

7. Leisure and Opportunity

1. The exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity.
 - a. The identification of leisure and opportunity
 1. Leisure
 2. Opportunity
 - a. The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to yourself.
 - b. The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to others.
 - b. Contemplating the great importance of leisure and opportunity.
 - c. Contemplating the difficulty of obtaining leisure and opportunity

The identification of leisure and opportunity

Leisure

Freedom from any of the lower rebirths that lack leisure.

The eight conditions are stated in the Friendly Letter:

1. Born with wrong views
2. Born without a conquerors word
3. Born as an animal
4. Born as a hungry Ghost
5. Born as a hell being
6. Born as an uncultured person in a border region
7. Born as a stupid or mute person
8. Born as a deity of long life.
 - lacks discrimination and lives in the formless realm
 - lives in the desire realm and constantly distracted by activities of desire.

After you have obtained leisure, which is free from these... strive to end birth. In these 8 states there is no time for acts of virtue, therefore they are called conditions that lack leisure.

Opportunity

5 aspects of opportunity that pertain to yourself

- Being born human.
- Being born in a central region

- you are born in an area where the 4 types of followers are active
- Having complete sensory faculties
 - You are not stupid, mute, and have your main limbs, eyes, ears, and the like intact.
- Having reversable karma
 - You have not done or caused others to commit the 5 deeds of immediate retribution
- Having faith in the source
 - You have faith in discipline which is the root in which all mundane and supramundane virtues arise.

These are all included in your own mindstream and are favorable conditions for practicing the teachings.

5 aspects of opportunity that pertain to others

- A buddha has visited
 - A Bodhisattva has collected the vast collections of merit and wisdom to become a perfect Buddha.
- The sublime teaching is being taught
 - The Buddha or disciples of the Buddha are imparting the teachings.
- The teaching remains
 - it is not degenerating between the time of someone becoming a buddha and giving the teaching until this buddha passes into parinirvana.
- There are those who follow it
 - There are some that understand that beings have the capacity to perceive the sublime teachings. These beings then follow the teachings, while teaching others according to their capacity.
- There is caring for others
 - refers to those that actually carry out acts of charity by giving out religious robes and the like.

Since these 5 exist in the minds of others and are favorable conditions they are called **aspects of opportunity that pertains to others**.

Contemplating the great importance of leisure and opportunity.

You can't practice the pure teachings with just any life. It must have leisure and opportunity.

Even though you have been born a human with such limitless suffering, you still have the best of situations. It is difficult to attain this in even 10 million aeons. Even when the dieties die, the other dieties say, 'may you have a happy rebirth'. By happy rebirth they mean a rebirth as a human.

- Descent into the Womb Sutra

You can't obtain the path of a noble being in the higher deity realms. Most higher deity realms are said to be in a life that lacks leisure.

Therefore a human life is the supreme basis for initially achieving the path.

Therefore.. repeatedly meditate with thoughts such as these

Why would I waste attainment of such a good life? When I act as though it were insignificant, I am deceiving myself. What could be more foolish than this? Just this once I am free from continuously trekking the many narrow cliff-paths of leisureliness conditions such as the miserable realms. If I waste this freedom and return to those conditions, it would be similar to losing my mind, like someone dazed by a magical spell.

Each time Jen-nga entered meditation he recited: You should do the same.

Now I have independence and favorable conditions.
If I do not take full advantage of this time, I will plunge into the abyss and fall under the control of others. Who will lift me out?

- Candrakirti 'Commentary on the Middle Way'

Think about the great importance of L&O in respect to your final goals as well as your temporary goals. Think of how you can easily achieve with this life qualities such as generosity, ethical discipline, and patience.. which are the cause of resources, perfect attendants, and the body of a being in high status.

Relying the boat of a human body,
Free yourself from the great river of suffering.
Because this boat is difficult to obtain again,
Do not sleep now, fool!

-Shantideva

By thinking along these lines, develop the desire to take full advantage of a human life of leisure and opportunity.

Contemplating the Difficulty of Obtaining a life of leisure and Opportunity.

In order to develop a fully qualified desire to take full advantage of a life leisure, you must reflect on its four elements.

- The need to practice the teachings because all living beings only want happiness and do not want suffering, and because achieving happiness and alleviating suffering depend only on practicing the teaching;
- The ability to practice, because you are endowed with the external condition, a teacher, and the internal conditions, leisure and opportunity;
- the need to practice in this lifetime, because if you do not practice, it will be very difficult to obtain leisure and opportunity again for many lifetimes; and
- the need to practice right now, because there is no certainty when you will die.

The last two can be combined to one - 'practicing quickly'. Mindfulness of death is needed here.

Try condensing the material into three topics.

- What the nature of leisure and opportunity is.
- How it is important in terms of temporary and final goals.
- How it is difficult to obtain in terms of it's cause and effect.

In particular, a life of leisure and opportunity requires many conditions to come about. Very few achieve such causes.

For beings in the lower realms, obtaining a life in the higher realms doesn't even seem almost non-existent. For beings in the higher realms, having a birth in the like ours with leisure is very rare. Meditate on this.

Geshe Dolwa values this teaching greatly. He said that the practice of all other teachings follows this one. So practice it well.