

---

## The Condensed Lam Rim

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 November 2007

---

As usual it would good to spend some time in meditation, and for that purpose we will sit in an upright but comfortable position and set a proper motivation for engaging in the practice. This should be done by anyone doing the practice, not only those who have come to listen to the teaching but also the one giving the teaching; we all need to cultivate that positive attitude in our minds.

If I encourage you to have positive motivation but lack that motivation myself, then one part of a complete practice would be missing: Normally, even in a conventional sense, ordinary people seem to prefer things in pairs. For example, you don't like to be single as it feels incomplete, like something's missing. So having a friend or partner makes life seem more complete.

In a broader sense, this is true that for whatever activity we engage in. When relating to others, it is always necessary that both sides have a good attitude. When there is a positive attitude from both sides, the result of whatever you engage in will be positive. I am relating this not just to our practice now, but generally; we should have a positive attitude for whatever we engage in throughout our lives.

So, we need to set a good motivation for the meditation practice that we are about to engage in now. What follows from a positive attitude, is a positive action and a positive result. In this case, the positive attitude would be, meditating for the purpose of subduing our mind. For as long as the disturbing attitudes are in our mind, whatever actions we engage in will become tainted – they will be harmful to ourself and others. So, for one's own peace and sanity, as well as for benefiting others, there is no choice but to overcome the negative, disturbing attitudes in our mind. Thus, the outcome of our practice of meditation should be one to obtain a subdued mind.

The natural outcome of a subdued mind is that the rest of our behaviour, such as our physical actions and our speech, will naturally become subdued, which will be conducive to a harmonious environment in our relationships with others. If the mind is subdued, naturally our physical actions will be more positive: our behaviour will be good and our speech pleasant. When we begin to see the natural, positive outcome of a subdued mind, we will be more inclined to put some effort into developing it.

In the process of subduing the mind through meditation practice, initially we may not be able to completely subdue our mind and control our physical actions and speech because of our habit of engaging in negative behaviour

and inappropriate speech. However, after engaging in meditation the difference would be that we are able to identify our negative behaviour right away and see it as being a fault of the mind not having been subdued. When we see such behaviour in others and within ourselves, we will be able to pinpoint it and say that this is because the mind is not subdued. This will help us not to further escalate our negative behaviour by becoming upset by our own misbehaviour or that of others. We will not get upset about it because we see that the root cause of that negative behaviour is an unsubdued, deluded mind.

There is a practical benefit in being able to identify the root, or main cause, of negative behaviour, particularly in relation to others. When someone says or does something inappropriate to us, our immediate reaction is to get upset and even get angry about it. Our normal habit is to immediately blame that person and see that person as being the main fault: 'They caused me these problems...they said things that were inappropriate...' and so forth. For as long as we see that person as being the main cause and blame them, it seems we will just become more upset and angry with them.

Whereas if we train our mind to see that the main cause is actually something beyond the person – the disturbing attitude or the delusions – then we will be able to lessen our anger, because we then won't blame the person entirely but rather the delusions. We will be able to reason with ourselves that the person is acting in such a way because they are under the disturbing influence of the delusions or disturbing attitude. It helps the mind to think of not blaming the person but rather the disturbing attitudes, then anger seems to lessen and we won't get as angry with the person as we would normally. Consequently, it will not disturb our peace of mind.

What happens when we get angry is that, as we get upset about a situation, it immediately disturbs our own peace of mind. Whereas if we can have the attitude mentioned earlier, it will help us to protect our peace of our mind and we will not be as disturbed. So, there is the practical benefit for ourselves.

As we train in generating positive attitudes within our mind by training in the practice of meditation, we will see the practical benefit of subduing our mind through meditation. Subduing our mind means to be able to put things into perspective and not allow situations to disturb our mind. When we are able to reach a point of not allowing any external situation to disturb our mind because of our perspective and proper attitudes – such as patience, love and compassion – that will be a sign that our mind is beginning to be subdued.

