
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual we can meditate for a little while. Meditating regularly helps one to prevent the mind from falling under the control of the mental afflictions. In ordinary terms, if the mind thinks in a one way, engaging certain objects, then that creates happiness. If the mind thinks in another way, engaging other objects, then that creates suffering in the mind. By being able to discern these two different ways of thinking, one can think 'Which one is more beneficial?' If one gives up the way of thinking that causes suffering, then one does not experience suffering, which is to one's benefit. If one adopts the way of thinking that causes happiness, then one will experience the happiness that would elude one for as long as one did not adopt that proper mental attitude.

The mind should be focused single-pointedly on an object, but initially we first direct the mind inwards. By stopping engagement with external objects, we direct the mind inwards. Then having directed the mind inwards, the mind is placed on the coming and going of the breath. Counting the breaths helps to focus on the breathing. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

If you were all to meditate regularly for a little bit, that would be very good, because it would help you to achieve some inner happiness. Everybody wants inner happiness, and you know that meditation is the way to go about it. So it is good to meditate regularly for a little bit.

4. How to guide with the actual instructions

4.1. The way of relying on the spiritual friend who is the root of the path

4.1.2. A brief presentation of the way to strive

4.1.2.2. The reason one needs to strive in two ways, eliminating misconceptions regarding the way of striving

Over the last few evenings we talked about how calm abiding, which is undisturbed by the conceptualising mind, and that can abide on the meditation object single-pointedly for how ever long it wants, has to be supported or preceded by analytical meditation. This was explained with an example. Lama Tsong Khapa explained the necessity of using analytical meditation to attain calm abiding. He established this point by using both sutras as well as some early Indian treatises such as those by Asanga. Today we will look at which factors actually

cause our mind to be distracted and obstruct the single-pointed abiding of the mind.

There are two factors that prevent one from attaining fully qualified calm abiding, which is also referred to as the single-pointed concentration with two characteristics. To be calm abiding it needs to be a single-pointed concentration that possesses two characteristics. The first characteristic is of course the single-pointed abiding of the mind on the object, which is undisturbed by mental wandering.

The two main obstructions to the attainment of calm abiding are **mental excitement** and **mental sinking**, or mental dullness. That is because the actual qualifying concentration has to be endowed with the single-pointed abiding of the mind (which is disrupted by mental excitement), as well as having clarity (which is prevented by mental sinking). In order to attain a fully qualified calm abiding or even single-pointed concentration, one needs to overcome mental excitement and mental sinking.

There is a sequence in which these two factors, mental excitement and mental sinking, are overcome.

At the beginning, one has to overcome the coarse **mental excitement**. This is when the mind actually strays away from the object. Mental excitement belongs to the family of 'attachment', so they are thoughts of attachment. When one has overcome the coarse mental excitement, and has reached the point where the mind then can abide single-pointedly internally, a subtle mental excitement can occur that still disrupts the meditation, without taking the mind completely away from the object.

When one then has overcome subtle mental excitement, then one has to deal with **mental sinking**- first coarse, and then subtle mental sinking. One needs to have clarity with intensity, and this clarity with intensity will not come about if one does not overcome mental sinking. But this only happens in the more advanced stage of the meditation, where one first overcomes coarse mental sinking and then overcomes subtle mental sinking. We will get to this in greater detail in the actual chapter on calm abiding.

To overcome the two faults of mental sinking and mental excitement one needs to rely on mindfulness and introspection. Mindfulness is the mental factor that can keep the object in mind on a continual basis. Introspection is the mental factor that checks up on the rest of the mind, checking on how it is meditating, whether it is still holding onto the object correctly or not and so forth. By relying on mindfulness and introspection, one can overcome mental excitement and mental sinking. These are the two conducive conditions for calm abiding.

Mental excitement and mental sinking are the two adverse conditions that obstruct the attainment of calm abiding, and mindfulness and introspection are

the two conducive conditions that facilitate the generation of calm abiding. When you meditate, you should be aware of this, and not forget about it.

For example to overcome mental sinking, if one visualises the object with a certain brightness or luminosity, for example meditating on the visualisation of a Buddha statue, then that helps to overcome mental sinking.

Mental sinking is a mind that is down, and what one needs to do is to build it up again. This one can do by, for example, thinking about the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, which is one of the recommended antidotes to mental sinking. Also, for example, when one feels down with oneself, one can counteract that by thinking about one's own qualities, and the qualities of one's mind, applying the principle that is taught in overcoming mental sinking to other parts of one's life. Mental sinking is a mind that is down, and it can be overcome by thinking about the qualities of one's mind, the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and so forth. One can also apply this in other aspects of one's life.

If one has strong awareness of such topics as impermanence, then that helps to cut off mental excitement. Because mental excitement is in the nature of attachment, thoughts of attachment and meditating on impermanence counteract attachment. Also, training in contentment is important, because that also counteracts the mental excitement, which is generated by thinking about the different positive and the desirable characteristics of the object, and also by thinking of the object as permanent, and so forth. By analysing the opposite nature of the object, then one can counteract mental excitement.

We have completed here one of the first major outlines, which is how to rely on the spiritual friend.

4.2. How to train after having established a relationship with the spiritual friend

Now comes the second major outline, how to train after relying on the spiritual friend. After having or entrusted oneself to a spiritual friend, then we have

4.2.1. Exhorting the disciple to take the essence of this basis with endowments

4.2.2. How to take the essence of this basis with endowments.

4.2.1. Exhorting the disciple to take the essence of this basis with endowments

4.2.1.1. The identification of the basis of the freedoms and endowments

4.2.1.2. Contemplating the great meaning of this basis with freedom and endowments

4.2.1.3. Contemplating its rarity

4.2.1.1. The identification of the basis of the freedoms and endowments

First one has to become aware that one has indeed a very great opportunity in having this precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. Then, in order to become aware of its potential, one has to contemplate its great meaning, and all the things that one can do with it.

