
The Condensed Lam Rim

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པ་དཔེ་སྟོན་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
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We can meditate a little bit as usual. Please seat yourself in a good physical position and after that please generate a good motivation. Generate the motivation of not wanting to let the mind fall under the control of the mental afflictions for even one more moment. You should recognise that the mind has been under the control of mental afflictions for a very, very long time and that this has been the cause of your problems. If you make a clear motivation for your meditation not to let one's mind fall under the control of these mental afflictions for even one more moment, that is sufficient.

As I have explained in the past the mind needs to abide in a stable manner, internally, and should not be left under the control of the mental afflictions. After placing the mind in this internal space that is free from the mental afflictions and where the mind is not engaging with the objects of the mental afflictions, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. The placement should not be in a dual manner but the mind should enter the object of the breath and remain very vividly on the object of the breath without any distractions going here and there. It should remain very stable and vivid on the coming and going of the breath. 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

The last few times we started to talk about being free from the eight inopportune states for Dharma practice, which makes up the attainment of the eight freedoms, and recognising that just having those freedoms alone is not enough to practice the dharma, but that one also needs to have conducive conditions for dharma practice. These are the ten endowments. The ten endowments are divided into the five personal endowments and the five endowments related to circumstance. There are five that are related to the individual and then there are five that are related to the external circumstance of that individual.

The five conditions that relate to circumstance are,

A Buddha has descended

The dharma is being taught

The dharma is still abiding

The dharma is being followed

One is the object of others' compassion

There is a great significance in all these points. **First of all** it is not a very easy for a Buddha to come to a certain place. Because the Buddha is a very pure object a lot of merit is required by the people of that place for a Buddha to be able to go there. But in our case a Buddha came and manifested enlightenment in Bodhgaya, which is sometimes referred to as the Tatagata-garba or the "Essence of Enlightenment". The "Essence of Enlightenment" can to Bodhgaya where the Buddha manifested enlightenment, or to the Dharmakaya, the enlightened mind and pure sphere of that mind in the continuum of a Buddha. When a Buddha descends to start Buddhism it is usually in the aspect of a supreme emanation body. A supreme emanation body is a form body with all the major and minor marks and signs.

The second point refers to the Buddha or his hearer disciples teaching the dharma. It does not always happen that the Buddha teaches the dharma. For example, after manifesting his enlightenment Shakyamuni Buddha wandered around for 49 days without saying a word and only started to teach the dharma when he was requested by Indra.

Neither Shakyamuni Buddha nor his hearer disciples are around any more, but one is born during a time when one can meet with a teacher that is like the Buddha and possesses the unbroken and pure lineage of the teachings. So even though one doesn't have the first and second point literally, one has a situation similar to that point. The meaning of the two points is still there.

The third point refers to the abidance the actual realised dharma. The realised dharma is by definition the path of seeing and above, and the truths of cessation that is attained together with those. There are still beings around that have these realisations and so the presence of the realised dharma is guaranteed.

The fourth point is the dharma that abides is being followed. Through having gained personal experience of the dharma the dharma is being followed.

The fifth point concerns being looked after by others with compassion. In order to practice the dharma purely one needs to have the external conducive conditions for dharma practice. If one is a good dharma practitioner, if one practices the dharma purely, one will never lack the necessities for life in order to continue one's practice. Even if one leaves one's home and goes to another country, if one is a good pure dharma practitioner one will never lack the necessities of life. In our case one can say that one has the conducive external conditions for the dharma practice and this condition is also complete. Sometimes this point is also interpreted to relate to being looked after by a spiritual friend, by a teacher.

There are the literal five endowments, and there are the five endowments adjusted to one's situation. Initially the Buddha came to this earth and not only did he come but he also taught the dharma. It is similar for oneself. One has a teacher that is like a Buddha and not only is there a teacher that is like a Buddha but one that teaches the dharma. But a teacher teaching the dharma is not enough. One needs to put those teachings into practice and, by putting these teachings into practice, one can realise them within one's mind. Everybody has some

measure of continual uninterrupted dharma practice. Through ones experience of the effectiveness of the dharma one then follows the dharma.

If one reverses that sequence it becomes; in order to attain the realisations of the dharma one needs to practice the dharma, in order to practice the dharma one needs to listen to teachings given by a teacher that is like a Buddha and for that one needs a teacher like a Buddha. Initially one listens to teachings then, through listening to teachings, one can practice and that generates realisations.

One should reflect on these different points and become aware how one has all these different points complete and how this enriches one's life and puts one in a very powerful position. Because one has all these conditions there is lots that one can do with this human body. This is specifically contemplated when one contemplates the great purpose of this precious human body. As one becomes aware of this great value and great potential one should rejoice that one has such a fortunate situation. It is an occasion to meditate on joy and rejoicing in one's fortune.

