

We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Sit yourself comfortably and relaxed in an upright position. The purpose of meditation is to free the mind from the control of the afflictions; to give the mind independence. At the present time the mind is not free, it is not independent. If the mind is not independent because it is under the control of positive mental states then there is no fault. But if it is under the control of harmful mental states then that poses a problem. It is important to think very carefully about one's motivation for meditation; that one needs to meditate in order to free the mind from the control of disturbing thoughts and to give the mind greater happiness and peace.

One can say that the mind is easily disturbed by different conditions, both good and bad. If the conditions are good then it is maybe not so terrible, but it is still a very curious thing that even ordinarily conducive and good conditions sometimes can bring about a disturbed mind. Then also, of course, the mind gets disturbed by adverse conditions. In order to avoid the mind becoming disturbed one needs to recall it from disturbing external objects and focus it internally.

Quite often the mind is occupied with the objects of the past, present and future. When one sits down and analyses one's thoughts one will find that one's thoughts are not focused, but that they are occupied with a multitude of objects of the three times. Not only does the conceptual mind occupy itself with all types of objects of the present, but also with those belonging to the future and those belonging to the past. There is really quite a lot of thinking going on. One practises meditation in order to provide some opportunity for this huge amount of thinking to subside and for some calmness and stillness to come into the mind.

It is important that one investigates one's mind and comes to understand the way the mind works and the way the mind is operating. Then one rectifies the different problems within the mind. This should be done very gently and very slowly over time. When one does these internal investigations of the mind and one tries to still the mind this has to be done in a gentle manner; one needs to take one's time.

We will now meditate on the coming and going of the breath. Initially focus the mind internally by recalling it from external objects. Bring the mind back home by completely focusing it internally and then place it single pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. It is important to understand that the mind acts as a mirror

that reflects objects. When we meditate we meditate on the reflection of the object in the mind rather than the actual external object. One focuses the mind on the coming and going of the breath in a single pointed and vivid yet relaxed manner. (*Pause for meditation*)

4.2.2.1.2 The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.1 Training the mind in the stages of the path of the small capable being

4.2.2.1.2.1.1 The actual way of training in the motivation common to the being of small capacity

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.1 Generating the aspiration for happiness in the future life

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.1.1 Remembering death, becoming aware that one is not going to remain for a long time

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.1.1.4 The way of meditating on remembering death

On past Wednesdays we talked about how to meditate on death and impermanence with the three roots, nine reasons and three decisions. Each root is established by three reasons and concludes with one decision. Last time we talked about the third root, that at the time of death only the dharma is of benefit, not one's possessions, not one's family and friends, and even not one's body. Regardless of how strong a body one has, eventually one will have to leave one's body behind and at that time of death it is of no benefit. No matter how many possessions one has one has to leave them behind at the time of death. One's possessions cannot prevent one's death and one cannot take them with one at the time of death. At the time of death they don't hold the slightest benefit. One's friends and relatives are also of no benefit at the time of death. They cannot prevent one dying and cannot accompany one; one has to go by oneself. One should arrive at an understanding that, at the time of death, neither one's possessions, nor one's friends and relatives, nor one's body are of any benefit and generate a mind that is free from attachment to these things. This meditation revolves around generating a mind that is free from attachment to family and friends, possessions and the body.

At the time of death, only the dharma is of benefit and none of the three; family and friends, possessions and the body, are of any benefit. Now, one should not generate a misunderstanding here by thinking that this means that one should not look after one's friends and relatives, that one should not have possessions and that one should not look after one's body. This is a misconception that it is possible to generate when one hears one should not have attachment towards those three. One might get the idea that somehow this means one should not have friends or that one should not look after one's friends. This is not what is meant. What is meant is that one simply does not have attachment for them. Similarly, not having attachment for one's body does not mean that one should not look after one's body. Again it's possible to generate this misunderstanding but that's not what is meant. The meaning is not that one should not have possessions or friends and should not look after one's friends and relatives and one's body. One should give up one's attachment for those three and one should keep the

actions of one's body, speech and mind wholesome at all times. They should be good at all times.

