
The Condensed Lam Rim

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11 April 2007

As usual it will be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose we will sit in an upright, but comfortable, position. We can summarise the purpose of meditation as quietening down our mind and making our mind relaxed and peaceful. In order to bring about a peaceful mind one must acquaint or train the mind to be familiar with positive states of mind that bring about peace. We have already acquainted the mind with negative states of mind. The disadvantages of negative states of mind are something we try to refrain from. We do not need to put any effort in acquainting the mind with negative states. What we are attempting to do here is to acquaint the mind with a positive state.

In our pursuit of happiness so far we are more acquainted with a distracted state of mind. A distracted mind is a mind that is focussed outward towards worldly, sensual objects. That is what we are acquainted with and that is how we are used to trying to pursue happiness.

A practical way of going about establishing a meditation practice would be to spend, for example, ten minutes a day in meditation, if that is something which one can comfortably allocate. Ten minutes may not seem much on a daily basis. But if we were to add up all those ten minutes in a year we will realise that we have actually spent quite a lot of time in meditation. We would then see that we have used our time in a meaningful way.

If one can develop the determination to meditate and then spend about ten minutes a day in meditation one is beginning the process of controlling the mind. Controlling the mind is making the mind serviceable. We can use the analogy of children who are obedient and listen to their parents. When children are obedient their parents don't have a hard time because their children are obedient and listen to what they say. You don't have problems with your children, right? Similarly, when the mind becomes obedient one can use the mind in a positive way. Training the mind to become obedient is part of that training of using ten minutes a day in meditation.

To explain the nature of an obedient mind. First, we are more familiar and have more experience with the opposite of an obedient mind. That is the mind that focuses on, for example, an object of desire. It is as if we have no control over this mind. As soon as we see a beautiful object, before we know it, the mind is already attached to it and we have a strong desire and longing to possess that object. For as long as the mind is obsessed with an object of desire the mind will be distracted. All our other problems arise from that initial attachment or

desire for that object. It is similar with anger and other delusions.

We can observe that at this point that it is as if the mind has no control of itself. As soon as a desired object, or some other object of the senses, arises the mind immediately goes towards the object. It is very hard to distance the mind from the object. Even if we know the disadvantages of the mind going towards the objects of desire or other delusions it is extremely hard to distance our mind from those objects and bring it inward and for the mind to become calm and restful. This is because the mind is not obedient at the moment. It is as if it has its own control over itself and goes in any direction it wants towards external sensual objects.

The opposite of that state would be an obedient mind. With an obedient mind, though we may still become distracted, as soon as we notice that the mind has become distracted we would be able to bring the mind back and distance it from the objects of distraction. We could bring it inward and focus and make the mind calm and peaceful. When we are able, through the process of meditation, to bring the mind back inward when it has become distracted and make the mind settle down, remain focussed on a long-term basis and be more peaceful and restful, the mind has become obedient. One is in control, not the distracted mind. One is controlling the mind to become peaceful and restful. That ability comes through the very small effort we make by meditating on a regular basis. That is the technique.

You would have heard in instructions on meditation the advice that one uses one particular chosen object to focus on. One does not use too many different objects at the same time to focus on in one's meditation. The reason for that is explained as the fact that the mind is already used to getting distracted. If one uses many different objects it just contributes to the mind becoming more distracted. Thus it is advised to chose one object in meditation, an object that one can become familiar with, and use that object as the focus of one's meditation and not repeatedly change one's object of meditation.

Having described the purpose and the benefits of meditation we now can use a few minutes for meditation. The object that we choose for our meditation here is the most common object for meditation to focus the mind upon; the breath. First of all one develops the determination, 'I will not allow the mind to become distracted, with distracted thoughts or even thinking about different external objects but instead I will bring the mind inward. I will use my attention and mind to focus on my own breath'. When one focuses on the breath, one just focuses on the breath coming in and going out. One maintains one's focus on the breath itself.

