

Visualization Practice

A Teaching by Lama Tharchin Rinpoche

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Visualization is one of the best methods of meditation for receiving swift results. The suffering we experience in samsara is caused by our basic delusion and lack of recognition of the ultimate nature of mind. Our own basic nature of mind is the same as the primordial Buddha Kuntuzangpo's. This original Buddha was never deluded from the beginningless beginning. Beyond subject and object, this essence of our mind recognizes all appearance as the spontaneous display of our own awakened state.

Delusion is caused by dualistic mind – mind that perceives self and other, subject and object. This creates karma. Mind that is free from grasping and attachment is naturally wisdom mind. For countless eons, we have trained our minds to grasp to things as solid. We perceive this world as real when really it's illusory form. We think because we can touch, feel, and see the same thing that it's true. This doesn't prove anything, however. There is no proof because everyone is in the same delusional state. In grasping, we create and stabilize phenomena as solid and real. The only way to reveal the true nature of phenomena is to dissolve the grasping mind. The only difference between pure wisdom state and delusion state is in the recognition of all phenomena as the display of mind. One who recognizes this recognizes wisdom mind. One who sees only subject and object, self and other, hope and fear – that is delusion mind. Therefore, visualize all phenomena as the display of pure wisdom. Automatically, in this way mind will be free from grasping. You are training your mind with a new habit. So visualization is an exercise for the mind. Visualization without grasping can dissolve untrue illusion phenomena, which is impure. It's like, for example, the difference between having ten kilos of gold or visualizing you have ten kilos of gold. If you actually have the gold, your mind continues thinking, "How much do I have? If I put it in the bank, will I get more interest?" and on and on, one thought after another. With visualizing the gold there is no attachment or grasping. Because we have only one mind, when we visualize pure phenomena then automatically our dualistic mind ceases.

Lots of people who meditate have great attachment to emptiness. In trying to deal with daily phenomena they are trying to hold a piece of emptiness somewhere. That is a misunderstanding or wrong view. This view that nothing exists is a nihilistic view. At the same time, you cannot say that something exists or that form, thoughts, and sounds are truly solid or real. This again is a wrong view. This view that something truly exists is an eternalistic view.

Lots of people think that focusing their mind by making it narrow and pointed is meditation. They close their eyes and sink into an animal-like state of mind. Again, this is also a wrong view.

During the time of the third Buddha, Devankara, a group of lower yana (vehicle) practitioners called Nyen-Tu Gokpa could sit forever in a meditation of having ceased all thought. These practitioners had extremely long life spans during that time. In the mountains of Tibet, lamas can still find them. Their bodies have become like rocks, their fingernails and hair are still growing. Some lamas are able to awaken them from this state. When they awaken, they immediately ask, "Where is Buddha Devankara?" In all this time they have never come any closer to Buddhahood. They have just passed their time in a state of non-thought without gaining any realization.

Buddha mind is a totally awakened state, omniscient, completely aware of everything at once, and completely pure. Pure mind is like the sky, without direction, form, beginning or end, pervading everywhere. Emotions and thoughts are like clouds, always coming and going. The sky itself never changes. Buddha's mind is like a drop of mercury in the dirt – it doesn't attach itself anywhere. The only difference between Buddha's mind and sentient beings' minds is grasping and non-grasping. Buddha's mind never grasps; phenomena are perceived as pure. Without attachment, the objects in this room, the trees and so on, are recognized as the deity's body; all sounds are mantra; and all thoughts are the awareness mind of the deity. Everything has quality, and compassion naturally arises as the display of primordial wisdom.

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