
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual we will spend a few moments engaging in some meditation. So please sit in a comfortable and relaxed meditative posture.

If the mind is subdued, it will be peaceful and happy. If the mind is not subdued, it will not be peaceful and happy. Therefore as we all wish to have a happy and peaceful mind, we should realise the importance of engaging in the practice of meditation. The practice of meditation is primarily to train the mind in focusing inwards – looking into the mind to protect it from the external distractions. That is what we call the primary practice of bringing the mind inward.

Initially, the most suitable object to focus on is the breath, and the more we train our mind to focus single-pointedly on the breath, the more relaxed and calm the mind will become. We can definitely see the immediate benefit of the mind becoming calmer and more relaxed by just focusing on the breath. Therefore, as we can see the benefit, we should continually try to practise this single-pointed focus on the breathing. Now we will engage in this practice, focusing on the breath for a few moments. *(Pause for meditation)*

Even with a few moments of meditation, we experienced the mind becoming calmer and more relaxed. This is a natural effect of having done nothing much more than bringing the mind inward and focusing on the breath, not allowing it to be distracted by contaminated worldly objects. However, as soon as we come out of meditation and start thinking about worldly things again – especially when we go out into the busy world – we find that our mind becomes more distracted, agitated and restless. We might find that thinking about certain objects will make the mind quite upset, uncomfortable and unhappy.

When we investigate this, we can clearly see the difference between a more controlled and focused mind, and a mind that is completely distracted by worldly objects. The point we need to investigate is that when the mind is distracted by external objects, it becomes unhappy. At the point when you notice the mind becoming unhappy and restless, bring your awareness back to the mind, thinking: “What is it that is making my mind unhappy? Why is it that my mind is becoming unhappy now?” If we can actually stop to consider why the mind is unhappy, we can begin to see the difference between a more controlled, focused and subdued mind, and a completely distracted mind, in terms of our experience of happiness or suffering, respectively.

It is good to consider the calming effect on the mind of

being more subdued and focused, in contrast to the agitated and unhappy state of the mind when it is completely distracted. When we verify this through our own experience, we will really begin to see the benefit of meditation.

A subdued mind is not something we can attain immediately; rather, it is something we build up gradually, step by step, through continual meditation. Also it is important not to think that controlling the mind just means sitting quietly, very solemn and still with a rigid mind. Some people may think that meditation just means having to be very still in a quiet environment. It is important to remember that the **result** we are aiming for through our meditation is to have a focused and clear mind – a mind that has the wisdom to be able to deal with any situation, a mind that can remain clear and peaceful, with awareness. This is the result we will attain through prolonged, step-by-step practice – a mind that will remain peaceful and calm in whatever situation we may find ourselves.

It mentions in the teachings that a controlled mind is a happy mind. If we look at our own situation, we may notice that we do not have control of our own mind. Rather we let ourselves follow whatever whims may arise in the mind. If our minds were always in a positive state, there would be no problem in following the mind’s impulses. For example, if our minds were imbued with compassionate attitudes such as generosity and loving kindness, it would be a good thing for us to be under the control of the mind. But if we look into our present situation, we will find that our mind is mostly influenced by negative states such as anger, jealousy, competitiveness and pride. When we let ourselves to be controlled by these negative states of mind, we will engage in actions that lead us into experiencing more suffering and conflict with others.

Therefore we must take control over our mind, engaging in positive ways of thinking that lead to positive speech and action. When we notice that we still have delusions in the mind, it is most important to try to engage in techniques to control the mind so that it will be influenced in positive ways.

As we have said, if we put a gradual, continual effort into meditation, our mind will become clearer and our wisdom sharper. In fact, for every moment we meditate, our clear wisdom increases. Every moment we put into meditation brings us more wisdom. This is something that we definitely achieve each time we put some effort into meditation. By continually engaging in meditation, our wisdom will naturally become clearer and sharper. We will be able to distinguish between what is positive and negative and we will be able to recognise negative states of mind. Our wisdom will also allow us to apply the appropriate antidote, allowing the mind to become kinder, gentler and more generous. In short, we will cultivate all the positive states in the mind that bring about happiness for ourselves and others.

The purpose of meditation is to understand our mind better, by investigating and looking into it. When you

think about it, this is actually quite an interesting job, looking at your own mind. Normally we hardly stop to think about what's going on in our mind; we blindly follow whatever comes up in our mind, jumping from one thing to another. Instead, we can actually stop and investigate what is going on in our mind: how does the mind function, why do certain attitudes and ideas arise? When we investigate and analyse the working of our own mind, we begin to actually understand ourselves much better. As we understand our mind better, it becomes easier for us to control it.

If we ask ourselves what we wish for, there is no doubt that we all wish to have a more subdued, peaceful state of mind, and to be successful in whatever we do. When we look closely at what we would call a bad situation, we can see that the root of the problem, what makes the situation go wrong – whether it involves a relationship or work – is our own attitude and how we are thinking about that situation. Someone whose mind is not clear and does not analyse things carefully will do things hastily; for such a person, it is quite clear that the result of whatever they do will not be effective. However, if we plan things carefully and think them through, we will engage in any activity with a clear mind, and this action or work will naturally turn out much better.

