
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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It is quite a warm day today. If the weather is not moderate, our bodies would not survive, and we would just rot away. Moderate weather seems to be essential for sustaining our body. Likewise the particular connection between consciousness and body is also evident. The mind, or what we call consciousness, and the body are very closely related. When the consciousness leaves the body, then the body will rot away as it is not able to sustain itself.

What we call the 'life force' in Tibetan is based on having consciousness. If consciousness or the mind were to depart from the body, then the life force would likewise be gone. The warmth within the body is based upon the consciousness that is within the body. It is clear that the mind and the body have a close relationship. Because we are alive, we possess a body and a mind. That is what sums up who we are.

To further illustrate the close and essential relationship between the body and mind, we can clearly see and experience that if our mind is in a happy state, then there is a very positive effect on the health of our body. For someone who is in a naturally happy state of mind, their health seems to be sound. The practice of meditation can help us achieve and maintain a healthy state of mind.

As I mention regularly, one of the main factors that causes problems and difficulties in our life comes down to the fact that our mind is constantly busy and distracted. We may have noticed that the busier our mind is and the more ideas and thoughts we are preoccupied with, the more we feel unsettled and agitated.

A disturbed and busy mind is a cause for all of the problems we face in our lives. To give a very simple example, if someone is not influenced by any worries during a particular day, then it would be a joyful and happy day. A day where there is no particular worry on the mind is considered a very happy day. We can relate this to our own experience. If we do have lots of worries one day, then we know it is a day where we will face difficulties. When a person is affected by particular worries on a certain day, then it will clearly be an uncomfortable and unhappy day for them. However, preoccupying ourselves with worries won't help solve any problems; it only seems to contribute to the mind being unhappy. The worries themselves don't help solve any of the problems.

Given the fact that worries contribute to an unsettled and an unhappy mind, one of the immediate benefits we notice from the practice of meditation is that we can withdraw our mind from all thoughts and

preoccupations. In this particular case, our worries are the object we withdraw from. If worrying would help solve our problems, then it might be worthwhile to worry. However, there are certain situations where we may not be able to resolve a situation immediately, and worrying about it will not help. Worrying only contributes to more unhappiness in the mind. So when we practise meditation by withdrawing our mind from all objects and all concerns, it brings relief to our mind. Because we are withdrawing our focus and attention from the particular objects of worries, as a consequence it releases us from that feeling of worry as well. When we experience that relief, we can see that meditation brings about some benefits.

By withdrawing our mind from the objects of worry, we bring relief to the mind. Similarly, the rest of the problems we experience relate to particular types of attitudes or states of mind where we experience unrest and feel uncomfortable. When we think about our life situation and look into it, we can identify that our mind is constantly preoccupied with different objects that lead to different sorts of emotions arising in our mind. Focussing on certain objects or situations may contribute to anger manifesting in the mind, while focussing on some other objects may bring about attachment, jealousy or pride.

So we are preoccupied by these states of mind in relation to certain situations or objects. We perpetually keep the cycle of the mind in an unrestful or unhappy state when we allow ourselves to constantly move from one object to the next, constantly bringing up those negative states of mind or attitudes. The immediate solution then is to withdraw ourselves from all the objects that induce a negative state of mind. Meditation settles down the mind.

This is one of the positive effects of meditation; applying the appropriate technique will allow our mind to be free from all of these negative preoccupations and disturbing states of mind. It is as if we are completely dominated by these various different states of mind, and constantly under their influence. This constant influence of negative states of mind is what keeps us constantly in a cycle of being either depressed or worried.

I personally have not experienced too many worries. However, I have experienced difficult situations that would be hard for you to even imagine. But even under the worst circumstances, somehow I just didn't get to the point of being completely depressed and worried. So it is hard for me to relate to some people's experiences of being depressed or worried, but it definitely seems that they do become completely overwhelmed by difficult situations in their mind, which results in them always being in a constant state of feeling depressed.

