
The Condensed Lam Rim

། བྱུང་རྒྱུ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བརྒྱུག་པོ།

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As usual, it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose we will sit in an upright, proper position. As we sit in a correct posture physically, it is equally important to have a proper state of mind, which means trying to freshen and clear one's mind. It is particularly important to develop a strong sense of determination to engage in meditation. It is important that, prior to actually meditating we set our mind for that purpose, making it clear in our mind, "Now it is my time for meditation", and to have a joyful, happy mind about it.

It is appropriate to have a joyful and happy mind when engaging in meditation as one can achieve great benefit from this practice. Even with mundane activities, if we see that we will get a great benefit from engaging in the activity, we will be quite enthusiastic, energetic, happy and joyful. We will willingly engage in the activity because we know there's going to be a benefit at the end. One can achieve incredible benefit from the practice of meditation. On a temporary basis we will definitely get some tranquillity and peace from a relatively calm mind. Ultimately engaging in meditation will help to subdue our mind completely. In the process of meditation we can see immediate benefits such as quietening our disturbed mind. We know from our own experience that when we experience a disturbed mind, full of anxiety and frustration, that it is uncomfortable and undesirable. We would not voluntarily wish to have a disturbed, agitated mind. We would rather have a peaceful and calm mind. Therefore we can definitely appreciate the short-term benefits such as helping to calm and soothe our mind. There is no question of the long-term benefits of completely subduing the mind. By thinking about the benefits we can develop a joyful and happy mind.

We can give further examples of the varieties of a disturbed mind. There are numerous instances where our mind becomes disturbed due to many kinds of circumstances. These are mostly created in our own mind. We find that there are times when we have a sense of empty feeling, of feeling like nothing one does brings about a good result, or feeling that we are hopeless. We feel very down and depressed. There are times when we are in that state of mind. Then there are the times when we find that even though we have friends and family around there's a sense of loneliness along with an empty feeling. A feeling that one is alone. Then there are times when, for no apparent reason, we might feel agitated. We feel that nothing is going right for ourselves. There seems to be a problem with whatever we do and, due to that, we may not feel fulfilment from whatever we do. That means that normal activities which bring about a certain relative pleasure and joy, such as eating or being with other friends, trying to entertain each other, suddenly don't satisfy and give enjoyment any more. We can definitely find that there are times when the mind is agitated even if we are with our best friend or a partner who we are

getting along with. When we are feeling agitated we might feel unhappy or uncomfortable even with our best companion.

In this way, we can reflect on the numerous different states of mind we go into which can all be classified as a disturbed mind, a mind which is ill at ease or agitated. These states of minds are so numerous that it's hard to mention them all. If we just reflect on our own experience we can identify by ourselves what states of mind we fall into. I often mention that if we were to actually tell someone else what goes on in our mind they might conclude that we have gone crazy. This is how disturbed our mind can be. We do not even dare to mention to others what's going on in our mind because if we were to do so others might think that we have gone insane. That is really the state of mind that we find ourselves in and that is what we call a disturbed mind, a mind of unease and an agitated mind.

When I mention the disturbed state of mind I'm not, of course, referring to all beings. I cannot, of course, assume that all individuals are in that state of mind. However for as long as someone has a disturbed state of mind, as long as one is afflicted by the delusions, we would find that we have varieties of thoughts which we would find hard to mention to others, because of the fear that others may think that we're insane. Now why would that be so? Why would someone think we were insane if we were to tell him or her all the thoughts we have in our mind? This is because very irrational thoughts occur in our mind. It seems really quite ridiculous that we have all these plans that could never really be achieved but, nevertheless, we do think about them. We have these grand ideas and grand plans that are actually in contrast to how much we can do right now, would sound quite ridiculous to others. In fact they seem so ridiculous to ourselves, however one has enough sanity not to mention them to others

Even though we may not be uttering whatever occurs in our mind to others it does, nevertheless, occur in our mind and to that extent, it disturbs our mind. It brings a sense of either hopelessness or frustration any of the things that were mentioned earlier, because these different irrational thoughts, or what we call in Buddhist term disturbing conceptions, occur in our mind. Meditation is the means to stop these dualistic or irrational thoughts occurring in the mind so that our mind becomes more peaceful, rational, clearer and basically more reasonable with thoughts and ideas which are based on reality. If we want to change from being irrational to being rational and clear and thus contribute to our calmness and peace of mind, the means is through meditation.

