
The Condensed Lam Rim

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It is appropriate as usual to do some meditation. The purpose of meditation is to achieve a relaxed mind as opposed to a very confused, frustrated state of mind; a clear mind as opposed to a dull, unclear mind because with a clear mind we can achieve greater purpose in life. If we have the opposite of a focused mind, the consequences will lead to a completely frustrated and unclear mind. A distracted mind leads to much more confusion in life. So when we see those effects, we can see that it is very good to strive towards having a clear and focused mind.

It is good to reflect that the practical benefit of meditation is to achieve some benefit for oneself. Even in a mundane job, anything that we do is for our benefit. For instance, we gain money from working which we can use to benefit ourselves by bringing greater comfort and thus happiness into our lives. Likewise, when we engage in meditation, we should think practically about the benefits we achieve. The reason we stress the benefit of meditation is that unlike other activities, it is initially difficult to recognise the benefits.

However, with meditation, the benefit we gain is on a much deeper level. We gain a real internal benefit that we can feel within our mind.

Just as we strive to engage in our work - even though it may be difficult, we do it because we can see the benefit to be gained from it. Unless and until we see the real benefits of meditation it will be easy to give it up or to not really take it seriously and do it regularly. But once we realise the benefits of meditation we will keep up the practise. And when we see the benefit as being the cause of happiness, we would certainly not give it up. Rather, we will put every effort and energy into keeping it up.

Real Dharma practitioners do not give up the Dharma because they recognise the Dharma as being the causes of happiness, not only in this life but in future lives. Real practitioners see the long term benefit as being much more important than the short term benefit. So Dharma practice being of benefit for future lives is considered to be much more important than to be immersed in some sort of temporary benefit, and those who sincerely engage in Dharma practice do not give it up. Similarly with meditation, when we see the benefit we will not give it up.

As I normally explain, the way to see the benefit of the practise of meditation is by recognising that what contributes to our happiness does not depend on external conditions. One may have the best external conditions but still be unhappy. That proves that the real happiness we gain within ourselves does not depend entirely on

external means. There are so many examples of people who have all the external means possible at their disposal, but who still don't achieve inner happiness. So when we begin to recognise that the main cause for our happiness is something that we have to achieve within our mind we begin to recognise the value of cultivating the inner qualities

What are the inner qualities? They are the positive states of mind instead of negative states of mind. Through our own experience we can recognise that when the negative minds take place and we allow our mind to be influenced by anger, strong desire, jealousy, anxiety, depression and so forth, our mind will become more and more unhappy. Conversely, the more we familiarise ourselves with positive states of mind they will help to maintain a happy mind. So we need to distinguish between the positive and negative mind states that contribute to our mental wellbeing and happiness and to cultivate them within ourselves.

We can distinguish the effects of positive and negative states of mind from our own experience: Check to see what happens within your mind when you cultivate anger or jealousy or strong desire? When those states of mind arise, how does it affect us? How does it affect our wellbeing? Do we feel peaceful or calm when we have those negative states of mind? Conversely, when we cultivate compassion and genuine love and concern for others, what kind of affect does that have on our mind? With such practical experience we can gauge that having positive states of mind such as generating love, compassion, and a kind attitude towards others definitely brings about a calm and much more content mind. The mind is more focused and tranquil. The positive states of mind definitely have a positive effect. When we distinguish the differences between positive and negative minds, we can see the value of a positive mind and thus put some effort into cultivating it.

With familiarity over time, the positive states of mind will become firmer within oneself. Attitudes such as genuine love, compassion, kindness and concern for others will become stabilised and one will begin to experience genuine joy, wellbeing and happiness. Those benefits will reflect not only personally but also upon others. Those positive mind states therefore deliver a twofold benefit.

We have all had the experience of engaging with someone we disagree with or whom we dislike and know that the more we focus on them and allow a negative state of mind such as anger, jealousy or competitiveness to arise within oneself; the more we hold on to attitudes that contribute to negative states of mind, the stronger they will become. Whereas, when we focus on compassion and love it helps the mind to feel more calm and peaceful. So by distinguishing between these two states of mind we can minimise our attention on the negative and try to cultivate the positive.

When you focus on the enemy and get angry, you will lose yourself. If, on the other hand, you focus on compassion, you will benefit from that and once you recognise those results you will begin to cultivate and focus on positive minds. Whereas, focusing on the

negative will just contribute to more turmoil in life. When we generate hatred towards the enemy, it actually harms only ourselves. It doesn't harm the enemy! On the contrary, if we cultivate love and compassion towards the enemy it will definitely benefit oneself. So, if by generating anger toward the enemy it only harms ourselves, then there is no point in generating enmity towards an enemy. But if one generates compassion and love it benefits both oneself and the enemy. So in order to protect the tranquillity and calmness of our mind, familiarising ourselves with positive states of mind will definitely benefit us.

So now we will spend a few minutes cultivating a focused mind in meditation and the object that we use to meditate upon is our breath. We focus 100 per cent on our natural breathing by distancing our mind from all other distractions. (*Pause for meditation*)

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

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2.1.2 Reflecting on the six sufferings

The topic we are covering in the text now explains the six types of suffering experienced within cyclic existence.

