
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can meditate for a bit as usual. Sit in a good, relaxed posture.

You also need to generate a good motivation, such as the bodhicitta motivation, thinking: “I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings and in order to achieve that aim I am going to practise meditation” or some other kind of altruistic motivation.

It is good to dedicate whatever merits we accumulate with bodhicitta and great compassion, and use these merits to increase one's bodhicitta and great compassion according to one's understanding – whether level of effortful bodhicitta it is, such as the very simple bodhicitta that is generated together with reciting the words. We may not have completely understood bodhicitta, but if the merits that we create serve to increase our bodhicitta and great compassion according to our level of understanding, then this makes them really worthwhile.

The purpose of meditation is to achieve peace and happiness. The happiness that we're talking about here is not some transitory fleeting type of happiness, but the peace and happiness that is the truth of cessation – the total pacification of the mental afflictions including their seeds.

What we want to achieve through meditation is the profound peace and happiness that arises from pacifying the mental afflictions and their seeds. But to experience that kind of happiness is currently beyond our means; we have to approach it in stages.

Before we can eradicate the mental afflictions and their seeds completely, we need to pacify the manifest afflictions. Here again, we need to proceed in stages. Initially, if we have many afflictions, we need to reduce those many afflictions to just a few. If we have strong afflictions, we need to make them weaker. In this way, by gradually lessening the mental afflictions, the mind will naturally abide internally; one will naturally attain calm abiding through this process.

The fewer afflictions one has, the more the mind abides naturally internally, one attains calm abiding, and the happiness that comes with having pacified the manifest afflictions. In dependence on that calm abiding, one can progress further along the path and eradicate the mental afflictions with their seeds completely.

Now we're going to meditate on the coming and going of the breath, placing the mind on the coming and going of the breath. First we need to turn the mind inwards, recalling it from external objects and focusing it

internally. Then, upon having focused the mind completely internally, we place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath.

This placement of the mind on the coming and going of the breath has to be done in a gentle manner. The single-pointed placement of the mind on the coming and going of the breath is concentration, and initially it might last only for a couple of minutes. However, through continual gentle practice, that period will extend further and further. It is very important that one practices this meditation gently. It is not recommended to be grasping and greedy, but that we place the mind on the breath in a gentle manner. At first, it might be only for a short time, because then the mind is again distracted by disturbing thoughts. However, by practising steadily and continuously, over time one will have some progress. We will meditate in such a manner for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

I have to recall you from your meditative equipoise, otherwise there might be a danger that you might still be sitting here in the morning if I didn't wake you up. Then you might have to go to work tomorrow morning without breakfast!

4.2.2 The way in which one takes the essence

4.2.2.2. The actual Way of taking the Essence of the Precious Human Life

4.2.2.2.2. The Reason for leading the Students along the Path of the three Beings

4.2.2.2.2. The actual Reason

We started to talk last week about the reason why students are taught according to the sequence of the three kinds of beings. This topic comes under two points – the actual reason and the purpose.

What we have to consider first is that the entrance to the Mahayana path is bodhicitta alone. Bodhicitta is the entrance to the Mahayana path, because only a person who has generated bodhicitta, who possesses bodhicitta in their mind, can be labelled a Mahayana practitioner; a person who has not generated bodhicitta in their mind cannot be labelled a Mahayana practitioner. So, the presence of bodhicitta in the mind defines whether the practitioner is a Mahayana practitioner or not. This is why bodhicitta is the entrance to the Mahayana path.

As Shantideva said in his *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, regardless of the status of a person, even a humble person who is weighed down by samsaric suffering, if that person generates bodhicitta even for an instant, that person is a child of the Tathagatas. Regardless of the status of the person or their situation – whether they are an ordained person, a lay practitioner, a person who looks sickly and unappealing, a person experiencing great suffering – if that being generates bodhicitta even for just one instant, they will be referred to as a child of the Conquerors.

