
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 for a little bit as usual. As we have mentioned before, you need to sit comfortably in a good posture. You also need to generate a good motivation. You have to remember what we talked about previously. As we have said, the meaning of meditation is to train the mind in pure mental states, in pure mental patterns. To train the mind single-pointedly on a virtuous object is meditation.

If you find that it is difficult for your mind to remain single-pointedly on a virtuous object you should initially collect the mind internally and stop engaging external objects. Instead of engaging external objects you focus the mind completely internally so that it is not under the control of the thoughts that engage external objects but is wholly focused internally. Do this in a very gentle and gradual manner. After remaining in that state for a little while, when you recognise that the mind now wants to escape again to external objects, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. From within the non-conceptual space place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Generally, one can choose any object of meditation. Tonight we choose the coming and going of the breath. From within that faultless internal state place the mind on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that manner for a little while. The mind becomes at one with the breathing. -
Pause for meditation.

One needs to look into one's mental continuum and identify the different suitable and unsuitable mental states and identify the effect that these different states have on one's wellbeing and happiness. Everybody desires happiness. By understanding the way the mind works and the negative impact that unsuitable mental states have on one's happiness, and the positive impact that suitable mental states have on one's happiness, one will not only understand the need to be free from suffering and the need to have happiness. One will also understand how one can become free from suffering and how one can attain happiness. One will come to recognise that to look internally for happiness is more fruitful than to look on the outside.

To know this distinction between confused states of the mind and between valid states of the mind is useful and practical for everybody, regardless of their religion. It is not necessary for a person to be a Buddhist to implement these principles. One can just take the useful things without necessarily accepting Buddhism as a religion.

By recognising the negative impact that confused mental states have on one's life one will automatically want to get rid of them. One will recognise them as something

that has to be reversed. On the other hand one will also recognise that valid states of the mind are states that need to be generated, and that they are supportive and conducive for one's happiness. Everybody is always talking about world peace, but the kind of peace one really needs is the pacification of the disturbing thoughts.

It is important to analyse the thoughts that disrupt one's relationships with others. If one does not have harmonious relationships with others one usually does not experience happiness because one's hopes for happiness are so much focused on the outside.

If one does not have the refuge of inner happiness one's focus for happiness is primarily to the outside. Therefore it is important that one has harmonious relationships with others. To this end one needs to foster the thoughts that generate such a relationship and one needs to identify the types of thoughts and minds that disrupt one's harmonious relationships with others. If a group of people or a society can live together harmoniously they can be happy. It does not depend on whether they are wealthy or not. The happiness of a society and the ability to live together harmoniously are not linked to their wealth. It is linked to their thoughts of love and compassion. That is where the importance and value of love and compassion lies.

It is very common to think that if one has a good relationship, if one has a good partner, if one has a nice house and if one has a nice car, then that constitutes happiness. That is a very predominant view but there are various problems that come with that view. One problem that comes is that if one's happiness is based on attachment for these external things, since one's attachment is never satisfied one is never completely happy. Even though one might have a nice car the mind wants to have a nicer car, and there's no limit to how nice the car can be. That creates one problem.

Another problem that arises is that if the mind is focused on the outside and that does not work out, then the mind becomes very depressed. If one does not attain those things or one loses them the mind becomes very depressed. One thing that can happen is that when something does not work out and one does not get one thing, like a good job or a nice house, the mind becomes sort of flat. It completely loses the energy to do anything at all. That happens because the mind is so focused on these external objects and has no inner refuge of inner happiness, of inner wisdom and satisfaction and knowledge.

Another problem is that if it does not work out one places the fault for one's unhappiness on the outside and others. When one's car breaks down one places the fault for the unhappiness that arises in the mind on external objects or on the other person. This again comes about through this very strong focus on the external objects for one's happiness. One has to come to recognise that being so strongly focused, having this single-pointed focus, on external objects is not going to bring happiness. One needs to have some other recourse, some other kind of refuge, some inner way in order to attain proper happiness.

I'm not telling you this with some thought of personal profit in mind. I view myself as a simple scholar and I don't have any great intentions with regards to wealth and position and so forth. I'm not telling you this from the point of view of personal profit. I'm telling you with the hope that it might benefit you. I have the wish that this concept might benefit you.

