
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As we usually do we can meditate for a little bit. Seat yourself in a good, but relaxed posture. Once seated in the appropriate meditation posture one has to adjust one's mental state. If one has the appropriate mental state, and one has physical as well as mental happiness, then one is able to benefit others accordingly. Once seated comfortably one needs to work on subduing the mind and regaining control of the mind from disturbing thoughts. One needs to take the mind away from the control of disturbing thoughts. If one doesn't do that then, as you all know, even though one might sit there physically very relaxed for a long time, it will not be of great benefit.

By subduing the mind and taking the mind out from under the control of the disturbing thoughts one attains mental pliancy or mental workability. The mind becomes very serviceable and workable. This, in turn, induces physical pliancy and physical pliancy induces the pliancy of subtle energy. This subtle energy pervades all of the body and induces the bliss of physical pliancy which, in turn, induces the bliss of mental pliancy or workability. In this sequence one attains the bliss of mental and physical pliancy through meditation. In this way, by having a relaxed mind, the mind is happy and the body feels happy and one gets a benefit from one's meditation.

When one meditates one has to retake control of the mind from disturbing thoughts. Otherwise the mind is always busy with some object of the past, present or future and it's always involved in some intense thinking. The mind being very involved in these different types of thought processes concerning objects of the past, present and future also does something to one's body. The body becomes very hard and it becomes very difficult for one to have free-flowing, easy going, coming and going of the breath. In order to counteract that situation one needs to let go of the different objects of the past, present and future.

One needs to develop a mind that is more relaxed, joyful and easy going. In this way one has more happiness in one's life. Here I am not talking about the happiness of liberation or enlightenment, very high, uncontaminated types of happiness, but just

about having an easier life and some more happiness in one's day to day life. A big part of the problem is that one's mind is very accustomed to distracting and harmful behaviour and distracting and harmful mental patterns. What one needs to do is one needs to change these mental patterns and the behaviour of the mind to something more wholesome, positive and pure.

Now you need to bring the mind back home, turn it inwards, stop engaging external objects and instead focus the mind inwards. Then, after having turned the mind inwards in this way, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. This placement shouldn't be done in a dual manner - the mind over here looking at the breathing over there. The mind should enter the breathing and become completely one with the breath and stay vividly focused within the breathing. We can meditate for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

I hope I didn't disturb you in your deep meditative equipoise. You might think, 'Oh, I was meditating very nicely and deeply and then the Geshe couldn't help himself but start talking'.

I think it would be very useful and beneficial for you if you were to meditate on a regular basis. Our problem is not that we don't know how to meditate, our problem is that we have an unwillingness to sit down and meditate, and even if we overcome that unwillingness, the mind doesn't abide on the object.

One doesn't need to look towards the outside for one's meditation practice and one doesn't need to be preoccupied with what other people do. One just needs to translate one's knowledge of meditation into practise. That's what it means when it's said that one's own happiness is within one's own hands. One just has to make use of the knowledge of meditation that one possesses. Meditation, the subduing of the mind, comes about through one's own efforts. It won't happen by taking some pills or some medicine. There are no pills or medicine that will help one to meditate. Meditation has to come about through one's own effort. In certain exceptional cases it can happen that one is introduced to deep states of meditation through the great blessing of a Buddha or high Lama but in our case that is unlikely to happen. We have to rely on our own efforts and if one improves one's mind then the actions of one's body, speech and mind will improve; will be less harmful. If one just lets one's mind remain under the control of disturbing thoughts, and lets the mind degenerate, then the actions of one's body, speech and mind will be harmful. It is one's own choice.

In general, the practice of the Dharma brings about

an improvement in the actions of the person that practises the Dharma. From one's personal point of view one has to improve one's actions, one's behaviour, and that constitutes the practice of the Dharma. One has a certain power, a potential, in the mind for goodness to improve the mind. If one makes use of that power it will only benefit one. One will only reap benefit from that.

A brief presentation of the way to strive

The actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

The 6 preparatory practices: 5) Gathering merit and purifying negativities

Last time we were talking about the practice of purifying non-virtuous karmas, negative karmas. We said that there is no negativity that can't be purified with the four opponent powers. The one saving grace of negative karma, the one positive quality of negative karma, is that it can be purified. There is no negative karma that cannot be purified with the four opponent powers.

One needs to investigate the heaviness of the karma. In general, it is said that the karma of those that are skilful and proficient, a wise person, is lighter than the karma of the fools. The reason for this is that the person who is wise and skilful purifies karma with the four opponent powers while the foolish person doesn't do so.