Once someone has generated bodhicitta in his or her mind, he or she is labelled a bodhisattva and has entered the Mahayana path. Should the bodhicitta in that person's mind degenerate, he or she will fall from the

Mahayana path and will no longer be a bodhisattva. A person who has generated bodhicitta and who then engages in the practices to attain complete enlightenment can be referred to as a bodhisattva. The presence of bodhicitta also makes the path in that person's continuum a Mahayana path, so that person will be a Mahayana practitioner.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, the presence of bodhicitta in the mind ensures that the motivation of the person is actually a Mahayana motivation – that the person does not just practice Mahayana Dharma but actually has a Mahayana motivation. By considering the significance of bodhicitta, one should try as much as possible to generate it, even if it is initially just effortful bodhicitta that is generated with mental effort. To inspire ourselves to generate bodhicitta, we should think about its benefits.

Here, of course, this topic is being explained in summary. All these points come later in greater detail.

Those that follow the Mahayana path or that wish to follow the Mahayana path should try in various ways to generate bodhicitta. Those interested in generating bodhicitta initially contemplate the benefits of bodhicitta, so as to generate joy and enthusiasm for generating bodhicitta. Then, they should engage into the practices of taking refuge and the seven limbs as a preparatory practice for bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta has two types of benefit – temporary and ultimate. The temporary benefit is that one does not take rebirth in the lower realms and attains a happy rebirth in the next life. Bodhicitta is the most powerful of virtuous minds, so it purifies non-virtuous karma. Also, through generating bodhicitta, one does not generate any new non-virtuous karma. Further, previously accumulated virtuous karma will be increased and the newly created virtuous karma will not be exhausted.

Because non-virtuous karma becomes purified and one does not create more non-virtuous karma, the causes for rebirth in the lower realms are purified and one does not take rebirth there. Also, through generating bodhicitta, the virtuous karma that one has already previously created will be greatly increased and the virtuous karma that one accumulates will become inexhaustible. Thus, one will not only increase the virtues that one has already created through the generation of bodhicitta, but also those virtues and the virtues that one subsequently generates become inexhaustible through the power of bodhicitta.

We should remember these benefits even when we generate effortful bodhicitta, which everybody possesses to some measure. By generating bodhicitta, not only do we purify non-virtuous karma, but we also greatly increase the virtues that have already been generated. For example, when we generate bodhicitta, the merits that we have created over ten years will equal the merits we would have created over a hundred or a thousand years.

By thinking about the two types of benefit of bodhicitta, we become enthusiastic about generating it and we will naturally meditate more and more, finally generating effortless bodhicitta, which arises spontaneously in the

mind.

We should train in bodhicitta and keep the benefits of bodhicitta in mind. To appreciate the two benefits of bodhicitta – higher status and definite goodness – and to generate the wish for those benefits, we need to train in the practices common to the small and medium capable being.

To receive the benefits of bodhicitta, one needs to generate bodhicitta, and this needs to be preceded by meditating on the practices common to the small and medium capable being. The generation of bodhicitta depends on the generation of love and compassion, and the generation of love and compassion needs to be preceded by meditation on one's own suffering. This is the path common to the small and medium capable being.

First, one recognises one's own suffering and then one recognises that other beings experience the same suffering and one can generate compassion for them. The great Bodhisattva Shantideva said: "Without renunciation, one will not be able to generate bodhicitta". This means that without clearly recognising one's own sufferings, one will not be able to clearly recognise the sufferings of others and generate bodhicitta. As the basis for bodhicitta, one needs non-discriminating love and compassion. And true love and compassion only arise after we have first thought about our own suffering.

So, first, we need to get an experience of our own suffering then, when we transfer our understanding of that experience to others, we can generate very strong compassion for them. If we have never experienced suffering then we do not know what suffering is, and so when we are told that somebody is experiencing suffering, we will just laugh and not understand what it really means for the other person. That's why it is important to precede one's meditation on love and compassion with the meditations of the small and medium capable being.

Initially, one needs to meditate on the sufferings of the lower realms, like the being of small capacity. Then, one needs to meditate on the suffering and lack of peace that one experiences even if one takes rebirth in a higher realm. Next, one needs to meditate that all kind sentient beings experience exactly the same suffering as we do. In such a way, we can generate love and compassion for them. In such a way the meditations of the small and medium capable being become the essential cause for love and compassion for sentient beings.

Therefore, the meditations common to the small and medium capable being are necessary at the training stage when one is training to generate bodhicitta. They also are necessary later, after the generation of bodhicitta.

As was said earlier, turn the mind inwards, then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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