

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

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We can meditate a little bit as usual. Sit yourself in a comfortable and relaxed position. As we have previously discussed the purpose of meditation, there is no need to do so again. However, despite already knowing about the purpose of meditation, one needs to reflect on the need to make the mind clearer, more refined and happier. That is one's own responsibility, and one needs to take it into one's hands to change one's mind so that one can be a happier person.

One needs to establish through inner reflection the ways of thinking that provide happiness, and the ways of thinking that give suffering. By repeatedly turning the mind inwards and repeatedly analysing the mind, one will come to an understanding of which ways of thinking give happiness, and which ways of thinking give suffering. Then one will be able to recognise that if the mind abides within the way of thinking that gives suffering, then it experiences suffering. One also comes to understand that if one changes the way of thinking to a different state of mind, then one experiences happiness. One needs to generate this wisdom about how one's mind works, and then make use of it.

If one doesn't have recourse to a positive inner mental state, then when difficulties are experienced one immediately goes into depression, one immediately gives up, and one immediately loses one's courage and one's strength of mind. However, if the mind is familiar with different positive mental states that can act as a inner refuge or backup when one experiences external difficulties, then one will not immediately lose one's strength of mind, one's courage and so forth.

It makes a great difference if one has trained one's mind in positive mental states through meditation. Then, when one experiences difficulties they are much easier to bear. One doesn't lose heart as quickly; one doesn't lose one's strength of mind and so forth. Therefore in order to generate this inner refuge, this positive and good state of mind, one arrives at the need for meditation.

For some people the more difficulties they experience, the more they gain strength while for others, the more difficulties they experience, the more they lose heart and lose their strength of mind. That also shows the advantage of mental training. One needs to focus the mind, which is ordinarily distracted to external objects, internally. A mind that is distracted by many external objects lacks power, but when the mind stops engaging with many external objects and remains on one point, then the power of the mind can be utilised. When the power of the mind is utilised the mind becomes much, much stronger. Therefore we now focus the mind first of all internally, not engaging external objects, and then we place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that way for a few minutes. *(Pause for meditation)*

That is enough - I have to wake you up from your meditative equipoise.

4. How to guide with the actual instructions

4.1. The way of relying on the spiritual friend who is the root of the path

4.1.2. A brief presentation of the way to strive

4.1.2.2. The reason one needs to strive in two ways, eliminating misconceptions regarding the way of striving

Last year we reached the point there was a debate where it was said by a certain person that since all conceptual thoughts are grasping at characteristics, all conceptual thoughts have to be stilled and all conceptual thoughts are obscurations.

The answer to this is that this is a misunderstanding that does not understand the difference between distorted, misleading conceptual thoughts, and accurate valid conceptual thoughts. This type of proponent has the idea that analytical meditation is harmful to the attainment of single-pointed concentration. They say that if one were to practise analytical meditation before engaging in singlepointed meditation, then it would become an obstacle, since conceptual thoughts increase, and in such a way obstruct the attainment of single-pointed concentration.

Since single-pointed concentration is the single-pointed abiding of one's mind, then the perception of these proponents is that to engage in analytical meditation before attaining single-pointed concentration becomes counter-productive. They think its OK to engage in analytical meditation once one has attained singlepointed concentration, but they think its counterproductive to do so before. However in actuality engaging in analytical meditation before engaging in single-pointed concentration actually facilitates the attainment of single-pointed concentration. It is much easier to engage in single-pointed concentration and to also abide single-pointedly if the mind is prepared by analytical meditation.

The reason why our mind is so distracted now and constantly wandering off to external objects is because of not having enough analytical meditation. In order to illustrate that point, an analogy is used here of a goldsmith who, before transforming the gold into any type of ornament or jewellery, first heats the gold in a fire to refine it and make it workable, very pliant and flexible. Having done so, the gold is ready and the goldsmith can do whatever he wants with it. Similarly one's mind first needs to be refined and prepared through the analytical meditation process. Once that is done then the mind is serviceable, and one finds it very easy to meditate single-pointedly.

The process of using analytical meditation to refine the mind, is likened to the process with which a goldsmith refines the gold in fire. The point of refining gold in fire is to get rid of impurities that might be present in the gold. Likewise analytical meditation is for the purpose of getting rid of impurities that might be present there. Here one has to reflect again and again on the harmful nature of the root delusions, the secondary delusions, and the black karmas that are accumulated through the power of these delusions. By reflecting on their disadvantages again and again - how they keep one in cyclic existence, how they constantly cause suffering and misery, how they always beat one down into suffering and so forth, then the mind will naturally let go of these mental delusions, and arise in a pure state. For example by reflecting again and again on the disadvantages of anger, one naturally lets go of anger because the more deeply one understands the disadvantages of anger, the more naturally the mind lets go of anger. In order to refine the mind in such a way one needs to do this analytical meditation of reflecting on the shortcomings of the delusions, and the karma they generate.

