

Meditation on Perfect Human Rebirth

Preparation: Start by focusing briefly on the position of your body, finding the most beneficial position with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid.

Then focus your attention on the breath, letting go of your thoughts and allowing them to pass through, like clouds in the sky. Imagine that with every inhalation you are breathing in purifying blissful white light, and that with every exhalation you breath out negative energy of body and mind, negative thoughts and pains and sickness, in the form of black smoke. Do this for a few minutes.

Motivation: Remember why you are sitting and meditating. Think that you are seeking to understand your mind and your life more deeply in order to become a better person, and ultimately in order to overcome the limitations that are keeping you from fulfilling your highest human potential and achieving a fully awakened existence.

The Main Practice: (For this meditation, have before you the complete list of the eight freedoms and ten endowments.)

Analytical meditation: Meditate on the points of the topic of perfect human rebirth using the following steps, applying these points to your own life and situation and finding examples and reasoning that is effective for your own mind:

Step 1: Recognition of the 8 freedoms and 10 endowments.

Step 2: Contemplation of the great value of the perfect human rebirth (in 3 parts).

Step 2a: The temporal value: enabling one to attain higher rebirth in the future.

Step 2b: The ultimate value: enabling one to attain full enlightenment.

Step 2c: The moment by moment value: the preciousness of every moment of a perfect human rebirth.

Step 3: The rarity of the perfect human rebirth (in 3 parts).

Step 3a: The rarity of the causes of receiving the perfect human rebirth.

- (1) practice of morality
- (2) practice of generosity
- (3) pure prayers

Step 3b: The difficulty of obtaining the perfect human rebirth illustrated by examples.

- (1) The example of the blind turtle surfacing in the ocean through a floating golden yoke.
- (2) The example of throwing a handful of peas against a wall ... how many of them will stick to the wall.
- (3) The example of pouring mustard seeds over the tip of a pin ... how many will stay on the tip.

Step 3c: The rarity of obtaining the perfect human rebirth in terms of numbers.

- (1) The number of beings with perfect human rebirth compared with the total number of sentient beings is like a handful of dust compared to all the dust in the world.

Step 4: Concluding determination:

Having received a perfect human rebirth, with the profound opportunities to attain higher rebirth, liberation, or even full enlightenment, if I do not utilize this rare and precious opportunity to achieve these goals, then this life has been wasted. Therefore, I **MUST** take the essence of this precious life and practice the Dharma, using my life in the most beneficial way possible to bring only happiness to others and thereby create only future happiness for myself.

Once you have come to this conclusion, cease all analytical thought-based contemplation and single-pointedly focus on this thought, letting your mind simply rest in and concentrate on this strong determination.

Dedication: Dedicate any positive energy and merit to be able to protect and fulfill one's perfect human rebirth and to attain a perfect human rebirth in all one's future lives, in order to progress on the spiritual path and reach enlightenment quickly to bring ultimate happiness to others.

Meditation on Renunciation

Preparation: Start by taking just a minute or two to focus on your physical body, finding the most beneficial position with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid. Feel the weight of your body, its substantial, earthy character. Become present in the moment and place where you are.

Now continue with a 5-minute breathing meditation. Focus the attention on the breath (the sensation of the breath flowing in and out at the opening of the nostrils). Let all thoughts go, like clouds in the sky. If distractions arise, be aware of them without getting involved and without judgment, then gently bring the attention back to the breath.

Motivation: Create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Without developing a fully renounced mind, there is no way at all to escape from the ocean of cyclic existence and thus to reach full enlightenment. We have been fumbling around in cyclic existence since beginningless time, suffering horribly and unable to free ourselves, much less others. The fully renounced mind is the foundation of the paths to liberation from samsara and enlightenment; it is essential to achieving these states. So think that you are meditating not just for your own well-being or peace of mind or good reputation, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop a fully renounced mind to reach the state of enlightenment where you can most skillfully benefit all beings.

The main body of the meditation:

The meditation on renunciation is based on all the meditations of the lower scope (perfect human rebirth, death and impermanence, sufferings of the lower realms, karma, refuge) and the middle scope (the sufferings of cyclic existence [of all six realms as well as the general samsaric sufferings], the causes of suffering: the mental afflictions, the four Noble Truths, the twelve links of dependent origination). The fully renounced mind is the mind that rejects or gives up not only suffering itself, but more importantly, the **causes of suffering: karma and the mental afflictions**.

To achieve a fully renounced mind, we must understand cyclic existence thoroughly; we must understand in what way all levels of cyclic existence are in the nature of suffering; we must understand what is suffering and what are the causes of suffering.