If one does not have attachment for one's possessions, for example, it makes it easy to part from one's possessions. Otherwise, if one has attachment for one's possessions it usually causes great distress and suffering when one is parted from one's possessions. The same also applies to friends and relatives and, of course, to one's body. At the time of death it is inevitable that one has to leave these three behind. At the time of death the only thing that one is left with in the end is one's consciousness, one's mind. That is what goes with one to the next life. Therefore, to avoid greater suffering at the time of one's death, it is very useful to familiarise oneself with the thought that the three are not useful at that time of death and to give up attachment for them. By training oneself slowly and by slowly acquainting oneself with this idea one will be able to give up attachment for these three and it will make one's life easier.

There are some people for whom it is possible to completely let go of an object even though they have attachment for the object while they possess it. When they lose the object they are able to completely let go and say, "May it benefit the other person". It makes that person's life much easier because they are able to completely let go. But generally, if one has attachment, one finds it very difficult, and one does this meditation to be able to give up one's attachment .

It is important that one practices love and compassion towards others and that one gives up one's attachment. If one does not give up one's attachment to these three objects it makes it very difficult when one is separated from any of these objects. As one knows from experience in one's life, if one is separated from an object that one is very attached to it can cause an infinite amount of distress in the mind because of not being able to let go of the object, even though the object is already gone. That problem of not being able to let go arises from attachment to the object and that's also why one experiences these sufferings. In order to avoid these problems it is important that one gives up attachment for these objects. Or one can be a person who, even though having strong attachment for the object, can let completely go without any problem when one is separated from it.

It is possible for the mind to be trained in letting go. By doing these meditations slowly it is possible for the mind to learn how to let go of an object. If one does not learn how to let go of an object it is a great cause for many sufferings. One knows it is usually inevitable that one will be separated from objects sooner or later. It is in the nature of existence. There are certain people that are able to say, "Okay, while I was together with that other person it was very nice and we had a nice time, but now it is finished". That person is able to leave it at that without having any sadness or suffering. One has to be able to let go from one's own side. If the other person has already let go from their side it does not make sense for one to hold onto the other person. It is only the cause for further suffering. If the other person still grasps at one and has not let go one might say it is not; there might still

be some reason for not letting go of the other person. But if the situation is that the other person has already let go of one then, from one's own side, it does not make sense not to let go as well. One also has to be able to let go from one's own side. If one can have this positive attitude and be able to say, "Okay, now the time has come for it to finish and it was nice and beautiful while it lasted, but now it is finished", and accept that, then that will avoid much suffering.

This is something to consider very carefully. If you just think about it once, feeling that it is sprung on you, you might feel uncomfortable and strange about this idea. But if you consider this idea very deeply and carefully you will come to recognise its value and you will come to recognise the many different dharma practices that are contained within this idea. Do you have a question?

Question. Once having conquered the afflictions and hindrances, how is calm abiding used in that stage of the path?

Once you have abandoned all obscurations and afflictions calm abiding transforms into the nature of clairvoyance, such as the clairvoyance of knowing the minds of others and you will be able to teach others according to their ability, spontaneously, as the Buddha did when he taught the *Heart Sutra*.

Initially one generates calm abiding and then, on the basis of the mind of calm abiding, one investigates the phenomena's mode of abiding and generates wisdom. This wisdom will liberate one from all obscurations and faults. In order for one to be able to overcome the mental afflictions one needs to generate wisdom, but for the wisdom to be sharp, accurate and penetrating it needs to be supported by calm abiding and in order for the calm abiding to be strong it needs to be supported by the higher training of morality. That's how one can relate it to the three higher trainings.

It is like a person who is cutting down a tree with an axe. In order for the person to be able to accurately hit the same spot again and again, in order for the arm not to waver, the person needs to have a strong body. It needs a strong-bodied person to be able to wield the axe powerfully and accurately. That would be the higher training of morality. The strong body then supports a strong shoulder. The strong shoulder will make it possible for the arm to hit the same spot again and again with the axe. That would be the higher training of concentration. The axe itself needs to be very sharp. Just hitting with the axe in the same spot alone will not be enough; it also needs to be sharp. The sharp axe is like sharp and penetrating wisdom.

