
The Condensed Lam Rim

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

2 June 2004

We will meditate for a little while as usual. Sit in an upright, relaxed position. One needs to be inseparable from a wholesome state of mind. Adopting a wholesome, positive and virtuous state of mind will be very beneficial for us. If one does not have such a state of mind, one's life will be very heavy-going and one will not have many friends.

It is important that we analyse the mind and investigate whether virtuous mental states or non-virtuous mental states are predominant.

If we conclude that virtuous, wholesome states of mind are predominant, this is something to rejoice about. However, if you find that unwholesome states of mind are predominant, you should be concerned and think that as long as you have such states of mind, there will be no opportunity for you to be happy.

One should view such unwholesome states of mind as the root of all problems, so one should take measures to reduce and then eradicate them. Otherwise, when they arise, the mind becomes uptight, causing the psychic channels and energies that flow within those channels to be blocked. Then, the whole body becomes 'blocked' and that person will feel very restless, incredibly uptight and not able to stay still. Obviously, it is also detrimental to one's physical health to be in such a state.

On the other hand, a virtuous and wholesome mental state is beneficial for oneself and also beneficial for others. If we are under the control of unwholesome mental states, they will cause all our friends to turn away from us. The negative states of mind will even transform the friends we have into enemies, so that in the end we will be left alone with nobody to look after us.

Positive states of mind, on the other hand, have the power to transform even enemies into friends. They don't scare away the friends we have, and also enable us to accumulate more and more friends, because if we are happy and joyful and convey that happiness and joy to others, people will feel friendly towards us and will want to be our friend.

However, if we are under the control of a negative state of mind, not only will that ensure that our enemies remain our enemies, but it will even turn strangers and friends into enemies, so that there will have no-one who really cares about us. People often complain: 'I have nobody who cares about me, I have nobody to look after me...'

So, by adopting a positive mental, one benefits oneself and others. At a personal level, a positive mental state

brings happiness to us; then, because we are happy, our actions will make others happy. We will have more and more friends and more and more people who care about us, which will bring additional happiness.

Thus, a wholesome positive mental state is at the root of even the happiness of this life. One should view this wholesome positive mental state as the root of all the happiness of this life – not just our own happiness, but eventually every being's happiness. Also, with a positive, wholesome mental state, when things are not going well, one has an inner refuge and will not really be affected when things are not going well externally.

Our experience with generating wholesome positive mental states is that even if we are able to generate such a virtuous mental state, we find them to be quite unstable and fleeting. On the other hand, when unwholesome mental states arise, they arise very easily and once arisen, they seem to be very stable. We are all familiar with this situation.

For example, we may regard someone as our best girlfriend or boyfriend at 1 o'clock, but by 2 o'clock, the situation may have completely turned and because of the anger we break up with our friend. Maybe we were already angry with our friend at 1 o'clock but by 2 o'clock we boil over and break up with the person. In order to avoid being overcome by these disturbing thoughts, we need to meditate – first, to reduce the disturbing thoughts and then to eradicate them while increasing our positive and wholesome mental states.

That's why one needs to meditate. To pacify the disturbing thoughts, one needs to meditate, focusing the mind on the meditation object. Even if one can just stay one minute in such a state, over time through continual practice, that ability to focus the mind will become stronger and stronger.

So, one needs to meditate in order to pacify the neurotic mind. Otherwise, as many people have experienced, the neurotic mind will come between them and their friends. They will begin to follow a train of thought and start to worry about what will happen: 'What is he/she doing now? ...if I do this, that will happen, and if I do that, something else will happen...how shall I do it?'. In this way, the neurotic mind artificially generates fears and blocks the person, causing all kinds of problems.

In order to subdue or pacify this neurotic, conceptualising mind, we need to meditate, placing the mind single-pointedly on one meditation object and letting it remain focused on that meditation object, even if just for a brief time; over time, this will have more pronounced effect.