Whenever someone else engages in inappropriate behaviour, such as criticising us without any basis, instead of getting upset and angry with them, if we can see the main cause for them to do that is because of the delusions and not the person themselves, we can then practice patience in relation to the person. Without being able to see that, it would be quite impossible to practise patience. It is when we begin to see the person not being at fault - as being under the influence of the delusions, that we can practise patience with them and develop compassion towards them.

---

---

So, when we see that a person is harming themselves under the influence of the delusions, we can develop compassion for them. This means that, rather than getting upset and angry at one's enemy, one can actually develop compassion towards them; it is in relation to the enemy where we can begin to practise real patience and compassion.

The practical benefit of the practice of training ourselves to develop a positive attitude in our mind, is that it helps us not to lose our peace of mind, not allow our mind to be disturbed. If we get upset and angry every time others act inappropriately, then we are losing our peace of mind by allowing our mind to be disturbed. By training our mind as mentioned before, we protect it and do not allow it to be disturbed. This is where we can see the benefits of the practice.

One of the main techniques of securing our peace of mind and protecting it, is developing what is called analytical wisdom. We already have the intelligence or wisdom to analyse what is useful and what is harmful to us, so once we develop that intelligence or wisdom further, we will be able to really distinguish between what is harmful to us and what is beneficial. Then we can adopt what is beneficial and avoid what is harmful. So this sort of intelligence will be one of the main tools for us to be able to maintain a positive frame of mind.

The purpose of meditation is to subdue our mind so that we have good behaviour and a good outlook on life. Good behaviour relates to all three levels – of mind, physical body and speech – which means having appropriate thoughts in our mind, good physical behaviour and appropriate speech. This comes about through developing and perfecting the intelligence or analytical wisdom within us.

Through this analytical wisdom within us, we are able to distinguish the cause of engaging in misbehaviour. From our own experience we notice that whatever negative behaviour we engage in physically and verbally is preceded by a certain attitude or state of mind; this attitude in our mind will then cause us to do and say certain things. When we are able to identify the negative thoughts within our mind prior to engaging in misbehaviour, we will be able to reduce, minimise and eventually completely overcome that misbehaviour. We know from our experience that certain actions we do, which have caused harm to us and others, have come from certain attitudes in our mind. Even though, in the past, we may not have been aware of those attitudes, after developing our practice of meditation, we will come to notice that the whole point of meditation is to be able to identify these negative thoughts as well as the positive thoughts in our mind, and cultivate a positive rather than a negative attitude. If we can use that intelligence continually, we will be able to derive the practical benefit, which is engaging in positive deeds.

Through our practice of meditation, we attempt to reach a point where we have become fully aware of the negative attitudes when they arise in our mind, and which normally influence us to engage in inappropriate physical and verbal behaviour. By being able to pinpoint such an attitude, one can think: 'If I were to follow what this

attitude and state of mind is influencing me to do, that will lead me to misbehaviour, which will be harmful'. So one can reason with oneself and avoid being influenced by negative thoughts. Conversely with positive thoughts, one can think: 'If I were to follow these positive thoughts, it will lead to positive behaviour' and one can adopt that. This is how we should reason with ourselves and follow our own wisdom.

The purpose of engaging in the practice of meditation is so that we can get some practical benefit from it. If we were to continue with the practice using the proper technique, we would begin to see that naturally our attitude and the behaviour that follows from it would improve, and become better and better. We would also begin to understand the difference between negative karma and positive karma. Inappropriate behaviour that results in an unpleasant outcome is identified in Buddhism as non-virtue or negative karma. One can identify negative karma from the results it brings. If an attitude and action brings about results that are inappropriate and unpleasant, that would be non-virtue. Similarly, we can identify virtue by its results: an attitude that brings about the result of appropriate behaviour in the sense that it is pleasing for others, pleasing for oneself and joyous; one feels good about it, and others feel good about it. That which causes an appropriate and pleasant experience is what we call virtue. This is how we can distinguish between virtue and non-virtue.

