
The Condensed Lam Rim

། བྱུང་རྒྱུ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བརྒྱུག་པ་སྟེ། །

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Please seat yourself comfortably in a good posture. Then, while sitting in a good posture one needs to withdraw the mind from the mental afflictions. One should analyse one's mind and regardless of whether one is sitting down, lying down, walking, eating and so forth, one should always be mindful and recall one's mind from the mental afflictions. If one practises in this way the mind will become refined and supple.

If one does not counteract the afflictions with an antidote when they arise in the mind, then one very easily arrives in the situation where it will seem virtually impossible to get rid of those afflictions. One will find oneself in a situation where it very difficult to counteract an affliction because one has just left it in one's mental continuum, where it grew and became stronger and difficult to reverse. Therefore, if one is always alert and mindful and counteracts mental afflictions when they arise, the mind will become very refined and supple.

Then, through the continual habituation with the mental antidote and the force of one's meditation, one's afflictions will become less. To be a meditator does not mean to sit correctly in the seven-point posture or to live in a particular place. What being a meditator means is to have a mind that is free from mental afflictions and that is refined and supple as a result of that.

To meditate for a few minutes on the coming and going of the breath, first recall the mind from external objects and focus the mind internally. Let go of all external objects and focus the mind internally. Then place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath in a non-dual manner, by letting the mind become one with the breath. The mind should enter the object of meditation that, in this case, is the breathing. One doesn't choose the actual external object as the meditational object but the reflection of the object in the mind. A reflection of the actual object arises in the mind and, by focusing the mind on that reflection, the mind is automatically focused internally because it is focused on itself. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes.
Pause for meditation.

To meditate is an opportunity for the mind to have some time for relaxation and to have a rest. This also translates into rest for the body. It is important that one trains the mind in wholesome mental states and tries to make the mind more refined and happier through this process. Throughout the day, maybe once an hour, it is good to remind oneself of that. To change the mind itself is, of course, a difficult task. But just reminding oneself continuously that it is important to have a happy mind

and that it is important to train the mind in positive mental states is a start. One needs to take responsibility for one's own happiness and to create one's own happiness.

4.2.2.1.2 The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.1 Training the mind in the stages of the path of the small capable being

4.2.2.1.2.1.1 The actual way of training in the motivation common to the being of small capacity

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2 The happiness and suffering of lower realm beings: Reflecting on what is to come in subsequent lives

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1 Reflecting on what is to come in subsequent lives

We started to talk last Wednesday about what comes after one's death. Death is not the end because one's continuity will go on to a next life. For the next life the different possibilities that can be summed up into two: going up or going down. Whether one goes up or down depends on one's karma. It depends on white karma and black karma; black karma sends one down and white karma sends one up.

If one is propelled into a lower state of existence through one's black karma there are three basic possibilities; rebirth in the hell realms, where one experiences intense sufferings of heat and cold, rebirth in the realm of hungry ghosts where one experiences intense sufferings of hunger and thirst and the rebirth in the animal realm where one experiences immense ignorance and dullness. To avoid these experiences Nagarjuna said one should avoid creating new black karma and purify any black karma that one has already created; and create white karma, which acts as a cause for a higher rebirth. In this way one takes responsibility for one's own happiness.

The Buddha laid out in the four Noble Truths that suffering is that to be known. Initially one needs to know about suffering. Last time we went through the five benefits of the experience of suffering that are outlined in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Life*.

The second Noble Truth is that the cause of suffering needs to be abandoned. After one has understood one's suffering, one will automatically want to stop that suffering. This is done by abandoning the cause of suffering. If one has abandoned the cause of suffering then one naturally arrives at the cessation of suffering, which has to be manifested. One manifests the cessation of suffering by practising the path. So, suffering has to be known, the cause of suffering has to be abandoned, the cessation of suffering has to be manifested, and the path is that which has to be practised. In this way one can take responsibility for one's own happiness by following this principle of the Four Noble Truths.

Contemplating the suffering of the lower realms and coming to understand the sufferings of the lower realms is the first step; the step of the truth of suffering. Then one naturally will want to stop the experience of that suffering. So one investigates the cause of the sufferings of the lower realms, which is black karma that has to be abandoned. This is the truth of the origin, the source of

suffering, which has to be abandoned. If one abandons black karma by practising the path one has stopped one's experience of suffering in the lower realms. One will not have the experience of suffering in the lower realms, so that falls into the class of the cessation of suffering. The practice of abandoning non-virtue and practising virtue would be the path.

This model of the Four Noble Truths is a very practical model to attain happiness. Initially there is the experience of suffering. The experience of suffering leads one to want to get rid of that suffering and the best next step to do is to investigate the cause of one's suffering. Remaining in a self-pitying state saying, 'Oh, I'm experiencing suffering', lamenting and feeling sorry is not the right way of doing it. The next step is to investigate the cause for one's experience of suffering. If one has understood the cause one can deal with the cause by applying the correct method and create the cessation of the suffering. One can stop the experience of suffering.

It is very similar to when one has a physical ailment and goes to the doctor. Initially the sickness has to be diagnosed, it has to be known. Then, by taking the medicine one gets rid of the cause of the sickness. It overcomes the cause of the sickness and one is cured. The cure becomes manifest.

The sufferings of the two lowest realms, the sufferings of the hell realms and the hungry ghost realms, are somewhat hidden to us. We cannot see them directly. The sufferings of the animal realms are more obvious and we can observe them directly. We have to imagine the hell realms. Could we stick our arm into a bucket that is filled with red-hot coals, and how long would one be able to leave one's arm in that bucket? How would one feel if one were left in a freezer? If one spent a day in the freezer being encircled by ice what would one experience? That's similar to the sufferings of the hell realms. With regards to the sufferings of the hungry ghost; is one able to go without food for a couple of days and how does one feel?