On the one hand we have the four opponent powers and, on the other hand, we have the four results of a complete negative karma. Now we can look at which of the four opponent powers purifies which of the four results.

The power of reliance purifies the fruit of negative karma because, by taking refuge, one will not take rebirth in the lower realms.

The power of the thorough application of the antidote purifies the experience similar to the result. The experiences similar to the result are such things as a short life span, sickness and so forth. Those results are overcome with the power of the thorough application of the antidote. For example, with the application of the different virtuous practices one gets a long lifespan, a healthy life and so forth.

The power of repudiation, which is regret, purifies the disposition to engage in the action again in the future, i.e. the karmic result that is the action similar to the cause. Having a disposition to engage in the action again, such as having a future disposition for killing and so forth, is purified with the power of

regret, the power of repudiation.

Then we have the power of the promise. The power of the promise not to do the action again purifies the environmental result.

Then the question arises, 'What are the signs that show one has purified karma?' There are a variety of signs. We can go through a few. There is, however, no guarantee that just because one receives one of those signs that one has purified the karma. If the sign comes about through a sincere effort of purification then it is a sign that one has purified the karma. But if it just arises without any such effort then it doesn't indicate the purification of the karma.

One shouldn't have the thought, 'Oh, that's very practical, since I can purify the negative karma I can engage in all kinds of harmful and non-virtuous actions and it doesn't matter because I can purify it'. That is not a very wise attitude. The skilful way of practising is not to engage in to a non-virtuous action at all, which is the best. Then the next best thing of course is to purify the non-virtuous karma that one already created. The principal to follow is not to engage in new non-virtuous actions, and to stop the non-virtuous actions that one is engaging in.

For example, even though one can break one's arm and the bone will heal again, it will never be completely new. It will always show that breakage. It is the same with one's karma.

There are certain dreams that can arise as signs of purification of karma. Here are some examples: that one is drinking milk or eating curd, that dirt and impurities are being expelled from one's body, that different types of fearsome and ugly animals and insects are leaving one's body, of being in the light of the sun or the moon and the moon or the sun is shining on oneself, of climbing a high mountain, of seeing very radiant monks and nuns, but if the monk or the nun is not radiant there is a doubt about purification, and of overcoming different types of dark fearsome beings in one's dream.

One further point to consider is that if one is somebody who accepts the causal relationship between non-virtue and the result of non-virtue and purifies it, then one doesn't have to experience the result of non-virtuous karma. If someone doesn't accept that relationship and doesn't purify, that doesn't mean that that person doesn't have to experience the result of non-virtuous karma.

That completes the third limb of the seven limbs, the limb of purification and confession. The next limb is the limb of rejoicing. We can start with next time.

The first limb, the limb of prostration, counteracts

the mental affliction of pride.

The second limb, the limb of offering, counteracts the mental affliction of greed.

This third limb, the limb of confession and purification, counteracts all three poisons - anger, ignorance and attachment.

The fourth limb, the limb of rejoicing counteracts the mental affliction of jealousy.

It's good to know which mental affliction is counteracted by which practice. One has to analyse one's own mind and see which of the mental afflictions is more prevalent in one's mental continuum and then apply the appropriate antidote. If one finds that one is very jealous one can just look at that jealousy and first of all analyse whether it is something useful or whether it is something harmful. Is it something that improves one's quality of life and makes one a more happy person or is it something that makes one more miserable and causes more suffering and so forth? By finding that jealousy is a mental affliction that is an unsuitable state of the mind, one can then apply the appropriate antidote. It is the same with the other afflictions. That is the way one practises the Dharma. One doesn't analyse the afflictions in other people's minds and then try to counteract those. Instead one has to recognise the afflictions in one's own mind and then apply the respective antidote. The same goes for pride and so forth.

One has pride in one's mind, however one also has mental states that are free from pride. One has both, both are present within one's mental continuum at one time or the other and that shows that one can counteract pride and that there is an antidote towards pride present within one's mental continuum. By analysing the disadvantages of pride one will most likely find that it is not very useful and that one would like to get rid of it. At least, I think if someone is a Dharma practitioner that is what he or she would like to do. Maybe if one is not a Dharma practitioner one would prefer to keep the pride.

