

Meditation on Compassion

Prepared by Jon Landaw

Preparation:

Before getting to the heart of this morning's talk, let's spend a few minutes placing both our body and our mind in an open and receptive state.

As far as the body is concerned, whether we are on a cushion on the floor or on a chair, try to sit in as comfortably upright a posture as possible. Think that we are like a tall, straight redwood tree, rooted in the earth yet reaching up to the sun. Remain relaxed and well grounded, yet upright and alert.

Then take a series of cleansing breaths. That is, breathe in slowly, deeply, and comfortably through the nostrils, hold it for a little while (but not until it becomes uncomfortable), and then gently expel the out-breath. As we are breathing in deeply and slowly through the nostrils, feel that the air we are inhaling is vibrant, permeated by a white light energy that is in the nature of clarity, loving-compassion, and all the other qualities of enlightenment. This energy enters deeply into us, permeates our entire being, and begins to loosen or dissolve any blockages it may encounter. Any feelings of tightness or restriction, any sleepiness or confusion, any residue of anger, attachment or the other delusions that may be interfering with the clear, unimpeded flow of energy within us is gently dissolved by this radiant white light energy. These interferences are in the form of dark fog or smoke, and as we exhale, slowly and thoroughly, we let go of these interferences completely, gently expelling them with the out-breath. They drift away from us, like smoke from a chimney, and evaporate into empty space. Without forcing it in any way, continue to breathe in the cleansing white light energy and to expel any dark, fog-like energy with the out-breath.

In this way we can dissolve, let go of, and gently expel not only the delusions and their karmic residue, but even our sense of the body's heaviness and solidity. As we continue to breathe in and out in this fashion, we can feel ourselves growing lighter, as if our body were slowly transforming from a gross physical object into a spacious body of

light...allowing our awareness to expand...allowing us to experience the mind's innate clarity.

After a while, we can relax our conscious control over the breath, and simply let it come and go as it will. We focus our attention instead on whatever feeling of clarity, freedom, weightlessness, light, joy, or even bliss that we may have experienced as a result of the cleansing breaths we had taken. Even if there has only been a *slight* shift in our feelings of openness and well-being as a result of our breathing meditation, we focus our attention gently but firmly on that experience itself...so that our mind and this experience of unfolding, of relaxation, of light, of joy, of bliss become unified, totally pervading one another.

The main body of the meditation

Then recognize that at this very moment each of us is seated at the very center of a vast assemblage of beings, human and non-human alike, numbering in the millions and billions. And realize as well that the vast majority of these beings are experiencing anything but the open, spacious, fully conscious, light, joyous, and blissful experience that we have just tasted. Instead, they are trapped in the self-created prisons of their petty, limited ego-identities, searching here and there for pleasure and happiness, but experiencing nothing but repeated frustration, disappointment, dissatisfaction, pain, and suffering. Although they are ignorant of the way things truly exist and are consequently under the sway of such powerful and destructive emotions as hatred, attachment, jealousy and the like, each one of these beings, without exception, has the potential for experiencing pure, blissful, and fully liberated consciousness. Each being has within him- or herself this infinite treasure, this potential for full enlightenment in the nature of everlasting happiness and joy. And yet this treasure is unknown, buried, obscured by delusion and ignorance and the accretions of karma...and thus they feel trapped, fragmented, alienated, and alone.

At this moment, through exceedingly good fortune, we have had the opportunity of being introduced to a powerful method for arousing this blissful, spacious, unencumbered, potentially enlightened consciousness within ourselves, as explained in the precious

teachings of tantra as revealed by Shakyamuni Buddha. So as we listen to, study, and think about these teachings precious teachings, let us expand our motivation so that we are not engaging in these activities for our own selfish reasons, wishing to extract some pleasure merely for ourselves alone. Instead, let us cultivate the pure and boundless bodhicitta motivation, wishing to use our knowledge of this tantric path in order to help all other beings without exception discover the indwelling treasure of their most subtle consciousness, the birthright of all living beings, and thereby experience infinite and everlasting happiness and fulfillment. In this way, any of the activities that we engage in, even thinking about one line of the Buddha's teachings, becomes a powerful cause for our experience of enlightenment, shared with all the beings inhabiting this universe.

And then, to conclude this introductory meditation in which we are setting our motivation to be as expansive and all inclusive as possible, let us recite the six-syllable mantra of the Buddha of Compassion: *om ma-ni pad-me hung*. As we recite this mantra, feel that we are allowing our compassionate motivation—our wish for all beings, without exception, to know limitless happiness and fulfillment—to be shared with all beings in the universe. First, turning our thoughts to all of those who are currently experiencing the most intense suffering and pain—such as those caught up in war, famine, and all other forms of mental and physical torment—let the sound of this mantra, together with the white light energy of compassion and love, radiate forth from the very center of our heart. Let this blessed sound and light reach all beings, calming their suffering the way the rays of the full moon relieve the suffering of heat, bringing them peace of mind, happiness, a sense of well-being, and finally complete spiritual fulfillment. Then, as we continue to recite the mantra, spread this wish for peace, happiness, well-being, and fulfillment to all beings, until we are all joined together in universal compassion:

Mantra Recitation

om ma-ni pad-me hung

Conclusion

Then conclude this meditation by imagining that all this loving, compassionate energy, emanated outwards from the center of our own heart towards the ends of the

universe, returns and dissolves back into us, like snowflakes dissolving into a still lake, inducing a blissful experience beyond words and expression. Allow this experience to permeate our entire being.

