

## 2018\_03\_04\_am3\_Shamatha\_LMC.mp4

using 3rd & 4th of 4 Thoughts - Karma and its Consequences, & Shortcomings of Samsara (quoting Tsoknyi Rinpoche)

[00:03:05] We'll start again with the Refuge and Bodhicitta.

**sangha** [00:03:17] reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer.

[00:05:13] So now we're on the Third Thought That Turns The Mind. ... The third is the subject of karma and its consequences. Which could be stated as actions and their consequences. And in that case, actions would include... *anything* that we do with our bodies, our speech or our mind. That's kind of the traditional formula. ... So we talked about the view previously. The view... you can think of as a kind of *lens* through which we look at things. Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that... the view itself is the *truth*. That somehow, we're postulating that the view is the truth. So... just as a way of looking through these things... the view is not here... considered the truth... it *might* be the truth. But... the view is more a lens through which we look at something... and part of the means by which we explore.

[00:06:52] Tsoknyi Rinpoche says... a little quote, "It is wise for us to contemplate that the quality of our life is fully determined by the quality of our behavior." So... in advance of the rest of the paragraph... a little explanation of that. We note that it does not say past behavior and it does not say future behavior. ... So tuck that away in a corner of your mind. "Our thoughts, feelings, speech and actions, virtuous and nonvirtuous, create the intricate patterns of our life experience." And that's fairly straightforward. "We ourselves create the causes for our own happiness or our own suffering. When we understand the unwholesome, nonvirtuous actions that cause suffering, we can eliminate those causes. When we understand the wholesome, virtuous actions which bring happiness and benefit to ourselves and others, we can cultivate those causes. We must begin by acknowledging that our situation in life is the result of our own actions."

[00:08:27] So often we say... and the Buddha is quoted as saying... short of being enlightened, there is no way to actually understand karma. So we have to see that this is not a contradiction here. We're not saying that we *understand* karma. We're saying that we have the means by which to... *influence* our own... experiences... our happiness, our suffering... our ability to help others and help ourselves. It doesn't mean that we understand fully... all of the mechanisms... because karma clearly... doesn't have a beginning and it doesn't have an end.

[00:09:16] So things done... in past lives, for example... [upon hearing tune from cell phone - "That's a nice break, isn't it?" laughter "Really!"] Things done in the past... will influence our current experiences, and influence what we do and say... in the present. And those things, that are again *influenced*, what we do and say, then influence the future. And we never say... important to notice... that there is a boundary around this... from our birth to our death. Because that's not meant to be there. We say that when we talk about the past and the future, we do not mean the past is from... the boundary of a previous life to the present time. There is *no* boundary. It's completely open. So... actions of body, speech and mind done... previously won't influence... current times and future times.

[00:10:38] So... [LMC rereading Rinpoche excerpt] "It's wise to contemplate that the quality of our life is fully determined by the quality of our behavior. Our thoughts, feelings, speech and actions, virtuous and nonvirtuous, create the intricate patterns of our life experience. We ourselves create the causes for our own happiness or our own suffering. When we understand the unwholesome and nonvirtuous actions that cause suffering, we can eliminate those causes. When we understand the wholesome, virtuous actions which bring happiness and benefit to ourselves and others, we can cultivate those causes. We must begin by acknowledging that our situation in life is the result of our own actions." It doesn't say... that we are *mostly* responsible for it.

[00:11:35] "So" then he says, "let's focus on Karma." ... Karma is such a *big* part of... the Buddhist tradition. Whether we're talking about current traditions or older traditions, karma is a big part of it. "So" he says, "let's focus on karma. The natural, unequivocal relationship between cause and effect. There cannot be any mistake about this; it is one of the defining characteristics of the Buddha's teachings. The traditional example is that if you plant rice, you will never obtain wheat or corn from that grain of rice, because there is continuity from seed to plant. Yet, even though we start with a certain cause, different conditions come into play and the fruition of that cause might change."

