
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can do some meditation as usual. First of all please seat yourself in the seven or eight point Vairochana posture. We have to consider that happiness and suffering come about through the different states of our mind. The state of our mind, our mental state, determines whether we have a happy experience or a suffering experience.

As it says in the sutra that I have already quoted many times says one is one's own responsibility and asks how could one be saved by another person. By subduing one's mind one can obtain happiness. It is one's own responsibility to liberate oneself from one's problems and to subdue one's mind in order to attain happiness. This is not something that can be done for one by somebody else. It says that a subdued mind is a happy mind. If one's mind is well-subdued one's life experience will be a happy experience.

As I have said many times, we are always engaging in activities in order to attain happiness. In fact all of the activities that we engage in we do with the motivation of wanting to attain happiness and avoid suffering. Some of us, for example, are working many, many hours every day, 15 or 16 hours every day, with the idea that what we are doing is going to provide happiness. If, however, we look at our present situation and check whether we attained the happiness that we hoped to attain, not even talking about ultimate and perfect happiness, we find that even small, temporary happiness seems to be elusive despite the huge effort that one is engaging in, or that one has engaged in all one's life. The desired result is somehow elusive.

The reason for this is that even though one has engaged in a great many actions that were designed to give happiness as one didn't engage in the action of subduing one's mind one wasn't successful. The key to having a happy life experience is to subdue one's mind. This is something that, up until now, one hasn't tried to do. Therefore one should make the determination that from now on, 'I'm not going to let myself fall under the control of the disturbing mind for even one moment'.

If one reflects on the pointlessness of an activity and one starts to perceive that activity as fruitless, pointless, cumbersome and so forth then, automatically in one's mind, one will let go of that activity. One won't be attracted to that activity and will immediately be able to let go and experience a lessening of tension and relaxation within one's mind. That is the principle that we have to apply to our normal samsaric attitudes; our normal ways of looking for happiness. By seeing them as

pointless, without essence, unsuccessful, actually detrimental to what one wants to accomplish and so forth, then eventually, within one's mind, the grasping at these different types of objects and these different types of activities will lessen. That lessening of grasping will generate space and relaxation within the mind. The mind can let go and will become more spacious and relaxed and generate more peace and happiness.

One should combine this practice of looking at samsaric worldly activities as being without essence and without point with the wisdom that understands the law of cause and effect - the wisdom that understands what should be adopted, what should be practised and what should be abandoned. When we generate renunciation towards samsara we shouldn't focus on the external world. We shouldn't have the thought focusing on the external world, 'Oh, yes. This is samsara. This is only worldly so I'm going to renounce this. I'm going to renounce that'. Actual renunciation is focused on one's own body. Actual renunciation relates to oneself not to external objects. One generates, for example, the thought that the physical body that we have as ordinary individuals is unsatisfying and that no matter what one does for the body one will never attain complete satisfaction through that.

One only has to look at all the different activities that one engages in order to satisfy the needs of one's body. There is no end to it and there will never be complete satisfaction attained in such a way. There's always something wrong when, for example, one tries to make one's body presentable. There are problems with wearing matching clothes so one is worrying about whether the upper clothes and the lower clothes are matching. There's something wrong with the lower clothes or there's something wrong with the shirt or jacket that one is wearing. Then one wants to match one's hairstyle to one's clothing. Then, if there's nothing wrong with the hairstyle, one finds something wrong with the hair colour. Then there are problems with the shoes and the socks that one is wearing. There's an endless possibility for problems. Basically, it is all quite pointless. All the different types of things that one does in this regard are without essence. They don't really have any deeper meaning or point.

When we look at our relationship with our body the situation is that, at the present time, one is really under the control of one's body. If we look at what controls the body we find the body is controlled by the mental afflictions and karma. By reflecting upon oneself in such a way one can generate renunciation. One's life and oneself is so under the control of one's body, the needs of one's body and so forth, that one doesn't really have that much control over the body. What really controls one's body is one's karma and one's mental afflictions. One is lost somewhere in there under the control of karma and the mental afflictions and one's body. By reflecting upon one's situation one will generate renunciation and then, in dependence upon this renunciation, if one takes certain vows those vows will become stable. Reflecting upon one's situation in such a way, perceiving what one's situation really is, will introduce a new way of thinking.

It will introduce a new outlook on life and that will be very fruitful.

Adopting this new outlook and this new perception of oneself opens the door to a whole new world with many new possibilities that one didn't know about. Generating this new type of insight and wisdom a new outlook on life that one finds very surprising. One finds oneself in a new and very pleasant world where one can look around and wonder at all the new and beautiful possibilities that open up. Adopting this new outlook on life is a very worthwhile and fruitful thing to do.