Meditation is now even being proven to be clinically beneficial. Scientists are doing tests in which they find how meditation can affect the brain to bring about wellbeing in our system. As I understand, there is a certain kind of energy within our body to fight off diseases. It is what is called the immune system. A good immune system is said to be able to ward off diseases. Where does that good immune system come from? Of course it is related to food and the nourishment; the measures that we take physically. But it also seems to very much relate to how we think, our attitudes and so forth. This is what is being proven clinically. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, recently mentioned in his teachings in India that certain neuroscientists have found that meditation and calming the mind somehow affects

activity in the brain which then helps to strengthen the immune system within the body. As a result of meditation the immune system within our body is strengthened and we have a healthier body. Modern technology can show that meditation as being helpful. Besides that fact we have, of course, numerous living examples of meditators who exhibit a calm and peaceful attitude, and also have a good, sound, healthy body. We have examples of that and therefore, in different ways, we can see how meditation is definitely a benefit.

Having explained some of the benefits of meditation we can now take some time to actually engage in meditation. Before commencing we will just go over again the main points of what meditation actually is. We can relate this to our immediate experience in this room. Most of us have ordinary minds. This means having a mind that is filled with different kinds of conceptual thoughts, which are distracting and contribute to the disturbance of the mind. Most of us who have come from our working day and so forth, would find that we still carry those sorts of wandering, disturbing thoughts in our mind when we come suddenly into this room. However, the moment that we actually decide to focus on a chosen object, such as the breath that we use here, the disturbances that we have noticed earlier suddenly fade away. The moment that we decide to just focus on our breath we experience the immediate effect of bringing the mind inward, withdrawing the mind from all the different thoughts and ideas and other disturbing worldly thoughts. The moment that we focus on our breath we experience a soothing and calming effect. That is the proof that the mind can be neutralised, that we can use the mind to become calm. That is something that we can see as an immediate benefit.

This experience might only last momentarily if we allow the mind to become distracted again. As we feel the benefit of focusing our mind on the breath we need the correct technique to maintain it. The whole point of meditation is to try to maintain that focus for as long as possible. Initially we allocate a short time and practise on that. The technique here is to bring the mind back on the object that we have chosen to focus on, which is our breath. After the initial, soothing, calming effect of the mind being focused on the breath we notice that the mind might get distracted again. Then we use our awareness, mindfulness and introspection, to remind ourselves to bring our mind back onto the object that we have chosen to focus on, which is our breath. To repeatedly bring our mind back and try to maintain our focus on the breath for as long as possible is the practice of meditation itself. That is what we are attempting to do in whatever time we allocate ourselves for meditation. Therefore we will now remind ourselves to withdraw our mind from all the other worldly thoughts and conceptions and focus it on our breath. We bring our mind onto the object, which is our breath, and determine ourselves to focus on it 100%. *Pause for meditation.*

As we have witnessed for ourselves in this short time of meditation, we definitely achieved a relatively calm state of mind. Thus for even that short period we had a relatively happier mind. This is proof that our own happiness is entirely dependent on ourselves. Our mind's happiness is dependent on ourselves. We are the creator of our own happiness. Likewise, we are the creator of our own misery. To that extent, the Buddha mentioned in his teachings that one is one's own protector. Who else is there to protect oneself? The Buddha was saying that one's own happiness is

entirely dependent, or created by, oneself. Recognising that we must then find the means and the techniques to create that happiness for ourselves and to abandon or avoid the unhappiness or misery within our mind. This is really important. In the course of our lives there are times when things go well, there are times when things don't go well, and there are times when we have made mistakes. That is natural for ordinary beings. However we must take a broader perspective, a broader view of life, and try to maintain a continuous, positive outlook on life and try to work on oneself.