[00:12:44] In other words, he says you plant rice, you actually *may* get wheat. [laughs] Because it's not an isolated event... to plant rice. So we know this even, from science, right? You can have mutations... all sorts of things happen... and you don't get the result that you thought that you would get. So likewise here, we can't see all of our actions. We can't see all of the things that we've said, all the things that we've thought, so we can't... predict precisely. Therefore, to be disappointed that we were good... and we had a negative result... is just normal. It's not actually... particularly unique... nor does it reflect something wrong with the idea... that actions and results... produce certain causes... and conditions.

[00:13:50] [continues reading quote] "Because it's possible to introduce different causes and conditions, we can change the fruition, we can change the result. But even this is not permanent. How do you know it's not permanent? You use logic to see it." So this is one of those places... you can't rely *entirely* upon logic to understand these things. But you also may not be able to penetrate some of the obvious things if you *don't* use it. "You use logic to see it. If karma is dependent on causes and conditions, then it has no intrinsic existence." That may not be obvious. Bring it up this afternoon if it's not. "If it were not dependent, everything in the world would be fixed in the first instant and nothing would ever change. The same is true of kleshas." That is to say, our conflicted emotional states. "They, too, are dependent and so have no intrinsic existence. They're the fruition of causes and conditions coming together [rereads it] They're the fruition of causes and conditions coming together."

[00:15:23] So when we bring our awareness to these factors, place our attention on them, meditate upon them, contemplate them... we are looking at opening a door into something that ordinarily we may not pay much attention to. ... And as we feel an understanding of how the pieces work together, it's also important for us to... notice the experience that arises... during those times. And even just as we say, our meditation today is the practice of shamatha, or calm abiding... when we see experiences arising by virtue of our contemplation... it's very helpful to practice... putting our awareness on that experience. ... *Treat* the experience... as the object of our meditation.

[00:16:35] In this way, all we can think that... "...the conditions that we create are the Path, and the main objective of the path is to eliminate the cause of suffering. You really can delete past karma!" Now, isn't *that* weird? "You really can delete past Karma!" he says. If this was any one of less stature... I would find that difficult. ... I'm saying that, he's not saying that. [laughter] We can come back to that.

[00:17:22] Now, because coming up towards the lunch break, I want to do The Fourth... Contemplation. The Fourth Contemplation is actually pretty straightforward. ... It's titled The Shortcomings of Samsara. ... I say it's straightforward because it's so... kind of, straightforward to understand, but extremely difficult... to work with. ... Samsara is... the world that we live in of confusion. It's the world of confusion that we live in. That is to say... it's driven by, it's  *fueled*  by our... conflicted emotions... our mistaken views and opinions about things, ourselves and others, as well as the world and how it works physically and otherwise. ... We can see all of that in our meditation practice by just looking at it and by bringing reason to bear on it. The problem...  *isn't*  that we can't see this... the problem is, is that  *we want to fix it* . And it's not fixable. As somebody once said... I think accurately... if it's broken, it's working.

[00:19:24] "We are so strongly attached to this material world..." that even when we see... that our attachment to the aspects of... this  *confusion*  in this world, we are still strung along by it. We can't seem to... get out of it. So he says, "A very large obstacle to success on the path of liberation is our attachment to samsara..." the attachment to the world of confusion. You would think that once you saw that... you would drop your attachment. Kind of like... every time you eat a certain food, you get sick. At a certain point, you'd think... I don't  *eat*  that food anymore. But actually, the evidence appears to be... not quite that clear. So this, in many ways, is like that.

