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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Summary

Lam rim chen mo – Lama Tsong Kapa Teachings

NAMO TSON-KHA-PA.

The Tibetan Master and Scholar Tson-kha-pa (c. 1357–1419) stated in the beginning of his great treatise “Stages of the path to Enlightenment” (Lam rim chen mo) 1.

"Den dus rnal, byor brtson rnam thos pa nun man thos nams len gnas la mi mkhas sin"

Alex Wayman a Sanskrit Scholar, translation of these lines is:

"In our day, enterprises in Yoga have little hearing, while those who hear much are unskilled in the essentials of PUTTING INTO PRACTICE" (= Taking to Heart, nams len). 2.

This text was studied during a five-day meditation course held at the Buddhist Discussion Centre (Upwey), Victoria, Australia in 1986. The above words by Tson-kha-pa were investigated by the Students to arrive at a more refined comprehension of the fundamental statement about two types of mind which frequently arise in our practice and which, by themselves, are greatly limited in scope for learning and practice.

"The Critical Path to the Development of an operating strategy on Resource Management" was used as a method by which Students could drop slow learning minds and slow practice minds and produce Minds which quickly learn and immediately put that learning into Dharma Practice. Such Minds know external resources arising in the present, and, immediately use them to maximise the benefits for other beings.

PHASE 1. Understanding Need for Change of Current Trends.

To understand the need for change of current trends, Students examined their present methods of using external resources and found that, upon observation, one or the other of the two types of mind, described by Tson-kha-pa, was arising.

The characteristic of the first type of mind described is that the Student's practice has little hearing (or learning). The Student adopts a trial-and-error approach, believing that activity alone is sufficient to progress along the Path.

By examining the trial-and-error approach it becomes evident that, whilst it is a method which can produce learning, it is not a method employing learning. Also, it will take a great amount of time to arrive at understanding; therefore, many present resources are wasted. Finally, there is no guarantee that any learning will be produced by such activity.

Ritualized practice is a clear example of the first type of mind; where the Practitioner follows some learnt rule or repeats methods blindly; without adjusting to the changing resource phenomena, instant by instant. A further example of the first type of mind would be to read this article, as if it did not apply to your own Practice !

The characteristic of the second type of mind, described by Tson-kha-pa is that the Students hear or learn much but will not act (as if they have never heard any PUTTING-INTO-PRACTICE Teachings).

Due to the countless lives in which we did not put into practice the Dharma, we now have a strong karmic predisposition to not put into practice the Dharma in this present life. A further characteristic of the second type of mind is that it acts out of deep habitual conditioning generated from past non-practice. We may hear the Teachings and understand the need to be practicing without gaps or breaks, but, on numerous occasions, we act without taking the Teachings to Heart.

Also, due to the inherent sloth and torpor of this second type of mind, it lacks the energy and sense of urgency to dispel hinderances and obstacles to resolute practice, instant by instant.

From the examination described above, Students clearly recognized the need for change of current trends.

THE CRITICAL PATH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OPERATING STRATEGY ON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

Phase 1 Understanding need for change of Current Trends

Phase 2 Upgrade Members Current Skills

Phase 3 Develop Broad View of Needs

Phase 4 Discovery and Identification of Present Resources

Phase 5 Knowing Growth Parameters for Future Resources

Phase 6 Finding Methods of Resource Management

PHASE 2. Upgrade Members' Current Skills.

It is desirable to acquire new skills and perfect old skills. It was seen by Students that although each being possesses skills, they are not perfected. Rather than learning new skills, it can be seen that the learning process itself is a skill which must be perfected.

Sankhara's (self-images) which our minds produce and grab, tend to define and limit the areas of which we are prepared to learn. We restrict our capacity to learn new skills by allowing habitual karmic boundaries to arise. This narrow view of our own capacity could manifest in the minds of boredom, aversion or restlessness.

We can identify the building of these minds by recollecting our past experience of resisting learning at school or work. This practice requires care not to permit a guilt feeling to arise, since guilt is a negative.

If the learning process is made error free; there are no obstacles to the development of the Mind or the rapid acquisition of new skills. Something that is heard once can be learned and recalled without confusion and without the fear of failure or fear of success associated with delusions of incapacity. Remember, human birth is associated with types of mind capable of great learning, provided the correct minds are cultivated.

PHASE 3. Develop Broad View of Needs.

As described in PHASE 2, as a result of the process of grasping habitual karmic boundaries that arise in some minds; our skills of learning are limited and restricted. We superimpose narrow minded-ness to block a clear view.

