
The Condensed Lam Rim

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3 December 2008

It would be good to do some meditation as usual. In order to engage in meditation it is best to sit in a relaxed, appropriate posture.

As mentioned in the text, the prerequisite for meditation is setting a good motivation. If all our actions are preceded by a good motivation, the subsequent physical and verbal actions we undertake will naturally be positive. As the great master, Shantideva, has mentioned, ensuring that our verbal or physical actions are conducive and appropriate depends on us first having a good motivation, so we have to check the mind first.

If, after checking, we find that our mind is dominated by strong delusions such as strong desire or intense anger, it is best that we do not engage in any verbal or physical actions at that time. Only after having restrained oneself for a while, to allow the delusion to subside, should we engage in the action. This is practical, sound advice that we need to use in everyday life. For example, if we say things to a close friend when our mind is in a state of intense anger, naturally those utterances will be unpleasant, and we will make our friend uncomfortable.

We can see from day-to-day life that whenever we engage in actions with a negative state of mind, it has negative consequences on the recipients of our actions. Thus it is worthwhile checking our mind and taking precautions.

When we talk about Dharma practice, it is very important to understand the positive effect it can have in daily life. If we consider actions such as speech, we can see that our speech can make others happy or unhappy. The way we use our capacity for speech has a certain effect in others. We can help determine whether it will bring them happiness or unhappiness. It is the same with our physical actions, which we can also use to make others happy or unhappy.

So we should make sure that our speech and physical gestures are pleasing in relation to those we consider as our friends. It would be inappropriate to use harmful, unpleasant speech with them. The appropriate way to relate to them is using pleasant speech and gestures that are imbued with real concern and love.

This is why I normally stress that one's practice of love and compassion begins with those to whom we live with. You should always be mindful of uttering pleasant speech and displaying friendly gestures conducive to your mutual relationship. Being mindful, when we see that the other person is upset or not feeling well we should wait, even if we want to say something confronting; we should wait until the appropriate time, when they are feeling better. Then one can have a discussion that would be more acceptable to the other.

I regularly emphasise that this is important point we need to keep in mind. We all have relationships with other people.

Relationships start off with good intentions between two people. However, as time goes by, there will be occasions when difficult circumstances arise. In such circumstances, one or both partners are bound to feel upset. At such times, if one says things to the other that are inappropriate and hurtful and also displays inappropriate and hurtful gestures to them, from that moment the relationship will be strained and begin to deteriorate. From then onwards, there will be some distance between the two, in what was initially a close relationship. If the relationship is not nurtured, the small gap that has been created between the two people will get larger and larger. One may harbour the intent to get back at the other and say something hurtful. When this sort of mentality continues, it will really destroy the relationship.

One of the most valuable qualities we can possess is the ability, at times of difficulty and hardship, to refrain from retaliating and trying instead to maintain positive gestures towards the other. If one is able to display good speech and gestures through difficult times, this is a really a good quality that will definitely sustain any kind of relationship

On the other hand, if one has an attitude of dismissing others' feelings and does not pay attention to maintaining one's good speech and actions, one will begin to become a little cold towards others. Such a person will ultimately suffer, as they would eventually become a person from whom others would want to keep a distance. That person later on would turn out to be quite lonely. Thus at times of difficulty, that person might themselves suffer the consequences of bad behaviour. That is why I stress the importance of developing positive qualities.

The point I was making earlier was the need to develop a good motivation prior to engaging in the practice of meditation. Now we will actually engage in a few minutes' meditation. Again, we will sit in an appropriate posture and generate a positive motivation.

Meditation is really a technique for cultivating good qualities in the mind, training it to be more positive. When we consider the person who is meditating—ourselves—there is a part of ourselves that we consider 'me' or 'I'. We immediately identify with this individuality, this 'me' or 'I'. We say 'my speech', 'my body' and 'my mind'; this combination of our body, speech and mind sums up our identity. Thus whenever one applies techniques to make one's body, speech and mind more positive, naturally that will make one—the person who possesses them—become more positive.

Of the three different aspects of ourselves—body, speech and mind—the primary one is the mind. When our mind is subdued or transformed, our speech and physical actions will naturally also be transformed. Thus initially we need to subdue our mind.

