

Slogans

Sending and taking should be practiced alternately. These two should ride the breath. (7)

Three objects, three poisons, and three seeds of virtue. (8)

In all activities train with slogans. (9)

Begin the sequence of sending and taking with yourself. (10)

Four stages of tonglen practice:

1. Flashing openness
2. Working with the texture, breathing in dark, heavy, and hot and breathing out white, light, and cool
3. Working with relieving a specific, heartfelt instance of suffering
4. Extending that wish to help everyone

We started with the absolute bodhicitta slogans. This is about resting in the primordial space of awareness or openness beyond thought. From an absolute point of view we are already buddhas, awakened beings. But from a relative point of view we can still use some improvement.

Beginning with the second half of Point Two (slogan 7) we start working with the relative bodhicitta practices. What is relative bodhicitta? The **relative** world is the every day world in which we live. In this world we have to deal with very practical things like paying our bills, shopping, dealing with people at work, raising children. **Bodhicitta** is the heart/mind that strives toward awakening and compassion for the benefit of all sentient beings. So relative bodhicitta is the practical application of the teachings in the world; working with others. Without the absolute, the relative can degenerate into pity and sentimentality, whereas the absolute without the relative can lead to nihilism and lack of desire to engage other sentient beings for their benefit.

You might ask:

How can I work with the buddhist teachings in my daily life? What can I do to bring benefit to the world? How can I work with my kleshas (neurotic upheavals) rooted in attachment, aggression and ignorance?

The first relative bodhicitta slogan is an applied meditation practice which can be done on the cushion during meditation practice or on the spot in any situation. This is the practice of *tonglen*. Slogan 7.

Tong=sending out or letting go

Len=receiving or accepting

In this practice we use the medium of the breath to activate the heart of compassion. We take in what is painful, undesirable, unwanted and we breath out all that is good, pleasing, desirable.

This practice undercuts our own self-cherishing, wanting everything good for ourselves and

pushing away that which we don't want. The result is to lessen ego's grip and open our heart of compassion wider and wider.

Introduction to *tonglen* practice. (4 stages)

Three objects, three poisons, and three seeds of virtue. (8)

How can what is seen to be a poison actually be a seed of virtue? Three objects is what we perceive in the world as something we want to embrace, push away or ignore. Like, dislike, forget about it. Three poisons is our reaction to the object. Then through lojong practice we can reverse our habitual pattern and see the object as a seed of virtue. We use the situation that arises to practice not being hooked in a habitual reaction.

In all activities train with slogans. (9)

All day long as situations arise you can flash on relevant slogans. Instead of dreading or avoiding painful situations, you can meet them head on joyfully because they give you a chance to practice.

Begin the sequence of sending and taking with yourself. (10)

You don't wait for the other person to give in. You are willing to aerate things first. You make the first move.