Here we talk about the precious human rebirth that has freedoms and endowments. To contemplate its freedoms, we have to be aware of the different experiences that one could have where one has no possibility to practise the Dharma. The freedom from those inopportune states then that makes it possible for one to practise the Dharma.

The endowments are the conducive conditions for the Dharma practice. Initially one has to explain the eight states of non-opportunity, but maybe we don't have to do that tonight.

It's very hot today, isn't it? If we practise while it is very hot, then it's of greater benefit. By experiencing some discomfort now one purifies many sufferings that one will then not have to experience as greater sufferings in the future. Do you have a question? Did somebody put up their hand?

Question: I find it very hard to find the right Buddha statue for doing my meditation. Here in the gompa there is one and I have another one at home. So when I want to focus on a statue in meditation it is very hard to know which to pick?

Probably you should use your own statue. If you always try to use the statues of others, then of course the mind gets confused. In general there is no problem in thinking about different Buddhas because it is virtuous to think about Buddhas. For the purpose of single-pointed calm abiding, however, it is good to always use the same object. Just use your own Buddha statue and don't worry about the Buddha statues of others.

For example, even though there are many husbands, you don't worry about all the other husbands that exist, you focus on your own husband. If you were to focus on all the other husbands, then your mind would get confused (*laughter*). If you have meditated very well on your own statue, then when you see other statues, your mind won't become confused because your mind will be familiar with your own statue. Likewise if your mind is very familiar with your own husband, you won't get confused even though you meet other husbands. Just because you see many other people, you don't forget about your husband, because of being familiar with him.

Geshe-la says it's actually a good question. When we take refuge and so forth, doing the different prayers, then we visualise different Buddhas, but when we meditate on calm abiding we visualise only one Buddha and always the same Buddha, and we also think of that Buddha as being the essence, actually being in nature all the Buddhas of the ten directions, and in that way then you get also the

blessing in your mind.

Question: When we come in Geshe-la tells us to focus of the object of breathing in and out. When we do this how do we overcome mental dullness, e.g. do we visualise brightness.

There's a distinction between dullness in general, and the mental dullness or the mental sinking that occurs in the context of calm abiding meditation. Really the mental sinking that occurs in the context of the calm abiding meditation is not our concern at the beginning - it wouldn't occur for us at this stage. Probably what you refer to is a general dullness that is a heaviness of body and mind. That is different. It might help to think about something that refreshes the mind, something that is clear and fresh. For example when we feel sleepy, but think about something clear and refreshing, then it can also wake up the mind again. There is a certain contraption that one can fasten to one's forehead that will have the effect of releasing a drop of water onto one's nose when one starts to nod off.

Question: Why is it so difficult to change the mind?

It is because one hasn't really practised the Dharma before, so it is because of strong familiarity. For example, for somebody who doesn't drink much, just a little bit of alcohol can make them completely drunk and out of control, doing all sorts of things. As time progresses, however, the reverse happens, and even though they drink a huge amount of alcohol, they actually need that in order to remain completely normal. They will not get out of control or drunk, they just need the alcohol in order to remain normal. At that stage abandoning alcohol becomes very difficult. Similarly with cigarettes - once one is used to smoking, then it becomes very difficult to give up smoking because of the familiarity.

For example, our mind is very accustomed to being distracted and going off to all kinds of objects, so it will not give up this habit very easily. It takes some time to give up this habit because of the strong familiarity and habituation.

If a child is very used to being out and about all day long, it will experience great difficulty if it finds itself in a situation where it has to stay in one room. If it's one's own child, one will find it very difficult to keep one's own child inside in the room if it has been used to going out and about all the time for many years. Likewise one's own mind has been used to going to all kinds of objects for a long time, and so it is difficult to get it to calm down and remain inside, so to speak. If one can come to a stage where small conditions don't immediately cause one to become angry any more, or where one doesn't generate strong attachment, or if one can avoid generating strong mental afflictions like jealousy, then that is already a good step in the right direction. That is already a very good aim.

In this process of subduing or reining in the mind, it is important to not lose one's self-confidence and one's strength of mind. One needs to remind oneself that the mind is trainable in anything. It is a creature of habit and if one tries to establish positive mental patterns, then even though they might just be weak at the beginning, the same principle still applies. The mind will follow those patterns sooner or later. One just has to persist for long enough.

Question: Could you describe the significance of the Day of Miracles.

It is the end of the time when the Buddha subdued many sentient beings by performing miracles. It is a month where there was a competition between the Buddha and other different Indian practitioners. They tried to outdo each other in different magical performances. In this way, the Buddha subdued many sentient beings and that's why this month is regarded as being very special. Most of that happened in Shravasti. It is explained at the beginning of the *Vajracutter sutra*, how the Buddha spent lots of time in Shravasti, how he went about his daily life there and so forth, how he got up in the morning and then went begging around and so forth. Then the Sangha there would prostrate three times to the Buddha and circumambulate three times, and then Subhuti would kneel down before the Buddha with his chögö over his left shoulder and request teachings from the Buddha.

Question: It just occurred to me that wearing shorts maybe disrespectful., When it got hot did the Buddha wear shorts [laughter]?

You can wear shorts in the gomba. Initially the Buddha was a prince who grew up in a palace and also had a family, so it is quite likely that he also wore shorts during those days (*laughter*). After he became a monk it is very unlikely that he would have worn shorts.

As we said at the beginning, turn the mind inwards and then place it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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