
The Condensed Lam Rim

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

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I am very happy that we have all come together here tonight. Everybody, both you and I, has to generate a good motivation so that the actions in which we engage together bear a positive fruit. A virtuous and pure motivation is always important regardless of the action. If one goes somewhere and engages in an activity it is always important that the motivation for one's action is pure. One can easily confirm through one's own experience that if one's motivation is not pure the action usually becomes an action that is afflicted and causes suffering. Whether the action is pure or impure depends on the motivation. Having a pure motivation makes one's actions pure and then it has a positive impact on one's life.

If there's a mutual interaction on the basis of pure motivation many problems can be worked out. But if the mutual interaction does not happen on the basis of a pure motivation then the problems that exist between two people cannot be worked out and quite often the reverse happens and the problems just get worse. That is one reason why it is important to interact with each other on the basis of a pure motivation. If one tries to work out a problem on the basis of pure motivation then it usually can be done. One can have a fruitful discussion and the problem can be worked out. If the interaction regarding the problem is not done on the basis of a pure motivation the problem is not resolved and quite often it gets worse.

It is important to always investigate the state of one's mind before engaging in a verbal or physical action. As the great Bodhisattva Shantideva said, before engaging in any action regardless whether it is speaking, a physical action, reciting mantras and so forth, one should analyse one's mind. If one engages in an action on the basis of anger or attachment then that action will bring about further disturbance. If one interacts with another person but one does not take care, and speaks out of anger or engages in a physical action out of anger or one's facial expression is one of anger, it usually only worsens the situation and brings about further disturbance. Therefore, regardless of what one's action is, one should always base one's action on an initial investigation of one's state of mind to make sure that one has a good motivation and that one's actions are not based on anger or attachment. In this way one's interactions with others will become fruitful and happy.

It is most important that one bases one's actions on a pure motivation with those that one has daily interactions with. Those that are close to oneself are the ones with whom one has to start this practice. It is usually not the person that is far away that causes one suffering. It is the

people that one has daily interactions with and is close where suffering arises from most easily. One has to base one's actions of body and speech with these people on a pure motivation. Acting in a kindly and friendly way will bring a smile to the other person's face and make the other person happy. In this way, one is happy oneself. This practice can then be widened out gradually over time.

One has to generate love and compassion and one has to identify the way that love and compassion perceive their object. Love and compassion are the direct opposite, the counter-positive, to harmful intent and anger. Harmful intent is a state of mind where one wishes to inflict harm on the other person and perceives the other person as undesirable. Love and compassion are the complete opposite. They perceive the object in a completely different light and completely counteract harmful intent. To meditate on love and compassion means to increase one's love and compassion for the other person. Everybody has a certain amount of love and compassion. To meditate on love and compassion means that one increases that love and compassion which one has. If one loses one's love and compassion for the other person one's own happiness is lost. If one's actions towards another person are based primarily on the mental afflictions such as anger or attachment one's actions will not produce proper happiness, no happiness at all.

Of course it is difficult to engage in actions with regards to others that are completely devoid of attachment. The primary motivation though, while not completely free from attachment, should be concern for the welfare of the other person, and of love and compassion. By increasing one's virtuous mental attitudes in this way one can counteract the mental afflictions such as anger, attachment, jealousy, pride, because, and this is important, there is nothing more harmful than those mental states. They are really the cause of all problems. One should, of course, practise love and compassion towards all sentient beings but initially it is important that one starts out one's practice of love and compassion with those that are close to one and with whom one has daily interactions.

One necessity for practising love and compassion is for a harmonious family life. In a family where love and compassion are lost and where anger is predominant there is no happiness. The harmony in that family is disturbed and there is no happiness. To restore happiness in that family there needs to be the practice of love and compassion. If one feels that there is a benefit from overcoming problems and having fewer problems one needs to practise love and compassion. If one feels that there is no particular benefit from having less problems and less disturbances one doesn't need to practise love and compassion.

