
The Condensed Lam Rim

༄༅། །བྱུང་ཚུལ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སྟེ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
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We can meditate for a little while as usual. Sit in a good physical posture. Having seated oneself in the proper meditation posture one can't just jump straight away into the meditation. There is first a little bit of thinking and consideration to be done because meditation should be tailored so that it becomes a method to lessen the mental afflictions. If one is actually able to hit the spot with one's meditation it will lessen the mental afflictions. Meditation is done in order to improve our mind, to make our mind more pure, more positive, more wholesome and healthy.

When we try to improve our mind, try to make our mind more pure and healthier, try to generate more qualities and make the mind more wholesome, we encounter a variety of difficulties. We encounter a variety of disturbing mental thoughts that are counter-productive and that counteract our wish to improve our mind. We have a range of the different mental afflictions such as attachment, anger, pride and so forth and our meditation should be tailored to lessen those mental afflictions.

If, for example, we take attachment and look at the nature of attachment, it is really nothing but troublesome. If one is separated from the object of one's attachment then attachment makes the mind unhappy. Because one is separated from the object of one's attachment one is unhappy. However, if one meets the object of one's attachment other types of worries, such as the worry of losing the object, set in. Then, when one again is separated from the object, mental misery sets in again because of one's attachment. If one looks at all the angles of attachment one finds that it is not very useful. The same also applies to all the other mental afflictions, such as anger and pride. That's how I look at it. Some of you might have some different ideas, but that's what I think.

We can again look at the example of attachment. Attachment is grasping at an attractive and beautiful object, or at an object that appears to be attractive and beautiful. What we need to do in order to counteract the hold of attachment over our mind is to meditate on something that is directly opposite to the object that is perceived by attachment. One needs to meditate on impurity. One needs to meditate on something undesirable, something ugly and impure. Meditating in such a way, again and again, counteracts attachment. Then, through one's practice, one experiences a lessening of the hold of attachment over one's mind and one experiences the creation of some space and relaxation in one's mind. Together with that lessening of grasping and creation of space one also experiences more inner happiness and satisfaction and one will naturally

generate the recognition that the meditation works. That will then instil a great appreciation of meditation practice. One will value meditation practice much more than one values other things.

In this way, through one's own experience, one can confirm that it is not necessary for one to remain under the hold of attachment, anger and pride and that it is not necessary to experience all the difficulties that are induced by those mental states. If one finds a meditation that can hit the spot, that can actually counteract the mental afflictions, then that is a meditation that is worth pursuing. Then, if through the lessening of one's mental afflictions one experiences a lessening of misery, a lessening of worries, a more calm and clear mind and an increase in one's confidence and self esteem, one will naturally greatly appreciate meditation. In this way one is able to ascertain through one's own experience that meditation actually works and that it is not necessary to remain under the different types of mental afflictions.

If, in this way, one can increase the useful, wholesome, beneficial mental states and decrease the harmful mental states then one's mind will become more joyful and happy. We can use an external analogy. The more friends we have who benefit us, and the fewer enemies we have who harm us, the more happy we are and the more joyful we feel. Similarly, the more positive and wholesome mental states that we have, and the fewer harmful and destructive mental states, the more happy and joyful one will feel. Recognising the significance of meditation in this way will greatly inspire one to meditate. One will be very happy to meditate and one will tell one's friend that he or she will have to wait a little while longer, because first we have to do our meditation.

If, for example, a couple or two friends want to have a meal together but are angry with each other it would be much better, before sitting down together, if they were to retreat and do some meditation and then have the meal together. That would be much better than sitting together in anger to have the meal. It is very useful if one applies one's Dharma practice to these difficult life situations. Sometimes it can be something that is maybe not so important, sometimes it can be quite significant, but in each case if one uses one's Dharma practice it will turn out better in the end.

Dharma practice exists in one's mind and one's refuge exists in one's mind. This is something that one will come to understand if one gains some experience in Dharma practice.

