
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it will be good to spend some time doing meditation. For that purpose, please sit in an appropriate and relaxed posture.

As well as sitting in a relaxed, upright posture, it is equally important to place the mind in a good state – to have a happy and joyful state of mind. As we generate that relaxed and happy frame of mind, it is also appropriate to remind ourselves of the main purpose of engaging in the practice of meditation. We can summarise this as overcoming the negative disturbing attitudes in our mind. We can remind ourselves how the negative attitudes in our mind have harmed us in the past and will continue to harm us in the present. We can then generate the thought: ‘For as long as the disturbing attitudes are within me, they will continuously disturb my mind. The disturbing attitudes in my mind do not give any benefit whatsoever, for myself or for others, so I must put every effort into overcoming them by engaging in meditation’.

Thus we should use our own discriminating wisdom to identify negative states of mind. Then we put every effort into overcoming those negative states of mind by cultivating the opposite, by first developing a clear and focused mind. We should recognise that every negative aspect of the mind is the real enemy within us, because it disturbs our calmness and peace of mind, harming us in so many different ways. It is said that the real enemy dwells within us, not externally. The so-called external enemy can harm us only to a certain degree, and we can usually run away from them. However the internal enemy of the disturbing attitudes is within us all the time, so we can not escape from it, unless and until we completely remove it. Sometimes, we may feel reassured that we don’t have any enemies. However, for as long as we have the disturbing attitudes within ourselves, it is as if we are carrying our own enemy within us, wherever we go. We must therefore overcome the negative attitudes.

If we consider how the disturbing attitudes arise in our mind, it is usually in relation to an external object. Focusing on that external object then becomes a condition for many negative states of mind to arise within us. It could be either the external objects or discursive thoughts arising in the mind that become the condition for disturbing attitudes to arise. So initially we engage in a meditation practice to withdraw the mind from distracting objects that serve as a condition for the disturbing attitudes to arise. That means distancing ourselves from the external objects, as well as the discursive thoughts that arise within us. To completely withdraw our mind from these various objects, we must

bring it within by focusing on the chosen object – our breath – and place it one-hundred-percent on that object of focus. We will engage in the meditation of focusing on the breath for the next few minutes.

We can reflect on how recalling an object of distraction becomes a cause for disturbing attitudes to arise in our mind. By initially recalling or remembering an object that disturbs our mind – either an object of aversion or an object of attachment – this is the cause for any of the disturbing attitudes to arise in our mind. As soon as that object appears in our mind and we think about it, to that extent that our mind will become obsessed with that object. Then it becomes a vicious circle: when we think about the object, we get upset, and because we get upset we become more unhappy. So once we start thinking about the object, it seems that we just continuously go round in circles, thinking about the qualities or negative attributes of that object.

The object could be a person or a non-human being. However, whether it is a human or a spirit or even a divine being – whatever it may be, good or bad, the fact that it is a cause for delusions to arise in the mind, to that extent it harms and disturbs us. The immediate antidote we can apply is to withdraw the mind from that object, because as long as we think about the object, it will only cause the delusion to become even stronger in the mind and thus disturb us further. So the best temporary solution is to forget about the object; not to even think about it. Whether the object is good or bad, is not what we are concerned about here. The object might even be a divine being. But if it disturbs our mind, if it contributes to the arising of delusions in our mind, then it is best that we withdraw our mind from thinking about the object.

Let’s use the example of becoming ill from a delicious meal. If we have previously eaten a delicious meal that made us sick, whenever we come into contact with that same type of delicious meal again, even though it may have tasted wonderful, we would not eat it, because we know that it will harm us. So we will avoid that meal.

It is the same with the objects we recall in our mind. If an object disturbs us, even if it is beautiful, for the time being it is best that we withdraw our mind and not think about the object. Then, when we take a break from that obsession, we can use our mind in a more constructive way. Later on, even if we were to recall the object again, because of our training and practice, we will be able to deal with it better. Here we are not saying that we have to completely ignore or forget the object if it is a person. Rather, by training our mind through practice, when we later recall that person, it will not disturb us.

If we put some effort into training our mind, through familiarity, it will definitely be possible to get positive results; we will be able to deal with the disturbing thoughts caused by recalling certain objects and get to a point of not being disturbed by them at all. The great master Shantideva has said that ‘there’s nothing we cannot accomplish through familiarity’.

