

6 Preliminary Practices – 11th November 2005

By Ven Tenzin Zopa

As usual set up the correct motivation, so that could receive this as pure dharma practice to subdue the mind; not just to make our daily life more comfortable. If can have compassion to others, have realization and little upgrade could also be meaningful.

We are not gathered here to make a bigger group, to check how smart I am or you are, but to analyze ourselves how smart, qualified, how good you have been (not necessary the other party – how long you have been in dharma) how good one can convince others with smart words?

You can meditate yourself, be yourself, your own guru, even one syllabus of Buddha's teaching can become complete route to enlightenment. If dharma teachings make you have more pride or more gossipy, then immediately degenerate in mankind.

If you are the true highest one, you will think you are the lowest.

If dharma becomes to upgrade your delusions, then like fire can go into water, which is not possible.

That is why always talk about mindfulness.

The advantages in practicing dharma is closer to happiness where there is a possibility to get into virtuous life.

We always want to achieve the quickest way, but must understand skillfulness in practicing dharma.

We always hear renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness, round and round same words, but each session could have different realization you receive.

Geshe Lama Konchok used to explain 'don't think you have receive it, as long as you are not Buddha'

Valid text, just as Buddha said, I give the teaching, but you analyze and follow valid reasons. I can't go through so detail, so many things have to be summarized.

When setting up holy objects, objects that has bad imprints, e.g. black magic, demons or impure objects should always get rid off, or donate to temple or whatever.

You don't have to have a very inspiring object . Not gold Buddha in the center, and clay one on the side, not like that. Set up by rank, not by value.

Anyway the offerings, accordingly to past Buddhas, masters, pundits. When setting up, make sure they are free from the 5 negative causes:-

- 1.Flattery
- 2.Hinting
- 3.Seeking rewards for favors
- 4.pretentious behavior
- 5.Contrive means

FLATTERY means for the purpose of gain by selling holy objects. Its not like thangka offered to benefactor, where its given with the pure wish to benefit more sentient beings.

HINTING , where the motivation is to gain favors from the other party. For example you said to the benefactor that he has been so kind to sponsor you to retreat last year, and this year you will be going also! Event the benefactor is willing to pay for you again, its negative in hinting.

SEEKING REWARDS FOR FAVORS

PRETENTIOUS BEHAVIOR is the example when a teacher in monastery sends a student home and tells the parents he is no good and hoping the parents will make offering to keep the student in school. Whatever gained by the teacher is negative.

CONTRIVE MEANS where an ordained person acts as so holy or advance in dharma practice to induce people to make offering, then its negative.

One should make offering with a pure mind, sincerely and what one can afford, not by cheating or like any of the above 5 causes. Of course best way to accumulate merit is by making offerings, but must be pure offering.

For extensive offering, best is to make water offering. Again it is not the object that you are offering but the MOTIVATION and your visualization. Like offering a cup of water but in the aspect of nectar.

Therefore, one must learn to create and transform the cup of water into nectar.

In Tantra, one chants OM AH HUM and transforms the offering into nectar. Nectar is totally delicious and even if eat a lot you won't get fat! Even one drip of it, you can feel the bliss and cure numberless illnesses.

Thus, base on the understanding of emptiness and do it the best way to transform into infinite offerings.

Our motivation is very vast. We should not think anything is small – mind small, container also small! There is no need to get the best crystals or gold but just what is the best you can afford, and offer what is the best you like, not something you do not like! Otherwise, it turns into 8 worldly concerns, which is not dharma. So it is not whether it is the best or most beautiful, but what is the best you can offer in your mind!

The facts that one makes offering that correspond with the body, speech and mind. Think but no action, is not enough. Direct effort is to purify numberless negativeness accumulated since past life times. Direct result is happiness and more glorious effort.

There is a manner on how the offerings are made. As the custom is from Buddha's time, similar to that of Brahma caste and custom.

FIRST, one must be properly attired. Dressed properly as if to receive a king. Buddha is omniscient, watching us all the time. So when come to practice, especially be serious. Don't just apply make up only for going out but not when making offering to Buddha. Not like that.

Pour the water slowly first, very thin and tiny drops. If made sound, then disturb samadhi; already show Disrespect. When clearing the water bowls or offerings, one can do 'durb bang, trima bang' or chant the Varjasattva mantra. This can purify eons of negative karma, how much satisfaction in applying the method to purify!

One can also purify with incense, which has natural purifying substance.

One cannot arrange empty bowls, as it is said to accumulate poverty instead of merits. Not to make sound when arranging and not too far in distance between the bowls as one will be far from the Guru. If fill the water too full, mind is disrespectful.

Supposed one has killed a human being, very negative karma; but slightest fault in this becomes biggest negative fault.

If one does not recite Om Ah Hum then the water is polluted by billions of demons and stability of the mind is disturbed and demons will possess the offerings. Therefore unstable mind is attributed by doing wrong water bowl offering. So, we must be very careful when making offering.

Every puja has different offering and different aspect of torma offering.

Question: what if ants come to the altar?

Answer: cannot kill. In India people put chalk around so that the ants avoid coming near and cannot spray.

Like Milerapa; he had no best offering for his Guru, the only offering is his pure practice! Which is the best one can offer.

So, one way is to accumulate merit, the other is through rejoicing. One can offer numberless lives in the world, waterfalls, rivers, ocean, falls turn into nectar, flowers – all offer to Buddha! Even good smell, like fragrance, perfume.