(1) Contemplate the 6 realms of cyclic existence, one by one. Contemplate the sufferings of each realm – from the hell realms to the highest god realms, especially focusing on the sufferings of the 3 lower realms. Contemplate the causes of rebirth in each of these realms. Come to the firm conviction that there is no rebirth anywhere in cyclic existence that is not permeated with suffering and brought about by our being under the control of the delusions and obscurations of our minds. Come to the conclusion that that you no longer want to ever be born in cyclic existence again.

Fix your mind on this conviction as long as you can with a concentrated mind.

(2) Contemplate the different types of suffering, especially the 3 sufferings: the suffering of suffering, changeable suffering, and pervasive suffering. Come to the final and firm conclusion that all experience, all existence that is under the sway of karma and the delusions is in the nature of suffering.

Fix your mind on this conviction as long as you can with a concentrated mind.

(3) Contemplate the different mental afflictions one by one, especially the 6 root delusions: attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride, jealousy, doubt. These are the root causes of our creating continuous negative karma, and thus the causes of our beginningless suffering. These mental afflictions have caused us again and again to take horrible rebirths in the lower realms, suffering interminably and unbearably for eons and eons. And if we do not renounce them, reject them altogether, they will cause us to take similar suffering rebirths again and again in the future. Since you understand that to be liberated from all suffering means that you must renounce these causes, completely and forever, come to the strong conclusion that you never want to be under the control of the delusions and the resultant karma again.

Fix your mind on this conviction as long as you can with a concentrated mind.

Having genuinely generated this thought within you, stop all thinking processes and simply remain concentrated on this determination with single-pointed focus, allowing it to absorb into the deeper levels of your mind.

Dedication

Having made this effort to achieve a fully renounced mind, may I in every moment renounce and overcome the causes of suffering, that is, every mental affliction in my mind. May I be swiftly liberated from samsara and progress to the state of supreme awakening in order to lead all other beings to that supreme state.

Meditation on Bodhichitta (overview)

Preparation: Start by taking just a minute or two to focus on your physical body, finding the most beneficial position with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid. Feel the weight of your body, its substantial, earthy character. Become present in the moment and place where you are.

Now continue with a 5-minute breathing meditation. Focus the attention on the breath (the sensation of the breath flowing in and out at the opening of the nostrils). Let all thoughts go, like clouds in the sky. If distractions arise, be aware of them without getting involved and without judgment, then gently bring the attention back to the breath.

Motivation: Create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own well-being or peace of mind or good reputation, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop the mind of bodhichitta that seeks to attain the state of enlightenment where you can most skillfully benefit all beings and lead them as well from suffering and to enlightenment.

The main body of the meditation:

Start by imagining that you are surrounded by all sentient beings, who are in the form of human beings. Your father is seated on your right, your mother on your left. Behind you are all your friends and family members ... those you are close to. In front of you are all the sentient beings that you have difficulty with or that you dislike ... your “enemies.” Surrounding you in all directions as far as you can see are all remaining sentient beings. They are all seated and facing you.

Briefly review the meditation on equanimity, in order to develop such a state of mind as a basis for the following meditation.

There are 2 meditative methods to develop bodhichitta in the mind. Choose one of these methods and contemplate the points sequentially to bring your mind to the state of bodhichitta.

The first is called the Seven Techniques of Mahayana Cause and Effect. The points are as follows:

1. Seeing all sentient beings as having been my mother
2. Remembering the kindness of all mother sentient beings
3. Determining to repay the kindness of all mother sentient beings
4. Generating loving kindness toward all mother sentient beings
5. Generating compassion toward all mother sentient beings
6. Developing the special attitude of “universal responsibility”
7. Generating the mind of enlightenment, bodhichitta

The second method of developing bodhichitta in the mind is that of exchanging self with others. The points are as follows:

1. Equalizing self and others
2. The shortcoming of the self-cherishing attitude
3. The benefits of cherishing others more than oneself
4. Generating loving kindness toward all mother sentient beings

5. Generating compassion toward all mother sentient beings
6. Exchanging self and others: Taking and giving (*tong-len*)
7. Generating the mind of enlightenment, bodhichitta

Once you have contemplated all points in order and reached the last point, bodhichitta, make this determination: I must reach the perfect state of enlightenment as quickly as possible in order to bring all kind mother sentient beings to the unequaled peace and happiness of that awakened state. Enlightenment is a state of perfect compassion, perfect wisdom, and perfect power, all these three in balance. Only when I am enlightened will I be able to see perfectly the exact needs and propensities of sentient beings, and thus be able to guide them perfectly and lead them to enlightenment. For their sake, to free them from every suffering and bring them every happiness, I must reach the awakened state of a buddha. From now on, this is where I shall direct all my energy in every moment of my life.