What we tend to do, which contributes to our unhappiness, is that we tend to reflect more on the negative aspects of life. If we have made certain mistakes in our life we tend to go over them again and again as though just thinking about them will solve the problem. In fact we are just creating more misery for ourselves by going over them again and again and again. Just thinking about the mistakes we have made and feeling bad about them does not help the situation. Instead we could develop counter-measures and do something else that would help. It is important that we try to focus more on the positive aspects of our life and try to maintain a positive outlook. Be they good times or bad times, try to maintain a basic positive outlook on life and oneself.

In our current state right now, we are quite dependent on the contaminated pleasure or happiness that we experience. It would not be suitable for ourselves at this time, at our level, if we were completely deprived of these worldly pleasures. Even though the teachings explain in detail that the worldly pleasures are not real pleasure or real happiness, that they're contaminated pleasures or happiness, nevertheless we rely and depend on a certain amount of worldly pleasure. Therefore in our situation we are working hard, trying to maintain and achieve that happiness. It is important that we acknowledge the fact that we depend on a certain amount of worldly happiness. Rather than trying to strain ourselves by thinking that this has to be all shunned, we have to acknowledge the fact that we depend on it. Therefore it is important that we protect a certain amount of worldly pleasure that is needed for our survival.

A real practitioner, of course, would see any worldly pleasure as something to be abandoned, something to be shunned. As soon as they come into contact with any worldly pleasure they immediately try to avert and overcome it. That is the life and practice of a real Dharma practitioner, but for beginners like ourselves, that is something which might be difficult at this stage. Abandoning all worldly pleasure is something which is possible, which is equally natural to do and eventually is something that will be possible for ourselves. But perhaps at this time and stage, it is not realistic.

I often stress this point. Some may even wonder why I keep making this point over and over again. Some may even wonder if it's really suitable or not. That's something you can find out for yourselves. However I cannot underestimate the importance of, as an ordinary person, adopting a realistic practice. This, I feel, is really the way to be an easygoing person. This means having a happy attitude towards life. That is not to say that someone who carries a happy attitude in life will not have problems and difficulties. Yes, they might face difficulties in life. But they will be open-minded, easy-going which means not allowing themselves to be too

stressed over things when they go wrong, and just maintain a generally happy attitude. Enjoy life to a certain extent. If one can really try to be happy in one's normal activities, the happiness that one has can then be a means to affect others in a positive way.

Trying to be completely pure and faultless is unrealistic. While that is not possible for oneself, one may be critical of others for not being perfect and faultless. One may think that others are not good because of having this and that fault. If one cannot be faultless oneself why can't one accept that others have faults? It is better to be realistic about life, accept that others have faults just like one has faults, but try to maintain a happy, positive attitude in life.

A person who can maintain a general, easy-going, happy attitude in their life can be helpful to others. Whatever they do for others will be highly appreciated. Even if you just give someone just a cup of tea, it will be graciously accepted because of your happy, positive attitude. Even if you say a few words, words that you utter to others with a helpful mind to soothe their pain, those words will be appreciated and graciously be accepted. Whatever activity, small or large, can be graciously accepted by others due to one's positive and happy state of mind. A happy state of mind seems to be the main thing that others relate to. Being confused, negative and judgemental oneself, and thinking that one should correct everyone and correct the world, doesn't work. That is not realistic and it does not help. Instead just accept who we are and be happy. In that way we can help others. We can see in the world that people, who have a happy attitude, a joyful attitude, in their mind, can really extend help to others even in great ways. Whatever extent it is, small or large, that seems to be the main way.

To further make this point hit home, let us reflect on our own experience of receiving something from others. Don't we find that there's a difference when someone gives us something out of real concern and a happy, loving attitude versus someone giving us something out of a mere obligation or even worse in a state of anger. We were just relating to a cup of tea. If someone gave us a cup of tea and shoved it at us and said, "Have a cup of tea" and we could see and feel that they are in a negative state of mind, do we feel joyful in having that tea? Does it feel comfortable? Do we really enjoy that tea versus the tea that is given by someone with a happy, loving attitude, with real concern for us? We can find that even in the tea that we receive, the enjoyment that we feel and anticipate is different in relation to the attitude that others have to us. That carries on to other things such as helping others, nursing others, giving them medicine. It is mentioned in the teachings as well. Giving medicine to others with a loving, kind attitude will definitely help and benefit the patient. If you were to give medicine and so forth with a negative attitude in your mind the benefit that it will give the patient will be much less. Therefore it seems that the attitude that comes along with what we give to others and what we receive from others has a definite effect.