To develop a broad view of needs, it is necessary to produce wholesome Minds (which do not resist learning by incorrect categorization of the subject matter). By dropping and cutting our attachment to arising Sankharas (self-images); we produce Minds free of artificial limitations to learning. This putting-into-practice produces Minds reduced in 'ego bias' and therefore can learn much. Vast learning is one of the highest blessings.

One method of producing a Broad open view of needs is to examine long term needs and growth strategies first. In this way, the Mind can arrive at great vision, without being suffocated by a view that present facilities are inadequate (they may be under-utilised).

If present resources are not exploited to their fullest use, then myopic strategies for growth appear.

PHASE 4. Discovery and Identification of Present Resources.

The non-myopic process of discovering and identifying present resources is crucial to the Practitioner who wishes to benefit himself and others.

Several exercises were used by Students to come to a clear view of the meaning of the above statement.

Firstly, Students observed to discover the presently available external resources, such as, for example, flowers, other beings, Buddha Images, food, warmth and a suitable location. Secondly, they listed the presently available resources and next to each listed resource, estimated its probable duration in time. Quickly, through this practice, their presently arising resources were recognised. In addition, they cognated that it is only a short time until each of them will cease. These two Knowledges makes us happier. A further knowledge now arises. It was our own great efforts in the past that caused each present resource to arise. The result of this realisation is a sense of urgency not to waste, or not to take for granted, our present precious resources for immediate practice.

Thirdly, Students listed how each of the newly identified present resources could be used for putting-into-practice. Without using each resource for practice, now, the resources which have arisen pass away; their non-use means no further causes for our own or others future benefit are produced. For example, if opportunities now to make others comfortable are wasted; how are we going to be comfortable in the future? If opportunities now to offer light to Buddha are wasted; how can we experience sustained 'bright' Mind in the future?

Since our futures are always uncertain, and our conditions change, one would be wise to make for one's future happiness causes now; by using our presently identified resources.

With reference to the two types of mind described by Tson-kha-pa; the first mind described wastes vast opportunities to put-into-practice by failing to learn or discover proper usage of present impermanent resources.

The second type of mind described is aware of presently arising resources but does not act to put these resources into practice.

Neither type of mind is capable of maximising the benefits to our-self or others; neither type of mind is capable of placing learning and practice together, like the two wings of a bird.

The knowledge of the inadequacies of slow learning and slow practising minds combined with the knowledges described above, leads the Student to the Heart-Wish to drop, forever, any minds exhibiting the characteristics of

practice-without-learning, or learning-without-practice.

Due to this renunciation, a Wisdom Mind arises which has the nature to cognate a presently arising resource and, immediately use this resource as practice. Wisdom Minds do not hesitate or stop to analyse what to do; rather, there is knowing (learning), immediately, producing wholehearted action of putting-into-practice. Having completed a practice action, a new practice action is generated in the next instant. This Mind starts again, and again and again, afresh in the present; recognises arising resources and uses them by an appropriate practice action.

PHASE 5. Knowing Growth Parameters for Future Resources.

By following an iterative process, using all data accumulated from Phase 1 through to Phase 4, Students were able to produce two lists entitled:

1. The things in which the Centre is concerned.
2. The things in which the Centre is not concerned.

Anything that the Centre is not concerned with is not pursued, while strategies for future management are recorded, without personal bias.

Each future activity is investigated with a one-pointed mind where it is viewed as a separate and individual process. Care is taken to not blur this investigation by overlapping of other activities with which the Centre is concerned. There are no decisions to be made at this time. This PHASE requires only investigation and identification of worthwhile activities.

Subsequent phases of, "The Critical Path to the Development of an Operating Strategy on Resource Management" will be discussed in a future B.D.C.(U)Ltd Newsletter.

L.A., F.T.C., J.D.H.

1. The full Tibetan title of Tson-kha-pa's work, completed in A.D. 1402, is Skyes bu gsum gyi nams su blan ba'i rim pa thams cad tshan bar ston pa'i byan chub lam gyi rim pa. The title means "Stages of the path to Enlightenment, completely showing all the stages to be taken to heart by the three orders of persons." It is generally abbreviated to Lam rim chen mo (The great book on stages of the path).

2. Ref: "Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real, Buddhist Meditation and the Middle View," From Lam rim chen mo of Tson-kha-pa. Translated by Alex Wayman. Pub. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, India. First Edition 1978, Reprint 1979 at page 3.