The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual, it would be good to spend some time in meditation. We sit in a relaxed, upright posture. It is important to try to clear one's mind from worldly concerns and thoughts for the time being and leave aside these distractions and try to keep a clear and sharp mind in order to focus on the object of meditation.

The purpose of meditation is, initially, to bring our mind to focus on the chosen object of meditation and once we are able to focus on the object we try to maintain that focus and increase the ability to have a clear image of the object and increase the duration of our focus on the object. In brief, the whole purpose of meditation is to acquaint our mind with good qualities.

The goal of meditation is to acquaint our mind with good qualities; a virtuous state of mind, a positive attitude. If we were to examine our mind we would notice that even if we do cultivate a positive attitude it does not to remain for long. In fact it is very seldom that our mind is in a very virtuous, positive frame of mind. When we analyse why that is we find it is because our mind is more acquainted with other disturbing thoughts. If we look into the thoughts that arise in our mind we would notice that they are very frequently deluded states of mind such as anger, jealousy, pride, and competitiveness with others. These states of mind, negative states of mind, are more prevalent. If our mind were in a neutral state that would be, relatively, better than having a negative mind. Ultimately the goal is to maintain a positive frame of mind. The reason why our mind is not in that positive state is because the other prevalent states of mind take

As we analyse our mind we notice that it is as though our mind has befriended the negative states of mind that accompany us most of the time. As long as we befriend the negative states of mind and allow them to influence and accompany our mind then, for the period of time that the negative states of mind are prevalent within us, our peace is disturbed. We would find negative minds such as strong attachment, strong anger. We would find that there is no clarity in what we do. We don't have good results in achieving our wishes.

As long as our mind is obsessed with strong desire we can't even enjoy a good meal and if we try to sleep, because the mind is so obsessed with desire, our sleep is also disturbed. Even normal activities that help sustain us are hindered by strong desire. Likewise when strong anger arises in our mind. Strong anger is more obvious to us. When anger arises our food is not so tasty when we try to eat and we won't be able to digest it well. It destroys our sleep. It is clear that these disturbing,

deluded emotions are actually harming us as they disturb our mind.

If we were to actually begin to notice that and try to change to a positive state of mind, to allow our mind to become more acquainted with the positive states of mind such as detachment instead of attachment or desire, if we can develop as sense of detachment for the moment that detachment is prevalent in our mind we will notice its soothing effect on the mind. The mind becomes more restful. Therefore, in a meditation session if we were able cultivate just a few moments of a detached mind, for those moments we are released from the grip of strong desire and this brings a soothing and calming effect on the mind. We can actually experience that good effect.

With anger we should acquaint ourselves with the state of calmness, patience and cultivate that in our mind and meditate on patience and distance our focus from an object we feel agitated towards. For those few moments that we distance our mind from the object of irritation our mind then feels calm and restful. We can definitely see, for those few moments, the benefit if we were to develop that positive state of mind and allow that positive state of mind to influence us. We can also change the place where there was attachment by cultivating and allowing our mind to feel detachment. Where there was anger we allow patience to take over and meditate on patience. When we change those states of mind into positive states and acquaint ourselves with them we will be able to feel the positive effects and in that way we train our mind to slowly become more and more acquainted with those positive states of mind.

The experience we gain from even a short meditation will help our mind to feel more confident and positive about acquainting ourselves with positive states and putting a little more effort into developing these positive states of mind. If we slowly train ourselves in that way and if we see the value we can definitely feel the encouragement or the need to develop that further.

Having explained the relevance and importance of meditation we can now spend a few minutes in meditation reminding ourselves that in order to have a successful meditation it is important that we develop a strong determination to actually engage and put our full energy and attention on the actual practice. Here we are using the breath as an object of focus and the breath is the natural mechanism of breathing in and out. Just allow your mind to focus on the natural rhythm of the breath going in and out. It is taught that we should try not to have laboured breath. Try to just sit upright and comfortable and the breath should come to its natural rhythm. We are focusing on the actual breath imagining it coming in to ourselves and leaving through the nostrils. Focus on that inflow and outflow of the breath in its natural state. We are able to achieve that if we are determined to not let our mind be distracted with other thoughts. Withdraw the mind from all other distractions for the time being and allow it to just focus on the breath itself. Just be aware of the breath coming in and naturally leaving us and focus on inhalation and exhalation.

As we do that we will notice that, if it is done in a sincere way, we will definitely feel an effect. First of all the mind

calms down. There are many other benefits experienced by different individuals. Some experience the mind calming down and experience a rest from the very agitated mind. If one is normally in the habit of thinking a lot one notices that one's mind is very busy and by focusing on the breath one finds that the mind takes a break and feels restful. Others may also feel the mind becoming more calm and settled and others may notice the mind becoming clearer. There are many benefits one could find just from focusing on the breath itself. In this way there are great benefits to achieve. Even a few minutes done sincerely with full attention can give effects that we can experience. We will now spend a few minutes focusing on our breath.