Once you are sitting in the proper meditation posture bring the mind back home, collect the mind internally, without engaging external objects, without letting the mind be distracted by disturbing thoughts that try to divert the mind to external objects, completely focus the mind internally and then place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in this way, on the coming and going of the breath, for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

4.1. How to rely on the spiritual friend, the root of the path

A brief presentation of the way to strive

Actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

The 6 Preparatory practices - 5) Visualising the merit field and offering the seven limbs.

Last time we talked about the prostration - how to do a prostration and the significance and symbolism of the different parts of the prostration. We talked about the prostrations of body, speech and mind (physical, verbal and mental prostration) and we also talked about how to do these three together and how to do them individually. Today we can talk a little bit about the visualisation that accompanies the prostration and also about motivation.

The initial motivation for doing a prostration should be bodhicitta. First one reflects upon one's own situation in cyclic existence, and then, recognising one's own suffering, one generates renunciation, the wish to be free from the suffering of cyclic existence. One then transfers that understanding to others, realising that others are in exactly the same position as oneself, and one therefore generates compassion for them and the motivation to attain complete enlightenment in order to be able to accomplish the welfare of all the suffering sentient beings. In this way one generates the motivation of bodhicitta for prostration. Doing the physical, verbal and mental prostration together as a unit makes the life to which one was born very useful. We know that one's present situation is very fortunate but one also needs to make it useful and one needs to take the essence. Making a prostration with body, speech and mind is a way of doing this.

When one is doing prostrations one shouldn't just prostrate to the Buddhas of a certain realm or to the Buddhas of certain times individually. When one makes a prostration one should meditate on all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three times - those Buddhas that have become enlightened in the past, those Buddhas that become enlightened in the present and those Buddhas that are going to come about in the future. The Buddhas of the three times and the ten directions should be the objects of one's prostration. Then, while making the physical prostration, one should recite praises from one's mouth and meditate on faith in one's mind. In such a way one has a combination of physical, verbal and mental prostration.

One should single-pointedly focus on the Buddhas, meditate on faith in their qualities, recite praises in their name and then, with single-pointed faith, make a physical prostration. That is the prostration that combines physical, verbal and mental prostration. One can also do physical, verbal and mental prostration individually.

If you have a question, we can have some time for questions and answers.

Question; What sort of verbal prostration would that be...

Verbal prostration means reciting prayers from the mouth, such as prayers to the Buddhas, prayers like the refuge prayer, 'I go for refuge to the Buddha. I go for refuge to the Dharma. I go for refuge to the sangha. I go

for refuge to the guru' and so forth. There's a great variety. Since it is in relation to a prostration one can say, 'I prostrate to the guru. I prostrate to the Buddha. I prostrate to the Dharma. I prostrate to the sangha'. That's what verbal prostration means, reciting praises and so forth verbally.

The etymology of the Tibetan word for prostration, which is not necessarily present in the English word, contains, on the one hand, the meaning of purifying, of cleaning one's mind, and, on the other hand, developing qualities. These two meanings are contained in the Tibetan word for 'prostration'. That's also good to remember. If we do prostrations, for just five minutes for example, and you focus single-pointedly on the object of the prostration, on the action of doing the prostration and on meditating on faith it will make the mind more clear and light and also it will make the body more clear and light. Of course it is initially difficult. Initially one has to overcome some physical difficulties but as one gets more used to it, doing a thousand prostrations and so forth, the body will feel light, the mind will feel light and then one feels mentally more happy because one is purifying the negativities of body, speech and mind. By doing prostrations with body, speech and mind one has really taken the essence at that time.

Doing prostrations is the athletic activity of Buddhists. *Laughter.* If we do prostrations it will also increase our physical strength and our physical health. It will also increase the metabolism of our body. Currently, when we eat food a lot of the power of the food is not really absorbed by the body but is just lying around unused as ballast. If you do prostrations all of that gets properly used and absorbed and in that way one's physical health increases.

Question: What's the meaning of a full-length prostration?