To engage in the actual meditation, we bring our full attention to our breath. First we withdraw our mind from all other distractions then we focus upon the breath itself, observing the natural inflow and outflow of the breath. We will try to maintain our focus on that natural inflow and outflow for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

That is sufficient for now. If we could commit ourselves in doing some regular meditation practice, as we have just attempted to do for a few minutes, it would be very beneficial for us, particularly at times when our mind is in turmoil, due to reasons that may be apparent to us or not. In some situations, we might find that nothing we do seems to really help. We may try to go out for a while, sit down, try to

lie down or relax, but whatever we do doesn't seem to really calm us down. If we can manage to get some relief from the immediate disturbance, our mind will start to feel a little lighter and more joyful. When we are able to regain that joy and happiness, our life will become meaningful again.

When the mind is relatively relaxed and joyful, even one's sleep will be sound. On the other hand, one is not able to sleep well with a disturbed state of mind. This is because the mind is agitated, constantly preoccupied with certain thoughts and ideas, and thus constantly active. When the mind is active, sleep cannot take place because sleep is basically the process of withdrawing from our gross levels of mind. Thus when we relate to the benefits of meditation practice, we will find many ways in which it can be useful in our lives.

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 strives 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

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.2. How is it gathered

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.2.1. An explanation of who gathers the karma that projects one through cyclic existence

Carrying on from the last session, we had covered the point in the text that identifies the type of karma called throwing or projecting karma. We were at the point of discussing how that karma is accumulated. However, if anyone has a question, I'll be glad to answer it; if not, we will continue with the text. If you have a question, you can raise your hand. No difficult questions please! (*laughter*)

So we reached the point in the text of identifying how projecting karma is accumulated. Now we need to identify the type of beings or persons that accumulate this karma. It mentions here that, in general, noble beings create and accumulate only virtuous karma. Such noble beings do not create karma that will impel them into cyclic existence within either happy or miserable realms. One needs to understand that the non-virtuous karma they create is not necessarily karma that propels them into cyclic existence. There are noble beings, or in Sanskrit *arya* beings, who may create non-virtuous karma, such as stream-enterers or once-returners. But although these noble beings may create karma that can be identified as non-virtuous, they do not create the type of non-virtuous karma that would project them into future cyclic existence. This distinction needs to be understood.

The reasons why a noble being does not create karma that propels them into further cyclic existence is explained in the quote from Nagajuna's *Fundamental Treatise of the Middle Way*: 'As the root of cyclic existence is compositional activity, the wise do not do activity that impels them into rebirth. The unwise are those who do; the wise do not because they see reality.'

'The wise' here refers to noble beings. Noble beings do not create the activity or karma that impels them into further rebirth. The 'unwise' refers to ordinary beings, who are the ones that create that karma. As the last line in the quote mentions, the reason why noble being do not create the negative karma that propels them into future rebirth or cyclic existence is that they see reality, which is emptiness;

their realising emptiness is the reason why they don't create that karma.

To give a more specific explanation, the first line of the quote reads: 'as the root of cyclic existence is compositional activity'. Compositional activity here refers to compositional karma or action, which is the second link within the twelve links of dependent arising. Compositional action serves as the main cause to propel the one who created that karma into future cyclic existence. That being the case, 'the wise do not create that activity' meaning that noble beings do not create the particular karma referred to as the compositional action. That is why they do not take rebirth in cyclic existence uncontrollably. This in turn is because noble beings have realised emptiness.

The text quotes from another great Indian master, Vasabandhu, who said: 'when you have seen the truth, you are not impelled into rebirth'. Of the two truths, conventional truth and ultimate truth, here the text is referring to ultimate truth, which is the ultimate reality of phenomena. The text continues to explain that as long as you operate under the influence of the conception of the self, you will accumulate karma that will impel you into cyclic rebirth.

Here it is appropriate to give the literal meaning of the Tibetan word for 'noble being', which is *phags pa*, which translates as 'superior being'. Thus there is a distinction between a superior being and an ordinary being. A being is called superior because they have surpassed the dominance of grasping at a self, while ordinary beings are still under the dominance of grasping to a self, and thus their actions are done in relation to that grasping at the self. Noble beings have completely overcome that domination. An analogy is the situation of a king. A king is considered as superior because he has surpassed his subjects in term of nobility or rank. Similarly superior beings have surpassed the grasping to the self.

Of course the analogy of a king surpassing ordinary people is an historical example. These days, I am not sure whether kings or leaders surpass ordinary people or not. We can, however, look at history and see how kings of the past were superior in terms of how many countries they conquered, how many people they ruled and so forth. In that sense, they are revered as superior. However these days, it seems that leaders don't seem to have that much power or ability to dominate others. That seems to be not so prevalent today.

