
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

9 June 2004

We can meditate for a little while as usual. Seat yourself in the proper meditation posture. Turn the mind inwards, bringing it back home; not engaging external objects; not letting it be distracted to external objects by disturbing thoughts. You have to completely focus the mind internally. Then, from within that state, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. The focus on the coming and going of the breath should be very clear and vivid. It shouldn't be a sleepy, dull type of focus, but it should be very crisp, fresh and clear. From time to time during the meditation you can also investigate, with the mental factor of introspection, whether you are still single-pointedly abiding on the object of meditation or whether the mind has wandered off. If you find that the mind has wandered off bring it back to the meditational object. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

It can be very good to combine this meditation on the coming and going of the breath with a simple visualisation of exhaling black light with the out breath. Visualising one's mental afflictions, sufferings and negativities exhaled in the form of black light with the out breath from one's nostrils. When one breathes in one can visualise that one is inhaling the blessings of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the form of white light. That white light has the nature of the blessings of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and is completely pervading one's body and completely purifying one's body of any type of mental or physical ailment or problems that one might have. Finally one's body actually becomes the nature of that white light. By meditating on the coming and going of the breath in that way the meditation becomes a specific Buddhist meditation.

A brief presentation of the way to strive

The actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

The 6 preparatory practices: 5) Gathering merit and purifying negativities

We have started discussing offerings. We finished explaining how to do the ordinary type of offering.

There are many general benefits to making offerings. It would take too much time to go through all of them. Briefly, it is said that the final result of even just throwing one flower as an offering to a Buddha will be that one will attain Nirvana. You can see that from accumulating even a small amount of virtue a very great effect will ultimately arise. Knowing that should inspire you to engage in even small actions of virtue, because ultimately

they all will have a very great effect.

If we compare the increasing factor of external cause and effect and the increasing factor of internal cause and effect, the internal cause and effect is vastly more powerful. We have heard many stories how the causes for great positive effects were created by just some simple or small offering. Understanding that one should include offering in one's daily practice and remember that, for example, just offering a tiny morsel of food to an animal based on the motivation of wanting to make that sentient being happy and content or suffer less is a very powerful virtue that will have a very great effect in the future. If one has pets at home, like fish or cats, if one feeds them with the right attitude after first generating a very powerful virtuous motivation, wanting them to be happy, wanting them to have less suffering, then even engaging in this very tiny action of giving them their food becomes a very powerful, virtuous karma.

In this way those people who have pets will accumulate greater amounts of merit than those without pets. There might be some expense involved but the merits are very good (*laughter*). Benefiting others is a universally recognised quality and seen as positive by those that don't practice the dharma as well as by those that practice the Dharma..

Other benefits from making offerings are that one will have accomplished some purpose with one's possessions and with one's body. When one makes offerings to the Buddha at least one's wealth and the body have served some purpose. One has taken some essence from having them.

Because one makes offerings to the Buddha, who is a very powerful offering object, one will not be reborn in the lower realms. That is also a problem that is solved.

By making offerings one's own wealth increases, and one's wisdom increases.

By making light offerings one's mind becomes clearer. One can do this any time. When one, for example, uses a lighter one can visualise that one is making a light offering to the Buddhas and that one has dispelled the mental darkness of all sentient beings. The result of this will be that one's own mind will become clearer, one's own mental darkness will be dispelled and one will also attain a type of clairvoyance that is called the 'divine eye'.

Another benefit from making offerings is that, at the time of the death, one will have certain types of auspicious visions. There are three types of benefits at the time of death.

First of all, by having made nice offerings to the Buddhas during one's lifetime, at the time of death one will naturally remember virtuous practice and virtue. One's mind will be naturally go into a virtuous state at the time of death. Because one has acquainted oneself with making offerings during one's lifetime, which is virtuous, at the time of death the mind follows that habit and one naturally arises in a virtuous state.

The second benefit is that, because one has made offerings that have been enjoyed by the Buddhas, one will

remember the Buddhas at the time of death. One will think of them, and see them or look at the Buddhas at the time of death. Because of the admiration that one generates for the Buddhas at the time of death one will remember the Dharma. One will see the Buddhas, or look at the Buddhas, at the time of death and one will remember the Dharma. Those are the benefits at the time of death of acquainting one's mind with virtue during one's lifetime..

The third benefit is that one will have visions of hosts of deities and of oneself making requests to the Buddha to remain until all sentient beings have attained enlightenment. One will also have visions of the sun shining or the moon shining.

There are many benefits of making offerings but, for our purposes, we can leave it at that now.

Sometime before I said that I would explain the benefits of making offerings to one's parents that are explained in the *'Letter to a Friend'* by Nagarjuna. The moral here, of course, is that it is not enough just to respect and have faith in the Buddhas and to make offerings to the Buddhas. One also needs to be respectful to one's parents and to other sentient beings and to make offerings to one's parents and to other sentient beings. The purpose of making offerings is to make the mind of the Buddha happy and pleased. However, the Buddha is not going to be very pleased if we, on the one hand, make offerings to him but, on the other, behave very badly towards sentient beings.

This advice, that one has to make offerings to and respect one's parents, was given by Nagarjuna to King Desheg-Nyingpo. Nagarjuna said that, "That is what the Buddha taught". The first thing is that when one makes offerings to one's parents one will not be harmed by humans or non-humans. One will be included in the group that receives the blessing of the gods and attain liberation. By making offerings to the teacher one will never be separated from the teacher. By honouring one's parents and making offerings to one's parents one will receive worldly renown. Because it is very well regarded to make offerings to one's parents one will retain renown in this life. This is from the point of view of this life. The benefit in the next life is that one will attain a higher rebirth.

