
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual, it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose we will sit in a comfortable, seated posture. When we consider engaging in meditation we can conclude that one of the main purposes of meditation is to generate a kind attitude within oneself, and the meditation technique is the means to generate such a kind attitude. If we consider the importance of generating a kind attitude we can refer to the practical benefits that we gain from a kind attitude in this life. For those who accept that there is a continuity of our mind and consciousness a kind attitude is something that will survive our death and go on with our mind to our future life.

Death is nothing more than the ceasing of the function of the physical body. Death cannot stop the function, or continuity, of the mind. All the positive imprints or attitudes in the mind continue with the mind on to the next existence. Cultivating and developing a kind attitude now not only assists us in this lifetime, and we can see the obvious benefits of that, but it will carry on to assist us in future lives.

Considering this life, if we were to ask ourselves, or anyone else, whether a kind attitude is beneficial or not the answer is obvious. A kind attitude is definitely beneficial for one's self and for others. That is something that we can all see. It is one of the main tools for our wellbeing, good communication with others and so forth.

Developing a kind attitude with oneself is of utmost benefit. One's wellbeing is very much related to the attitudes cultivated within our mind. Working with the mind and developing the mind, is of utmost importance for our own wellbeing. Atisha has mentioned that the best instruction that we can derive from the Dharma is the instruction to take care of one's mind. Developing positive attitudes within our mind and a kind attitude within those positive attitudes is something that can really assist us. When we talk about our wellbeing as a person, the 'person' we are referring to is basically the combination of the body and mind, and within the body and mind the predominant aspect of ourselves is our mind or mental function, the attitudes in our mind.

Having a positive mind also contributes to our physical wellbeing. If our mind is in turmoil, constantly agitated and disturbed, then it negatively affects our physical aspect as well. Developing the mind is really in our own primary interest and, furthermore, a kind attitude can benefit others. We can see it helps us to communicate well with others such as our partners or friends.

Those who are parents, such as a mother, naturally contribute to their children's wellbeing and the effect of a

mother's kind attitude seems to be passed on to her children. We can see in families where parents make an effort to develop a kind attitude or are naturally kind, that their children seem to carry that aspect of kindness as well. In this way if one nurtures that kindness within oneself then many generations can be affected in a positive way. So we can see that there are great benefits for oneself and for others in developing a kind attitude, and that contributing to a generation of kind beings is a really worthwhile contribution that we can make. In this way we can see the long term benefits of a kind attitude.

In relation to parents' contribution to their children; there can be a positive contribution to the children if parents are actively involved in nurturing kindness and consideration of others' wellbeing. This positive effect will be carried on to the children. We must not ignore, however, the fact that there are also many problems that come from parents as well. From the Buddhist point of view in training our mind, we must regard our parents as being very kind regardless of their attitudes to us.

It is a fact, however, that there are many who feel some resentment towards their parents. It is hard to discern where the fault lies but that effect has to be acknowledged as well. In either case, even though the parents have been kind in many ways there are many who experience, due to certain misunderstandings or communication or whatever reasons, difficulties that arise in relation to their parents. That is part of natural existence. It is hard for everything to be entirely positive. The main point here is that if parents nurture kindness and try to bring up their children with kindness then it is most likely that the children will have that positive effect and, as mentioned earlier, these positive attitudes can be passed on to the following generation.

In order for this to come about it is important to put some effort into it. There is nothing that comes about naturally without any effort. There has to be some effort and that effort is in the practices of checking one's mind and dealing with one's mind. It is all in relation to dealing with the mind, transforming the mind into positive attitudes. It is important that we look into this.

The physical aspect of ourselves very much includes our mind. Whatever we do physically is as a result of what goes on in the mind. The mind is the predominant motivator of our existence. The mind influences our physical actions as well as our speech. In relation to our physical and verbal actions it is conventionally accepted that there is good behaviour and bad behaviour or bad manners. This is something that we all conventionally accept. There are certain behaviours that are considered good behaviour and certain behaviours that are not considered good behaviour. This is determined in relation to how you affect others. When you engage in activities that benefit others and so forth, it is considered good behaviour. If we engage in activities that harm others that is negative or bad behaviour.

If we wish to have good behaviour, and good conduct that others appreciate, we need to engage in the causes that bring about that good behaviour. Good behaviour is an external manifestation of what happens in our mind. If we can discern what causes good physical and verbal

behaviour we can try to cultivate and increase that positive state of mind. When we are able to discern the state of mind that causes negative behaviour we can work towards overcoming and controlling the states of mind that influence negative behaviour. In this way, we work at discerning and analysing what goes on in our mind and cultivating what is a positive, and discarding what is negative.

When we engage in positive actions, and good behaviour that can be of benefit to oneself, one is considered a good person and is appreciated by others. But one also benefits others by engaging in positive deeds. People really benefit from that and in that way one can contribute to the wellbeing of others as well. We all have the wish to help others. This is an instinct we all have, but whether we are able to help others is another matter. It depends very much on whether we have the skilful means, whether we know how to help others or not. The main point is that since we have the intention to help others it is worthwhile to look into the means of how we can benefit others. As mentioned previously these means are looking into our mind and developing a positive attitude in the mind.

