
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can practise some meditation as usual. Place your body in a relaxed posture. Regarding meditation; everyone wants to experience mental happiness but one finds it very difficult to make the mind really happy - to experience stable mental happiness. One has these fleeting experiences of mental happiness that then disappear and go away. The reason why one isn't able to have a stable experience of mental happiness is because the mind is unsubdued. Everyone is experiencing some measure of mental happiness but it doesn't stay and it goes away and one of the reasons is that the mind is always attracted to external objects. That is a major factor that disturbs the mind. If one would instead turn one's focus towards the inside, saying to oneself, 'Now I understand the way the external world functions and now I have to investigate my internal world', then one would become more aware of one's internal situation.

If one just lets one's mind be attracted towards external objects then one can receive great loss within one's life. It takes away the opportunity for inner happiness and when the mind is so attracted to external objects it also causes a great laziness within the mind. It also causes other disturbances such as the loss of enthusiasm and confidence. One comes into situations where one, because of one's great distraction, wasn't able to accomplish any type of purpose and then, because one is very aware that one hasn't accomplished much, one becomes depressed and loses one's enthusiasm and goes into a downward spiral.

There are different types of faults that can occur when the mind is very attracted towards external objects. Particularly when one is young one has to take great care of one's mind. Of course it will be difficult to totally avoid attraction towards external objects however it is important that one takes care that one doesn't engage in activities that are completely pointless - activities that have neither a worldly purpose nor a Dharma purpose. It is important that one looks after one's mind in such a way, particularly when one is young, because one determines how one's life will turn out at a young age. When one is, for example, around 18 one's actions at that time can have a great impact on the rest of one's life. At that time one can determine through one's actions that one will have a good life.

So it is important, particularly at a young age, that one looks after oneself in such a manner and that one develops a well-regulated lifestyle. By trying to follow some rules in one's life one will be able to regulate one's days better and soon it will become second nature. One

needs rules in one's life. Otherwise one will just hang around, not knowing what to do, and then one's days will probably seem very long. But if one knows what one is about, has plans and schedules, then one's days will seem very short. In fact they will seem too short in order to accomplish what one wants to do.

It is important that one looks after one's body and one's mind in an appropriate fashion, recognising what benefits the mind and then being enthusiastic about those things that benefit the mind, striving in them, being enthusiastic about them, developing them. Similarly, regarding the body, one should be aware of what is good for the body and then engage in those actions while avoiding actions that harm body and mind. One needs to have a healthy body and a healthy mind in order to be successful in life and whether one has success and happiness within one's life or not is within one's own hands. One has to take responsibility for one's life and takes one's life in one's hands and do something positive.

For example, a sapling is nursed until it has grown tall and yields many fruits. When the tree has grown many people will benefit from the fruits that the tree provides. Likewise one has to take care of oneself from a young age and then, when one has grown up, many people can benefit from the fruits. So it is important that the mind becomes acquainted with positive mental states and that one establishes positive mental patterns so the mind will become acquainted with the discipline of being positive and wholesome.

We can meditate for a few minutes. Take the mind away from external objects and focus it inwards and then, after having focused the mind totally inwards, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, not letting it wander off to any other object, but placing it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that way for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

It is important to practise meditation and by practising meditation one can pacify the conceptualising mind that will otherwise cause worry and anxiety by thinking a lot about things of this life. While meditating one can let go of that anxiety and worry and just relax and enjoy some peace.

THE GREATNESS OF THE TEACHINGS

Last time we were talking about the first greatness of the teachings; the greatness of realising that all the teachings are complementary. Here, when it refers to 'all the teachings' it refers to all the teachings of the Buddha and how they are all complementary because they all facilitate the attainment of enlightenment and how there are various ways of understanding how all the teachings complement the attainment of enlightenment.

The first point was that all the teachings facilitate the attainment of enlightenment by becoming a tool for the Bodhisattva to accomplish the welfare of others.

All the teachings become a tool with which the Bodhisattva accomplishes the welfare of others.

Bodhisattvas accomplish the welfare of others by guiding disciples along the three types of paths. So, if you ask, 'Do Bodhisattvas also practise ordinary generosity in order to benefit sentient beings?' - yes they do. They also practise material generosity in order to bring about the physical happiness and welfare of the recipient. But then do the Bodhisattvas also practise other types of generosity? Yes. Why? Just bringing about the physical wellbeing of the recipient is not enough because that is only a very transient and momentary experience. The Bodhisattva also practises the generosity of the teachings in order to enable the recipients to learn how to practise the Dharma, how to learn, how to stand on their own feet and how to liberate themselves.

Parents do the same for their child. The aim of parents is to empower their children to stand on their own feet and go through life by themselves. Of course parents will also give food to their child when they are hungry and give them something to drink when they are thirsty and clothing when they are cold, but that's not the only thing they do. They also give the child an education because through education the child can learn how to help itself and how to stand on its own feet. Likewise the Bodhisattvas, in order to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings, teach sentient beings the Dharma in order to help them to be self-reliant and able to stand on their own feet.

