

# Understanding the Importance of Motivation

As taught by Ven. Geshe Sangey Thinley at Jam Tse Dhargyey Ling on Sunday 10th October 2014.

It is very important both in dharma practice and in all our daily life activities to set a positive motivation so that our activities produce positive results and we will be at peace and happy. If we do not check this, we will not experience peace and happiness.

The benefits of developing and practicing this positive motivation is that we will create the imprints which are useful in this and future lives.

Now that we have achieved this precious human rebirth we need to use this life to develop and grow our positive qualities and not be drawn down to negative habits or states of mind. We need to use this life to really improve ourselves.

This is not just something you listen to on Sunday and then forget about it - you need to strengthen this by cultivating an attitude daily and develop the aspiration to improve oneself. Here we are at a teaching so the point is to get the meaning and main points across to you. Then you take this on board and develop positive attitudes in the future. Before every teaching we recite the refuge and seven limb prayers. We take refuge in the Three Jewels for protection from going down the mistaken road or in the wrong direction. This wrong road leads us into the state of suffering. Then we have the Bodhicitta practice to stop us going down the lesser path which is one which focusses on the happiness of ourselves and our closer friends and family. The 'Great Vehicle' is that which is vast and encompasses the wish for happiness of ALL beings. This attitude is not to be cultivated only as an attitude it is one which should be actually engaged with – the focus of your life is to benefit others and developing this attitude to do this.

If we want to determine if our practice is correct we need to check if we have this attitude of faith and Bodhicitta. Without the two components of Refuge and Bodhicitta. Check your mind for evidence of these attitudes and the wish to benefit others. Why is this practice seen as the one to practice – many spiritual traditions have practices in common with Buddhism, like meditations and prayer, but when you look at Refuge and Bodhicitta it is unique to the Mahayana Buddhist path. In this way we can say we are practicing this Mahayana path because of these two unique elements of Refuge and Bodhicitta.

We also need to look at the practice of Morality – that is engaging in positive actions and speech and abandoning the 10 non virtues and practicing the virtuous activities which is the opposite of those 10 non virtuous activities.

Look at the meaning of this word 'cho' – to transform or develop – that is the unsubdued mind into a disciplined mind. If one turns our actions away from non virtuous action this is part of the process of changing ones mind stream towards that aspired to in the Mahayana practice.

***This is the whole point of Buddhist practice, to change or transform the mind.***

If you can see improvement in your mental activity, in this way you can see your practice is effective. If you have not subdued your mind after years of practice then there is no effect from your practice and this can raise questions about the quality of your practice.

There are many vast aspects to the practice but if we look at the “Three Principal Aspects of the Path”: Renunciation, Bodhicitta and Right View, or the development of wisdom. You need to constantly check and if there is no change you need to keep coming back to these three principle aspects.

*(Note from editor – Geshe-la will be teaching on the Three Principal Aspects of the Path during the retreat on the 22/23 November 2014)*

When we look at Renunciation – literally it is translated as ‘definite emergence’ which is the understanding of the first Noble Truth – that is all pervasive suffering. If you have the attitude of the wish to be free of this suffering, because of this suffering there is no stable happiness. So this is what is to be cultivated is the awareness of the nature of suffering in samsara and the development of the strong wish to be free of this – we need to change our attitude so if we see a person we really don’t like and need to develop the attitude like this around samsara – like an aversion to the sufferings of samsara.

***Then we need to overcome the attitude of self cherishing towards that of cherishing others.***

Ones interactions with others can become conflicted even if this is not intentional – we become rivals with others and conflict, not relaxed and we become obsessed with what is said and done by others and our compassion disappears. So by developing the attitude of focussing on the suffering of others and you become more relaxed and harmonious with this attitude of care for others and not focussed on the self. As Shantideva would say – humans want happiness and not suffering but we become caught up with our negative emotions that come from self cherishing and yet we don’t have the positive attitudes. So we want happiness but we don’t develop the causes for this – we only have the causes for suffering through negative thoughts and actions.