Therefore, now you need to turn the mind inwards, bringing it back home, focusing it internally, and not letting the mind be distracted by the disturbing thoughts that try to engage external objects. You have to totally turn the mind inwards and, from within that space, you have to place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Here the mind should not be 'looking' at the breathing but should become one with the breathing. We will meditate in this manner for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

I think it would be very beneficial for your life if you could meditate a little bit on a regular basis.

There is no need to worry about the future, because we don't know what the future will bring. For us, the future is a hidden phenomenon, so worrying about what will happen in 20 years or 30 years time is quite meaningless.

I'm not saying don't think about the future, but what I'm saying is that you should not worry about it. If you worry about the future, it's not beneficial; it doesn't reduce your suffering. Having these neurotic fears and conceptual ideas about what will happen in 20 or 30 years is quite useless; I don't think you need to have those fears.

At the same time, I'm not saying not to think about the future at all. You just live your life, do your job well and save up some money – every week put \$100 in the bank if you can. Doing this will help you to have a calmer mind and perhaps alleviate some of those worries you might have. Don't spend all the money you earn on drinking and eating and so forth, but put some away every week, say \$100. This will come in handy in the future. Even if you have a good situation now – for example, if you have a good car – there will come a time when you will need to buy a new car, so it's good to put some money away regularly, every week.

This is just some advice I am sharing among friends – you might be thinking that this Geshe is trying to interfere with your life! But this type of advice is what some people say they find is quite useful. Worrying about future problems is not going to solve those future problems; however, for example, putting money away every week is actually a method with which we can counteract future problems.

Worrying about future problems is not going to make those future problems go away; rather, it will interfere with your daily life, preventing you from doing your daily activities and your job to your full capacity. So, instead of worrying, you can do something to meet those future problems; that is a much more effective way.

Sometimes, people are also in a situation where they come into a little bit of money – their grandmother may have given some money to their mother, the mother says she doesn't need it, so she divides it up between the different children, giving each of the siblings say \$10,000. There was a case like this where the student started to worry about what to do with the \$10,000 and started to make all kinds of plans – travelling the world for six months, for example. I told the student there was really no need to worry, but just to put the money into the bank.

Realistically, \$10,000 does not get you that much. If you went to a car dealer wanting to buy a new car, you would get nowhere with \$10,000! It might seem a lot, when you don't have a lot, but it's not that much money. So just invest it and let it do some work for you and it will come in handy in future. This advice is specifically directed at the younger students. This is something specifically the younger students should listen to.

Do you have some questions?

Question: A work colleague had a very serious accident

and is in intensive care. Is there any type of meditation I can do to help?

Answer: There are long life mantras you can recite for your work colleague that will help if that person has life obstacles.

But first of all, you should go to the hospital with a bunch of flowers and a nice card. They will feel happy when you arrive with the flowers and some nice, uplifting things to say. You could also ask them whether there is anything you can do for them. This will make their mind happy, and this happy mind will make it easier for them to cope with their injuries. Otherwise, if they have physical injuries and feel mentally depressed, it will be much more difficult for them to get well.

There is also the meditation on giving and taking, which you know.

Question: I'm surprised that you didn't suggest to the student to give the \$10,000 away to build up their merit!

Answer: I would only give such advice to a person who had stable generosity. If I gave such an advice to a person without stable generosity, they might be very enthusiastic at the time because they may not have needed the money at the time. However, because of having unstable generosity, if they came into financial need themselves later on, they would generate regret and wish they hadn't given away the money.

So giving away large sums of money is something you can only advise to someone who has a stable generous attitude.

If the person did not have a good understanding of the law of cause and effect, they might say: 'I lost my \$10,000 because of generosity. So forget about increasing your wealth through generosity, even though they say that generosity is the primary cause for wealth'. So, by not understanding the law of cause and effect, that person will think that you will only become poorer through generosity. Thus, there is a danger that such a person would generate wrong views regarding the Dharma.

Question: Geshe-la, what happens if we have the generous thought but don't undertake the action? Shantideva said that it was a bad thing to have the thought of generosity, but not to do it. It would seem to be better to at least have the thought even if one can't complete the action.

