

Columbus KTC Intro Class 8: Mantra Meditation

I. Discursive, conditioned thinking

- A. "Discursive" means our thoughts ramble, jumping from one subject to another.
- B. "Conditioned" means they're affected by past and present conditions.
- C. Discursive, conditioned thinking forms our concept of ego.
- D. Clinging to this concept causes great suffering.

II. Buddha Nature

- A. Our true nature; the essence underlying discursive, conditioned mental activity.
- B. Is described as having the aspects of limitlessness and clarity.
- C. Is embodied in images of the Buddha and other enlightened beings.
- D. These images can be utilized as aides to mantra meditation and deity visualization practices.

III. Mantra Meditation in the Context of the Three Vehicles

- A. The three vehicles are three cycles of the Buddha's teaching
 - B. Hinayana: "Path of Individual Liberation," in which mindfulness is directed at letting go of the impure.
 - C. Mahayana: "Path of Liberation for All." Here, the approach remains mindfulness and purification, but with the addition of thought transformation techniques such as "lojong", or mind training, which cultivate the altruistic intention to benefit others.
 - D. Vajrayana: "Path of Indestructible Mind." The approach remains that of altruism, but with additional special methods such as deity meditation.
- IV. Mantra Meditation in the Context of the Causal and Resultant Vehicles
- A. Hinayana and Mahayana are the "causal vehicle" because their approach is to realize our Buddha Nature by increasing our positive qualities, in a sequence of cause and effect.
 - E. Vajrayana is the "resultant vehicle" because it takes the goal as the path to uncover qualities considered inherently present.

V. History and Foundational Concepts

- A. Introduced by the Buddha in several scriptures, and made more available by subsequent enlightened masters.
- B. Based on the Buddha's teaching: "We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world."

VI. Primary technique

- A. The principal element is a meditational deity, an embodiment of the fully realized qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, wisdom, etc.
- B. The primary technique is to replace the thought of our relative self with the thought of ourselves as the meditational deity, transforming our ideas about ourselves and our world from confusion and impurity to wisdom and purity.

VII. Four Stages

- A. Preliminary Prayers: such as taking refuge and generating bodhichitta
- B. Creation stage
 - 1. Visualization of the meditational deity
 - 2. Self-visualizing as the meditational deity
- C. Completion stage
 - 1. Dissolution: We dissolve the visualization into emptiness as an acknowledgement that all phenomena are basically illusory in nature.
 - 2. Re-arisal: We rearise with the view of ourselves as the enlightened being, the world as the enlightened being's realm, sound as mantra, and thought as enlightened awareness. We use this understanding to remind ourselves of our enlightened nature at any moment of our day.
- D. Concluding Prayers: Dedications of merit

VIII. Variety of meditational deities

- A. Each meditational deity is an embodiment of our Buddha Nature, but with its own appearance and qualities.
- B. Because there are so many different kinds of people, there is a wide variety of meditational deities. In essence, though, they are all the same.
- C. Our regular practices at Columbus KTC include Chenrezig (compassion), Amitabha (unlimited light), Green Tara (fearlessness), White Tara (longevity), Medicine Buddha (good health), and Mahakala (protection).

IX. How to approach deity meditation

- A. Meet a teacher who holds the lineage of the practice.
- B. Receive the three "permission-blessings" that make our preparation for practice complete.
 - 1. Empowerment: a ritual "introduction" to the deity via purification and blessing
 - 2. Reading transmission: a teacher reads us the practice text as a means of transmitting the lineage of the practice
 - 3. Practice instruction: a teacher gives us the specific oral instructions for the practice