
The Condensed Lam Rim

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12 April 2006

We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Seat yourself comfortably in a good posture.

Meditation is training in single-pointed focus on a virtuous object. But single-pointed focus of the mind on a virtuous object is obstructed by the different negative mental states. This is something that one has to think about. This is an important point because the more one lets the mind fall under the control of the negative mental states the more it is distracted towards external objects. Even though one might initially be focused internally on a virtuous object if one does not take care and lets the mind be taken over by negative states, then slowly, slowly, before one knows it, it has again engaged in external objects.

One might ask, "What is the problem if the mind engages external objects?" In the same vein one might as well ask, "What is this supposed to be, sitting in a contained posture, not moving the eyes, not looking straight ahead but downcast, so that one can't even see other people that are around?"

Somebody who has experience in meditation knows very well why one meditates and the benefits of meditation. One fault that arises when the mind engages external objects is that one's focus is directed externally and then one's actions become directed externally. One's search for happiness becomes directed externally by looking for money or fame, possessions, friends and so forth. By striving in this external world one can have worldly success through which one can eliminate the suffering of poverty and the suffering of the sense powers. What one has to look at is the difference between somebody who is wholly focused on the external world and somebody that follows an internal path. If one compares the two, somebody who follows an internal path, somebody who practises the Dharma will overcome both the sufferings of this life as well as the sufferings of future lives. Somebody who practises the Dharma will attain a much greater result.

One person might be enthusiastic about the external world and another person might be enthusiastic with the internal world. The first is, by definition, not really enthusiasm because the 'joyous enthusiasm' that one talks about in Buddhism is confined to joy in the Dharma. Anyway, one might nominally say that it is enthusiasm. Which person has a greater result, the businessman or the person that practises the Dharma?

The businessman will be able to overcome some problems relating to this life such as external poverty and so forth. The person who practises the Dharma will be able to experience happiness both in this life and in the next life by the mind remaining in the Dharma. By remaining peacefully focused on an internal object the mind remains peaceful and happy both in this life as well as in the future life.

As I always say, one does not need to give up one's external work completely. But it is good to practise a combination where one also practises the Dharma according to one's ability. In a gradual step-by-step manner, one meditates according to one's ability. If one does not practise according to one's ability, but tries to push beyond one's ability, one's Dharma practice will not be successful. Not only will it not be successful one will also lose one's enthusiasm for Dharma practice. If one practises according to one's ability it will be successful.

If, according to one's ability, one regularly practises meditation on a daily basis, even just being able to have the mind calmly focused internally for just one minute, the mind improves over time. If one then sees that the mind is strongly focused on external worldly objects and is therefore disturbed, then one can sit down just for a brief while and focus the mind internally to calm the mind. In such a way, over time, one's practice will be successful and the mind will be peaceful and happy.

The meditation posture is significant. One significance is that while one sits in this posture one does not engage in non-virtuous actions of body and speech. Because all non-virtuous actions of body and speech first develop within the mind, the negative mind precedes the harmful actions of body and speech, one needs to meditate and train the mind in positive mental states. Then, through that, one can avoid harmful, non-virtuous actions of body and speech.

For example, the harmful action of speech comes about because of a negative state of the mind. Likewise harmful actions of the body come about because of a negative state of the mind. If through meditation one can pacify the negative states of the mind then the negative actions of body and speech cease naturally. Even if it is just for the duration of the meditation it is at least a start. During meditation, because of the absence of non-virtue, one can practise virtue and train the mind in virtue.

It is important to know that harmful actions of body and speech are initiated by a negative state of mind. Positive actions of body and speech are initiated by a wholesome state of the mind. It is important to know the difference between those two. For example, if one notices that one's mind is under the control of a negative state one can say to oneself, "That's not a good state of the mind", and try to adjust one's mind and not act upon that negative state and cease any actions of body and speech and change one's mind to a positive state. If one is not aware of the differences between the different positive and harmful mental states and the actions that they initiate it brings a lot of confusion into one's life. It is very important that one is able to discern between wholesome mental states and actions and harmful mental states and actions.

Harmful actions of body and speech that are initiated by harmful mental states are also actions that disturb others. They are actions that cause distress and are unpleasant to others. Wholesome actions of body and speech are actions that are pleasant for others and are regarded as beautiful by others. They are appreciated by others. Knowing the different mental states and the different actions, and the impact that they have, one should train one's mind in lessening the harmful mental states and in generating, developing and protecting wholesome mental states. If one does this it will also be appreciated by others. Others will recognise a change in one and will say, "Oh, that person is

quite different. That person is much easier to get along with. That person is much happier” and so forth. The change that one effects in oneself will also be noticed and appreciated by others.

