEN, WE FIND THAT THE MORE WE HAVE OF THESE, THE MORE PROBLEMS WE HAVE. THEN WE THINK THERE IS MAGIC IN BUDDHA’S WORD AND WE EMBARK INTO SPIRITUAL LIFE. WE ENGAGE IN DHARMA STUDY AND ENGAGE IN SOCIAL WELFARE WORKS BUT SOMEHOW, PROBLEMS STILL REMAIN. WHY? BECAUSE WE ARE STILL COMPLETELY CONTROLLED BY OUR EMOTIONS AND THIS IS CAUSED BY OUR INABILITY CONTROL OUR MINDS BECAUSE WE DON’T MEDITATE, WE DON’T HABITUATE OUR MINDS WITH THE BUDDHA’S ADVICE TO BE MINDFUL OF THE ACTIONS THAT OUR BODY SPEECH AND MIND COMMIT. ESPECIALLY THAT OF OUR MIND.

WHENEVER WE SAY WE WANT HAPPINESS, WHAT WE ACTUALLY MEAN IS THAT WE WANT ULTIMATE HAPPINESS, EVERLASTING HAPPINESS – WHICH IS BUDDHAHOOD ITSELF. EVERLASTING HAPPINESS IS NON EXISTENT IN SAMSARA AND CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED WHEN WE OBTAIN NIRVANA/THE CESSATION OF ENTIRE ASPECT OF SAMSARIC EXISTENCE AND NO LONGER BE REBORN IN THE SAMSARIC 6 REALMS. ONLY WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO CONTROL OUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, CAN WE OVERCOME THE CAUSES TO BE REBORN IN THE 6 REALMS AND ONLY THEN CAN WE ACHIEVE PEERLESS HAPPINESS.

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THUS EVERY BODY HAS TO BECOME A BUDDHA. HOW DOES ONE ACHIEVE THIS? THROUGH MEDITATION AND THE PURIFICATION OF OUR SUBTLE DEFILEMENTS, WHICH COMES WHEN ONE STARTS TO IMMERSE OUR LIVES INTO DHARMA. IN ORDER TO ACTUALISE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST FORM OF HAPPINESS, WE NEED MEDITATION. AT WORK, WE FIND THAT COLLEAGUES TROUBLE US, TRAFFIC JAMS DISTURB US, THERE IS NO PEACE. THIS DISTURBED MIND AFFECTS OUR CHAKRAS WHICH JAMS UP OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM, OUR BLOOD FUNCTION AND THEN THE NECK PAIN STARTS, SHOULDERS ACHE AND SMOKE COMES OUT OF ONE’S EARS; WHEN PEOPLE TALK TO YOU, YOU DON’T WANT TO LISTEN AND YOU START SCOLDING EVERYONE; AT HOME, CHILDREN CAN BRING UP SO MUCH NOISE – ALL THESE SITUATIONS CAN BE EASED AND HELPED BY DOING MEDITATION. REGARD THE NOISY CHILDREN AS OBJECTS OF ONE’S COMPASSION, GENEROSITY, PATIENCE, AS THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP BUDDHAHOOD. IN ONE’S CAR OR AT HOME, ONE MAY HAVE TONS OF DHARMA BOOKS OR PSYCHOLOGY BOOKS BUT THESE DON’T HELP IF WE DON’T HABITUATE OUR MINDS WITH THEIR CONTENT.

IN ORDER TO MEDITATE, THERE IS A METHOD. BEFORE WE CAN EFFECTIVELY MEDITATE, WE NEED TO CONTEMPLATE ON THE POINTS OF THE TEACHINGS AND ON LIFE BUT BEFORE WE CAN CONTEMPLATE, WE NEED TO LISTEN/STUDY/OBSERVE. THEREFORE, IF WE ONLY STUDY BUT NOT CONTEMPLATE, WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE TEACHINGS; AND IF WE CONTEMPLATE BUT NOT FAMILIARISE OUR MINDS WITH THE DHARMA SOLUTIONS THROUGH MEDITATION, IT WOULD ALL BE POINTLESS LIKE PUTTING A ROCK IN A ROCK CAVE, WHICH CAN REMAIN THERE FOR AEONS YET NO BENEFIT COMES FROM IT .

WE NEED TO THINK, “MY ENLIGHTENMENT IS DEPENDENT ON MY HAVING A POSITIVE MIND BUT IF I KEEP REACTING WITH NEGATIVE EMOTION IN RELATION TO OTHERS, THIS WILL DELAY MY ATTAINMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT. BUT IF I CULTIVATE COMPASSION, IT WILL BRING THE POSITIVE MIND OF LOVE AND PATIENCE AND AT THE SAME TIME, ENABLE ONE’S MIND TO BE CLEAR AND EVENTUALLY, ONE WILL BE ABLE TO EVEN PACIFY OR SUBDUE THE OTHER PERSON”. I WANTED TO SPECIALLY MENTION ABOUT OUR SPEECH. WE ARE OFTEN NOT CAREFUL WITH WHAT WE SAY AND OFTEN WE ENGAGE IN IDLE GOSSIP. THE MOMENT WE START TO GUIDE OUR SPEECH, WE WILL BRING ABOUT GOOD VIBRATIONS WITHIN THE FAMILY, SOCIETY AND RELATIONSHIPS. PHYSICALLY, WE ARE ONLY CONCERNED ABOUT HOW WE LOOK TO OURSELVES BUT NOT HOW PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU. ONE HAS TO ASSOCIATE WITH ALL SORTS OF BEINGS – SO WE NEED TO BE MINDFUL. LIKewise, IN PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS. IN THE VINAYA VOWS, WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BE TOO ACTIVE, WE HAVE TO WALK LIKE ARHATS – THIS IS BECAUSE IF WE WALK AROUND SWINGING OUR ARMS, IT MIGHT HURT INVISIBLE BEINGS.

THERE ARE VARIOUS TYPES OF MEDITATION – THOSE IN RELATION TO DHARMA AND THOSE NOT IN RELATION TO

DHARMA. THOSE MEDITATIONS WHICH ARE NOT IN RELATION TO DHARMA ARE THOSE MEDITATIONS THAT ARE MERELY TRANQUILISING OUR MINDS THROUGH FOCUSING ON ONE SOUND OR LIGHT. BUDDHA TAUGHT THAT WHILE SUCH METHODS DO BRING SOME LEVEL OF PEACE, THAT WILL NOT HELP US ATTAIN LIBERATION. THUS BUDDHA ADVISED TO DO DHARMA-MEDITATION WHICH MUST BEGIN WITH THE POSITIVE MOTIVATION TO ENGAGING IN MEDITATION.

### THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF NIRVANA

- (1) THE NIRVANA AIMED FOR BY THE SHRAVAKA (HEARER) PRACTITIONERS
- (2) THE NIRVANA OF THE PRATYEKABUDDHA (SOLITARY REALISERS) WHO CULTIVATE ALONE.
- (3) THE NIRVANA OF THE MAHAYANA PRACTITIONER - FULL ENLIGHTENMENT

THE ATTAINMENT OF THE FIRST 2 TYPES OF NIRVANA (WHICH IS THE GOAL OF THE HINAYANA PRACTITIONER) DOESN'T MEAN THAT ONE HAS BECOME BUDDHA. THESE 2 TYPES OF NIRVANA ARE LEVELS WHERE ONE HAS PURIFIED GROSS DELUSIONS AND OVERCOME SAMARA BUT NOT THE SUBTLE DEFILEMENT, WHICH IS THE OBSCURATION TO SEEING THE TRUE NATURE OF EXISTENCE, NAMELY THE ABSENCE OF INHERENT EXISTENCE. IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO JUST UNDERSTAND THE EMPTINESS OF THE PERSON BUT ALSO THE EMPTINESS OF ALL PHENOMENA. TO ACTUALISE THE FIRST 2 TYPES OF NIRVANA, ONE CAN DO SO BY ERADICATING SELF GRASPING AND REALISING THE EMPTINESS/SELFLESSNESS OF THE PERSON ONE BUT ONE NEEDS TO PROGRESS TO SEE THE EMPTINESS OF PHENOMENA.

TO ENGAGE IN THE DEEPER REFLECTION AND MEDITATION OF THE ABOVE POINTS, ONE NEEDS TO DEVELOP:

- (1) SINGLE POINTED MEDITATION (SAMATHA) AND
- (2) SPECIAL INSIGHT OR ANALYTICAL MEDITATION (VIPASSANA).

### SINGLE POINTED MEDITATION (SAMATHA OR CALM ABIDING MEDITATION) – CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS

WHEN STARTING SINGLE POINTED MEDITATION, ONE NEEDS TO MAKE PREPARATIONS AND THESE RELATE TO: THE PLACE, TIME, NECESSITIES AND INSTRUCTIONS.

(A) CONDUCTIVE PLACE – IT SHOULD BE A QUIET PLACE AND A PLACE WHERE ONE'S MIND CAN BE EASILY INSPIRED AND NOT DISTRACTED AND WHERE ONE FEELS SECURE FROM DANGERS LIKE WILD ANIMALS, WAR, ELEMENTAL DISTURBANCES. THE PLACE COULD BE AT HOME IN FRONT OF THE BUDDHA'S IMAGE BUT IF FAMILY MEMBERS ARE NOT SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR MEDITATIVE PRACTICE, THEN THAT WOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A CONDUCTIVE PLACE.

(B) CONDUCTIVE TIME – ALTHOUGH ONE CAN MEDITATE AT ANY TIME, FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT, DAWN TIME IS THE BEST FOR MEDITATION I.E. BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 3AM-6AM, AS ONE'S MIND IS CLEAREST THEN. BEST TIME IS TO SLEEP AT 10PM. THIS WOULD BE GOOD FOR MEDITATION AND ALSO GOOD FOR HEALTH. THE GREAT INDIAN PANDITS FOLLOWED SUCH A ROUTINE. EVEN IN PRESENT DAY, THE GREAT LIVING MASTERS REST AT 10PM AND WAKE UP AT 3AM. MY LATE MASTER ALWAYS WOKE UP AT 3AM AND WOULD IMMEDIATELY START TO MEDITATE. WHEN HE WAS DOING STRICT RETREAT FOR 26 YEARS, HE DIDN'T SLEEP BUT DID CONTINUOUS PRACTICE. WHEN IN THE CITY, HE WOULD DISPLAY THE ASPECT OF SLEEPING BUT IN THE CAVE, HE NEVER SLEPT. I REGARD MY LATE MASTER AS ENLIGHTENED BUT WITH THE ORDINARY CONTAMINATED BODY. LIKE THE LATE VEN DHAMMANA, I HEARD SO MUCH GREAT THINGS ABOUT HIM AND HE BENEFITTED SO MANY BUT HE TOO MANIFESTED A CONTAMINATED BODY AND PASSED AWAY.