That is the way one counteracts the afflictions by habituating the mind with, in the case of pride, the mental state of non-pride. Concentrating the mind on the mental state that is free from pride and absorbing that mind again and again is a way one becomes free from pride over time. This is an example of the antidotes that one can apply. The more ultimate antidotes, such as the meditation on emptiness, are a little bit more difficult to apply.

So do you have a question?

Question: I met a Burmese monk who seemed to have a

somewhat discriminatory attitude towards Tibetan Buddhism. What is the difference between Tibetan Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism.

All Buddhist monks follow the Theravada tradition. The practice of becoming a monk, the vows and the practices of a monk, the rules to follow and so forth are all actually practices that belong to the Theravada tradition and are the same for all Buddhist monks. In some of the Theravada traditions they don't accept the Mahayana teachings as teachings of the Buddha. They don't accept the Mahayana and, of course, they also don't accept the tantric teachings.

There are many practices that relate to monastic discipline such as meditation on the four noble truths, a path that consists of method and wisdom, the three higher trainings and so forth, that are shared between all the Buddhist traditions. But there are certain Theravada traditions that don't accept the Mahayana. Even though the Mahayana was actually spread to those countries that we know as South East Asian countries in these days, such as Burma and Thailand and so forth, these countries are predominantly Theravada in these days because, somewhere along the line, they focused more on the Theravada teachings.

Having the view that the Mahayana is not the teaching of the Buddha shows that the person hasn't really studied the Buddha's teachings in great depth. In Tibet the studies done by the monks also include the teachings of the Theravada tradition. In Tibet the studies were all encompassing. One would study all the facets of the Buddha's teachings. A minimum of four years of the monastic study programme is spent studying the Theravada teachings. There are two years on monastic discipline and two years minimum on the Abhidharma teachings.

The Wheel of Sharp Weapons concerns itself with overcoming self-cherishing; learning how to cherish others more and have less self-cherishing. In the Hinayana teachings there is an emphasis on cherishing oneself more than others. The focus of the Hinayana teachings is more on self and the happiness of the self. That's why they are called the teachings of the lesser vehicle. They are called 'lesser' from the point of view of result as well as motivation. They aim for mere nirvana, which is a lesser result compared to full enlightenment, and their motivation is primarily for self-liberation. That doesn't mean that they are not compassionate and don't meditate on compassion. Primarily however, what they aim at in the long run is individual liberation only.

Question: "Is there a reasonable measure of attachment, or is there something we are allowed to be attached to?"

The answer to the first question, 'Is there a measure of attachment that we are allowed to have?', is 'no' (*laughter*). The situation is, as I have said before, that when the three conditions for the arousal of attachment come together attachment arises automatically. The three conditions are the proximity to the object, not having abandoned the delusion and having the seeds of the delusion in the mind and the presence of the distorted thinking that exaggerates the attractiveness of the object. When those three come together attachment will definitely be generated. What one has to do is, through continuous practice, to gradually lessen the attachment; the strength and amount of attachment that is generated. That happens gradually through one's practice.

You are going from a state of great attachment to lesser attachment. That's the way to practise, a practice of reduction, going along a path of reduction. It's important, for example, that the mind doesn't fall under the control of serious attachment that causes sickness and severe problems. Sometimes, for example, when one doesn't accomplish what one wants to accomplish it causes great distress in the mind because of one's attachment. Cracks might appear in the mind and so forth. One should definitely be very careful that one doesn't fall under the spell of these types of very harmful attachments.

With regard to the second question, 'Are there certain objects that we are allowed to be attached to?', the answer, again, is 'no'. There is no special permission. I can get the drift of your question. I told that story before. A young girl came to class and the same question came up. I think the student started to worry that she was not allowed to have any types of attachment so I said, 'Oh, as long as you get rid of the big attachments, then maybe a few small attachments are alright'. After class she came to me and said, 'Thank you very much, Geshe-la, that you allow me to have a few small attachments'. She was quite relieved and happy, so I can see the drift of where you are going. It is perfectly understandable because everybody feels that if one doesn't have attachment then one can't be happy.

Question: Wouldn't Guru devotion be a form of attachment.

The term 'Guru devotion' is a western invention. The more literal translation of the Tibetan words is 'reliance on the spiritual friend'. Therefore I asked Geshe-la about having faith in the teacher and that, of course, is not attachment. Having faith in a

teacher is not attachment. Faith is a virtuous mental factor, a virtuous consciousness, while attachment belonging to the desire realm; attachment for an object of the desire realm is non-virtuous.

As was explained at the beginning, turn the mind inwards, bringing it back home and place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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