
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
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We can meditate for a bit as usual. Sit comfortably in a good posture.

Meditation is about making the mind serviceable. The meaning of flexible and serviceable is that when the mind is focused on a virtuous object it stays on the object, and can be focused on any virtuous object of one's choosing.

Meditation requires us to focus the mind single-pointedly on a virtuous object. When we have trained the mind to be single-pointedly focused on one virtuous object, we will be able to transfer this concentration to other virtuous objects. Initially, however, we train the mind to focus on just one virtuous object, because the mind is already accustomed to going to many different types of object.

The mind can generate many unsuitable thoughts that cause it to become restless and agitated. Many different types of thoughts populate the mind and we tend to believe those thoughts, regardless of whether they are true or not. Usually this multitude of thoughts brings about a state of confusion and agitation, making one susceptible to becoming easily angered. It also causes other confused mental states – losing faith in the Dharma or aspiration to practice the Dharma, losing self-confidence, and so forth.

Therefore, it is very beneficial if we can subdue the unsuitable mental thoughts and bring the mind to a more peaceful state. We focus our mind single-pointedly on one virtuous object and make the determination not to let the mind fall under the control of the negative mental states – keeping in mind the disadvantages of the negative mental states, and how they cause us suffering and problems. In this way, we generate some apprehension about those negative mental states. This type of fear is actually quite useful.

On the basis of this strong motivation of not letting the mind fall under the disturbing mental states, we place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. After having collected it internally, recalling it from external objects, and focusing it internally, we place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

It's good to meditate like this every day, because quite often the mind is overcome by different thoughts and ideas that tend to disturb it. These different fantasies tend to make one, as a person unhappy, and cause one to run around angrily with a frown, because one's mind has produced these fantasies that one believes and which make one unhappy and disturbed.

I think it would be very beneficial to reduce these disturbing conceptual processes through daily meditation practice. Sometimes, it also helps to engage in some physical activity; physical exertion can also reduce disturbing thinking for some time.

4.2.2 The way in which one takes the essence

4.2.2.2. The actual Way of taking the Essence of the Precious Human Life

4.2.2.2.2. The Reason for leading the Students along the Path of the three Beings

4.2.2.2.2.2. The Need to do so

Last week, we finished with the reason for leading the students along the path of the three kinds of beings. Next comes the need to do so.

Initially we ask question: If the paths of the small and medium capable beings are part of the path of the great capable being, why are they mentioned separately? Why is there the concept of meditations common to the path of the small and medium capable being?

There are two important reasons for separately mentioning the meditations that are common to the path of small and medium capable beings.

One reason is that this will prevent one from generating pride in being a Mahayana practitioner if one has not meditated on the paths common to the small and medium capable being.

The second reason is that it is beneficial for all three kinds of beings to do these meditations. Practising the meditations common to all three paths is beneficial for students of medium and great capacity because these students need to have the motivation of wanting to attain higher rebirth and liberation. So, there is no loss to these students in dividing the meditations up according to the three types of path, as this only increases their qualities.

If one did not divide the path up into these three sections, the beings of less capacity would receive a great loss, because if they meditated on the practices common to the great capable being, they would not generate those realisations; if the meditations of the small capable being were not mentioned, these practitioners could not generate the concordant realisations, so they would get left out of the path.

Also, for the beings of greater capacity, it is not a loss to do the meditations common to the small and medium capable being because those meditations are needed as preparation to generate the higher paths. By going straight to the meditations of the great capable being, even those of greater capacity would not generate the concordant realisations, because they also need to meditate on the meditations common to the small and medium capable being.

For the uninformed, it looks as if this three-part approach extends the path needlessly and makes it longer. But in reality, meditating on the meditations common to the small and medium capable being actually helps the being of great capacity to progress quicker. The purpose of this approach is to lead the student gradually along the path

and not introduce them straight away to be highest teachings.