AS WITH OUR PRESENT GURU, KYABJE LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE, HE NEVER SLEEPS. YEAR AGO, I WAS ASSIGNED TO SERVE HIM DURING THE NIGHT. AT FIRST, I DIDN'T BELIEVE THAT RINPOCHE NEVER SLEPT AND THUS WATCHED THE WHOLE NIGHT UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO ATTEND THE MONASTERY'S 5AM PUJA. HE REMAINED UPRIGHT IN MEDITATION THROUGHOUT. THERE ARE SUCH MASTERS WHO ARE ABLE TO OVERCOME THEIR GROSS SENSES AND DESPITE HAVING TO INTERACT WITH THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS AND HANDLE MANY PROJECTS AT ONE TIME, THEY

ARE NOT DISTURBED BY ANYTHING. SO IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE CONTROL OVER ONE'S MIND AND WE CAN BE ENCOURAGED BY SUCH PRACTITIONERS.

AS A DAILY PRACTICE, AT LEAST DO SOME MEDITATION BEFORE ONE'S FAMILY MEMBERS WAKE UP AND BEFORE GOING TO WORK – EVEN ONE MINUTE OF DOING THIS IS SO BENEFICIAL. IF ONE REALLY CANNOT MEDITATE IN FRONT OF ONE'S ALTAR, THEN AT LEAST SIT UP IN BED AND MEDITATE FOR A SHORT TIME – IT'S ALL ABOUT MENTAL CULTIVATION. POSTURE IS HELPFUL BUT NOT NECESSARY, NOR EFFECTIVE FOR EVERYONE. IT DEPENDS ON ONE'S PHYSICAL STRUCTURE AND ALSO ONE'S PREVIOUS KARMA. THERE WAS ONCE A MEDITATOR WHO TRIED FOR MANY YEARS TO MEDITATE IN THE NORMAL UPRIGHT SEATED POSITION, WITHOUT SUCCESS. FEELING CONCERNED AT HIS OWN LACK OF PROGRESS, HE CONSULTED HIS MASTER WHO ADVISED HIM THAT IN A PAST LIFE, HE WAS A COW AND THUS THE RESULTANT KARMA WAS THAT SITTING UPRIGHT FOR MEDITATION WOULD NOT BE IDEAL FOR HIS PRACTICE. HIS MASTER ADVISED HIM INSTEAD TO MEDITATE IN A LYING POSITION. WHEN HE DID SO, HE WAS ABLE TO MEDITATE PROFOUNDLY AND REALISATIONS CAME QUICKLY. THEREFORE, THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IS THAT ONE'S MIND SHOULD NOT BE DISTURBED OR DISTRACTED. ONE CAN EVEN SIT ON A CHAIR OR SOFA TO MEDITATE BUT BE CAREFUL NOT TO FALL ASLEEP.

NECESSITIES: HAVE SIMPLE FOOD ARRANGED FOR IF YOU ARE DOING A MEDITATION RETREAT; FOOD THAT IS SOOTHING AND THAT YOU FIND PLEASANT.

INSTRUCTIONS: RECEIVE FROM A QUALIFIED MASTER, PROPER DHARMA TEACHINGS TO ENABLE ONESELF TO GAIN TOTAL CONTROL OVER ONE'S MIND, AS WELL AS INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO FOCUS ONE'S MIND. THEN CONTEMPLATE WELL ON THE TEACHINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS RECEIVED TO DERIVE A FIRM UNDERSTANDING ON THE ESSENTIAL POINTS OF EACH SUBJECT; ONCE YOU HAVE ACTUALISE THIS WISDOM OF CONTEMPLATION, ONE IS THEN READY TO ENGAGE IN A MEDITATION RETREAT. AS BUDDHIST, ONE IS ADVISED TO USE VIRTUOUS OBJECTS AS ONE'S OBJECT OF MEDITATION – INSTEAD OF FOCUSING JUST ON ANY LIGHT, FOCUS INSTEAD, ON BUDDHA'S FOREHEAD; INSTEAD OF CHOOSING TO MEDITATE ON A TREE, CHOOSE TO MEDITATE ON THE BUDDHA EYES INSTEAD; INSTEAD OF CHOOSING TO FOCUS ON JUST ANY SOUND, FOCUS INSTEAD ON THE SYLLABLE OM OR THE SYLLABLE AH OR OTHER SACRED SYLLABLES. INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON AN OBJECT OF TASTE, FOCUS INSTEAD ON IMMORTAL NECTAR; INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON TOUCH, VISUALISE AND MEDITATE ON THE BUDDHA'S HOLY BODY AS IF IT IS IN ACTUAL FORM. THIS IS HOW TO USE VIRTUOUS OBJECTS TO FOCUS ONE'S CONCENTRATION AND THIS WILL BRING THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF CONCENTRATION AND MERIT. CONCENTRATING ON A LEAF ALONE WILL DEVELOP SOME LEVEL OF CONCENTRATION BUT WILL BRING NO MERIT. SO WE SHOULDN'T WASTE OUR TIME AND EFFORT WHEN CHOOSING THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION.

IT WOULD BE GOOD TO DO MEDITATION IN A PLACE WHERE THERE ARE QUALIFIED MASTERS, SO THAT ONE CAN CONSULT THEM FOR GUIDANCE ARISING DURING ONE'S SESSION.

## **HOW TO PERFORM A MEDITATION RETREAT**

PERIODS OF MEDITATION: IF DOING CONCENTRATION MEDITATION RETREAT, ONE CAN DIVIDE THE SESSION INTO AS MANY PERIODS YOU FEEL ABLE TO CONCENTRATE. HOWEVER, THE GENERAL ADVICE IS TO DIVIDE TIME INTO 4 SESSIONS OF ABOUT 2-3 HOURS EACH AND HAVE POST-SESSION BREAKS. THE FOUR SESSIONS COULD BE TIMED THIS WAY E.G. 3AM – 5AM; 8AM-11AM; 1PM- 4PM (END BEFORE SUNSET) AND LAST SESSION ANYTIME AFTER SUNSET (E.G. 7-9PM). AFTER CONCLUDING FOR THE DAY, ONE COULD UNDERTAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT DAY SUCH AS SETTING UP FRESH OFFERINGS ON THE ALTAR ETC.

DURING POST-MEDITATION SESSIONS, TRY TO DISCOVER WHAT WERE THE OBSTACLES TO ONE'S MEDITATION, GIVING RISE TO DISTRACTIONS. ONE CAN THEN STUDY MORE, CONSULT SENIORS OR ONE'S MASTER IF ABLE TO, ON HOW TO REMOVE THOSE OBSTACLES.

OBJECT OF MEDITATION: WE HAVE ALREADY DISCUSSED THIS EARLIER. ONE OF THE MOST INSPIRING OBJECTS IS THE QUALITIES OF THE BUDDHA. WHICHEVER OBJECT ONE CHOOSES, THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION SHOULDN'T CHANGE IF ONE WANTS TO ATTAIN SINGLE-POINTED CONCENTRATION/SAMATHA. IF ONE HAS DECIDED TO USE THE BUDDHA'S EYE, THEN UNTIL THE END OF THE RETREAT, USE THE BUDDHA'S EYE AS THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION. DON'T HALFWAY CHANGE TO MEDITATING ON THE BUDDHA'S LIPS OR FOREHEAD ETC.. IF ONE CAN DO MEDITATE IN A FOCUSED WAY, WITHIN 6 MONTHS ONE CAN ATTAIN SAMATHA.

MEDITATION POSTURE: THE VAIROCHANA POSITION

- **HEAD** - SIT NATURALLY WITH THE BACK UPRIGHT WITHOUT FORCING. ONE'S HEAD SHOULD NOT BE TOO FAR BACK AS THIS COULD LEAD TO MENTAL EXCITEMENT; NOT PLACE THE HEAD TOO LOW, AS THIS WILL RESULT IN LAXITY;
- **EYES** – THESE SHOULD NOT TOTALLY OPEN AS THIS COULD LEAD TO DISTRACTION) NOR CLOSED AS SLEEPINESS COULD ARISE. INSTEAD, LOOK DOWNWARDS NATURALLY.
- **HANDS** - PLACE THE RIGHT HAND OVER THE LEFT HAND, SUCH THAT THE RING FINGER ON THE RIGHT HAND SITS JUST ON TOP OF THE RING FINGER OF THE LEFT HAND. THIS PLACEMENT OF THE RING FINGERS STIMULATES BODHICITTA BECAUSE THE NERVES OF 3<sup>RD</sup> RING FINGER CONNECT TO YOUR HEART CHAKRA, WHICH IS CONNECTED TO ONE'S SUBTLE BUDDHA NATURE MIND. THE HANDS SHOULD BE POSITIONED 1 INCH BELOW NAVEL CHAKRA.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL ABOUT CHAKRAS HERE BUT FUNDAMENTALLY, WE HAVE AN INNER NERVOUS SYSTEM MADE UP OF CHANNELS AND INNER WINDS. THERE ARE 3 MAIN CHANNELS CALLED THE CENTRAL CHANNEL, THE RIGHT AND LEFT CHANNELS. THESE 3 CHANNELS CROSS OVER IN VARIOUS PLACES AND THESE SPOTS OF CROSSING OVER ARE CALLED CHAKRAS. THE INNER WINDS TRAVEL THROUGHOUT THE CHANNELS AND OUR CONSCIOUSNESS/MIND IS LIKE A HORSE RIDER, RIDING ON THESE INNER WINDS. THE LOCATION OF THE CENTRAL CHANNEL IS THAT IT STARTS FROM THE FOREHEAD AREA BETWEEN ONE'S EYEBROWS, CURVES OVER ONE'S HEAD AND GOES ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE BODY AND CURVES UPWARDS A SPOT THAT IS LOCATED BETWEEN THE ANUS AND THE SEXUAL OGRAN.

