
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual, it would be good to spend some time in meditation. First of all, make sure that you are sitting in a comfortable and relaxed position, as it is important to find the balance between sitting upright and being relaxed.

Having found a comfortable sitting position, the next thing is to check our mind to reconfirm that the purpose of meditation is to bring about a calm and peaceful mind. As the Buddha himself mentioned, a subdued mind is a happy mind, and the more we are able to subdue our mind, the more it contributes to a happy mind. Furthermore, to practise meditation is to protect the mind from being completely distracted. The more the mind is influenced by distractions, the more troubled the mind becomes.

In the attempt to achieve a subdued mind, we must initially generate mindfulness to protect the mind from distractions. If we are not vigilant about this, then the mind will be easily influenced by distractions. As we notice from our own experiences in life, problems occur in our life when the mind is influenced by external distractions. So we must be vigilant, and guard our mind against distractions.

The instruction on the importance of protecting our mind from distractions by keeping the mind's focus inward can be misinterpreted to sound as if we need to restrict our mind from thinking about other things. That sort of restraint feels restrictive. To use an analogy, when children are told to sit quietly in a room for a while, they get very restless and they will feel restrained. They want to go out and play and be active. Even as adults, if we misinterpret the words, 'protecting the mind, securing the mind by focussing inward', as having to restrict our mind, then that might cause us stress.

If we believe that protecting the mind means stress, then we have missed the point. Rather than being stressful, the whole technique is about releasing ourselves from stress and having a relaxed mind. As we learn and train in the technique of meditation, we will notice the positive effects even when we are outside; we don't always have to be inside in a quiet room.

In fact the whole purpose of practising meditation is to be able to deal efficiently with the outside world. Because it is a mental attitude, the real positive effect of meditation happens in a mental state, which we carry inside us wherever we go. When we reach a certain level, we will notice that even with all the distractions of the external world around us, our mind will not be influenced by them. Even with a lot of distractions we can have a stable mind. Then we can really maintain and secure a calm mind in all situations. That is what we want to achieve.

Again, if we misinterpret meditation as being focussed on only one thing, and only thinking about one thing, then that may seem awkward, strange, and futile. Just as one way of thinking about marriage is that it is strange that you are

committed and looking only at one person for the rest of your life; and how strange it is that this one person is the focus in your life.

In a committed relationship such as a marriage, if that means you must focus on only one person and you cannot look at anyone else, or if it is a crime to even look at someone else, then that is of course not the point. But if you are in a committed relationship and you start looking at everyone else in a room, then your partner may feel uncomfortable. But if they know that your mind is stable and you are just being friendly with others, and there's no other intention, then it is fine. The problem arises not just by looking at others, but being distracted by them. This is where the problem arises. If in looking at others you get distracted by their attractive appearance, then it potentially becomes a problem with your partner. The problem escalates and typically that is what leads to many of the problems in a relationship. Similarly, in meditation, in attempting to keep our focus on one single object, we are training the mind to remain focussed in all situations.

Having mentioned the significance and the purpose of the practice of meditation, we will attempt to meditate now. First of all reflect on the technique, which involves temporarily completely distancing your mind from distractions for two or three minutes. During that time, try to be completely committed in keeping your focus on the object, which in this case is the breath.

In order to make that strong commitment we need to remind ourselves of the disadvantages, or the ill effects, of a distracted mind. If our life feels meaningless, and we aren't focussed, our mind feels scattered, and we aren't clear in anything we do, then that is the result of a distracted mind - a mind which is constantly running after certain ideas, or plans, or objects to obtain. The mind is constantly running from one thing to the next, and as a result of that we experience a sense of purposelessness. It feels like there is nothing we can hold onto. If that is the experience that we get once in a while when we really reflect upon our life and situation, then this is because of external distractions.

There is no real essence, no real meaning or contentment that we can derive from external distractions. Because our mind is influenced by these meaningless distractions, we don't feel that we have any purpose and meaning in our life. Reflecting upon that should encourage us to engage in meditation so we can generate a focussed mind, which in turn leads to a more contented mind.

In a formal meditation, we sit in an appropriate position and spend some time quietly focussing inward on an object, such as the breath. Even if for one or two minutes we can do it sincerely and wholeheartedly, and really try to keep our mind focussed on the breath 100 per cent, then this becomes the cause for us to obtain a focussed mind. Initially we are advised to spend only one or two minutes, and practise doing a short meditation session, and then slowly, as we get more and more familiar with being able to focus on our breath for one or two minutes, we can increase the time to three or four minutes.

