
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 can meditate as usual. Seat yourself in the correct meditation posture. If one abides within the two isolations; physical isolation from distracting physical behaviour and mental isolation from disturbing thoughts, one's meditation will progress very well. By sitting in the appropriate meditation posture one abides in physical isolation from disturbing and distracting physical behaviour and then what one needs to do is subdue the mind and not let it fall under the control of disturbing thoughts.

Disturbing and distracting physical behaviour comes about through being unmindful and unconscientious. Sitting in the appropriate meditation posture stops that. Then one needs to attain mental isolation from disturbing thoughts. If one normally lets one's mind fall under the control of disturbing thoughts and is constantly engaged and preoccupied with external objects one finds it very difficult to turn the mind inwards. A mind that is very accustomed and habituated to being preoccupied with external objects finds it very difficult to become calm and turn inwards.

Such a mind is a very coarse, agitated, restless type of mind that, for example, finds it very difficult to fall asleep. One reason that one finds it difficult to fall asleep is because the mind is preoccupied with external objects and the coarse mental states, such as the five sense consciousnesses, are very active. That is one reason why one experiences insomnia and so forth. The five sense consciousnesses are so active that they don't allow the more subtle types of consciousness to become manifest. The consciousness of sleep is subtler than the five sense consciousnesses. Similarly, when the mind is preoccupied with external objects one finds it more difficult to turn the mind inwards and to experience more subtle and refined types of consciousness. It also makes it difficult to experience more refined types of happiness.

If the mind is very habituated with being preoccupied with external objects one finds it very difficult to turn the mind inwards and to subside and calm disturbing thoughts. On the other hand, if one is not preoccupied with external objects and the mind doesn't have such a habit of engaging external objects one finds it easier to turn the mind inwards and to calm and still the mind.

This makes it obvious that one needs to practise meditation. One needs to start to turn the mind inwards and to be less preoccupied with external objects and to slowly, slowly, bring some calmness and stillness into the mind. The type of agitated mind, which is preoccupied with external objects, is really the enemy that causes one

all one's problems and one's unhappiness.

It is important that one understands these benefits of meditation in order to become inspired to practise meditation. One seats oneself in the correct meditation posture and then adjusts one's mind. By just sitting in the correct meditation posture one has already had a positive effect on the mind to help it become more settled and relaxed. One then needs to bring it back home, turn the mind inwards, stop it engaging external objects, and place it single-pointedly on coming and going of the breath. This placement of the mind on the coming and going of the breath should be very pointed and very vivid. One concentrates on the breath with a very pointed and vivid mind, but at the same time, in a very relaxed, leisurely and gentle manner. We can meditate in that way for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

I think it would be very beneficial for you if you meditate again and again in that manner on a daily basis. This meditation also helps when our mind is preoccupied with objects that cause us suffering. If, for example, one is constantly thinking about or remembering someone dear that has passed away, or even constantly remembering a person that one has separated from and thinking about the nice times that one had with that person, how nice it would be to be together with that person again, to talk with that person and so forth and the mind is constantly trying to mentally create or recreate the situation of being together with that person and it is not possible because the person has either passed away or one has completely separated, then this type of thinking just causes suffering, distress and unhappiness. At that time, when one is not able to give up that type of thinking, one gets the feeling that that's just how one's mind works. One starts to think, 'Oh, somehow maybe I'm programmed to think like that all the time'. That is not accurate. It is only because one is so habituated to think in such a way – the mind is so habituated to work in such a way - that it seems as if that is a natural state. Through meditating one learns to let go of these objects and memories that cause this suffering and, over time, the mind becomes more and more spacious with less and less grasping and one can see that it is only really a matter of changing the mind's habits.

A brief presentation of the way to strive

The actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

The 6 preparatory practices: 5) Gathering merit and purifying negativities

Now we move on to the third of the seven limbs, the limb of confession. Here the text quotes a verse from the introduction to *A Bodhisattva's Way of Life* that basically says, 'I individually confess all the negativities that I have created out of attachment, anger and ignorance with my body, speech and mind,'.

One engages in the negativities of body, speech and mind because of the three poisons. The three poisons are attachment, anger and ignorance. Because of attachment, anger and ignorance, one engages in the three non-

virtuous actions of the body, the four non-virtuous actions of the speech and the three mental non-virtuous actions. When one confesses the negativities that one has created in this way, and the verse says, 'all the negativities', it firstly refers to the negativities in which one has directly engaged. These are the negativities of body, speech and mind that one has engaged in out of the motivation of the three poisons. There are also the negativities that one has created by inducing and ordering others to engage in such actions and the negativities that one has created by rejoicing in others engaging in such actions. When it says one confesses **all** negativities it is that inclusive.

The negativities that one has created form an obstacle that prevents one from having a successful meditation practice. They cause one to be uninspired to meditate. Even through one decides one wants to meditate somehow, in one's mind, one feels uninspired or reluctant to do so or one feels one can't do it and so forth. That's why it is important to engage in the six preparatory practices to purify the negativities that block one's spiritual progress and one's meditation practice.

In order to purify oneself one has to look at the disadvantages of anger, attachment and ignorance. One needs to look at all the problems and sufferings that are caused by anger. One needs to look at the problems that are caused by attachment and one needs to look at the problems that are caused by ignorance. One then needs to look at the harmful, non-virtuous nature of the actions that one engages in out of those motivations. These are the actions of the body, speech and mind that one engages in out of the three poisons and their harmful and non-virtuous nature. Becoming aware of all of that makes one's practice of purification much more effective.