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.

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3. The way one engages in virtue

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3.2. The way to train by means of the four powers

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3.2.3. The four powers

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3.2.3.2. The power of the opponent force

Following on from the earlier explanations of the text we have come to the explanation of the means for purification that is done through cultivating the four opponent powers. We have come to the point where the text explains when a purification practice has been done how the negative karma is purified and the manner in which it is purified.

Depending on the strength of the purification practice there are different ways in which the purification is experienced. If, for example, a very heavy negative karma had been created which would result in great suffering in unfortunate rebirths then, through purification, the suffering experienced in an unfortunate rebirth would be lessened. Even if one were to be reborn in the lower realms the suffering that one experienced would be minimised. In other instances the purification practices can result in not having to experience the sufferings of the lower realms. Even if one is reborn in the lower realms one will not have to experience the actual sufferings of the lower realms.

In other instances the purification practices may occur when one has illnesses such as a headache. Having a mere headache now may be a means to purify negative karma which would otherwise have to be experienced in an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime. In yet other instances negative karma that is to result in experiencing suffering for a long duration of time in the future may be shortened. If one has to suffer in the future rebirth it will be shortened. In other examples of strong purification

practices it can actually purify the negative karma so one will not have to experience the result at all.

As described earlier there is no certainty that the negative karma can be removed as it depends on whether the purifier is of greater or lesser strength or whether the remedy is one that has greater or lesser strength. The purifier of greater or lesser strength refers particularly to how the purifier engages in the practice of purification. If the purifier engages in the practice of purification by leading a life of ethics and they absorb their ethics well then the purification is said to be of great strength.

The text then explains that even definite karma, a karma where the one who creates it will definitely experience the result, can be purified through purification practices. In regards to that explanation the text goes into what we call a doubt that is raised by some in relation to a statement in a sutra. This sutra says that karma does not perish, even in one hundred aeons. This sutra says that once karma is created its results will definitely be experienced, even if a hundred aeons goes by. This is explained in detail in the sutra where it says that karma is not like other material objects such as seedlings and so forth that may lose the potency and ability to produce a result. After a certain time the potential to sprout and grow may be lost. Likewise other material objects lose the ability to produce a result after a certain time. However karma is not like that. Once karma has been created, even if a long duration of time has passed by, the conditions are intact and at a certain time that karmic imprint in the mind will be activated and experienced.

Having raised this doubt in relation to the statement in the sutra Lama Tsong Khapa explains that what is being explained in the sutra in that quote is that once created karma does not perish even in one hundred aeons and if it is not remedied through the purification of the four opponent powers it will definitely be experienced. That is the meaning of karma not perishing in even a hundred aeons. This quote from the sutra should be understood in its context. It does not mean that karma under any circumstances will definitely be experienced. It refers specifically to karma that has not been remedied. When the four opponent powers have not been applied it will definitely be experienced. Otherwise it can be purified.

When the four opponent powers have been applied as a remedy for purification they will definitely become a remedy. The result of that particular negative karma will not be experienced. The purification process serves as a means to nullify the potential for the karma to ripen. In other words, it is affecting the potential to create a result. The potential that is left upon our mind. The imprint on our mind does not have the potency to bring about a result. In that way purification becomes a remedy towards overcoming the negative consequences to be experienced.

Just as that is true for the negative karma one can also interpret from the teaching the potential for positive karma to also be nullified through negative states of mind such as anger. It is said that the moments of anger that we experience destroy the potential that we have created for positive karma to bring about a result. That is also true for negative karma.

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What we need to understand from the explanation of the teachings is that because negative karma can be purified we need to apply the four opponent powers in a purification practice so we can prevent the negative consequences of negative karma from being experienced. We apply the remedy in that way. When we create positive karma we need to secure the potential of that positive karma so that it does not become destroyed. It is said that we need to dedicate the positive karma that we have created and the dedication practice secures the positive potential in our mind.

The teaching goes on to explain that even though negative karma can be purified it is better if one were not to engage in negative karma from the beginning. There is a big difference in relation to the experience that someone has from having purified negative karma versus someone who has not created negative karma in the beginning. The analogy given to illustrate that is the instance of someone who breaks a leg and it heals later. Even though a broken leg can be healed there is a difference between someone who has broken their leg and it has been healed versus someone who has not broken their leg at all. Just because a broken leg can be healed it does not mean that after it has been healed it is the same as someone who has not broken their leg at all. In instances such as running or walking someone who has broken their leg would not be able to walk as fast or stably as they would have in the past. Someone who hadn't broken his or her leg would, in that case, be better.

The teaching further explains the negative consequences of someone who has created negative karma, especially in relation to having broken vows. After having taken certain vows if one breaks those vows it is said that even though those vows can be retaken and the negative karma can be purified to a certain extent the fact of having broken the vows would prolong the realisations or attainments one can achieve through one's practice. It takes much, much longer to achieve the realisations and attainments if one has broken vows.

