
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can practise some meditation as normal. Sit in a correct and relaxed meditation posture. The purpose of meditation is to harness the positive potential of the mind. As one is a person one is endowed with potential and if, through meditation, one can harness the potential of one's mind and focus that potential single-pointedly one's mind will become more stable and one's mind will become clearer. If one doesn't harness the positive potential of one's mind and let's one's mind fall under the control of its negative potential, of its harmful potential, that will then bring lots of suffering and problems.

Within the mind we have both positive potential as well as harmful potential. The purpose of meditation is to harness the positive potential, to concentrate and protect it and focus it single-pointedly and, in such a way, make the mind stable and clear.

Within the mind one has positive potential as well as unsuitable potential. Because of that unsuitable potential unsuitable states of the mind, inappropriate states of the mind, can arise very easily through very small causes. Very strong anger can arise within the mind because of some small reason. Very strong attachment can also arise within the mind because of some small reason. These unsuitable states of the mind can be very stable and strong, arising from a very small condition. This is due to the harmful potential of the mind, the inappropriate potential of the mind.

Even though this is so there's also the positive potential of the mind, on the basis of which one can develop the mind and generate suitable states of the mind. The generation of positive mental states is difficult. It is difficult and even if one is able to generate some positive states of the mind they are not very strong. They very easily fade immediately away. They are very unstable. Why? Because the mind is so overpowered by the unsuitable mental states.

But one shouldn't think that one's situation is hopeless. One should never think, 'My mind is so much under the control of those unsuitable mental states that it is impossible for me to change'. One shouldn't think that. Rather one should think, 'How can I change? How can I make my mind be controlled by the positive states? Instead of my mind being controlled by unsuitable mental states, how can I switch it so that my mind is controlled by very positive mental states?' That is definitely possible, even though at the present time the unsuitable mental states seem to be very strong and stable and have been abiding for a long time and arise very effortlessly, while the positive mental states require

lots of effort and are unstable and difficult to maintain. But just because of that one shouldn't lose one's courage.

As long as the mind is under the control of unsuitable mental states one will not be able to experience happiness. The more one can get out from under those unsuitable mental states the more one's mind will become flexible and pliable - the more the mind will be clear and stable and experience happiness. But as long as the mind is under the control of unsuitable mental states that will not happen. So one has to arrive at the recognition that one is not able to experience happiness if one doesn't free oneself, at least a little bit, from unsuitable mental states. Those unsuitable mental states have to be recognised as the enemy. So the real reason why one is experiencing problems lies within. Ordinarily we always relate it to external conditions but the real enemy is actually within.

On the basis of sitting in a correct and relaxed meditation posture, place the mind internally. Focus the mind internally, withdrawing it from the unsuitable mental states, from disturbing objects and so forth, and focus it internally. The purpose of meditation is to free the mind from the control of those unsuitable mental states... to get out from under those unsuitable mental states. By withdrawing the mind in meditation from those unsuitable mental states one sets up a mental pattern and slowly, slowly through practise that pattern will become stronger and stronger and it will be easier and easier to get out from under the unsuitable mental states. Therefore one now withdraws the mind from unsuitable mental states, disturbing mental states, and focuses the mind inwards. Then, from within that state, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. *Pause for meditation.*

It's good to meditate a little bit each day. Meditation provides the opportunity for inner happiness. If we are in a difficult situation, a very stressful and difficult situation, then it is good to practice meditation. When we find that our mind is very tied up and we are not able to experience any happiness regardless of what we are doing, whether we are eating, drinking, walking or working, when don't find any relief or happiness, lying down or whatever we are doing. Especially at those times it is very good if one just sits down very calmly and practises some meditation because the meditation provides the opportunity for happiness to arise within the mind. So by practising meditation the mind becomes calm and suppler and a certain type of happiness can arise within the mind.

3. THE WAY OF LISTENING TO AND TEACHING THIS DHARMA WITH TWO GREATNESSES

We now go to the third outline, the way of listening to and teaching this Dharma that is endowed with the two greatneses. This outline has three sub-outlines, 3.1. The way of listening; 3.2 The way of explaining; 3.3. Common subsequent activities

3.1. The way of listening

This has three further suboutlines, 3.1.1. Contemplating the benefits of listening to the dharma; 3.1.2. Generating admiration for the dharma and for explaining the dharma; 3.1.3. Actual way of listening.

3.1.1. Contemplating the benefits of listening to the dharma

One first contemplates the benefits of listening to the Dharma because if one is aware of the benefits of listening to the Dharma then, naturally, one will be enthusiastic about listening to the Dharma. If we are aware of the benefits of a certain action then we will happily engage in that action naturally. So, in order for one to become enthusiastic about listening to the Dharma, one contemplates the benefits of the Dharma. So here it gives this quote,

Through listening, one gains knowledge of the Dharma.

Through listening, one reverses from negativity.

Through listening, one abandons meaninglessness, and

Through listening, one attains liberation.

One benefit of listening is that one will come to know what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned. Without listening one will not be aware of what has to be generated, what has to be practised, and what has to be abandoned - what type of actions will have to be stopped. But through listening one will become aware of what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned.

