
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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We will meditate a little bit as usual. Sit in a comfortable, relaxed and appropriate posture. At the outset of the meditation, it is important to generate a good motivation for meditation.

What do we mean when we say we have to generate a good motivation at the outset of the meditation? Generally, it is difficult to generate such a good motivation naturally, so one has to start out generating that motivation with effort; then, over time, it will become a natural thing.

If we analyse our life and weigh up which type of actions are more prevalent – harmful, unsuitable actions or virtuous, beneficial ones – we will probably find that the unsuitable actions far outweigh the virtuous ones. So, to counteract that trend, at the outset of your meditation, you generate virtuous motivation with effort.

Therefore, to establish a pattern of positive mental states, at the beginning of the meditation, we put effort into generating a virtuous motivation for the meditation, since it doesn't come about naturally.

When we meditate, we shouldn't have a motivation concerned with the happiness of this life. Meditation shouldn't be for the purpose of attaining the happiness of this life and for eliminating obstacles within this life – that wouldn't be appropriate. Rather, one should direct one's motivation towards the happiness of one's future life, or the attainment of liberation, or enlightenment. Our motivation should be for the attainment of a higher status and definite goodness – meaning our motivation should extend at least to the wish to accumulate merit and purify negative karma so that one can have a better future life; or attain liberation, freedom from samsara altogether; or to attain complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

By preceding our meditation with such a motivation – in fact preceding any type of virtuous action with such a motivation – we will increase the power of that virtuous action.

An analogy for generating a virtuous motivation that might not come about naturally is our external appearance. Even if we don't naturally look particularly handsome or beautiful, we can exert effort and try all kind of external means to make ourselves appear more beautiful and handsome, applying makeup, eyeliner and so on (*laughter*)! Likewise, although naturally we cannot yet generate a virtuous motivation, we can do transform our motivation with effort.

We might become concerned and think, 'If my motivation

is for the happiness of future lives, what will happen to the happiness of this life?' Well, you don't need to worry about this, because by working for the happiness of your future life, the happiness of this life is established implicitly.

However, when we work only for the happiness of this life, the happiness of our future life is ignored and, at the end of this life, the happiness of this life is all gone and we have no reserves for the happiness of future lives. But by working for the happiness of future lives, the happiness of this life is accomplished implicitly.

If we are able to generate a concern for the happiness of our future life, automatically our grasping at the happiness of this life becomes less, and we experience more happiness in this life. This is how the happiness of this life is automatically established when we develop a concern for the happiness of future lives. Otherwise, as long as we have grasping for the happiness of this life, we are unable to enjoy the things of this life. There will never be any satisfaction in this life as long as one grasps at the happiness of this life.

So, now try to generate the motivation, 'I am now going to meditate in order to attain enlightenment so that I can be able to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings'. Then, by practising meditation with such a motivation, you will be happy. We all know that when we engage in the different meditation practices, that the mind is happy.

Then you have to focus the mind internally, and stop engaging with external objects. After having focused the mind completely internally, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath – letting the mind enter the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate for a few minutes in this manner. (*Pause for meditation*)

We need to consider the point of meditation – why does one meditate and practise the Dharma?

The practice of the Dharma is to improve the mind. We should always try to be a good person, someone who is well-behaved and treats others well, and we engage in Dharma practice to improve our mind. But to achieve that aim, we need to practise what we know. If we just acquire Dharma knowledge but don't practise it, the Dharma won't work.

Improving our mind happens by utilising the power of the mind. The mind will not improve and will not become purer through external means – the mind can only be improved through its own power.

If one has a good, pure and wholesome mind, one will be able to lead a happy life. By generating love and compassion, one's mind will become positive, pure and good. The root of a good mind is love and compassion. By being loving and compassionate, one's mind also becomes wholesome and good, and one can have a happy life.

What determines whether one leads a good human life or not is determined by one's actions. It is not determined by external means – whether one is enjoying food and

drink and so on – but rather by one's state of mind; this determines whether one lives a good human life or not.

Human beings have a particular power that other sentient beings don't possess and, by using that power effectively, one can bring about great happiness for others. However, this won't come about without love and compassion. One needs to have love and compassion to engage in actions that are beneficial for others.

One might then think, 'I'm a poor person and I don't have much worldly power, so how can I possibly benefit others?' There are many other ways to benefit others without necessarily having great material resources. For example, one can cheer up those who are sad and depressed; one can make them happy again, and can talk to them in a way that revives their self-confidence and strength of mind. One can be compassionate and loving to those who are desperate and suffering. Anyone can do these things. And we must value the other person, and their abilities and potential. Without love and compassion, we won't really value the other person.

For example, if you and your partner or friend have the same financial means, there is really no need to benefit each other materially. So, the question arises, 'How can I be of benefit to the other person?' One can benefit the other person by being kind, compassionate and affectionate to them when they are down and having a difficult time; restoring their self-confidence and strength of mind when they feel depressed; looking after them when they are sick, and so forth. By acting in such a manner, one will establish a good foundation for a lasting relationship, because the other person will later remember, 'When I had a hard time, when I was sick, when I was depressed, this person usually treated me very well and helped me.'

By acting in such a manner, many problems and sufferings can be alleviated. We all experience different problems, but sometimes we don't think about the means for alleviating the problem. We just get caught up in the problem without thinking about a means for alleviating it. But we can solve many of our problems by thinking about ways and means to alleviate them.