An example of the training of the mind that we just talked about would be that if one is verbally attacked by a friend or one's partner, one does not retaliate with harsh words but instead one tells the other person how much one likes them and that one loves them and appreciates them. If one's mind is not trained well, there is a danger that that might not happen. In our case it is usually a little bit different. When one is talked to harshly one will usually reply with greater force. This kind of action just aggravates the situation further. Instead, if one were to recall that the other person is unhappy and their mind is under the control of mental afflictions and they can't really help themselves, and then meditate on love and compassion for them one can avoid that kind of retaliation, diffuse the situation and avoid unnecessary aggravation and fighting. This kind of practice is something that one definitely needs in life. It is an indispensable tool in life.

On the basis of all of that, we can meditate for a little while. Initially focus the mind internally so the mind that is normally occupied with a multitude of external objects and is dispersing its power is focussed internally instead. All the power of the mind is harnessed. After you completely focus the mind internally keep it in that state for a little while until you notice that the mind is again trying to escape to the external objects. When that happens direct it single-pointedly to the coming and going of the breath. Place the mind single-pointedly within the coming and going of the breath letting it become one with the breathing. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.* It would be good if you were to practise in the way I explained.

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 Relying on the methods for achieving happiness in future lives

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1 Developing the faith of conviction in karma and its effects.

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1 Thinking about the Law of Cause and Effect in general

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1.1 The actual way of contemplating karma in general,

We have started with the outline on karma. We were at the point of the general explanation that will be followed by a more detailed explanation. The general explanation comes in four points. The first one was the definiteness of karma. The second is the increasing factor of karma.

We have already talked a little bit the last few times regarding the difference between mental karma, verbal karma and physical karma.

Mental karma refers to the mental factor of intention that is focused on the object and precedes the actions of body and speech. The mental factor of intention is already focused on the object but there has been no action of body or speech. The mental factor of intention at that time is referred to as

the mental karma.

Before an action has commenced the mental factor of intention is referred to as mental karma. Once a physical action has commenced the mental factor at that time that is focused on the object is referred to as physical karma and if a verbal factor has commenced the mental factor of intention focused on the object at that time is verbal karma.

For example, before one sets out to make prostrations, one forms the mind, “Now I'm going to prostrate”. That would be the time of mental karma. Once one has commenced the action of prostrating and verbally recites the names of the Buddhas, then one has a physical karma and a verbal karma. That indicates that the act of prostrations would have both a verbal and physical virtuous karma. This blue print for the different karmas can relate back to what we talked about earlier when we talked about meditation.

We are at the increasing feature of karma. One aspect of karma is that it increases. Even a small non-virtue can produce great suffering and a small virtue can produce great happiness. There is not really any external example that can accurately describe the increasing factor even though we have certain analogies. For example a tree that bears fruit that many, many people can eat grows from one small seed. This is an example where a great result comes about from a small cause, a tiny seed. But such an external example is not able to fully convey the increasing factor of karma, which is much, much, more vast. One's happiness and suffering are really produced from internal causes and not from external causes.

The text quotes an analogy where it says that even a small non-virtue can induce great suffering in future existence and great loss in this life. It is like a lingering poison in the body. A lingering poison in the body works its way through the body gradually affecting the different organs until the whole body is completely poisoned and sick. Similarly a small non-virtue works in a similar way. It doesn't just induce loss in this life but also produces very great suffering in existences in the future. It works its way from this life through future lives and has an effect through many lives. Even a small virtue can produce a very happy existence, a very happy rebirth or rebirths. It is not all in the future. It can also produce, for example, good crops, good fruits, and good results in this life. If somebody has lots of merit everything goes well for that person.

One should not think, “It doesn't matter, it is only a small negative action. It doesn't matter if I do it because it is only a small negative action”. Likewise one should not disregard small virtues and think, “Oh, that virtuous action is too insignificant for me to do”. Even small, non-virtuous actions produce a very great destructive effect and produce great suffering. A tiny flame is enough to cause a huge fire inferno that can destroy many things. In the beginning it might have been just a spark, or a tiny flame, but then it became a vast fire inferno. Similarly, one should not disregard small virtues and thinking of them as insignificant. A vessel can be filled by regularly adding drops. One should not think that small virtues are too insignificant to create. Instead, one should take this advice to heart and avoid even small non-virtues and practise even small virtues.

