
The Condensed Lam Rim

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It is good to begin with some meditation. For that purpose we shall sit in a relaxed and upright position. The purpose of meditation is to guard our mind and to realise the faults of not guarding the mind.

Guarding the mind means to focus inward and subduing the mind. We can then gain some real inner contentment and peace. Otherwise, we can see many faults arising from not guarding the mind.

However, there is a difference between controlling the mind and guarding the mind. Guarding the mind refers to keeping our six senses intact, not letting them be influenced by external distractions. When we have distractions in our mind, it is through one or more of the six senses being influenced by the object of distraction. For example, when we see beautiful objects, if we don't guard our mind, the eye sense will become influenced by the attractive object allowing attachment to arise in the mind. In this way, the mind becomes completely influenced by attachment. Likewise, the sight of an unattractive object can influence the mind to generate aversion or anger, allowing this delusion to arise and completely overpower the mind. It is the same with our other senses such as hearing and smell – the mind becomes influenced when these senses meet external objects. Therefore, guarding the mind means to not allow the mind from the very beginning to go towards any external objects of distraction; this protects it from being influenced by those objects of distraction.

Controlling the mind – the Tibetan word for which is *sem dhom*– means bringing the mind back when it is already influenced by a distraction. If the mind is already influenced by a visual object of distraction – for example, after we see a beautiful, attractive object – then before we are able to think twice about it, attachment may arise in the mind. When we notice that the mind is already influenced by attachment, bringing it back inward so that it is not further influenced by attachment is what we call controlling the mind. This applies also to all the other senses.

Thus we can see how objects of distraction influence the mind either way – either generating attachment, as when a man sees a beautiful woman or when a woman sees a handsome man, or generating anger if the object is perceived as unattractive.

Guarding the mind is a means for us to attain a saner, more subdued mind. If we do not guard the mind, we can see how easily we are influenced by an object of distraction, be it an attractive object which causes

attachment to arise in the mind, or an unattractive object which causes anger to arise. In either case, we can definitely see the effect – how it makes the mind restless and agitated, which makes us feel uncomfortable and lose our peace of mind. On the other hand, when our mind is not agitated and restless and is subdued, there is a natural tranquillity, which has a peaceful effect on our mind. So through our own experience, we can see how important it is for us to protect the mind from being disturbed. This is something we have the capacity to do. It is a matter of applying it in our practice. In this way, we can train our mind.

We can see from our own experience that the mind is not always influenced by objects of distraction. It is not as though the mind is continuously focused on an object of distraction, such as anger or attachment. When the mind is not thinking about an object of distraction, we can experience the difference. For example, when the mind is not influenced and overpowered by an object of attachment, it has a relatively more peaceful outlook, and is more at rest. Likewise with anger; there are times when our mind is not influenced by anger, and we feel that the mind is at rest. From these normal experiences, we can see that how even on a subtle level, it is possible to overcome the influence of attachment or anger. When we experience a moment of feeling rest and calm in our mind, we use that as a benchmark to further develop the mind, to prolong that feeling of calmness and peace in our mind by bringing the mind inward and guarding it at all times.

Initially, for those of us who do not have much training, it is difficult to completely protect our mind. We may be attempting to calm the mind and overcome certain delusions such as attachment, the particular antidote for which is contemplating the unattractive aspects of a seemingly attractive object. When we meditate on the faults of an attractive object and see the reality of the object, which is seeing it with its faults, this helps the mind to reduce attachment towards that object. Now, when they are in meditation, someone meditating on the faults of the object of attachment might have a tranquil and subdued mind. But when they come out of meditation, go out in the world and meet the actual objects of attachment again, attachment may arise in the mind.

That is because the mind is not yet completely familiarised with the faults of the object. So it is easy for attachment – which the mind is more familiar with – to arise again. However, when attachment initially arises in the mind on seeing an object of attachment, if we remind ourselves of the faults of the object of attachment, it will immediately help to subdue the mind, to 'hit the target' so to speak, of overcoming attachment. As we familiarise the mind more and more through meditation, it will become easier and easier to overcome attachment, to the point that, even when faced with the object, the mind will not be influenced by it.

