
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can practise some meditation as usual. It is very important that one subdues one's own mind because of the great harm that one receives from an unsubdued mind. If we ask what gives us greater harm, what can injure us more, a wild and crazy elephant or a wild and crazy mind the great Bodhisattva Shantideva said that the unsubdued mind poses a much greater danger and gives much greater harm. Similarly to the keeper of the elephant, who won't let the crazy elephant just run freely because of the great danger that it would pose to the people living in the area, one shouldn't let one's unsubdued mind run freely because of the danger it poses to others. Just as the keeper of the elephant uses different tools to subdue the elephant one has to use different tools to subdue one's unsubdued mind.

To subdue the elephant the keeper needs a pillar, a rope and a hook. Likewise, in order to subdue the mind, one needs the pillar of a meditational object, the rope of mindfulness and the hook of introspection. With these tools one can subdue the mind. If one lets one's mind just run freely following mental distractions it becomes an obstacle to one's practise of virtue and the attainment of inner happiness and hence peace will be elusive.

The great Lama Tsongkhapa said that once the mind is subdued one becomes the lord of one's mind, the master of one's mind. One can then place one's mind on any virtuous object and meditate on that object as one wishes. If you look at the elephant keeper, a human being who is comparatively much smaller and weaker than a crazy elephant, it might seem surprising that they can subdue an elephant that is much stronger and bigger than they are, but it is still possible. After having been subdued with the hook and the rope the elephant will follow whatever commands the elephant rider gives; directing it with the hook here and there. Likewise, one can subdue one's mind and, after having subdued one's mind, one will be the master of one's mind and can meditate on whatever virtuous object one chooses.

One has to bind one's mind to the pillar, which is the meditational object with the rope of mindfulness and then, with the hook of mental introspection, one has to investigate how well the mind is placed on the meditational object and correct it if necessary. Is it still meditating properly or has some lack of clarity occurred or has it has been diverted and then rectify the mistake.

By meditating in such a way the mind will become more and more stable. The length of time that one will be able to remain mindful of the object will become more prolonged and then, at a certain time, the mind becomes

very flexible and one attains mental pliancy. That mental pliancy then induces physical pliancy and through the attainment of physical pliancy something happens in the body and one attains the bliss of physical pliancy that then pervades the body. That bliss of physical pliancy in turn induces the bliss of mental pliancy and in this way one attains the bliss of mental and physical pliancy and this marks the attainment of calm abiding.

In order to meditate place yourself in the proper meditation posture. In very simple terms the aim of meditation is to regain control of one's mind from afflictions and delusions. At the present time our mind is under the control of afflictions and delusions and the purpose of meditation is to regain control of the mind from these afflictions and delusions. Therefore one has to bring the mind back home, focusing it internally, stop it engaging external objects and instead focus the mind internally.

First we have to focus the mind 100% internally. When you get a feeling that the mind has been focused internally you remain in that state for some time. While remaining very gently in that state, let your mind stay without any object for a short while. Then, when you feel that the mind is again trying to escape to an external object, very gently place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Let it enter the breathing. We can meditate in that manner on the coming and going of the breath for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

You should try to meditate in this manner on a regular basis. You should do it in a very leisurely and relaxed manner. Do not stress yourself with meditation but meditate in a very relaxed and leisurely or slow manner, taking it easily. If one tries to push a lot internally it won't work. One has to practise meditation slowly and leisurely, step by step. We are already living in a very stressful environment and there are many external stresses that we are encountering. If, on top of that, we place internal stresses on our mind it doesn't work. It doesn't work that way and it can cause some unpleasant things to happen in the mind. Then, because one doesn't have internal peace and calm one finds it difficult to bear external busy-ness and external stress. It is important that you should meditate regularly but you should do it very gently and leisurely, taking it easy.

Because of being so busy some people get into the situation of not being able to meet their commitments properly. Having taken on many daily commitments and being very busy they are not being able to meet their commitments properly, even just reciting them. I am not talking about meditation but not even being able to recite the words properly. You may also have the situation where, having been busy all day, you are too tired in the evening and when you try to say your prayers you are constantly nodding off.