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THE ESSENCE WE RECEIVE FROM MOTHER RESIDES AROUND THE NAVEL (IN ITS GROSS FORM, THIS MOTHER-ESSENCE IS MENSTRUAL BLOOD) WITHIN CENTRAL CHANNEL; THE FATHER SUBSTANCE IN ITS GROSS FORM IS WHITE FLUID AND IN ITS MOST SUBTLE FORM RESIDES ALSO IN THE CENTRAL CHANNEL. THE MOTHER AND FATHER SUBSTANCES ABIDE IN A DHALL SIZED, OYSTER SHAPED SEED CALLED THE INDESTRUCTIBLE DROP WHICH IS IN THE CENTRAL CHANNEL AND REMAINS CLOSED UNTIL DEATH, WHEN THE INDESTRUCTIBLE DROP OPENS. BY PLACING OUR JOINED PALMS IN MEDITATION NEAR THE NAVEL AREA, WITH THE RIGHT HAND REPRESENTING FATHER/METHOD/ BODHICITTA AND THE LEFT HAND REPRESENTING MOTHER/WISDOM/EMPTINESS – TOGETHER WITH THE TWO HANDS JOINED TOGETHER AT THE RING FINGER, THIS HAS THE EFFECT OF ACTIVATING THE *TUMMO* (HEAT) ENERGY WHICH CAUSES THE MELTING OF THE DROPS CONSISTING OF THE ESSENCE OF FATHER AND MOTHER AND THIS IS WHAT BRINGS ABOUT THE SENSATION OF BLISS. THIS AREA OF STUDY COMES FROM THE TANTRA TEACHINGS WHICH EXPLAIN ABOUT THE DROPS AND CHANNELS. HOWEVER, ONE NEEDS TO GET THE PROPER INITIATIONS TO BE ABLE TO RECEIVE THE FULL TEACHINGS ON TANTRA.

- **MOUTH**: ONE'S MOUTH NEEDS TO BE GENTLY CLOSED AND THE TIP OF THE TONGUE SHOULD TOUCH THE PALATE. IN THIS WAY, OUR SALIVA WILL FLOW BACK NATURALLY WITHOUT CAUSING DISTRACTION TO OUR MEDITATION FROM THE NEED TO CONSTANTLY SWALLOW.

BREATHING MEDITATION IS ABOUT BRINGING ONE'S BUSY MIND INTO A STATE OF CALM. LEFT AND RIGHT CHANNELS ARE LINKED TO CORRESPONDING NOSTRIL. LEFT AND RIGHT CHANNELS ARE LINKED TO GO INSIDE THE CENTRAL CHANNEL. SO WHEN YOU DRAW YOUR BREATH IN, USE THE LOWER PART OF YOUR STOMACH, STOMACH GOES FLAT AND WHEN BREATHING OUT, STOMACH EXPANDS. YOUR MIND SHOULD FOLLOW THE PASSAGE OF THE INWARD AND OUTWARD AIR.

### COMMON OBSTACLES TO SINGLE POINTED MEDITATION:

- (1) THE MAIN OBSTACLES ARE EXCITEMENT AND LAXITY (DULLNESS) . THESE NEED TO BE OVERCOME BECAUSE ONE NEEDS TO ATTAIN CLARITY AND FIRMNESS ON THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SAMATHA.
- (2) OTHER OBSTACLES ARE HAVING TOO MANY PLANS, OUTINGS, BUSINESS, PARTIES, EMAILS, DIARIES, MOBILE PHONES AND CHATROOMS. IF YOU WANT A GOOD BUSINESS

PLAN, DO MORE MEDITATION AND THE PLANS WILL COME CLEARLY!

**THE ACTUAL MEDITATION PROCESS : THE 5 FAULTS & THE 8 ANTIDOTES**

WHEN ENGAGING IN SINGLE POINTED MEDITATION, ONE NEEDS TO BE AWARE OF THE 5 FAULTS, THE 8 ANTIDOTES AND THE STAGES OF THE MEDITATION PROCESS ITSELF.

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TO FULLY ACHIEVE THE PERFECTION OF CALM-ABIDING, ONE MUST ELIMINATE THE 5 FAULTS BY APPLYING THE 8 ANTIDOTES

OBSTACLES TO SAMATHA	ANTIDOTES
1. LAZINESS	FAITH
	ASPIRATION
	PERSEVERANCE
	PLIANCY - THIS IS WHERE THE BODY & MIND FEELS LIGHT DUE TO THE ABILITY TO CONTROL AND PACIFY THE MIND
2. FORGETTING THE OBJECT	RECOLLECTION - ONE NEEDS TO BE VERY CLEAR OF THE OBJECT AND WE COULD HELP OURSELVES WITH THIS BY REMINDING ONESELF OF THE OBJECT AT LEAST 6 TIMES A DAY (3X IN THE MORNING AND 3X AT NIGHT).
3. LAXITY & EXCITEMENT	VIGILANCE – THIS IS SIMILAR TO INTROSPECTION, WHICH OBSERVES AND GUARDS THE MIND.
4. NON-APPLICATION – THIS IS WHEN WE LOSE FOCUS OF OUR OBJECT OF MEDITATION AND ALLOW OTHER THOUGHTS ON THE OBJECT TO ENTER OUR MEDITATION.	APPLICATION - MEANS WE NEED TO BRING OUR MIND BACK TO THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION IF WE WISH TO ATTAIN SAMATHA
5. OVER-APPLICATION – THIS IS WHERE ONE STARTS TO EXAGGERATE THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION BY ADDING MORE INFORMATION ON THAT OBJECT. THE PRACTICE IS TO MAINTAIN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION VISUALISED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEDITATION RETREAT UNTIL THE END.	EQUANIMITY

THE ATTACHED DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATES THE LEARNER MEDITATOR'S MIND AND HOW IT EXPERIENCES THE OBSTACLES TO PERFECT CONCENTRATION AND ALSO SHOWS THE EFFECTS OF APPLYING THE ANTIDOTES. THERE ARE 9 STAGES OF MEDITATIVE OR MENTAL ABSORPTION THAT ARE ACHIEVED THROUGH SPECIFIC TYPES OF MENTAL EFFORT.

GUIDE TO THE DIAGRAM

1. THE 1ST STAGE OF MEDITATION IS ATTAINED THROUGH FORCE OF HEARING (LISTENING TO THE EXPLANATIONS OF THE TEACHINGS)
2. FIXING THE MIND ON THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION
3. THE FORCE OF RECOLLECTION OR MINDFULNESS
4. THE FORCE OF VIGILANCE, ALERTNESS OR INTROSPECTION
5. FROM HERE UNTIL THE 7<sup>TH</sup> STAGE OF MENTAL ABSORPTION WILL BE FOUND A FLAME DECREASING IN SIZE AT EACH PROGRESSIVE STAGE UNTIL IT BECOME ABSENT. THIS STRENGTHENS ONE'S RECOLLECTION AND VIGILANCE.
6. THE ELEPHANT REPRESENT MIND AND ITS BLACK COLOUR REPRESENTS THE MENTAL FACTOR OF LAXITY.
7. THE MONKEY REPRESENTS DISTRACTION AND ITS BLACK COLOUR THE MENTAL FACTOR OF EXCITEMENT.
8. THE FORCE OF REFLECTION. THIS ACHIEVES THE 2<sup>ND</sup> STAGE OF MENTAL ABSORPTION.
9. UNINTERRUPTED AND CONTINUOUS ABSORPTION ON THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION (LENGTHENING THE PERIOD OF CONCENTRATION).
10. THE 5 SENSUAL DESIRES ARE THE OBJECT OF THE MENTAL FACTOR OF EXCITEMENT.
11. FROM HERE, THE BLACK COLOUR, BEGINNING FROM THE HEAD OF THE ELEPHANT, CHANGES TO WHITE AND DENOTES THE PROGRESS IN THE CLEAR GRASPING OF THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION AND FIXING THE MIND ON THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION.
12. THE FORCE OF RECOLLECTION. THE ATTAINMENT OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> STAGES OF MENTAL ABSORPTION IS ACHIEVED THROUGH THE FORCE OF RECOLLECTION.

13. TO RETURN AND FIX THE STRAYED MIND ON THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION.
14. THE HARE REPRESENTS THE SUBTLE ASPECTS OF THE MENTAL FACTOR OF LAXITY. AT THIS STAGE, ONE RECOGNISES THE DISTINCT NATURE AND GROSS ASPECTS OF THE MENTAL FACTOR OF LAXITY.
15. LOOKING BACK MEANS THAT HAVING PERCEIVED THE DISTRACTION OF THE MIND, IT IS BROUGHT BACK TO THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION.
16. MAINTAINING A CLEAR VISUALISATION OF THE FINEST DETAILS OF THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION
17. THE FORCE OF VIGILANCE. THROUGH THIS IS ATTAINED THE 5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup> STAGES OF MENTAL ABSORPTION.
18. THE ARISING OF THE MENTAL FACTOR OF EXCITEMENT IS MARKEDLY REDUCED.
19. AT THE TIME OF SAMATHA MEDITATION, EVEN THOUGHTS OF VIRTUE THAT ARISE NEED TO BEEN REMOVED WHILST THE MIND IS STRONGLY FOCUSED ON THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION. HERE ONE IS DEVELOPING THE VEHICLE (THE MIND) TO HAVE THE QUALITY OF CONCENTRATION TO BE ABLE TO DEEPLY EMBED VIRTUOUS THOUGHTS CONTINUOUSLY AND EVENTUALLY GAIN THE DIRECT REALISATION OF EMPTINESS/SELFLESSNESS.
20. THE FORCE OF VIGILANCE ARRESTS THE MIND FROM DRIFTING ASTRAY.
21. THE MIND IS CONTROLLED
22. THE MIND IS PACIFIED
23. THE 7<sup>TH</sup> AND 8<sup>TH</sup> STAGES OF MENTAL ABSORPTION ARE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE FORCE OF PERSEVERANCE.
24. THE MIND BECOMES PERFECTLY PACIFIED. AT THIS STAGE, THE ARISING OF THE SUBTLEST LAXITY AND EXCITEMENT HAS STOPPED.
25. THE BLACK COLOUR OF THE ELEPHANT (LAXITY) HAS COMPLETELY FADED OUT AND THE MONKEY (DISTRACTION) IS ALSO ABSENT.
26. SINGLE-POINTEDNESS OF MIND

27. THE 9<sup>TH</sup> STAGE OF MENTAL ABSORPTION OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> STAGE IS ATTAINED THROUGH THE FORCE OF COMPLETE FAMILIARITY.

28. PERFECT EQUANIMITY

29. GREAT EASE OF BODY

30. ATTAINMENT OF CALM ABIDING OR SAMATHA

31. MENTAL BLISS

32. THE ROOT OF SAMSAARA IS ELIMINATED THROUGH THE JOINT POWER OF CALM ABIDING AND DIRECT INSIGHT INTO EMPTINESS/SELFLESSNESS AS THE OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION.

OUR TRAINING IN CONCENTRATION IS MOTIVATED BY BODHICITTA I.E. NOT JUST HELP ONESELF BUT ALL LIVING BEINGS TO FREE THEM FROM THE DISTURBED MIND, THUS WE ENGAGE IN SAMATHA TO REALISE EMPTINESS OF SELF AND PHENOMENA.