The primary suffering of the animal realms is one of constantly being eaten by other animals. At present one finds it very difficult just to be bitten by one mosquito. But in the animal realm one is eaten by other animals on a regular basis in all kinds of ways; smaller animals are eaten by bigger animals. Many of the big animals don't just eat one small animal; quite often they eat quite a few of them without even chewing. They just swallow them whole. By contemplating these different kinds of experiences, one should ask oneself whether one would be able to bear these different sufferings.

These sufferings should be contemplated very carefully, not just sporadically but in a sincere, continuous fashion. One should develop a strong feeling of fear with regards to them. The aim is not just to generate fear in the mind and to remain fearful, but to recognise that at the present time one has a very precious opportunity where one can purify the non-virtuous karmas that one has already generated, and where one can accumulate new virtuous karma. So, on the one hand one purifies with strong regret the non-virtuous karmas that one already created

and stops creating new non-virtuous karmas and, on the other hand, with strong aspiration one increases the virtuous actions that one already engages in and initiates new virtuous actions. One's altruistic motivation '*May all sentient beings be liberated from suffering... May I attain enlightenment to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering*', will become much stronger through this contemplation. By practising in this manner on a daily basis one's precious human rebirth, one's precious human life, will have become meaningful.

It is very good to recognise the value of one's present, precious human life. If one imagines life as an animal, first of all it is incredibly difficult to find a refuge, and it is virtually impossible for an animal to rely on that refuge and to be able to discriminate the teachings of that refuge, to be able to discriminate between white karma and black karma and so forth. This is much more difficult for animals than for oneself. It is the same, of course, when one takes rebirth in the other lower realms. Recognising this gives one more appreciation of one's precious human life.

Next week we will talk about how to free oneself from rebirth in the lower realms; and how to achieve a happy life in the next rebirth.

I have said what I wanted to say tonight, now you can have a say. You can ask me some good questions. Good questions asked well are appreciated by everybody. Sometimes there are questions that don't generate a very good feeling when they are asked.

Question: There are practices to purify past karma. Could Geshe-la talk a little bit about how that actually works?

Purifying non-virtuous karma means that one does not have to experience the resultant suffering. That's what one has to think about. By doing these practices one does not have to experience the result of that karma and that signifies the purification of that karma. For example, a karma that was created yesterday has already ceased. The actual karma ceases to exist immediately in the subsequent moment. However, even though the karma ceases to exist in the immediately subsequent moment, for as long as it exists it places a karmic potential on the mind stream that continues from yesterday to today. By doing purification practices today one takes away the power of that karmic potential and one does not have to experience the resultant suffering. We will go into this in more detail later. Thanks, that was a good question (*laughter*).

Question: (Inaudible but concerns the capacity to see the next life as this one is ending.)

It does happen that people have visions of their future life as they go through the death process. One may have visions of where one is going to be reborn. For example, there is a story from the time of the Buddha of a man who possessed certain psychic powers and was able to see that after death he would be reborn as an animal. He became very concerned and went to Shakyamuni Buddha for advice on what to do.

Question: What can one do when one is feeling suicidal?

When a person thinks a lot about suicide it is probably the result of not seeing any happiness in this life, feeling that one is being squeezed from all sides by suffering, and not seeing any light. In a general way, it would be good for that person to remind themselves of the different happinesses that there are in this life; different things to eat, to drink, different types of company and activities and so forth, in order to see that there is also happiness in this life. From a more specific, more profound point of view when that person starts to meditate and is able to experience the happiness of meditation that will help them to overcome the suicidal inclinations.

As we explained earlier, it is important for such a person to investigate the cause of their suffering. There's a certain personality that likes to hold on very strongly to their suffering without being very receptive to change. If such a person is approached by others who want to help they reject any kind of help and say, 'What do you want? It is my suffering and not your suffering'. It's almost like they want to keep their suffering. That is not conducive. What one needs to do is to look into the causes for one's unhappiness and not just hold onto one's unhappiness. One needs to investigate the causes for one's unhappiness.

If a person lacks patience and forbearance they will find it very difficult to bear suffering. In order to be able to bear suffering, one needs to have patience. With patience one will not feel that one is crushed by one's suffering; one will not feel that one's experience of suffering is unbearable. It becomes something that is bearable. If one lacks patience one will have the feeling that one is overcome and crushed by one's suffering.

If one has patience one is able to bear suffering because the nature of patience is a mind that is undisturbed by suffering. That is the nature of patience, a mind that is undisturbed by suffering, that is not overcome by suffering, that is not agitated by suffering. If one has such a mind one can bear suffering when it occurs.

Question: Does non-virtuous karma arise if one fails to help others who ask for help?

Generally there is not necessarily non-virtuous karma involved. If one has already taken the responsibility to help others, such as a Bodhisattva, and then refuses to help when one is asked it is non-virtuous karma. But generally, if one has not taken that responsibility, then it is so-so.

If you are a Bodhisattva you are somebody who has taken the responsibility, and has made a promise to help others. If you do not help when you are asked that is a fault. But if you have not made any such commitment there is no fault. If you have made a promise and then you don't help at the time when you are asked it becomes like having told a lie. You break your promise.

Question: My four-year old son is worried about death.

You can tell him not to worry. If he prostrates well nothing bad will happen to him. I have seen him, and he

prostrates very well and he follows your lead very well. You can also say if he always listens well to the advice of his mother, regardless of whether he becomes enlightened or not, then he has nothing to worry about. To listen to the advice of his mother is virtuous. You can tell him if he listens well to his parents now he will have a good rebirth where he will meet nice parents that will look after him very well.

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

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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