Bodhisattvas accomplish the welfare of sentient beings by guiding them along the three paths. Bodhisattvas have to teach practitioners following the three types of path and, in order to be able to teach those practitioners, they need to know the individual practices associated with the three types of path. They have to know them and, in order to get to know them Bodhisattvas have to practise their meditations. Bodhisattvas get to know the meditations for the three types of paths by actually generating those meditations. By actually practising those meditations themselves they come to know those paths and then they can teach those paths to others.

In Tibet a major part of the Geshe programme is consumed by studying texts that actually belong to the Theravada tradition. Four years are spent studying what is called *The Treasury of Knowledge* and four years spent studying monastic discipline and then many months are also spent studying valid cognition. The text on monastic discipline basically explains the practices of the Theravada tradition and then *The Treasury of Knowledge* explains the stages of spiritual development of a Theravada practitioner. The treatise on valid cognition explains the points of view of the lower tenets. A great deal of time is spent studying teachings of the smaller vehicle in order to know those teachings so that one can better benefit sentient beings. One doesn't just say, 'I'm a Mahayana practitioner and I study only the Mahayana teachings and not teachings belonging to the lesser vehicle'. That's not the way it works. Bodhisattvas, in order to be able to teach practitioners belonging to all three types of vehicles, meditate on the meditational objects of the lower paths in order to thoroughly know those practices and then be able to teach those practices

through the knowledge gained from experience. In this way all the teachings of the Buddha become complementary by facilitating the attainment of enlightenment because the Bodhisattvas have to know all the teachings of the Buddha by experience so that they can then teach them to others.

Out of giving material benefit and helping others generate qualities in their mind, the second one is more important and more valuable. It is like that within the Dharma, but one can generally say that helping others to generate inner qualities is more valuable than giving them material comfort. If someone is a teacher with a pure intention and helps students to generate knowledge and qualities that is a very precious and valuable activity. Similarly the Bodhisattva's main aim is to help students to generate internal qualities and knowledge and for that purpose they also meditate on the lower paths, becoming familiar with the meditations and objects and so forth, not forgetting them and being very clear about them.

So the knowledge of the path of the three vehicles is the method with which the Bodhisattvas accomplish the welfare of others. This was explained by the protector, Maitreya, in his treatise, *The Ornament of Pure Realisation*, where it says that knowledge of the path is the only method by which one accomplishes the welfare of others.

Within the teachings of the lesser vehicle we have paths common to the Mahayana path and we have paths that a Mahayana practitioner won't practise. We then also have the uncommon Mahayana teachings. First of all, within the Hinayana basket, there are certain teachings that are not practised by a Mahayana practitioner. Which teachings are these? These are the teachings concerned with meditating on the wish wanting to attain liberation only for oneself. That is something that a Mahayana practitioner doesn't meditate on. If one meditates on the sufferings of cyclic existence and then generates a wish to become free from the sufferings of cyclic existence by oneself alone, not remembering other sentient beings, the motivation being solely to attain one's own liberation from cyclic existence, then that is a type of renunciation in which a Mahayana practitioner doesn't train. That is a type of thought in which a Mahayana practitioner doesn't train. But then there are other Hinayana teachings, such as the teachings on selflessness, that are practised by all three types of practitioners and are also practised by a Mahayana practitioner. The wisdom teachings can be adjusted to whichever type of method they are combined with. And then, of course, we have the uncommon Mahayana teachings that are only practised by the Mahayana practitioner.

The first reason that established the thesis that all the teachings of the Buddha are complementary is that all the teachings of the Buddha are complementary from the point of view that they are needed in order to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. A Bodhisattva needs those teachings in order to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.

The second reason that is given, the second way one can look at it, is that all the teachings are complementary

from the point of view that the state of enlightenment is a state that is free from all faults and is a state that has perfected all qualities. So enlightenment is a state that is not merely just free from one fault and has accomplished just one quality but it is a state that is free from all faults and has accomplished all qualities.

Therefore, since the state of enlightenment is a state that is free from all faults and is endowed with all qualities, the path leading there has to be a path with which one can develop all qualities and abandon all objects of abandonment. A path to enlightenment should incorporate the development of the qualities of the three types of paths, the three types of results, and it also has to be a path that incorporates abandoning the three types of abandonment relative to the three paths. Therefore all the practises of the three paths are included in the path to enlightenment. The state of enlightenment is a state that is free from all faults and is endowed with all qualities and therefore the path leading to enlightenment, the Bodhisattva path, is a path that concerns itself with developing all qualities and getting rid of all faults. So, from this point of view, all the teachings of the Buddha are also complementary.

One reaches a state of enlightenment by developing the different qualities, one by one, and getting rid of the different faults, one by one. It is not realistic to expect to develop all the qualities at once and to get rid of all the faults all at once. This is done in a sequential manner, step by step. Progress is achieved quality by quality, one develops one quality after the next and one gets rid of one's faults one by one. A Buddha is not someone 'up there', pure from the beginning and having had all the qualities from the beginning and having been free from faults from the beginning. Shakyamuni Buddha also started out as an ordinary person and then, step by step, purified the mind of the different faults and, step by step, developed the different qualities until he became enlightened.