By reflecting again and again on the different points of the Lam Rim - the precious human rebirth, its great potential and its rarity, its impermanence, then reflecting on the sufferings of the lower realms, on the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and the characteristics of black and white karma, and the qualities of bodhicitta the mind becomes more and more refined and suitable for change.

It is as if these meditations are the moisture that softens up the mind, making it flexible and workable. Therefore analytical meditation is a very important as preparation for the attainment of single-pointed concentration. By practising these analytical meditations again and again, the mind becomes ripe for the attainment of singlepointed concentration, and that's why the analytical meditations are significant. By meditating in this manner, one establishes conducive internal mental conditions for the attainment of calm abiding.

The reason why one finds it difficult to attain calm abiding is because one does not have the conducive internal conditions, and the disruptive internal conditions are very strong. By doing these different analytical meditations, one is able to train the mind in the conducive mental states that facilitate the attainment of calm abiding. Then, of course, calm abiding is needed in order to change the mind at its most profound level. One needs to attain calm abiding in order to achieve a very profound change of mind, but calm abiding will not happen if the mind has not already been trained before in these different virtuous mental states. The main adverse conditions for the attainment of calm abiding are mental excitement and mental dullness, and we will talk a little bit about these two next time. Then one arrives at the main part of the Lam Rim. But for tonight we can stop here and have some questions.

Question: Could you please explain what calm abiding is?

Answer: Calm abiding is a single-pointed concentration that is held by the bliss of mental and physical pliancy with which one can focus on any object according to one's wishes, for however long one wants. It is attained by going through the nine stages of calm abiding. Just having a single-pointed mind by itself does not mean that one has single-pointed concentration. For the attainment of single-pointed concentration, one needs to also have an absence of mental sinking or mental dullness, for example. Just because one abides singlepointedly does not mean that one has overcome the subtle mental dullness.

When one attains calm abiding, then the mind and the body are pervaded by a certain type of bliss that arises from physical and mental flexibility. The sequence is that first one attains what is called mental pliancy, which is (tape turned over here) a state that induces physical pliancy, which then induces the pliancy of the psychic energies, which then in turn induces the bliss of physical pliancy which then in turn induces the bliss of mental pliancy. At this time then the body becomes very light, and one doesn't have, for example, any more these problems of aching knees, aching back and so forth. The body gets this feeling of being very light, refined, flexible and supple, and the same also applies to the mind. Then because of this suppleness the mind can abide single-pointedly on the object. There is not the heaviness and distraction that one is currently experiencing.

At the present time when one tries to meditate the mind is very unwieldy. It is very heavy and very easily distracted to different objects. When one attains calm abiding then one experiences this physical and mental suppleness and the bliss that arises out of that suppleness. Being aware of these benefits of calm abiding is also important. Ultimately the mind, while being very supple is also single-pointed and immovable like a mountain.

Question: Can you give an example of the school of thought that thinks it's a hindrance to practice analytical meditation prior to the attainment of single-pointed meditation?

Answer: There are many. We have already been through the different views before. Of course it is a bit of a cliché but, there are for example certain ascetic yogis who assert that analytical meditation is useless, and that the real practice is single-pointed meditation. On the other hand there are scholars who assert the opposite. They say that the real meditation is analytical meditation and not the single-pointed meditation. Sometimes one finds there are two camps. We have already been through how one facilitates the other and the reasons why both are needed.

Question: Is it possible to actually do a meditation without having done some sort of analysis?

Answer: Yes, it is possible to meditate without initially engaging in an analytical process, but it won't be beneficial. As we have already said, in order to have a good effective meditation one needs to follow the three steps of listening, contemplation and meditation. As Shakya Pandita said, those who want to meditate without listening, for example, are like an armless person trying to climb a mountain. Of course one can meditate without first engaging in analytical processes, but it won't be very effective. If one likes, one can meditate on attachment. One can just visualise the object of attachment and reflect on the different qualities of the object of attachment, making it very nice in one's mind. The more one creates this fiction about the object, then the greater the attachment for the object becomes. So that is possible. That would be an analytical meditation on attachment.

If one, for example, just meditates on calming the mind, without reflecting on the different disadvantages of the delusions, then one arrives at the situation where even though one can calm the mind temporarily, anger, for example, arises again very quickly and easily. Why? Because one has not really engaged in any analytical meditation on the disadvantages of anger. One has not really created any counter-positive to anger and that's why, even though one meditates, one is in a situation where the delusions arise again and again. As long as one can see, for example, some benefit in the delusion or some attractive quality in the object, then the attachment will arise again and again no matter how long one meditates. In order to counteract the arising of attachment, one needs to engage in analytical meditation regarding the actual nature of the object.

As was explained at the beginning, turn the mind inwards and then place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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