

Drusilla Lopez
Dec. 23, 2015
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Att: Director of Contemplative Scholarships
Isadra Foundation

Dear Lama Drubgyu,

After a couple of days of spontaneous, chaotic scribbles, I sit to weave a cohesive letter to you.

The weather since September has been simply gorgeous... the stark trees (after the fall of leaves), gives rise to clear, blue sky permeating the cabin. Great for gazing meditation... and a support to "just let go".

Without the ordinary distractions of worldly life, mind and mental events are piercingly perceptible; layers and levels which had remained hidden under a bushel of activity are now laid bare... ongoingly. Ahh... the great purification has begun.

The first couple of months (mid March - mid May) I sat out on the porch in the freezing pre-dawn hours, bundled in a fur coat, blanket, hat and gloves... holding a flashlight for the text. I needed to wake up from a sense of slumber in the mornings to adjust to the rhythm of full time retreat. I challenged myself to sit before the first bird chirped... like a loud grandfather clock waking up the Spring Chorus of nature.

After watching a couple of Wrens build a druid house for their eggs, protecting them with great care, the birth of three precious beings, their flight leaving an empty nest... a slight sadness came over me, and I moved back into my shriner room seat for good.

Oh, the summer ... a tropical jungle of wild life inside the quarters and out! After being infested with Chiggers (due to carelessness) I named them "the anti-Shamata bugs".

The Kazillion cicadas chanting their own mantra late afternoons and all through the night is quite a contrast to the silence of winter.

One hundred days of Lojong was a powerful way to embark on this three year journey of consciousness. Although I have engaged in a few cycles of Khorde Rushan (over the years), I still felt the freshness and depth of contemplating the six realms, four thoughts, Immeasurables and Six Perfections as detailed in Patrul Rinpoche's Kunzang Lama'i Shelung ... thereby deepening renunciation and giving rise to a firmer commitment to relative and absolute Bodhicitta.

The transition into the next section of practice was a welcome change, bringing a sense of relaxation and openness after intensive contemplations. We accumulated 100,000 Seven Line prayers of Guru Yoga with Je Mipham's "Shower of Blessings" text.

We are currently doing 135 days of Shamatha and Vipashana training from Longchenpa's "Kindly Bent to Ease" Trilogy (third book) ... the last twenty-seven steps.

Employing the practices (in their multiplicity) to cut through the ignorance brought on by the undercurrent clouds of thinking and habitual patterns ... in order to expose the natural mind and simplicity of

Wakefulness ... Rigpa ...

is an ongoing work in progress.

My strengths lie in prayer, ritual activities and pujas (to a certain extent). Open meditation with no fixed reference is definitely more of a challenge for long durations ... as we are in this section for 135 days. Of course, we do maintain the "four activities" daily, in between sessions. The subtleties of Longchenpa's twenty-seven steps are quite different from my previous training. I have respect for the clarifications and nuances of the process (which in totality is 141 steps ... sutra, tantra, dzogchen). We started on section three. It has been grounding me from intuition into a more detailed understanding of mind's tapestry ... expanding wisdom and knowledge. As a complementary reading to our morning Ngondro session, I have been using Dongsé Thrinley Norbu Rinpoche's "Cascading Waterfall of Nectar" as a reference book ... a true gem!

The ebb and flow of thoughts, memories and experiences (like echos) continues in waves ... letting go of the past, aging, a dramatic shift in lifestyle, a full time occupation of sitting, meditation and contemplation in an isolated environment, off the grid cabins, with an exquisite little Temple ... for gathering and offering. It's not to say it's all cozy wozy! Oh no!

The crucible of purification has arisen ... stripping away pride, revealing unconscious habitual tendencies and karmic residue accumulated over lifetimes.

The Four powers have taken on a profound quality, not to be taken for granted ... or lightly.