Whatever the duration of the meditation, if we meditate in a determined and disciplined way, the meditation will become very stable. Initially we may begin with a short

meditation. Then slowly, as we become more familiar with meditation and can prolong the duration, the mind will become firmer and more stable. Even when we meet an object of distraction that generates attachment, anger, jealousy or any kind of delusion that normally influences us, if we have meditated on the appropriate antidotes and if we have familiarised our mind with them, it will not be affected and will remain firm and stable. This will be a real measure of the effectiveness of our meditation.

To achieve such stability in all circumstances, we must from the very beginning be determined to have 100% focus on the object on which we are meditating. From the very beginning, if we don't put the right effort into keeping a disciplined and focused mind, if we start the meditation half-heartedly, this will become a habit. Whenever we meditate, it will be done half-heartedly, which means it will be half-focused on the object and half-distracted. As a result, when we meet the real objects of our distraction, our mind will be completely overpowered again by the delusions. Therefore, it is very important to keep the mind 100% focused on the object that we choose to meditate on. Then gradually, as we choose a different object as an appropriate antidote to another delusion, we will become firm and stable in that meditation. That seems to be the technique.

Having a disciplined and focused mind is like having a medication to overcome the sickness of the delusions. The delusions are likened to chronic diseases that harm our mind, causing it to be disturbed, to feel unhappy, frustrated, and so forth. These feelings are like symptoms of the diseases of delusions. To effectively overcome the root of the disease in our mind, we focus on a virtuous object in meditation. After we identify and choose a virtuous object on which to focus, we should be determined to maintain that focus and be disciplined about it. It is useful for us to attempt to achieve this slowly and gradually.

Now we will spend a few minutes in meditation. As described earlier, we check our sitting posture to make sure we are upright but relaxed. Most importantly, we bring our mind inward, which means to slowly distance ourselves from all the external and internal distractions, withdrawing the mind from all the different thoughts and keeping it focused on the breath. It is very important to be determined to focus on the breath 100%, not allowing the mind to wander off. If we notice that it is wandering off, again we bring our focus back onto the object, which is the breath. In that way, we maintain our focus on the breath 100% for a few minutes. *(Pause for meditation)*

4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.1. Training the mind in the stages of the path of the small capable being

4.2.2.1.2.1.1. The actual way of training in the motivation common to the being of small capacity

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2. Relying on the methods for achieving happiness in future lives

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Developing the faith of conviction in

karma and its effects

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.2. Thinking about the Law of Cause and Effect in detail

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.2.2. The fully ripened qualities and their causes

Having explained the causes to obtain the eight attributes for a perfect human life, the text goes on to explain that if these eight causes are endowed with three causes, their fruition will be incredibly good.

The first of the three causes is pure attitude. Pure attitude is subdivided into two: pure attitude in relation to oneself, and pure attitude in relation to others.

Pure attitude in relation to oneself has two further subdivisions, the first of which is not hoping for fruition or results from one's virtues, but rather dedicating the virtues to unexcelled enlightenment. This means that whenever we practise generosity, ethics or any of the six perfections – in short, whatever practice we engage in – first we dedicate it to unexcelled enlightenment, to achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment, to becoming a buddha for the benefit of other sentient beings. When we dedicate our virtue, we can achieve a good effect. We dedicate the virtue we have accumulated through our good deeds and do not wish for any result for ourselves alone – whatever good effect we receive ourselves is further dedicated for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The importance of dedication is that one's virtues do not go to waste. If one did not dedicate one's virtues and good deeds, they could be easily destroyed by other factors. However when you dedicate them to the ultimate goal of enlightenment, it is said that until you achieve enlightenment, those virtues you have accumulated will not deteriorate. Then, after having dedicated the virtues, make sure that you do not hope for a result merely for yourself, but that the result is entirely for the benefit of other sentient beings.

