
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”
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Geshe-la has some suggestions as to how to lead meditations. Principally a meditation must be led out of personal experience of the subject. This implies:

- a. familiarity with the subject and also
- b. meditation upon that subject.

Maybe it is not necessary to bring notes in order to lead a meditation, since what is brought to the meditation is not only what has been learnt from the text, but also through thorough study of the subject. When one then sits and concentrates upon the subject, the meditation can be completed without any notes. Leading the meditation therefore is just like doing the preparation meditation beforehand.

Achieving Happiness By Decreasing The Selfish Mind

In general it is said that we always need to observe our actions of body, speech and mind. This leads to the development of more self control. The most important actions to control are our thoughts, because they determine the other actions we complete, and thereby the consequences which we experience. It is the mind, or thought, which is behind all our other actions. Therefore, it is important to be able to discriminate between those states of mind which influence us to undertake both negative and positive actions.

The best moment to observe our state of mind is when we are in a very peaceful mood. When we are very distracted or busy, it is impossible to observe our own mind. Through observing the mindstream, we can see that it is the influence of our thoughts which drives one to undertake the various normal, day to day actions. This mind is very self centred. Our daily actions are done out of either fear of what might happen, or for some perceived advantage to oneself.

Through this very selfish way of thinking, we somehow distance ourselves from all others. Instead of helping them, even to those close to oneself, we cause even more harm and problems. As a result of this self centred attitude, we suffer loneliness and do not receive friendship or support from others. If we always adopt a selfish attitude and try to gain some advantage for ourselves, then there is no motivation to help others. If others also have this same attitude, then we receive no help from them.

It should be understood that our comfort and satisfaction in life depend upon others, and that we should not imagine we are living alone. Just as we wish for happiness and no suffering, so do all other beings. Our own happiness depends upon others - particularly those closely related to us. Therefore, to achieve happiness through a better future rebirth, and happiness in this immediate life, we must think of the needs of others. Those close to us are particularly important because in daily life they are the main reason for our unhappiness or problems.

This shows how important it is to include the needs of the other beings in our daily life as well as in our meditations. This is very different from the other selfish way of thinking. If the needs of others are respected, we develop good relationships with them, which in turn brings more happiness into our lives.

For these reasons the selfish mind should be subdued. This is the purpose for studying Lam Rim. Putting Lam Rim into practice has the potential to completely calm the mind through loving kindness for other beings.

The Purpose Of Studying Lam Rim Is To Develop The Good Heart

The reason for studying Lam Rim is to develop good heart in the mind. If good heart is developing then there will be more joy, peace and happiness in this life. It is characteristic of human beings to like those who show love and good heart towards them.

Shantideva:

Even your enemy will come to help you if you show friendliness and try to help them.

Benefiting others depends on having a good heart and loving kindness in the mind. We should practise showing loving kindness and friendliness even towards our enemies, rather than showing hatred, or attempting to defeat them. These outer enemies are not like anger and desire within oneself. Anger and desire within are the true enemies. They are what we should fight and subdue. We should not be careless about them or show friendliness to those enemies, otherwise we would be under their control.

In this way the self centred mind is a source of conflict and suffering for us. Such a mind makes it difficult for

others to actually show friendliness and offer help.

When one says, "Help others", this means to help all sentient beings - all living beings. Since such a thing does not seem feasible to the beginning practitioner, the very least that should be done is to try to help those closest to oneself - for example the members of the Study Group. We should all try to be very helpful to each other, whether it be sharing dharma knowledge or just sparing time to talk to each other. The objective is happiness in one's mind. This can be experienced by listening to dharma, or through the company of others. Experiencing this happiness is the purpose of life. As it is for ourselves, so it is for other beings, so we should try to help others to be happy.

Geshe-la is constantly encouraging us to show love and friendliness to others, just as parents never stop telling their children the same thing. He hopes that this will help us to make progress in this regard.

The Ten Non Virtuous Actions (continued)

Atisha said in his Thought Transformation,¹

When I am amongst many others I must
observe my speech and bodily action. When
by myself observe my thoughts.

This advice means that when with others, we should observe our actions to make sure that they are not one of the three non-virtuous actions of body - killing, stealing or sexual misconduct; nor one of the four non-virtuous actions of speech - lying, divisive speech, harsh speech or idle gossip.

422.122.121.16: Harsh Speech

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There are four characteristics which determine whether that action is complete or incomplete.

1. Basis

Is the object to which the speech is directed. Generally the base is an object to which one wishes to hurt or cause harm. Such a base object can be either animate, such as a living being, or inanimate (such as swearing at an inanimate object).

However it is said that in order to create the complete action of harsh speech, the base, which although in general can be either animate or inanimate, must be a living being. That living being must be able to understand one's speech and be hurt by it.

2. Thought

Recognition: Is directing one's speech to the specific object to whom one intended to use those words. This recognition must be correct. If one's speech is mistakenly directed to another, then recognition is incomplete. So recognition must be accurate for the action to be

complete.

Motivation: The wish to use abusive words or speech.

Delusion: Anyone of the three poisonous minds.

3. Deed

The actual deed is when the harsh speech is actually used. For example, degrading others by saying, "You have no sense of morality" or "You have no education." Or it can be by swearing at others. If one says, "You are blind", then it does not matter whether that is true or not, i.e. whether the person is in fact blind. Rather, it becomes harsh speech when the words can hurt the listener.

4. Finalisation

The other person fully understands the meaning of one's speech.

We should constantly be aware that we unnecessarily cause disharmony in our relationships with others and unnecessarily disturb their minds through the use of harsh speech. Harsh speech is one of the major causes of conflict in relationships. We do not usually use harsh speech to strangers, but are more likely to use it to those closest to us. In this way we cause conflict and lose friendships. We might think that what we are saying is very unimportant, but the listener may be very hurt and always remember that hurt. Even if they have a very bad memory, they can still remember a hurt administered by a friend. Then later, if there is conflict, they recollect the hurt and this makes the relationship worse.

Therefore to maintain relationships with others, we should look at the causes and conditions for bringing disharmony. The best way to develop relationships is to develop patience and tolerance whenever the cause of disharmony arises. On the other hand one should always create secure relationships by creating the causes and conditions that develop harmony.

End of discourse

Geshe-la: Question six from the exam paper, "How to integrate the study and practice of Dharma into my daily life?" The point here is to try to combine spiritual knowledge with daily activities. So one must look at a single day and what is done in that day. How are daily activities transformed into spiritual practice?

On waking up, remember that it is a fact that waking up shows that you are not dead. Immediately you will feel some joy. The reason why you are alive is because of the blessings of the refuge objects and your guru. So then you can remember the qualities of the refuge objects. Try to keep mindfulness of the dharma throughout the day.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

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¹Bodhisattva Maniavali: *The Jewelled Rosary of an Awakening Warrior*