
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Seat yourself in the appropriate posture in a relaxed manner. Then, when sitting in an appropriate meditation posture, you need to train the mind in virtuous states. The purpose of meditation is to familiarise the mind, again and again, with a virtuous and good state.

The meaning of meditation is to familiarise the mind with good, virtuous positive, mental states. By generating good, positive, virtuous mental states one counteracts harmful and disturbing mental states and generates happiness. When a good mental state is generated, this good mental state counteracts a disturbing mental state and produces happiness.

The mind is very easily agitated through exposure to the five sense objects. The mental consciousness reacts to constantly engaging the sense objects, seeing different sights and hearing different sounds, by producing different types of conceptual thoughts and puts in motion different types of trains of thought, which put the mind into a very strange and disturbed mental space. In order to counteract these mental states one needs to meditate and produce virtuous and positive mental states.

Once one has pacified the disturbing mental states and has, in this way, created some space in one's mind, one is able to recognise that one's quality of life is actually not so bad after all. As long as the mind is disturbed and agitated, one quite often goes through life feeling that life is very bad and sad and one doesn't think that one has a good life experience. It takes this clearing of the mind of disturbing thoughts for one to be able to recognise that one actually does have a nice life after all. Life is not as bad as one thought and one can recognise that one actually has a very good quality of life.

If one leaves the mind under the control of disturbing thoughts one can't really appreciate the quality of life that one has. If you look at the nature of disturbing thoughts one sees that first of all they harm oneself and then, because one is put into an unhappy state by the disturbing thoughts, one harms others. Take anger for example. First anger disturbs one's own mind and one says things that are harmful to others. In this way disturbing mental attitudes make both oneself and others unhappy and if one leaves one's mind under the control of these disturbing thoughts it will be very difficult to attain happiness. One needs to recognise that if one wants happiness one needs to subdue disturbing thoughts because they will just drag the mind further and further down and one will feel more and more depressed

and be less and less able to see what one has.

As we have explained many times, turn the mind inwards, stop engaging external objects and, after having completely focused the mind inwards, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

One searches for happiness, for human happiness. Ordinarily the way this is done is that one lets the mind fall completely under the control of mental afflictions and just follows those mental afflictions, completely focusing on the external world, trying to achieve happiness in this way. Sometimes, when one gets tired of this way of looking for happiness, one tries the more internal way of looking for happiness where one tries to attain happiness through subduing the mental afflictions. I think it would be a good thing to compare those two types of happiness. Of course, some type of happiness is generated when one engages external objects, whether it is actual happiness or not. I think it is very worthwhile, however, to compare true inner happiness and the type of happiness that one achieves through external objects. Inner happiness is more stable and of better quality and probably also a stronger experience of happiness. This is something that especially young people should keep in mind.

Strictly speaking, as a dharma practitioner, out of worldly actions and dharma actions, one should always give priority to dharma actions. Out of this life and the next, one should always regard the next life as more important. Out of dharma actions and worldly actions, one should always regard dharma actions as more important. However, this can be difficult to do, and as a beginner it can be counterproductive to try and give up all worldly activities. That is why I always tell you to not give up your worldly activities. Even if one is not able to practice in a very pure manner and one's life still mainly revolves around one's worldly activities, one should not, at least, lose one's practice of the dharma altogether. While one might not be able to focus one's life completely on dharma practice and make dharma practice the central point of one's life, one should not lose dharma practice altogether. Even though one's life might still revolve mostly around worldly activities, if one is not able to give them up, one should still keep one's dharma practice and not forget one's dharma practice.

I say this even though, strictly speaking, most lamas will say one has to give up the worldly life and practice the dharma. I'm not saying that one should not do that. However, in the case where one is not able to practice in such a pure fashion one should not feel that there is no other possibility. One can live one's life focused on worldly activities with dharma practice on the side. In this way one has the benefit of not abandoning one's dharma practice altogether. You probably think, "That's very good. I don't have to give up my worldly activities and I can practice the dharma. That's very convenient."

There is a very significant point to my advice. I always

tell you to go slowly in your dharma practice. Life is long and it is very difficult to keep up pure dharma practice throughout one's whole life. Experience has shown, time and again, that certain students become very enthusiastic about the dharma and then decide to wholly devote their life to dharma practice. I tell them, "Look, it's probably better to take it a little bit more easily. As you know, your life is long, and who knows whether you are able to keep up this practice for the rest of your life". They may tell me, "Oh, the time of death is indefinite. I don't want to lose any time. I could die tomorrow so I have to practice very purely". Then I just let it go and fold my hands in prostration to that person and don't say anything more. I just say, "Ah, that's really a very good thing, I prostrate to you".

But it happens, from time to time, that after a few years this type of person hasn't gone very far in their dharma practice and, because they neglected their worldly education and their worldly life, they arrive at a point where they become immensely dissatisfied. They have not had the success in the dharma practice that they hoped for and, because they neglected their worldly activities, they have no money and no job and maybe no education. They find themselves in a difficult position, and quite often they actually generate wrong views with regard to the dharma and give up their dharma practice altogether. It was actually completely counter-productive for such a person to completely devote the life to the dharma. It would have been much better to take it more slowly and that's why I give this advice.

Other Lamas will tell you to completely give up any worldly action and devote yourself wholeheartedly, completely, to the holy life and to the dharma. When I say that you should keep both sides, your worldly activities and the dharma practice, and take it slowly there is a point to it. I have told you before that one needs many internal conducive conditions in order to be able to completely dedicate one's whole life to dharma practice. Just living in a good house and having enough to eat is not sufficient. Just generate a good mental state, a good mind, just try to be a good human being and carry that attitude into your daily life. This will bring great benefit to oneself and others. In this way one gains the benefit of dharma practice. It is what we term the white worldly actions.