My own experience of seeing a kingdom ruled by a king was when I was in Nepal. It was quite evident that when the late king was in power, people naturally had a reverence towards the king, which showed how much power the king himself had over his subjects. After he passed away, that all changed. One indication of how much power the king himself had is that when he was alive, his brother, who became the next king of Nepal, was a businessman who imported and exported things, and apparently was never searched in the airport. The customs officers could never touch him, for no other reason than he was the brother of the king.

As the text continues to explain, once one has perceived reality or selflessness, one is referred to as a superior or *arya* being. While such a being may still be reborn in cyclic existence by the power of former karma and afflictions, they would not accumulate any new karma that would impel them into future rebirths. One must understand that this refers particularly to those noble beings known as hearers or

solitary realisers; bodhisattva noble beings cannot be reborn again in cyclic existence. The reason why hearers and solitary realisers can still be reborn is that apparently they still have residual karma that was accumulated previously while they were ordinary beings, which could still impel them into rebirth or cyclic existence. Having gained the realisation of emptiness or selflessness, they do not create any new projecting karma that would impel them into cyclic existence.

The analogy given is like a strong person overpowering a weaker one. When a strong person is in combat with a weak person, the latter will be completely overpowered because of the strength of the former. Likewise when one gains a realisation of emptiness or selflessness, although one may still create some negative karma, the wisdom realising emptiness will overpower whatever karma one may create because it is much more powerful.

To be more specific, the stronger person is analogous to the antidotes to self-grasping, whereas the weaker person is analogous to the grasping at a true self. When the antidote to grasping at a true self is present, although they may be some grasping at the self, because the opponent force is present and much more powerful, it does not allow the grasping to the self to dominate. The antidote to grasping at a truly existent self, is selflessness or emptiness.

We can also use the example of the negative state of mind of anger, which is opposed to the sense of love for others and also patience. Though love and concern for others is not a direct antidote to overcoming anger, it does serve to weaken the anger. From our own experience, we can see that if someone has a genuine concern for another, as long as that sense of true concern is present in the mind, feelings of anger hardly arise towards the other. Even if anger or irritation were to arise, it would be overpowered by strong love for the other. In other words, the anger would not overpower us to the point of actually harming them, because of the love that we have for the other. Thus we can see that when love is strong, it weakens the power or strength of anger. Likewise we can develop more patience for another if we have love. With those tools, we can see that anger is reduced.

Again from our own experience, we will notice that we rarely feel angry with those we consider closest to us, who we love the most. Even if anger were to occur, it would not be very intense and would not reach the point of wishing to harm them. When one's actual concern for another starts to diminish, anger creeps in slyly: it is as if it is waiting for an opportunity to strike. So when love and concern for the other starts to diminish, anger will sneak in and find an opportunity to strike.

I thought of sharing a personal story that relates to when I began my formal studies in the monastery in Tibet. That is when I was studying to become a geshe, which encompasses all the philosophical studies, debates and so forth. I started these studies when I was about eighteen. My first teacher who taught the first subject called 'The Collected Topics' was a very, very kind teacher, a real bodhisattva. The custom of teaching in the monastery is that we have to repeat again and again the formal text after the teacher. When he would say certain passages, as students we had to repeat it. Usually I was the brightest who could memorise it first, before the rest.

One particular evening, I was somehow not able to memorise the few lines the teacher was saying. I would hear him but when I tried to say it, it wouldn't come out

correctly. The teacher commented that it seemed that I was playing tricks on him; that I was intentionally misbehaving. So he stood up and started to smack me. However another teacher came by and started to apologise on my behalf, saying 'it's OK, sorry, sorry'.

When someone apologises, it is a very good technique, and after the apologies, the beatings stopped right away. Even though there were times when I got smacks or beatings, the following day the teacher would call me up and give me presents. It was a skilful way of teaching. The teacher's skill was showing pleasant gestures to encourage or please us, but at times he also showed some wrathful gestures. That is how the teacher would nurture and teach.

This is a technique that can be applied in different circumstances involving nurturing or teaching others. For example, if parents were to always show a smiling face and always give in to what their children said, the children would become completely spoiled. They would not really behave well. Thus the parent has to adopt the technique of sometimes being kind to the children and at other times being wrathful.

In a family situation, when one parent is a little bit stern—for example, if the mother is stern and if the father comes in later on being kind to the children or vice versa—the children can be supported at all times in their upbringing. Similarly in the example earlier of when the teacher was smacking me, another teacher came and apologised saying 'sorry'—that is when the other teacher stopped beating me. That sort of technique of working hand in hand together seems to be most beneficial.

We will spend the next few minutes before ending our session in meditation. This time, we focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. Having put our focus on that, we will spend some time in meditation so we can finish this session on an auspicious note for everyone.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version
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