PERSEVERANCE IS CONTINUOUS JOYOUS EFFORT; GREAT EASE OF BODY – FREE FROM TIREDNESS AND SLEEP (THAT’S WHY THEY DON’T NEED TO SLEEP); AFTER ATTAINING SAMATHA, THEN ONE NEEDS TO UPGRADE ONESELF FROM MERELY BLISS FOR ONESELF, ONE NEEDS TO DEVELOP SPECIAL INSIGHT .

**Q:** ARE THESE 9 STAGES OF MEDITATION THE SAME AS THE THERAVADAN METHOD WHICH ALSO REACHES THE SINGLE-POINTED STAGE.

**ANS:** IT IS THE SAME – THERE IS NO NEED TO SPECIFICALLY REFER TO THE TERM “THE 9 STAGES” BUT THE FINAL ATTAINMENT OF THE SINGLE POINTED CONCENTRATION WOULD BE THE SAME. THE TOTAL PHYSICAL AND MENTAL PLIANCY INFLUENCES THE ONE’S MENTAL DEVELOPMENT OF SAMATHA. SAMATHA IS ATTAINED AFTER THE 9<sup>TH</sup> STAGE OF ABSORPTION.

#### **ANALYTICAL MEDITATION – SPECIAL INSIGHT/VIPASSANA**

##### IN GENERAL

IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO SET THE RIGHT MOTIVATION FOR ACTUALISING NIRVANA AND LIBERATION FROM SAMSAARA. ONE STUDIES THE BUDDHA’S TEACHINGS AND THEN USES MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION TO LEARN ABOUT WHAT IS TO BE ADOPTED AND WHAT IS TO BE ABANDONED. STUDYING, CONTEMPLATING, DEBATING, DOING RESEARCH IN DHARMA WITH RIGHT MOTIVATION IS MEDITATION. WITHOUT RIGHT MOTIVATION, THE DHARMA SESSION OR MEDITATION SESSION WILL BRING SOME INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE BUT IT WON’T BRING THE ULTIMATE BENEFIT THAT COMES FROM HABITUATING OVER THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA NOR THE ACCUMULATION OF

MERIT. IF WHATEVER KNOWLEDGE ONE GETS, ONE USES IT TO BENEFIT OTHERS AND ONE HAS THE ENTHUSIASM TO INTEGRATE THE TEACHINGS INTO ONE’S DAILY LIFE, THAT IT ITSELF BECOMES MEDITATION BECAUSE THE MIND IS WELL HABITUATED WITH THE BUDDHA’S TEACHINGS. IN THAT WAY, ONE WILL GENERATE THE CAUSES FOR LIBERATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT AS WELL AS AVOID CREATING THE NEGATIVE CAUSES WHICH BRING SUFFERING.

THUS, EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIFE CAN BECOME A FORM OF MEDITATION. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE SPEAK, WE SHOULD ENSURE WE DON'T USE HARSH WORDS OR SARCASM, AS THIS WILL ONLY BRING FUTURE TROUBLE AND SUFFERING. RIGHT SPEECH IS SPEAKING ONLY THE GOOD QUALITIES OF THE OTHERS. AVOID DEGPA – THIS WORD HAS MANY MEANINGS AND THEY INCLUDE PHYSICAL HITTING WHICH TAKES THE LIFE OF ANOTHER LIFE, UP TO MINOR UNINTENTIONAL HITTING DUE TO THE LACK OF MINDFULNESS AND IS THUS, STILL A NEGATIVE ACT. WITHOUT MINDFULNESS, WE CAN COMMIT ALL SORTS OF NEGATIVITIES – LIKE WITHIN THIS TEMPLE COMPOUND, ONE MIGHT PLUCK FLOWERS THAT ONE IS NOT SUPPOSED TO DO, GIVING RISE TO STEALING. IF WITHOUT OFFERING RESPECT OR GETTING PERMISSION FROM NOT ONLY HUMAN BUT ALSO NON-HUMANS (SUCH A EARTH PROTECTORS) AND NOT CARING ABOUT THE ANIMALS THAT INHABIT THE PLACE AND WE PROCEED TO DESTROY THE MOUNTAINS TO BUILD HOUSES, WE COULD BE CREATING NEGATIVE KARMA. ONE OF THE CAUSES FOR GETTING CANCER (UNDER THE CATEGORY OF A RESULT SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE UNDER THE KARMA TEACHINGS) IS CAUSING HARM TO ANIMALS AND NAGAS WHO ARE ATTACHED TO THE PLACE, RESULTING IN THE PEOPLE CONCERNED GETTING SKIN DISEASES, CANCER AND LEPROSY. THIS IS WHY SOMETIMES PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON FARMS EATING ONLY ORGANIC FOOD, STILL GET CANCER.

THUS ONE SHOULD CULTIVATE THE 10 VIRTUOUS ACTIONS AND IF ONE FALLS ILL, ONE SHOULD IMMEDIATELY REFLECT ON KARMA AND HELP TO LIBERATE LIFE OR OFFER MEDICINE TO A POOR PERSON WHO IS IN NEED OF MEDICINE). SIMILARLY, OF ONE FINDS THAT ONE CANNOT RETAIN THE MONEY ONE HAS WORKED HARD TO EARN OR CANNOT EVEN GET A DECENT MEAL, THIS IS DUE TO THE PAST KARMA OF STEALING ,WHICH COULD BE IN RELATION TO AS SIMPLE AN OBJECT AS PLUCKING FLOWER WITHOUT PERMISSION.

WE ARE NOT SEEKING ONLY ORDINARY HAPPINESS BUT LASTING HAPPINESS. FOR THIS, THE BUDDHA NEVER ASKED US TO GIVE UP ONE'S COMFORTABLE LIFE BUT RATHER, PRACTICE VIRTUE AND LIVE AN ETHICAL LIFE, DOING THE RIGHT THING. FOR INSTANCE, WHEN WE HAVE A MEAL, SINCE THERE ARE COUNTLESS LIVING ORGANISMS IN OUR BODY, WE SHOULD HAVE THE KIND THOUGHT THAT WHEN WE EAT, WE ARE ALSO FEEDING THEM AND FULFILLING THEIR NEEDS. THIS IS AN ACT OF GENEROSITY. AS REGARDS THE OBJECTS OF GENEROSITY, THEY ARE THE BUDDHAS AND ORDINARY SENTIENT BEINGS. BY MAKING OFFERINGS TO THE BUDDHA, IT IS A PRACTICE OF GENEROSITY WHICH ONLY BENEFITS US. AS FOR SENTIENT BEINGS, WE SHOULD TRY TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, SHARE WHATEVER WE CAN TO FULFIL THEIR NEEDS. BEFORE LUNCH, WHEN WE DID THE FOOD BLESSING AND OFFERING, THIS MANTRA OM AH HUM WAS USED. THESE SYLLABLES WERE MANIFESTED FROM BUDDHA'S BODY SPEECH AND MIND. THE OM MANIFESTED FROM BUDDHA'S CROWN /FOREHEAD AND WHITE IN COLOUR; SYLLABLE AH EMANATED FROM BUDDHA'S SPEECH AND IS RED IN COLOUR; THE SYLLABLE HUM MANIFESTED FROM THE BUDDHA'S HEART AND IS BLUE IN COLOUR. WHEN BUDDHA MANIFESTED THESE SYLLABLES, THEY WERE IN THE FORM OF LIGHT. THROUGH THE POWER OF THE BUDDHA, HUM HAS THE POWER TO PURIFYING ALL IMPURE SUBSTANCES AND TRANSFORM THEM INTO PURE NECTAR; THE SYLLABLE AH TRANSFORMS ALL (THE FOOD IN THIS CASE) INTO IMMORTAL NECTAR; THE SYLLABLE OM HAS THE POWER TO INCREASE THE QUANTITY INTO INFINITE AMOUNTS. THE SYLLABLE AH IS THE SEED SYLLABLE OF THE AMITABHA BUDDHA FAMILY AND ONE OF THE MANIFESTATIONS OF AMITABHA BUDDHA IS AMITAYU, WHICH HOLDS THE LONG LIFE VASE, SO WHEN YOU RECITE AH OVER THE FOOD OR MEDICINE, IT

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BECOMES LIKE MEDICINE TO PROLONG ONE'S LIFE. SINCE YOU ARE BUDDHIST, BUDDHA, DHARMA AND SANGHA ARE ALWAYS WITH YOU. SO AFTER RECITING OM AH HUM, YOU OFFER THE MENTALLY TRANSFORMED FOOD TO THE TRIPLE GEM WHICH IN ITSELF CONFERS MERIT. THEN BY REMEMBERING THAT THERE ARE 84,000 BACTERIA IN EACH OF OUR BODIES, WE MAKE CHARITY TO THEM AS WELL. ALTHOUGH BACTERIA MAY NOT CONSIDERED AS LIVING BEINGS BY SOME QUARTERS, IN THE DHARMA TEXT CALLED ABIDHAMMAKOSHA, IT IS EXPLAINED THAT EVEN CELLS CAN BE LIVING BEINGS. THEIR LIFE IS DEPENDENT ON US SUSTAINING OUR OWN LIFE. WHEN WE DIE, THOSE BEINGS LIVES ALSO CEASE. THUS THE FOOD WE EAT SUSTAINS OUR LIFE AND SUSTAINS THEIR LIFE AS WELL. THUS WE ARE MAKING CHARITY TO 84,000 BEINGS! AMAZING! IT'S NOT EASY TO FIND 84,000 PEOPLE OR BEINGS TO MAKE OFFERINGS TO YET IN OUR OWN BODY ALONE, WE HAVE THIS PRECIOUS OPPORTUNITY. THIS SHOWS THAT WE CAN PRACTICE AT ANY TIME AND IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. WHETHER SOMETHING IS DHARMA OR NOT IS ALL DEPENDENT ON OUR MIND.

#### **SPECIFICALLY ON ANALYTICAL MEDITATION – WHY IT IS NEEDED AND WHAT TO ANALYSE DURING THE MEDITATION**

ALTHOUGH CALM ABIDING MAY BRING CLARITY OF MIND AND BLISS, ONE SHOULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITH THIS BECAUSE IT WILL NOT CREATE THE CAUSES NOR MERITS FOR ONE TO ATTAIN LIBERATION. TO GAIN LIBERATION/FREEDOM FROM SAMSARA AND ATTAIN ENLIGHTENMENT, ONE NEEDS TO CULTIVATE ANALYTICAL

MEDITATION/SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO SELFLESSNESS/EMPTINESS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH SINGLE POINTED MEDITATION. FOR THIS, ONE PRACTICE METHOD AND WISDOM I.E. THE TERM “METHOD” REFERS TO BODHICITTA; TO PRACTICE “WISDOM” MEANS TO ERADICATE ALL SELF GRASPING AND BELIEF IN INHERENT EXISTENCE – FOR THIS, ONE NEEDS TO REALISE EMPTINESS (WHICH IS THE LACK OF INHERENT EXISTENCE OF SELF AND PHENOMENA).

ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS CAN CUT OFF THE ROOT OF SAMBARA. YOU MUST HAVE CONVICTION IN THIS. AFTER ALL, EVEN NON BUDDHISTS CAN ATTAIN THE 9<sup>TH</sup> STAGE OF CONCENTRATION BUT ONCE THEY ATTAIN THIS, THEY FEEL THEIR GOAL IS ACHIEVED BY REMAINING IN BLISS. BUT FROM THE BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE, THE OBJECTIVE IS NOT TO ATTAIN PERSONAL BLISS AND SUPERNATURAL POWER BUT TO OVERCOME TAKING REBIRTH IN SAMBARA WHICH OCCURS THROUGH THE FORCE OF KARMA AND DELUSION BUT TO OVERCOME DEATH AND BIRTH; TO ELIMINATE SAMBARA AND TO ACTUALISE THIS FOR ALL LIVING BEINGS. THEREFORE, ONE MUST GAIN THE CORRECT VIEW OF SELFLESSNESS/EMPTINESS. WE NEED TO STUDY WELL, THE EXACT METHOD ON HOW TO ANALYSE SELFLESSNESS/EMPTINESS SO THAT WE CAN ARRIVE AT THE REALISATION OF SELFLESSNESS/EMPTINESS.

### WHAT TO MEDITATE ON FIRST

TO DO ANALYTICAL MEDITATION EFFECTIVELY, WE NEED TO FIRST ENGAGE IN THE ANALYTICAL MEDITATION ON LAM RIM (WHICH IS THE ENTIRE BUDDHA’S TEACHINGS ORGANISED IN A SEQUENTIAL MANNER AND PRESENTED AS A GRADUATED PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT).

TO OBTAIN PERFECT KNOWLEDGE, ONE NEEDS A PERFECT TEACHER – THE BUDDHA WAS SUCH A PERFECT TEACHER. ONCE WE FIND THE PERFECT TEACHER, WE NEED TO DEVOTE 100% TO HIM. FIRST WE NEED TO ANALYSE CAREFULLY WHETHER THIS TEACHER POSSESSES ALL THE QUALIFICATIONS TO GUIDE ME – WE TEND TO TAKE REFUGE IN WORLDLY

GODS WHEN ONE SHOULD RELY ON THE BUDDHA AS AN OBJECT OF REFUGE. THE GURU SHOULD HAVE REQUISITE QUALITIES BECAUSE OF THE SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GURU AND THE DISCIPLE AND IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, OUR REALISATIONS COULD BE DELAYED. UNTIL WE ARE SURE, WE CAN REGARD THAT PERSON AS A MENTOR OR DISCUSSION LEADER BUT NOT AS A GURU. WE NEED TO BE CLEAR IN OUR MIND THAT THE GURU IS OVERWHELMED BY COMPASSION, RENUNCIATION AND ADORNED WITH MORAL ETHICS, LIVES A LIFE CULTIVATING EMPTINESS AND IS NEVER GRASPING.

THE 10 QUALITIES THAT A DHARMA TEACHER OUGHT TO HAVE ARE:

- THE TEACHER’S MIND STREAM SHOULD BE SUBDUED BY ETHICS
- THE TEACHER SHOULD BE STABLE CONCENTRATION
- THE TEACHER HAS THE WISDOM THAT PACIFIES SELF-GRASPING
- THE TEACHER SHOULD HAVE MORE GOOD QUALITIES THAN THE STUDENT
- HAS PERSEVERANCE
- HAS GREAT SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE
- HAVE REALISATIONS INTO EMPTINESS
- IS SKILFUL IN TEACHING
- HAS PURE AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE
- DOES NOT GET DISCOURAGED

ONCE WE SEE THE ABOVE QUALITIES, WE DEVOTE AS GURU. HOWEVER, THE STUDENT ALSO NEEDS TO HAVE QUALITIES AND THEY ARE:

- BE HONEST AND NON DISCRIMINATORY I.E. FRIENDLY TO SOME AND HOSTILE TO OTHERS
- SHOULD HAVE WISDOM TO KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG
- THEY SHOULD YEARN FOR THE TEACHINGS
- HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR THEIR GURU
- SHOULD HAVE VIRTUOUS MOTIVATION TO STUDY DHARMA

ESTABLISHING THE GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP CAN BE EITHER A FORMAL REQUEST AND ACCEPTANCE OR FROM THE HEART, REGARD AS GURU. NEXT COMES THE MEDITATION ON SEEING THE GURU AS BUDDHA HAVING THE BUDDHA'S QUALITIES. ONE DEVOTES TO THE GURU THROUGH ACTIONS OF BODY, SPEECH AND MIND UNDER THE

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GUIDANCE OF THE GURU AND DO ACCORDING TO ADVICE WHICH IS THE BUDDHA'S WORD. HAVE FAITH, DEVOTION AND CONVICTION IN THE GURU AND WHEN ONE DOES THIS, THEN ONE ONLY RECEIVES BLESSING AND BENEFIT. IF ONE REGARDS ONE'S TEACHER AS ORDINARY, THEN YOU RECEIVE ONLY ORDINARY BENEFIT; IF REGARD TEACHER AS DOG, THEN ONE GETS BENEFIT IN THE FORM OF HAVING A DOG. BUT IF ONE SEES THE GURU AS BUDDHA, THEN THAT HELP US TO IMPROVE OUR MIND AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE. THE GURU SHOULD HAVE PROPER SCRIPTURAL STUDY; THE INNER QUALITIES INCLUDE REALISATIONS, THEN LEARNING FROM THAT PERSON RECEIVES BLESSING FROM THE HEART.

NOW COMES THE MEDITATION – AS AN EXAMPLE - HOW TO DO ANALYTICAL MEDITATION ON *GURU DEVOTION?*

TRAIN THE MIND TO ONLY SEE THE QUALITIES OF THE GURU AS THAT OF THE BUDDHA'S SUCH AS THE QUALITIES OF THE 5 POWERS. ALTHOUGH IN THE SENSE OF ORDINARY APPEARANCE, ONE'S GURU MAY LOOK WORSE THAN ONESELF, FROM ONE'S OWN SIDE, ONE SHOULD PROJECT AND SEE ALL THE BUDDHA'S QUALITIES. SOMETIMES, WHEN GURU ACTS STRANGELY, WE START TO DOUBT AND CRITICISE. THE MOMENT WE HAVE NEGATIVE VIEW OF GURU, WE SHOULD THINK AND REALISE THAT IT IS A NEGATIVE REFLECTION OF ONE'S OWN MIND. OR IF GURU SHOWS ANGER, WE SHOULD THINK THAT GURU IS TEACHING ME FAULTS OF ANGER AND HOW NOT TO SHOW ANGER. IN THIS WAY, WE SHOULD REGARD EVERY ASPECT OF THE GURU'S BEHAVIOUR AS A TEACHING TO HELP US DEVELOP POSITIVE QUALITIES. AND THE MOMENT WE ATTAIN STABLE CONVICTION IN THAT, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, THAT'S THE DAY ONE GAINS REALISATION ON GURU DEVOTION.

NEXT, DO ANALYTICAL MEDITATION ON THE *PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH* – THERE ARE MANY BEINGS WHO NEVER ENCOUNTER DHARMA. THEY MEET RELIGION BUT NOT DHARMA. SO YOU SHOULD FEEL HAPPY THAT YOU HAVE THIS PRECIOUS REBIRTH TO PRACTICE DHARMA, HAVING ALL THE 8 FREEDOMS AND 10 ENDOWMENTS WHICH INCLUDE BEING BORN WITH FULL FACULTIES AND IN A WORLD WHERE THE BUDDHA HAS COME AND TAUGHT, WHERE DHARMA CONTINUES TO EXIST AND WHERE THERE ARE PRACTITIONERS OF THE DHARMA . THE CAUSE TO GAIN SUCH A PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH IS ONE'S ENGAGEMENT IN MORAL ETHICS AND THE 6 PERFECTIONS. THE RARITY OF SUCH A HUMAN REBIRTH REQUIRES US TO MAKE GOOD USE OF IT BECAUSE THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT WE CAN GAIN A PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH AGAIN. THIS THOUGHT WILL INSPIRE US TO PRACTICE DHARMA CONSISTENTLY. AT THE TIME OF DEATH, WHEN THE DISSOLUTION PROCESS (OF PHYSICAL AGGREGATES AND CONSCIOUSNESS) OCCURS, THERE IS MUCH CONFUSION AND FEAR AND NO CHANCE TO PRACTICE VIRTUE. THUS, TO OBTAIN ANOTHER GOOD REBIRTH IS DIFFICULT.

FOLLOWING THIS, ONE SHOULD THEN DO ANALYTICAL MEDITATION ON *IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH*. DEATH IS CERTAIN, TIME OF DEATH IS UNCERTAIN – CHANT THIS AGAIN AND AGAIN. IF ONE IS STILL NOT CONVINCED OF DEATH COMING AT ANY TIME, THEN RECALL THOSE FRIENDS WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY, ESPECIALLY THOSE YOUNG FRIENDS WHO SHOULD HAVE LIVED LONGER OR THE HEALTHY ONES WHO HAVE SUDDENLY DIED. EVEN ALL THE GREAT BEINGS HAVE SHOWN DEATH, SO HOW CAN WE BELIEVE THAT WE WILL NEVER DIE. WE HAVE AN INBORN SENSE OF GRASPING AT LIFE AS IF IT IS PERMANENT. WE NEVER THINK OF DEATH. EVERY SINGLE MOMENT THAT WE DO NOT REMEMBER DEATH IS IN FACT OUR GRASPING AT THE PERMANENCE OF LIFE. ALTHOUGH WE DON'T SAY IT THIS WAY, WE LIVE THIS WAY. WE PLAN FOR TOMORROW, FOR NEXT YEAR – IF YOU WANT TO REALLY PLAN FOR TOMORROW, BETTER TO PRACTICE DHARMA NOW AND NOT WAIT TILL SOME FUTURE TIME. THE GREAT

MILAREPA COMMITTED MUCH NEGATIVITY AND AFTER HE MET HIS GURU, HE REALISED THE FRAGILITY OF LIFE AND THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH AND DEVELOPED THE CONSTANT AWARENESS THAT TO ACHIEVE ENLIGHTENMENT ONE HAD TO MUST PRACTICE NOW AND BEFORE HE DIED, HE ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT. SO ONE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEATH SHOULD NOT BE ONE

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OF FEAR BUT ONE OF URGENCY THAT AS DEATH CAN COME AT ANY TIME, WE SHOULD MAKE BEST USE OF OUR TIME. AT THE TIME OF DEATH, THE LAST THOUGHT BEFORE THE ACTUAL DEATH DETERMINES THE COMPLETION OF THE THROWING KARMA. THIS MEANS THAT IF ONE HAPPENS TO HAVE A NEGATIVE EMOTION AT THE TIME OF DEATH AND IS LET'S SAY, ATTACHED TO ONE'S MONEY, THEN EVEN THOUGH ONE LIVED A LIFE OF PRACTICE, THAT STRONG ATTACHMENT CAN TRIGGER THE KARMA TO BRING US TO THE HELL REALMS.

