

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 July 2008

As usual it would be appropriate to spend some time for meditation. For that purpose, find a comfortable and relaxed position.

As we mention regularly, the main purpose of meditation practice is to familiarise our mind with a good attitude, forming the good mental habit of thinking positively.

First we must recognise the adverse, negative states of mind or delusions. Having recognised them, we can prevent our mind from falling completely under their influence. As we notice from our daily life, if we find ourselves being unfocused and burdened with anxieties, worries and stress, this is the result of a distracted mind, a mind that is influenced by the delusions. For as long as we allow the mind to be influenced by the delusions, we will continue to experience these problems. What we are basically trying to do in the practice of meditation is protect our mind from not being influenced by the delusions by withdrawing our focus on the distractions, and familiarising our mind with a more positive attitude.

Having identified the purpose of meditation practice, we will now go into the actual technique. The technique we use here is focusing on an internal object – a neutral object to which we can closely relate. As we are trying to familiarise our mind with being clear and focused rather than distracted, we need to focus on an object that does not cause delusions to arise. Thus the technique we use here is focusing on our own breath. This has the natural effect of settling down our mind. Because the breath is a neutral object, focusing on it doesn't cause mental agitation and so forth but rather calms the mind.

To get the benefit of the specific technique we use, it is good to make the commitment: 'For the next few minutes of my practice, I will not allow my mind to be influenced by thoughts or external distractions of the five senses, but will intentionally keep it focused only on the meditation object, which is the breath'. So we keep our mind completely focused on the breath, on our natural breathing process.

To secure a good meditation practice, we need to have the important tools of mindfulness and introspection. These two tools make sure that we remain focused on the object of meditation. One part of the mind (mindfulness) is always diligently making sure that our mind is not becoming distracted and keeping its focus on the breath. Another part of the mind, which we call introspection, has the function of bringing the mind back to the object when it does become distracted; if we notice that our mind has become distracted introspection brings its focus back to the object.

If our mind is focused, then we just let it remain there; we don't do anything extra, we don't intentionally try to probe into it. However, as soon as we notice it losing its focus and becoming distracted, we use the tool of introspection to bring the mind's focus back on the breath. In this way, our practice becomes complete.

So we will now focus on the breath and for the next few minutes, we will try to maintain a one-hundred-percent focus on the breath. *[Pause for meditation]*

Just as we see some benefit now, it would be good to regularly engage in some practice of meditation. As mentioned previously, to familiarise our mind with being positive, focused and controlled, we have to reverse the situation of it being influenced by the delusions. To prevent the mind from being influenced by the delusions, it is important for us to identify and recognise what they are.

4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.2. Training the mind in the stages of the path held in common with beings of the medium scope

4.2.2.1.2.2.1. The actual training in the reflections: the way to develop the mind that strains for liberation

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Reflection on the causes of suffering – the faults of cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. How afflictions or delusions arise

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. Identifying the afflictions

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.2. The five speculative afflictions

From the text that we are covering in the teachings here, the specific topic that we are relating to now is identifying the delusions. The delusions have been categorised into ten different types: five non-speculative and five speculative delusions. We have already covered the five non-speculative delusions, which people should already be familiar with.

Within the next five speculative delusions, the first – which we covered last session but nevertheless will cover in more detail – is called the *reifying view of the perishing aggregates* or the *view of the transitory collections*.

1. The reifying view of the perishing aggregates

This delusion is a misconception, or a distorted view. The definition given here is it is an afflictive intelligence that observes the appropriated aggregates and regards them as 'I' or 'mine' – that is, a self or that which belongs to the self. Basically this type of delusion is the misconception we have of holding on to an identity of a self and to that which belongs to the self ('mine'). This sort of misconception is based on the aggregates: from viewing the aggregates such as the body, one develops the notion that 'this is me', and that which belongs to this 'me' is 'mine'.

This misconception or distorted view is important to identify, as it is one of the main causes for all of our other problems. It is appropriate that we identify this view, which is a delusion, within ourselves. If we didn't have this misconception, we might not need to worry about it. But ordinary beings like us definitely have this view. We focus on our physical and mental aggregates and consider that as being 'me', and its possessions as 'mine'. So it is appropriate that we identify and recognise that misconception within ourselves.