For example, there are certain people we may not have associated with, yet the mere mention of their name may cause us to be fearful or disturbed. The mere recalling of their name or just being in their presence could disturb

us. However, through slowly familiarising our mind with their qualities, we may come to a point where we befriend such a person, even to the point where we could not bear being separated from them. So, someone we could not even bear to think of, can later turn out to be someone we can not bear to be separated from. This comes about as a result of familiarity.

We will spend the next few minutes contemplating our breath, withdrawing our mind from discursive thoughts and other objects that may disturb or distract the mind. Then we place our mind one-hundred-percent on the object of focus, which is our breath. In that way, we will spend the next few minutes meditating. *[Pause for meditation]*

It would be good to do some meditation on regular basis. Again, the regular practice of meditation is the key. As a result, one will have a more relaxed, happier mind and consequently a kinder attitude. That is a real worthwhile goal to achieve in our life: well-being through having a happy, joyful mind, combined with a kind attitude towards others. I stress all the time, that this is something really precious; something most worthwhile that we can attain in our life.

In stressing the importance of generating a kind attitude towards others, I have often emphasized that the objects towards which we convey our loving attitude are the very people that we associate with daily. For couples, your partner is the person you associate with every day. This is the object towards whom you begin to practise genuine compassion and a loving attitude. It's not as if you have to generate a loving attitude and compassion towards some obscure object that is out of reach.

If we cannot practise a genuine and unconditional loving attitude with the people surrounding us, we will never develop a real loving attitude towards others who are strangers. The partners or relatives – whoever we are living with and associating with in our daily lives – are the objects towards whom we train our mind to have genuine love and compassionate attitude: not just a worldly concern, but a genuine feeling from one's heart. We should really try to develop an attitude of benefiting them and being kind to them in any appropriate way, extending real warmth and compassion towards them.

For those couples who have children, I have observed that initially you're completely attracted to each other and everything seems to be fantastic. But as time goes on, the strain on the relationship may increase, particularly when you have children. This can cause a distance between you and the initial attraction may be lost, putting a strain on the relationship. At such times, you may find that you've been critical of each other. Let's say from the mother's side that she naturally loves her children. So if she loves her children greatly, wouldn't she consider that criticising the father and saying abusive words towards him would harm the children as well? After all, the children are also the result of the father. Thus if you were to abuse and criticise the other, wouldn't that reflect on the children that you love? With this concern for the children, you may reconsider saying harsh, abusive words to your partner.

This would be the same for both the mother and father: they both have this common interest in their children. This common interest of bringing up their children should actually strengthen their relationship. So when someone feels they want to be critical or abusive to their husband or wife, I ask them to adopt such an attitude of thinking about the children and how it will reflect on them.

Furthermore, I feel that is not appropriate if one partner is attracted to someone else, causing strain in a relationship. It's not appropriate because initially you stayed together out of mutual attraction and a mutual agreement of wanting to be together. You have all the reasons for wanting to live together then, later on, when the external attraction seems to fade away, one's feeling of wanting to be with the other fades, and one starts to get interested in someone else. If you have developed distaste for worldly relationships all together, and thus wish to practice non-attachment then that is something worthwhile to consider. But if you are merely losing interest in your partner and start to develop an interest in someone else, that is totally inappropriate. You may think you will get more joy with that other person, but that's questionable. If you cannot get along with the person you are with now – to whom you were also very attracted before – then how can you be certain that you will sustain a good mutual feeling with this other person you are attracted to now?

The main point is that if one is in a relationship and develops a genuine sense of compassion and love towards the other – a real sense of caring and compassion, going beyond external attraction – then the problems that I mentioned earlier will not occur, or at least will be minimised.

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

Within the outline of 'thinking of the sufferings of cyclic existence in general', we started enumerating the eight types of sufferings. Now we've come to the *seventh suffering*, which is *the suffering of not finding what you seek*. In the text, this is also further subdivided into five specific sufferings, similar to the subdivision of the sixth suffering of separation from what is pleasant into five [see transcript for 5 September 2007].

Seeking but not getting what you want means, for example, planting a field but not being able to harvest it, or engaging in a business but not receiving any profit. Basically the pain and disappointment comes from working hard for something you long for, but then not getting it. You put effort and energy in obtaining

something, but if you do not get the desired result, suffering will occur.

