
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can practise a little bit of meditation as usual. Sit in a good and comfortable physical position. To just put one's body into a good meditation posture is not enough. The purpose of meditation is to improve the mind, to develop one's qualities and to decrease one's harmful mental behaviours, destructive mental behaviours and so forth. Atisha said that when one is alone one should watch one's mind and when one is in the company of others one should watch one's words, what one says, because what one says can be the cause for anger for many people. That's really correct. While one is alone, by oneself, one should watch one's mind. That's what we are doing now in meditation.

Meditation doesn't happen all at once. Meditation means to gradually and slowly acquaint one's mind with mental states that are not conducive to the generation of delusions. In order to meditate we first have to reverse the trend of the mind of engaging external objects and we have to focus the mind internally instead. We can observe through our own experience that if our mind is very engaged with external objects then, at such a time, the mind is unclear and unstable. We need to reverse this trend of the mind engaging external objects. We need instead to focus the mind internally. When we focus our mind internally in such a manner we shouldn't do it half-heartedly. The mind should be totally focused internally, not just 50%. Then, after having focused the mind internally, we place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Here the mind should actually completely enter the breathing. It should become one with the breathing. We can now meditate in that manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

That's maybe enough.

It's good to practise a little bit of meditation on a regular basis because we have to take control of our mind. One needs to take control of the actions of one's body, speech and mind. It is our speech, our body and our mind. It's not the other way around. We say 'my body, speech and mind', and not the other way around.

One is the owner of one's mind and of one's speech and of one's body and therefore one needs to take responsibility for them. One needs to take it into one's hands to establish wholesome mental patterns within one's mind because even though one's mind is one's own, one is under the control of one's mind. The mind determines how one lives one's life. If the mind is under the control of mental afflictions, then, since one is under the control of the mind, one is also under the control of mental afflictions and whatever actions one engages in

will be under the control of these afflictions. Therefore it is very significant, it is very important, that one meditates and purifies one's mind.

The mind is one's own, the body is one's own and the speech is one's own. As long as one doesn't purify the ways of one's mind, as long as one's mind is under the control of the mental afflictions, then the actions of body and speech will be harmful. One can perform an analytical meditation investigating where this 'I', to which the mind and the body and the speech belong, actually resides; whether that 'I' actually resides within the body or whether it resides within the mind. One has to investigate where that 'I' exists. The presence of that 'I' is the source for attachment and aversion to arise. If one sees something that is desirable and pleasant to the 'I' one generates attachment towards it. But if something appears as undesirable and unpleasant to the 'I' one generates aversion towards it.

3.1.3. The actual way of listening to the teachings

We have reached the outline on the actual way of listening to the Dharma teaching. Within this outline we had reached the point of adopting the six recognitions and here the first recognition was the recognition of oneself as a sick person.

Recognising oneself as a sick person

Regarding this it says in the Introduction to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life, '

If we have to act according to the doctors instructions

When we come down with an ordinary sickness,

WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID ABOUT BEING CONTINUOUSLY

Afflicted by the hundred defects of attachment etc.?

One needs to reflect upon how one is experiencing the sickness of the various mental afflictions such as attachment and so forth. We all know that at different times we are in a happy mental state and sometimes we are unhappy. We can observe that when our mind is unhappy it is because of the presence of mental afflictions in the mind. These are mental afflictions that we haven't yet completely understood and identified. So that is something we need to do. We need to identify and understand those mental afflictions. Adopting the first recognition of oneself as the patient means that one identifies that one is afflicted by the various mental sicknesses such as attachment and so forth.

Recognising the person who explains the dharma as the doctor

Then there is the second recognition, the recognition of the person that explains the Dharma as the doctor. When we have an ordinary sickness and we are fortunate enough to meet a qualified doctor that can cure us of our disease we should meditate on rejoicing. We should be very happy that we have this opportunity and we should be respectful towards the doctor. Likewise, if you find

someone that can cure us of the mental afflictions, the disease of the mental afflictions, we should meditate on rejoicing, meditate on joy, and be respectful.

