
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'll spend some time in meditation. Begin by sitting in an upright, but comfortable, physical position. As mentioned previously, it is also important to check one's motivation, so generate a positive motivation. The most important element of the motivation is to have an attitude of wishing to benefit others. That is the main point. Whatever activity one does should have some benefit for others as well. Whatever we do, it can be considered as a positive activity in dependence on the attitude we have before we engage in the activity. Therefore, if we have a good attitude, the action will naturally become positive and good. If we have a negative attitude to begin with the actions that follow generally tend to be negative as well. This is something that can be quite obvious. If we have not spent that much time in checking our attitudes, it may not be obvious but if we were to do that, we can see that this is really true.

The outcome of our motivation even with normal activities would be obvious if we were to actually look into it. Take the example of when we communicate with others, or when we work with others. In whatever situation where we are dealing with, the relationship with others depends on the kind of attitude or motivation we have at that time. If we have a positive outlook or positive motivation in our mind it is quite natural that we have quite good communication and a good relationship. If it is contrary to that, then usually we will not have a good relationship. This is something that we can really see in our own daily life. We don't need to have a great understanding of Dharma practice to be able to identify and notice that. It is something that is quite common in our daily lives.

Therefore the attitude, or motivation, to benefit others is something that we need to cherish and maintain within ourselves. It's not something that we should disregard.

If we were to consider what meditation is meant to be, and what is it that we are we suppose to be doing during meditation, we come to the explanation of keeping the mind focused inward on a chosen object. It is quite obvious to us that our mind is usually very distracted. If we really look within ourselves, we can see how our mind is completely focused outward on all the different activities that are going on in our daily lives. Our mind jumps from one thing to the next, constantly busy. This is something that is quite obvious if we look into it.

When we consider why our mind is so distracted, and why is it constantly thinking about things outside, external objects and thoughts, it is meant to help bring some happiness and wellbeing for ourselves, physically and mentally. But does that result come about or not? Do we actually gain the result that we seek of physical and mental wellbeing with a mind which is so busy and distracted? If we don't have the happiness that we wish for, there must be something wrong in our approach. If all the worldly

thinking process, does not contribute to our own happiness, then why are we doing it?

If you were to actually spend some time to investigate and analyse how you spend your time and energy focusing on so many different things externally, you come to a point where you realise, or feel, that no matter how much time and energy you spend in trying to pursue happiness by following worldly external distractions, there's no real contentment in one's mind. One still has this empty feeling within one's own mind. Somehow there is something missing in one's mind, within oneself. We hear about many people who have spent a lot of time and energy trying to pursue their goals in life but don't seem to really gain that real inner happiness, peace and contentment. That may not be obvious if one were not to spend some time to consider that and just went along with whatever happens. For those who do spend some time in thinking about it, it becomes quite clear.

If it is one's experience, that one feels that there is something lacking in one's mind, that there is an empty feeling and the mind is constantly distracted, unhappy and frustrated, then one should try to bring one's mind inward and focus on a chosen object of meditation, which is either a neutral or virtuous object. By spending even a minute focusing inward on a chosen object one can see the result. Can one see that it bring some sort of calmness and peace in one's mind or not? Compare the result of that short time or energy we spend focusing inward with the result, if we were to just let our mind be completely distracted. What kind of result, what kind of experience, does that bring for us? Compare a completely distracted mind with a mind that is focused on a chosen virtuous object. The result of these two minds can be felt within oneself?

If one has had that experience already, one would come to the conclusion that focusing the mind inward is something very worthwhile. Even for those who have not tried it yet, it is definitely a fact. If one allows the mind to focus inwardly it definitely brings some mental calmness and peace in one's mind. The immediate result is feeling calm and peaceful. If one spends more time and energy focusing inwardly, that would definitely contribute to feeling more and more calm and restful in one's mind. Therefore it is very important for us to find the opportunity and time to meditate. Most importantly one needs to understand the technique, having understood the method, then actually set aside some time for one's own meditation. It is very important that each day we allocate some time just for meditation, to bring our mind inward.

The result of meditation, where we focus our mind inward on a chosen object, is that the mind becomes clear and powerful with much more control. This happens because when there's no other distraction the mind is able to focus its energy on one object and that naturally enhances the clarity and the strength of the mind. Whereas if the mind is focused outward it is as though the mind has been divided into many parts, focussing on so many different objects, and the result is that it cannot even focus on one thing well. That's where the frustrations arise in the mind where anything we do doesn't seem to bring a good result. Therefore the method is to have the mind focused on one chosen object, then it naturally becomes stronger and clearer.