Another mistaken attitude is the attitude of wanting everything very quickly. If one wants to attain a certain university degree but then finds out that one has to go to university for 3 or 4 years to attain the degree the mind goes sort of flat and thinks "Oh, I cannot do this for so long". This attitude is always the same. If one hears that it takes one year one wishes that it would take only 6 months. If one hears that it takes 6 months one wants it to take only a few months or a few weeks. The basic attitude is that one wants everything very quickly. One mistake in that attitude is that it does not let the mind relax. One cannot approach something in a relaxed manner. If one looks at it from the point of view of one's whole life 3 or 4 years are not really very much. Going to university for 3 or 4 years can open the door to the whole world because one has a good education. I have mentioned this before to some young students and they found it beneficial. I think it's something that's good for parents to gently convey to their children. To have a good education, even if it takes a few years to get that good education, is worth it because the benefits far outweigh the difficulties.

Do you have a question? If you don't have questions I continue with the text. If you have questions we can have some time for questions.

Question: Is there a fine line between samsaric activities and mindfulness?

Mindfulness is important because without mindfulness we will not be able to perform samsaric activities effectively. One very simple example is that without mindfulness you will not remember a person you met yesterday. Mindfulness is very similar to recollection. If you don't have a memory of a person from yesterday you will not recognise that person today. That is like saying that if you don't have mindfulness of that person you will not recognise them.

Specifically, in Tibetan, the word for mindfulness is the same word that is used for recollection. When you talk about mindfulness in the context of meditation we talk about a more special type of mindfulness or recollection.

We are not able to perform worldly activities without mindfulness. First one does not know the person. Then, when one is introduced to the person, one comes to know that person. Let's say that happened yesterday. If one is not mindful of what happened yesterday, if one does not recollect it, one will not remember the person. For even very simple things one needs to have this faculty of mindfulness, of keeping the object in mind.

Question: If someone was sleeping and having an awkward, upsetting dream, would you recommend they continue the dream or should they wake up and end the dream?

(Translator) I'm not quite sure what you meant by

'awkward dream'. I asked from the point of view of a nightmare, and Geshe-la said, it depends on whether you like to be frightened or not (*laughter*). If you like to be frightened continue with the dream. If you don't like to be frightened then stop the dream. Probably, for the most part, one doesn't actually have that choice.

Question : A few weeks ago, Geshe-la mentioned checking your motivation to ensure it is pure. Sometimes I might help someone and when I come to check later I have a cynical mind and it seems counterproductive, because I might think cynically later that I had something to gain.

The best thing is if you are able to help spontaneously. The best type of action is where one spontaneously helps the other person upon seeing their need for help. That is pure Dharma. There is no thought of reward or of any kind of personal benefit. Even though the thought of compassion may not be manifest in the mind it will be there in the background. It will be a driving force in the background because one sees that the other person is suffering and one wants to alleviate that suffering. Or one sees that the other person is lacking happiness and one wants to give them happiness. That thought will be in the background even though it might not be manifest.

Also, for example, if one makes offerings to holy objects and the initial motivation for making the offering is not completely pure there will still be a 'natural virtue' at the time of making the offering. Even if one generates competitiveness and pride thinking, "I'm going to make an even bigger offering than the other person", there will be a natural virtue of giving at the time of the action. That's also good to know.

Question: Can you give me some advice on my motivation when I'm cleaning altars and statues?

You can apply the meditation that one also does when one cleans the room. One thinks that one purifies one's afflictions, one's attachments, one's ignorance and so forth. One can do that same meditation. Even just to blow on the Buddha, blowing off the dust for example, is already beneficial. You have to take care, of course, that you don't spit on the statue (*laughter*). It has to be very softly and gently.

This meditation on purifying the dirt and purifying the dust while sweeping was taught by the Buddha. He taught this to a student and after some time the student realised that the actual dirt and the dust that he was supposed to purify was internal. It was the anger and so forth. One of the disciples of the Buddha actually attained high realisations through this practice. One can also meditate that the broom is the wisdom that realises selflessness and as one is sweeping away the dirt, one can meditate that the dirt of the internal afflictions of anger, ignorance, attachment and so forth are purified by the wisdom realising selflessness. In this way one also places good karmic potentials regarding the wisdom realising selflessness on one's mind.

We can stop here. As we said before, focus the mind internally and then, after having focused it internally, place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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