4. How to guide with the actual instructions

4.1. The way of relying on the spiritual friend who is the root of the path

4.1.2. A brief presentation of the way to strive

4.1.2.1. The actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.2. What to do in the time between sessions

Last time we reached the point of how to go to sleep and when to go to sleep. We said that the time for sleep is in the middle part of the night and we said that dharma practitioners would not even want to waste the time of

sleep. One does not, of course, waste the time when one doesn't sleep and uses it for dharma practice but, as a dharma practitioner, one also wants to use the time of sleep itself for dharma practice. The point we had reached was concerning the physical position of sleeping. One should lie on one's right side with one's head resting in the palm of one's right hand. The left leg is resting on the right leg. Sleeping in this position has various advantages for one's dharma practice. First of all the body will not be too relaxed while sleeping. Through the very nature of this position the body will not be too relaxed and one will not fall in too deep sleep and one's sleep will not be disturbed by heavy dreams during which one creates non-virtuous karma. This position also facilitates mindfulness and introspection.

While going to sleep one should remain mindful of one's object of meditation. The object of meditation can vary according to the retreat in which one is engaged. By falling asleep and keeping mindful of one's object of meditation sleep, as a whole, becomes virtuous. It is still possible that mental afflictions can arise which one can recognise through mental introspection and completely reverse from the mind. If mental afflictions arise recognise this with mental introspection and do not accept them in any way. This can reverse the mind from those mental afflictions.

It is also important before going to sleep, before falling asleep, to create the motivation for getting up; when one wants to get up, which state of mind one wants to get up with and how one then wants to spend the day after having gotten up. Ideally one does this with the motivation of bodhicitta; thinking one will rise early the next day and then dedicate the next day in order to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings or, if that is not possible, in other positive and wholesome attitudes. One motivates oneself while one is going to sleep on how one will get up. If one doesn't motivate oneself in such a way one probably will not get up at the exact time that one wants to get up. If one wants to get up at five it will be five-thirty or, if one wanted to get up at four it will be four-thirty.

If one has trouble sleeping or if one's sleep is disturbed by heavy dreams, nightmares and so forth there is a small meditation that one can do. One visualises that Shakyamuni Buddha is on one's cushion, on one's pillow, and light rays emanate from the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha to the ten directions invoking the blessing of the Buddhas of the ten directions which absorb in the form of white light back into Shakyamuni Buddha. Then, from the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha white light emanates forming a protective tent or cocoon over oneself. This light is, in its nature, non-dual transcendental wisdom and its aspect is light. Do you have some questions?

Question: Didn't Lord Buddha die in that position? Is there a reason why he died in that position and not in the lotus position?

Buddhas pass away in all kinds of positions and some

pass away in this sleeping lion position while others pass away in the vajra position. The vajra position is not so significant. The significant thing is that one dies in a virtuous state of mind. There are benefits to sleeping in this position, such as not being harmed by adverse conditions, similarly to the lion not being harmed by other animals. If one sleeps in the lion position one is not harmed by adverse conditions. Lying on one's back is called the sleeping position of the gods, lying on one's left side is called the sleeping position of attachment, lying on one's stomach is called the sleeping position of animals. One doesn't want to lie in any of those three. The one that you want is the sleeping position of the lion. All the other sleeping positions are referred to as the sleeping positions of lazy people. You don't like it if someone calls you lazy so you shouldn't adopt those positions.

Question: Geshe-la, I was surprised to hear that we can create non-virtuous karma through our dreams. I was wondering if you could talk a little about that?

The karma that one creates during sleep is referred to as karma that is created but not accumulated. If, for example, you kill somebody during your dream you have created the karma of killing but because some conditions to get a complete karmic action are not there it is not accumulated. There would, for example be no afflicted motivation. There is lots of debate about whether these karmas are non-virtuous or not but, as I said before, sleeping in the lion position counteracts these type of dreams. If one is in deep sleep then one doesn't dream. When the mind is completely overcome by deep sleep, completely under the control of sleep, one doesn't dream. Dreams occur when the sleep is lighter.

Question: Can you create virtuous accumulated karma during sleep?

It is also possible that one creates virtuous karma during a dream. It is possible to meditate on concentration during sleep by not losing one's mindfulness and introspection, transforming the whole process of sleep into virtue. When we create non-virtue during a dream the mind of regret arises. One immediately thinks that was not an appropriate action.

Question: Is it a bad thing to set your snooze button so that you can sleep in a bit before you get up, or is it better to get up straight away? Is it creating bad habits using the snooze button?

That's up to personal preference. Some people, if they don't get up immediately fall into very deep sleep again. When some people try to give up alcohol or cigarettes they find it more conducive to cut it off altogether. They say "Oh, if I try to reduce it, everyday a little bit less, that doesn't work out." It's personal preference. If, for example, you want to get up at five, then maybe a skilful thing to do is to have the alarm go off at four-thirty and then you know that you have still half an hour to lie in bed which might provide some comfort. If you just leave yourself five minutes then that's hardly worth it.

In Tibet, if people travelled somewhere as a group they would say, because there were no clocks or watches, "Tomorrow morning we will all get up at the second or third or fourth call of the rooster". Some people were very skilful at reading the stars. They would be able to say, "When that star is in such and such a position, that's when I will come". If the group wanted to leave by, let's say, the second call of the rooster everybody would have to get up by the first call to make tea and get ready. It is similar here. If you want to go to work at seven then you have to get up at six.

That's enough. They were very good questions, thank you very much. As we said before, turn the mind inwards and then place it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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