

---

# The Quick Path to Enlightenment

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་ལམ་རིམ་དམར་བྲིད་ལམ།།

Commentary by Venerable Geshe Lobsang Dorje

Translated by Sandup Tsering

11 May 2022

---

As usual, we will start with a short breathing meditation. Through this breathing meditation, we want to make sure our mind is where our body is and more particularly why we are here, which is to listen to the teaching. We want to make sure that during this teaching our mind is here in this prayer hall too.

## Breathing meditation

The breathing meditation is a very effective way of immediately getting rid of any disturbing thoughts that we may have. Begin with a long breath in and out and choose the most suitable sitting posture. There is a standard instruction relating to the features of the meditation posture, and these are some important points that we should take note of.

The posture should not make us feel too comfortable or relaxed. If it is too relaxed, that can bring about the obstacle to meditation that is called laxity or sinking, where your mind becomes very lazy, and you are at risk of falling asleep. Likewise, the posture should not be too constrained or so hard to adopt that we need to force ourselves to adopt it. This will not only make us very uncomfortable but it will also bring about other meditation obstacles such as excitement or mental distraction. A difficult posture can cause aching and pain in the body and if this happens then our attention will go to that instead of to the meditation object. Therefore, the right posture is one that is convenient but not too relaxing nor too hard and constrained. It is, however, highly recommended that we keep our back straight so that the spine is in a straight line. This will make our *nadi* or psychic channels straight so that the *prana* or *wind energy* will flow smoothly in our systems, which in turn helps the stability of the mind.

When doing the breathing meditation, we need to make sure that we are breathing as naturally as possible – not too long, forceful and not so short that it is like being out of breath. We need to make sure that we inhale and exhale as naturally as possible. We then direct our mental attention to inhaling and exhaling, not letting our mind wander after any other objects. If the mind goes after another object, gently bring it back to our breathing. As an aid to keeping our mind on our breath, we should mentally count each cycle of our breath. This will help us keep our minds on it. Here we are doing this meditation only for a short period and it would also be very beneficial to do the same each morning, as you will find it beneficial throughout the day.

[Meditation]

## Practise subduing the mind

A famous Tibetan thought transformation master Geshe Potowa says in his work *Beh-bum ngonpo* or *Blue Collection*: 'All the teachings given by the Buddha and the treatises or commentaries on those by later masters are about the means of subduing the mental continuum of sentient beings. You might physically or verbally engage in the virtuous practices

for eons, but without subduing your mind you are not creating a cause to achieve liberation.'

From this, we can understand that the primary purpose of all the Buddha's teachings is to help us transform our state of mind from negative and unwholesome states to positive states of mind. If we don't focus our minds and direct our practice towards transforming and changing our state of mind, then whatever practices we do, such as prostrations, walking around sacred places, making offerings and so forth will not help, because we have not directed these practices towards subduing and changing our mind.

If the practices do not have any effect on our mind, then they are not of much benefit to us. That is because we all want to avoid suffering and find happiness, and the main source of suffering and happiness lies within us. The main source of our suffering and problems is the negative and destructive states of mind such as anger and harmful thoughts towards others that we generate within ourselves. On the other hand, if our mind is calm and happy, we are calm and happy too. Therefore, as we diminish any destructive and negative states of mind through meditation and Dharma practice, we will find peace and happiness in this life and create causes for a better future life.

## The precious human rebirth

The question is: how we should train and bring change to our minds? The answer is through applying spiritual practice, which we must understand and put into practice. Most importantly, we must be motivated to learn and practice the Dharma. In recent teachings, we talked about contemplating the preciousness of human life which we have found now and how it is impermanent, in that we can lose it at any moment. The main purpose of this contemplation is to recognise the potential of the precious human life in terms of achieving whatever we want to achieve, which is joy and happiness in this and future lifetimes. Through this human life, we can achieve happiness and avoid suffering both now and in future lives.

Furthermore, the precious human life also offers us a perfect opportunity to achieve the lasting happiness of the state of liberation from cyclic existence, and even the complete enlightenment of buddhahood in order to benefit all sentient beings. By realising our self-potential, we need to cultivate the thought 'I can achieve this.' If the Lord Buddha could achieve it, we can too. The Lord Buddha is a fully awakened and perfect being. But he has not always been a perfect being – before he came to this earth over 2500 years ago, he was not an awakened being. Once, he too was an ordinary being just like us – having a flesh body and being subject to suffering nature. Therefore, we need to realise that we do have the full potential to achieve enlightenment.