I had hoped to have more time to read the biographies of great masters... but have contented myself to leave a pillar of books on my puja table and read a few pages here and there. Just looking at the titles is inspiring and supportive... like old friends. I'm currently peeling into Lerab Lingpa/Terton Sogyal's biography "Fearless in Tibet".

On a side line: we had a temporary retreatant up here who was quite unstable and wild... though he had the blessings of over two decades of teachings (mostly from Dudjom lineage) and over 10 years with Khenrub Rinpoche... he had not experienced a lot of "Sitting".

As he was a very proud ex-navy submarine engineer, I tried to encourage him to "muscle up" by speaking in his military language. As we sat on my porch stairs one day during a break (early on), I said "this is the Navy Seals of meditation retreats".

His face turned beet red as he buried it in his hands.

(Freak out... yikes!). I was just trying to help... ha! He made it through eight months... quite impressive, considering.

OK Lama Prubgye... I hope this report finds you in a healthy and joyful state of well being where ever you may be on this Christmas day.

Pg. 5 has my final remarks and a short journal entry. Until next year...
Best Wishes!

pg. 6 retreat Schedule

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Scholarship
Drusilla Lopez

Summer journal entry:

Here in the Ozark mountains of rattle snakes,
Wolf spiders, razor back hogs, flying squirrels,
a single brilliant red bird among the splendor of many,
deciduous trees with azure blue sky peaking through
impermanant leaves, thunder and lightening shaking
awake the inertia of subconscious dream life,
incense wafting in the air; Lerab Lingpa sits on
my shrine, gazing in total ease, accompanying
another solitary being ... to welcome the dawn.

I hope these words of description of my retreat
experience is in accord with Tsadra Foundation's
scholarship objectives ... purpose.

All sessions are maintained {^{skipping sessions?} without taking breaks} (daily);
I have maintained proper conduct and harmony
with my retreat comrads to date;
and continue a concerted effort towards realizing
the goals of meditation practice
on and off the seat.

Many blessings your way!

Sincerely
Drusilla Lopez

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General Daily Schedule

{ Summer earlier
Winter later
according to sunrise

4:20 AM - roll up bed
- tea
- set up puja tables
- open shrine
- prostrations as time allows

5:00 AM - 7:30 TUN (Ngondro)
[Chutor] [short RED TARA - personal]

10:00 AM - 12:30 PM TUN
[Sur]

3:00 PM - 5:30 PM TUN

[Riwo Sangchod - Katog protectors]

[short Vajrakilaya - Chagdud Gonpa protectors] Personal
commitment

7:30 PM - 10:00 PM TUN
[and Chod Feast] Sometimes
I do Chod before TUN

* I have adjusted to 5+ hours of rest

* TUN is two hours prior to sunrise

* any missed session time (rare)... 20 min. / 1/2 hr. / etc.

I am adding up the increments and commit to making up

1 hr = 1 day of retreat at the end

Dear Lama Drubgyu,

PROGRAM OUTLINE FOR KATOG RITHROD DRUBGYU ATI-LING FOR 03/2015 to 01/2016

100 days of Lojong (from 03/06/2015 to 06/13/2015)

1. 10 days for the Freedom and advantages of this human life, how difficult they are to find, and once found, how ultimately meaningful.
2. 10 days for Impermanence.
3. 10 days for suffering/ the flaws of samsara.
4. 10 days for karma, cause and effect.
(Total: 40 days of lojong on the four thoughts)
5. 10 days of Refuge. Focusing on key points, accumulated refuge.
6. 50 days of Lojong on Bodhicitta as follows:

Lojong in Aspirational Bodhicitta

1. Lojong in the four immeasurables (5 days each, total of 20 days).
 - a. 5 days in immeasurable Equanimity/Equalness.
 - b. 5 days in Immeasurable Loving Kindness.
 - c. 5 days in Immeasurable Compassion.
 - d. 5 days in Immeasurable Joy.
2. Lojong in the following set of three (5 each, total of 15 days)
 - a. 5 days on equalizing self with others.
 - b. 5 days in exchanging self for others.
 - c. 5 days of cherishing others as most important.