HH the Dalai Lama says that Bodhisattva’s are smart because they know all beings want happiness and they realise that by considering that all sentient beings are like our mother and wish them to have only happiness. Yet for others we hold some close and others at a distance and this creates the causes for suffering and problematic situations through the negative attitudes and self centred focus.

There are two perspectives like world leaders. If they could promote harmony they would solve a lot of problems which would avert wars. But this is not there. As individuals we are the same. If we could live without conflict it will avoid conflict and there would be peace throughout the world. With the variation in view of others we create the conflict we actually wish to avoid.

The attitude of renunciation is to be free of suffering – neju. It is important to understand this.

***The attitude of Bodhicitta – this is the cultivation of the wish to free all beings of sufferings. For us we need to not just focus on our own happiness but that of all others.***

The third is the perfect or correct view. Here we need to understand the way things are. The understanding of the nature of existence. This view is developed in combination with renunciation and bodhicitta. By Understanding the nature of phenomena then we develop the correct view.

These three are in order of importance. Based on the realisation that we suffer, however if we do not see our own suffering in samsara how can we see that all others are in this state and without

the understanding of the nature of existence we cannot see that this is the very view that releases us from suffering.

Without suffering there can be no renunciation. Based on this understanding of the nature of suffering we cannot develop the wish to be free of suffering –renunciation. When we want this attitude there is the wish for liberation from suffering. You have to want to know what you want to be free from. Like the person who is in prison. If you do not understand you are in prison then you cannot develop the attitude that you wish to be free from prison.

***These 'Three Principal Aspects of the Path' are the basis for attaining the fully enlightened state. The bodhicitta attitude - this is the view which achieves enlightenment. With Wisdom of the reality of existence then this is the cause which removes ones ignorance – emptiness.***

The importance of this is not just hearing but to integrate it into ones mind like milk into water, it becomes inseparable. It is so deeply integrated, become so familiar with it they become fully part of your mind. The important thing is to understand the meaning of the dharma and then engage in these practices. Understand what dharma is. You can understand how to develop the mind. At the very least we should cultivate the view that we are cultivating the attitude for continuous practice throughout this and future lives. These positive habits need to be so strong they will be continued in future lives. This should be our view.

When we look at our existence, that of the body and the mind. The body comes from the parents and that of our ancestors. When we look at the mind – it comes from somewhere, as the body comes from similar substance. The same with the mind it can only come from the same substance of mind which has a lineage which goes back to limitless time.

The importance of abandoning anger – this is the worst emotion since so much can be destroyed in one moment of anger. Like with clean clothes it takes a long time to clean but in one moment they can be stained.

Question: The cause of anger is attachment – should this not be what we should work on?

This is correct in most cases this is true - attachment can be the source of anger, but it can be more subtle and very hard to remove. It could be easier to deal with the anger first. Slowly work on removing the attachment since this is very subtle and more difficult to eradicate. The point is we have many delusions and some more subtle than others so work on the most obvious first. Work on that which is disturbing your mind the most – peel them off one by one.

Question: How does one determine the link between particular cause of attachment first and manifests as a particular type of anger? With anger how do you determine the particular root cause of that particular anger?

As we have said – the cause for the anger is defined as attachment and what ever interferes with that. When you look back through the mental continuum you may locate this cause. The way attachment arises is based on objects. If someone does something which causes problems for yourself or precious others. Or else if an enemy gets help or gets something good, because of our aversion we can get angry. So this is either attachment or aversion.

Question: Emptiness and anger – how is the view of emptiness connected to averting anger?

When we look at the view of emptiness every thing arises from causes and conditions it is imputed. It arises from this dependent origination, because it arises from imputation. So if you eradicate the basis from which anger arises and attachment. Like if something happens to a person we don't know we don't get anger. If there is not attachment there is no anger. If there is a view of dependence of arising then there is no attachment and then no anger.

(Translated by Anton Weiersmuller :Typed out by Teresa Rudgley: Edited by Kaari Schleich)