After becoming aware of the great potential of this, of one's precious human life, one should contemplate the great purpose, all the different things that one can do with this precious human life. This will automatically make one cautious not to waste this precious opportunity. It will make one cautious not to throw one's human life away meaninglessly or to treat it as something meaningless. It will automatically direct one's mind towards dharma practice and initially towards the attainment of a happy future life in the next rebirth. By going through these meditations step by step, each step builds on the previous step. Initially recognising the eight freedoms is complimented with the ten endowments and then comes recognising the great purpose of the precious human rebirth. By meditating in such a way one sequentially generates new insights so each previous insight is complimented with a new insight.

When one engages in this analytical meditation the mind still has to remain single-pointedly on the object. Just because it is an analytical meditation doesn't mean that the mind can go all over the place. The mind still needs to be focused on the object of the meditation and going sequentially through the different points, contemplating each one for some time. One needs to keep the mind single-pointedly on these different points, on the meditation. In this way one might be able to have a single-pointed, focused meditation for a longer period of time, such as 20, 30 or 40 minutes. If you do single-pointed meditation on the coming and going of the breath, then after a brief amount of time the mind wanders off. But with analytical meditations the mind can stay single pointed longer.

Question: Do you have some advice in how to make visualisations clearer? I get very fuzzy.

The way one tries to have a single-pointed visualisation is to keep the mind single-pointedly on what one can visualise comfortably. What you describe is a problem of trying to have a too clear visualisation too early. For

example, when one tries as a beginner to visualise Tara, it will not happen that one can have a single-pointed visualisation of the whole body of Tara with all the different marks and signs and ornaments and so forth. One has to be satisfied with what one can visualise comfortably initially and not try to grasp for more, to try and force a clearer image. That's not the way it happens.

The way it happens is that you visualise clearly what you can visualise comfortably. You just meditate on what you can visualise comfortably and increase it over time in a natural manner. Your problem sounds like you are trying to grasp too much and that has the effect of disturbing the mind. Meditation is not done with a mind grasping intensely at the object but it is done in a very leisurely and relaxed manner. For example, if one were to meditate on this glass, and there are certain meditators who choose simple inanimate objects as their meditation object, one would first look at the actual physical object and its different characteristics. Study it and through becoming familiar with the object in this way a mental image of the object will arise in the mind. It is as if a mental reflection of the object arises in the mind. The reflection of the object that arises in the mind is the actual meditation object and one has to be satisfied with what arises. Even though we say we meditate on a certain outer object what is meant is that the mind focuses on the reflection of that object that arises within the mind. If the mind focuses on the actual external object then the mind is distracted.

Question: How does one overcome circumstances in one's environment that detract from compassion and reason to practice?

I think you made a mistake. When meditating on compassion the mind of compassion is what is meditated upon, and not some outer object. When meditating on impermanence or emptiness and so forth, the mind will be focused on that object different from itself. But here the mind of compassion is what is meditated upon. Compassion is a mind, a mental state. When we say I meditate on impermanence or I meditate on emptiness, then there is an object that is different from the meditating mind itself. But when we say 'meditation on compassion' it's not as if there is a mind that focuses on the object of compassion, that's not what it means. When we say meditation on compassion it means the generation of the mind of compassion in one's mental continuum, which is done by reflecting upon sufferings. If one reflects on the sufferings of sentient beings, then that will generate an inability to bear the sufferings of these sentient beings and, by increasing this meditation, one will eventually be able to even have compassion for the sufferings of one's enemies. Its good to know this difference.

Question: With regard to visualising, I find that it's harder to focus my mind at some times of the day eg morning and evening when I am tired. Is it better to try to practice at those times when my mind is clearer anyway?

Generally it is always recommended to meditate early in the morning because the mind is said to be particularly clear during this time. You said that's the time when your mind is tired. It's good as long as you don't become

too tired and you go from being relaxed to sleep. In general it is recommended to meditate early in the morning because straight after waking up the mind is more relaxed and undisturbed by the disturbing thoughts. All of the disturbing thoughts and afflictions become non-manifest during sleep. They all go to sleep, so to speak, into a non-manifest state. When one first wakes up they have some catching up to do. So it is very useful if, instead of immediately distracting one's mind with various things that cause the disturbing thoughts to arise, one is a little bit careful and meditates first. Collect the mind internally and uses that state for a little bit for meditation, and also make a strong motivation not to let the mind fall under the control of the mental afflictions for the rest of the day. If one doesn't take care the mind falls under the control of disturbing thoughts and very quickly becomes black and unwieldy.

Apart from that, there are certain times in the day which it is said are not as suitable for concentration. The first light of dawn, when it switches from night to day usually brings some disturbance into the mind. The actual time of the sunrise also brings some disturbance to the mind. The exact time of noon and sunset are also said to bring some disturbance and not be conducive. Apart from those four times it is said that one can meditate on calm abiding at any time.

As was explained in the beginning, turn the mind inwards and place it on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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