Since all of that doesn't come about without meditation we can now meditate for a few minutes. Bring the mind back home. Don't let it be distracted by disturbing thoughts to external objects. Instead, recall the mind from the external world and collect it internally, focusing it inwards. Then, after having completely placed the mind internally in this manner place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in this manner on the coming and going of the breath for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

4. How to guide the disciples with the actual instructions

4.1. How to rely on the spiritual friend, the root of the path

4.1.2. A brief presentation of the way to strive

4.1.2.1. Actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session

6 Preparatory practices -

Last time we explained, in general, how one should adopt the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta as the foundation for one's meditation. Now we are going to explain in more detail how one generates the motivation of refuge, how one goes for refuge and bodhicitta. Of the 6 preparatory practices this falls into the third preparatory practice that consists of adopting the right physical position and the right mental state as the best basis for one's meditation. The right mental state refers to refuge and bodhicitta.

Refuge and bodhicitta are contained within the four line refuge and bodhicitta verse that you recite before the teachings. When it says in the refuge prayer, 'I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha', that shows the objects of refuge. We have the Buddha, who is, for example, Shakyamuni Buddha. Then the Dharma. The Dharma is sometimes referred to as the truth of the path and the truth of cessation. The Sangha refers to those beings that have attained the truth of the path and the truth of cessation.

There's a slight difference in the specific Mahayana refuge. Here refuge in the Dharma refers to the refuge in the truth of the path and the truth of cessation attained by a Bodhisattva, the Mahayana truth of cessation and the Mahayana truth of the path. The Sangha also refers to the Mahayana Sangha, the Buddha is the same.

I go for refuge until I am enlightened

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

By my merits created through generosity and so forth

May I attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The refuge and bodhicitta prayer says, 'I go for refuge until I am enlightened'. That shows the time span that one is intending to go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is from now on until one attains enlightenment. From now on until one attains, for example, the Dharmakaya body, the wisdom truth body, the enlightened mind of a Buddha. It is not just until one dies but until one attains enlightenment.

When it says, 'I go for refuge', this shows who is going for refuge, oneself. To whom is one going for refuge? To the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Until when is one going for refuge? Until the attainment of the enlightened mind of the Buddha which is also simultaneous with the attainment of the different types of emanation body of the Buddha, and the enjoyment body of the Buddha and so forth. The reason that one is going for refuge is because one has complete faith that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha can rescue one from one's problems. By recognising one's problems and sufferings one has complete faith that the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha can rescue one from those problems and goes to them for refuge.

The motivation for going for refuge is that one wants to have happiness and avoid suffering. Upon having complete faith that the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha can help one to achieve that aim of the attainment of happiness and the alleviation of suffering, one goes for refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. One's state of mind is to completely entrust oneself to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Similarly, if one has a problem, a sickness, and goes to a doctor then one completely entrusts oneself to the doctor, thinking, 'Oh, the doctor, he/she knows completely, perfectly how I'm going to be cured from this disease'. So one completely entrusts oneself to the doctor. Likewise one completely entrusts oneself to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, thinking, 'They know best what I have to do in order to attain happiness'. When one experiences suffering one has a certain type of fear and apprehension regarding those problems. In order to become free from those problems one goes for refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

The first two lines of the prayer deal with refuge. The second two lines deal with the generation of bodhicitta. It says here, 'May I attain complete enlightenment through the accumulation of the merits of generosity and so forth'. Here again the basis of the generation of bodhicitta is oneself. This is expressed in the two lines. The causes of the generation of bodhicitta and enlightenment are the merits that one attains through the practices of generosity, morality, meditation and so forth.

When it says, 'May I attain enlightenment for the welfare of sentient beings' the beneficiaries of one's generation of bodhicitta, are sentient beings. One is doing it for the welfare of sentient beings. So we have two purposes. On one side one has the wish to accomplish the welfare of

others and, on the other side, there is the wish to attain complete enlightenment. Bodhicitta is characterised by those two aspirations - the aspiration to accomplish the welfare of others and the aspiration to attain complete enlightenment for that purpose.

I'm not quite sure of the sequence in English in the two lines where it says, 'May I attain complete enlightenment'. In Tibetan it comes at the end. So when one meditates on that statement, 'May I become enlightened' that is the actual generation of bodhicitta; when one meditates on the actual bodhicitta.

When one meditates on these words, 'May I attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings', that meditation becomes a meditation on bodhicitta. Initially it is a meditation on the aspirational bodhicitta, combining it with the thought, 'May this aspiration never decline and only increase more and more'. One then extends that thought further by thinking, 'In order to actually attain this enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings I'm going to engage in the practices of the 6 perfections, generosity, morality and so forth'. This then becomes the generation of the engaging bodhicitta, the determination to engage in the practice of the 6 perfections in order to attain complete enlightenment.