This is a more comfortable approach rather than immediately trying to meditate for a long time. Even though that may seem to work for a while, it will not be sustainable and we will not be able to continue the practice. It is much more practical to meditate for a short time, but sincerely and with full attention and focus. So when we meditate, we need to withdraw our mind from external distractions and keep

our focus on the natural inflow and outflow of our breath, and just maintain our focus on that one hundred per cent. *(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

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Reflection on the causes of suffering – the faults of cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. How afflictions or delusions arise

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. Identifying the afflictions

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1. In identifying the afflictions

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.1 Desirous attachment

As explained in the teachings, in order to overcome the delusions within our mind we must first identify what the delusions are. Then we can recognise their disadvantages and the advantages of overcome them. Understanding that will prompt us to apply the antidotes for overcoming delusions.

Delusions can be divided into ten specific categories, and then a further two categories called views and non-views. These can be understood to be like speculative delusions and non-speculative delusions. Within the non-speculative delusions or non-views, the first is attachment.

Previously we went into identifying what attachment is and how attachment arises in the mind. Now we come to the point of explaining how to overcome it by applying an antidote. Previously we explained attachment, the actual definition of attachment itself and then the disadvantages of attachment as well. We went through the explanation of the disadvantages of attachment when strong desire arises in the mind.

Now we come to the point in the text where it explains how to overcome attachment or desire in our mind. The specific antidote as a practice of meditation is explained as meditating on the repulsiveness of the object, which is a direct antidote towards the object of attachment. Attachment arises in us when we exaggerate the qualities or the attractiveness of the object. By seeing the object as attractive and exaggerating its qualities and attributes, the mind wants to cling onto the object. Meditating on the repulsiveness or the faults of the object becomes opposite to the attitude of attachment. That is how we overcome attachment.

The mind of attachment is a mind or attitude that focuses on the qualities of an object and exaggerates its qualities, thus seeing the object as being overly attractive. That attractive appearance is an exaggerated perception, and is what causes strong attachment. If attraction is very strong in our mind, then we will experience negative consequences. In order to reduce and eventually overcome attachment towards the object, we must change our perception of it. Since the perception in the mind of attachment is seeing the object as being very attractive through seeing the qualities of the object, then we must train our mind to see the faults or the repulsiveness of the object. This will change our attitude towards seeing the object as unattractive. When we see the object as unattractive, then the desire or attachment to the object will naturally subside.

There are various different techniques that are explained in the teachings of how to meditate on the object as being repulsive or unattractive. First of all, when we are attached

to an object, it could be either attachment to 1) the colour or radiance of the object, or 2) it could be an attachment to the shape or 3) attachment to the tangible feeling of the object. There are specific meditations to overcome the specific aspects we see in the object. If it is the colour that we are specifically attached towards, perhaps because it is radiant and bright, then we must meditate to see it as a reddish dark colour that takes away the tint or glimmer of the object. If we are attracted to the object's shape, then we meditate on the object being infested with bugs or worms so it looks tattered and the nice beautiful shape of the object begins to fade away and look unattractive. If we are attracted to the touch and feeling of an object, then we meditate on the object as rotting away, then we will be repulsed and not want to touch the object because it has rotted away and looks disgusting.

These techniques can be related to any object, particularly for a strong attraction to another person. For example, if we have a strong attachment towards a hat that we like, which has a nice colour or shape, then if that hat later becomes infested by moths and eaten away and starts to fall apart, then the attractiveness of the hat would suddenly go away too. What appeared to be a beautiful hat is now not a nice hat anymore. If it starts to fall to pieces or if it has gone mouldy or something then we will not have a strong attachment to the hat.

Likewise, in order to reduce our attachment to a person we have strong desire or attraction for, we can meditate on their repulsive features. We can focus on the person's internal organs, starting from the feet, mentally taking away the skin and dissecting the body, and looking at it internally beyond the skin and the surface and the flesh and the bone. Looking upwards from within the body, investigate from the feet all the way up to the top of the head and try to search for what is actually attractive within the body. We will come to the conclusion that it is not really attractive at all. This reduces our attachment. For those who may have a problem in focusing on someone else's repulsiveness, feeling that this is disrespectful, then you can use your own body. Since we have a strong attraction towards our own body by seeing it as beautiful and attractive, we can focus on our body from the sole of our feet all the way up to the top of our head, looking beyond the surface and as mentioned previously, investigating within the body, looking at the internal organs and so forth; and seeing that how it is the truth, the reality that beyond the skin things are not really attractive within our own body.

This type of meditation, where we see the repulsiveness of the body, and see the body in its natural state as being unattractive, comes only with familiarity. When we become familiar with that practice, then the body will not appear as attractive. Seeing the body in its natural state will overcome the faulty state of mind, our faulty perception of seeing the body as being attractive, because our mind is overpowered by the perception of seeing it as repulsive and unattractive. That naturally occurs as a result of the mind being familiar with that perception.