Having described the benefits of meditation, it is good now to actually spend some time in meditation. We sit in a

comfortable but upright position and focus our mind inwards choosing the breath as the object of focus. Even for the few minutes that we spend in meditation, it is very important to keep our mind completely focused on the chosen object, here the breath. We focus on our own breath, our natural breathing, the inflow and outflow of our breath. If we find the mind becoming distracted, we use introspection and mindfulness to bring the mind back onto the object and don't allow the mind to just follow whatever thoughts arise in the mind. We don't allow the mind to be distracted. We are training our mind to be completely focused on the breath and in that way spend some time in meditation. As mentioned earlier, we sit in an upright position. *Pause for meditation.*

Another important point is that the wisdom we gain from whatever time we spend in meditation will help us even when we are not in formal meditation, even in our everyday life. If we use our wisdom and mindfulness then whatever other activity we do will also be meaningful and will go well. Therefore whatever time you spend in meditation will enhance and enrich our daily life. It will contribute to engaging in good activities and making good decisions in our normal life.

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

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1.2 Reflecting on the individual divisions

We are on the topic of karma, particularly discussing resolving karma and its effects. Within negative karma, there are the **ten** non-virtuous or negative karmas. We were explaining the **first** one, which is the act of killing. In order for an act of killing to be a complete act of killing, what we call a complete path of karma, there have to be four conditions present. These are the basis, the attitude, the performance and the culmination, or completion, of the act. We have described the earlier points. The completion, or culmination, is when the act of killing has been completed, and the other being dies. That is when the complete karma, based on the earlier conditions all being present, has been accumulated. The complete path of karma has been exhausted and one accumulates a complete karma of killing. In other circumstances, where we are just walking around or engaged in other activities like driving and so forth, if beings are killed in an accidental way and the other conditions are not present, there has been a killing, but one does not create the full path of karma of killing. It does include the act of killing but it is not a complete act of killing because some of the factors are missing.

We come to the **second** of the ten non-virtues, which is the negative act of stealing. The literal translation of the Tibetan word 'Majin-len' is 'taking something which has not been given'. In order to engage in a complete act of stealing, or taking something that has not been given, there has to be, similarly with killing, four conditions present. These are

- the basis,
- the attitude,
- the performance and
- the culmination or completion.

The basis is an object that belongs to someone else, because stealing is something that you take which belongs to someone else.

It is very important to see how the topics, in this case stealing, relate to us and the environment in which we live. Sometimes we may think that, "Oh, religion preaches something which is only for certain people who are interested in religion". What we call religion, or Dharma in this case, is something that can actually be integrated in our own life and environment. Consider stealing for example. The act of stealing is not appreciated in any environment. Wherever you are living, would someone who is known to be prone to taking things from others without asking, be trusted by others or not? Would one trust someone who is known to steal things? This is really very practical advice when the Buddha says not to engage in the act of stealing. It is to protect us and to protect others. If we look into this we can find the practical benefit of refraining from such activity. As explained earlier in relation to killing, it is very obvious that someone who engages in the act of killing is not liked by others. It's not appreciated. It's the same with stealing.

Someone who is known to be a thief would not be trusted. They are not a trustworthy person. Likewise, on a larger scale, if a country or an area were it is known to have a lot of thieves, would naturally be a place where people would be very apprehensive. They would always be guarding their things and always be very tense. Such an area or country would be a place where there's not much peace. People could not experience real calmness and peace for an example when they travel. They would always have to be on guard and apprehensive. Contrary to that, a country or an area which is known to be very safe and everyone is very moral would be considered a safe place, a place where people can feel at ease and comfortable.

As explained earlier, the non-virtuous activity of killing and the virtuous act of refraining from killing contributes to either violence or non-violence. Likewise, if one or others engage in the act of stealing it will contribute to what we call violence, physically and mentally. When one and others refrain from the act of stealing that will contribute to non-violence and peace.

The opposite of the non-virtuous act of stealing is, of course, refraining from stealing. Beyond that, the act of giving is considered to be a really virtuous act. When you give to others, when you are generous to others, they really appreciate it. Therefore we find that in many religions the act of generosity, the act of giving, is really emphasised and encouraged. Wherever it may be, when there is generosity, the act of giving, it is really appreciated by others. That is why it is something very valuable. On the very practical level, when we consider the difference between someone who takes something without asking, and someone who gives without being asked, who would be considered as being more valuable or more worthwhile?