On a practical level, we can see that in whatever we do, the effects are much greater when we do it with a real interest in others, not with an ulterior motive of receiving something back. Even for something as simple as giving a gift or giving a helping hand to someone, if it is done with an ulterior motive such as the thought of getting help or a gift or some other benefit for oneself in future, one will experience the negative consequences if one does not get what one wished for in return. For example, if you did not receive a gift in return from others, you would feel totally disappointed and unhappy. Or if others did not show appreciation for your generosity you would feel disappointed. We can definitely see the negative consequences of an ulterior motive. On the other hand, if we help others with a real sense of goodwill, because we do not hold hopes for ourselves whatever good deed we do will be done with a really happy mind, and we will feel good afterwards.

The next subdivision of pure attitude in relation to oneself is called intense power. This means that while we are exerting ourselves to achieve the causes from the depths

of our heart, whatever activity or practice that we engage in should be imbued with the intense bodhicitta attitude. This strong intention will make one's practice powerful.

To summarise, the first subdivision of pure attitude in relation to oneself is that of dedicating the virtue of good actions to others and not wishing for benefit only for ourself, and the second subdivision is that of doing the practice with intense power.

Along with the advice that we receive from the teachings, it is important that we secure our practice, starting with the proper attitude. Before we engage in a practice, it is important to make sure that our motivation is pure. For a Mahayana practice, the motivation should be that we do it for the benefit of all sentient beings. We begin the practice by bringing to mind the reason why we need to benefit other sentient beings – we contemplate the many and various sufferings that sentient beings experience. Then when we contemplate the fact that they have no means to overcome that suffering. So we develop the strong determination: “May my practice become a means to benefit these other beings who are suffering so greatly”. With that good motivation, we begin the practice.

Then we engage in the practice with a joyous mind, a happy mind. This is putting into practice one of the six perfections known as joyous effort. There is definitely some effort involved in whatever practice we do. However when we do it with a joyous mind, it becomes the particular practice of joyous effort, which is very important for us to continue in our practice. Even if we engage in our practice with the proper motivation and a joyous state of mind, nevertheless we may still encounter difficulties. Because we are beginners, we might find that there are certain times when the practice is difficult and we might find that our mind is becoming disturbed. At that time, we must apply the practice of patience, being patient with ourselves, being patient with the outcome of a practice, and not being put off from our practice but being patient with the difficulties. We try to maintain our practice with patience. This is applying another of the six perfections, the practice of patience.

And as we continue our practice, it is also important that we maintain a stable mind with concentration, being able to keep our mind focused on the practice we are doing, not allowing it to be distracted but having it focused on whatever we are doing. Maintaining our focus on the practice we are doing is applying the practice of the perfection of concentration. Then as we continue the practice, it is also important to be able to apply wisdom and intelligence or wisdom – knowing the advantages of the practice, what to avoid, details about the techniques. Applying wisdom while we're doing the practice is very important.

In this way, we are applying the practice of the six perfections while we are engaging in whatever practice we do. It is said that when our practice is imbued with the proper motivation and the six perfections, it becomes a meaningful, good and profound practice.

Next we come to the pure attitude in relation to others.

This means abandoning jealousy in relation to those fellow practitioners of the teachings who are better than us, competitiveness towards those equal to us, and pride in relation to those of lesser capability. What is implied here is that when we engage in any kind of practice, there will be others around us that we would regard as being superior to us, or as being equal to us, or as being inferior to us, in the sense that we think: “I'm a little bit better than them, I'm doing better practice than them”.

As explained in the teaching, there are occasions when we see others in that light – either superior to or equal to or inferior to us. Therefore we need to abandon jealousy in relation to those who are superior to us, competitiveness in relation to those we see as equal to us, and contempt in relation to those we feel are inferior. We need to combat the particular delusion in relation to a particular object. For example, when we see someone who seems to be practising better than us and whom we regard as a superior practitioner, instead of feeling happy about them being able to practise better than us, we may develop jealousy. This really destroys the virtues of our own practice: the pangs of jealousy really affect our mind so that it disturbs our practice. Therefore, we need to apply and develop a sense of rejoicing when we see such a practitioner.