As we notice, after even for a few minutes of meditation the mind will definitely settle down. An important piece of advice is to initially begin with short durations of time and then one slowly can increase that. Initially it is very important that we use a short time like five or ten minutes. This is easier for us to manage and does not become a heavy thing for us but rather something we can manage on a regular basis. When we can become familiar with that it will help to benefit the mind. Now as we

focus on the breath we bring the mind inward and just focus on the natural inflow and outflow of breath and keep our attention on that. (*Pause for meditation.*)

One of the main reasons why the duration of meditation needs to be initially short is so that it becomes a good quality meditation. It needs to be clear with a good focus and not half-hearted but determined. It is the quality that matters and not the quantity. We can explain in a little bit more detail the significance of having an initially short duration. As mentioned earlier, this is so one can train one's mind from the very beginning to achieve a quality meditation. This means a really focused and clear meditation. If from the very beginning our pursuit is just for duration, and our focus and source of contentment is feeling that one has meditated for certain length of time one may get into bad habits. Initially, when one begins meditation one would, because of one's determination, have a little bit of clear and focussed meditation. But if one falls into a lax state the mind starts to become distracted. When one notices that one's mind has become distracted one brings it back again. If one's concern is having a long meditation and one is determined to spend the time one has allocated the mind will be habituated in wondering off, coming back, wondering off again, and coming back. In that sense one will acquaint oneself with the mind becoming distracted all the time. One may not even notice this but one will be cultivating a very bad habit in one's meditation of constantly becoming distracted. We find many people who end up saying, 'I meditate, but I'm always distracted and never seem to achieve anything'. That is the reason. One has been using a faulty technique.

Whereas if one actually meditates for even a few minutes, five or ten minutes, and if during that time one makes sure that one has a clear and focussed meditation then that becomes the imprint. That is what we are going to acquaint our mind with. If we continue with a very short time but clear and focussed meditation then that is what our mind is going to become familiar with.

As soon as we meditate the mind will become clear and focussed and one can build upon that. One builds upon that focussed and clear meditation and rather than becoming tired and difficult and distracted, the meditation quality becomes better and better. When the meditation technique is correct from the very beginning the meditation can only become better, not worse. That seems to be one of the main reasons.

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

4.2.2.1.2.1.2. The measure of having produced such thoughts

Now we come to the point in the text where it has completed the explanation of the practise of being of a small scope. As a summary, the text goes into explaining what are the signs of having achieved the attainments of a small scope. The text describes the sign of someone who has developed the attitude in line with the practise of a being of a small scope.

It explains that initially an ordinary being's mind would be familiar with the concerns of this life. That means that

focusing on this life and the temporary short gains of what to achieve in this life would be in the forefront of one's focus. One would have a spontaneous, natural inclination to pursue goals that are only for this life. The results of these goals would be experienced in this life and intentions to achieve results for the future life will be just sort of an idea. One would not have a strong, spontaneous inclination to pursue goals for future lives. That would be an ordinary being.

After having trained in the practises that are prescribed in the instructions for a being of small scope one comes to a point where, having considered the long-term benefit for one self, this earlier attitude changes. One now develops an attitude where one sees the benefit of future lives as being more important and begins to pursue happiness for a future live with strong determination and that becomes at the fore front of one's goals. The temporary or worldly goals of this life become secondary. One does not pay much attention and focus to that. The main focus is on future lives and their happiness. When that takes place it would be a clear sign that one has developed one self, trained one self, sufficiently to develop the attitude of being of a small scope. However, even after having developed such an intention one can easily lose that attitude again. The advice is to continuously practise even after this attitude has been developed.

With regard to the need to continuously practise and develop one self even after the attitude has been gained. We can refer to the experiences of certain individuals amongst the students who come here. There will be some who have experienced a very strong feeling that the pursuit of the worldly life in this short time life is really meaningless and have wished to really engage in the practise as a means to develop a long-term goal for the future. That sort of intention can be reached with a very strong intensity and thus, for a few days or maybe a week or so, they may have that intention. But one would notice that that experience slowly fades away and one loses that determination. For those who have that experience it is clear that even when that strong intention or attitude have been developed it can be lost. Therefore the advice is to continuously practise.