In the example each relies on the other and they are all working together to cut down the tree. The strong body acts as the foundation and then one has the strong shoulder and arm with which can accurately wield the sharp axe. Similarly one needs to have the strong foundation of morality as the basis from which one can generate calm abiding from which one can accurately meditate on the penetrating wisdom that realises selflessness. Through this one can overcome the mental afflictions.

Question. Geshe-la, can guru devotion be construed as a form of attachment?

To have faith and respect for the teacher is not construed as attachment. Faith and respect for the teacher are two virtuous, beneficial and wholesome mental states. In the Abhidharma it is taught that the liking for one's parents is simply a liking for one's parents. A liking for the three jewels, for the Buddha, dharma and sangha, is both a liking as well as faith. If one has a liking for the Buddha that is both liking as well as faith. Recalling the qualities of the object usually generates faith and recalling the kindness of the object generates respect. These are two virtuous minds.

Question. In the Prajnaparamita it says "the highest mantra, the unequalled mantra." How do we decide where to put our time into different mantras e.g. the Tara mantra etc.?

First of all we need to look at the etymology, the meaning, of the word mantra. Mantra is a Sanskrit word made out of two syllables, *man* and *tra*. It means rescuing the mind. That's what a mantra does; it rescues the mind from suffering. That is the meaning of the word mantra. The *Perfection of Wisdom* mantra is regarded as the highest mantra and the supreme mantra.

We also need to know that there are two types of mantra. There is the definitive mantra and the interpretive mantra. The interpretive mantra is what is more commonly referred to as a mantra; it is the actual words, such as those in the *Perfection of Wisdom* mantra or the Om Mani Padme Hum and so forth.

The definitive mantra of the *Perfection of Wisdom* mantra is the wisdom directly realising emptiness. There is nothing better than the wisdom directly realising emptiness to liberate oneself from suffering. That's why it is referred to as the highest mantra. That does not mean that we don't recite the other mantras as well. For example, the definitive mantra of Om Mani Padme Hum is the omniscient wisdom knowledge of Chenrezig. In order to attain the omniscient wisdom knowledge of Chenrezig, the definitive mantra, one recites the interpretive mantra of Om Mani Padme Hum. If we recite it with that in mind, it becomes very effective. Likewise with the Wisdom mantra.

Question. You talk of meditation as the path to non-attachment. Is there a particular way to meditate to attain that or is it just continual focusing on the breath?

There are specific meditations that act as antidotes. Generally the meditation on the coming and going of the breath is regarded as the general antidote to the over-conceptualizing mind. In order to pacify the over-conceptualizing mind in general, one meditates on the coming and going of the breath. Those that primarily and specifically want to overcome attachment should meditate on impurity.

Question. How do you meditate on impurity?

The meditation on impurity acts as the direct opposite of our perception of the object as attractive, beautiful and desirable. Attachment for the object is generated on the basis of perceiving the object as desirable, as pure, as

clean, as attractive, and as pleasant. Meditating on the impurity of the object counteracts the perception of purity and implicitly counteracts the attachment.

If, for example, one superficially analyses another person's body then the colour of that body and the shape of that body seem to be beautiful and attractive. However, if one closely investigates the nature of the body one finds that the appearance of purity and attractiveness is deceptive and one cannot find anything beautiful or attractive inside the body. If one goes deeper and deeper into the body to look for this beauty one arrives at the bones. If the body is looked at through an x-ray one is left with the bones. All one sees are the bones. I don't know if you can do this but if you were to look at somebody walking by through some kind of x-ray machine all you will see is a walking skeleton. You can also visualise that the right side of your body is all bloody and the left side of your body is basically just yellow bones. If you meditate in that way there will be no possibility that attachment will arise. If you meditate that in front of you is a rotting corpse, bones with rotting meat on it that smell terrible, this will not leave any possibility for attachment to arise.

As was explained earlier, focus the mind internally and you place it single-pointedly on the mantra, on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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