In order to stabilise and increase the engaging bodhicitta one can meditate on the four immeasurable thoughts.

It is completely unacceptable that sentient beings are not free from suffering and its cause

May all sentient beings be free from suffering and its cause.

I, myself, will bring this about.

Please, guru deity, bless me that I may be able to do so.

It is completely unacceptable that sentient beings don't have happiness and its cause.

May all sentient beings have happiness and its cause.

I, myself, will bring this about.

Please, guru deity, bless me that I may be able to do so.

It is completely unacceptable that sentient beings aren't unified with untainted happiness, lacking any suffering.

May all sentient beings be unified with untainted happiness, lacking any suffering.

I, myself, will bring this about.

Please, guru deity, bless me that I may be able to do so.

It is completely unacceptable that sentient beings don't abide in equanimity, free from attachment and anger.

May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free from attachment and anger.

I, myself, will bring this about.

Please, guru deity, bless me that I may be able to do so.

In the case of immeasurable compassion, for example, one initially meditates, 'It is completely unacceptable that sentient beings are not free from suffering and its cause'. This is called the immeasurable aspiration.

The second is, 'May all sentient beings be free from suffering and its cause'. That is the immeasurable prayer.

Then 'I, myself, will bring this about'. This is the immeasurable, superior thought. One takes the responsibility upon oneself.

And then 'Please, guru deity, bless me that I may be able to do so' is referred to as either the immeasurable blessing or the immeasurable wishing thought.

This sequence can be applied to all the four immeasurables. Initially there is the immeasurable aspiration, where one meditates, 'It is unacceptable that (for example) sentient beings don't have happiness and its cause'. This becomes stronger when one makes the immeasurable prayer, 'May all sentient beings have happiness and its cause'. That becomes even stronger, becoming the immeasurable superior thought, when one takes upon oneself the responsibility, meditating, 'I, myself, will bring this about'. Then comes the immeasurable blessing or the immeasurable wishing thought, 'Please, guru deity, bless me that I may be able to bring this about'.

When we ask for a blessing we are asking for some kind of pure power or ability that is transferred into our mind. One is requesting this blessing, this power, this energy that one needs in order to engage in those activities.

Next time we will deal with the fourth preparatory practice. The practices of refuge and bodhicitta are explained more extensively in a later part of the text. Next time we will do the fourth preparatory practice. Just as refuge and bodhicitta are part of the prayers that we do, some of the other prayers that we do form the fourth preparatory practice. If you have already read through those prayers as a preparation for the next class, or the next two classes, you will be very familiar with what these classes are going to be about. The explanation of the fourth preparatory practice will become an explanation of the rest of the prayers that we do before the teaching.

So do you have a question? But a good question.

Question: I am afraid to ask for blessings.

Why are you afraid?

Answer inaudible.

If you're asking for some good ability, for some good energy, you don't need to be afraid. If you are asking for some kind of harmful energy or for some kind of harmful ability then you should be worried.

Question inaudible.

First of all, when you meditate on the four foundations of mindfulness, the Vipassana meditation, there are different types of meditation involved. For example, when you meditate on the mindfulness of the body you meditate on the different characteristics of the body and so forth. I don't know whether you were given the proper explanation of those practices.

Generally it is alright to do visualisations as the mind needs to have an object upon which it can focus. Certain teachers say that the mind can remain without an object

but that is not really possible. The mind needs to have an object. When you say that you focus the mind internally it needs to have something upon which to focus. If you don't have a focal object for your meditation practice and you just turn the mind inwards, then what usually happens is that you just generate or create a multitude of different types of thoughts. If we focus the mind internally and remain in a state without an object it is not quite correct. There is still an object there.

If, for example, you take the mind itself as the meditational object then you don't use visualisations. There are meditations where you use visualisations and there are meditations where you don't use visualisations. There are different objects. For example, when you meditate on the foundation of mindfulness of the body it's actually called the closed mindfulness of the mind. The object of this meditation is the mind itself, which becomes an object of the mindfulness. The mindfulness and the mind become inseparable. Your focus on mindfulness is only aware of the mind itself. This then generates a particular type of internal bliss.

Another type of meditation is where you focus on the coming and going of the breath. If someone is completely absorbed in meditation on the coming and going of the breath they will have no awareness of external objects. When one meditates on the closed mindfulness of the mind once again outer objects won't appear to the meditator. The only object of one's attention will be one's mind. It also will be only internal.

We can leave it here. As was explained in the beginning bring the mind back home, focus it inwards, 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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