

How the Sacred Teachings of Guru Rinpoche Relate to and Counteract Mental Difficulties

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1) Definition of Guru Rinpoche's sacred teachings

From my humble perspective, the Great Lopön Pema Jungne taught in two ways. Based on the explanation of these two, we can clearly understand what is meant by the sacred teachings of the Great Lopön.

1) The teachings, which newly established the Nine Yanas

The teachings of the Buddha spread to many countries in a manner appropriate to them. Amongst them is the Himalaya region, where a special union of sutra and tantra teachings in their entirety took root. This is only due to Guru Rinpoche's kindness, which can be clearly seen in the ancient historical texts of Tibet and Tun-Huang. Here I cannot say more about these documents due to the lack of time.

Historically speaking the main topic of this part of the presentation is about the Khenpo Shantarakshita, the Dharma King Trisong Detsen and Guru Rinpoche. They not only built the great school of the unchanging, spontaneously present, great Samye temple in the 7th century, but they also decided to translate the sacred Dharma, so a Buddhist following could be established and maintained long term.

To summarize in a new way, that has not been used before, in just 70 years more than 200 Buddhist volumes were translated and edited until they were considered definite translations. This is an amazing feat of history. To illustrate this, these days it is an undertaking of four to five years to newly translate a text like *The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in One Hundred Thousand Lines* in a monastic institution. Therefore the translation of more than 200 volumes in just 70 years is result of the powerful

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kindness displayed by Khenpo Shantarakshita, the Dharma King Trisong Detsen and Guru Rinpoche. It is a truly amazing, pure, complete, faultless and kind story.

In this regard, during the years of the early spread of teachings the activities of the common pandits included the cataloguing of the two volumes on grammar, the *Karchag Pangtangma* and *Denkarma*¹. This can be verified by looking up the Tibetan catalogues about ancient documents on the history of psychology, at texts like the extensive teaching *The Ornamental Flower* the Nang Jomden Rigral, who lived in the 13th century.

These 200 volumes of translated texts were composed differently due to the different explanations by the pandits, siddhas and awareness holders, who categorised them by different themes like the four and two types of bliss or the Four Dharma Seals.

It is said that Guru Rinpoche newly established the nine yantras amongst them and is therefore considered the Founder of the Chariot of the Nine Yantras. This is clearly demonstrated through his shastra *The Oral Instruction Garland of Views*. One might wonder what the reasons are to regard Guru Rinpoche as the founder of the nine yantras based on his role as the first composer of a shastra featuring this classification of nine yantras, and if there were any additional reasons. I will illustrate here through elucidating this shastra with the tantra it comments on, the root tantra *The Secret Essence*.

Even though *The Oral Instruction Garland of Views* is a commentary of the Mahayoga root tantra *The Secret Essence*, it details nine yantras, where the *The Secret Essence* only mentions five. This shows how the nine yantras were newly established. Please investigate this reason for yourself through the works of the old scholars.

2. It is a new way of lineage practice for a person traversing all the yantras

The Buddha expounded different yantras, depending on different

¹ Collection of Tibetan translations catalogued by leading translators.

mental capacities, different needs, different motives, different aspirations, whether the society at large was the main focus or the individual. All these different ways of teaching could just be accepted for face value or completely discarded. Someone who does not engage in these foolish ways of accepting and rejecting purifies the mind from what troubles it, does the necessary to tame the mind stream and acts according to the three vehicles according to the three times without contradiction. During the practice these points are incorporated in the Ngöndro and the main practices. This is what is expressed here. These two kinds of practices mentioned are what is called the sacred teachings of Guru Rinpoche, which is categorized into the nine yantras. This shows that a person's mind stream needs both kinds of practice.

Why did I choose the Ngöndro practice to illustrate how the sacred teachings are connected to mental difficulties and how it remedies them? Because it is the foundation for the main practices as it creates the mental equanimity and the understanding to engage in the elaborate main practices.

2) The psychological impact of the Ngöndro practice

The purpose and the sub-divisions of the Ngöndro practice is generally the same, but there are different texts of various lengths. The nine different parts presented now are remedies to the nine commonplace mental problems, which will be mentioned later on.

1. The contemplation on the precious human birth awakens the mental state of valuing one's life.
2. Contemplating the impermanence of life produces the mental state of urgency to engage in whatever positive deed quickly.
3. The contemplation on karma, the law of cause and effect, evokes the mental state that the joys and pains of life are not someone else's fault, but one's own responsibility.
4. The contemplation on the defects of samsara and the benefits

of liberation engenders the mental state which identifies where wellbeing and where suffering abide.

These first four parts belong within the nine yantras to both the Shravaka's and the Pratyekabuddha's practice. These two yantras are commonly called the lineages of the South and have spread to countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, etc. They combine the Buddha's teachings on meditation, view and conduct into one.

5. When practicing the refuge, the mental state induced is not to resort to harming another under any circumstance.
6. The awakening of bodhicitta is the mental state which not only promotes non-violence, but also imparts the intention to benefit anyone regardless of nationality, religion, whether they are friend or foe, etc.
7. The mandala offering promotes the mental state to freely give one's wealth, experience, time, etc., without any stinginess.

These three parts belong to the practices of the bodhisattva vehicle. They are practiced as what is commonly known as the Northern lineage in countries like Nepal, China, Tibet, Bhutan, Korea, Japan, Vietnam.

8. The meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva gives rise to a state of mental strength to regret one's past negative actions and to resolve not to engage in them again.
9. Guru Yoga gives rise to mental state where one does not follow thoughts regarding views, habits, culture, etc., but the mind rests in its natural state.