At this point doubt could enter one's mind and one could think that this might be true regarding the sutric teachings, the perfection aspect of the teachings, but that it might not be true for the tantric teachings.

Even though there are differences in the way the perfections of generosity and morality and so forth are practised between sutra and tantra there is no difference from the point of view that all six perfections have to be practised.

If one practises the six perfections according to the sutra path then there is a step-by-step way in which one practises the six perfections which takes many lifetimes. When one practises the perfections on the tantric path it is done slightly differently.

But, even though the practice might differ, one has to still practise the six perfections in the tantric path. Therefore the practice of the six perfections is a common practice between sutra and Tantra. Similarly to the sutra path one has to also practise bodhicitta in the tantric path as the basis of one's practice. There is not really any difference from the point of view of having to practise bodhicitta

and the six perfections.

There are different quotes from the different tantric texts that elaborate this point.

For example, here it quotes from a text called *The Vajra Peak*,

'Don't compromise your bodhicitta,

Even at the cost of your life;'

and,

'The practise of the six perfections

shouldn't be given up at any cost.'

A Bodhisattva has such a strong determination that they rather will give up their life or their livelihood than giving up their bodhicitta. They will not compromise their bodhicitta or the practise of the six perfections for any purpose, even at the cost of their life. This shows very clearly how important the practise of the six perfections is in the practise of tantra. There are many other quotes throughout the tantric texts making clear how important the practise of the six perfections is for the practise of tantra.

Without studying the *Graduated Path to Enlightenment* teachings, it will be very difficult to generate an understanding of how all the teachings of the Buddha actually complement each other.

When one generates an understanding that all the teachings of the Buddha are complementary it is done from the point of view of the practise of one individual. From the point of view of the practice of one individual, from the point of view of the path to enlightenment that has to be traversed by one individual, all the teachings of the Buddha are complementary. They are all parts of that path and no teaching of the Buddha is an adverse condition preventing progress along the path from the point of view of one individual. Of course from the point of view of different individuals some practises are more important than for others but, from the point of view of the practice of one individual wanting to attain enlightenment, all the teachings of the Buddha are part of the path of one individual to enlightenment.

So do you have some questions? We have time for one question.

Question: In Christianity it is taught that just by having faith in Jesus one can redeem a lifetime of negativity.

Faith is also very important from the Buddhist point of view. In the Buddhist tradition one can prevent rebirth in a lower realm if towards the end of one's life one changes one's lifestyle and generates faith in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and has regret for one's negative actions. One might not attain liberation but one will definitely purify lots of non-virtuous karma and one won't take rebirth in the lower realms. Faith is regarded as the root of all attainments. Faith is something very important. Without faith one's practice won't develop. Having strong faith in one's refuge, whatever refuge that may be and whatever tradition is very important because, by having very strong faith in one's refuge, one's mind will be protected from negativity. It also makes a great difference to the

way one dies if one has strong faith in one's refuge. If one has strong faith in one's refuge and a strong conviction when one dies that one's refuge is looking after one then it will help one to die in a much more relaxed and confident manner. People whose mind is devoid of faith have a much harder time when they die; there's more internal suffering and the mind is also empty.

Question; Geshe-la, if as you said, all the teachings of the Buddha are complementary, why is it that the Theravada school does not accept tantra as an authentic transmission of the Buddha?

That's because they haven't studied the *lam rim* teachings (*laughter*). In previous times tantra was also present in Thailand, until the time when a king decided that it wasn't good for his subjects to practise two different Dharmas. That king, obviously not having an understanding of the *lam rim*, thought that the practice of tantra and Theravada Buddhist practice were contradictory, mutually exclusive, and felt they were two different Dharmas and then decided that his subjects should practise only the Theravada Dharma. That type of misunderstanding comes about when we don't understand that all the teachings are complementary. Mahayana practitioners who haven't studied the lam-rim might think that the Hinayana path is redundant or a sutra practitioner who hasn't studied the lam-rim might think that the tantra path is wrong or a tantric practitioners might think that the sutra path is redundant and so forth. These different types of misconceptions can arise from not having studied the *lam rim*.

In different Southeast Asian countries, Singapore, Indonesia and so forth, we can observe this trend very strongly. Tantric practitioners don't want to have anything to do with sutric practices and the sutric practitioners don't want to have anything to do with tantric practices. Within the Mahayana we have the sutra path and the tantric path and one can find division because of this misconception. Those who follow the tantric path feel that they don't need to practise the sutric practices of the Mahayana and those who follow the Mahayana sutra path¹ they feel that the tantric practices are not for them, or are not teachings of the Buddha or whatever.

As was explained at the beginning, focus the mind internally, bringing it back home from the external objects and then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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