Contemplating these sufferings as a natural occurrence of being in cycle existence will help the mind to accept sufferings when they do occur. The subject explained here is in relation to the suffering that will occur naturally, for as long as one has the contaminated appropriated aggregates. The contaminated appropriated aggregates are the aggregates which by their very nature are suffering, such as engaging in something with a certain wish or goal, and if one does not obtain it, one will become extremely disappointed and sad. If we were to reflect on these points, it would help us to accept that this is the nature of cyclic existence, so we will not be too surprised or shocked and thus be able to better handle suffering.

These sufferings, of course, are very much related to the desires we have, and to our grand wish or goal of obtaining the object of desire. But when we are not able to obtain or possess it, we can reflect on that situation. There may be instances where you may not be able to fulfil the goal or wish of helping someone; or even if you were able to help, your efforts may not be really successful. We will notice that if we practise in this way, thinking about this type of suffering, then when we try to help someone else and it is not so successful, we can think: 'From my side, I've tried my best to help with the best intentions, and it didn't work out; that is the nature of cyclic existence, so it is OK'. If you can think in this way, you will be able to accept it more easily.

The *eighth suffering is the suffering of the five appropriated aggregates*. As the text says, the five appropriated aggregates, which are the contaminated aggregates, are in the nature of suffering. The five aggregates that we possess are appropriated by delusions and karma. These five are - the physical aggregate, the aggregate of feelings, aggregate of discrimination, aggregate of compositional factors and the aggregate of consciousness.

The eighth suffering is subdivided into two: a brief explanation and an extensive explanation. The first subdivision, the brief explanation, explains that the appropriated aggregates serve as (1) a vessel for future sufferings; (2) a vessel for sufferings based on what presently exist; (3) a vessel for the sufferings of pain; (4) a vessel for the sufferings of change; and (5) a vessel for sufferings of conditionality, or also called the all pervasive compounded suffering.

The extensive explanation: regarding (1) a vessel for future suffering, this means you induce suffering in future lives by taking up these appropriated aggregates. Having the contaminated aggregates now, serves as a basis for creating the causes for suffering in future lives. For as long as we have the contaminated aggregates, they serve as a basis for future suffering; not only do we experience suffering now, but these aggregates are a cause to create suffering in the future.

In relation to (2) a vessel for suffering based on what presently exists, this means that the appropriate aggregates form the basis for conditions such as illness and old age, which are grounded in the existing aggregates. So the existing contaminated aggregates serve

as the basis to experience the sufferings of sickness and so forth.

The third and fourth vessels for the sufferings of pain and change both come about because the appropriated aggregates are linked with dysfunctional tendencies. Having dysfunctional tendencies basically means having the seeds or imprints of delusions within oneself. That then becomes the cause to experience either pain or pleasure; at a certain time, one feels pain, but then one may feel well-being or some sort of pleasure. But just as we are experiencing pleasure and feel that everything is fine, it changes again into the suffering of pain. In this way, we fluctuate between experiencing temporary contaminated pleasure and then pain. That is because of the dysfunctional tendencies of the aggregates, due to having the seeds of the delusions.

The fifth the vessel for the sufferings of conditionality means that the very existence of the appropriated aggregates constitutes the nature of the suffering of conditionality, because the aggregates come about as a result of previous karma and afflictions and are the bases or causes for further sufferings. The text further explains, if you do not cultivate a genuine sense of disenchantment with cyclic existence - the nature of which is the appropriated aggregates - you will have no chance to develop a mind that is genuinely intent on liberation, and there will be no way for you to develop great compassion for living beings wandering through cycle existence. Hence this reflection is extremely important, regardless of which vehicle - Mahayana or Hinayana - you enter. It is definitely the case according to the explanations of teachings, that without first developing renunciation oneself, there is no possibility of developing genuine love and compassion towards others.

Developing renunciation basically means developing a genuine sense of disgust or disenchantment with the pleasures and pains of cyclic existence. Until one develops a genuine wish to be free from cyclic existence oneself, one cannot develop genuine love and compassion towards other sentient beings. Thus as mentioned here in the text, whether one is practising the Hinayana vehicle or the Mahayana vehicle, developing renunciation is essential in order to develop the intention to achieve liberation or enlightenment.

