
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
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23 March 2005

We can meditate a little bit as usual. You should seat yourself in a comfortable, good meditation posture. Then you need to have a good motivation for the meditation. If the mental state that induces an action is positive then the action turns out positive. It is good to think a little bit about how one's unhappiness and suffering is dependent on one's state of mind. If one develops an understanding that one's happiness and suffering are dependent on one's state of mind one will come to understand that both happiness and suffering have to be established and refuted in the mind. One comes to understand that happiness is something that can be developed in the mind and that suffering is something that can be lessened and eliminated in the mind.

It is a very common experience that one lacks happiness despite having all the good, external conditions. If one is in such a situation, where one lacks happiness even though one has only the good external conditions, one has to ask oneself, 'How does it come about that my good external circumstance does not give me any inner happiness?'. One has to direct one's attention inwards. One has to come to the conclusion that external conditions are not really the main cause for one's happiness, otherwise one would already experience happiness. There must be other causes and conditions within the mind that will generate real happiness. As it is said, a subdued mind is happiness and an unsubdued mind is suffering. One should come to the understanding that a mind that is pacified brings happiness and, in order to attain happiness, one needs to pacify one's mind.

Two of those internal conditions are mindfulness and introspection. These are the two main tools for meditation. They are the two main tools with which one can keep the mind single-pointedly on the object of meditation. It is very useful to know this.

The experience of keeping the mind single-pointedly on the object of meditation while sitting in the proper meditation posture is a very particular type of experience. It provides a very specific type of happiness that is different from the other types of happiness that one experiences. If one sits in the proper meditation posture and places the mind single-pointedly on the object it provides a very singular experience. The mind should be very vivid and clear when it is abiding on the object and, through this single-pointed abiding of the mind on the object the body becomes relaxed. Because the mind is relaxed the the body also becomes relaxed. This type of meditation induces both a very special mental and physical experience.

Being in a single-pointed state becomes like medicine for

the mind because if one thinks too much it creates many disturbances, mentally as well as physically. What I'm saying is that because of the over-conceptualising mind thinking too much, new diseases arise, both physically and mentally. Single-pointed meditation, where the mind is very vivid but very relaxed on the meditation object and not thinking too much, is like medicine for the body and the mind because it has a relaxing and good effect on the body as well as on the mind.

To collect the mind internally and to remain with this internal focus without any specific object brings a specific type of happiness to the mind. We can do exactly that now. We can focus the mind internally, stop engaging external objects and instead bring the mind home, focus it internally and, after having totally focused the mind internally, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We don't do this in a dual manner, but in a manner where the mind actually enters the breathing and then abides single-pointedly on the breath. We can do this meditation 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

4.2.1.2 Reflecting on their great importance

The last few times we talked about how we have a precious human body that is endowed with the eight freedoms and the ten richnesses and that this is something very special. Somebody that has this precious human body obviously has a human mind and, as such, has the human capacity for discerning right from wrong and so forth. The often asked question arises, 'What should one do with this human intelligence that is very powerful?'. What should one do with this intelligence? This question leads one to the purpose of this precious human body and the purpose one should accomplish with it.

This leads on to the second point of this meditation which is the great meaning of the precious human body. One can say that the great and precious human body has a great purpose, a great meaning, both from an ultimate point of view as well as from a temporary point of view. Within the ultimate purpose there are temporary purposes that can be achieved with the precious human body. Everything is contained in those two categories of temporary and ultimate purpose.

In order to achieve the purpose of this life one needs to generate a good mental attitude that is free from grasping for the happiness of this life. If, for example, one wants to meditate on pure love that should be a love that is untainted by grasping for the happiness of this life. If one meditates on pure compassion it should be compassion that is untainted by grasping at the happiness of this life. Just being concerned with the happiness of this life is not something that would distinguish a human being, that would do justice to the human intelligence. That is something that even animals are quite adapted to. If, for example, one is hungry and steals in order to satisfy that hunger that is something that animals do. Likewise, animals are very adept in

discriminating between friend and enemy. There are many stories regarding this, such as the different ways and means that animals know to get food or the different ways and means in which they interact with friend and enemy. If one only acts similarly one does not really do justice to the human life because one does not act any differently from an animal. To do justice to the human life one should do something that distinguishes oneself from animal behaviour.

Everybody is very focused on this life and the happiness of this life. But everybody is unhappy and is trying to attain happiness thinking, 'Oh, if I were just to be able to attain this or that, then I would have happiness'. 'This' or 'that' could be variety of things. It can be a boyfriend or a girlfriend or it can be all kinds of other material things; a new car or a job and so forth. There's a variety of things that one desires out of one's unhappiness, that one imagines will give one happiness. When one sees oneself just about to obtain the object one thinks, 'Oh, that will give me happiness'. But when one actually has the object one starts to feel empty. When the object is actually obtained and one should have the happiness that one was looking for one feels empty inside. One doesn't get the happiness that one expected. How does this come about? It comes about because one is grasping only at the happiness of this life. If one were to have less grasping for the happinesses of this life one would experience greater happiness. There are, of course, those that say they don't believe in past lives and that when they die that consciousness becomes non-existent, it disappears. But it is good to think about the benefit of having less grasping for the happiness of this life. If one does this one will experience more happiness in this life. That is something important to think about.