We can conclude discussing offerings here tonight. Next time we will explain the way of performing the ordinary offerings. We have done this once before but there's no harm in going through it again. The way one visualises the object of offering, how the offerings are offered, and the visualisation that one does and which part of the offering object the offerings are offered to, and so forth. We can do this next time and then we will get to the supreme offerings, the highest offerings. For tonight, do you have some questions?

Question: 2 years ago a cat attacked a bird and I, out of concern for the bird, took the bird to the vet to get it fixed, and they put the bird down. Should I have kept the bird at my house instead of taking it to the vet. ?

The bird is sick so you have to take it to the doctor unless you have clairvoyance and know that the vet is going to

kill the bird. If you don't have that type of clairvoyance then, of course, you take the animal to the doctor because you want to help the animal.

Question: I still feel depressed about it.

You didn't take the bird to the vet because you wanted to harm the bird. It would have been something different if you had known that the vet was going to put down the bird. From one's own side one wants to help the bird and then of course one takes it to the vet. There's no need to be sad about it. You didn't do anything bad. Instead of being sad just offer some prayers for the bird.

Once I went to lunch at a friend's house. Her cat had also caught a bird and Polly chased the cat around the house. I think they went around the house three times before she could catch the cat. Then she took the bird away from the cat. The bird was actually unharmed because the cat only wanted to play with the bird. It didn't intend to eat the bird because the cat actually gets quite a lot of food. It's very well fed. As I told you the other day, if you feed the cat well it will not be interested in killing mice and birds. It might catch them for the purpose of pleasure, to play with them, letting them go and then catching them again, letting them go and then catching them again, but it won't be interested in actually killing them.

Big cats, tigers and leopards and so forth, also catch smaller animals. They don't kill them but bring them back to their brood and show their brood how to catch smaller animals. They let it go and they catch it again, they let it go and catch it again. It is said that they do that in order to show the small leopards and tigers how to catch an animal. That shows that animals do possess certain intelligence.

Question: I am surprised to hear that there is worship in Buddhism..

I said to Geshe-la that the word 'worship' means to make offerings to and pray to the Buddha and so forth. I don't know if that is also your understanding of 'worship'. Geshe-la said that in that case there's lots of worship in Buddhism.

Questioner: For me worship is based on blind faith.

Blind faith is the type of faith that is not generated out of reason. Blind faith is a faith that is generated independently of reason. There are certain people who say that faith in the Dharma and Dharma practice is blind faith. Personally I don't think so. For example, the colour of those roses is yellow. A blind person, who can't see the colour of the roses but is told the roses are red, will believe what they are being told, because they can't see for themselves. In this case it would be blind faith because they don't have any basis for the belief that the roses are red apart from what they are being told. Maybe that's an example of blind faith.

Question: In western medicine there is the opinion that it isn't good for people to meditate who have had a psychotic episode.

No, I think actually it's the reverse. These days there are more and more western doctors who recommend meditation. Of course they don't really know the methods

for meditating, but they still recommend it.

Questioner repeats the question.

These decisions of whom to recommend to meditate have to be made on an individual basis. We don't know what the other person likes or doesn't like because we don't know their mind. However, we always jump to conclusions and think that when something bad happens it is because of one's meditation. For example, somebody might meditate and become mentally disturbed. Then one jumps immediately to the conclusion that the mental disturbance arose because of their meditation practice. But we do know that if we don't subdue our mind then we will not be happy.

Question: Similarly to transforming the action of using a lighter into making an offering, can any action be transformed into an offering?

Yes, you can. When you use the lighter you can meditate on making the light offering. In this case the light dispels darkness. You have to associate the darkness with internal darkness; the darkness of ignorance. Similarly, other actions can be transformed likewise.

Question: Sometimes there is danger of exposing oneself to dark energy when helping others.

If you benefit others there's not really a great danger that something bad is going to happen to you. If there's some danger that something bad is going to happen to you then you can just leave it. If the person you want to help is someone who is very angry then there might be some danger. There are people who even kill their parents out of anger. When the mind is overcome by anger it forgets all about the benefit and kindnesses that were received.

Question: Can you give me some advice for someone who has Parkinson's Disease?

Well it also depends on how advanced the Parkinson's Disease is. If the mind is already very degenerated then it would be very difficult to meditate.

Questioner: It has just started.

In that case there can be some benefit from meditation; just sitting quietly and not thinking too much. In general it can be very difficult. There are some cases where it is really very difficult to change their mind. This happens if the mind is accustomed to falling into a state where one just continues to think, going from one thought to the next, just going on thinking. There are people who can recognise that the mind is like that but they find it very difficult to change because naturally they fall again and again into this habit of just starting to think and think and think and think. It is very difficult if we generate this mental habit in our mind.

Sometimes, from a young age, we fall into a habit of being very self-willed and not wanting to listen to what our parents have to say. One always rejects the good advice of parents and holds onto one's own harmful habits simply because one wants to reject the advice of the parents and simply wants one's own way. That is also a very difficult situation where it's very difficult for the mind to change, because of closing the mind to positive

advice of the parent.

Bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards and placing it on the mantra. Then, when you drive home tonight, please drive carefully because it is raining. Otherwise I will be worried. Sometimes, even though the driver is not afraid the passenger gets very afraid (*laughter.*) This is similar – you might not be worried but I will be a bit worried.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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