In S'pore 7 to 8 years back during X'mas time. Rinpoche (LZR) and I happened to pass by Orchard Road and saw 100s and 1000s lights, Ven. Palzang was the director of ABC then' Rinpoche requested to go to the park he already started blessing and multiplying mantra. We stopped the car and Rinpoche came out and made offering. No need a single cent and have everything and can make offering. Therefore, so much benefit by making this type of offering lights in the streets! One can purify ignorance and gain wisdom, then can gain realization and then gain Buddhahood.

But one word of caution – you don't own the lights, then how can you offer? Talk about tantra.....so if know how to meditate, can transform the lights into offering, and you make the merits. Smart way, good way of twisting!

Whoever put the effort, everyone who has the proper motivation can accumulate merits but due to you, everyone achieved merit. So due to bodhicitta path, accumulate merit.....may it be beneficial to all! May this by myself alone be able to accumulate the complete merit to enlightenment for the benefits of all beings – this is bodhisattva path.

If no understanding of emptiness, then stealing others. By understanding voidness, one can transform the holy lights and offer to Buddha. Lights that you see are only label. Since it is mainly label therefore these lights are based on this condition, Conditionally to change....Through my positive thinking and on the basis of the light is only label, nothing exist from its own side, IS for the benefits of numberless sentient beings, to make the offering.

For Rinpoche , everywhere he goes many flowers he sees, he will make offering. It is the same for us, when we see beautiful mountains, big houses, make offering, then there is no jealousy. Transform that and rejoice. Even see a beautiful face, Om Ah Hum rejoice! And offer and dedicate for the benefit of all sentient beings. In the end, you become the most beautiful as you have no concern for self - only always rejoicing for others.

Like reciting the 8 praises in prayer, recite 3 times though mountains, rivers, flowers immediately turn into pure land. When you take a walk in and around the house, nothing disturbs you because everything becomes offerings.

If you know how to arrange your mind, everything becomes easy. LZR sees every one as a Buddha, so we should follow his example .If you practice Heruka, all the female ants you see becomes Varjayogini, and the males become Heruka. How meaningful?!

If you know how to practice everything can be transformed. How happy you are if you see everything positive. If pride is there, then it is difficult, If one regards one as beginner, then the ego is not affected too much. Since we face problems everyday, why not face it in a good way.

If you don't have the substance, have it as grand as possible to accumulate merit. Visualize.

We should treat this session as a retreat. If you treat this as a class, you already know everything. So, like retreat, everything is done perfectly. Now sit down (laughter)

HOW DO SIT PROPERLY?

What posture? What benefit?

Then set up super motivation - to gain Buddhahood.

Perfect posture - 7/8 point posture of Vairochana.

In fact in daily life, must have a place set up a cushion permanently. I remember Geshehla (Geshe Lama Konchok) have 2 different place,

have 2 beds. Whether big or small, one to sleep, the other for practice (sadhana)

After completing the first 2 preparatory, third is the cushion to sit. Draw the swastika, or cross varja i.e. To make the varja ground. One hope is to gain enlightenment that very moment or before one finished session or get up from the cushion. Normal ground is not enough it will crack! Therefore, Buddha Shakyamuni also sat on varja ground before he gained enlightenment. The purpose is to practice and gain enlightenment immediately.

On top of the cushion, put kusha grass, one bunch or one stick is OK. Put the head of the kusha grass facing you.

Of benefits of the millions/billions of grass, the purest is kusha grass. For example, it is easiest for us to get deluded - negative friends etc, or demons can pollute us. If we have this problem, go into kusha grass field. Outer pollution is purified, but not sure if karma is purified.(laughter)

Inner benefit is, the inner dukkha of polluted mind, even see Buddha unhappy, super black, darkest in our heart, like black cow; by putting kusha grass, it cleanse the pollution.

What do you gain? Single pointed concentration.

On top of kusha grass, put long life grass. The benefit of putting long life grass is, death is certain but time of death is uncertain. Therefore, we need a very long life. It has the effect of cleansing obstacles in accidental or untimely death. In short, this is to clear the karma of accidental or untimely death.

Sudden death, even by initiation can prolong? May be 20%

For what purpose do we need long life? In order to liberate oneself so as to benefit others.

So, head of long life grass facing your face. Sometimes during retreat, touching the cushion with the varja is also sufficient. If possible do not move the cushion especially during retreat. You can bless the cushion by yourself or by others. 3 forms offerings and burn some herbs, to clear the obstacles.(jit tok) or chant Om Ah Hum and touch with varja or with hand if not receiving initiation.

Sitting in the varja position, right leg on top of left leg. Right palm on top of left palm and 2 thumbs touch together and place at 4 inches below the naval.

Spine straight, and eyes droop to see tip of the nose.

There is a danger....when your eyes look at the tip of your nose, you cannot relax, instead of visualizing Tara, you always look for the tip of your nose! Especially if you have a small nose (laughter) Of course you can train your concentration on any single object.

Another reason cannot close your eyes or open eyes at side is the best.

Tip of your tongue, to touch your upper pallet. This is to avoid the danger of saliva dripping or choking, the purpose is to hold back your flow of saliva.

The purpose to practice like Vorachana is to have strong imprints and the purity state and form aggregates of Buddha Vorachana.

We at present are formed by 5 aggregates and gross aggregates, which will die at time of death. From here we know why we need to accumulate bodily merit; so that at the end of life the subtle continuity of life up to Buddhahood, the body will get purer and purer. One day, we will achieve the purity of form which is Buddha Vorachana.

5 color rays are also much related to this, when a person achieved enlightenment, can see 5 rays of light which is a sign of achieving 5 dharani Buddhas.

Whoever achieve Bddhahood, will achieve the 5 color rays.

Moral ethics - the realization of moral ethics. All realized beings will never say they are realized and manifest silently so as to benefit others beings.

-End-

