
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual we will spend some time in meditation. Sit in a comfortable but upright position. In order to meditate it is important to generate a good motivation. The purpose of meditation is to form a good habituation of mind within oneself. The good habituation that we need to develop is the habituation of holding a positive frame of mind and avoiding a negative frame of mind. We do this because, as we would notice from our own experience, as long as we are in a negative state of mind we generate more unease and uncomfortable feelings for ourselves and others. Whereas the more positive our state of mind the calmer and happier the mind is.

One should check within oneself to identify and differentiate the advantages and disadvantages of having a positive or a negative state of mind. As we look within ourselves it will become quite clear what we call the disadvantages of having a negative state of mind and the advantages of having a positive state of mind. If you were to consider the negative state of minds; the more we are habituated to a negative state of mind the more our mind becomes vulnerable to becoming upset or agitated. For example, with anger even a very small reason, a very insignificant reason, may cause the mind to get upset immediately. That is because of the habituation our mind to anger. Likewise with attachment, we may feel a very strong desire for even a very small object and a longing to have that object and the unease that one feels from not getting that object will arise in the mind. That unease is the affect of attachment. Even for a very small object the mind gets into that state because of the habituation that we have with attachment.

It is in this way that we investigate and check for ourselves. It is very important to really relate it to one's own experience rather than looking outwards to external examples such as pointing the finger at others and saying, "Oh, he or she, has a lot of anger, has a lot of attachment. They are not really sensible and you know they are.....and one goes on" Having a critical mind towards others' anger and attachment will not really help one's own mind. If we are always focussing outward and checking what others are doing, it will never bring a good effect for one's own meditation. In fact the reason our meditation is not progressing well now is because of the habituation of always pointing the finger outwards and looking at others' faults. It is time that we focussed inward and looked within oneself, contemplating on the faults of anger and attachment within oneself.

As one investigates within oneself and acknowledges the disadvantages and shortcomings of negative states of

mind such as anger and attachment it is also important, at the same time, to acknowledge the positive outcomes of our meditation. Even an attempt at meditation, since the time we heard about meditation and tried to put it into practice, has definitely brought us good results. We would find that there definitely has been some progress. If we look back and compare how our mind was a few years ago when we didn't meditate and how, from that time, if we have put some effort into meditation, we would find that the mind has definitely become calmer, a little bit more controlled and therefore more disciplined. We are more disciplined and the mind is not as influenced by negative state of minds as it was in the past.

Those are the definite positive advantages, that have come with meditation. These obvious advantages should encourage us to put in even more effort and continue to look inward by investigating within ourselves and continue with our practice of meditation. One needs to reemphasise the importance of investigating within oneself and using oneself as the gauge of the disadvantages and shortcomings of the negative state of minds. The measure, what we could call a meter, should be oneself rather than other people outside. Now we can definitely see that the disadvantage of always pointing the finger outwards and looking at others' faults. That does not bring real benefit for one's mind. In fact a person who always sees faults outside has so many reasons to feel uncomfortable and uneasy. Whereas the person who is looking within oneself and looking into one's own faults and trying to correct one's own faults is, in contrast, a much happier person. We would definitely notice that. This might be because there is something one can do about oneself, as it is only one person, whereas out there when you are focussing on so many others, there is always going to be some who are at fault, that one can do nothing about. If one takes that as a fault, there is always going to be reasons for one to be unhappy.

As mentioned earlier, there are definitely positive results or benefits from transforming the mind from a very negative to a more positive state of mind. These are a happier state of mind and being calm and more subdued. However if one does not reach a point where one feels that one has changed much, where one has not transformed even after hearing the teachings for a long time, then one should look into why the transformation has not happened. Why has it not come about? One has to honestly look into whether one has put much effort, or any effort, into the actual practice of meditation and likewise any other practices. With regard to meditation, familiarising the mind in virtue, has one actually made much of an attempt or not? If one finds by honestly looking within oneself that even though one has heard the teachings for a long time, which talks about the benefits of meditation and one has had an interest in meditation, but one has not actually put in much effort, hasn't allocated any time for meditation, then naturally if the causes have not been created then the results of transformation, the mind becoming more positive and

calm will not occur. Therefore the fault does not lie in the technique of meditation itself but lies in not having applied the techniques in one's practice.

As the great masters advise in their teachings, one should hear the great profound teachings and then contemplate what one has heard and then meditate on what one has found through one's contemplation. This is really very important advice. It is important first to listen to the teachings, that is where we gain the knowledge of hearing and the advice or information about the techniques. But we should not leave it just at that. Just hearing the teachings will not bring much benefit. Even though there is some benefit it will not bring about the real transformation. After hearing advice about meditation the next step is to contemplate that advice. This means analysing whether it is true or not. Having analysed the teachings about meditation putting them into practice is to actually then meditate. Once one puts it into practice in meditation one will definitely get the results. That will benefit one's mind. To that extent meditation is said to be very important.