Developing renunciation oneself basically means developing a recognition of the five appropriated aggregates that we possess as being in the nature of suffering. Then we will develop a genuine wish to be free from the conditioning of having the five appropriated contaminated aggregates. Once we develop an understanding of the five appropriated aggregates as being in the nature of suffering, we can develop a genuine wish to be free from this and reach the state of liberation.

When one develops a genuine wish to be free from the five appropriated aggregates, one will then look into the causes that bring about the five appropriated aggregates which, as mentioned in the teachings, are delusions and karma. Thus one will develop a genuine wish to abandon delusions and karma. By abandoning delusions and karma, one is then creating the causes to obtain liberation.

After one develops that wish for oneself, one can extend it to other sentient beings.

An even more extensive explanation about the nature of cyclic existence and the sufferings experienced, will be presented in detail further in the text.

We study all of these explanations so that we can begin to develop non-attachment on a practical level. Through the understanding we gain, we can reduce strong attachment towards our contaminated aggregates as well as cyclic existence itself, which includes our possessions, and all objects of our indulgence. As a result of reducing attachment to oneself, one's possessions and other desired objects, one will experience a relaxed mind as opposed to a tense and agitated mind. One's mind will become much more contented and happy because one is released from strong attachment and desire to these objects. We know from our experience that excessively indulging in the objects of desire becomes a means to experience more and more confusion and disturbances which results in suffering. So thus once we contemplate these facts, it can help on a practical level.

As we slowly understand the teachings and really contemplate and meditate on them on a deeper level, we begin to really taste the flavour of the teachings and make sense of them. This will slowly begin to change your perspective.

That is the main point: that this will start to change your perspective. Initially, from a worldly point of view, when we saw someone who had a beautiful body, we may have developed envy, feeling 'what a wonderful body that is; I wish I had a body like that'. But as you contemplate the teachings and think about the nature of reality of cyclic existence, you can come to really understand that there is nothing to be envious about, because their body is no different than the body you have. No matter how beautiful it may look or appear, their body is actually exactly in the same nature as the body you have. So your desire to have a body like that can be reduced. You will not envy others' beauty because of that understanding.

Furthermore, you will not fret about the shortcomings of your own body. Contemplating the teachings will help you reduce strong attachment to your own body. Again, I must emphasize here that reducing attachments to one's body does not imply that one does not take care of it. One should not misunderstand that point. There are many who seem to misinterpret this point and start to think 'I should not take care of my body or look after the well-being of my body'. That's not the point. The main point here is to reduce attachment to one's body but not to reduce one's care for one's body. While we must care for our body, we can do this without strong attachment.

If one reduces attachment to one's own body, this can also help us reduce our strong attachment to others' bodies. Because by seeing the nature of one's own body clearly, one can use that same example to see how others' bodies are of the same nature.

The technique for meditating on the faults of the body is described in the teaching. One analyses one's own body and thinks about its unclean nature. As we investigate our body, beginning from the tip of our toes to the top of

our head, we analyse what it is made of, going beyond the skin to the flesh and bones. We will come to realise that there is really nothing there that we would consider as a pure, clean substance. We will come to realise that every atom within our body is in the nature of being unclean. When we cannot find anything clean and pure within ourselves, within every atom of our body, this will reduce attachment and the excessive obsession that we have for our body. Then, as we think about that, it would also be the same for others' bodies. One can then reduce strong attachment and obsession with others' bodies.

Through our meditation, we can really change our perspective of our body. As mentioned previously in one of our earlier sessions, the body was described as appearing as a different object to different beings: for a yogic meditator, the body would appear as a corpse, a dead body; there is no difference for them between a live body and a dead body, as far as the atoms and molecules and other constituents of the body. For wild animals, such as wild dogs and so forth, the body would appear as an object to be consumed – food. When they see a body, it appears as food, something to devour. Whereas the same body will appear to another being who is attached to it as an attractive object. In fact it is the same body, but it appears in different ways to different beings. On a practical level, through the training of our mind, the whole point of contemplating the cleanliness of the body is that we can see that the antidote is not despising the body, but reducing our strong attachment or desire towards it.

We will conclude here for the evening. Before we end the session, we will spend some time on meditation. This time as we withdraw our mind from the objects of distraction, we focus it on the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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