Here, the text gives us the example of polishing precious stones, a process that has a threefold, sequential approach. First, you wash off the very coarse, loose dirt. Next, you polish it with a coarse cloth to get rid of small particles of dirt, which already makes the precious stone shiny. Finally, you polish it with a very fine type of cloth.

Similarly, the mind of the student needs to be purified sequentially – first introducing the more easily understandable practices then, as the mind of the student becomes more and more refined, the more profound kind of practices can take hold in the mind.

The text also mentions a quote by Nagarjuna that says the same thing. Initially, the mind of the student needs to be introduced to the concept of attaining higher rebirth in the next life. After this, it needs to be introduced into the concept of attaining complete liberation from cyclic existence. The text mentions this as a scriptural source.

As Asanga said, the more childish type of student needs to be introduced to the more easily comprehended type of Dharma. After having being taught the more easily comprehended Dharma, the student is induced to practise that Dharma. After the student has arrived at the level of medium capacity through his or her practise, he or she is introduced to the medium scope practices. Then, after having progressed through these practices and having developed the mind further so that his or her wisdom has become vast and expansive, the student is introduced to the most profound practices. In this way, sentient beings need to be guided in a gradual manner.

Similarly, Aryadeva said in his *Compendium of Practices* that after having initially trained in the perfection vehicle, the student needs to be gradually introduced to the tantric vehicle. The idea is again the same – that one cannot be introduced directly into the most profound types of highest practice but that the mind needs to be prepared and gradually trained. The buddhas, being very skilful, introduced sentient beings in a gradual manner to the holy Dharma.

Next comes the outline of actually taking the essence of the precious human life, which we can start next time. Do you have questions for tonight?

Question: Geshe-la, would you be able to teach me the Mantra of Golden Light, the wealth generating one?

Answer: There are different types of mantras, such as a mantra to increase wealth, to pacify anger, and to increase wisdom. Making requests to Manjushri and reciting his mantra greatly increases one's wisdom. It is recommended that one does this by meditating on emptiness, viewing the teacher as Manjushri and making requests, and reciting this mantra.

When one meditates on bodhicitta, one meditates on the lama being Chenrezig and recites the mantra, *Om Mani Padme Hum*. By reciting *Om Mani Padme Hum*, the mind becomes more pacified and peaceful. There is probably no better mantra to pacify the mind than *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

Also, there is a specific mantra for increasing wisdom which is very long – it might not be possible to memorise it in one lifetime!

Reciting *Om Mani Padme Hum* greatly pacifies the mind and increases one's wisdom. Also, the Tara mantra has many benefits, such as increasing wisdom and so forth – the Manjushri mantra is very useful in that regard.

Because these mantras are quite short, one can recite them purely. To recite the longer mantras purely is a bit difficult if one doesn't know Sanskrit.

It is usually recommended to very young monks in the monasteries to recite the mantra *Om Ah Ra Pa Tsa Na Dhi* in the morning, hanging on for as long as possible to the repetition of just the *Dhi Dhi Dhis*, etc. at the end – as Geshe-la just did. This greatly purifies one's speech and increases one's wisdom. Sometimes, when the monks are very worried that they cannot study well, the teacher tells them to recite this mantra in the morning.

Question: Geshe-la, the Theravadin school rejects the tantric teachings as not being the authentic transmission from Lord Buddha. This implies that half the world's Buddhists don't accept them and is very confusing for Westerners.

Answer: We have already talked about the Theravadins not accepting the Mahayana teachings in general. They assert that one can become enlightened just through the sutra practices, and that one does not need to practise tantra. You don't need to get too worried about that! In reality there are many Theravada practitioners that, even though having problems with Tantra, accept the Sutra Mahayana.

Recently, we said that first one practises effortful bodhicitta, then one practices effortless bodhicitta, and then one affirms that bodhicitta through a bodhicitta ritual. So, one engages in the practices of the six perfections, trains in the wish of wanting to practise them, and when one naturally feels a strong wish to engage in the practice of the six perfections, one takes the engaging bodhisattva vows. Somewhere around this time, those of sharper mental capacity recognise the need that to become enlightened more quickly than three countless great eons. Then, because they have greater compassion and recognise the need to become a Buddha more quickly, they engage in the practice of tantra.