We have already covered the *first* which is the *fault of uncertainty*, referring to the different types of uncertainty in life. Our relationships with other human beings illustrate this point because we can divide other human beings into three categories whereby we consider them to be either friends, enemies or strangers. We develop strong attachment to friends and aversion or anger towards enemies. We develop indifference towards strangers. However, by understanding that there is no certainty between friends, strangers and enemies and that one can change into the other at any time, we understand that because of those uncertainties one should try to reduce negative states towards these objects.

Now we come to the *second* fault of the six types of suffering which is the *fault of insatiability*.

The fault of insatiability refers to the unsatisfactory nature of wealth and so forth that we might possess. There is no satisfaction from it. The reason we acquire wealth is in order to gain some satisfaction. But because of the very nature of the material object - as well as our mind's way of clinging to it - the very nature of the state of insatiability is that the more we get, the more unsatisfied we are. Rather than being satisfied when we gain some wealth it actually just brings more desire in the mind and the more we indulge in desire, the more we wish to experience it again and again. So there is never real lasting satisfaction in our mind from experiencing worldly pleasures. Without recognising the fault of

insatiability, we seem to think we might get satisfaction in experiencing and indulging in worldly pleasure. But the fact remains that the more we experience it, the more it induces longing and attachment and we are never satisfied.

As one of the great masters mentioned, the suffering of dissatisfaction is the greatest suffering because as we gain more, those attainments become the very basis for us wanting even more. And so there is no end to the requirements of the dissatisfied mind. As one acquires, one wishes for more and more. Looked at from a realistic point of view, the fault of insatiability is a basis for real mental suffering.

The opposite of the fault of insatiability is to be satisfied and content. Once one cultivates contentment within one's mind, then one does not need excessive wealth and belongings because one will be satisfied and content with whatever one has. To that effect, the great master Nagarjuna mentioned in one of his works that real wealth is possessed by a content mind. He explains that for someone who has developed contentment even if one may not have riches such as gold and silver, a mind of contentment will mean that person is happy with whatever they possess. When one has developed contentment it becomes the real wealth, the source of real satisfaction, and wellbeing. That is what wealth should bring about. And because the wealth of a contented mind is unstained it becomes ultimate wealth. So it is very worthwhile to cultivate the mind of contentment.

One must not, however, misinterpret what contentment means. Developing contentment doesn't necessarily mean that one disregards wealth and acquiring wealth or wastes away whatever one has. Rather, it means while securing what one has already got, also to be happy with what one has. So one should ideally cultivate a sense of contentment in relation to whatever one has. Reflecting on the fault of insatiability, one can look around and see that because of the sense of being dissatisfied so much suffering arises. That is the nature of being in cyclic existence. So one must try to overcome insatiability and try to develop some sort of contentment within oneself.

The *third* fault is the *fault of casting off one's body repeatedly*.

The fault of casting off bodies repeatedly, according to Buddhist teachings, refers to the fact that through a number of past lifetimes we have obtained many bodies but have had to cast them off again and again. The teachings mention that if we were to pile up all the bodies we have had in numerous past lifetimes, the heap would surpass even the greatest mountain, Mt. Meru. However even in relation to this very body we have now, it is a truth that we cannot hold on to this body. We will have to cast it away. We will have to leave this body at some time, no matter how beautiful or wonderful it is. No matter how possessed one is with one's current body, one will have to discard it. So even in relation to this lifetime's body we will have to eventually discard it. I for one would definitely like to keep my body, (*laughter*). But that is not the case.

The teachings describe the practical benefit one can derive from contemplating the fault of casting off one's body repeatedly. One will understand that the reality of

being in cyclic existence means one has to discard one's body over and over again and this will help the mind lessen the strong attachment to this life. Also it will help to lessen worries, fear, anxiety and sadness that comes in realising that one has to leave this body. There are those who, when they think about death and having to leave this body, become anxious or unhappy. One needn't be too surprised or shocked thinking about discarding the body, as one has discarded so many bodies in the past. This way of thinking can help the mind lessen the fear and anxiety of discarding this present body as well.

To give an analogy: Someone who has worries and fears perhaps about their eyesight becoming weaker – which is of course genuine concern, can realise that compared to losing their eyesight completely, it is a relatively diminished concern. Similarly, considering that in the past one has had to discard one's body so many times and will have to do so again in the future, the idea of having to discard this lifetime's body becomes less significant. This comparative thinking can serve to bring less anxiety and unhappiness in relation to truth that one will have to discard this lifetime's body.

The *fourth* fault is the *fault of repeated rebirth*.

Having reflected on the fault of having to discard one's body repeatedly, if it were our choice to go wherever we want to; to go to a better place, then that would be something to look forward to. However, in relation to the fourth fault of repeated rebirth, the fact that once one discards this lifetime's body means that as long as one is in cyclic existence, one has to take rebirth again.

The particular word used in the Tibetan context is that rebirth refers to having to be conceived again in the mother's womb. That means one has to come back again into existence; to take rebirth and cope with the trauma of being reborn again with all the suffering that entails. It is totally out of our control as to where we will be reborn. It is completely influenced by our delusions and karma. That is the suffering of having to be reborn again, uncontrollably.

The next two faults are the fault of repeatedly proceeding from high to low, and the fault of having no companions. We will explain them in more detail in the next session. Before we end this session we will again spend some time in meditation. This time as the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni is recited, we will keep our mind focused on the sound of the mantra by distancing our mind from all distractions. Try to keep your focus entirely on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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