

## 2017\_05\_07\_2\_Impermanence\_LMC.mp4

*human existence precious because of bodhicitta, 4 thoughts: experience of rather than contemplation of, **Carrying Practice**: contemplation of impermanence develops sense of sanity*

[00:02:31] In these four contemplations we are encouraging ourselves... to develop a helpful attitude... toward our circumstances... in all ways. When we talk about the benefits of a precious human existence, we don't actually mean... that a human existence is in *itself* precious. It is not. We can imagine all sorts of situations, and maybe even have personally witnessed, the *truth* that a human existence is not necessarily precious.

[00:04:06] In the context of our practice of the buddhadharma, a precious human existence includes a number of things, but in essence... that we have a body. Including the results of our DNA, if you will, a brain, a mind. And most importantly... a willingness and a wish... to accomplish insight... into the nature of the mind itself. And by extension, to be able to and to actually *engage* in accomplishing the benefit of others.

[00:05:40] There are long lists of characteristics associated with this. But today, I want us to get the *feeling* behind it, not the concept, so much. The concept is actually fairly easy. If we can give rise, in our own mindstream, [to] a definite experience of appreciation for what we have... in terms of our physical being, which is not to say that we are always well, always physically at our best. But no matter what, we nurture a sense of appreciation that we have the ability to accomplish our own benefit through the practice of the Dharma. And by extension, the benefit of others. So the *appreciation* aspect of the precious human existence *and*... the willingness and aspiration to benefit others... and the actual doing of that makes our lives precious. So we'll begin again this morning at this point doing the recitation of refuge & bodhicitta.

**sangha** [00:07:42] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:09:44] In our culture... even just the contemplation of, the conversation of... our mortality... is sometimes considered a morbid and useless contemplation... at best. We often divide... things into small groups or into opposites like living and dying. Life and death. Some people will be afraid of even a conversation around death if they *feel* their own mortality. So the contemplation of impermanence, the second of the Four Thoughts that Turns the Mind. We are all aware of impermanence. You don't need a college education to know that nothing remains the same for long. And our youth becomes maturity and middle age, old age... and then the end.

[00:12:30] In our ordinary conversations about life and death, we make often the rather large mistake, treating life and death as if they were entirely separate. ... When upon close examination... it's clear that they are both part of one thing. ... When we look close, we can see... there is no life without death. There is no death without life. They are not diametrically opposed. We may conceptually hold them to be in conflict... mutually exclusive somehow. But there is actually no evidence for that.

[00:14:19] One of the great, unique qualities... of our path of the buddhadharma... is that we are encouraged... and given the *tools*... to embrace the totality of our experience. Including... sickness, dying, being well and not being well. We are encouraged, *all* of our experiences, to hold them as precious. And to *link* those experiences with our understanding of our meditation and spiritual practice in general. And those practices are effective... in a profound way. ...

Impermanence is not only about mortality, of course, it's also about the change in our beliefs. The change in our economic states. The change in our relationships with each other, which are continuously in a state of change. And when we look closely at these things, we often can see, if we look close enough and steady enough, that *change itself* is uncomfortable.

[00:16:56] In order to engage fully in the contemplation of, and the meditation on, impermanence... it's important... to apply and look at impermanence in all aspects of our experience. It's not all about life and death. It's also all about the things that happen during life and during death. In the next contemplation, we're also going to look at what happens following death.

[00:18:05] What's important with this, as with the precious human existence, is not so much the conceptual understanding of the contemplation, which is important, but it is not where the *fruit* is. All of the contemplations of the four that we're doing today are about doing whatever is necessary in order to have the *actual* direct experience. If we cannot appreciate our bodies when they are sick, if we do not understand how precious it is to have a body... we cannot appreciate... our ever changing and sometimes unpleasant, as well as sometimes pleasant, relationships with each other... if we do not understand the *nature* of impermanence... which imbues all of our experiences.

[00:19:49] The very highest meditation practices on emptiness... are actually not different from a *deep* understanding of impermanence. Impermanence is not one particular thing. In its more... complete understanding, we refer to it as interdependence. We each... become... an *affect* on each person. And we become, an affect... of all of our experiences and our relationships. All of the pieces are constantly flowing together and apart. On a day when there are scattered clouds, you can gaze at the clouds and witness the continuous change. If you can treat looking at the clouds as a continuous change and witness it, you can sit with your own body in this moment, in this very place and witness the changes that your body is going through each moment. And while your body changes, so too does your attitude, your mind, your sense of well-being or the lack of it. And those experiences become causes and conditions for further experiences. There is no beginning and there is no end. So for the next while then... just bring your awareness to that continuous flow that we call impermanence, interdependence... with as little thinking as possible and mostly just witnessing that continuous change.

[00:23:15] *period of meditation*

[00:42:27] Continuing now as you contemplate impermanence... it's so easy to fall back into a strictly conceptual understanding. ... If you go deeply into it and watch for all of the changes and experiences that occur throughout the day... that becomes very helpful... in developing a strong *sense of sanity*... in relationship to a world which is continuously in a state of flux. Imagine changes which are difficult, but not devastating. You could lose your job. Be separated from a loved one. And don't forget the other side, which is you could get a job. [laughter] You could get a raise. Your economic situation could improve. Impermanence is not to be divided into positive and negative. It's another one of those continuous processes... that when we look close, there is no beginning, there's no end. Sanity... is relating to all of it as it occurs... without our usual strong melding of attachment and aversion.

[00:45:16] *short period of meditation*  
**sangha** [00:50:14] *dedicating the merit*