Lojong in Action Bodhicitta- the six perfections/ paramitas (2 days for each of the first five paramitas, 5 days for the sixth paramita, total of 15 days.

1. 2 days of lojong in generosity/jin-pa
2. 2 days of lojong in ethical discipline/ tsul-trim
3. 2 days of lojong in patient forbearance/ zod-pa
4. 2 days of lojong in diligence/joyful effort/ tzon-dru
5. 2 days of lojong in meditate concentration/ samten
6. 5 days of lojong in wisdom/Sherab, or vipashyana practice.

This completes 100 days of mind training.

100 Days of Guru Yoga (06/14/2015 to 09/13/2015)

Accumulating 100,000 repetitions of 7 line prayer of Guru Rinpoche in the context of the Shower of Blessings text by Mipham Rinpoche.

135 Days of Shamatha and Vipashyana from Longchenpa's own don-tri/meaning commentary on "Mind Resting in Ease":

The third positive Instruction: The secret teachings that are the fruition of the heart essence as the definitive meaning, the vehicle of unsurpassed great perfection. (09/14/2015 to 01/23/2016).

OUTLINE

1. The succession of lineage lamas
2. The teachings that are the oral instructions
 - 2.1 Determining the view.
 - 2.2 Sustaining continuous meditation
 - 2.3 Relinquishing hope and fear for a result
- 2.1 Determining the View

2.1.1. A demonstration of how there are no externally perceived objects.

2.1.1.1. (step #115) A teaching on the eight examples of illusoriness and reflections for how appearances lack inherent truth.

2.1.1.2. (116) A teaching on how, if you examine there is no object, they are empty.

2.1.2. A demonstration of how the inner perceiver is devoid of foundation or root.

2.1.2.1. (117) How cognition is inherently lucid and without an existent support.

2.1.2.2. (118) Demonstration for examining how emptiness is devoid of basis.

2.2. Sustaining Continuous Meditation

2.2.1. The general explanation of how to meditate according to the three capacities of beings.

2.2.1.1. Basic, First Level Capacity

2.2.1.1.a. Shamatha

1. (119) Taming conceptual thoughts.

2. (120-121) Holding the mind on sense objects and their mental impressions.

3 (122) Training in mental phenomena.

2.2.1.1.b. Vipashyana

1. (123) Resting in evenness like space, in the non-existence of externally apprehended objects.

2. (124) Demonstrating the perceiver to be devoid of root, empty.

2.2.1.1.c. Unity of Shamatha and Vipashyana (125)

2.2.1.2. Middling Capacity

- 2.2.1.2.a. (126) The method of meditating on emptiness that is like space.
- 2.2.1.2.b. (127) The method of meditating on clarity that is like a mirror.
- 2.2.1.2.c. (128) The method of meditating on the arising of that, which is like waves.

2.2.1.3. (129) The Greatest capacity.

2.2.2. The specific instructions on the special path of skillful means.

2.2.2.1. Shamatha

2.2.2.1.a. Accomplishing

- 1. (130) Objects with appearances.
- 2. (131) Objects without appearances.

2.2.2.1.b. (132) Enriching

2.2.2.2. Vipashyana

2.2.2.2.a. Developing/Cultivating

- 1. (133) Appearances
- 2. (134) Emptiness

2.2.2.2.b. (135) Enriching.

2.2.2.3. Unity of Shamatha and Vipashyana

2.2.2.3.a. (136) The actual practice.

2.2.2.3.b. (137) Enriching

2.2.2.4. (138) Decisive Experience- Progress.

2.3. Relinquishing Hope and Fear for a Result.

2.3.1. (139) The basic space of the true nature of phenomena's own face/dharmata dharmadhatu.

2.3.2. (140) The nature of the manifestation of kayas as basic space.

2.3.3. (141) The display of timeless awareness.