

A River That Cannot Be Frozen

by his Eminence Garchen Rinpoche

You are so fortunate to have met the Dharma with devotion. The essence of Dharma is the two bodhicittas: relative bodhicitta is the noble mind focussing on others; ultimate bodhicitta is emptiness - looking at your own mind.

If you find it difficult to see your own mind, it is due to obscurations which come from afflicting emotions. Transcendent wisdom dispels afflicting emotions. That wisdom is the blessing of the lama. To receive the lama's blessing you need the sun of devotion, which in turn gives rise to compassion. A drop of tear by the force of devotion purifies or dispels a mountain of obscurations.

Generally speaking, Buddha and sentient beings are like one river. Buddha, however, realizes the nature of the self and, free from doubt, sees that all the activities of samsara are like a dream or illusion. Buddha's mind abides like the nature of space, like a river that cannot be frozen. Sentient beings, on the other hand, have not realized their own nature, and their minds are influenced by conditions which cause afflicting emotions. This is like meeting very cold water and freezing, the ice then becoming like a rock that cannot be broken.

If the heat of devotion and compassion melts this frozen mind, one will realize there is no difference between oneself and Buddha. Therefore, the single most important source of blessings is devotion. It is like a hundred rivers going under one bridge.

When you look at your mind just after strong devotion, that awareness is the cause of attaining enlightenment. Within that, look again at the very face of awareness. It dissolves into emptiness - both subject and object. A beginner does not believe it, but this dissolution is Buddhahood. Therefore, Tilopa said, "Seeing nothing is the supreme insight."

It will not last long, so meditate for a short time, again and again each session. This will dispel obstacles and enhance your meditation.

Devotion is the single essential point. When you practice devotion, visualize the lama in front of you in space as actually residing there. The lama's mind is Buddha, so when you supplicate, the blessing will be definite, and the lama will keep you in his or her mind.

[This Mahamudra teaching was written by Garchen Rinpoche at Gon Gar, Nangchen (in Kham, Tibet), in August 1995 for James Pittard. Venerable Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche subsequently translated it at Jangchub Ling, Dehra Dun, India in September, 1995. This translation was first published in the quarterly newsletter of the Tibetan Meditation Center - "Dharma Wheel," Spring 1996]