In order to practise the Dharma one needs to know what has to be generated and what has to be abandoned. One needs to know the important points of development and abandonment and one comes to know those important points through listening. This is a very skilful way. It is very skilfully outlined. If one wants to practise the Dharma one needs to know the important points of what has to be developed, what has to be generated, and what has to be abandoned, what has to be stopped. In order to find out about those important points, in order to come to know those important points, one needs to listen to the Dharma.

Of the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings, the basket of the Vinaya teachings explains the practices of ethics and morality. Those teachings on ethics and morality explain how one stops negativity. They explain what has to be developed, what has to be generated, and what one has to abandon and, in such a way, one reverses negativity. The opponent of negativity is morality. Morality stops negativity and the practice of morality is explained in the Vinaya teachings.

One has to relate the practice of stopping negativity to one's own mind and what reverses mental negativity is the practice of morality. Morality is the antidote to negativity. For example, the thought of harmful intent is a negative thought. In order to reverse that thought one needs to generate the morality that reverses that thought, that protects the mind from the thought of wanting to harm others. All this happens on an internal level.

The practice of morality is also taught first because it acts as the basis for any further Dharma practice. Also, by

practising morality one stops the very distractive behaviour that is always occupied with external situations and thus focuses the mind naturally by pacifying the extremely disturbing types of behaviour that needlessly agitate the mind. The mind then naturally becomes pacified and, in such a way, the practice of morality acts as the basis for the practice of concentration by making the mind already a little bit more subdued and calm. The practice of morality acts as the basis for the practice of concentration.

So the Vinaya basket of the Buddhist teachings explains the practice of morality. It explains the higher training of morality. Why do we talk about Vinaya basket? A basket is a vessel in which one can collect and contain various types of things, different objects. Likewise here what is referred to as the Vinaya basket is the accumulation of the Buddha's teachings on morality and ethics, those teachings that explain the antidote against mental negativity.

The second basket, the basket of the Sutra teachings, explains the higher training of concentration. Through concentration the mind is withdrawn from meaningless objects. You know that by generating concentration the mind becomes withdrawn from meaningless external objects and is focused. The teachings that have as their primary subject the higher training of concentration are referred to as the basket of the Sutra teachings.

Then, lastly, the teachings contained within the Abhidharma basket explain the higher training of wisdom and through those teachings one will be able to free oneself from mental afflictions - mental delusions - and attain liberation.

These three baskets of teachings are referred to as the three baskets of inner knowledge. First of all, why inner? Because those teachings are concerned with the mind. And why inner knowledge? Because through these teachings one will finally be able to generate the wisdom that understands selflessness and counteracts the afflictions.

There is also a progression here. First of all, through listening, one comes to know what has to be generated and what has to be abandoned. So one comes to know the important points of generation and abandoning. Then, on the basis of that, one can practise the higher training of morality. The higher training of morality then acts as the basis upon which one can successfully practise the higher training of concentration. And then, in dependence upon the higher training of concentration, one then can successfully generate the higher training of wisdom. So there is a succession.

Everyone possesses the practice of morality and, even if one doesn't have perfect concentration, one has a certain amount of concentration and one also has a certain amount of wisdom. So one knows those three practices and thus one knows what has to be generated and developed and that which is contrary to those three (morality, concentration and wisdom) and has to be abandoned. In this way one knows what has to be abandoned and what has to be practised and generated.

So you know that the practice of morality is that which has to be generated. The opposite of morality is non-virtue. Non-virtue is that which has to be abandoned. Concentration is something that also has to be generated and developed and the opposite of concentration, unsuitable disturbing thoughts, are what has to be abandoned. Likewise wisdom is that which has to be generated and developed and the opposite of wisdom, the different types of delusions, afflictions and ignorance, have to be abandoned. By relating it in such a way to your own mind you then know what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned. It is not an abstract theory. By relating it to your own mind it then becomes a living thing in your life, a living part of your life.

By relating the teachings to one's own experience one generates a very beneficial type of insight. We can finish with the benefits of listening for today. There are many more benefits to come. I'm not finished, but maybe we can have some time for question and answers.

Question: How can I counteract unsuitable states of the mind?

Which type of unsuitable thoughts are we talking about? *[laughter]*. With regards to unsuitable thoughts that belong to the family of anger it can be good to meditate on love and compassion for the other person. We have to analyse the object of our anger and realise that they also want happiness, that they also don't want suffering, and generate thoughts of love and affection for them.

It is also very useful to reflect upon the disadvantages of anger and the benefits of practising patience. However that is very difficult to do at the time when the mind is agitated by anger. Therefore at a time when the mind is very strongly agitated by anger it is better to first meditate on the coming and going of the breath in order to calm the mind down. First one pacifies the manifest anger through the meditation on the coming and going of the breath and then, when the manifest anger has calmed down and the mind is in a neutral and calm state, one reflects upon the benefits of patience and the disadvantages of anger.