Recognising the holy dharma as the medicine

Then one needs to adopt the third recognition of the holy Dharma as the medicine. That which cures a disease is the medicine. Likewise, that which cures the disease of the mental afflictions is the Dharma. So we should recognise that the Dharma is the medicine that will cure the disease of the mental afflictions. If we have an ordinary sickness then the way to cure that sickness is to rely upon a qualified doctor and take the medicine that the doctor prescribed according to the doctors advice. That will then cure us of the disease. Likewise, in order to be cured from the sickness of the mental afflictions one has to take the dharma medicine in accordance with the instructions of a qualified teacher.

The way that the Dharma medicine cures the mental afflictions for example in the context of attachment is through one meditating on the antidote against attachment. At a time where one's mind is experiencing suffering due to attachment, that suffering is then cured by meditating on the antidote against attachment. Otherwise, if one just further indulges one's attachment, then, as we all know, that doesn't lessen the attachment but just increases it.

The way you have to think of it is that the Dharma medicine that cures the mental afflictions is not an external phenomenon but it exists within one's own mind. So, by generating the Dharma medicine within one's mind one then cures mental afflictions. One has to relate it back to one's mind. One generates attachment towards those people that one finds attractive and desirable and one generates aversion towards those that one finds unattractive and undesirable. The psychological development of attachment is that one initially perceives an attractive and desirable object and then what is called the 'distorted belief' further exaggerates the attractiveness and desirability of the object by further and further thinking about it; how nice and how beautiful it is and so forth. The attractiveness of the object becomes exaggerated infinitely, even up to the point where one feels that one cannot live if one doesn't have that object.

The strength of our attachment corresponds to the strength of the distorted belief; the distorted conception. The distorted conception increases the attractive aspect of the object, the desirability of the object. It exaggerates the desirability of the object and the more the desirability of the object is exaggerated by distorted thinking the more one's attachment increases. What one has to do is investigate the nature of the object of one's attachment. One has to analyse whether there is a discrepancy between appearance and reality. One has to analyse whether the object is really as attractive and desirable as it appears to be. One has to analyse whether the object is, in reality, as desirable and attractive, as it appears to be to the distorted thinking.

One has to investigate the nature of the object of one's

attachment. Attachment is generated because of the very strong appearance of desirability and attractiveness.

But that appearance of the object such as the human body, which is one of the major objects of one's attachment, as being very desirable, is basically just on one's own fiction. If we actually investigate the nature of the human body we find that there's nothing very desirable to be found. Therefore, by meditating on the impurity of the human body one can counteract attachment.

There are different ways that this can be done. One doesn't actually have to meditate on the nature of the human body that one is attached to. One can meditate on the nature of one's own body; for example by starting at the feet and working one's way up through one's legs, through the lower body, then up through the body up to one's head. Just meditating on the inside of one's body, on the different substances and the internal objects of one's body, will counteract one's attachment. One can meditate that from the right side of one's body blood and pus is oozing out and that the left side of one's body is a mere skeleton. That will help one to overcome one's attachment [*laughter*]. Visualising yourself in such a manner, blood and puss oozing from the right side and the left side being a mere skeleton, doesn't leave any space for attachment [*laughter*]. There's a significance to the meditation because if we look at the actual nature of the body, it is full of blood and puss. Obviously there's also a skeleton within the body. It's not as if one is meditating on something that is not actually there.

It is important that one understands the way one's mind works; that one understands the psychology of one's mind and that one then makes appropriate use of that understanding. The next time we can talk about the fourth recognition; the recognition that the thorough practise of the Dharma is the cure for the mental afflictions. But we can talk about that next time and for tonight we can have some questions and answers.

Question; Geshe-la speaks of the body in terms of blood, pus, and as impure.... [a few words inaudible].... I understand that this is the process of destroying attachment, but to do that with aversion for our bodies? To feel trapped in our bodies, or that our bodies are dirty, is not going to help us either. So what would be the correct attitude to have towards one's body?

