

“Foundation of All Good Qualities”: Teaching by Arjia Rinpoche

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The “Foundation of All Good Qualities,” by Lama Tsongkhapa, is a summary explanation of Buddhism. Today I will talk about two key points: motivation and preparation

Motivation

1. Motivation is very important. We can turn our daily life actions of body, speech, and mind into Dharma Practice. “Dharma” means two things: a) Buddha’s teachings and b) All phenomena. Our daily life is dharma in the sense of the second meaning of the word, but our motivation changes it into “Buddha Dharama.

In the morning, we dedicate our activities to the Three Jewels. Then we can turn anger into compassion and attachment into realizing impermanence. When we go to sleep at night, we rejoice at our good actions and express regret at our negative actions.

2. Motivation involving teacher and students. The teacher must not teach for gain or fame but to benefit others. The listener must have good motivation, also. He can be likened to three kinds of vessels:
 - a. A vessel that is turned upside down does not receive water. This is like a student who doesn’t pay attention.
 - b. A vessel that leaks is like a student who forgets what he hears. (He should make a summary and review his notes)
 - c. A vessel that is contaminated in the inside and had not been washed out is like a student who is not pure in motivation.
3. The student should be aware of six attitudes regarding receiving Dharma teachings. The first four are cause and the last two are effect.
 - a. We are sick and need treatment. We are sick with the poisonous seeds of attachment, anger, and ignorance. Tibetans see a doctor to have him “kill” the seed of illness at its very roots.
 - b. The Dharma is our medicine
 - c. Our teacher is our doctor
 - d. Our practice is the treatment
 - e. As we become better, we recognize the Buddha as an enlightened being who is all knowing and is without negativities
 - f. As we become better, we wish the Dharma to remain forever.
4. The student practices on three levels:
 - a. He takes refuge
 - b. He practices renunciation
 - c. He generates compassion

Preparation

As a Dharma practitioner we need to do 7 things. These are expressed in the “Seven Limb Prayer”

Reverently, I prostrate with my body, speech and mind,

And present clouds of every type of offering, actually and mentally transformed
I confess all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time,
And rejoice in the virtues of all holy and ordinary beings.
Please remain until cyclic existence ends,
And turn the wheel of Dharma for sentient beings.
I dedicate all the virtues of myself and others to the great enlightenment.

1. **Prostration:** We respect the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha from our body, speech, and mind as we perform prostrations.
2. **Offering:** There are many ways to make offerings. Typically, a Tibetan altar will have 7 water bowls dedicated to offerings of the 5 senses:
 - Sight: flowers and light
 - Sound: music
 - Taste: food and water
 - Feeling: washing the body and bestowing silk kata
 - Smell: incense
3. **Confession:** Acknowledge and show regret for negativities
4. **Rejoicing:** Express happiness for all good things
5. **Requesting:** It is customary to ask a holy person for a teaching
6. **Supplication:** It is customary to ask a holy person for a blessing
7. **Dedication:** We need to “put our money in the safe.” When we accumulate merit, we need to dedicate it; otherwise, we can lose its benefit

Mediation:

When you meditate, you need to start with correct posture:

Legs crossed (ideally in the lotus position)

Back straight and shoulders out

Hands clasped: right hand sitting in the left hand with the thumbs touching

Neck slightly bent

Eyes half closed (can be closed) and looking down at the tip of your nose

Tongue touching upper palate as you breathe in and falling down when you breathe out