At a time when the mind is very strongly agitated by anger it is very difficult to see the disadvantages of anger. When the mind has calmed down through the meditation on the coming and going of the breath then one can very clearly see the difference between the previously angry agitated mind and the calm and peaceful mind. Then one can very clearly see the disadvantages of anger. That's why one first meditates on the coming and going of the breath to calm down the mind, to pacify the mind, and then one reflects upon the disadvantages of anger and the benefits of patience and developing the mind.

Question: How can I counteract fear?

In order to oppose fear we need to generate courage, we need to lift up the mind and generate courage. First of all we need to identify the object of fear because we generate fear in relation to some object. We don't just generate fear without an object. If the object of our fear is another person we can reflect upon how we are actually equal to the other person. We can think that just like the other person has two arms, we have two arms, just as they have

two legs, we have two legs and one head and there is no reason why we can't oppose the other person. We are completely equal to the other person. Whatever they have, we also have, so there is no reason to be afraid of them. We can oppose them.

Question: I am very dissatisfied and change residence all the time.

You have to lessen your attachment. It can also be the case of indecisiveness. In this case one should make a decision. It is the same, for example, with work. Some people start out with some work or some project or whatever and then after two or three months they get tired of it, don't complete it, and go on to something else, which they also don't complete. In such a way they just go from one project to the next, from one task to the next, and never complete anything. That is a very dangerous habit to create because one takes it with oneself to the next life.

It can be similar with a making a proper decision about a house to live in. If you don't think initially, 'Can I stay there or not' and just move you can find you haven't made a proper decision about it and then move on very quickly. One should do as Shantideva advises. Before engaging in an action one should check whether one can do that action and complete the action or not. If one finds that one can do the action, complete the action, then, on the basis of whether it is beneficial or not and so forth, one engages in the action. In your case it is quite possible that already in past lives you may have moved around quite a lot from one house to the next and brought that habit with you to this life.

Also, as you know, it's not really something very harmful to switch residence all the time. It brings with it some logistical problems and it might create some restlessness but it's not an incredibly harmful thing to do. You create a whole list of places where you were living. For other people the situation is exactly the opposite and they feel unhappy with that. Other people stay for decades in the same place and also have the same job for ten or twenty or thirty years and they feel unhappy with that. They feel, 'Oh, for twenty years I have sat in the same chair at the same desk, in the same room, and in the same house', and they feel boxed up and unhappy with that. It's actually the same and it also doesn't really matter. It's just their mind that makes the difference. It would be a problem if you would want to move and you don't have anywhere to move to. But if you have somewhere to move to and you want to move that's not a difficulty. It's not really a problem to move.

When I first went to Sera Monastery in Lhasa I had a very great wish to go back to East Tibet but it wasn't possible for me to do so. There was the wish to go but I couldn't go, so that created unhappiness.

We have already explained the meaning of the word 'Buddha'. Buddha is referred to here as the Lord of the fearless realms. With 'fearless' it refers to the absence of anger, attachment and ignorance. Through the teachings of the Buddha anger, attachment and ignorance can be eliminated. This shows that by practising the teachings of

the Buddha one will exhaust attachment, anger and ignorance. Anger will cease, attachment will cease and ignorance will cease. One can abide free from the fears of these if one practises the Dharma. That's why the Buddha is referred to here as the Lord of the fearless realm.

Question: How can one break the habit of changing partners all the time.

What one has to do in order not to have that habit of switching partners and be able to go with one to the next life is that one has to stay together with one partner [laughter]. You have to stay together with one partner, love that person and be affectionate to that person. One way of looking at it is that it doesn't really matter whether you get a new partner or not because the new partner will also be someone who has an afflicted mind, a mind full of delusions. From that point of view there's no difference between the present partner [laughter] and the possible future partner. So there's really no need, no benefit in switching. Also the happiness that one would experience with a future partner won't be different from the happiness that one is experiencing with a present partner. There is really no difference between the happiness that one is experiencing with the different types of partners but constantly switching partners agitates one's own life, brings difficulties and confusion to one's own life and others as well.

In a way constantly switching partners is quite an inconsiderate thing to do. One does that out of a very egotistical attitude, which brings about lots of worries and sufferings to many people – parents, friends, children and so forth. The suffering that is induced through separation is very widespread, and also, when one separates, wealth becomes separate so it gets dispersed. If one separates and one has money then at least they have the money. Then it's not so bad. But if on top of separating you end up without any money then there is nothing left.

One acquaintance of mine told me, 'I have been married four times, but at the present time I'm single and unhappy'. There are other couples that stay together for many years, even sometimes 50 years, 60 years, who regard each other with love and compassion and don't experience that suffering. They don't experience the loss of their happiness of having a friend or a partner. The person who was looking for more happiness and married four times, ended up without anyone.

Question: My friends son died 12 year ago and she is still grieving.

You can try to convey to your friend that grieving and being sad about a lost son will not bring the son back. It also doesn't help your friend in any way. Being sad about a situation that one can't change doesn't really have any benefit for anyone. So try to help a person to be aware that there's not really anything to be gained by still mourning and being sad and that it would be better for them to be happy. Also, some people, even though they lose one child they have another child later. That's also a possibility. It's possible for some people, even though they lose one child to have another child later.

As we discussed at the beginning, focus the mind internally and remove it from external objects, focus it internally and then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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