Within the nine yantras, these last two points are practiced in the Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra, Yoga Tantra, Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga. The yantras are practiced in the aforementioned Northern Lineage. They particularly spread in Tibet, Nepal, Korea, Bhutan and Japan as the secret mantra teachings.

Even though these days some Tibetan historians distinguish three lineages, the Southern, Northern and Tibetan lineage, in the old documents Tibetan lineage is part of the Northern

lineage. Not only that, the Buddha predicted the sustained dissemination of these teachings to the North, which is an additional reason to include them in the Northern lineage.

3) Mental difficulties

1. A mental attitude of low self-esteem leads to a sense of lack compared to the wealth, the qualities, the capabilities, etc., of others. This is a serious problem, whether it is on a social or individual level. The worst outcome of attributing no value to one's life is to commit suicide. Every year over 800,000 people worldwide resort to killing themselves.
2. If someone believes that everything is permanent, he will think that a difficult time in his life cannot possibly change. Many people suffer from this. Another example is someone who overworks herself for the sake of wealth without taking her health into account, believing that her life will last forever and suffers from endless insomnia.
3. When there is no understanding of what leads to happiness and what to suffering, someone might mistake committing a crime to be the appropriate action to ensure wellbeing or some sort of gain. Or even if there is a wish to be happy, one might succumb to laziness and not engage in what would lead to happiness.
4. If one is not aware of the resultant wellbeing or suffering of certain actions, one might get drunk, take drugs, amass fame and wealth, believing that the result should be enjoyment and wellbeing even though it is ultimately physical and psychological misery.
5. When someone is uses the wrong techniques or methods, she might engage in a life style that will not bring about happiness like working as a butcher. Also many religious and philosophical texts give instructions and advice which is mistaken.
6. A selfish-motivation leads to always wanting oneself and one's own group to win over other nations, religions, views,

etc. In the worst case scenario, the enemy should not simply be defeated but one works towards completely eliminating the other, because one cannot bear to eat together, enjoy or obtain something together. This is really a massive obstacle for a peaceful society.

7. A greedy mind leads to never feeling content, no matter how much one has. Some people even resort to robbery or theft to acquire the possessions of others. The idea that whatever one owns is sufficient never arises.
8. Without a feeling of regret, even though it might not be necessary to directly engage in positive actions or to make amends, it is impossible to say sorry when one acts negatively. Also one won't feel compelled to stop non-dharmic and harmful activities. Through regretting and apologizing many problems in this world can be solved.
9. When the mind does not rest in its natural state serious health problems can arise. If the mind circles within the boundaries of conceptual thoughts, dealing with what is and what not, good and bad, what is permissible and what not; gain and loss, there is never a moment's rest. If one can at least enjoy ten minutes in a state without mental fabrication, one can experience wellbeing.

4) How two opposing mental states cannot abide simultaneously

The mental states evoked through Guru Rinpoche's practices and the mental difficulties described before, cannot abide in the mind of a single person at the same time, like fire and water cannot abide at exactly the same place.

This logical approach, that one mental state eradicates an opposing one, if employed at the same time, is something to be made use of in life. One can pacify an anguished mind by taking advantage of this logic or this view and make a long lasting effort in it. It is impossible for example to be greedy and content at the same time. To eliminate one, the other needs to

be generated, strengthened and sustained for a longer period of time.

If two mental states can be present simultaneously, this practice is of no benefit. For example, if between pride and greed one is strengthened, it does not act as an antidote to the other as they can easily coexist. Contentment though directly eliminates greed like fire extinguishes water.

From this point of view of contradiction being the most important, Guru Rinpoche devised the nine parts of the Ngöndro to overcome the nine mental difficulties:

1. The instruction on the precious human birth is the antidote to low self-esteem.
2. The instruction on the impermanence is the antidote to believing in permanence and immutability.
3. The instruction on karma, the law of cause and effect, is the antidote to being unaware of the causes and conditions leading to happiness and suffering.
4. The instruction on the defects of samsara and the advantages of liberation is the antidote to being unaware of resultant happiness and suffering.
5. The instruction on refuge is the antidote to using the wrong methods.
6. The instruction on bodhicitta is the antidote to self-centeredness.
7. The instruction on mandala is the antidote to greed.
8. The instruction on Vajrasattva is the antidote to not regretting negative acts.
9. The instruction on Guru Yoga is the antidote to not resting one's mind in its natural state.

Why is it not possible for these mental states to be present simultaneously? It is because their aim, their conceptual make up are directly contradictory to one another. As mentioned before greed and pride don't have opposing aims and therefore

cannot cancel one another out. Greed and contentment on the other hand are fully incompatible in their aim and make up, so when one is present, the other cannot arise. To express this in a manner that is easy to understand, I said that they cannot abide simultaneously. The factors of aim and conceptual make up determine whether two mental states can be present at the same time or not. I explained earlier on about the opposing factors. As this is quite important, one needs to study the teachings on perceiving the deity when practicing Guru Rinpoche's main practices in the same vein.

Through identifying the nine difficult mental states that need to be overcome, the nine parts of the Ngöndro are practiced, which improves one's health, prevents harm to be done to the environment and inner strength to help others increases. The development of the wisdom, which unmistakably knows the true state of reality, brings wellbeing to this and the next life. Also, because if it abides in the mind stream, it cancels out wrong thinking.

All of us here have resorted to religion, psychology, neurology, medicine, etc., when searching for methods and knowledge on how to better the mind. Please investigate for yourself if through these methods a difficult mental state can abide simultaneously.

May the teachings of Tsodrung Wangpo spread far and wide!