The system is similar to what I always tell students with regards to saving money. You should not think, “Oh, this amount of money is too small to save” and then just disregard it. Even a small amount of money, if it is saved on

a regular basis, whether it is \$1 or \$5, \$10 or \$20, will, after one year, total a certain sum of money, even if it is just \$11. One has some fruit that one would not get if one just were to disregard the small amounts of money and just waste them.

By thinking about the increasing factor of karma, one should adopt the right attitude of practice and negation with regards to small non-virtuous and virtuous actions. One should say to oneself, first of all, that there is no non-virtuous action small enough that is not worthwhile to stop doing. No matter how small the non-virtuous action, it is always worthwhile to stop that action. There is no virtuous action that is too small to do. It is always worthwhile to engage in a virtuous action, regardless of how small the virtuous action may seem.

Regarding our previous discussion of meditation. Initially one might just be able to meditate for one minute or two minutes. But, by practising regularly, over time the period of one's meditation ability will increase naturally. One should make this determination in one's life, "I will abandon each and every harmful action, regardless of how small it is, and I will generate each and every type of virtue, also regardless of how small it is". That is the increasing factor of karma from which you have hopefully got increasing benefit. Does any one have a question?

Question: I didn't quite understand mental karma. If you think negative thoughts but you don't do anything about it is it still karma?

Mental karma is the intention of wanting to do the action, the thought, "Now I'm going to do the action". If, for example, the intention was to do a non-virtuous action that would be a non-virtuous mental karma even if you do not engage in the action. That's why one has the threefold division into mental karma, verbal karma and physical karma. If you generate the intention to kill another person, "I am going to kill that other person", that is a non-virtuous mental karma. Initially you might have the intention to kill the other person but when you actually see the other person, and see that they are actually capable of defending themselves, you might not kill the other person.

Question: In my meditation practice, I've had experiences where my body expands. I don't know if it's really happening or not.

Don't worry; your body does not swell up by meditating. If you were to sit in meditation in a place that fits your body and your body were really to expand you wouldn't fit any more in that space. That's one way how you could find out whether your body expands. But sometimes during meditation, when the mind relaxes, different types of appearances can arise within the mind such as the body expanding and so forth.

One meditator, always had a pot appear in the space in front of him while meditating. He went to his teacher and the teacher said, "Oh, no, there's not really any pot appearing before you while you meditate. To test you can just put a mark on the pot when it appears". So the meditator did that. The pot appeared and he put a mark on it. He found that he had actually put the mark on his stomach. So I could tell you in order to check up whether you are really expanding or not, put yourself somewhere where it just fits your body. Then you can see whether you are actually expanding.

Question: I was told once that the reason there is a lot of suffering in this land is because our forefathers took the land by violence without asking the great spirit's permission. I was wondering

what we could do about it.

When the tsunami happened there were people who said, "The tsunami happened because the great spirit was angry". That is not something that I personally believe in. Regarding your question about living peacefully and happily in Australia. That depends on living harmoniously with others, whether one has a concern for the welfare of others and so forth. If the people in the country can live together harmoniously the country develops well.

There's a story about an Asian country where all the people used to live together happily and peacefully. The people in that country were able to live together very harmoniously and peacefully because they followed the principle of harmonious living, where one treats others with respect, love, compassion and affection. If two people live together harmoniously, if they try in harmony with each other, they can live together peacefully. There is an absence of strife and fighting and so forth that applies to the whole country if the whole country follows the principle of harmonious living. Regardless of whether it is just two people, or whether it is a whole group of people, if they live together harmoniously they will be happy and peaceful. To live together harmoniously with the other person is the key to being happy and peaceful.

Question: Is karma given through ancestors so it helps to transform negative karma into positive karma?

It is not possible to experience karma that was created by one's ancestors. That comes in one of the later points. One cannot experience karma that one did not personally create.

Question: Why do we suffer today for what we've done in a past life but we don't remember it? Isn't it wrong to suffer for what we can't remember?

First of all we need to ask whether you remember being born from your mother's womb? Do you remember being born from your mother's womb? Despite not remembering the initial birth you still experience the sufferings of ageing, sickness and death. The mere fact that one was born, means that one will subsequently experience sickness, ageing and death. So you experience sickness, ageing and death even though you can't remember being born. But that initial birth is the reason why one experiences the sufferings of sickness, ageing and death.

One doesn't need to remember one's past karmas. It is said that if one wants to know one's past karmas one only needs to look at one's present body. If one wants to know one's future rebirth one needs to look at one's present mind. That is important advice.

As was said initially, turn the mind inwards and place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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