The text quotes from different sutras in explaining how one who has broken certain vows will need to practise for a long time and will find it very difficult to achieve the realisations. The explanations given here clarify a point. The main point is that having understood the teaching where it says negative karma can be purified through a purification practice of applying the four opponent powers one may become complacent in one's practice. One may think, 'Oh, now that I have learned and understand how to purify negative karma it will be fine if I do something wrong and engage in negative karma. It will be O.K. because I can purify it.' That state of mind may arise so the teaching points out here that just because negative karma can be purified that should not become leeway for one to engage in negative karma. If one does create negative karma, particularly in relation to breaking vows and so forth, there will still be negative consequences of prolonging one's attainments and realisations so one must be careful.

After having quoted from the sutras to make this point, Lama Tsong Khapa concluded by saying that when the sutras and so forth explain that negative karma can be purified it is explaining the fact that the potential for that negative karma is nullified. One does not experience the negative consequences of that particular karma but one must always remember the fact that realisations and attainments will be prolonged and will be much harder to achieve and one should limit and avoid creating negative karma.

Lama Tsong Khapa further stresses the point by saying that other teachings indicate the bodhisattva's practice involves not creating even the smallest negative karma. Bodhisattvas would rather give up their life than allow themselves to create even the tiniest, smallest negative karma intentionally. Bodhisattvas will avoid by all means, even at the cost of their lives, creating negative karma. This indicates that there is definitely a great purpose in not engaging in negative karma. Bodhisattvas would definitely know how, and have skilful means, to purify negative karma. The fact that they avoid creating negative karma, even at the cost of their lives, shows that there is a difference between negative karma that has not been created at all from the beginning versus negative karma that has been created but purified. If that were not the case then bodhisattvas would not apply such great measures to avoid creating negative karma. Lama Tsong Khapa then mentions here what I have mentioned earlier - that there is a difference between someone who has broken their leg and fixed it and someone who has not broken their leg at all. We can conclude the explanation from the text for this evening and leave some time for questions, if there are any.

Question: How does one develop bodhicitta properly?

Since your question involved 'properly', the proper way to develop bodhicitta would be to first develop renunciation in relation to oneself. Renunciation means developing a clear understanding of the faults of samsara, cyclic existence and thus developing a very keen, very strong determination to overcome the shortcomings of samsara and to be free from the sufferings of samsara. When a desire to be free from samsara is felt very strongly within oneself one can use that strong feeling that one has developed in oneself. When one focuses on that and has that wish for others as well then one has developed a basis for developing bodhicitta.

There is a process in first developing renunciation for oneself and then how that contributes to developing bodhicitta. When one sees the faults of samsara very clearly and develops a determination to be free from the shortcomings and faults of the worldly existence or samsara and that determination becomes very strong within oneself that determination turns into a state of mind where one sees the possibility, one develops a certainty, that one will be able to do that. When one develops a certainty of being able to free oneself from samsara one then focuses on others and thinks about how other sentient beings have been kind to oneself and how one should not ignore or leave others behind. One then develops a strong concern for other sentient beings. With the strong certainty that one has developed the possibility of achieving liberation for oneself then, based on one's sense of concern and then love and compassion for

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others, one will develop the same certainty that it will also be possible for other sentient beings. Bodhicitta mind can be developed in that process.

Actually the text that we are studying here, the Lam Rim, is a process, the whole technique, to eventually develop the bodhicitta mind and thus practise after having developed that mind. The text itself is divided into trainings or practices for the three different levels of capacities of beings. It is divided into the three scopes, the small scope, the medium scope and great scope. The text what we have covered so far is the practises of the small scope. From the next session onwards we will be covering the teachings and the trainings for the medium scope that will then lead on to the trainings of the great scope.

This is a very systematic way of how to progress along the path. In the small scope that we have been covering so far the teachings are mainly explaining ways of avoiding the ten non-virtues and creating the ten positive virtues and, in that way, creating the causes for achieving a good rebirth in the next lifetime, such as rebirth as a human or in the special god realms. After having trained oneself to avoid and purify negative karmas and cultivate positive karmas one creates the causes for good rebirth in a future lifetime.

As we progress in the training and come to the trainings of the medium scope we come to realise that just achieving a good rebirth in the next lifetime as a human or even as a worldly god will not be sufficient. One will still be in the cycle of samsara and that will not be sufficient to achieve a good result for oneself. One will still have to go through the different types of sufferings. When one comes to realise and fully understand this the training leads us into how to develop, as mentioned earlier, a sense of renunciation. From that renunciation a complete disgust for the shortcomings and faults of is developed and this develops samsara determination to be free and achieve liberation. When that attitude has been developed then, based on that, one can train in the great scope where we focus on other sentient beings.

Before we conclude for the evening we will spend a few minutes in meditation and, as previously, we will sit in a relaxed upright posture and bringing our mind inward. Distancing our mind from the distractions we try to bring our mind inward and this time we focus on the name mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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