Now we need to consider the negative consequences, or the negative results, of stealing. The teachings, of course, go into great detail about the negative results that would be

experienced in a future lifetime. Leaving that aside for the time being, if we were just to consider the negative consequences or results that we would experience immediately in our life now, it is very clear that when someone is known to be prone to stealing they are not trusted. One would lose the trust of others and that is something that would bring about negative consequences for one self. For example, if a person in a job were known to be prone to stealing they would always be scrutinised by the bosses. Even if they were to do their job well if they are known to be untrustworthy and prone to stealing the boss would always be checking whether they are taking something or not. Even if they are doing their job well, because they are not trusted, they don't get promoted so much. They will not really be getting to a higher status because of the fact that they have stolen before.

The advice that is given here in relation to adopting the ten virtues and avoiding the ten non-virtues is in order to make one a good person. Whoever follows this advice will be considered a good person; a person who has good manners and a well behaved person. If one were to ask oneself, does one want to be considered a good person or not? Would one wish to be considered amongst one's family and friends as a trusted, well-behaved person? Would that be something which one would like or not? If the answer is yes, then one needs to look into what would make one become such a person. One needs to look into what kind of activities would lead to us to being considered as an ill-mannered person, and what kind of activities would lead to us be considered as a well-behaved, good person. The practical advice given here can turn us into a good, well-behaved person. At this point now, if anyone has questions, we can have some time for questions. I'm happy to answer, otherwise we can continue for a little while.

Question; If a father, or a person, were to ask his son or someone else to abandon another person, would that person who persuades them be considered a thief?

The specific act of stealing involves an attitude to begin with, wishing to obtain something for yourself. In this case, it doesn't seem to connote a desire to obtain something. It sounds more like a case where the relationship is not good and therefore you don't want someone who's close to you to be with them. It doesn't seem to directly involve an act of stealing, which is a wish to obtain something for yourself.

Questioner continues: This is a situation where whether the father has stolen the son from the mother.

It would not be a direct act of stealing because it seems to relate more to a relationship problem than an act of stealing. I am not saying it's not a fault, just that because your question is directly related to whether it's stealing or not. Stealing is the moving of an object that belongs to someone else, the physical act of taking an object. It will become clearer whether this is an act of stealing act or not when we go through the rest of the conditions. Right now we've just talked about the basis of the stealing. When we come to the completion of the stealing the answer to the question will become clearer to you.

Questioner comments further: He stole my husband or stole my child.

Geshe-la agrees that there can be an act of stealing people. Kidnapping and so forth is an act of stealing, but in this particular case Geshe-la doesn't feel it relates to an act of

stealing.

This particular case, as you relate, seems to be a relationship problem. If we're taking this particular example of a father and a mother and a son, then because the father does not have a good relationship with the mother, for whatever reason, and doesn't want the son to go to the mother he starts saying negative things about the mother. If the son were to be with the mother, the mother may say similar negative things about the father. Both are trying to influence the child not to be with the other because they want to possess the son themselves. In this process, it is the child that has the difficulty of knowing what to choose, who is right. Initially a child may be confused, but as the child grows up and gains more understanding and wisdom, they would be able to figure out for themselves that neither of their parents was entirely right, both had faults. They would be able to distinguish between what was right and what was wrong.

When I am personally approached about parents splitting up, my advice usually is for either parent, whoever I have connection with, that it is very important that even though you may not wish to live together, it is very important for the child to be able to have time with, and needs, both parents regularly. Either parent may feel that they have control and can stop their child from seeing the other parent. But, when the child grows up, they will have their own choice anyway. You can't stop a child growing up to a certain age. You can't stop what they would like to do anyway. Further, it will be unhealthy for the child's mind and when the child grows up they will not be grateful to the parent who stopped them from seeing the other parent. In fact, when they come to realise and know that it has been a mistake they would actually be ungrateful and have an uncomfortable feeling. Therefore Geshe-la advises the parent, whichever parent, to actually let the child meet the other parent if they don't want to be criticised later themselves.

Geshe-la remembers an example of a child who was living with his mother. He asked the child once, "Have you met your father? Have you seen your father lately?" The child said, "Oh, I haven't seen my dad in maybe two or three years. He advised the child that, "It's important that you meet your father because a father needs a son and a son would likewise need a father. I think it is important that you meet your father." Apparently the son told his mother and then he thought about it and the son said, to Geshe-la, "Actually, that seems to be very true. I think I agree with you." He spoke with his mother and the mother agreed to send him off to see his father in Sydney and he had a good relationship, slowly, in that way. This is very important.

It seems that it is really important for a child to have a good connection with both parents. It's very important for the child's upbringing and growth. Either parent who does not allow their child to see the other parent after a separation would be being very selfish. They're not thinking about the child's welfare, rather their own interests. If a parent is interested in the child's welfare they would allow the child to see the other parent. In fact it seems that it would be against the law to stop a child to see the other parent, dependent on the sanity of the other parent and so forth. If either parent doesn't allow it is against the law. If there is an attempt not to allow the child to go it might even come to a court case and become more complicated, more difficult. If you don't think about the consequences it could lead to more

complications later on.