The teachings also explain about the qualities of our mind. They refer to it with an analogy of 'the treasures', these are the treasures that are within oneself and the treasures that are outside. In this treasure analogy the treasures that are within oneself are much more important and their value is much greater. We can understand this from our own experiences.

It seems we have gone through a bit of time. We can answer any questions that you have. If there are no questions, I am happy to go through the text a bit further.

At work, when I am in a happy mode and start to sing or whistle, I noticed that other colleagues seem to get annoyed by that. How is it possible to maintain a happy mind without annoying others?

To really maintain a happy mind, one needs to have a balanced state of mind. Where one is not going from one extreme of feeling joyful and happy at one moment, and feeling upset by what other's say or think the next moment. The tool for maintaining that balance is said to be mindfulness and introspection. Perhaps they are getting annoyed because their work is being disturbed by your whistling and your singing. *(laughter)*.

Depending on what kind of work is involved, if it's work where your colleagues have to concentrate a lot, only someone else who doesn't want to concentrate hard might appreciate it as you whistle along. Those who are concentrating will be disturbed.

However even if one is exhibiting real happiness, sometimes it does seem to agitate others. But it's agitating them because they have a question in their mind. They can't understand how, under the same circumstances, someone else should be quite happy. If you are experiencing some real happiness and they really want to know why you are happy, maybe that's an opportunity to slowly influence them how to be happy as well.

I don't mean that you have to preach or anything like that. It doesn't mean you have to teach the Dharma right there and then. One doesn't have to preach the Dharma in order to talk about being happy. If you do have a concern with your colleagues and you would like to share the happiness that you are experiencing and want to influence them in a positive way then, when they are a little bit negative and so forth, rather than being affected and taking it personally say, "At the break should we go and have a coffee together?" and be friendly toward them. If they do agree to have a coffee and you were to pay for it *(much laughter)* that would make a difference in their lives.

This, of course, is an example just relating to your workplace. But in fact I am not kidding and it is really said to be one of the skilful means of benefiting or helping others. This approach extends to your real friends and your partners or whoever, any close relationship one has with someone. If you notice that your friend or anyone that is close to you is feeling a bit down it is said that rather than talking and giving a lot of advice in order to help them, just take them on a small break. Take them on a small stroll and offer some tea or something nice to eat and doing that will help to calm them down and they will feel a benefit from it. In that way, you can relate later on another level as well.

This is precisely the advice that I give to parents who come and see me with concerns about their teenage children. It might be at a time when their teenagers or young adults have finished their studies or are in the middle of their studies or need to find a job and are not taking the initiative and being laid back. One must understand that the reason they lack initiative is because there are some things disturbing their mind. They're not really happy. If we don't recognise that and instead nag them for not studying and not working and so forth, it will just worsen the situation. My advice to parents who have these concerns is that rather

than telling them again and again about the importance of studies and work and so forth, which will just burden their mind even further and create even more rejection in their mind, if one has real concern for them the better or more skilful way to deal with the situation would be to suggest taking them on a really nice vacation. If you cannot afford a big vacation use one's money in a wise way to be able to give them a good time. This is something might help to change their mind. If they have a good time with you and have a good time on a vacation, that might help to lighten their mind and once they get back they might start taking the initiative themselves to consider studies or work or whatever. This is what we call in the teachings a skilful way to deal with the situation.

The other day, some fellows who were Jehovah Witness came to my door and started to talk about how we have all come from Adam and Eve, and went on to ask if I believed in the word of God. I didn't really wish to listen to them, but at the same time I didn't want to be rude. How best can I approach such a situation?

Maybe the best thing to say in that situation is, "Thank you very much for coming and sharing this with me, but I really don't have time now. I would like to listen to you, but I just don't have time, I'm busy." Another way to approach this may be to say, "I think what you are trying to preach is really very profound, but unfortunately my intellect and understanding are not so good (*laughter*). You might be wasting your time in trying to tell me this because I may just not get it."