Meditation on Compassion 2

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Preparation

Let us begin this session with a brief meditation to help put us into the proper frame of mind for the remainder of this *Introduction to Tantra* course.

First, pay attention to the body, trying to make sure that it is in an attitude, or posture, that will allow the meditation to proceed smoothly, with good concentration and clarity. Of the various points of the seated posture, it is most important that our spine, the trunk of our body, be comfortably upright and straight, but not in an exaggerated manner.

Main body of the meditation

As we adjust our seated posture, we can keep in mind an image that might help us cultivate both the stability that supports calm concentration as well as the alertness that supports mental clarity. Imagine for a moment that our body is like a great tree, which sends its roots down deep into the earth. We can bring our attention to the place where our body makes contact with the cushion or chair below us, and then follow these roots as they reach down through the cushion, through the floor, and deep into the ground, until we feel well anchored to the earth. In this way, allow our mind to make contact with the stable earth energy below that supports us. (Alternatively, if we have some previous experience in meditating on the central channel that runs down our trunk just in from of our spinal column, we can think to extend the lower end of this tube of light in the same manner, allowing it to penetrate deep down into the earth, contacting the stable earth energy that grounds and supports us.) As we establish this connection with the earth element, feel stable, anchored, deeply supported.

When a tree sends its roots down into the earth, these roots absorb nutrients from the earth that are then drawn upwards, up through the roots and into the trunk of the tree from below, up the trunk and through the branches until they reach all the way to the uppermost leaves, drawn by the energy of the sun. In a similar fashion, imagine that the

energy we have contacted by sending down roots into the earth begins to rise, very slowly and deliberately, up through trunk of our body from below. Slowly this energy makes its way up, through the spinal column, up through the back of the neck and the back of the head, all the way up to our crown.

Follow this movement upwards, slowly and deliberately, and feel that at every step of the way, this slowly rising energy gently releases any tightness, any restriction, it encounters. It may help at this time to allow the body to sway slightly, back and forth or from side to side, because this gentle swaying motion can aid in the release of these pockets of frustrated energy. Then allow this swaying motion to come to an end.

Now imagine that the energy that has been rising up the trunk of our body continues straight up and out of the crown of our head, up through the ceiling, the roof, through the atmosphere, and all the way out into the farthest reaches of space. (Again, if we are familiar with meditation on the central channel, we can imagine this tube of light extending upwards into limitless space as described.) As our mind contacts the boundlessness of space, it effortlessly experiences the boundless expansion of clear unobstructed awareness. Remain in this boundless state of pure awareness for a while.

Now allow our attention to descend slowly from the boundless space above ourselves, down in through the crown of our head, down through the back of our head and the back of our neck until our attention comes to rest in the heart center deep within the center of our chest.

This is the center of our awareness, but it remains in contact with the earth element below and spaciousness above. The earth element imparts to our mind a sense of calm stability, concentrating our attention, and allowing it to remain fixed on any object of our choosing. With the aid of the space element above us our mind experiences its own spaciousness, clarity, and alertness. In this way, our mind achieves balance and poise. If the earth element predominates and we begin to feel heavy, dull, drowsy, or sleepy, we can turn our attention to the space element and feel refreshed. If the space element

predominates and we find ourselves feeling vague, light-headed, distracted, or scattered, we can turn our attention to the earth element and ground ourselves once more.

Now imagine that the essentially clear consciousness residing at the center of our hearts takes on the aspect of gently radiating white light. This white light is in the nature of loving compassion, the heart-felt wish that all beings could be free from suffering and endowed with true happiness, that all beings could have perfectly balanced minds, stable and clear, that their own innate loving compassion, wisdom, and skill could manifest effortlessly, bringing true satisfaction and fulfillment to all.

Slowly allow this radiant white light at the center of our heart, together with our loving-compassionate wishes, to expand, to emanate out in all directions. This compassionate white light energy merges with the white light emanating from all those who surround us. It slowly expands to encompass the entire room in which we are sitting, and then outwards to pervade the entire building, the community, the town, the state, the country, the world, the solar system, and the entire universe.

At the same time, this expanding sphere of light is pervaded by the sound of the mantra of compassion, *om ma-ni pad-me hung*, radiating from the center of our heart and from the heart of all beings. Wherever this light and the sound of the mantra reach, and whomever they touch, they induce an inexpressible experience of peace, well-being, happiness, and blissful fulfillment.

MANTRA RECITATION

om ma-ni pad-me hung

Conclusion

At the conclusion of our recitation feel that all the white light energy and all the mantra energy that has been emanated throughout the universe, fulfilling the deep desires of all sentient beings for peace, well-being, happiness, and fulfillment, return to us. Like snowflakes falling into a lake, this compassionate energy dissolves into our heart, inducing

an inexpressible experience of bliss that pervades our entire being. Rest in this experience for a while.

Dedication:

Then we can bring this brief meditation to a close by thinking, "Just as now, through the force of imagination, I have emanated white light and mantra energy to all the beings throughout the universe, bestowing upon them peace, well-being, happiness and fulfillment, so in the future may I actually be able to accomplish all this and thereby make this life truly meaningful".