In order to discern whether good behaviour influenced by a positive mind is useful or not we can look into ourselves as an example. When others show good manners and are helpful and show kindness to us, do we appreciate it or not? The obvious answer, within ourselves, is that we do appreciate others showing good manners, and being kind to us. From that we can infer that others would also naturally appreciate it if we were to show a good attitude to them, and be kind to them. We can assume that whatever one experiences oneself as good others will appreciate as well. In this way we can tell what is beneficial or not.

When we are able to discern the positive attitudes in our mind that influence the positive behaviour and wellbeing of ourselves and others and we are able to discern what is negative then in that way, through our own discernment, we are able to develop a certainty within oneself about which states of mind within oneself one can trust and nurture, and which states of mind are negative and to be discarded. If one can develop that sort of understanding and trust within oneself it becomes very secure.

Having explained the benefits of generating a positive state of mind, one must also understand that a kind attitude within oneself is not something that can come about just by itself. One has to put some effort into training one's mind and then a kind attitude comes about as a result of familiarising one's mind with those positive attitudes. The training that is involved is what meditation is about. So we can then understand the importance of meditation, and how it brings benefit for ourselves.

The initial training that we engage in is to spend some time focusing on our breath. This is one of the most effective techniques to clear our mind. Initially it clears our mind of all discursive, disturbing thoughts and then makes our mind focused and stable. This technique of focusing on the breath seems to have very practical benefits that can also be felt physically by helping to clear the channels within oneself. It is a very practical and

relatively easy practice of just focusing on the breath and does not involve too much thinking. Focusing on the breath is the main technique. To focus on the breath we need to distance our mind from other thoughts and distractions and put our mind one hundred percent on the breath. So for the next few minutes we will engage in doing just that. (*Pause for meditation*)

It would be worthwhile to try to continue to engage in this practice of meditation on a regular basis. However we must be very cautious not to overdo it. Use a short duration but with consistency. That is the main technique of any practice of the Dharma: do it moderately but with consistency.

It is very important that one has the right technique of meditation. The main thing that one is looking for is being able to discern the positive states of mind from the negative states of mind and then cultivating the positive states of mind and trying to apply the antidotes to the negative states of mind. This is also must be done in a very slow process. One cannot achieve quick results in the practice of meditation. One must expect that it will take time and the natural way is to slowly but steadily develop one's mind.

4.2.2.1.2 The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.2 Training the mind in the stages of the path held in common with beings of the medium scope

4.2.2.1.2.2.1 The actual training in the reflections: the way to develop the mind that longs for liberation

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1 Reflection on the truth of suffering- the faults of cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2 The actual meditation on suffering

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2.1 Reflecting on the actual sufferings of cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2.1.1 Reflecting on the eight types of suffering

The topic we are covering in the text is how by contemplating the Truth of Suffering we can generate distaste or disgust towards cyclic existence. Under this heading we have extensive explanations of the various types of suffering. The main point is that by contemplating the various types of suffering that exist one tries to develop a yearning to be free from these conditions. The conditions that cause us to experience these sufferings are our contaminated aggregates. We should develop a yearning to overcome the causes of the contaminated aggregates and eventually be able to remove all the causes and conditions for obtaining the contaminated aggregates and develop a strong wish to attain liberation. That is how it comes about.

We should also contemplate how the natural sufferings of our contaminated aggregates are related to our physical body. We can then slowly develop a sense of non-attachment, or lessening attachment, to our physical bodies. We can see how a lot of problems in relation to our body come from the strong attachment we have to the body. Contemplating the realities of our physical

body, the suffering that it has to go through and experience, can help to reduce attachment to the body that will then be beneficial in the long run. It can help us to have a healthy attitude in relation to our body.

Of the eight types of suffering we have now come to the *fifth suffering* which is the *suffering of encountering what is unpleasant*. Having the contaminated aggregates it is natural for us to experience this type of suffering. There are five particular sufferings in relation to this. The sufferings listed here is said to be very obvious sufferings that we can relate to immediately. If we were to hit an animal, such as a dog, with a stone it would immediately cry in anguish. That is an obvious indication that it is experiencing pain. Likewise the suffering described here we can readily relate to and identify as being suffering or unease.

The first amongst the five types of this suffering is merely encountering your enemies. This causes, for example, pain and anguish. This is very obvious. If one were to encounter a sworn enemy they would definitely cause us pain and anguish. That is obvious suffering.

The second is one dwells in fear of being punished by them. This is again in relation to a sworn enemy such as we can see now in areas of conflict such as Iraq. When opposing forces, enemies such as terrorists, are caught even those who catch them will torture and punish them. So people live in constant fear of being caught by the enemy. This suffering is always experienced as long as the enemy is there.

The third is that you fear they will speak maliciously, without kind words. This is again fear in relation to the enemies that one has.

The fourth is dreading death. This is the fear of all the worst scenarios, worst possibilities, even death that can occur in relation to the enemy.