You should meditate regularly. It doesn't need to be a very long time. One can determine the length of the meditation oneself. It can be 10 minutes or 15 minutes or whatever. Length doesn't matter so much. It is more important that one does it regularly. One should set aside

a certain time every day for meditation. Then one should take care that one doesn't miss the time one set aside. It is like that for all types of activities that we do. If we want to be successful in those activities we have to set aside time to engage in them. Then, when the time comes, we have to take care not to miss it, not to waste it. Similarly, we should set aside some time every day for meditation and then we should take care that we don't miss that time. And the time can be 10 minutes, 15 minutes, that's up to you.

4.1.1.3. The way for the disciple to rely upon the spiritual friend

4.1.1.3.1. The way of relying in thought

4.1.1.3.1.2. Recalling the teacher's kindness and generating respect

In the past sessions we've been talking about the relationship between the student that listens to the Dharma and the teacher that explains the Dharma. We went through the way a student should listen to the Dharma and the way the teacher explains the Dharma and if that is done properly there is great benefit for both the teacher and the student.

We have started with the way the student should rely upon the spiritual friend and we completed the part that consists of training the mind in faith. Now we have come to the part that is training the mind in respect, which is basically remembering the kindness of the teacher and keeping in mind all the benefits, all the good things, that come about if one relies properly upon the spiritual friend.

One has been wandering around in cyclic existence for a long time. It is through the kindness of the spiritual friend, through the kindness of the teacher, that one becomes aware of this wandering and that one can liberate oneself from it. One has been obscured for a long time by ignorance and now, through the kindness of the teacher, one has woken from the sleep of ignorance. The teacher is the one that wakens one from the sleep of ignorance. When one wakes up in the morning and one rubs one's eyes so one can see clearly again. It is similar when one wake from the sleep of ignorance and generates wisdom. One can see clearly. This also occurs through the kindness of the teacher. In order to eliminate one's ignorance, in order to eliminate one's 'not knowing', one needs to rely upon someone who does know and who can help one to overcome one's ignorance; one's not knowing. This applies not just to the Dharma but to all areas of life.

The teacher is the one that pulls one out from the ocean of cyclic existence. After having sunk in the ocean of cyclic existence, one is pulled out of that ocean by the teacher. The teacher shows those that have chosen a wrong path the proper, pure path. This is something that we all can see. The teacher liberates one from the bonds of the prison of cyclic existence. The prison of cyclic existence is actually one's contaminated aggregates. One's contaminated aggregates are the prison of cyclic existence to which one is bound by karma and delusion. The teacher liberates one from that prison of cyclic existence.

The teacher liberates one from the contaminated aggregates and then bestows the rain that pacifies the fires of the various afflictive delusions such as desire and so forth. One should generate the understanding that these are things that the teacher does for one.

If one wishes to pacify the fire of attachment one needs to rely upon an antidote that can overcome attachment. Only someone who knows the antidote against attachment can overcome attachment. One needs to be shown that antidote. In order to overcome the various afflictive delusions, such as anger and attachment, one needs to be familiar with the antidotes through which one can overcome attachment and anger. In order to become familiar with those antidotes one needs to be shown them by a teacher. So it is through the kindness of the teacher that one can subdue the various afflictions such as attachment and anger.

These are some of the various kindnesses that one receives from the teacher. There are also many other kindnesses that we know about, such as giving teachings and so forth. We can illustrate the kindness of the teacher with an analogy. If a person has eaten poison and food and medicine, and someone comes along who, first of all, can draw out or transform the poison, secondly can transform the food into medicine and thirdly can transform the medicine into nectar we would say that person is indeed very kind. We would say that person does a great service.

The first instance, having eaten poison, is an analogy for having created all the various negativities, which one can purify through the kindness of the Lama. Then one can transform the various merits that one creates, which is like having eaten food. Through the kindness of the teacher one can transform them into causes for rebirth into the human realm or a divine realm and liberation. One can also transform those merits that are created just for individual liberation alone. They are like having eaten medicine. They can then be transformed into nectar by transforming them into causes for complete enlightenment. In this way one receives many benefits from the teacher.