Having explained the benefits of meditation, we now take some time to actually do some meditation. As our object of focus we take the breath. It is very important, as mentioned earlier, to keep our mind completely focussed on the breath. Focussing on the breath as an object of meditation does not, in itself, become an antidote for overcoming the delusions in our mind, the negative state of mind. However focussing on the breath gives a temporary relief from the very distracted and disturbed state of mind. It actually brings a relief as it brings the mind into neutral state where it is free from the very busy and distracted stream of thoughts. From that state of mind one can then go further into deeper meditations. However for us beginners, focussing on the breath seems to be a very practical and very effective technique, for a start to just calm down our minds. (*Pause for meditation.*)

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 the mind 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 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

To continue on with the topic we have been talking about, the ten non-virtuous deeds. Within the ten non-virtuous deeds we have covered the three which relates to the actions of the physical body, which are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. We now come to the four non-virtues which relate to speech. These four are lying, divisive speech, harsh speech and senseless speech or idle gossip.

As mentioned earlier, the ten non-virtuous deeds and their opposite, the ten virtues are explained as a means and way for someone to become a good person, to have a good behaviour. It becomes clear, as we identified earlier, that the ten non-virtues such as those relating to the physical body, killing, stealing or sexual misconduct, are not only faults which harm oneself but are faults which in fact harm many others. Therefore anyone who engages in these actions would be considered as a person who is doing ill deeds, misbehaving. It is the same with speech. Anyone who engages excessively in the four negative actions of speech, lying, slander or divisive speech, harsh words and senseless speech, would definitely be considered as a person who is not reliable, a person who is condemned, even in society. Therefore, by adopting the ten virtues with the four opposites of non-virtuous speech one would be considered a well-behaved person.

If everyone were to learn about the right way of engaging in karma, the virtuous actions, virtuous karma, there would definitely be a result. There would be real calmness, peace and harmony in the country and in the world.

The first of the four negativities is lying. As with the earlier non-virtues, there are four conditions for a complete act of lying. The first is the basis. There are said to be eight bases for lying. The eight are that which has been seen or unseen through the eyes, that which has been heard or not heard through the ears, that which has been distinguished or undistinguished by the mind and that which has been cognised or un-cognised by the mind. Those are the four positives and their opposites. Then, the object that the lie has been uttered towards would be a person with a sound mind who is able to speak, who is able to hear and is able to understand coherently. Someone who has all the faculties intact.

Then we come to the next condition which is what is called the attitude. This consists of the perception, the affliction or the delusion and the motivation. The perception includes misrepresenting a perception, such as saying what you have seen when it is not something you have seen or misrepresenting what you have not seen as something you have seen. Altering the perception when you have actually seen to say that you have not seen would be one example. The motivation includes the actual motive of wishing to tell a lie knowingly. In the affliction or the delusion there are all three, attachment, anger and ignorance.

The third condition, the performance or the action, means the actual act of lying is either through using speech to utter a lie, or if one were not to speak it may be through use of a gesture, lying through an indication. In the Tibetan there is actually a distinction you can make between the words of a lie, and lying itself. In Tibetan, "dzun" is the word for false or lying and "tsik" means words. Therefore if it's a lie it doesn't necessarily have to be words or speech. It could be a gesture. If someone asks you if you have seen something and if you have seen it and you move your head in a clear indication to show that you haven't seen it, that would be still a lie out of a gesture. The performance or the action would be the

actual words which are uttered or a gesture which is made to indicate a falsity.

The fourth condition is the culmination. The culmination or the completion of a lie is when someone else has comprehended the words or the gesture that one has made. For example, if someone asks you if you have seen something, and you have actually seen it and you say you haven't seen it that would be the culmination of a lie through speech. If one makes a gesture indicating that one has not seen it then that would be the completion of a lie through one's gesture.

That completes the four conditions for a full path of lying to occur. There are cases where one may, in order to protect others from harm, not create the negative karma of lying. If you were to tell the truth it may cause harm to others but if you tell a lie then that would be creating negative karma for oneself. In situations like that, if someone were to ask have you seen someone, and knowing that if you say yes and they find the person the person will be harmed, you can distract them by talking about something else. Rather than answering their question you can start think of another topic to distract them. It will come later however. Feeling self-righteous and uttering the truth even when one knows that it will harm someone else would not be proper. Therefore it is important to tell the truth but one must be mindful that it does not cause harm to others.

The fifth in the ten non-virtues is divisive speech. The basis of divisive speech are living beings who are compatible or incompatible. In the discrimination, or perception, one has to have what we call the unmistakable perception of the two people. The motivation would be a motive of wanting to separate two people or to make them separate. With the affliction or the delusion, there can be all three delusions.