This view that we refer to here as the reifying view of the perishing aggregates – some translations use the term, ‘view of the transitory collections’ – is a basic misconception that is the root of all our other delusions and thus our problems. Although here it is identified at a basic level, it is good to get some notion of this basic level, which leads to a stronger view of a false identity and grasping at the self.

As explained in the teachings, this view serves as the root cause of all our problems and delusions. When we think about it more carefully and analyse this view, we will come to recognise this as true. We grasp at the self as ‘me’ or ‘I’, and in relation to anything else, we put so much importance on this ‘I’. From holding on to that self come the thoughts, ‘I want this...I don’t want this...I wish for this...I don’t wish for that’. In relation to possessions, the thought ‘this is mine’ causes us to feel others don’t have a right over something; we think, ‘it solely belongs to me, it’s mine and no one should have it’. We can see how that leads to many other complications and problems. Thus it is important that we recognise this misconception of holding onto the self.

When we think about it, how do we view the self? We have an instinctive notion that the ‘I’ is independent: that it does not depend on anything else. That is what we hold on to. If we look at it in this way, we can go deeper into that misconception of grasping to a truly existent, independent self. What is explained here serves as a basis.

Although an analysis of how this misconception acts as the main source of all our problems will be given in more detail later, at this point it is appropriate just to recognise how this misconception arises. Based on the reifying view of the perishing aggregates, it is said that we have an underlying deep misconception of holding on to a solid, independent self, which does not depend on anything else. That is what we now hold on to as ‘I’. As explained in the teachings, the stronger our sense of self-identity, of grasping at an independently existent ‘I’, the stronger will be our aversions and attachments.

For instance, if someone were to suggest something to us or we were to suggest something to them, and we or they responded ‘I don’t agree with that, I don’t accept it’, at that moment when one is presented with something that seems to oppose our point of view, the notion of ‘I’ becomes very strong. If we were to look closely, at the moment we felt hurt or when there was disagreement in relation to one’s suggestion, we would have the strong response ‘I cannot agree with that, I don’t accept that’. In such moments when we feel very opinionated, the ‘I’ seems to be solid and tangible, as if we could actually hold on to it. It seems as if we could point to it and say ‘this is me’.

However, that is a completely false notion. There is no solid ‘I’ or ‘me’. That solid sense of ‘I’ that arises when we have a very strong opinion dissipates when the other person says ‘OK, I agree with you. Everything’s fine. There’s no dispute. I totally agree with you’. That strong opinionated ‘I’ that seems to be independent, will subside. If we actually look into it, we would come to notice that as soon as we disagree with something, we

have the response, ‘I disagree with that. That is not acceptable to me’. With that strong opinion, we have a sense of heaviness in our mind; it seems like a heavy, uncomfortable burden. Whereas as soon as we generate the state of mind and response: ‘I agree with that. I accept that. Everything’s fine’, it seems as if the mind settles down. So basically it’s just a matter of changing our mental attitude.

The main point is that the stronger our opinions, the stronger the sense of ‘I’ becomes, which leads to problems and difficulties. When we have that strongly opinionated mind, the sense of ‘I’ becomes very strong – for example, when we feel ‘I don’t want that’, we are ready to fight against anything that opposes our likes or dislikes. We would take any possible measure to try to prevent anyone from obstructing what ‘I’ want. In that state of mind, the moment one feels ‘I want or don’t want that’, one is ready to fight anyone who opposes that decision, regardless of who they are, even one’s parents, close friends or family members. At that moment, because of the strong sense of ‘I’ or ‘me’, one would even disregard the fact that one’s opinions may harm others. In fact one would defend one’s opinion, even if it means harming others. That is how the strong notion of ‘I’ leads to destruction, harm, and so forth.

The text goes on to explain the literal meaning of the reifying view of the *perishing aggregates*. Here, perishing means impermanent or transitory. Aggregates are plural, indicating that there are different parts of the body and mind. So the term indicates that what is apprehended are impermanent and multiple phenomena, which implies that there is no permanent, unitary person. What one is actually focusing on is transitory and multiple; it is not a permanent, single unit.

