

The Continual Practice of Right View

Before, during, and after meditation

When we practice any meditation method, there are always either the realization of truth, or some degree of a mistaken conception in it. The best possible way of practicing, of course, would be to have no wrong view from the very beginning, then during the practice itself, and at its conclusion, and between sessions. This is not easy to do, especially when starting out. It should be known why and how this can be done, though, and so I've assembled these reasonings and reflections from Traditional and modern sources and added a few comments, for my own sake, and for the sake of all those who would realize freedom and peace, and have the best gift to offer all beings.

I've divided how this can be understood, and how the practice of right view can be applied into *three parts*, what comes before meditation, sometimes thought of as giving rise to our motivation; then the actual session of meditation itself, and finally the concluding practices, which includes the dedication of merit, and how we go about living our daily lives. All these three periods then can be the continuous practice of wisdom.

Part I. If sentient beings don't exist as we believe...

In Buddhism, the cause of human suffering is a self grasping ignorance that is habitual and pervasive. When this is seen through, or seen for what it is, we experience ourselves and others and our world differently. Grasping at a self unconsciously cuts us off from our ancestors, our teachers, from one another and from our natural world. Removing this false view, we awaken to our connectedness, and inner treasures, joy, compassion, and peace. We enter into a dynamic, creative involvement with all our family and world.

This is the realization that brings an end to samsara, the potentially endless wandering in states of suffering, born of ignorance of our true nature, the nature of everyone else, and this world. This is the knowledge that enables us to help others in provisional ways, becoming sensitive to their needs, with energy and awareness, and it is the means of our being able to help in ultimate ways, by our teaching and example, being a catalyst for their own realization of truth.

How then can we make our way to freedom and to being able to help others? What is the method? There is learning involved, surely, and reflection, questioning, quiet meditation, refining the mind, and working our way through difficult points by ourselves, and with the help of our teachers.

We can begin here: It's taught that the way ordinary people conceive of themselves and others is not the truth. It is fragmentary at best. We think of ourselves as permanent selves, independent, and unitary, as in - of a single nature. This is wrong view, continually appearing to untrained minds. How to proceed?

From Metta and Wisdom:

The freedom from problems, and the attainment of the highest happiness is naturally what all wish for ourselves, and those we care for, and so, of course the question, or sticking point presents itself: how can we wish happiness for ourselves or another if they don't exist as we imagine?

When this question comes up, it's something of a landmark, I think. It means we're trying to integrate these two aspects of the path, of love and wisdom, and something doesn't seem to fit. But this only means that we haven't yet taken the wisdom side far enough. Resolving this question is of central importance in Mahayana Buddhism, with its vow to help all beings to freedom and ease.

What our senses and concepts present to us, and what we then fixate on, is not what is actually there. We can learn to see through our imaginings, and in fact, out of compassion, this is something we need to learn to do. The way we can have both wisdom and compassion present in our mind is explained by the Eighth century saint, Shantideva, in his *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, where he asks,

'If no beings exist [in ultimate reality], toward whom should we have compassion?'

and he answers:

'To attain the result [of buddhahood, which is to be achieved only through the awakening of great compassion], one should direct one's compassion toward whatever it is that unenlightened beings call 'beings'.'

The modern day Tibetan teacher, Deshung Rinpoche, also taught on this same subject, when he said:

'On the conventional level of reality, beings do not exist as they are perceived by other unenlightened beings. The bodhisattva realizes that, in ultimate reality, there are no beings who exist as unenlightened beings think, but he directs his mind toward those beings as they perceive themselves.'

'On the ultimate level, he sees no beings, but he realizes that on the conventional level, beings think they exist and do experience suffering. Out of objectless compassion, therefore, he directs his mind toward them.'

Integrating this insight

The insight that is gained through deep practice is different from intellectual understanding alone, and that has to be fully integrated into our lives and all our interactions. We do this by continued learning and reflection, and by continually cultivating our understanding, both in meditation time and during our daily lives.

Part II. During practice itself

'The Buddha's activities are magical displays that dispel the nightmare visions of sentient beings', said Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche.

Freda Bedi said, *'Mahayana is the philosophy, Vajrayana is the practice'*.

We can represent *our motivation and Right View* to our minds symbolically in practices that use visualization.

The following is adapted from a teaching by Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche:

(In Vajrayana) We aspire to a nonconceptually performed practice, free from grasping or clinging. This means that when we practice or meditate, we should not relate to our visualization as if it were a solid object.

Our visualization must be experienced as a dynamic display of the true nature, like a transcendent wisdom rainbow body. We must understand that the visualization is totally empty of inherent existence, yet totally full of dynamic energies of love, compassion, and wisdom.

Here is where we can use meditation to integrate our understanding. We train in seeing the world we live in as translucent, made of light, and holy, and that we are upheld by countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Saints and Sages, ancestors, and the sacred powers of the earth, sky, water, and fire. In this way, the tantras affirm that divine help is always available in abundance. Visualization in this way can be the expression of Right View.

We can represent the way things are by the practice of seeing ourselves and others and this world as transparent like a rainbow, with light shining through, appearing and yet ungraspable. What's more, when we realize our inherent worth and the preciousness of ourselves and others and this

world, we can intentionally visualize all this as being divine in nature, poetically adorned with jewels, exalted, and uplifting to behold in every way.

Part III. Dedicating the merit of formal practice and carrying Right View into our daily lives

Khenpo Choga has said:

'The strongest way to dedicate merit is called 'a dedication that does not conceptualize the three factors'. This dedication is done while recognizing the buddha nature. In that recognition there is no subject who dedicates the merit, no merit to be dedicated and no object who receives the merit. A mind that has truly realized the buddha nature actually does pervade the totality of space so the dedication of such a mind actually reaches all beings in all universes. This is the most powerful form of dedication.'

In the words of the Avatamsaka Sutra:

*To all internal and external worlds
Bodhisattvas have no attachment at all,
Yet do not abandon works beneficial to sentient beings;
The great ones cultivate this kind of knowledge.*

*In all lands in the ten directions
They do not depend or dwell on anything;
They do not grasp things, such as livelihood,
And do not arbitrarily create distinctions.*

*They engage with all sentient beings
In all worlds in the ten directions;
Observing their essential nature,
They practice dedication reaching everywhere.*

May all beings have happiness, and the causes of happiness.

May they all enjoy and abundance of well being and peace.

How else can we continue the practice of wisdom in our daily lives?

Unless we are on retreat, most of the time we are not engaged in study or formal meditation, so it's of vital importance that we find ways to continue through our days whatever insights we have gained from our study and contemplation. If we're only wise when we're sitting or walking then the experience is still only a precious seed that needs mindfulness to flower into realization, which is stable, and with us at all times.

Integrating Wisdom begins with our understanding and insight. By our study and practice, quiet meditation, and our own investigations and analysis, we can then tell when ignorance / wrong view or Transcendent Intelligence is functioning in our daily life. This is like telling the difference between being asleep or day dreaming, and believing in the reality of our dreams, or waking up, and knowing they were just thoughts, just dreams.

Khenpo Karthar taught:

'There is nothing wrong with appearances. They are not in themselves an obstacle. It is our confusion about them that is the obstacle. Because of our confused habit of fixating on appearances as being true and real, we cling to them and to our concepts about them and experience suffering. When we realize at the moment they arise that these appearances have no true existence, then appearances will never be a problem or obstacle for us again.'

To continue this practice, there are phrases we can keep in mind throughout the day. For example,

The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation concludes with

*Realizing the nature of appearances,
I will liberate my mind from the bondage of attachment*

And the Seven Point Mind Training Teachings has the instruction:

Between sessions, be a child of illusion...

Geshe Rabten said:

'When we are out of formal meditation on emptiness and again have to experience our external environment, we should regard the mistaken view we have of it, which will still continue to arise, as merely the illusory creation of the ignorant propensities in our mind. Since we have seen previously in the meditational period that the object of such a mistaken view is empty of independent existence, we should regard this deceptive view of things as completely false, just as the conjurer regards his illusory creations... This will help to diminish the force of the ignorance that clings to the independent existence of all phenomena. Thus, meditation and post-meditation sessions will be mutually beneficial.'

This is as important as formal practice itself.

The thought 'this is my karmic perception...'

In preparation for dream yoga, students are encouraged to view their experience with the thought, *this is my karmic perception*. Hard as it may be to believe, we can see how this is true when we engage some practice that changes our mind, and our experience. Usually we don't regard our own mind as contributing anything at all to the way we experience things, but carrying this thought with us, and experimenting with it, shows us the nature of our thoughts and experience. It helps us to awaken, see through our projections, and touch reality.

Lama Yeshe prayed:

May all sentient beings discover that all the appearances of their ego are projections of their mind. Whatever self-existent thoughts, whatever concrete concepts of

*objects, whatever fears they have, may they discover them to be mental projections.
and also may the nature of mind be recognized as non-dual.*

This completes a description of how to practice Buddhist Wisdom teachings in a cycle of three periods of time, before, during, and after meditation, supportive of each other.

*May all beings realize the nature of mind,
liberating wisdom, uprooting suffering,
May that knowledge not decline,
and may it be integrated throughout all their lives*