The performance, or the action, includes making a separation between two who are together in harmony or making two who are already a little bit separated and have some disharmony separate further. Included in the performance is using words that would make a separation between two people who are close and words that would make those who are already have some relationship problems separate further. Not attempting to bring them closer and making them go further would be an action which could include either true or false speech. Whether it is the truth or not, if you are saying something and it makes others separate and not bring them together then those words, whether they are true or false, will be included in the action and would be a fault.

The completion, the culmination, for the action to become divisive speech is when the objects who one uses the divisive speech towards, the two people, understand the words and, as a result, they either separate or further their separation. That is when the culmination takes place. It's important for us to note the point where it mentions that even if it's the truth one should not utter it if it causes a division between two people. We can see examples in a relationship. If one were to mention to either partner that their partner is going off with someone

else, even if it was true, and we know it will harm the relationship, then there is not much point. It doesn't help that relationship. If there is a basis for the relationship to grow and become mutually beneficial for each other, then to use that speech, even if it's truth, would be a fault because it will cause a separation, a division. One would incur the negative karma of divisive speech. Of course if it's false then definitely this would be the case as well. But even if it is the truth it is better not to mention it, if it causes division.

The sixth non-virtue is harsh speech. In order for a full path of harsh speech to take place there has to be, again, the four conditions. The first being the basis. The basis of harsh speech is a living being in whom one can engender hostility. The point here of being a living being is that in order to incur the specific negative karma of harsh speech, the object has to be a living being. We know that we may use harsh words against other objects. When things go wrong we might start swearing and so forth. However, if the objects are not living beings then one does not incur a full path of negative karma of harsh speech. The basis of the object has to be a living being, toward whom one has feelings of hostility and therefore uses words that will hurt them. The perception, or the discrimination, is an unmistakable perception of the person that one is inflicting that harsh speech towards. With the affliction or delusion there can be all three. The motivation is the desire to speak in an offensive manner.

The performance, which is the second condition, is saying something unpleasant that may be either true or false about the deficiencies of someone else's body or family or whatever they relate to. To give an example, if someone were to encounter a blind person and utter, "You are blind," it may be the truth. But if, out of hostility, you were to say, "you blind person", that would hurt the person. Even though it is the truth because it is uttered out of hostility and a desire to harm the other and the other does get affected it would be considered to be harsh speech. Of course if it is not true, it is even more so. If you are using criticisms against others which are not true then that would be all harsh words, harsh speech. In fact most of the faults we criticise others for may not be true. You know we usually use those criticisms against others which we know hurt.

We can sum up what it means to use harsh words by considering whether those words when they are uttered would anger the person or not. Any words you were to utter that create anger in the other person are an indication that the person has been hurt and those words would be considered as harsh speech. To use words with an intention of hostility would be considered harsh speech. The culmination is when the other person understands the meaning of one's words and is affected by them.

The seventh non-virtue is idle gossip or senseless speech. The basis of senseless speech is speech about a topic that is not meaningful. "Not meaningful" is defined in relation to the dharma. In relation to the dharma "not meaningful" includes talking about topics which doesn't have any real essence, no real dharma value or no

spiritual value. We can say in general terms that any speech like that would be considered as speech which does not have meaning. Such speech would be called senseless speech. Of course even in ordinary, worldly speech if you are talking about things which have no interrelationship or no connection with anything, then that would be considered senseless speech in worldly terms. In relation to the dharma it means any speech which does not have any real spiritual value. The perception, or the discrimination, includes identifying, or having a right perception, of the speech that one is using. Unlike the earlier three negativities of speech, senseless speech does not seem to require an actual living person that one needs to utter that senseless speech towards. Even blabbering about oneself, talking to oneself, can also be senseless speech. The motivation is a desire for uttering senseless speech, with a motive of just talking without much meaning. The affliction includes all three.

In the performance, there is actually using speech which includes speech about, for example, fighting or fault finding, disputes and divisions, talking about wars and things, politics and so forth. Those kinds of speech which do not have what we call real spiritual value, dharma value in them and bring about a lot of other kinds of emotions. Uttering such speech would be the performance. The culmination would be when one actually engages in the performance of using meaningless speech. In terms of direct harm, senseless speech is one of the minor faults within the ten non-virtues but in terms of habituation it becomes one of the heaviest, gravest non-virtues because we are so habituated to it. In fact we spend most of our time, most of our life in senseless speech. The great master Atisha has given very sound advice about how to guard oneself from this. He mentions “when one is in a gathering with others, watch one’s speech, and when one is alone watch one’s mind.”

We can conclude here for this evening. Before we conclude the actual session we will take some time to contemplate. This time we will focus and meditate on the mantra that we recite. We sit in a comfortable and upright position and focus on Buddha Shakyamuni’s mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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