2. The view in which one apprehends extremes

The next delusion or view from this category is called an extreme view, or the view in which one apprehends extremes. Its definition in the text is ‘an afflictive intelligence that observes the self as apprehended by the view of the perishing aggregates and regards that self either as permanent and eternal, or as subject to annihilation in such a way that there will be no rebirth from this life into future lives’.

3. Holding wrong views to be supreme

The next deluded view is called belief in the supremacy of wrong views. The text defines this as ‘an afflictive intelligence that observes one of the three views - the view of the perishing aggregates, an extremist view and a wrong view - along with the view-holder’s aggregates on the basis of which such a view occurs, and regards such a view as supreme’.

Basically this means holding on to either of the two deluded views mentioned earlier, and to a wrong view (which we haven’t covered yet) as being a supreme view. Holding on to any of these three views being supreme means having the notion oneself or explaining to others that holding onto this view helps one overcome delusions and that one can be liberated by this.

4. Holding faulty ethics or religious discipline to be supreme

The ninth affliction in this category – the fourth of the deluded views – is a belief in the supremacy of ethics and religious discipline.

The text defines this particular deluded view as ‘an afflictive intelligence which observes an ethical discipline that renounces faulty ethical discipline, or a religious discipline which requires certain forms of dress, manner, speech and physical behaviour, as well as the mental and physical aggregates on the basis of which these forms of ethics and asceticism occur, and regard them as cleansing you of sin, freeing you from afflictions and removing you from cyclic existence’.

The text is not referring to holding on to certain behaviours as being ethical when in fact they are not really ethical. In one’s own mind, one affirms something as an ethical gesture and then holds on to that as being supreme. These are practices that one would consider ethical, but which in reality are not.

The next part says ‘or a religious discipline which requires certain forms of dress, manner, speech and physical behaviour’. In certain religions, followers hold onto forms of what we call austere practices – such as going naked and spreading ashes on one’s body – as a supreme practice leading to salvation or liberation. The word ‘manner’ here refers to certain austere practices such as standing on one leg and facing the sun for hours on end, so seeing the practice of just observing the sun and paying respect to it as a form of supreme practice. In other cases, someone might completely avoid speaking, observing a vow of silence, and consider that in itself as a main form of a practice leading to liberation. There are other extreme practices such as jumping off cliffs as a way to salvation, and so forth.

Holding these practices and faulty ethics (mentioned previously) to be supreme and a way to liberation is what this deluded view relates to.

Although the text does not explicitly list the different forms of austere practices that come under this deluded view – the belief in the supremacy of ethics and religious discipline – also includes certain forms of austere practices that come from some clairvoyant abilities that certain practitioners may develop. Some religious beliefs may put faith in certain limited clairvoyant abilities, such as being able to see one’s past life but not being able to see further beyond that. With that limited clairvoyance, if the practitioner saw they were a certain kind of creature that walked or hopped on one leg in the past life, they might think: ‘Having been a creature that goes on one leg in the past life brought me into a human existence in this life. Therefore if I assume the stance of a creature on one leg for a long time, that will be the cause for me to become a human again’. Likewise, some may remember their past life as a creature such as a pig, leading them to think: ‘If I act like a pig in this life, that might be a cause for me to be born again as a human in the next life’. With that limited clairvoyance, they get a perverted view of the causes for them to be reborn as a human.

In some cases, their limited clairvoyant view would enable them to see one or two future lives and not beyond that, so they conclude that one has only a certain number of rebirths left, after which everything will be fine, one will not be reborn again. That leads to perverted views as well.

5. Wrong views

The tenth and last delusion, and the fifth deluded view is called wrong view. The text defines it as ‘an afflictive intelligence that denies the existence of things such as past and future lives or karma and its effects, or believes that the cause of living beings is a divine creator or a primordial essence etc.

The text then goes on: ‘I have explained these ten afflictions in accordance with the *Compendium of Knowledge of the Levels of the Yogic Deeds* and with Vasubhandu’s explanations of the five aggregates’, which means that some of the lower Buddhist school’s point of view are explained now and the Prasangika, or the highest Buddhist school’s, points of view will be explained in more detail later on.

Before we conclude for the evening, let us again spend some time in meditation. This time, as we distance our mind from distractions and bring it inward, we particularly focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni. Try to keep the mind focused on the sound.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Peter Boothby
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute