
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 a little bit as usual. Please seat yourself comfortably in the appropriate meditation posture. Within one's life one tries to be as happy as possible and engages in a variety of actions, both physical and mental, to attain that happiness. But, if one is honest, all this incredible activity and chasing different types of happiness make one really tired. All the mental and physical busyness makes one both physically and mentally tired. Therefore it would be very nice, if one has the opportunity, to rest and rejuvenate oneself both physically and mentally and, in this way, experience a different type of happiness. This is a happiness that one has not experienced before or, if one knows that type of happiness, one can increase it.

When one seats oneself in the meditation posture the body remains calm and still and then one has to make the mind calm and still. Ultimately one needs to calm the mind in order to calm the body. As long as the mind is restless and unruly one will always be physically restless and unruly. When one meditates one first sits oneself in the meditation posture, which contains the physical restlessness, and then one has to calm the mind. As long as the mind is not calm, as long as the mind is restless, it will have a negative impact, even on one's physical health. We know that there are a great variety of physical diseases and sicknesses that come about because of a restless and unhealthy mind. It is very important that one takes responsibility for one's own happiness and says to oneself, "I have to gain power over my body and mind. I have to gain power over my body, I have to gain power over my mind. Specifically I have to gain power over my mind because as long as I don't have power over my mind, control over my mind, I will not really have power over my body."

One thing to look at is what is beneficial towards one's physical and mental happiness and what is harmful towards one's physical and mental happiness. One has to look within one's work environment and within one's life. One has to observe one's body and mind and see which way of life, which type of actions are conducive to one's mental and physical happiness and which type of mental and physical activities are detrimental towards one's mental and physical happiness.

Now we have to focus the mind internally and not let it be distracted towards external objects. One has to very gently focus the mind internally and not let it engage the various external objects that cause suffering and distraction. Then, after having very gently collected the

mind internally, place it single-pointedly within the coming and going of the breath, letting it become one with the breathing.

After having collected the mind internally one remains very relaxed in that state for a little while without occupying the mind with any type of particular object. One just stays in this objectless state and then one places the mind single-pointedly within the coming and going of the breathing, letting it become one with the breathing. You should try to hold this focus, single-pointedly, for a few minutes and if you are able to do that you will gain the mental and physical rest that we were talking about before. We can meditate like that for a few minutes. *(Pause for meditation)*

I think it would be very good for you if you were to meditate regularly in that manner a little bit every day because I think it will be beneficial both for yourself as well as for those around you. If you have a calm, peaceful and happy mind one obviously benefits from that oneself but it also makes a difference if one treats those around oneself in a happy and kind manner instead of being agitated and so forth by one's friends and partner etc. By meditating and making the mind calmer, happier and more peaceful one can avoid agitation and treat those around oneself in a cheerful and kind manner.

If while one meditates the mind really abides peacefully within its own nature there is some benefit to the meditation and that benefit then will be also recognised by one's partner and friends. If, however, one just sits there cross-legged with one's eyes downcast for some time and as soon as one gets up one starts to bicker with one's partner they will not have the feeling that meditation practice is particularly useful.

4.2.1 Exhorting the disciple to take the essence of this basis with endowments

4.2.1.2 Reflecting on their great importance

Previously we have talked about the precious human rebirth with its eight freedoms and the ten endowments and how this special situation of the precious human rebirth has great meaning, both temporarily as well as ultimately. In each moment of the precious human rebirth one can accomplish very great things. One can, for example, purify a great amount of negative karma in just a few moments of the precious human rebirth. One can accumulate great amounts of virtue. One can, in just a few moments of one's precious human rebirth, create the causes of liberation and enlightenment. It is really a very special situation that it is good to make use of. After reflecting on the great meaning of the precious human rebirth the next step is to reflect on its great rarity.

To have a precious human rebirth is extremely rare. If this fortunate situation were to come around a lot it wouldn't matter if one wastes one's time. But if one recognises that the precious human rebirth is extremely rare it helps to overcome the procrastinating mind that says, "Oh, this Sunday I don't really feel like dharma practice. I will just schedule it for next Sunday when I have less to do or when I feel better". One procrastinates in this way. Recognising the rarity of the precious human

rebirth helps one to overcome the procrastinating mind.

To reflect on the rarity of the precious human rebirth one has to reflect on the causes of the precious human rebirth. If one just thinks of it in terms of being human it doesn't seem to be a very rare thing because there are plenty of humans around. One might think it's not really very rare to be a human. A Mongolian geshe once remarked, 'You know, I don't think that the precious human rebirth is very rare. There are plenty of humans in China.'

This very specific body that one has at the present time is extremely rare and it will not come about again very quickly. That's what one has to reflect on. There are different ways of reflecting on the rarity of the precious human rebirth. One way is by way of the example. The Buddha remarked that the number of beings that live in the lower realms equal the grains of sand and earth of the whole world but the number of beings that live in the upper realms are, comparatively, like the grains of sand that one can pick up with two fingers. The point that is being made by the Buddha is that even though it looks like there are many humans around one should compare the number of humans with all the beings belonging to the animal realm, which is one of the lower realms that one can directly observe. If one compares the number of beings that are part of the animal realm and the number of humans one can understand why the Buddha would say such a thing. The number of beings in the animal realm, and this number includes insects and so forth, vastly outnumber human beings.

First of all it is very difficult to take rebirth from a higher realm to a higher realm, and then, secondly, it is very difficult to take rebirth from a lower realm to a higher realm. For those two reasons it is very rare to have a precious human rebirth. Then one arrives, of course, at the question, 'Why is it like that?' Why is it so difficult to have a precious human rebirth? This is explained here with a quote from the text "400 Verses" by Aryadeva. It says, "Most human beings don't follow very wholesome ways and that's why most ordinary individuals go to the lower realms in the next life."

The first statement, that most human beings don't behave in a very wholesome, distinguished manner, means that most human beings don't abandon the ten non-virtuous actions and they don't abandon the ten non-virtuous actions. This means they don't practice the ten virtuous actions and in this way they most create the causes for rebirth in the lower realms. It helps to remember that one instant of anger towards a bodhisattva can wipe out aeons and aeons of virtuous karma and create the cause for rebirth in the lower realms. For each moment that one generates anger towards a bodhisattva one has to take rebirth for aeons in the lower realms. One has to reflect on all the negativity that one has created in the past, all the causes for lower rebirth that one already created in the past. On top of that one does not create many causes for a higher rebirth. One does not engage in the practice of the ten virtuous actions.

It is extremely rare to find somebody who creates the causes for rebirth in a higher realm. If one were to purify

all the negativities that one has created in the past and then stop creating any further new negativities one will not take rebirth in the lower realms. If there were many people that could do that, purify past negativities and stop creating new negativities, then rebirth in the higher realms would not be rare. Since such people are very rare to find then rebirth in the higher realms is rare. Once one has taken rebirth in the lower realms one, by the very nature of this rebirth, creates further negativities through the actions that one naturally engages in while being there and one does not create any virtue while in those realms. After having fallen into the lower realms not even the sound of happy rebirth exists.

To purify one's negativities is very important. What causes unhappiness in one's life is one's negative karma. By purifying one's karma one experiences greater happiness and by purifying one's karma one will also have greater success in one's meditation practice. That's why it is always recommended to engage in a practice of purification before going off to some place to meditate, because that eliminates obstacles towards one's meditation practice. If the mind is full of negativity it becomes very heavy and unwieldy and it is as if one is carrying this load around with oneself. That does not let the mind fresh and clear and vivid and happy.

We can stop here for tonight and have some questions.

Question. Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, tried on three separate occasions to assassinate the Buddha. What are his chances of escaping the lower realms?

In general one can say that if one purifies one's negativities one does not have to take rebirth in the lower realms. If one engages in purification then the negative karma becomes purified. There are lots of other considerations in the case of Devadatta. He might be an emanation of the Buddha himself and there are sources which point to Devadatta actually having become enlightened in that lifetime. The point is that if one purifies negative karma one does not have to experience the result. It is said that the one redeeming quality of non-virtuous karma is that it can be purified.

Question. How does one purify negative karma?

In order to purify non-virtuous karma it is important to generate strong regret for one's action. One must think that that was not a right thing to do. Then one has to generate the determination not to engage in that action again. One generates the mind of restraint that promises not to engage in the action again. Then one engages the power of the thorough application of the antidote, which could, for example, be meditating on love and compassion. Then there is the fourth power, the power of the basis, which basically means one goes for refuge and generates bodhicitta. With these four powers, these four things, one can purify karma.

It is difficult to generate strong regret for one's actions if one does not reflect on the suffering that the action will bring about. By reflecting on the suffering that one will experience if one doesn't purify the action one generates regret for the action. To have strong regret from one's heart, to think from the depths of one's mind that the

action was not the right thing to do, purifies a great amount of the negativity. If one generates regret for a non-virtuous action then that regret is virtuous. If one generates regret for a virtuous action, then that regret is non-virtuous. Any type of virtuous action or any type of virtue that one creates purifies non-virtue. Purifying non-virtue means that one does not have to experience the result. That's the meaning of purifying the non-virtuous karma.

Question. On Friday my dog has to undergo surgery and I wondered what would be the best meditation to engage in, or mantra to practice, while I'm waiting for him?

To recite the Medicine Buddha mantra or the Tara mantra is very useful. If, before the operation, you recite the Prayers to the 21 Taras or the Heart Sutra the operation will go well. You have to take strong refuge in Tara, thinking, "Tara, you are going to take care of it".

Question. Is there anything you can do to show gratitude to someone who has passed away and would they benefit?

Of course there are things that one can do to repay the kindness of deceased people. If there was a strong bond, a good relationship, with the deceased they will benefit from the prayers that one does for them or mantras that one recites for them. One can also make offerings on behalf of the deceased, offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and prayers to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.

Regarding offerings, if the offering is made with money that belonged to the deceased it is especially helpful for the person. In Tibet it was very common to use the possessions that were left behind by the deceased to make offerings on his or her behalf. For example, when Dr Adrian's father passed away and he came into a small inheritance he used the inheritance to offer this Tara statue to Tara Institute and he also made offerings to Chenrezig Institute and to Vajrayogini Institute in France. He didn't keep very much of the money.

To pray on behalf of the deceased is very powerful and there are many things that one can pray for such as the person being reborn in the pure realms or that by all their merit that they may attain enlightenment. Doing these prayers also creates a karmic connection to meet that person again in the future. The karmic interdependency, the karmic dependent arising between human beings, is very subtle and profound. It is much more subtle and profound than we can understand and that's why these prayers work.

As was explained at the beginning, turn the mind inwards and you place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Lois Smith

Edit 1 by John Burch

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

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