Similarly, we need to abandon competitiveness in relation to those who are equal to us. Rather than feeling competitive, we again try to develop rejoicing at others' efforts, helping them and so forth. Finally, we need to abandon contempt for those who seem to be inferior to us. This is something that also affects our practice and destroys our virtue.

Even in day-to-day life, the samsaric world, a lot of problems arise from jealousy, competitiveness and contempt and so forth. For example, we can unfortunately see that some of these negative attributes prevail in relation to different religions. Perhaps this is why there are misunderstandings between different religions too. For a practitioner too, if we're not careful about guarding the mind, these negative tendencies can definitely arise. Therefore it is important to guard the mind and abandon such negative attitudes.

The faults of jealousy cannot be underestimated as it really disturbs the mind whenever it arises. When it's in relation to practitioners who are superior to us, who are able to devote much more time and energy to practising, if we feel jealousy rather than rejoicing in their good deeds, that really disturbs our mind and it becomes really agitated. On the contrary, if we can rejoice and feel happy that they are able to practise like that and be inspired by them, that really brings a sense of joy in our mind. Being happy about others' virtues, their good qualities and their practice bring a real sense of joy and happiness within the mind. So rejoicing in others' good deeds actually benefits us, it has a good effect on us that we can experience right away.

We can measure the progress of our meditation practice by how we feel in relation to others. The real measure of how much we have gained from our practice can be

experienced when we come into contact with others. If we feel jealousy arising when we see others who are doing better than us, that is a sign that we have not been so successful in our practice. If we have a sense of competitiveness when we come into contact with others who are equal to us, again that is a sign that we have not been so successful in our practice. If we feel contempt for others who seem to be less capable than us – rather than trying to encourage them and help them – that again is a sign. These are basically measures of how much we have been able to really practise or not.

If, on the contrary, we rejoice when we see others who are superior to us, and have a sense of joy at seeing others equal to us who are practising, and wish to encourage those who are inferior to us rather than feeling contempt, that is a real sign of one's practice being fruitful – one has gained some good effect from one's practice. Other than that, there is no vivid or actual object that we can use as a measure of our practice; rather it is our experience, what we feel like in our mind when we come in contact with others.

When we feel a real sense of rejoicing and happiness towards others who are doing better than us and towards those who are either equal to us in all circumstances and our mind is not disturbed, that is really a sign of having subdued one's mind. As the Buddha has mentioned in the sutras: "A subdued mind is a happy mind". When we have an attitude like that, it brings real happiness to our mind, and that is what we call a subdued mind.

Now we come to the second (of three) cause(s) of fully ripened effects, which is the pure application of that attitude. Within the pure application, there are also two subdivisions, in relation to oneself and in relation to others.

The pure application in relation to oneself is to have a continuous practice, without losing one's enthusiasm and without leaving 'gaps' in one's practice.

The pure application in relation to others is encouraging others to practise, encouraging others to take vows and to uphold their vows. We encourage those who are not engaged in practice to engage in practice, and we encourage those who are already engaged in practice to maintain their practice and continue with it.

For example, those who haven't taken vows we encourage to take vows, then once they have taken the vows, we encourage them not to give them up and to maintain or continue that practice without any gap or discontinuity.

The third of the three causes of fully ripened effects is the pure field or recipient. The pure field or recipient is that which has the earlier purities – a pure attitude and a pure application. This person becomes the pure field, as the basis for engaging in the practice. It is similar to a field which is the basis for growing a crop – someone who has the earlier two purities acts as a basis. Just as a good field serves as a basis to produce bountiful harvests, similarly a practitioner who has a pure attitude and pure application becomes like a field for accumulating a good harvest of all the virtues and all the results of those

virtues.

Before we end the session, we'll spend a few minutes in meditation. Therefore adopt an upright and relaxed sitting posture again, and bring the mind inward. This time we will focus on the sound of the mantra, and as we focus on the sound of the mantra, we maintain that focus.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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