[00:20:25] [quoting Tsoknyi Rinpoche] "Because we are all so strongly attached to this material world, we need to examine with great care whether worldly activities will benefit us in the long run or not. For example, most of us desire possessions, pleasure, comfort, and we also want love and acceptance from others. We work hard to obtain these things, going through much discomfort and even suffering to get them. Ultimately, we will find that clinging to this world as the source of our safety, happiness and satisfaction is fruitless and futile." So it's important to point out there... no statement made about... the possibility... of being happy and cared for and caring for others and all of that. It's more that the method  *itself* , by which we think we can  *get*  those things, is faulty.

[00:22:08] One of Tsoknyi Rinpoche's... poignant instructions is... that when we look at various aspects of the path, that we hold to be important... as a  *means*  to... overcome confusion and suffering... and as a means to... gain that happiness and that clarity and compassion for others... we tend to fall into a trap... where we try to practice those things and then they don't work. And then people don't love us. And then we find out that actually we don't love them either. And all sorts of things come about because of that. And so... he makes the clear statement. I don't think I have it written down here, but... he speaks of the instructions within all of the texts and the instructions we get from our teachers to...  *fabricate*  our experience. To  *intentionally*  fabricate our experience. Like... there's somebody we know and we want to feel compassion for them and we just find it like  *not possible* . Somehow it doesn't work. We can't do it. So, his instruction is... fabricate! Fabricate the compassion... over and over and over again. And at some point it...  *self-fabricates* . And we all know that from our own experience. You hold a certain opinion... about someone and you nurture it and nurture it and nurture it. And finally, you don't have to hold it... now it has you!

[00:24:04] So, in that way then... one of the kind of humorous ways we think of this is... you fake it till you make it. You just *keep trying to hold the view*. And to see things through that view. Especially since... the views... primarily when we look at them... we *wish* they were true. It's easy to hope that they were true. They *become* true by virtue of our embodying them. And so, as we embody them, as we work on it, we have experiences... and now we're back to the place where... the experience is... *the key*. We keep coming back to that. Whatever the experience is... in our practice and in our understanding... it's important for us to be able to... see that. And we see that by placing our awareness upon that experience and resting there with it. ... Okay, I think that's good enough... for now.

[00:25:35] Contemplation in its... fundamental meaning... *includes*... using our intelligence... our conceptual minds, to understand how things fit together. As we understand how things fit together... it's also important... to be able to recognize our experience as it unfolds. So that our... intellect, our conceptual understanding... *blends* with our experience. ... So if you take the pieces that we have... covered just now, any portion of it... from the contemplation of impermanence... or contemplating the precious human existence... contemplating the faults of samsara, which are actually not the *faults of samsara* per se... but our fault in relationship to samsara, as if samsara was pure, somehow... when it's really the manifestation of confusion. These... thoughts are of great importance... to fuel our *interest*... in the Dharma and fuel our *practice* of the Dharma. Each one of us has a unique relationship with that. ... So we'll take a bit of time leading up to the lunch break... and you can take whichever part of The Four Thoughts That Turn The Mind... look at those things through your conceptual understanding. ... If the conceptual understanding fails... then look at that experience. And if the conceptual understanding seems clear... look at that experience. Place your awareness on it.

[00:28:17] Impermanence... in the same way. We want to find some specific *truth* in impermanence because we all so understand the inevitability of impermanence. ... But it's better to rest our awareness on... while it's inevitable... it's also utterly uncertain. We do not know the time of our death. Even when we're very sick, we do not know... the precise time of our death. We do not know whether we'll be well tomorrow... sane tomorrow. Healthy. Sick. ... So having a sense of the view, again, embracing the *uncertainty* of impermanence... and resting our awareness in... whatever discomfort is there or whatever comfort is there... so that it doesn't become just a concept. 'Yeah, everything's impermanent.' We need to *feel* it. Feel it and rest with it. Feel it and rest with it. ... So we'll take the remainder of our time... now to... practice with... any of these four that you wish.

[00:29:54] *period of meditation*  
**sangha** [00:54:07] *dedicating the merit*

The Four Thoughts That Change the Mind ~ Karma and its Consequences  
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