The practises are described in the teachings of the earlier sessions. When we started the text we covered the main points of taking refuge in the three Jewels, the significances and purpose of taking refuge, based on that adopting or developing a conviction in karma, the cause and effect sequence and, having studied and understood what karma means developing a strong determination to purify the negative karmas one has created through the practise of applying the four opponent powers as an antidote. When that has been studied and developed within one's mind one can develop a strong determination to purify the negative karmas and so forth as a means to pursue our goals for future lives.

If one engages in the practices and one has developed a very strong determination to pursue the happiness of future lives based on the understanding of karma and engaging in the practise of purification and so forth one will become a person who is at real ease. One is at ease because an actual, immediate consequence of practising

in this way is that life becomes much happier. One actually experiences an immediate benefit from these practises of a happier and content life.

When contemplating future lives one will develop a sense of confidence because of one's practices. Whatever the future will be, it will be fine. That also brings a happy state of mind to be experienced in the future. We can use an example of someone who has a very beautiful and nice place to stay now and has the promise of getting an even better place to go for the days to come. Such a person would be at ease and will be content. They will not only have a nice place to live and stay now but also there's a promise to have a better place to stay in the future. Such a person would be content and at ease, wouldn't they?

One can use the same analogy further. If someone has been promised a much better dwelling or living place in the future and the choice is given to them, 'Would you want to move to this better place now or whenever the time is ready?' They would readily feel, 'Yes'. If there were a better place than where one is living now one would definitely want to go and live in a better condition or better place. It would be seen as foolish or meaningless to be attached to one's own dwelling place if a better place has been offered. Similarly, that would be the case in regard to our lives. If future lives would be much better than what we have now then the strong attachment and grasping to this life will naturally be decreased because of the knowledge that there would be a better future. Thus the importance of this life will decrease.

One must understand that when the teaching describe that one should not be grasping and desirous for the pleasures of this life that this does not, in any way, imply one should completely neglect this life. One should not neglect the necessities in this life such as clothing and food and whatever wealth one has. It does not mean that one has to give these up entirely. We need to use them for our survival. What is being explained is that one can still use the necessities for this life, wealth and so forth, but without strong attachment or without strong desire. What has been explained explicitly in the teachings is to reduce the desire. One does not need to completely give up sensual or desirous objects themselves, but rather the strong attachment and desires for those objects. When that is reduced then, as a consequence, one will become much happier.

That will be sufficient for this evening session. We can leave a few minutes for questions if you have any. I have to admit that I have reasons to be a little bit tired today. This morning I woke up at about quarter to four. From that time on I have had no rest today and I have been continuously going on until now. However if you have any questions I will be happy to answer. As I mentioned I have had a very long, tiring day. Please don't ask me difficult question that will add to my tiredness.

Question: I have a question that you may not even have an answer to. There is a television program tomorrow night concerning people who have had a heart transplant and the nature of the program is that people who receive a new heart experience memories of the person who have the old heart? I just wonder if that is feasible from the Buddhist's perspective?

From the Buddhist point of view, in general, you would have to say that it is not uncommon or unique that people will have memories which they cannot associate with this life. There could be memories of places where they have not been, or memories of incidents that they may not have experienced or have not occurred in this life. Yet they have these memories at certain times. This could be associated to memories from past life times.

So it is not sort of unique or uncommon for individuals to have memories of experiences that they don't seem to be able to relate to in this life, even without a heart transplant. These are said to be memories that would likely be associated with past life times. This experience of having memories which are not associated to this life could be due to various reasons where one could have heightened intelligence.

In this case of a heart transplant, if the original heart was weak and not functioning well it may have affected the memory to some degree as well. Now that they have a new, fresh, good heart that functions well it could have contributed to a sharpening their intelligence and understanding to a higher level. Being able to use the mind more acutely could then result in memories associated with past lives. That could be possible.

If there are no further questions we can spend a few moments in meditation before we end the session for this evening. Bring your mind inward, distancing your mind from distractions and focus this time on the sound of the recitation of the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version
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