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

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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Seat yourself in a relaxed and comfortable, yet appropriate, meditation posture. The mind then needs to be clean, clear and happy. I think Geshe-la is trying to describe a "can do" attitude, that of somebody who is very positive and has a "can do" positive attitude. That is the type of mental state that one needs. This state of mind is the opposite of the opposite of having a state where one feels down. Sometimes one gets into a state where one feels down regardless of whether one is walking around, sitting or whatever. Here one needs to have the opposite state of mind.

Meditation practice should be beneficial for one's life and should benefit any activity that one engages in. As the great Bodhisattva Shantideva remarked, "There are many things that bring joy to the mind but there is only one thing that can really bring profound joy to the mind and that is meditation." Therefore one should set aside all the other things that the mind joyfully occupies itself with and concentrate the mind on meditation. If we think about our experience, normal joys go away very quickly. They are very fleeting experiences and what one needs is a more lasting and profound experience of happiness.

There are actually many different types of meditation that are applicable to different situations. If, for example, one is a person that doesn't experience lots of difficulties such as mental problems and so forth there are meditation practices that concentrate on developing and refining the mind. If one is experiencing different types of problems there are meditations to counteract those problems. There is a variety of meditations from which to choose. For bodhisattvas there are meditations to generate the bodhicitta that has not been generated and there are meditations to increase the bodhicitta that has been generated.

Similarly to these examples of meditations for the bodhicitta that has not been generated, to be generated newly and so forth, there are meditations to generate the mental happiness that one is not yet experiencing. The general purpose of meditation is to have a happier mind. To experience happiness in the mind one needs to practice the meditations that can generate this happiness that one is not yet experiencing. One needs to look into the methods through which one can generate the happiness that one is not yet experiencing.

If we analyse the happinesses that we are experiencing and the way we are experiencing them, for example, from eating and drinking, from interacting harmoniously with others and so forth, then we will find that these happinesses do not really touch the depth of one's mind. They don't really bring joy to the primary, fundamental consciousness. One creates different types of situations where one can experience company and have nice interactions with others, and where one can enjoy nice food and drink but, if one looks at the reality of all these situations, the joy that one is experiencing in this way does not bring real joy to the primary consciousness. They are just pleasures that are moving the surface of one's consciousness but don't really bring joy into the depths of one's consciousness. They are fleeting superficial experiences that don't bring about any profound happiness.

The ordinary way of looking at one's situation is that one thinks if one has all the conducive outer conditions together one experiences happiness. Then, when the outer conditions disintegrate, or a person loses them, a person usually experiences a loss of happiness and one thinks, "Oh that person is not happy any more". But one hasn't really looked at the real conditions for happiness. The real reason why the person is unhappy is because they are lacking the internal conditions for happiness. In order to experience inner happiness one needs to have the internal conditions for happiness. If these internal conditions for happiness are lacking then, when the external conditions for temporary happiness go away there are no internal conditions for internal happiness and there is no happiness left. What one really needs to look at are the conditions for the attainment of internal happiness.

But the situation is that even though all the external conditions for physical happiness are present one does not experience inner happiness. One then needs to look at why it is that one is not experiencing happiness despite all the external conditions being present. The answer is that one doesn't experience happiness because the internal conditions for happiness are missing. If one is not able, for example, to meditate on patience even with small conditions, with small problems, then even small problems immediately have the capacity to disturb one's mind. Or one's mind is being torn between attachment for friends and anger for one's enemies and one is experiencing a lack of love and compassion.

There could be different inner reasons why one is not experiencing happiness. If, for example, one is not able to be patient, and gets immediately extremely upset even when just very small things go wrong, the condition for the unhappiness is internal and not external, and the conditions for inner happiness are lacking.

It is similar with attachment. The mind can be so overcome by attachment that it takes over one's life. The mind loses any freedom and one is not experiencing happiness and is distressed by the attachment but, at the same time, one feels that there is something to be gained from following attachment because the object seems so attractive. It is as if there is some kind of potential, some kind of positive energy or something that one could attain by meeting with the object. In this case, when then the mind is in this extremely disturbed state, it helps a lot to meditate on the impurity of the object. Meditating for a few minutes, five or six minutes, on the impurity of the object, will definitely restore peace and calmness in the mind because meditation on impurity is the counterpositive to attachment. Attachment is based on perceiving the object as extremely attractive and by counteracting that perception one can calm down the attachment and pacify the mind and experience more internal freedom and happiness. One has to apply these various methods towards one's mind in order to generate the internal conditions for happiness.

If, for example, the mind is overcome by anger for enemies this indicates that one has an inability to practice patience with enemies. What one needs to do here is identify the psychology of anger and then counteract anger appropriately by remembering that anger always exaggerates the harmful nature of the object. Mentally one goes repeatedly over the perceived faults of the other person until nothing else appears to one's mind and, in this way they become greatly exaggerated within one's mind. One needs to recognise the way the mind works, that it is not really perceiving reality and this then makes it possible to start looking at the person in another light. One also needs to remember the disadvantages of anger, the potential of anger to disturb one's own mind, how its mere generation takes away the happiness in one's mind.