The Hinayana sutras do not talk about the generation of bodhicitta and the practice of the six perfections, but these sutras approach the Dharma only from the point of view of the four noble truths, generating renunciation, and attaining personal liberation.

Comment from same student: The Theravadins would respond by saying that the Heart Sutra was not recorded at the time of the first great council of the Arhats and therefore would claim that it was not an authentic transmission of the Lord Buddha.

Answer: In those councils the teachings were classified according to the three baskets of teachings. But the sutras that explicitly teach the lack of inherent and true existence, such as the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, are not accepted by the lower tenet holders generally.

But the Theravadin school does not completely disregard

the perfection teachings. There are a few 'hard-liners' who don't accept the perfection of wisdom sutras and so forth, but there are also many Theravadin practitioners who do accept those teachings. Historically the Mahayana teachings once pervaded Southeast Asian countries that are today strict Theravadin cultures, such as Thailand, before a certain king came to power who was against the Mahayana teachings and forbade the those teachings in his country. Today, those countries strongly adhere to the Theravadin tenets, but that does not necessarily mean that they completely disregard the Mahayana teachings.

Probably the hard-line Hinayana countries are Thailand, Sri Lanka and Burma. Of those three countries, Thailand probably once had the Mahayana teachings, but that was changed by a certain king who had some issues with the Mahayana. However, if you look at Buddhism as a whole, apart from those three countries, there is not really any other Buddhist country that does not accept, for example, the Heart Sutra.

To say that the Mahayana teachings and the tantric teachings are not the teachings of the Buddha is quite problematic because you end up disregarding more and more teachings of the Buddha by the same reasoning.

Also, if you look at it from a quantitative point of view, the percentage of Buddhists who don't accept the Mahayana and tantric teachings is really very small. Most Buddhists will accept the Mahayana and tantric teachings.

Further comment from same student: I wasn't suggesting that I accept the Theravadin teachings. I was suggesting that there appears to be...you mentioned the various countries that do reject the tantric teachings. Therefore, that introduces a cultural overlay. For a truth to be universal, it has to be free from cultural overlays.

Answer: The argument that, for something to be true, everybody has to recognise it as such is a difficult one.

For example, the communists did their best to destroy Buddhism, so to say that something cannot be true because it is blocked by a certain culture is not really a valid argument.

Because other people have different views, they will not necessarily accept one's own views. In this case, there are certain groups that don't accept the Mahayana teachings as authentic teachings of the Buddha. So, this has to be discussed. One has to look into the reasons and convince the other party using valid reasons and arguments why the Mahayana teachings are authentic teachings of the Buddha.

One has to present valid reasons and arguments which, for example, Nagarjuna has already done. When he was alive, he had discussions with Hinayana followers who didn't accept the Mahayana as authentic teachings. He entered into discussions with them and presented arguments as to why he thought the Mahayana teachings were authentic teachings of the Buddha. Because of this, many Hinayana followers started to accept the Mahayana teachings at the time of Nagarjuna.

At the time of the Buddha and after, there were eighteen Hinayana schools and the Theravadin was just one of them. The Hinayanists had a lot of debate between themselves regarding which were the authentic teachings of the Buddha. So, they didn't just have arguments with the Mahayana, but also between the different Hinayana schools. Today, the Theravadin school is the only one of the eighteen Hinayana schools left.

Anyway, we accept the Mahayana as pure teachings by the Buddha. There is no need to worry otherwise.

In a certain hard-line Theravadin group in the recent past, one of the monks suggested that their monks should study the Dharma in the same extensive way as was done in Tibet by the Tibetan monks in the Tibetan monasteries. For that suggestion, he was expelled from their order.

As was explained before, turn the mind inwards, then place it on the mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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