Answer: Shantideva was talking about this in the context of bodhisattvas who have made the vow to practice the six perfections.

Bodhisattvas have made the vow to practice the six perfections to subdue their own mind, and to practise the four ways of subduing sentient beings in order to subdue the minds of others. Because they have already made the promise to give away everything for the benefit of others, if they don't do so at a time when there is a need – for example, when they encounter beggars and so forth – they will generate great negativity. But in general, if we encounter somebody asking us or begging for money, there is really no harm in giving it to them.

Of course, some people who ask for money are deceptive

about their needs and motives. For example, once when I was in Delhi on my way to Dharamsala, in front of the Gyuto Restaurant in the Tibetan settlement area, there were two Tibetans on the ground. One of them had a blanket over his head and looked quite ill. The other asked me whether I could give them 65 rupees so that they could go to Deradoon. I was able to give them 65 rupees – thinking that in the past when I had lived in India, before I lived in Australia, I wouldn't have had 65 rupees to give them. But after having been in Australia I had the 65 rupees to give to them.

However, a monk from the Gyuto Restaurant told me that I had been duped because he said they only pretended to be sick and that they would use the money for drugs.

A few years later when I was again at the same place, I encountered the same person who asked the same question – for 65 rupees to go to Deradoon. I said: 'This time, I won't give you any money, because I gave you some money some years ago and you lied to me then. That won't happen again now'. But then he said: 'No, no, actually now I just want to have some noodle soup (thugpa) from the restaurant please'. So this I could do. I ordered some soup for him from the restaurant.

Question: In the case of a cat chasing and eating a mouse, which being should we feel more compassion for – the mouse that lost its life, or the cat that has to kill another being to survive?

Answer: So if you were really a practitioner of compassion, the cat would be the object of greater compassion, because while the mouse has been eaten, it doesn't really create any non-virtuous karma, but only experiences the momentary suffering of being eaten by the cat.

However, the cat eating the mouse accumulates very strong non-virtuous karma, which in the future will ripen as a much heavier result. For that reason, the cat is in greater need of one's compassion. Other sentient beings that accumulate non-virtuous karma should become the object of one's compassion, because they are accumulating the cause for future suffering.

Question: Geshe-la, you said there is no point worrying about things 20 or 30 years in the future. What if something unpleasant is going to happen in the next week? Is it still better not to worry?

Answer: Worrying about anything is not really beneficial – whether the problem is 20 or 30 years away or next week, worrying about the problem will not solve it.

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said, if there is a problem that you can do something about, there is no need to worry; you just do what is required to counteract the problem. Worrying will only make your mind unnecessarily unhappy. And if you cannot do anything about the problem, worrying is also unnecessary, because no matter how much you worry, you will not be able to change the outcome. There is no benefit in worrying about problems you can't change, because it will only make your mind unhappy and the problem will still be

the same.

For example, if you have a physical illness, worrying about that physical illness is not going to help you get better. In fact, it will not do anything beneficial. Instead of worrying about the illness, it would be much more skilful and practical to engage in methods to cure the illness. Not worrying about it will also make the mind happy.

A mind that doesn't worry is a happy mind. A mind that worries is an unhappy mind. So, having a happy mind will facilitate the cure of the physical illness. But if one worries, then on top of having the physical illness, one's mind will also become ill; one will become sick with worry and will have doubled one's problem.

Question: Geshe-la, going back to the earlier question about the cat and the mouse, I am wondering how the cat – an animal which is a carnivorous hunter and is genetically programmed to eat mice – accrues bad karma from eating the mouse?

Answer: The non-virtuous karma comes about because the cat kills; it cuts off the life force of another sentient being, which causes the cat to accumulate non-virtuous karma.

In the context of human beings, it is sometimes socially acceptable to kill one's enemies, but that does not mean that killing other sentient beings is not a non-virtuous action. You could decide from now on I am only going to eat meat, but that would not make it ok to kill. There are no special considerations given for certain special cases where karma doesn't apply.

If you say that the cat eats only meat and that's why it makes it alright for the cat to kill the mouse, then you could also say: 'I'm only going to eat meat and no vegetables anymore, so therefore if I have to kill other sentient beings (to eat), it will be alright'.