This is definitely an uncomfortable and an undesirable state to be in. But it is something that can be overcome. We need to recognise how this happens and develop some sort of determination within ourselves that 'I'm not going to allow those disturbing attitudes and emotions to influence and overpower me. Rather I will take control of my mind and myself'. When we develop that determination, then with the proper meditation technique we will be able to overcome being under the influence of the negative states of mind. We can actually withdraw

our mind from the delusions and develop a clearer and fresher mind through using the proper meditation technique. This can definitely help ourselves, as well as others who are affected by negative states of mind.

Even though the proper meditation technique can definitely help us overcome being in a negative state of mind, it is not as if the result will come about immediately. We must allow it to take time. In fact, when we notice a gradual progress then that is a good sign of the positive effect of meditation. When change comes slowly and gradually, it is more stable and durable. It is important that we have the foresight to understand the positive effects of meditation and engage in a gradual process on a daily basis. Everyday slowly, slowly we continue with our practice.

There are many people who claim that when they see the real benefits of meditation they feel a strong sense of regret that they didn't have those techniques much earlier in their lives. They can clearly see that if they had applied those meditation techniques earlier, then their progress would have been much greater. They are speaking from their personal experience of having some benefit from meditation, but also realising and noticing that the positive effect of meditation does not come about immediately. It takes time, a long time.

Because it takes a long time to reap the results of meditation, I often emphasise that it is good to invest in the practice of meditation as early as possible in life. People's lives and time are consumed mostly with work and having to accumulate funds to sustain themselves in the future. So people spend a lot of time and energy in doing that. But if we fail to pay attention to developing our mind and practising meditation, then when we reach retirement, we may find that we are quite lost and don't know what to do with our time. Suddenly people feel they have time on their hands but they don't know how to use it, and feel very restless. Whereas someone who has engaged in the practice of meditation in the earlier part of their lives, and who has continued to meditate on a regular basis, does not need to spend time and energy in practising the techniques. Likewise, people don't need to worry about earning money in retirement if they have already spent time and energy doing that. So, if they have the resources because of practices developed earlier on, then it becomes a good condition for them to spend their time in a meaningful way.

We can see the temporary and ultimate benefits of meditation, which definitely has a positive effect on us. Thus in order to engage in the practice of meditation now, we shall adopt a physical posture where we are sitting upright, comfortable and relaxed. We develop a strong determination to withdraw our mind completely one hundred percent from all distractions. By withdrawing from all distractions, we bring our mind inward. Having brought our focus inward, we can focus on our breath. Try to find the natural rhythm of the breath, where it is not too laboured or too shallow, but just get in tune with its natural rhythm. Maintain focus one hundred percent on the breath. (*Pause for meditation*).

4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.2. Training the mind in the stages of the path held in common with beings of the medium scope

4.2.2.1.2.2.1. The actual training in the reflections: the way to develop the mind that strains for liberation

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Reflection on the causes of suffering – the faults of cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2. The way one gathers karma

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.1. Identifying the karma that is gathered

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.1.1. Karma that is intention

We will follow on from our last session on the topic of karma where, in the text, it identifies the karma we accumulate. There are two different categories, karma that is intention and karma that is the intended action. We covered what intention means in our last session—it is one of the five omnipresent factors. The five omnipresent factors are feeling, discrimination, intention, contact and attention. These five accompany any state of mind, which is why they are called omnipresent mental factors. Within these five, karma is the mental factor called intention.

The text quotes from another treatise called *The Compendium of Knowledge*, which states:

What is intention? It is a mental karma that involves the mind; it acts to engage the mind in virtuous, non-virtuous and ethically neutral activities.

So, the definition of intention is the mental factor which moves our mind towards an object. When our mind is moved towards an object, it either engages with the object in virtuous manner, a non-virtuous manner or a neutral manner. Whether virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral, it is the mental factor of intention that moves the mind towards the object that is karma. Lama Tsong Khapa further explains:

Thus, intention is a mental karma, a mental process that moves and urges the mind with which it is associated toward objects.