The objective is to understand the actual nature of our body but there is no need to generate a negative attitude towards the body because, at the same time, our body is the precious human body. Even though, if one has a strong liking for the body it will also induce a slight attachment for the body. When one meditates on impurity the purpose is not generating a negative attitude towards the body. The body is still, of course, something very precious, being a precious human body. One shouldn't engage in activities that mistreat the body like exposing the body to fire, burning the body or mistreating the body in other ways The purpose is not to generate such an attitude. Sometimes we have the situation where people are unhappy with their body but desire a beautiful body. Unhappiness with their own

body doesn't help them to have less attachment.

Question ; If one had a strong attachment to food, what would be a good meditation, the antidote to that attachment?

The meditation that we just explained is also an antidote against the attachment to food. One can visualise that, for example, the plate or bowl is also filled with blood and pus [laughter].

There are different motivations with which one can eat the food. If, for example, one eats food in order to attain a more handsome and beautiful body then that food is eaten with the motivation of attachment. Some people eat food in order to gain a very strong body with the aim of then using that strong body to intimidate or subdue others. It is said that that food is eaten on the basis of pride. But one can also eat food with the idea of having a healthy body that lives a long time in order to be able to practise the Dharma. If you eat food with such a motivation, it won't lose its taste as well.

Eating food with an altruistic motivation, thinking, 'I am eating the food so that I can better benefit others', is a very good state of mind with which to eat food. One can also first bless the food with the threefold recitation of OM AH HUNG. When one does the first recitation of OM AH HUNG it purifies the faults of colour, taste and smell of the food. The second recitation of OM AH HUNG transforms the food into nectar and the third recitation of OM AH HUNG makes the nectar inexhaustible. Then, when one eats the food, one can imagine that one practises generosity of the food to the hundreds of thousand, millions, of small micro-organisms that are present within one's body. One can pray that in the future, by offering food to all those sentient beings now, one may be able in the future to offer them the Dharma; to practice the generosity of Dharma towards those sentient beings.

Question; 'Those of us who work for social justice 'Is it attachment and grasping to go for outcomes...'

Regardless of whether the thought is attachment or grasping, if the aim is an altruistic aim that benefits many sentient beings then the action is still Dharma. There's nothing wrong with one also receiving benefit from one's altruistic actions. It is also OK to expect some benefit for oneself from one's altruistic actions. Of course it is possible for certain practitioners to engage in altruistic actions without the slightest expectation of something in return, of some benefit for oneself. But, in general, it is quite OK to also think in terms of one's own benefits, to also think of what is the benefit for oneself from one's altruistic actions and to receive some benefit from those altruistic actions.

Question; When you have more than one intention and perhaps some of them are bad, if there's more than one intention behind the actions.

The karma that you create with that action will be a mixed karma. If, for example, you are weaving a string out of a black and a white thread you end up with a mixed string. Wherever you look there's black and white string. Getting such a mixed result is actually a very good

thing. To have a karmic action that is partly white and partly black is a very good thing; not having an action that is totally black. Your way of thinking is actually very good.

Question ; I have a problem with food, an attachment to food, in that whenever I have a problem, a big problem, I eat a lot and it's not... it's a way of coping with the stress.

In that case what you have to do is you have to lessen your worries and stress [laughter]. If you just add one worry to the next worry then today you have one worry, tomorrow you add another worry, the day after you add another worry and you will just end up with an ulcer [laughter]. In general there's nothing wrong with eating food [laughter]. Of course you have to also look at the health impact of what you eat. If it is unhealthy, then it's better to eat less. The purpose of working and earning a wage is so that one can eat good food and that one can dress in good clothes. That's what one should do. If you just have the money but you don't eat good food and you wear poor clothes then what good is the money?

Question; Geshe-la, some forms of attachment can be extremely subtle, and sometimes or quite often we may not even recognise they're having an impact on our lives or that they're influencing the ????????. What is the method for us to identify our attachments if they're not clear?

What we can say for sure is that if an object appears to us as desirable, if we see a beautiful object, we will generate attachment for that object. So the basic principle is that if we see a desirable object, we generate desire and attachment. If we see a undesirable object, an undesirable object, then we generate aversion. That's basically how it works. Of course within the desire and aversion that are generated there are many different levels of strength.

As was said at the beginning, bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards to reverse the trend of the mind engaging external objects and focus it internally. Then place the mind 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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