Question: How does anyone know how a child or someone is a reincarnation of a previous teacher, being?

There are many systems but one of the main, obvious things seems to be that the child themselves shows many obvious signs of being the reincarnation of a certain predecessor. It will show many signs.

Just to give one example, when they are searching for the reincarnation of a previous master, those who are searching carry objects with them. A child who is known to have certain good auspicious signs would be shown these different objects like, for example, a rosary. The child may choose the rosary that belongs to the previous master and use it and even sometimes claim, "It belongs to me". For a young child, without any other prior influence, to choose an object and claim that it is theirs and use it and recognise it is one of the signs of the child having that memory from the past.

To give a more personal example. One of my late teachers, Geshe Ngawang Dhargye passed away some years ago and his reincarnation was sought. After finding many other signs, a child was chosen to be the reincarnation. When the child was recognised and announced as the reincarnation of the late master Geshe Ngawang Dhargye, some students went to visit him. When the child met a student of the predecessor, someone they had never met before in this life, the child actually greeted the student by name. How would they have known that name? The student who came to visit the reincarnation, the child, had such strong faith, saying "There's no doubt in my mind that this is the incarnation of my teacher." There are actually many other stories like that.

There's also a story, not talking about incarnated Lamas or Teachers but in everyday life, Geshe-la heard about a child in Turkey or somewhere in Europe. A child had a memory of the child's previous parents. Having made connection with the previous parents, the child now has four parents, two fathers and two mothers. Because she remembered the previous parents, she had a good connection with them, but also she had this life's parents.

To tell the story in more detail. It's actually a very young girl who, when she started to be able to speak at three or four years of age, started to mention how she has some other parents. She named the parents in her past life and she talked about how she was killed in an accident near her school. A vehicle, a bus or some other car had run her down. She even mentioned the name of the school and could recognise where the school was. The present life's father had previously not believed in reincarnation and he was quite confused. But when the girl repeatedly mentioned this they went to the school and then went to see the other parents. They found that the parents were exactly as the child had described. The parents from the previous life were also overwhelmed when they found out that their child had been reincarnated. The present life father said, "Even though I didn't believe in reincarnation previously, in this case I have no choice but to believe. It's against the odds." If we can find that this is true for one person then it should apply for everyone.

Question, inaudible.

This, of course, is something that is quite natural. Even in cases of children who do remember their past lives and mention a lot of things that indicate remembering their past

lives it seems that their memory fades away. It is a factual thing that some people have short memories and some people don't have a short memory. Some people know more things, and some people know less things. It's just part of the reality of our situation.

It can relate to karma. If you have created a lot of positive karma, you can develop through meditation what is called clairvoyance. Particularly there is the clairvoyance that is said to be the remembering of past lifetimes. When one has developed this clairvoyance one can remember past lives easily. It also can relate to having the right kind of karma or creating a particular type of karma.

Question: How do you react or treat a person who has stolen from their own family members? How can you be compassionate towards them?

This is, of course, an awkward situation, a difficult situation, to deal with. Geshe-la has also heard about incidents of stealing from common property if you are in a relationship. If there's some property that is a common property, everyone owns it together, and then it would not be considered a real act of stealing because you are just taking what belongs to you anyway. But the fact is that if you haven't asked. In the case of partners, if someone takes something without having told the other partner, then it's an uncomfortable feeling, it causes someone unease because you feel, "They should have asked." Even though it belongs to both of you, they should have asked before they took it, the money or whatever. It's an uncomfortable feeling regardless of whether the thing belongs to both of you or not or to the family.

In the actual case of a family, if a child or someone else in the family starts to take things without asking and uses up the resources it would affect the rest of the family and it's an act that has to be rectified. You can still correct others' behaviour out of compassion. The main point about compassion is not to develop a strong sense of anger or hatred when you deal with others. To answer your question, the reaction would be if it harms the resources and is actual harm to others then, by all means, one should correct their behaviour slowly by advising or hinting or whatever best way one finds, but without getting angry.

There may be cases where children steal from their parents because the parents are very stingy and don't give them any money. If the parents have sufficient money but don't give their child any money they have not much choice but to steal it (*laughter*). Amongst siblings, one checks where the money's put and another is brave enough to steal it. We have to look into all aspects of the situation. Children need something to spend and need to buy some things, on a practical level as well. That's something that has to be considered.

We just have a few more minutes before we end the session in doing some meditation. This time the meditation would be to focus on the mantra to be recited, Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. We sit in an upright position and bring our mind inward.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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