We actually have this even in our own circle of Buddhists where people say, "I've studied Dharma for many years, but I still don't know anything."

Can mind, which is non-physical according to Buddhism, be a cause for matter?

Mind can not be a primary or substantial cause for matter, but can be a conditional cause, such as for physical actions to occur. For example, with an angry mind you could actually kill someone. There is an action that takes place, which is physical. In other words mind can influence or be a cause for matter to happen. But mind itself cannot be a primary cause. It's not as though mind itself can turn into matter. Mind can influence matter to be produced, but mind itself cannot become a primary cause for mind to turn into matter.

Our own physical aggregate, our body, is said to be a product of the delusions in our mind. In other words our body was created by the mind. Here again the body is physical matter, so the mind is an indirect cause for the body to be produced. That's how mind or states of mind can be a cause.

Geshe la, you mentioned that a true practitioner will renounce worldly pleasures; how can one develop a sense of detachment to worldly pleasures?

The best means is to develop a strong awareness by reflecting on the actual nature of worldly pleasures. This means to reflect, as described in the four noble truths, how the actual worldly pleasures do not really last and in fact turn into unpleasant feelings of dissatisfaction. We can actually experience worldly pleasure slowly becoming a cause to experience dissatisfaction and discontent. Experiencing dissatisfaction brings unhappiness into our mind. The more we reflect on that and see the reality of that the more it helps us not to be too attached to worldly pleasures and to develop a sense of wanting to renounce

worldly pleasures.

This is particularly the case if we reflect on how participating or indulging in worldly pleasures brings no real sense of contentment. The more we engage in it, the more dissatisfied we become and the more we want to experience it, and the more there's no sense of fulfilment or contentment by experiencing it. In fact, the more we experience it, the more the desire to experience it increases. The more we indulge in it, the more the desire to experience it increases. That is the nature of the worldly pleasures.

It sort of seems like an endless cycle as well. You have this desire in your mind and it's as though you live with a constant cycle. That's not a question, it's an observation.

Yes, indeed it may seem endless. But according to the teachings the cycle is not endless. The cycle can be stopped. That is the whole point of the teachings. The cycle can be stopped and we can end the cycle. However, for as long as desire is there that desire perpetuates the cycle. The desire itself becomes the cause for us to experience more misery that follows it. That is true for any kind of contaminated or worldly pleasure and thus any worldly gains. For example, someone who does not have sufficient money would experience the suffering of not having money. So one would think that gaining money would become the cause for him or her to be happy. It does contribute to a certain amount of happiness but when a lot of money has been obtained one way or another that brings another kind of unhappiness. First of all there's no satisfaction and secondly there are many worries in relation to the money. Will the money run out? How should I invest it? Will it get lost? There are many other worries that were not there before. Extra kinds of suffering come with that gain. When we reflect in this way we find this is a reality.

There's a truth when the the teachings mention that there's no real lasting happiness from worldly pleasures, but in fact they induce more misery and suffering. The teachings described this and I definitely feel this seems to be the case from my own experience. It seems to be in our nature to experience real suffering but no real pleasure. Whatever pleasure we seem to experience does not last, whereas the sufferings we have are sustaining. We seem to be always in a constant dissatisfied state of mind. Even when we gain some temporary pleasure that pleasure can be immediately replaced by another kind of suffering. Suffering seems to be more prevalent. The nature of our existence right now seems, in reality, to be more one of suffering than actual, real happiness. That's why the teachings describe the happiness that we experience as not being real happiness but the suffering that we experience to be real suffering.

We can conclude the session for this evening here. If there are some who had questions they were not able to ask this evening these questions can always be saved for the next session. You can ask next time. If I was not able to answer your questions, I should apologise for that. I regard our discussion as a mutual companion discussion where we're trying to help and benefit each other. We can share and try to resolve whatever we have in our mind. That is the attitude I have.

We will now spend a few minutes again in meditation where we bring our mind, our focus inward, to distance our mind from any distractions. This time as we focus inward we place our focus onto the sound of the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni as it is being recited.