In this way one understands how one generates anger towards one's enemy just by hearing the name of the other person or just by remembering them. One can counteract it by remembering that one's perception is not based in reality and remembering the disadvantages of anger, which is very important, and then also remembering how the other person is suffering and destitute of happiness and so forth. In this way one can turn one's mind around and meditate on love and compassion, even for one's enemy. In this way one has a conducive condition for one's internal happiness.

One needs to understand the way the mind works and that by generating positive thoughts such as love and compassion then correspondingly the harmful thoughts and mental states will reduce. The more one can generate positive thoughts, then directly proportionally the less the harmful thoughts will arise. In this way one will experience inner happiness even if one does not want to experience inner happiness. One needs to generate these positive mental attitudes, identifying the specific mental states that take away one's happiness, then generating the antidote, the counter-positive mental states within one's mind, so that they then can counteract the harmful states that cause suffering.

Now you all know what to do. Once you are sitting in a good meditation posture bring the mind back home, focus it internally and then place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Let the mind enter the breathing and we can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

4.2 How to train after having established a relationship with a spiritual friend

4.2.1 Exhorting the disciple to take the essence of this basis with endowments

4.2.1.1 The identification of the basis of the freedoms and endowments

Last time we had reached the point where we started with the eight freedoms and ten endowments. The eight freedoms refer to freedoms from inopportune states where one cannot practice the dharma and the ten endowments refer to ten conducive conditions for the practice of the dharma. If you have questions we can now have some time for questions and answers. If you don't have any questions I will continue with these eight freedoms and ten endowments. There are no questions?

The eight freedoms are called "freedoms" because they are eight states where one is free from inopportune states regarding dharma practice. It is explained in the sutras that the cause for attaining the eight freedoms is the practice of morality. The cause to be free from these eight inopportune states where one cannot practice the dharma is to practise morality.

One inopportune state is to be reborn in a border country where there are none of the four types of disciples present. The four types of disciples refer to bhikkus and bhikkunis, and to male and female upasakas. An upasaka is a Buddhist lay person with vows. One can see here how men and women are regarded as equally important in Buddhism. It mentions bhikkus and bhikkunis. Bhikkunis are female fully ordained practitioners and bhikkus are male fully ordained practitioners. It also mentions male and female upasakas. It doesn't just say that one needs to be in a place where there are male upasakas or male bhikkus. It is equal opportunity. Male and female upasakas and male and female ordained practitioners. The source for this is the vinaya teaching, the sutras on vinaya. The perfection of wisdom sutras also talk repeatedly about the sons and daughters of good lineage. They don't just talk about the sons of good lineage but repeatedly talk about the sons and daughters of good lineage. Similarly, in Tantra, there are dakas and dakinis and there are another class of practitioners that are referred to as heroes and heroines. There is always the female counterpart so there is equal opportunity in Buddhism.

The first inopportune state is to be reborn in a place where there are none of these four types of disciples present. This would be defined as a "border country".

Another inopportune state is being reborn with defective faculties, such as a mental defect that would make it difficult to develop the wisdom that can distinguish right from wrong. Or to be born deaf, dumb or blind. Here it refers specifically to situations where one is reborn with incomplete faculties or defective faculties. One can be born with complete and healthy faculties that deteriorate over time or are damaged. That is different. When it talks here about the inopportune state it means to be reborn with defective faculties; being reborn blind or deaf, not being able to see the form of the Buddha or not being able to hear the teachings. Further inopportune states are being born with very strong anti-dharma views such as complete disbelief in karma or a complete disbelief in the existence of past and future lives or the existence of the three jewels and so forth, or being reborn during a time when no Buddha has taught.

These four are the four inopportune states relating to human rebirth. Then there are the four inopportune states relating to non-human rebirths which are rebirth in the three lower realms and being reborn as a long-life god. Being reborn as a long-life god can be related both to the rebirth in the form realm as well as in the formless realm. In the form realm it means taking rebirth in a state of absorption without recognition, where the practitioner abides in a concentration without coarse recognition, a pure concentrative state without any coarse recognition, or being reborn in the formless realm. This relates to ordinary individuals. There are also arya beings that are being reborn in the formless realm which is, of course, different. For them it is not an inopportune state. But if one is reborn in the formless realm as an ordinary individual it is an inopportune state.

By looking at one's situation one can see that one has all these eight freedoms complete and one can recognise how fortunate one is. It is important that one becomes aware that one possesses these freedoms because otherwise one will not recognise the preciousness of one's situation. If one puts a lump of gold in front of a beggar it will only be beneficial if the beggar actually knows what gold is. If the beggar doesn't know what gold is he will not appreciate what value has been given to him. In order to appreciate one's situation one needs to identify the eight freedoms.

Since there are no questions we can go on to the mantra recitation. Here you focus the mind single-pointedly on the sound of the mantra. After having collected the mind internally those who have faith in Shakyamuni Buddha can visualise the Buddha above their crown and visualise white nectar and light flowing down and entering their continuum and that they are being blessed in this way. I find this meditation very useful when my mind is disturbed. It is like a refreshing shower when one feels very hot and it can cool down the mind and make the mind happy and relaxed again. I find the meditation very useful myself and you will also.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Lois Smith Edit 1 by John Burch Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak Edited Version

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