The experience of suffering and happiness is very personal. When there is a financial problem that affects two friends, it is possible that one will be sad while the other will be happy. So, the internal experience of happiness and suffering is purely individual. The experience of the financial problem is a shared situation that it is felt by both parties, but internally, each person may have a different response. When one person is sad and suffering, the other person can try to instil some peace and tranquillity in the mind of their partner through saying and doing the right things, and thus benefit the other person.

If your friend or partner is experiencing difficulties, this is not a time for distancing yourself from them. If you distance yourself at such a time, probably in future you will come into the same situation in which you will experience similar suffering and will need someone to

support and help you. You will really come to understand the suffering that your friend experienced. So, when there is a difficulty, you should stand by your friend or partner and help them through that difficult time and not distance yourself from them.

We all know how to meditate, so the lack of meditation practice does not come about because of a lack of knowledge of how to meditate; rather, it comes about because of a lack of application. One has the wisdom that knows right from wrong, that knows virtue from non-virtue, so what one needs to do is to follow up that wisdom and apply it.

The kind Buddha said that if one doesn't practise Dharma, no benefit will arise, so one has to practise.

If one continues going to the doctor and collecting one's medicine, but just stores all of it medicine in a drawer at home and doesn't take it, then whose fault is it if one doesn't get cured from one's sickness? It is certainly not the fault of the medicine that is stored away safely in the drawer, and it is certainly not the fault of the doctor who gave one the medicine. It is only one's own fault. Likewise, one has to put the Dharma one has learned into practice. There is no point of trying to study further great Dharma practices if one doesn't put the small things that one knows into practice.

For example, if one knows that a certain action will harm another person, one will refrain from that action. However, if one doesn't refrain from that action, the great Bodhisattva Path won't come about, because one has forgotten about the accumulation of merits – the more merits one accumulates, the faster and more easily one's prayers will be accomplished and the more successful one's activities will be.

One should engage in all activities in reliance upon mindfulness and introspection. All of one's activities should be combined with mindfulness and introspection, so that one avoids those activities that harm others and engages in activities that benefit others. When we see another sentient being, we should remember that that other sentient being has shown us only kindness and that that being is a field of merit in dependence upon which we can accumulate the merit to attain enlightenment.

By seeing that sentient beings have shown us only kindness and are the supreme field of merit in dependence upon which we can accumulate the merit to attain enlightenment, we should then regard them only with love and compassion. We should think that by making sentient beings happy, we make all the buddhas and bodhisattvas happy. This should become one's essential practice.

If parents concerned with the welfare of their child see someone who benefits their child and makes their child happy, the parents will be delighted with that person. Likewise, the buddhas' singular concern is the welfare of sentient beings. The buddhas' and bodhisattvas' singular concern is the welfare of sentient beings, so when they see us benefitting sentient beings and making them happy, they rejoice and delight in this. So, when we look

at a sentient being, we should be aware that the merits for attaining enlightenment come only about in relation to that sentient being through the practice of generosity, morality and so forth. Then, we should regard that sentient being only with kindness, love, and compassion and only treat that being well.

When we engage in the practice of benefiting sentient beings, making the buddhas and bodhisattvas happy, all the important points of Dharma practice are there. So when one asks oneself, 'What should I do in order to make the buddhas and bodhisattvas happy?', the answer is that one should benefit sentient beings and doing that becomes our offering of our practice.

It is important that we practise the Dharma. By practising the Dharma, the mind will improve and become positive and wholesome. Without the practice of Dharma, it is difficult to improve the mind and for it to become positive and wholesome. So there is an important point here, and I hope that you all will practise the Dharma.

You attended the classes this year very well. I am very happy and I want to thank you very much. From my side, I explained the Dharma to you from the point of view of explaining the Dharma among friends, with a good and pure motivation. I don't have any motivation regarding fame and so forth; with a good motivation, I just aim to explain the Dharma among friends, and I don't know whether you find it beneficial or not.

Again, I want to thank you very much and hope that you have a good Christmas and New Year – one that will be different from the Christmas and New Year experienced by someone who doesn't know about the Dharma. If one practises the Dharma, those events should differ from earlier times, when one didn't know about the Dharma.

If one is a Dharma practitioner, external conducive conditions will induce great inner happiness. If one has good food to eat, one's meditation practice will also develop well. If one doesn't have good food to eat, one's meditation practice will decline somewhat. So having good nourishment, good food, is a very important condition for good meditation practice.

The Buddha said, 'When we eat, we shouldn't eat until we are completely filled up to the top. We should leave a little bit of empty space in there'. Because if you eat until you are completely full, you fall asleep and you don't get to meditate! Also, one's breath won't be able to flow as freely and lightly if one has filled oneself up completely. Therefore, the Buddha taught that one should leave one's stomach one-third empty.

On Wednesday 7th January, the classes start up again, when Damien will teach the meditation on Chenrezig, which will be done for world peace. If we recite the OM MANI PADME HUM Chenrezig mantra while meditating that our mind is one with Chenrezig's mind, it has incredible benefit, and will make the mind much more peaceful, calm and tranquil. Also, reciting Chenrezig's mantra is beneficial for those with vision and eye problems!

As explained at the beginning, bring the mind back home

focusing it inwards, then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of the Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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