Right now if we feel that we are immediately attracted by focusing on the attractive features and qualities of the object, then that is because that is what we are familiar with. We familiarise ourselves with the object by focussing on its nice external aspects, and so we are immediately influenced by that. We are more familiar with the object's nicer aspects rather than its repulsive ones, and this is how attachment and desire arises. When we are more familiar with the

practices of focusing on the repulsiveness of the object, then we will be able to relate to its actual state of being not so attractive. This practise will overpower the desires in our mind, the mind of strong attachment.

When we become familiar with the techniques of meditating on the repulsiveness or the unattractive features of an object, then this way of thinking begins to dominate our mind, and overpowers the mind of attachment and desire. Then we can begin to relate to things in a realistic way and not have an exaggerated view of objects as being beautiful. So when we relate to someone or some thing, it will be in a more realistic way, and will bring a healthier approach to our way of living. Our mind will be trained to a point where it will not be easily influenced by distractions; it will become steady and stable. Whatever practise we engage in, meditation or other activities, our mind will be stable and good, and we will achieve good outcomes.

The great Kadampa master Geshe Karawa says that all the faults in our mind arise by failing to see the mind as being distracted, and swayed and influenced by all the distractions, which lead us astray from our path of practise. As long as we are not aware of our mind being influenced by distractions, we just let our mind continue to be completely influenced by them, and then end up being confused and troubled. We experience all life's shortcomings because of that. But once we are able to identify what is distracting us and how we are being distracted, then when we check our mind and bring it inward, we are able to protect ourselves from these negative influences, and become much more steady and stable.

A stable mind means a happy content mind. When the mind is influenced by distractions, then disturbances arise and the mind is not in a happy state. In order to maintain a happy mind we have to be able to recognise how the mind works. Furthermore, another great master has mentioned that if someone is skilled, even the disturbances that occur in the mind can actually be favourable for their practice. Normally when we are faced with problems and difficulties, we see them as being totally negative and totally unwanted. This disturbs our mind and we totally want to reject the difficulty. Whereas someone who is skilled and engages in the practice is able to transform unfavourable circumstances into something beneficial. What would normally be considered as an unfavourable circumstance or difficulty is actually used to benefit their spiritual development and practise.

Reaching that level is something that we should all aspire to. There are so many difficulties and problems, so as soon as they arise we see them as being unwanted and something we should avoid. This makes it difficult for us to maintain our practice. We can apply all the different meditation techniques that are presented in the teachings for all the different circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, that we find ourselves in.

We do not need to go around asking people for advice when we have strong desires and attachments, because we already have the techniques to apply. Once we have heard about the technique and have understood it, then it is a matter of applying it at any appropriate time when we need to use it.

The technique for overcoming strong attachment and desire is to meditate on the repulsiveness, the faults or the unattractive features of the object. This particular technique is most effective in overcoming strong attachment. For someone who has a strong attachment or problem with

attachment, it becomes a problem that disturbs their mind. When they recognise that disturbance and want to overcome it, then using some sort of technique that is not really effective, even though it is a meditation technique, if it doesn't directly oppose the misperception, then it may give some relief but it won't really work to overcome the immediate problem of strong attachment. Just knowing one meditation technique and feeling that it is sufficient in our life is unrealistic.

If a particular meditation technique does not serve to oppose or overcome a particular strong delusion in our mind, then it does not really serve the purpose. To quote from the earlier master, without recognising the state of mind or recognising the particular fault, we will not be able to overcome it, we will not be able to apply the antidote. Only by applying the antidote correctly will we have contentment and peace in our mind. If we do not deal with the particular problem that is disturbing our mind and try to do something else, then this will not solve the problem

The main point to emphasise is, that in order to overcome a particular problem we must tackle that problem. If it is attachment that is disturbing our mind, then we must apply the specific antidote for overcoming attachment so we can deal with that problem so that it doesn't disturb our mind. The main point is that the effectiveness of learning the different techniques of meditation will become really worthwhile.

Question: When we practise to overcome attachment, do you mean a formal practice with specific steps, on a regular basis?

If the question is in relation to whether we apply specific techniques at specific times in our daily practice, and if there are specific steps, then that is exactly what is being presented in the text. Different techniques apply to particular circumstances or particular delusions that arise in the mind, such as what we were describing this evening - in order to overcome strong attachment we meditate on the repulsiveness of the object.

For someone who has strong anger, then they meditate on seeing the object as not being so negative. This is how they develop patience. For someone who has a very scattered mind and lots of disturbing thoughts arising in the mind, then the technique is to meditate focusing on the breath. That becomes the most effective practice in overcoming a lot of distractions.

The teachings indicate that certain people may have certain kinds of delusions that are stronger than others. Some people may have a particular problem with attachment, others may have a particular problem with anger, and others may have particular problem with pride. For ourselves, we can note down either physically or mentally what delusions are strong for us, and need to be overcome. It helps to learn and understand the techniques as they are presented, using the appropriate antidotes at particular times. The supreme antidote to overcome all delusions is the meditation on emptiness.. The actual meditation is done mentally and we apply the meditation in our mind.