Having genuinely generated this thought within you, stop all thinking processes and simply remain concentrated on this determination with single-pointed focus, allowing it to absorb into the deeper levels of your mind.

Dedication

Having worked to develop this pure mind of bodhichitta, may I quickly generate all positive qualities of kindness and compassion and remove all negativities and obscurations of self-cherishing from my mind. May I swiftly awaken to the state of supreme enlightenment and lead all other beings to that supreme state.

Meditation on Emptiness

Preparation: Start by taking just a minute or two to focus on your physical body, finding the most beneficial position with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid. Feel the weight of your body, its substantial, earthy character. Become present in the moment and place where you are.

Now continue with the 9-round breathing meditation (see the instructions in the module “How to Meditate.”) Let all thoughts go as you focus on the breath as you inhale and exhale through each nostril, breathing in white light and breathing out black smoke.

Motivation: When the mind is calm and focused, create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own well-being or peace of mind or good reputation, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop the wisdom of emptiness in order to attain the state of enlightenment where you can most skillfully benefit all beings and lead them as well from suffering and to enlightenment.

The main body of the meditation:

Now think “I,” “I.” Allow the feeling of “I” to grow. Focus on the sense of “I,” or “me.” One way to bring up this sense of I is to generate a strong emotion ... for example, bring to mind an instance in which you felt strong anger or strong fear. Now allow a small part of your mind to subtly act as an observer, observing this sense of I. (That “observer” must be very sneaky and subtle, otherwise, this sense of I tends to disappear.)

How does the I appear? As one with the body? As completely separate from the body? As one with the mind? As completely separate from the mind? Often, the I appears as something independent, separate from, the mind and body. Is this appearance accurate and true? Let’s investigate.

What is this I? Is it the body? The whole body? A part of the body? Is it the head? The heart? The brain? If it is any of these things, how could then we say “my head,” or “my heart,” or “my brain,” or even “my body”? Contemplate this for awhile.

Now think: Is the I the same as the body, or is the I the “possessor” of the body? If the I is not the same as the body, is it completely different? If the I is the possessor of the body, does that mean it is completely independent of the body? Something separate? Contemplate this for awhile.

Can the I exist without the body? Think about this.

Now think: Is the I the same as the mind, that which perceives and thinks and experiences, both perceptually (through the 5 senses) and conceptually (through thinking)? Is the I the same as the whole mind? As every moment of the mind? If the I is the mind, which moment of the mind is it? Which part of the mind? Contemplate this for awhile.

If the I is the same as the mind, why do we say “my mind”? Is the I the possessor of the mind? Is the I completely different from the mind? Completely independent of the mind? Something separate? Contemplate this for awhile.

Can the I exist without the mind? Think about this.

The I is neither one with nor completely separate from the body. The I is neither one with nor completely separate from the mind. What is it then? How does it exist?

The appearance of the I as something completely independent of the mind and body is a complete illusion. It is a completely false appearance. And this appearance gives rise to all the afflictions of the mind, all the delusions and resulting karmic actions. This false appearance is the root of our samsara and our suffering. This false appearance is completely deceptive, and the I that appears to exist in this false way DOES NOT EXIST AT ALL. Thus, the very subtle I that does exist (conventionally) is COMPLETELY EMPTY OF THIS FALSE WAY OF EXISTING. The I is completely empty of independent existence, or of inherent existence. The I is a mere imputation, a mere label, that depends on the base of the body and mind. Contemplate this strongly. Once you have come to this conclusion, allow all your thinking process to stop and merely concentrate on this understanding with single-pointed focus, so that it can penetrate into the deeper levels of your mind.

Dedication

Due to the merit and positive energy of meditating to understand the emptiness of the I, may I, who is merely imputed by mind, and all sentient beings quickly generate all positive qualities of kindness and compassion, which are merely imputed by mind, and remove all negativities and obscurations of self-cherishing, which are merely imputed by mind, from our mindstreams. May the wisdom of emptiness annihilate all my wrong views and completely cut the root of samsara in my mind and the minds of all sentient beings. May I swiftly awaken to the state of supreme enlightenment, which is merely imputed by mind, and lead all other beings, which are merely imputed by mind, to that very same supreme state.