## Death and impermanence

After the teaching on the precious human life, we moved to the teaching on death and impermanence. We studied how death is certain, how the life we have found now is impermanent and transient, and how we cannot have this current body and life forever. We discussed the reasons why our death is certain but the time of death is uncertain. We discussed the reasons why we have no control over the time of death because when it will come is uncertain. Finally, we looked at what will be helpful and beneficial to us at the time of death and learnt that nothing can help us except the Dharma or spirituality.

---

---

The main lesson we learnt from the teaching on death and impermanence is that we should not be attached to things. There are many benefits to lessening attachment, which causes anger, jealousy and other afflicted minds to arise. So, attachment brings suffering in our current life and future lives. In short, an awareness of death will help us realise how short life can be and hence urges us to seize whatever opportunity we must make our life most meaningful.

Our current life is very short in comparison with future lives; therefore, we must consider the needs of our future life before the needs of this life. As we need to consider our needs in future lifetimes we must believe in the existence of future lives.

We will have future lives because the continuum of our mind doesn't end with this life and at the end of our body, it goes to the next life. If there is a future life, then the question is: what factor will decide whether we will find a good rebirth or a bad rebirth in the future? From the Buddhist perspective, that depends on what sort of karma or action we have accumulated. The sort of karma we create is very much dependent on what sort of mind we utilise. A positive mind yields positive actions, and a negative mind yields a negative result. So, positive karma is the cause to find a good rebirth such as a human or godly being, and negative karma is the cause of a bad rebirth such as being born as animals and so forth.

#### **Self-observation and assessment**

We all know the kinds of actions we have been doing and weigh up whether we have done more good actions or bad actions. If we don't remember all our past actions, we can try to remember some of our most recent actions, or even our actions in a single day. This will give us some indication of whether we have done more good actions or more bad actions, which will determine where we will go in the future.

Moreover, to understand how complete and powerful our actions, both negative and positive are, we need to take a closer look at them, otherwise, we may misunderstand them. There are several factors involved in creating an action that determines the completeness and forcefulness of an action.

In the beginning, there is the thought or motivation of taking that action. Secondly, consider the level of mental attention and enthusiasm as we implement the action. And finally, look at the mental attitude we have at the consummation of the action. Given these three factors predetermining the size and force of actions, think of how the three appropriate factors that make our good actions full and strong are present when we do good actions and the three that make our bad actions full and strong when we do bad actions. We will note these three are rarely present when we engage in good actions but mostly present when we engage in bad actions.

Also, think of how at the time of death it is the more forceful of all these accumulated virtuous and non-virtuous actions that will determine our future rebirth. If our virtuous actions are more powerful and forceful, then our next rebirth will be a good and happy rebirth, such as a human or godly being. Whereas if the accumulation of non-virtuous and negative actions is more powerful, then the result will be a lower or bad rebirth, such as being born as an animal, a hungry ghost or a hell being. So, whether we will take a good or bad rebirth depends on the force of our virtuous or non-virtuous actions. In our case, it is most likely we have accumulated more non-

virtues and those non-virtues are full and forceful. Therefore, the odds of us falling into a lower rebirth are very high.

#### **Taking refuge**

In order to protect ourselves from taking a bad rebirth in the lower realms, we need to seek refuge and guidance. We need to find someone to show us the right direction. Just as we need an umbrella to shelter us from the rain, we need to find the right object of guidance to free us from lower rebirth and find a good rebirth.

Of course, the object of guidance and refuge that we choose must possess all the necessary qualities to be able to save us from falling into a lower rebirth and lead us to happy rebirths and liberation. Therefore, one of the qualities of a refuge object is that it is free from all suffering and has achieved liberation, such as the Lord Buddha who is a fully awakened one. Not only must the refuge object we rely on be perfect and endowed with excellent qualities, but we must also meet the conditions for sincerely taking refuge.

There are two main causes for taking refuge that we must create which are a sense of fear or insecurity and faith. To generate a sense of fear and insecurity and seek refuge, we need to contemplate the sufferings of cyclic existence in general and the sufferings of lower rebirth in particular. Being aware of the high risk of falling into lower rebirth alone is not enough for the refuge practice, we must also find the right refuge objects and must cultivate faith based on our knowledge of the qualities of the refuge objects. For example, a prisoner seeking help from an authority to leave prison must first have a strong desire to leave prison and the suffering that exists there. In addition, he needs to find the right authority who he can trust. Following the guidance of the authority, he can find his way out of the prison. Similarly, by relying on the refuge objects, we can free ourselves from lower rebirth and samsara.

Time is up for tonight, so we will leave it here and continue next week.

*Transcribed by Ai Chin Khor  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett  
Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering  
Edited Version  
© Tara Institute*