ONE ASPECT OF DHARMA IS PREPARING OURSELVES FOR A PROPER DEATH TO CONNECT WITH NEXT LIFE. THIS LIFE HAS A MAXIMUM DURATION OF PERHAPS 100 YEARS BUT THE NEXT LIFE (EVEN IF ONE IS DESTINED TO BECOME A BUDDHA) MIGHT TAKE 3 COUNTLESS AEONS. WHAT WE NORMALLY DO IS THAT WE PREPARE FOR THIS LIFE BUT IGNORE THE FUTURE LIFE, FORGETTING THAT DEATH WILL COME AND FORCE US ONTO THE JOURNEY INTO THE FUTURE LIFE. HOW SHOULD WE THEN PREPARE FOR THE LONG JOURNEY INTO THE FUTURE LIFE? MEDIATE ON DEATH. BECAUSE WE DON'T UNDERSTAND THE PROGRESS OF IMPERMANENCE AND CHANGE, IT SEEMS LIKE ONE HAS SUDDENLY BECAME OLDER. THE LAM RIM SAYS THE MOMENT OF BIRTH STARTS, THE CYCLE OF DECAY AND DEATH BEGINS. DUE TO NO UNDERSTANDING OF IMPERMANENCE, WE GRASP AT THE PAST AND FUTURE AND THUS HAVE NO GENUINE SENSE OF INSPIRATION TO PRACTICE DHARMA BECAUSE WE THINK WE HAVE A CHANCE TO STUDY DHARMA.

OURS IS THE STORY OF AN EMPTY LIFE – WE THINK, “I WILL DO THIS WHEN I FINISH THIS JOB”. THEN 20 YEARS PASS. WE THEN THINK, “ I WILL DO THIS WHEN I HAVE THE TIME”, THEN ANOTHER 20 YEARS PASS. THE “I'LL DO THIS WHEN I RETIRE”, ANOTHER 20 YEARS PASS AND THEN DEATH COMES. BEFORE ACTUALISING THE PRACTICE, DEATH COMES, SO WE MUST PRACTICE DHARMA NOW.

HOWEVER, THIS DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO GIVE UP OUR LIFESTYLE. CONVENTIONAL LIFE CAN REMAIN AS IT IS BUT THE CHANGE IS IN OUR MINDS, OUR MENTALITY. WE NEED TO LEARN TO TRANSFORM THE MIND. “NEVER COMMIT NON-VIRTUE, CULTIVATE ONLY VIRTUE, SUBDUE ONE'S MIND, THIS IS THE TEACHING OF THE BUDDHA.” BY LIVING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS, ONE CAN TRANSFORM ONE'S ORDINARY BODY INTO A BUDDHA'S RAINBOW BODY.

THE ANALYTICAL MEDITATION OF DEATH IS TO REPEATEDLY REFLECT ON THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH, THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE TIME OF DEATH, IMPERMANENCE AND ITS MOMENTARY CHANGES. EACH MOMENT CONTAINS 64 SUB-MOMENTS AND EACH SUB-MOMENT CONTAINS ZILLIONS OF FURTHER MICRO-MOMENTS OF TIME. ALL CARRY THEIR EFFECTS OF CHANGE.

THE NEXT TOPIC TO MEDITATE ON IS REFUGE. LET'S RECAP. FIRST, WE FOUND THE RIGHT (QUALIFIED) TEACHER, THEN WE REJOICED AT OUR GOOD FORTUNATE IN HAVING THIS PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH; THEN WE FREAKED OURSELVES OUT BY DEATH/IMPERMANENCE AND COME TO THINK THAT WE NEED INSURANCE (BECAUSE ONE DOESN'T KNOW HOW FAR ONE'S OWN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE CAN TAKE CARE OF ONESELF AND AT THE TIME OF DEATH, WHEN THE DISSOLUTIONS OCCUR, ONE'S SENSES ARE NUMB AND THERE IS LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO START DOING PRACTICE). THE ACTUAL REFUGE IS NOT BUDDHA, THE ACTUAL REFUGE IS THE DHARMA TEACHING. AFTER LEARNING, CONTEMPLATING AND MEDITATING ON THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS, ONE CAN CONTROL AND DIRECT ONE'S MIND AT DEATH TIME. AT THE TIME OF CLINICAL DEATH, ALL THE GROSS FUNCTIONS CEASE BUT ONE'S SUBCONSCIOUS STILL CONTINUES AND IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL BUT WHETHER THIS CONSCIOUSNESS IS CONTROLLED BY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE IMPRINTS, WILL DEPEND ON THE LEVEL AND QUALITY OF ONE'S MEDITATION THROUGHOUT ONE'S LIFE AND AT THAT TIME. THE INSURANCE HERE IS TAKING REFUGE IN THE TRIPLE GEM. HOW TO MEDIATE ON REFUGE? IF ONE

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CALCULATES HOW WE SPEND OUR TIME, IT CAN BE DESCRIBED BY BEING OCCUPIED MOSTLY BY EITHER NEGATIVE EMOTIONS OR NUMBNESS BUT RARELY BY VIRTUE. WE MIGHT GO TO THE TEMPLE ON SUNDAY MORNINGS BUT EVEN WHEN WE DO THAT, THERE IS THE INFLUENCE OF GRASPING AT WRONG VIEWS E.G. WE THINK “IF I DON'T GO, MASTER WON'T BE HAPPY” OR “MY FRIENDS WILL THINK POORLY OF ME IF I DON'T ATTEND PUJA” AND SUCH NEGATIVE THOUGHTS. SO TO OBTAIN INSURANCE FROM THE REBIRTH IN THE LOWER REALMS WHOSE SUFFERINGS

FAR EXCEED THE HUMAN REALM, WE GO FOR REFUGE TO THE TRIPLE GEM. THROUGH UNDERSTANDING THE QUALITIES OF THE BUDDHA, DHARMA AND SANGHA – AND ESTABLISHING IRREVERSIBLE FAITH BY REGARD THE TRIPLE GEM AS THE PROTECTION FROM ONESELF GOING TO THE LOWER REALMS, THIS CREATES THE CAUSE OF HAVING FAITH IN TRIPLE GEM AND GAIN THE RESULT OF AVOIDING THE LOWER REALMS. THERE ARE REFUGE VOWS TO BE FOLLOWED BUT AS A MINIMUM PRACTICE, IF WE CANNOT BENEFIT OTHERS, AT LEAST ONE SHOULD NOT CAUSE OTHERS ANY HARM. UP TILL HERE IS THE TEACHING OF SMALL SCOPE ACCORDING TO THE LAM RIM.

NEXT COMES THE MEDITATION ON *KARMA*: THERE ARE 4 CHARACTERISTIC OF KARMA - (I) KARMA IS CERTAIN (IF WE CREATE NEGATIVE CAUSES, NEGATIVE RESULTS WILL COME; FROM POSITIVE CAUSES, POSITIVE RESULTS WILL ARISE); (II) KARMA INCREASES (III) ONE DOESN'T EXPERIENCE THE RESULT IF ONE DIDN'T CREATE THE CAUSE FOR IT AND (IV) KARMA DOESN'T DISAPPEAR ON ITS OWN ACCORD (ONE HAS TO PURIFY THE KARMA COMMITTED IN ORDER NOT TO FACE ITS RESULT).

*HOW TO PURIFY KARMA?* WE NEED TO APPLY FOR THE 4 OPPONENT POWERS – ALL KARMAS INCLUDING THE HEINOUS KARMA, CAN BE PURIFIED. THIS IN ITSELF BRINGS QUITE A GREAT DEAL OF RELIEF! SO ONE NEEDS TO MEDITATE AND PRACTICE ON THE 4 OPPONENT POWERS WHICH ARE (A) POWER OF RELIANCE ON THE TRIPLE GEM (B) POWER OF REGRET (TO BE DIFFERENTIATED FROM GUILT, WHICH IS A NEGATIVE THOUGHT). REGRET IS RECOGNISING THE MISTAKE (C) POWER OF THE REMEDY – E.G. TO PURIFY THE KARMA OF KILLING, ONE CAN DO LIBERATION OF ANIMALS OR RECITE SUTRAS OR DO VAJRASATTVA PRACTICE (A MANIFESTATION OF SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA FOR THE PURPOSES OF PURIFICATION PRACTICE); RECITE PURIFICATION MANTRAS LIKE OM VAJRASATTVA HUM 28X (D) POWER OF THE PROMISE TO REFRAINING FROM COMMITTING THE SAME MISTAKE FOR A STATED PERIOD OF TIME. BY ENGAGING IN THE 4 OPPONENT POWERS, ALL FORMS OF NEGATIVE KARMA CAN BE PURIFIED.

THEN COMES THE MEDITATION ON *SUFFERINGS OF SAMSAARA* - WE MEDITATE ON THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS. IF ONE HAS KILLED MOTHER AND FATHER, THAT KARMA WILL THROW US INTO ONE OF THE LOWER REALMS OF THE HELL REALM (THERE 16 HOT AND COLD HELLS, EACH WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE CAUSES); THE HUNGRY GHOST REALM AND THEIR GREAT SUFFERINGS (ONE REALISES THAT ONE CANNOT AFFORD TO GO THERE!); THE ANIMAL REALM (WE THINK PETS HAVE A GOOD LIFE BUT IN TRUTH, THEY HAVE CONSTANT SUFFERING OF IGNORANCE, ANXIETY, FEAR, LONELINESS, DANGER OF LARGER ANIMALS EATING SMALLER ONES). THE HIGHER REBIRTHS ALSO HAVE SUFFERING – THE HUMAN REALM EXPERIENCES CONSTANT UPS AND DOWNS, ENCOUNTERING WHAT WE DON'T WANT AND NOT GETTING WHAT WE WANT; GOD AND DEMI GOD REALMS ARE EXISTENCES WHICH HAVE NO INCENTIVE TO PRACTICE DHARMA. FOR THIS, WE CAN SEE IN MANY CASES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMFORTABLE LIVES. THEY DON'T THINK OF DHARMA. ONLY WHEN THEY ARE IN TROUBLE, THEY LOOK FOR BUDDHA, OTHERWISE, NO. ONE MONTH BEFORE THE GOD REALM BEING DIES, IT EXPERIENCES THEIR LUXURY-EXISTENCE DECLINING, THEIR RADIANCE FADES AND THIS IS DUE TO THE EXHAUSTION OF KARMA TO REMAIN AS A GOD-REALM BEING. WHEN THIS HAPPENS, THERE IS MUCH FEAR

AND ANXIETY AND THEY PERCEIVE THEIR NEXT REBIRTH EITHER IN HELL OR REBIRTH. THROUGH THIS, YOU CAN SEE HOW TERRIFYING AND UNSAFE SAMSAARA IS. THE ONLY SAFE PLACE IS LIBERATION.

WHAT IS THE METHOD TO ATTAIN NIRVANA? ONE NEEDS TO PRACTICE ETHICS/MORALITY/VOWS.

WHAT IS THE WISDOM INVOLVED? IT IS TO ELIMINATE THE CONCEPT OF THE PERMANENCE EXISTENCE OF LIFE. THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS UN-ASSOCIATED WITH MIND. PEOPLE AND THINGS EXIST AS MERELY LABELLED. WHEN I WAS IN THE WOMB, "TENZIN ZOPA" DIDN'T EXIST – ONLY WHEN I WAS BORN, I WAS GIVEN THE NAME TENZIN ZOPA. FROM THAT DAY, TENZIN ZOPA CAME INTO BEING BUT MERELY LABELLED. AS A MERELY LABELLED BEING, THAT EXISTS – I HAVE PARENTS, I HAVE A BODY. BUT PROBLEM IS, WE DON'T ANALYSE THIS WAY – WE BELIEVE THE LABEL AND THE PERSON AS THE SAME. WE SHOULD HAVE LESS AND LESS GRASPING. THEN WHEN WE DIE, WE ARE ABLE TO HAVE POSITIVE THOUGHTS AND THAT POSITIVE THOUGHT IS THE CONNECTING FACTOR TO THE NEXT LIFE.

DOES IT MEAN THAT ONLY THE LAST THOUGHT COUNTS AND NOT ALL THE KARMA THAT ONE HAS COMMITTED? NO. FOR THIS WE NEED TO STUDY THE 12 LINKS OF DEPENDENT ORIGIN – THE LAST THOUGHT CAN INFLUENCE THE COMPLETING KARMA, WHICH CAN INTERRUPT THE 12 LINKS (ORDINARILY, THE 12 LINKS WILL BE COMPLETE IN 2 OR MAXIMUM 3 LIFETIMES BUT DUE TO INTERRUPTIONS, ONE SET OF 12 LINKS CAN TAKE COUNTLESS LIVES TO COMPLETE). LET SAY I COMMIT THE CAUSE TO BE REBORN AS A HUMAN BEING AGAIN. I NEED TO FIRST PERFORM VIRTUE IN ORDER TO BE REBORN AS A HUMAN AGAIN TO ENJOY THE RESULTS OF THIS

VIRTUE. BUT THIS RELIES ON THE LAST THOUGHT BEING ABLE TO CONTINUE THIS CONTINUUM OF VIRTUE. IF THE LAST THOUGHT IS NEGATIVE, IT WILL CAUSE AN INTERRUPTION TO THE CONTINUUM OF VIRTUE. OF COURSE, THE VIRTUOUS KARMA WILL STILL RIPEN IN THE FUTURE BUT IT COULD BE DELAYED.

BUDDHA IN ONE OF HIS PAST LIVES, WAS A HELL BEING PULLING A CART. THERE WERE TWO OTHERS THERE WHO WERE UNABLE TO PULL THE CART AND THE HELL GUARD (WHO WAS A PROJECTION OF THE NEGATIVE MENTAL IMPRINTS OF ALL THE HELL-BEINGS) BEAT THEM AND BUDDHA STOPPED HIM AND OFFERED TO CARRY THE LOAD ON HIS OWN SHOULDER INSTEAD. AT THIS, HE WAS BEATEN TO DEATH BUT DUE TO HIS RIGHT INTENTION, THE ACT OF COMPASSION RIPENED HIS POSITIVE 12 LINKS OF THE PAST AND WAS SUDDENLY THROWN INTO A REBIRTH IN TUSHITA PARADISE.

ONE CAN LEARN ABOUT THE CAUSES THAT GIVE RISE TO THE SUFFERINGS OF THE VARIOUS REALMS. THROUGH THIS, ONE ASPIRES TOWARDS ENLIGHTENMENT. THE HINAYANA FOCUS IS ON MORALITY AND THE SELFLESSNESS OF SELF; THE MAHAYANA FOCUS IS BODHICITTA AND EMPTINESS OF SELF AND PHENOMENA.

THE MEDITATION ON THE NEXT TOPIC THAT IS PARTICULAR TO THE MAHAYANA PATH, *BODHICITTA*. FOR THIS, ONE FIRST STARTS WITH EQUANIMITY – REGARDING ALL BEINGS AS EQUALLY DESERVING OF COMPASSION AND HELP. RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE ENEMIES, FRIENDS AND STRANGERS – THESE ALL FLOW FROM OUR PARTIAL MIND. WE CAN SEE THE UNCERTAINTY OF THESE LABELS BECAUSE RELATIONSHIPS CHANGE. WE ARE LOOKING AT JUST THIS ONE LIFETIME. IF WE GO IN PREVIOUS LIVES – ALL BEINGS HAVE BEEN OUR MOTHERS, WHO HAVE BEEN CLOSEST TO US, OFFERING US PROTECTION AND HELP, NOT JUST ONCE BUT MANY TIMES AND THE REASON WE CANNOT SEE THIS DUE TO THE INTERRUPTION OF RECOLLECTION CAUSE BY REBIRTHS. SO WE NEED TO REMEMBER THE KINDNESS OF ALL BEINGS, AS THEY HAVE BEEN OUR MOTHER BEFORE. WHEN WE ARE BORN, WE FEEL LIKE WE ARE BEING SQUEEZED BETWEEN 2 MOUNTAINS. NOWADAYS THERE IS CAESARIAN BIRTH. KARMICALLY, IT IS UNNATURAL AND THUS BRINGS EQUAL PAIN AND SUFFERING TO CHILD AND MOTHER. DUE TO THE SUFFERINGS OF BIRTH AND DEATH, WE FORGET

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ABOUT THE PARTICULAR SUFFERINGS OF LIFE. BY BEING CONVINCED IN THIS TEACHING, ONE SHOULD ELIMINATE PARTIAL THOUGHT AND DEVELOP LOVE AND COMPASSION EQUALLY TO ALL. TRY THIS EQUANIMITY MEDITATION WITH A VERY DIFFICULT PERSON. IF CANNOT MANAGE THIS, THEN APPLY IT TO A MILDLY IRRITATING PERSON. BY ENGAGING IN SUCH MEDITATION, THE HEART BECOMES SOFT AND GRADUALLY YOU WILL FIND THAT EVEN ENEMIES WILL BENEFIT YOU. WE NEED TO DO THIS PRACTICE TO EVERY SINGLE LIVING BEING. WHEN ONE IS SUCCESSFUL IN EQUANIMITY PRACTICE, THEN BODHICITTA PRACTICE BECOMES POSSIBLE, THE 6 PERFECTIONS TRAINING ALSO BECOME POSSIBLE AND ALL MAHAYANA PRACTICES BECOME POSSIBLE.

**TRAINING TO ATTAIN BODHICITTA** – THERE ARE 2 METHODS - ARYA ASANGA'S TRADITION (THE 7 FOLD CAUSE AND EFFECT) AND SHANTIDEVA'S TRADITION (EXCHANGING OF SELF FOR OTHERS).

ASANGA'S METHOD OF THE 7 FOLD CAUSE AND EFFECT – STARTING WITH NO: 7, THIS IS THE RESULT I.E. BODHICITTA (THE ALTRUISTIC THOUGHT TO ACTUALISE FULL ENLIGHTENMENT FOR THE SAKE OF ALL LIVING BEINGS FOR THEM TO ALSO ATTAIN ENLIGHTENMENT) ; THE 6 CAUSES ARE TO SEEING ALL BEINGS AS HAVING BEEN ONE'S MOTHER, REMEMBERING THEIR KINDNESS, REPAYING KINDNESS, SPECIAL LOVE (CHERISHING OTHERS), COMPASSION, GREAT COMPASSION/ALTRUISM (TAKING ON THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LIBERATE BEINGS). THE FIRST ONE (SEEING ALL BEINGS AS ONE'S KIND MOTHER) IS THE MOST DIFFICULT.

COMPASSION IS COMMON TO ALL 3 YANAS. GREAT COMPASSION HOWEVER, IS PRACTICED BY MAHAYANIC PRACTITIONERS, NAMELY TAKING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LIBERATE ALL BEINGS FROM SUFFERING.

SHANTIDEVA'S METHOD IS EXCHANGING SELF FOR OTHERS. FROM BEGINNINGLESS TIME, ONE HAS INDULGED IN THE SELF CHERISHING MIND. WHY IS IT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN ENLIGHTENMENT BEINGS BUT WHY AM I STILL HERE? BECAUSE THEY CHERISHED OTHERS EQUALLY AND CHERISHED OTHERS MORE THAN THEMSELVES. THEY OVERCAME SELF IMPORTANCE AND ENHANCES THE IMPORTANCE OF OTHERS. WE NEED TO DECONSTRUCT SELF CHERISHING AND CONSTRUCT CHERISHING OTHERS. IF WE CAN DO THIS, WE WILL ACHIEVE BODHICITTA. THERE ARE DIFFERENT LABELS AND ASPECTS – CONTRIVED BODHICITTA (WE START WITH THIS) AND SPONTANEOUS BODHICITTA (ACTUAL, CONTINUOUS BODHICITTA). WHEN WE FIRST ENTER THE MAHAYANIC PATH, THREE THINGS OCCUR NAMELY WE ATTAIN SPONTANEOUS BODHICITTA, MAHAYANIC RENUNCIATION AND ENTERING INTO MAHAYANIC 1<sup>ST</sup> PATH OF ACCUMULATION. THERE ARE 5 PATHS:

1<sup>ST</sup> PATH – PATH OF ACCUMULATION – IN SUTRAYANA, ONE NEEDS 3 COUNTLESS AEONS MERIT TO BECOME A BUDDHA; IN TANTRAYANA/VJRAYANA ONE REQUIRES 3 COUNTLESS AEONS MERIT BUT NOT THAT PERIOD OF TIME TO ATTAIN IT.

