

A Guide to the Longchen Nyingtik Ngöndro Practices - Arousing Bodhicitta*

Tantric practices like the generation phase, the perfection phase and so on, practiced within the context of Bodhicitta, lead to complete Buddhahood in one lifetime. But without Bodhicitta they are no different from the methods of the tirthikas. Tirthikas also have many practices involving meditating on deities, reciting mantras and working with the channels and energies; they too behave in accordance with the principle of cause and effect. But it is solely because they do not take refuge or arouse Bodhicitta, that they are unable to achieve liberation from the realms of samsara.

Unless you first create the proper foundation with the refuge and Bodhicitta, however intensively you might seem to be studying, reflecting and meditating, ultimately it makes no sense at all. Therefore, never undervalue the refuge and Bodhicitta practices, assuming that they are inferior or just for beginners. Complete them in full, within the framework of preparation, main practice and conclusion that applies to any path. It is most important for everyone, whether good or bad, high level or lower level practitioners to concentrate their sincerest efforts on these practices.

The result of study, reflection and meditation should be a steady and real Bodhicitta , together with a steady and real diminution of self-grasping and negative emotions. This instruction on how to arouse Bodhicitta is the quintessence of all Dharma teachings and the essential element of all paths. Bodhicitta is the indispensable practise to have. Without Bodhicitta one is not practising Mahayana Buddhism or the Great Perfection Do not to be content just with hearing and understanding it. Put it into practice from the very depth of your heart.

The practice of arousing Bodhicitta should be carried out in meditation.

Each session of the meditation practice includes three stages, the preliminaries, the main practice and the conclusion.

*A large extent of the description of the practises has been obtained directly from the excellent writings in "The words of my perfect teacher" by Patrul Rinpoche.

1 The Preliminaries

The preliminaries for each session are further divided into two parts, namely, the preparation for the preliminaries and the actual practice of the preliminaries. Preparation for the preliminaries (see as before).

The actual practice of the preliminaries: This includes the three sections of key points relating to body, speech and mind as well as the four thoughts that turn the mind from samsara. Pray to your root teacher that you may attain the four empowerments. Begin with the key points relating to body, speech and mind (see as before): First, the key point relating to body-The Seven-Point Posture of Vairochana, then the key point relating to speech - expelling the impure air (according to The Dzogchen Preliminary Practice of Longchen Nyingtikin at Yachen Monastery), and finally the key point of mind - generating Bodhichitta. Next is the four thoughts that turn the mind from samsara: Visualise and contemplate the "Precious human birth with its freedoms and endowments", "Impermanence of life", "The sufferings and defects of samsara" and "The infallibility of the law of cause-and-effect" to give rise to true renunciation and the wish to seek liberation. Pray to your root teacher and visualise that you attain the four empowerments (see as before).

You may now begin reciting the "The Excellent Path to Omniscience: The Dzogchen Preliminary Practice of Longchen Nyingtik". Start from the very beginning until you reach "3. The Generation of Bodhicitta", and contemplate the meaning of this teaching while reciting.

2 The Main Practice

Clearly visualise the field of merit (Figure 1). With all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other deities in the sky before you, and think like this: "Of all the countless living creatures throughout the vast reaches of the universe, there is not one who has not been my parent in the course of our succession of lives without beginning. I can be certain that, as my parents, they have all looked after me with every possible tenderness, given me the very best of their own food and clothing and nurtured me with all their love, just as my present parents have done. Now all these kind parents are floundering in the waves of samsara's great ocean of suffering. They have been plunged into the deepest darkness of confusion. They have no idea of the true path to be practiced, nor of the false path to be avoided. They have no authentic spiritual friend to guide them. They have no refuge or protection, no leader or companion, no hope and nobody to turn to, as lost as a blind man wandering friendless in the middle of a deserted plain. My old mothers, how could I ever liberate myself alone and leave you all behind here in samsara? For the sake of all beings, I shall awaken the sublime Bodhicitta . Learning to emulate the mighty deeds of the Bodhisattvas of the past, I shall make whatever efforts are necessary, till there is not one being left in samsara!" With this attitude, recite the following verse in "The Excellent Path to Omniscience: The Dzogchen Preliminary Practice of Longchen Nyingtik" as many times as possible:

ho natsoknangwachudédzünrikyi

Ho! Mesmerised by the sheer variety of perceptions, which are like the illusory
reflections of the moon in water,

khoralugugyü du khyampédro

Beings wander endlessly astray in saṃsara's vicious cycle.

rangrigösalyingsungalsöchir

In order that they may find comfort and ease in the luminosity and all-pervading
space of the true nature of their minds,

tseméshyiyang né semkyé do

I generate the immeasurable love, compassion, joy and equanimity of the awakened
mind, the heart of Bodhicitta .

Recite this as many times as possible in each session. Until you have recited it at least one hundred thousand times.



Figure 1: Refuge Field

3 The Conclusion

When it is time to conclude the session, visualise that innumerable rays of light stream out from the lineage teachers and Buddhas of ten directions in the refuge field. The rays dissolve into the heart centre of your root Guru, and the teacher then emanates innumerable rays of light, which becomes a blue energy drop of light; this energy drop of blue light slowly flowing down from the crown of your head to your heart centre. Rest as long as you can in this state that you and your root Guru are inseparable. Then recite the verse of aspiration: "May Bodhicitta, precious and sublime, Arise where it has not yet come to be; And where it has arisen may it never fail, But grow and flourish ever more and more". In the end, finish reciting the rest of the "The Excellent Path to Omniscience: The Dzogchen Preliminary Practice of Longchen Nyingtik" following the Bodhicitta Practice. Dedicate the merits of this session, and make aspirations with pure intentions for the infinity of beings.

At the close of the session, examine your mind and see if you have fulfilled our previous aspirations. If you have, and positive discursive thoughts arise in you, which makes you overwhelmingly happy, at this moment you should overcome this thinking by reminding yourself: Is it really good to cheer over such a small merit? I'll see what's going to happen to me in my next session. Try to eliminate your pride in this way; but if you fail to live up to your aspirations made before this session of practice, you become distracted and feeling disappointed and frustrated, believing that you won't achieve anything, when this happens you should instead cheer yourself up and encourage yourself: What is there to be so disappointed about? If I'm not confused in the very beginning, then would I not be a Buddha by now? I've already become distracted in this session, I swear over my death that I won't be lost under the influence of confusion.

In all situations during sessions, when you eat, sleep, walk or sit, remember the deities of the refuge constantly. When you walk, visualise the deities in space above your right shoulder and imagine that you are circumambulating them; when you sit, visualise the them above your head and pray to them; when you eat, visualise the deities in your throat and offer them the first mouthful or sip of what you eat or drink; when you sleep, visualise the deities in your heart. This practice is essential to dissolve delusions (dreams) into clear light. Whatever you are doing, do not part from a clear mental image of the refuge deities. Entrust yourself with total confidence to the Three Jewels and devote yourself entirely to taking refuge.

A proper session of the Bodhicitta Practice should be conducted as above in this lineage. It is very important that for every session, except for the unfinished ones, be sure to apply the three supreme methods- the preliminaries, the main practice and the conclusion to it.