So specifically, what we call intention is called karma. Basically it is a state of mind that associates with a motivational state of mind, or motivation. Whenever we engage in any activity—mental, verbal or physical—it is preceded by a motivation, for example, 'I want to say this', 'I want to do this' or 'I think this'. That thinking process comes from a motivation, and associated with that motivation is a factor that moves the mind towards engaging in the activity. The factor that moves the mind in association with that motivation is called intention, which is identified as karma. To be more specific, intention is not the motivation itself but is the mental factor, which arises simultaneously with the motivation that moves the mind towards the object.

We can all relate to the state of mind called motivation. There is always a motivation that precedes an action. There is a separate state of mind that simultaneously arises with the motivation, and that factor is what we call intention. This is karma. Thus, karma that is intention is the mental factor that arises simultaneously with the motivation prior to engaging in any action. That is how we identify karma that is intention.

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Karma that is the intended action

The next category of karma is the karma that is the intended action. This is the physical and verbal action motivated by intention. To explain this type of karma, the text quotes from *The Treasury of Knowledge*:

Karma is both intention and what intention produces.
Intention is mental karma;
What it produces are physical and verbal karma.

Then the Lama Tsong Khapa further explains specifically what intended karma is by refuting some other views within Buddhist schools.

The Vaibashikas, [one of the lower Buddhist schools] divide physical and verbal karma into two types, the perceptible and the imperceptible, and hold that both types always have form. Vasubandhu refutes this, asserting that physical and verbal karma are intentions that work along with perceptible physical and verbal behaviour; thus, both forms of karma [intention and intended] are actually intentions.

The Vaibashikas assert that there is both mental and physical karma. For example, when we engage in a negative activity such as harming someone else or becoming angry with someone, then our facial expression will obviously change when we are experiencing anger and annoyance with someone. That very change of the facial expression is a physical factor. So, the Vaibashikas assert that those very changes, which are physical, are also karma.

However Vasubandhu refutes that assertion, and instead says that both forms of karma, intention and intended, are actually intentions. Vasubandhu establishes that when we engage in physical or verbal activities such as the facial expressions when getting angry or annoyed with someone, or the act of hitting someone when angry, at that time the intention that occurs simultaneously with that activity is the intended karma, not the actual action or any physical aspects of the action.

The moment after karma is created, the actual karma itself disintegrates. However the residue of that karma remains upon our mind. The potential to bring about a further effect is left as a potential upon our mind after the karma is created. To give an analogy of how that potential is left upon the mind, we can say that the moment after a picture is taken of someone, the person may go away, but the imprint of that person remains on the negative. Later when develop the negative; we will get the result of the initial action of taking the picture. The potential to experience the future effect of karma is similar to that.

Having introduced karma as intention and intended karma. The text further explains that in general karma is of three types, virtuous, non-virtuous and ethically neutral. However, we are only concerned with the first two, virtuous and non-virtuous karma, when explaining the cause and effects of karma. Virtuous karma is of two types, contaminated and uncontaminated. There are two types of contaminated virtuous karma, one is in noble beings' mind and the other is present in the ordinary person's mind. The teachings here explain karma and its effects in an ordinary person's mind.

There is a further category of karma that is divided into non-meritorious, meritorious and invariable karma. Non-virtuous karma is non meritorious. Meritorious karma is virtuous karma in the minds of beings of the desire realm. Invariable karma is the contaminated virtuous karma in the minds of beings of the form and formless realm. In this category of karma, what is called non-meritorious, is all non-virtuous karma. All negative karma is subsumed into non-meritorious karma. Within the three realms, the virtuous karma of the desire realm is called meritorious karma. And invariable karma is the karma which is contaminated virtuous karma within the higher realms, the form and the formless realm.

Next the text quotes from *The Treasury of Knowledge* to backup this explanation, however we can leave that for our next session.

Before we conclude for the evening, let us spend a few minutes in contemplation or meditation. As we adopt the appropriate physical posture and withdraw our mind from distractions, we focus on the object, which is the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Kim Foon Looi
Edit 1 by Cynthia Karena
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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