2<sup>ND</sup> PATH OF PREPARATION – HERE THERE IS THE INTENSE ENGAGEMENT OF MEDIATING ON EMPTINESS

3<sup>RD</sup> PATH OF SEEING – HERE ONE REALISES EMPTINESS DIRECTLY; REALISES THE REALITY OF EXISTENCE AND FROM THIS POINT, THE 10 GROUNDS (OF PRACTICE) BEGIN. THE 10 GROUNDS ARE THE APPLICATIONS/ANTIDOTES TO REMOVE DEFILEMENTS (9 DEFILEMENTS OF WHICH THE FIRST DEFILEMENT IS SPLIT INTO 2 WHICH IS WHY THERE ARE 10 ANTIDOTES). WHEN IS ABLE TO OVERCOME ALL THESE, ONE IS FILLED WITH THE DIRECT REALISATION AND MINDFULNESS OF EMPTINESS OF PHENOMENA.

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4<sup>TH</sup> PATH OF MEDITATION - THIS IS WHEN ONE IS AT THE 8<sup>TH</sup> GROUND TO THE 10<sup>TH</sup> GROUND DURING THE PATH OF MEDITATION. WHEN YOU REACH THE 10<sup>TH</sup> GROUND, THERE ARE 2 LEVELS, NAMELY THE STAGE OF TOTAL VIGILANCE THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF ANTIDOTES AND THE LAST STAGE RELATES TO THE ELIMINATION OF THE MOST SUBTLE DEFILEMENTS WHICH THEN LEADS TO THE 5<sup>TH</sup> PATH OF NO MORE LEARNING WHICH IS THE ATTAINMENT OF CESSATION, WHICH IS THE OMNISCIENT MIND OR BUDDHAHOOD.

DURING THE 10 GROUNDS, WE ENGAGE IN THE 6 PERFECTIONS. THE 6<sup>TH</sup> PERFECTION IS ON THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS. WHEN ONE IS FULLY MATURED WITH THE CONDITIONAL FACTORS TO FIGHT WITH THE DELUSION, THEN WHEN ONE APPLIES THE FINAL WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS, IT BECOMES VERY FORCEFUL.

**6 PERFECTIONS** – TO BE CULTIVATED WHILST ON THE BODHISATTVA PATH

GENEROSITY: OF MATERIAL POSSESSIONS, PROTECTION AND DHARMA. GENEROSITY MEANS THE TOTAL GIVING WITHOUT EXPECTATION OF RETURN OR CONDITIONS (THEY MUST USE OUR OFFERINGS THE WAY WE WANT. HENCE, BEFORE WE GIVE WE GRASP; AFTER WE GIVE WE GRASP). IN LHASA TIBET, THERE IS THE JOWO (BUDDHA STATUE IN MAIN TEMPLE IN LHASA) BUTTER WAS OFFERED BY THE BENEFACTOR TO THE JOWO, THE TEMPLE-KEEPER HOWEVER USED THE BUTTER TO MAKE BUTTER TEA TO DRINK. THE BENEFACTOR GOT VERY ANGRY AND CONFRONTED THE TEMPLE-KEEPER WHO ADVISED HIM, “THE BENEFIT FROM YOUR OFFERING WILL BE RECEIVE WHEN YOU TOTALLY LET GO”. SO IT DIDN’T MATTER WHETHER THE BUTTER WAS USED A A LIGHT OFFERING OR AS BUTTER TEA. THE POINT OF GIVING WAS TO LET GO OF GRASPING AT THE OFFERING.

MORALITY: ETHICS AND KEEPING VOWS. THERE IS BLESSING FROM RECEIVING VOWS.

PATIENCE: THIS IS ABOUT NON GRASPING.

JOYOUS PERSEVERANCE = JOYOUS EFFORT. THERE IS NO FORCING IN BUDDHISM. IF A TEACHING IS BENEFICIAL FOR YOU, ACCEPT IT; IF NOT THEN LEAVE IT ASIDE FOR THE TIME BEING. IF WE WANT TO GO FOR CLASS OR RETREATS, WE CANNOT FORCE OURSELVES. THERE ARE TEACHINGS ON HOW TO LISTEN TO DHARMA. ONE SHOULD FEEL JOY AT LEARNING THE DHARMA AND LISTENING TO IT WITH A QUESTIONING MIND (WE SHOULD CHECK DHARMA THE WAY A GOLDSMITH CHECKS THE QUALITY OF GOLD). WE NEED TO LEARN ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF DHARMA PRACTICE, THEN THERE WILL BE JOY IN US TO PRACTICE.

CONCENTRATION – WE ALREADY COVERED THIS ON SAMATHA SECTION.

WISDOM - THE WISDOM REALISING THE EMPTINESS OF SELF : WE TEND TO BELIEVE THAT I EXISTS AS AN ABSOLUTE ENTITY EXISTING HERE. BUT HOW CAN THE SUBJECT (THE PERSON MEDITATING) AND OBJECT (OF MEDITATION) BE ONE. AND IF I AM ALL THE PARTS OF MY BODY, THERE WILL BE MULTIPLE “ME” WHICH DOESN’T MAKE ANY SENSE. THE IDENTITY OF ME HAS ALREADY DISAPPEARED. THEN WE THINK WE ARE OUR CONSCIOUSNESS – LET’S CHECK - WE HAVE ZILLION OF THOUGHTS AND MANY MINDS – SO WHICH ONE IS “ME”? THE CONCLUSION IS THAT SELF IS TOTALLY EMPTY. THIS GIVES RISE TO A SENSE OF LOSS OF ENTITY. THERE IS AN EXISTENT SELF AND NON-EXISTENT SELF. THE NON-EXISTENT SELF IS THAT WHICH IS THINKS ITSELF PERMANENT, THAT THINKS ITS EXISTENCE IS NOT RELIANT UPON CAUSES AND CONDITIONS. SUCH VIEWS ARE BORN OUT OF IGNORANCE. THIS IS THE MERELY-LABELLED I ON THE BASE OF AGGREGATES. THE “I” THAT DOES EXIST IS THE DEPENDENTLY

EXISTING I. IT DOES NOT EXIST INDEPENDENTLY. BY FAMILIARISING AND MEDITATING FREQUENTLY ON THIS, WHEN DEATH COMES ONE WILL NOT FEEL PAIN.

NOW THE EMPTINESS OF PHENOMENA: THIS IS THE ANTIDOTE TO ALL SUBTLE DEFILEMENTS. PHENOMENA REFERS TO EXTERNAL OBJECTS AND ONE'S AGGREGATES. THESE ALSO EXIST AS BEING MERELY-LABELLED. THE LABEL HAS TO BE ON A VALID BASE, OTHERWISE THERE IS THE FAULT OF NOT ACCEPTING THE CONVENTIONAL TRUTH. CONVENTIONAL TRUTH REFERS TO CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE COMMONLY AGREED UPON; ULTIMATE TRUTH IS ABOUT SELF AND PHENOMENA BEING MERELY LABELLED.

WHENEVER ONE DOES MEDITATION, ONE MUST DEDICATE THE EFFORTS AT HAVING DONE MEDITATION BE THE COMPLETE CAUSE FOR EVERY SINGLE BEING TO ACTUALISE ENLIGHTENMENT. THEN HAVE A SENSE OF JOY AND THINK "MAY I AND OTHERS ALWAYS HAVE THE POSITIVE KARMA TO BENEFIT OTHERS".

### **TONG LEN - TAKING AND GIVING PRACTICE**

TONG LEN LITERALLY MEANS GIVING ONE'S RESOURCES TO OTHERS TO HELP THEM AND TAKING ON OTHERS' MISFORTUNES. THIS IS NOT AN EASY PRACTICE. SINCE DOING IT LITERALLY IS DIFFICULT, WE TAME OUR MIND BY DOING IT MENTALLY. THROUGH THE CULTIVATION OF GIVING OUR VIRTUES AND PRAYERS TO OTHER SUFFERING BEINGS, THAT THOUGHT ACTS LIKE A RADIO-FREQUENCY AND WILL BRING BENEFIT TO THAT PERSON. THROUGH ONE'S VISUALISATION DURING TONG LEN MEDITATION, ONE TAKES ON ALL OTHERS SUFFERINGS AND OFFERS TO THEM, ALL OF ONE'S GOODNESS. WHEN ONE ACHIEVES ARYA BODHISATTVA LEVELS, ONE CAN HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE LEVEL OF OTHERS' SUFFERINGS BUT FOR US, IN THE MEANTIME, THIS PRACTICE IS TO DEVELOP ONE'S COURAGE OF HEART.

TONG LEN USES ONE'S IN AND OUT BREATH – WHEN WE INHALE, WE TAKE ON ALL THE SUFFERINGS OF OTHERS AND WHEN THESE "SUFFERINGS" GO INTO US, THE SUFFERING STRIKES AT THE EGO AND WITH OUR OUT BREATH, WHATEVER MERIT OR POSITIVE ENERGY IS SHARED AND TRANSMITTED WITH SENTIENT BEINGS.

TO ENHANCE THIS PRACTICE, WE INVOKE EMPTINESS. WHATEVER SUFFERINGS OF OTHERS ARE BROUGHT UPON ONESELF AS BLACK SMOKE AND APPLY IT IN THE MANNER OF SEEKING THE "I " I.E. THERE IS NO "I" TO CLING TO AND SIMILARLY APPLY THIS TO THE SICK PERSON AND AT THE END OF THE SESSION, TRANSFER THE MERIT OF THIS PRACTICE TO THAT PERSON.

**Q** – AS A BEGINNER, WE MAY HAVE SOME CONCERN ABOUT WHETHER WE WILL SOMEHOW CONTRACT THE DISEASE.

**ANSWER:** FIRSTLY, IF WE DO NOT HAVE THE KARMA TO GET THE DISEASE, WE WILL NOT GET IT. HOWEVER, IF WE HAVE SUCH FEAR, THEN DO THIS – WHENEVER WE ARE HAVING SOME UNEASE OR DIFFICULTY – WE CAN THINK MAY WHATEVER PAIN I MAY BE HAVING BE SUFFICIENT TO CLEAR THE SUFFERING OF ALL BEINGS AND ALL THE MERITS I HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO THEM.

**Q:** CAN WE DO ANY PRACTICE THAT WILL ALLOW US TO KNOW EXACTLY WHEN AND WHERE WE WILL DIE?

**ANS:** AS LONG AS ONE IS NOT IN CONTROL OF KARMA, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHEN AND WHERE TO DIE.

THE END