Here we are talking about an overhaul of our habits for our own well-being, in this life and in future lives. We are talking about how to attain a sharp, clear mind that is able to discern negative from positive states of mind, eliminating the negative states of mind when they arise by applying the appropriate antidotes and cultivating the positive states of mind that are the natural basis of the mind.

There is a story related to the negative consequences of following the whims of our mind and daydreaming. I heard this story from someone else. Apparently this is a story about a person in a very poor area of China where people didn't even have proper houses. This person would go to work during the day and would take whatever belongings he had with him. His only shelter was a clay pot, which he used to sleep in because it was warm and protected him from the wind. Apparently certain parts of China can be very cold.

Anyway, one evening, after this person had managed to save a small amount of money which he thought was quite a sum, he started to daydream in his small clay pot where he was curled up. He thought: "I have collected quite a bit of money. I think with this money I could propose to a beautiful woman and maybe marry her. Then I will start having children and I will send them to a good school..." and so forth. He started imagining himself in a nice mansion on a comfortable bed. But suddenly in a moment of excitement he stretched out his legs and broke his own small clay pot. So whatever wages he had earned, he had to spend on getting a new pot! (Laughter)

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

Coming to where we left off in the text, we were discussing the four modes or characteristics of karma, the first two – which we have covered – being that karma is definite and karma increases. The next two characteristics are that one does not meet with the results of karma one has not been created, and that once karma has been created it will not dissipate of its own accord.

As it states here in the translation of the text, we will not encounter the effects of an action that we have not performed. If we have not created a particular cause, then the desired or undesired result will not come about. So this refers to both positive and negative karmas. If a positive cause has not been created, a positive result can not come about. Likewise if a negative karma has not been created, a negative result of suffering will not be experienced.

This Characteristic of karma may cause doubt to arise in the mind because you may ask, if it is the case that we do not meet with the consequences of karma we have not created, then how about those who are reborn in the lands of bliss, such as Tushita or Amitabha's Pure Lands? How could one be reborn in the Pure Lands when the Pure Lands had already existed – when the karma for the Pure Lands was already created somehow before one was reborn there? Wouldn't that be a case of experiencing the good results of an abode such as the Pure Lands without having created the karma for that to exist?

The answer to this is, one has already created a partial cause for that Pure Land to exist. For example, before I arrived in Australia, Australia of course already existed and the nice countryside, nice scenery, nice climate and food – everything already existed here. So the question would be: did I not create the karma to experience the result of being in Australia, since Australia already existed before? The answer to that would be, even though Australia itself existed, for me to be able to come here and experience the nice environment, I had to create that karma. In other words, the part which I experience by being here is the part that I have created the cause for. I don't know if that is clear? Is that clear?

The point here is that for an individual to experience a negative karmic result, that individual must have created a negative karma in the past. Likewise for an individual to experience a positive result, that particular karma or karmic causes for that pleasant result was created by that person in the past. Here in the text contains a quote to counteract a misconception that some other [spiritual] schools hold that an individual's karma can be divided

amongst others; that if one creates a negative karma, it can be shared by others who may have not contributed to the cause. In order to counteract this misconception, Lama Tsong Khapa quotes from the sutras: once a karma has been created, it will definitely bring results, even if it takes eons to be activated, a particular karma will not go to waste once it has been created.

Even in terms of our own experience, we can see clearly that we cannot either take or give our experience of pleasure or pain to others. If it were the case that we could share our good karmic results, we would be able to share our good health and so forth with our loved ones. We could share our good health with our parents when they were ill so that they too would be in good health. Likewise, if it were possible to take upon ourselves the ill health and negativities of others, we would be able to take on the ill health or so forth of our loved ones.

However, in reality, we find that this is not possible. Each individual experiences whatever karmic consequences they happen to have created.

The fourth characteristic or mode of karma is that once karma has been created, it does not go to waste. The point here is that once karma has been created, it will not naturally disappear. This applies to any kind of karma, whether it's a small or extensive deed. When we think in this way, we will come to realise that no matter how small a deed may be, it will definitely bear fruit. Even small karmas, whether they are positive or negative, will definitely bring about a result. Once they have been created, they will not just dissipate.

As a result of having contemplated the third characteristic of karma, which is that is that we will not meet the results of karma that we have not created, we will try to overcome the negativities we have created by applying the four antidotes or the four opponent powers. We will engage in purification practice so that we will not experience the results of the negative karmas we have created. And we will engage in virtuous deeds so that we create the causes to experience the positive results in this life and future lives.

Having contemplated the fourth characteristic, which is that once karma has been created it will not go away, we will then engage in dedicating whatever virtues we have already accumulated so that our positive karma increases. The main point here is that the negative karma one has already created needs to be purified through the practice of applying the four opponent powers, and the positive karma one has created needs to be increased and further secured by doing extensive dedications.

Geshe-la would like to stop earlier for this evening with consideration of me as the new translator!! We will end with some more meditation, focusing on the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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