The fifth is that you will worry that you will go into a miserable realm after death for having acted in a way contrary to the teachings. Those who have a belief in afterlife may even, after having feared death, be afraid of what will happen after death. They may be afraid of the realms one could be born in and so forth. It is the fear of the afterlife.

The sufferings that one experiences that are related here all arise in relation to having the contaminated aggregates. One reflects on these sufferings and contemplates how one experiences suffering because one has contaminated aggregates that are the result of delusions and karma. One reflects on these points and the strong yearning to rid oneself of, to overcome, the contaminated aggregates, can develop in the mind.

The *sixth* of the eight types of suffering is the *suffering of separation from what is pleasant*. Just as there is a suffering of encountering what is unpleasant there can also be the suffering of parting from what is pleasant.

If we really contemplate the points that are raised in the teachings about suffering, such as the suffering of separation from what is pleasant, it can bring about an understanding within oneself that can help one reconsider before we act in ways that would harm others' relationships. As we contemplate the suffering of

separation from what is pleasant we can relate to that, and understand how much suffering others would go through if they were separated from what is pleasant. If one contributes to the relationships being broken that can cause much pain and anguish and suffering. If one begins to understand that then one could refrain from engaging in activities that harm the relationships of others.

This type of suffering is again divided into five different types of suffering. When you are separated from a very dear relative, for example, 1) sorrow arises in your mind. 2) in your speech, you lament. in other words your very speech is sorrowful. 3) you bring harm to your own body. 4) you are saddened recalling and missing the good qualities of what you have lost.

In relation to the fourth suffering, it seems to be very true that remembering the qualities of someone can really sadden you when you are separated. As a result, the practical advice I give to those who find some difficulty in their relationship with their partner is not to be hasty in separating because while you are living together it might be hard to see the good qualities of the other person. But, once you separate you might start to remember and recall all the kindness they have shown you and when you think about this kindness, it can actually start to bring sorrow into one's mind that one has separated. In order to avoid that suffering it may be better to be a little patient. In times of difficulty, particularly when living together, it is sometimes hard to see qualities as they may not be obvious. However sometimes in separation one can later on, recall their qualities.

It is important that one does not make hasty decisions and choices to separate because the suffering could be much greater later on when one realises that one has left someone who had good qualities. I shouldn't have much say about relationships as you may think, 'What sort of experience does Geshe-la have in this?' Those who are actually in relationships and have difficulty are the ones who go through this experience. For someone who does not have much experience, it may not even be appropriate to talk about that.

This reminds me of a story of a monk who used to give teachings. During the teachings he talked a lot about the suffering of being in relationships and so forth. However he didn't have much experience of that but he had to talk and teach about it. Later on in his life he disrobed and became a layperson and then engaged in a relationship himself. Later on he commented, 'Now I really understand the suffering'. This is a true account and I heard it through one of his students who had been told by this monk about how he had really experienced this suffering.

From my side, even though I may comment about these sufferings casually it might be a different thing if I had to experience it myself.

Apart from talking in jest we should consider these sufferings seriously. It seems that when difficulties arise in relationships of any sort, we start to see faults that we then exaggerate. Once we see some fault while in a disturbed state of mind, the fault escalates in one's mind and one only focuses on the faults, and not on the

qualities. When one reaches a point where one only sees faults in the other then, naturally, one would want to stay away from them and that is when separation occurs.

If we want to maintain a healthy relationship it is very important that we focus on the qualities ourselves and from time to time remind ourselves of the good qualities that the other has, regardless of their faults. There are, of course, qualities that the other possesses. Therefore it is good to remind oneself of these qualities and in that way associate them with that person in one's mind. That can then help to maintain a healthy relationship. This is something that I advise students and friends frequently. It is good to focus on the good qualities.

The fifth suffering is recourse is no longer available for what you have lost. Loss can relate to different kinds of loss, including wealth, jobs and so forth. Once it has been lost and one does not have sufficient means to re-establish oneself then this suffering will arise. If one were to lose something and one were immediately able to replace that again it may not be such a problem, but suffering arises when one is not able to re-establish what one has lost.

In relation to this suffering, there can be instances where one would long to possess something like a car that would cost about \$50,000. In one's mind one would long to have a car but because it costs that much and one does not have sufficient funds it brings about suffering in one's mind. There is unrest in one's mind because one longs for an object such as a beautiful car but because it costs \$50,000 and one does not have sufficient means to buy it, it brings about unrest in one's mind.

Sometimes the sufferings that we experience are very much unrelated to the reality of our present situation but are just speculations. One may speculate that if I had such an amount of funds then I could, for example, buy a car or if I have a certain amount of money I could befriend someone that I like. But because I don't have this money I am not able to befriend this person and have them as a partner and so forth. In this way by speculating on what one could achieve if one had a certain amount of money or so forth one experiences distress in one's mind because one does not have those funds. In fact, this is all just speculation in one's own mind that brings about that suffering.

We can conclude now for the evening. Before we finish we will spend a few minutes in meditation again. This time as the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni is recited we maintain our focus on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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