Now we will take some time to actually engage in some meditation practice. Sitting in an upright, comfortable position we make a determination that for the next few minutes, we will not allow our mind to be influenced by external and internal distractions, but rather keep it focused on the object we choose to focus on, which is the breath. Keeping our mind focused on the natural inflow and outflow of the breath, we stay one-hundred-per-cent focused on that, and not allow the mind to be distracted. *(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 strains 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**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2.2 Explaining the sufferings of cyclic existence in particular**

The topic that we are covering from the text right now is the topic within The Four Noble Truths, the first of which is the Truth of Suffering. In the text, the Truth of Suffering is explained in relation to the suffering of cyclic existence: the outline explains the suffering of cyclic existence, first, in general, by covering the eight types of suffering. Now the text goes into the next category, which is explaining the sufferings of cyclic existence in particular.

The main purpose of the text going into detail in explaining the nature of suffering of cyclic existence is so that, when the student understands the reality of cyclic existence, it instils in them an intense wish to overcome

---

or abandon cyclic existence. So the main purpose is to make us develop a detachment towards the pleasures of cyclic existence by seeing the reality of cyclic existence as being in the nature of suffering.

When the text went into the earlier explanations of suffering in general and we went over the list of the different types of suffering, that was the suffering experienced by all beings – all beings in cyclic existence would experience those types of suffering.

Here the text is explaining the particular types of suffering experienced by the beings within the six different of realms of cyclic existence. So the six (or five) realms are basically the categories or different types of existence experienced by beings existing in what we call cyclic existence. 'Beings in cyclic existence' here refers to beings that dwell in cyclic existence under the influence of delusions and karma. There are five or six different types of beings; the text goes into the details of explaining the particular suffering of beings within each realm of cyclic existence, to instil within us a stronger determination to overcome being born in any of these five or six types of rebirths.

The six realms can be divided into two categories; the three lower realms or unfortunate rebirths, and the three higher realms or fortunate realms. Within the six types of rebirth, the sufferings of the three lower realms have been explained earlier in the text [under the Lower Scope] so we don't need to go into further detail here.

The three fortunate rebirths, or the three higher realms are the human, the demi-god and the god realms. When all the realms are subdivided into five rather than six, the demi-god and god realms are combined into one, so then the two upper realms are the human and the god realms; otherwise the upper realms are subdivided into three.

In explaining the suffering of the three higher or fortunate realms, the first is the human realm, for which the text explains four different types of suffering.

The general sufferings of human beings consist of the pain of hunger and thirst, unpleasant sensations, heat and cold, searching for sustenance, becoming fatigued and so on, as well as the sufferings of birth, old age, illness and death. These are all experienced by humans. When we relate to these sufferings on a practical level, in relation to the suffering of particular types of beings, of course the suffering of the demi-gods and gods is hard for us to relate to because we don't perceive them. However, the suffering of animals is something that we can relate to, and in relation to humans, we can see that animals in general go through much more suffering than humans.

Even when we relate to the suffering of human beings – the general sufferings that all humans experience and the particular types of suffering that some humans experience – that in itself is something that should instil a great sense of disenchantment towards human existence, what we usually regard as favourable compared to the other existence. In fact when we think about the sufferings that humans go through, it will really instil a strong sense of disenchantment towards that existence.

As we reflect on the suffering experienced by human beings in relation to the suffering of the lower realms,

which were explained in detail earlier, we can see a similitude of the suffering of the lower realms within human existence. For example, when we relate the particular sufferings of the hell realms, such as extreme heat and extreme cold, to human existence, we can definitely see humans who experience extreme heat and cold. Likewise, the particular sufferings of the hungry ghost or spirit realm are intense hunger and thirst: we can also relate this to human existence, where many humans undergo extreme sufferings of hunger and thirst

Humans have to endure an incredible amount of suffering without any choice. When we relate human suffering to the particular sufferings of the animal realms, we see that the mighty in the animal realm overpower, prey on and devour the weaker animals. We can see that particular suffering also in human existence where the powerful overpower weaker humans and try to take advantage of them.