In general, one finds it easy to recognise the disadvantages of anger. The faults of anger are easily recognisable and universally agreed upon. The disadvantages of attachment are more subtle and difficult to recognise. With regards to ignorance, we can recognise that there's a problem with ignorance and not knowing. We can recognise having distorted perceptions as problematic. With attachment, however, we usually have the feeling that attachment is somewhat beneficial to us or very beneficial to us. Therefore it's difficult to see the problems of attachment. Even though ultimately, if you look very deeply, there's no benefit to attachment, superficially it seems there is some small happiness that is produced by attachment. Sometimes there's some small superficial happiness for oneself or others as a result of attachment. Attachment is, however, the factor that causes us to again and again take another rebirth. We are constantly going from one life to the next, crossing the border from this life to the next again and again, because of attachment.

We need to look at the psychological development of the delusions and the three poisons and the way the three poisons are inducing us, or ordering us, to engage in different activities. Initially there is a type of ignorance that is called the 'view of the transitory collections'. This

is a type of ignorance that is self-grasping. After having generated the self-grasping at 'I' comes the grasping at 'mine'. As soon as one has the thought of self one starts to think in terms of 'mine', that which belongs to the self. One starts to think in terms of 'my' friend, 'my' boyfriend, 'my' girlfriend, and so forth. One then generates attachment for that which one regards as 'mine'.

Together with generating attachment for that which one regards as 'mine' one generates anger towards that which falls into the category of 'other'; the opposite category. Because of this attachment for 'mine' and the anger for 'other' one engages in many activities that cause a lot of problems. Also, one is constantly in a situation where one is separate from that which one is attached to, one cannot have that which one wants, one is losing that to which one is attached, one is unable to subdue or overcome those that one dislikes and one is constantly exposed to that which one dislikes. Living in this type of situation comes about because one has attachment, anger and the root ignorance.

The solution is that one needs to start looking at one's own three poisons as the enemy, and lessen them. The more one lessens them; having less attachment, less anger, less ignorance, then the more one can lead a happy life. That is really important. One is not really able to change others. One cannot subjugate the whole environment to one's wishes so that one is perfectly happy. But, by subduing one's own mind, one can remain perfectly happy regardless of what others do. The normal way is that one puts the blame on others. Instead of saying, 'OK. Here's a problem. If I want to be happier I need to become less angry', one points instead at the other person and complains about them being very angry. As a Dharma practitioner one wouldn't point at others expecting them to be less angry to make one's own life easier. One would point at one's own anger and say, 'That is what I have to work with. I have to work with my own anger, I have to work with my own attachment and I have to work with my own ignorance'. In this way one can attain happiness.

If one always lets one's mind fall under the control of anger and attachment, generating attachment for that which appears attractive and generating anger for that which appears unattractive, one is constantly between those two and is not really able to have a good, peaceful and harmonious relationship with others. This perception of what is attractive and what is unattractive changes very easily. In this way one moment one is very attached to somebody, then one is angry at that person, then one is again attached. It becomes very difficult to have a harmonious relationship with somebody if one's mind is under the influence of attachment and anger. In order to be able to have a harmonious life and to live a happy life one needs to lessen one's anger, attachment and ignorance. That would be the way of a Dharma practitioner.

If you think about it, it is attachment that makes a situation busy and stressful even though there is

absolutely nothing stressful about the situation. Attachment creates this dissatisfaction. One has one thing but needs to have another. One has two things but needs three, and so forth. In this way one needlessly complicates the situation and is never really satisfied regardless of how much one has. The actual purpose of acquiring wealth is to attain a satisfied mind but attachment makes that impossible. The more attachment one has the more dissatisfied the mind becomes and the purpose of acquiring wealth is never achieved. As Lobon Phawo said, there is really no greater harm than the harm of attachment which never lets a person be satisfied. If someone has a great attachment, very great desire, and that desire is fulfilled and they have received all the wealth of the humans and gods they are still not satisfied. There is nothing really more problematic than such a state of mind. By training your mind slowly, slowly you will be able to have greater satisfaction and less attachment.

We have time for one question. We can have one good question.

Question: Someone in my family died and now they are all unhappy. What can I do to uplift them?

What you have to do is build up their mind. If someone is feeling depressed and down what one has to do is build up the mind of that person. Sometimes people, even though they call themselves Dharma practitioners, actually put a person down even further. When they encounter somebody who is depressed and sad they demoralise them even further and make them more sad and depressed. That is quite a terrible thing, particularly if someone calls themselves a Dharma practitioner. To do such a thing is really quite bad.

What you have to do is you have to make them feel more at ease and you have to build up their mind. One should have the inner refuge of one's mental state. In order for them to have this you have to build up their mind and tell them that they shouldn't worry; that there's not really any point in being upset and so forth.

You can ask them whether there is anything that you can do for them. That will make them feel better. You say, 'Ah, is there anything that I can do for you? I'm quite happy to do anything for you that you need to have done or that makes you happy'. That will immediately make them feel much better.

When someone is in distress that's the time when they need help and they will really appreciate our help. Even if someone is our enemy, if we help them at a time of distress they will certainly appreciate that help. If you ask whether there is anything that you can do for them and you offer your help it will definitely be much appreciated and uplifting for them.

Probably, in your case, your family is far away. Otherwise you could go home and help in the house of your parents, clean up or something. You could go home and make yourself useful, help clean up or make tea or make food; lunch or dinner or something. It will be really appreciated by the person who is down. That's something

that we can remember in all kinds of situations.

As was said before, turn the mind inwards and place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Gabrielle Thomson

Edit 1 by John Burch

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

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