Contemplating the great meaning of the precious human life one should gradually reflect on the different things that one can attain with this precious human life. In this way one should slowly expand one's mind, one's objective. At the beginning one might be very insecure about what one can do and very small-minded. One might have just very short-term objectives that are not very meaningful. But, by reflecting on the great purpose of the human life, one should gradually become aware of the great potential that one has and of the great things that one can do. In this way, expanding the mind more and more, one's motivation becomes greater and greater.

We say 'Oh, I am a human being. What makes it so special to be a human being?'. The human being is the basis for taking vows. It is the basis for practising the Mahayana path. There is no better basis for practising the Mahayana path than the basis of a human body. The human body one is the ideal situation to generate renunciation. This is actually envied by other beings. There are other beings that pray to be reborn as a human in order to be able to practise the Dharma more efficiently and to progress quicker along the path. It is only on the basis of a human being that one can attain the Path of Seeing. There are many advantages to being a human being. As pointed out by Nagajuna, it is the ideal basis for practising the Mahayana path. So when we say, 'Oh, I'm a human being', one should not just think it is some meaningless statement. One should

understand what it means to be a human being.

One should become aware of the great potential that one has as a human being. In order to progress along the path, in order to attain liberation and enlightenment, one needs to practise the three higher trainings. One can practise the higher training of morality, by taking vows. One needs to be a human being in order to take those vows. So being a human being provides the excellent opportunity to take those vows. Then, on the basis of the practice of higher training of morality, one can practise the other trainings and, in this way, progress along to path to liberation.

If one wants to do something even better one can practise the Mahayana path. First generate bodhicitta. Here again, of the different types of beings the human situation is the most conducive for the generation of bodhicitta. Being a human being becomes something very special for the practice of the Mahayana path. One can practise the Mahayana path and progress along this path to enlightenment. From the ultimate point of view one can aim both for liberation as well as enlightenment and practise the path on the basis of the three higher trainings where one can take vows on the basis of being a human being. There's a great meaning to being a human being.

On the basis of the precious human body one can achieve the ultimate purposes of liberation and enlightenment. The question arises, 'Well, why should I focus on some kind of a future happiness when I have happiness and suffering right here in this life?'. The answer is that the more one can actually give up grasping for the happiness of this life the more happiness one experiences in this life. By actually working to achieve the purpose of the happiness of future lives one implicitly, automatically, becomes happier in this life. A strong focus on happiness in this life is the cause for more and more misery. That is the answer. In this life one gives up grasping for the happiness of this life and turns one's mind towards liberation and enlightenment and practises the Dharma towards those aims. Then, automatically, one's mind will become much happier than when it is focused only on the happiness of this life. That is the trick. One gives up grasping for the happiness of this life and one will be happier in this life. This is the point.

Today we primarily talked about the ultimate purposes of the precious human body. Next time we can talk about the temporary purposes.

An acquaintance of mine is a trader. He says that, financially, he's off very well but he's not happy. He has to go to work every day and he runs his business every day. He has plenty of money but he is not happy. He doesn't have happiness. That's how it is if the mind is only focused on the happiness of this life. The mind does not experience happiness. As long as one does not engage in some method for attaining inner happiness one will not experience inner happiness. I think that this type of experience is probably shared by many business people. I always say, look after one's body and having a relaxed body and a relaxed mind is very meaningful because then one has a happy life experience.

Do you have a question? We have maybe time for a

question.

Question: Geshe-la, I am hopeful of taking a trip to Dharamsala and around India. I wanted to do a retreat while I was there. I wonder if you could offer some advice?

When in India take care that you eat good food and look after your health properly. The second piece of advice is that you look after your money well (*laughter*). There are two important conditions for a retreat. On the one hand you must have good physical health and on the other the financial means to do the retreat.

The other important thing is, of course, one's mind. It is important before you go to have a good motivation for going. By setting out a positive, wholesome, good motivation for going it will be much easier for you to generate virtuous mental states when you are there. It's important to stay relaxed while meditating. Sometimes when one meditates one can become uptight. It is important to stay relaxed, to have a relaxed mind during the retreat.

It's also good, between the sessions, to go out for a little bit for a walk or to have a look around so that the mind becomes refreshed and clear. Do not stay in your room all the time. When you go out of the room for a breath of fresh air you can do a meditation to refresh yourself. When you breathe out you can imagine that you expel all your polluted psychic energies and your polluted breath and so forth. Because Dharamsala is quite high the air is very fresh. When you breathe in you can visualise that you are breathing in this very fresh air that possesses goodness and freshness and can replace all the pollution. You can do this kind of purifying meditation while breathing. You can do this kind of meditation very nicely in Dharamsala because you are high up and have a very nice view. It's very spacious. That is my advice in short.

There are some people who experience the feeling that their breathing becomes blocked. This is a very good meditation, where one very slowly exhales and then does this meditation of the pollution going out, for that situation. When one goes higher up where there is snow it is especially fresh and you can breathe out very slowly and breathe the fresh air in slowly. Doing this kind of breathing exercise helps to relieve the experience some people have of the breathing getting blocked.

As we said in the beginning, bring the mind back home and focus on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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