Student replies: But the cat can't think about it! If it sees mice, it's just genetically programmed to kill them. I still can't understand how it can accrue bad karma doing something that it's genetically programmed to do.

Answer: If you look at the different features of karma – the different conditions that need to be there for a complete karmic action – they are all present. First, there is the delusion and the motivation – the wish to kill the mouse – which comes about through the delusion of attachment, having the desire to eat the mouse. Then there is the action of actually killing the mouse. All the factors for a complete karmic action are present.

Student again: But the motivation is survival!

Answer: Yes – so the motivation is complete! The cat won't die if it doesn't eat the mouse. In Australia, cats probably eat very few mice. There are not many mice in Australia so, unless you serve up a meal of mice to your cat, they don't have much chance of getting a mouse. Or, you would have to keep mice along with the cat, so that the cat would be free to hunt the mice!

It is understandable to think that, because the cat is doing it for its survival, the action of killing is not non-virtuous, because we would also make the same excuse for ourselves, thinking that because I am killing another

being for my survival, it is ok.

Question: The original question was, between the two animals, for which should you generate the most compassion? The last question and answer was very good proof, because so much compassion was generated for the theoretical cat.

Answer: When we think about generating compassion for a cat, we don't take the point of view of thinking that it is sweet and playful and so forth. That's not really the way to generate compassion for the cat. Our compassion for the cat is generated from the understanding of how the cat is involved in non-virtue, by understanding the results of non-virtue and so forth. You wouldn't be a cat in the first place if you weren't somehow involved with the result of non-virtue.

Question: I got my friend to kill some wasps' nests. The dilemma was that they would potentially injure some visitors, but on the other hand they are sentient beings.

Answer: Those situations are quite difficult because, for example, feeling justified to kill the wasps of course rests on the idea that a human life is more important than a wasp's life. I think we had a wasps' nest here, at Tara House, at one point. I don't know what happened, I was not here at the time.

It is difficult if it is the custom of the country is to kill everything that could somehow endanger human life or human health. For example, it is also the custom to kill all insects that could otherwise interfere with the growing of vegetables and crops.

Of course, such action is not without non-virtue, but on the other hand one can't say don't do it, because one might be regarded as somewhat deranged or impractical! Because the custom to kill everything that harms human life is the norm in this country, if one were to say something to the contrary, one might be regarded as crazy.

Question: I have been trying to find a home for two cats and have found it really difficult. I have had to think about taking them to a shelter where they might end up being killed. Maybe it's more honourable for me to take this action rather than leaving it for someone else to do.

Answer: If there is a choice between ordering someone else to kill the cat and killing the cat oneself, of course it is better for oneself to kill the cat. But you are not ordering anyone to kill the cats.

There are places that take good care of animals, and hopefully you can find somebody. There are also some people who devote their life to cats, even taking care of up to a hundred cats. They make the determination to look after those cats until they die a natural death; maybe you can find somebody like that. Otherwise, you might end up giving them to a place where, if they don't find a place for the cats and can't look after the cats much longer, there is a danger they might kill the cats.

There are people who devote their life to looking after animals. For example, there was a woman called Leona who took care of a bird that was injured and had a

broken wing. Leona took the bird in and it had two operations to repair the wing. She spent about \$800 on it, but then it became difficult for her to look after the bird, because she said that when she tried to release it, it would come back! Eventually, she found a person who dedicated their life to looking after birds. She gave the bird to that person and with \$200 to cover the costs.

If you look after an animal, you have a commitment to looking after it until it dies, no matter if it makes things dirty and so forth. You have to make this type of commitment, and you will accumulate great amounts of merits by making that type of commitment, saying that 'I am going to look after the animal until it passes away'.

As mentioned before, turn the mind inwards, then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of the Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

If one did not think about the law of cause and effect, there would be no need to generate compassion for the cat, because the cat would be quite happy about having a nice meal – and the mouse would be the greater object of compassion!

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Edited Version

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