We explained that last time. The full-length prostration means that your body is laid out fully on the ground. The benefits of doing a full-length prostration arise from the fact that the more atoms you cover with your body when you do prostrations the more merit you accumulate. When prostrating to the holy object the more atoms you cover with your body the more merits you accumulate. The last time we also explained how this relates to the four enlightened activities - peaceful, wrathful, controlling and increasing. The different parts of the action - going down, getting back up and so forth-- relate to the four activities. In the sutras it is explained that for each atom that is covered by prostrating to the holy object, for each atom that is covered with one's body one accumulates the merit of being reborn as a wheel-turning king. In this way, in the context of prostrations, it is more useful to be big than to be small. There was once a big Lama who said 'I have a really good body because I cover many more atoms when I prostrate. (*laughter*).

Question: How does it come that delusions arise even though one can see that they don't have any valid basis.

The problem might lie with not having realised selflessness, not having generated the wisdom that understands selflessness, because the wisdom that

understands selflessness is the only antidote that can cut off the root of the disturbed emotions. If we just cut off branches or even the trunk of the tree but leave the root in the ground then it will grow back. Still, even though we might not be able to cut off the root straight away, the aim to trim the tree regularly is useful.

The reason why mental afflictions arise so strongly is because we are not free of the four causes of the generation of mental afflictions. These are the proximity of the object, the inappropriately conceptualising mind, or the distorted thought, the seed of the delusion which we haven't abandoned and that we are very habituated to the delusion.

As long as those four conditions are present the delusion will arise in the mind. There is nothing else that one can do. If, for example one has proximity to the object, the distorted thought that causes the delusion to arise (that distorts the object into something completely unreal at which then the delusion grasps), hasn't abandoned the seed of the delusion and has the habit of the delusion then the delusion will arise.

Even though sometimes it seems difficult to get one's head above water, so to speak, to meditate there is definitely a benefit in meditation. Even though at times it seems difficult to attain any progress there's definitely a benefit in meditation.

Question: How can I avoid becoming uptight in my practise?

In order to avoid becoming uptight in your practice you have to practice gradually. You become uptight if you don't practice in a gradual, step-by-step way. Once, for example, I recommended to a student that to study. The student picked up a book, of the same size as Geshe-la just showed, opened it, and didn't understand. He couldn't make head or tail of what was going on, became very upset and closed the book and didn't want to continue studying. I then advised him to start at the beginning of the book and just to read it through slowly chapter-by-chapter, going through each chapter trying to understand the meaning. By approaching it in this way the study developed very well.

One has to really go slowly, slowly, step by step. There's a very deep meaning why, all the time, I say to take it easy, go slowly, step by step. There's significance there. There's a saying that by going slowly, slowly, one will reach one's destination. In Tibet, for example, when one had to travel huge distances by foot if people became very upset and had a great urgency, constantly asking, 'When are we going to arrive?' and 'How much longer is it going to take?', the more experienced and older people would say, 'Go slow, go slow, and then you will reach your destination'.

If we do things in a hurry we generate this hurry in our mind. If we generate this hurry or stress in our mind then we tend to overlook things and our activities won't work out really very well any more. If, for example, people rush off to the airport very often they arrive at the airport and realise that they have forgotten their tickets. One time Roger Kunsang, and I were on the way back to Melbourne from Sydney. I went earlier and he told me he

would catch up with me later but when he arrived at the airport he hadn't brought his ticket and he hadn't any money on him. So, first he had to go the bank and get some money. It did work out then in the end, he got his ticket, but it's stressful.

An experienced person will approach their activities in a gradual, step-by-step manner, giving them enough time to do the things that they have to do. Someone without experience will say, 'There is still time later. There is still time later', and procrastinate saying, 'I still have time. I still have time', and then it becomes all a rush and it becomes too late. Once I visited a bank in Melbourne and the teller was a young man who was inexperienced and nervous. When he had to open something he couldn't do it and became muddled and nervous and it just didn't work out. An older and experienced teller came and took over and handled it very calmly and sorted it out. If you want to know how to prepare before going somewhere you have to ask Pam. Pam is really the expert in preparing.

That's enough for tonight. As was explained at the beginning focus the mind internally and then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha and don't let it be distracted by thoughts that engage external objects

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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