The teacher is immensely kind to oneself. In fact the teacher is kinder to one than the Buddha because at the present stage one doesn't really have direct access to the Buddha. One would only see the Buddha directly when one has already reached high spiritual stages. It is said that receiving teachings from one's teacher now is like the teacher giving food to one just when one is at the very edge of dying from starvation. The teacher comes along and nurtures one with food as one is just at the edge of dying from starvation. Receiving teachings from the Buddha is like receiving food when one is very well off because one will only receive teachings from the Buddha when one is already spiritually highly advanced. At the present stage one receives the teachings only from one's teacher. There is a very great meaning in that. There is a very deep point to this teaching.

You have to always keep in mind that if you want to do something about your situation, if you want to change

your situation, you can do that. It is in your own hands. The Lama provides one with the nourishment of the wisdom that can distinguish between right and wrong, that can distinguish between white karmas and black karmas. One is nourished at a time when one is at the edge of starvation, is completely starved of such wisdom and understanding, and is at the edge of dying. The teacher provides one with that information, with that knowledge. Then, through one's own effort, one is prevented from dying and one's situation improves. From one's own effort one can increase one's wisdom and develop oneself further and further and become more and more healthy and more and more well off. This will later equal the more advanced stages when one also receives teachings directly from the Buddha. At the beginning one only receives teachings from one's teacher.

These are the benefits of relying upon a spiritual friend. After having listened to the benefits of relying properly upon a spiritual friend a question might arise, "Are there disadvantages of not relying upon a spiritual friend?" If you look at our situation we have to say that it is the result of not relying upon a spiritual friend. We all experience the disadvantages of not having relied upon a spiritual friend or of not relying upon a spiritual friend now. It is similar to going in school. If one does not make use of the opportunity for study and gaining knowledge from the teachers one ends up ignorant and one has a lack of knowledge. Likewise, not knowing how to practise the Dharma and not having knowledge of the Dharma and of Dharma practice is a result of not having relied upon a spiritual friend, of not relying on a spiritual friend now.

We have two things that are slightly different. We have the disadvantages that one gets from not relying upon a spiritual friend and then we have the disadvantages that arise when one breaks one's relationship with a spiritual friend after having relied upon one. We will go into those next time. Do you have some questions?

Question inaudible.

The question is the relationship between equanimity and choosing friends. You might think that when you practise equanimity that you don't have any friends, enemies and strangers any more. That is not the case. A mind of equanimity means a mind that is free from attachment to friends and aversion to enemies but it doesn't mean that one doesn't have any enemies, friends or strangers any more.

There's also the immeasurable equanimity that acts as a preliminary condition for the generation of bodhicitta. Further we have the immeasurable equanimity that one meditates on subsequent to the generation of bodhicitta. These two types of immeasurable equanimity are a little bit different. The immeasurable equanimity that one meditates on as a preliminary to the generation of bodhicitta, as a preliminary to recognising all sentient beings as having been one's mother, is the equanimity where one creates an equal outlook within one's own mind. One generates a state of mind that is free from attachment to friends and aversion to enemies. The

immeasurable equanimity that one meditates on after having generated bodhicitta, that one meditates on in order to increase one's bodhicitta, is an equanimity where the object is others. After having firstly generated equanimity within one's mind one then wishes others to have this state of equanimity, free from attachment and anger.

When we meditate on the initial equanimity, and we visualise in front of us a friend, an enemy and a stranger we have different mental states arising with regards to those three types of persons. We will have attachment with regards to the friend, aversion with regards to the enemy and ignorance with regards to the stranger. One has to equalise one's mental outlook. One has to generate a mental outlook that regards those three types of persons equally, with the same mental state.

Without equalising one's outlook, without pacifying the three types of reactions that one has with regards to those three types of people, one won't be able to generate non-discriminating love and compassion. One won't be able to generate great compassion and love.

After having generated bodhicitta one has already generated equanimity. When one meditates on immeasurable equanimity subsequently to having generated bodhicitta one wishes all sentient beings to have that equanimity and one makes a determination to bring that equanimity about. One says, "I will bring it about". One requests blessings from one's teacher to be able to establish all sentient beings in a state of equanimity.

Question: How to avoid wanting to do more virtues actions when rejoicing?

When you meditate on rejoicing you recollect all the good, virtuous things that you have done. You meditate on those. If you get the wish to do more, there is nothing wrong with that. If you feel that you want to do more virtuous things there's nothing wrong with that in general. However you have to be realistic about what you can do. There are certain practitioners that make the determination that they are going to become enlightened in one lifetime but they become very disappointed when it doesn't happen. When we say that we have to take it slowly and easily it is also for the purpose of avoiding that type of discouragement when the reality sets in.