Question: Some meditation texts seem to prescribe a script like practice, where specific steps are followed in a certain order.

Whatever the meditation that is written out, it is used in practice mentally. If we find that it is difficult to recall specific antidotes in our meditation, then this may be because of not using our analytical wisdom or intelligence more regularly. If we attempt to practise meditation by

thinking that we should just have our mind blank and not focus on anything, and if we become too familiar with that, then although the mind remains blank it does not really acquire anything. We are not able to achieve anything, particularly when a problem arises out of not knowing what to do, because the mind is not prepared, and feeling too comfortable in that state.

But that is not how life is; life is full of problems. When problems arise, we need to use our intelligence or analytical wisdom to check up on how the delusions arise, how they disturb us, their disadvantages, and then apply the antidotes. Normally we are not familiar with that process, so if we try to apply the antidote immediately it may not work. In our daily life we must apply the practice of analytical wisdom and intelligence, and investigate how the delusions arise. We need to work with them, see how they arise and understand their disadvantages.

The disturbance arises from our mind, so we need to probe and look into that mind and see where the delusions arise from. However, keeping the mind blank won't give us any understanding of the delusions and we will not be able to deal with the problems that arise. Analytical wisdom is looking into the mind and seeing what is in there. We can look at the delusions in our mind and identify them. For example, even in our practice of meditation, of trying to remain focussed, if our mind suddenly becomes dull, then what is causing that? If the mind is very agitated, what is causing that? Looking and investigating further is what is called using the analytical wisdom. The main point of the analogy is that in order to combat and overcome the enemy, you must face the enemy. To go somewhere elsewhere the enemy is not located and thinking that we can overcome the enemy is missing the point. You would not be able to combat the enemy. We must face the enemy in order to combat and overcome and vanquish it.

Similarly, when we face the internal enemy arising from our own mind, we must investigate our mind, look at how the delusions arise, and use the antidotes to overcome those particular delusions, such as our attachment or anger. But keeping the mind blank would be like holding onto the enemy and just securing the enemy within ourselves. When we hold onto the objects of attachment or anger, or hold a grudge, then attempting to meditate and keep the mind blank is not going to be effective. As soon as we come out of the meditation, we will explode again either in anger or with desire.

Furthermore, not only have we not been able to use the practice effectively way for our own benefit, but others can start to lose faith. Our friend and relatives start to mistrust whatever we are doing. If we claim to be doing the Buddhist practices then that will start others to distrust the practice. People will start claiming that you say you are doing a spiritual practice, a Buddhist practice, but somehow you are not changing at all. You become even more irritated, and have even more desire in your mind, how can they trust that?

But if we start to really use the practice effectively in overcoming the delusions, and as a result of our practice we start to have a more subdued mind, then we will be a calmer person, and we'll be more understanding and more forgiving. The practice has then become more fruitful. This is when the people around you, such as your family, relatives and friends will begin to appreciate what you are doing.

We hear comments from people who say that for those who become Buddhist, either their parents or relatives may not accept that initially, but when they see the transformation taking place then they may comment that whatever practices you are doing seem to be helping. You definitely used to be easily irritable or grumpier, and now you are calmer and more peaceful. They say that even though we may not be able to be practise Buddhism, or practise the meditation techniques, ourselves and it is not for us, but it seems to be OK for you, so we support you. That's how the family and others will support you to engage and continue with your practice, because they can see the positive results.

In order to make our practice effective, we must be able to recognise how to deal with internal problems. When we refer to the external enemy, we always make sure that we try to either avoid or vanquish them. We put all our effort in trying to protect ourselves from an external enemy. The word 'enemy' means someone who harms you, and we try to protect ourselves from them. There are certain measures we use to try to avoid the external enemy. We might use many tactics trying to avoid harm from them without necessary fighting them or facing them.

However, if we don't tackle the internal enemy and we don't work to overpower them, then the internal enemy will not go away. With the external enemy there are times where the situation may change and they are not your enemy anymore. External situations can change without really having to fight with them or overpowering them. But unfortunately the internal enemy does not just go away or fade away if it left alone. It will only be become stronger if you don't actually tackle it.

Tackling the internal enemy means tackling our delusions by applying the antidotes to overcome them. This is something that we need to work at constantly and with diligence. We must see it as a long-term fight. It is not something that we can overcome right away, but through our practice and diligence we can definitely overcome and overpower the delusions that are our internal enemies. Once we overpower the delusions and reach a subdued mind, then real joy, peace and contentment will take place in our mind.

Let us spend a few minutes in contemplation. As we sit in an appropriate position, bring our mind inward and focus on the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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