If love and compassion are not present in the family then happiness in that family is lost. In order to have a harmonious life one needs to have love and compassion. That also applies to one's relationship with one's partner. I always say that you need to have a partner. A man needs to have a woman, and a woman needs to have a

man. It is important to have a partner whom one can support and whom one can look after. If one has this friendship with the other person then they can support each other throughout their life. One needs to base one's actions on love and compassion to work out problems that might exist in this partnership. Those problems won't be worked out on the basis of attachment or anger. Usually the worldly perception is that if one is attacked or if one is treated with anger that one is diminished if one does not respond in kind with anger as well. That is a misunderstanding and is a lack of an understanding of the importance of love and compassion. If one, instead of retaliating in kind with anger, responds with love and compassion then one substitutes love and compassion for the anger and one can defuse the situation.

Since all actions should be preceded by a pure motivation one's meditation should also be preceded by a pure motivation. Recognising the disadvantages of the mental afflictions, one should generate the motivation of not wanting to let one's mind fall under the control of the mental afflictions for even a moment. That should also form the motivation for one's meditation. On the basis of making one's mind clean and clear one generates the motivation; "I'm going to meditate to lessen the afflictions in the mind and to free the mind from the mental afflictions." One also wishes that one is able to also benefit others with that pure state of mind. That is the mental motivation. The physical basis for the meditation is that one sits in a relaxed manner in the meditation posture.

Once you are sitting comfortably in a good meditation posture, you initially focus the mind internally. This internal focus is to overcome the distracted mind that is always attracted to external objects and preoccupied with external objects. Conceptual thoughts that grasp at external objects need to be pacified. For that purpose, very gently focus the mind internally. After having achieved this internal focus leave the mind in that mental space of nothingness for some time and, when you recognise the mind again tries to escape to the outside, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath and let the mind enter the breath. We can meditate in such a manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

Do you have questions?

Question : Geshe-la, you mentioned last year how the breath appears to the mind in meditation. Could you say a bit about this please?

The way the breath appears to the mind is through counting. One doesn't focus, for example, on the movement of the air on the nostrils because, if you do, the mind is already distracted externally again. The way the breath appears to the mind is by way of counting; "One breath has gone. Two breaths have gone", and so forth. There are of course different types of meditations on the breath taught these days but that's how it says one focuses on the breathing the profound treatises on meditation.

That's how Lama Tsong Khapa explains one should focus on the breathing in the extensive *Graduated Path to*

Enlightenment. Lama Tsong Khapa says one doesn't focus on the breathing by focusing on the coarse movement of the air at one's nostrils.

I have heard that some say one should meditate on the breathing like smelling the air after a rat has left a room (*laughter*). When a rat has left a room one is breathing in strongly to check whether there is some residual smell in the air or not.

Question : If a person has physical pain in their body and they have discomfort and they can't seem to shift it, what do you recommend? This occurs "out of meditation".

It is difficult for somebody who is not well trained in meditation to meditate when there is physical pain because the mind is distracted by the physical pain and is always attracted and focused on the physical pain. It becomes very difficult. An experienced meditator is able to focus on the meditation object despite having physical pain. They are able to remove the mind from the pain and focus on the object even though the sickness or the pain has not become less. They are not bothered by the sickness and pain.

Take, for example, somebody who is doing some intense sailing in the ocean in cold weather, not some comfortable sailing in sunny weather and warm water. There is strong wind and cold water. Then, even though their body is cold from the waves and from the wind, the sailor is not really aware of the cold and the wetness at the time of sailing because the mind is occupied with the activity of sailing. Once the sailor has reached land and the activity of sailing has ceased their mind becomes more aware again of the physical feelings and the person starts to shake because of the cold. They start to feel cold and start to shake.

That's why; if one meditates strongly on love, compassion and Bodhicitta when one is sick it diverts the mind from the sickness and the problem. They are much stronger than the pain. In a way it overcomes the feeling of pain. But of course it does not cure the sickness in actuality. If you need somebody that has had this experience we can ask Damien who at one time had strong stomach problems. When Damien had lots of stomach problems and stomach pain he tried to meditate a lot. During those days we all thought that he was just about to die. He sat meditating. I don't know if it was beneficial or not, but anyway he meditated. We can ask him whether there was some benefit. When he was cured of his stomach problems his mother invited us for a meal. At least there was the benefit of getting some food (*laughter*).

As was said earlier, focus the mind internally and place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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