Question: How to prepare for the Mahamudra retreat with Rinpoche next year?

I don't know. I'm not sure how Rinpoche is planning to organise the retreat. In general, when we talk about Mahamudra we talk about very advanced practice. I also don't know whether Rinpoche is planning to do it in relation to tantra or how he is planning to do it. So I don't really know what you could do as a preparation. In general, you have to have a pure mind, a good attitude.

First you have to attain calm abiding. So it would be good if you became more familiar with the way of attaining calm abiding and train a little bit in that. You have to know how to meditate on calm abiding taking consciousness itself as the meditational object. You to

become familiar with how one has to meditate to attain calm abiding by taking mind itself as the object. There are quite a lot of things to consider.

Question: If I don't have attained calm abiding yet would it be pointless to do the retreat?

You have to go to the retreat because you haven't attained calm abiding. The reason why you've got to meditate is in order to attain calm abiding. So you have to become familiar with the way of meditating on calm abiding; how it is done, and practice it. Then when Rinpoche is teaching calm abiding you will immediately know what he is talking about. You will immediately be able to relate to that.

You have to consider the various conducive conditions and the various adverse conditions. For example the primary adverse condition that prevents the attainment of calm abiding is laziness. Of the five faults, the five adverse conditions that prevent the attainment of calm abiding, the first one is laziness. Laziness is that which prevents us from starting meditating at all. So you should study those, the antidotes and the five adverse conditions and so forth.

The mudra that is talked about here is the wisdom that realises emptiness. There are differences regarding the mind with which one realises emptiness when one practises Mahamudra according to the sutra tradition or according to the tantra tradition. According to the sutra tradition it will be just ordinary mental consciousness; ordinary wisdom realising emptiness. In the tantra tradition it will be the mind of clear light. But in both cases you have to be familiar with emptiness. In tantra when one talks about mudra one refers to is something that one can't go without. In tantra, one cannot attain realisations, without the wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness. Mudra means a seal. When one talks about the 'Mahamudra' one talks about the great seal. A seal is something that one cannot do without, that one can't transgress. Once the king has put his seal on something then that's it. You can't go beyond that. Likewise, you definitely need that wisdom realising emptiness.

Question: How can I avoid assuming the bad qualities in the behaviour of my friends?

You don't conform to their bad behaviour. If, for example, you have a friend who smokes cigarettes you don't start smoking yourself. If you don't start smoking yourself you haven't conformed to the bad habit of the other. But if you start smoking yourself then you have conformed with the habit of the other person. Likewise, if you have a friend who drinks alcohol, as long as you don't start drinking alcohol yourself then you haven't conformed with their bad habit.

That is actually a situation where you would be very well advised to be quite careful. Let's say you do not smoke. Initially your friends who smoke will give you cigarettes. They will say "Oh, just have one of my cigarettes". You know you don't have to pay any money yourself. They will give you the cigarettes. Similarly with alcohol. If they drink but you don't drink they will say, "Ah, don't worry, just have a drink on me". So in the beginning you

don't need to pay yourself. You will get the cigarettes and the alcohol from your friends. But once you have taken on the habit nobody will give you the cigarettes and the alcohol. (*laughter*). After you have taken on the habit one difficulty that arises is that you have to pay for it yourself. It becomes a burden on your pocket.

Question: How do we find a spiritual friend who has the five or the ten qualities?

Not someone who has the three qualities (*laughter*)? To find a qualified spiritual friend is very rare. To find someone who has ten qualities is very rare. To find someone who has five qualities or even three qualities is also very rare. It becomes important that one applies one's own discriminative wisdom and it is very important that one becomes one's own teacher. For example, for a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation, two types of spiritual friend are explained – the external one and the internal one.

The external friend is the one that one relies upon to receive teachings. The internal one refers to the internal qualities of method and wisdom. One should generate the understanding that the internal quality of method and wisdom are one's spiritual friends. The Buddha himself said that one has to act as one's own protector.

As was explained at the beginning, bring the mind back home and then focusing it internally place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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