In that way, we can definitely relate to the particular sufferings of the lower realms that are experienced within the human realm. As the teaching explains, there are various benefits in reflecting on suffering.

One of the benefits is to develop disenchantment with cyclic existence; after having reflected upon suffering, we develop a genuine determination to be free of suffering. That is one of the practical benefits for oneself. Another benefit is that, by reflecting on suffering in detail, we develop strong compassion for beings undergoing that type of suffering.

The text quotes here from another great master's work, Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanzas*. The quote reads:

For the privileged pain is mental  
For common people it is physical.  
Day after day  
Both types of pain affect this world.

The first line refers to those who are affluent, who from a material point of view have sufficient means such as wealth and power. The particular type of suffering for these beings, is mental suffering. They are not deprived of clothing, food and normal sustenance, but because they have wealth and so forth, they experience much greater mental suffering, such as worry and anxiety, for example, the suffering of great responsibility. There is the further anxiety of losing their wealth, of protecting it, and other kinds of problems such as jealousy because others are doing very well. They are not able to bear the fact that others are doing well, and develop jealousy, envy and pride in relation to others' progress. These sorts of mental afflictions and suffering occur for those who are privileged.

Common people, meaning those who are underprivileged, don't have enough to sustain them or may have enough for a while but may have worries about what happens when that runs out. What they have is sufficient for this year, but where will they find the means for next year? Even with the most basic sustenance, they have that sort of worry. Some face difficulties of not having enough clothing and food and so forth and experience more physical suffering.

---

The final two lines mean that human beings, whether they are privileged or affluent or whether they are ordinary beings, experience various sufferings day after day. It is good for us to reflect on a practical level how these types of suffering are prevalent in this world among all humans, whether they are rich and wealthy or ordinary beings and poor – all of us experience similar types of suffering.

In relation to what we call success, normally we say that success and progress are good. For example, a person who starts off a business and has one shop that takes off and becomes quite successful might then have two shops, three shops, all the way up to owning ten shops. When they reach the point where they have ten shops, compared to the time when they had only one shop, they would of course have made real progress and had great success. However, when we relate to the state of the mind of that person, when that person was only dealing with one shop, the level of sanity and peace of mind would have been much greater than when they owned ten shops. The level of anxiety, worry and so forth will be much increased when they reach the level of owning ten shops. That would be a practical way of looking at it.

Our mental peace depends primarily upon our inner development, not our external development. If we do not pay attention to developing our inner strength and peace – to our internal means – but instead focus on our external progress, rather than benefiting us it could even harm us by bringing more worries and anxiety. Whereas if we develop ourselves internally, the external conditions are only an aid to help us for the better. Otherwise the external conditions in themselves cannot benefit us by bringing us peace of mind.

Reflecting upon that situation helps our mind to not aspire to merely gain wealth and high status and become obsessed with our work, because we can see that external progress does not necessarily mean internal progress, where we have mental peace. When we reflect upon that we will not be too driven by just external success and then not become too disappointed when we don't have material success, as long as we are working on our inner development.

The suffering of poor beings who are deprived or impoverished is something that we can relate to very easily. We see so many people suffering in this world because of being destitute, experiencing hunger and thirst and having meagre dwellings. Even though in Australia people seem to be quite well off in general, in many other countries, we can see the immense suffering that many people experience. We seem to be the ones who are in between, not impoverished but not too wealthy and famous – so we are the ones who are quite well off, in between the two extremes! Actually it is the case that those who are in the middle, free from both extremes of destitution and great wealth, are really the happiest people.

The explanation given here in the text is the way for us to reflect upon and meditate upon this topic. Using traditional meditation plus analytical meditation will help our mind slowly become more subdued and it can

really benefit us. So we should do this practice on a continuous basis.

Before we end the session for the evening, we can spend some time in focused meditation. This time, as we sit in an upright comfortable position, we bring our mind inward, away from the distractions. We can now focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. So let us just keep our mind focused on the sound of the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne  
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version  
© Tara Institute*