
The Condensed Lam Rim

ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སྒྲོལ།

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As usual we will spend sometime in meditation. For that purpose we sit in a comfortable and relaxed position. When the physical body is relaxed it seems to contribute to having a relaxed mind, and when the physical body is not settled it is hard for the mind to actually be calm and focussed.

When we reflect and analyse the various difficulties and problems we have in life, we can come to understand that a lot of problems that we face arise because we are not able to deal with the overwhelming thoughts and ideas that we have in our mind. The basic problem is having so many different thoughts and ideas but not actually being able to translate all those ideas and thoughts into actions.

On a practical level, we do, of course, need to think about our survival in this life. We need to think about the practical aspects of how to sustain our life and this means thinking about studies, work and so forth. However, where the problems begin is when we have far-fetched thoughts and ideals in our lives that we may not be able to practically accomplish. When we have many different thoughts and ideals in our lives that are practically unattainable, that starts to create worries in our mind.

When we have lots of ideas and thoughts in relation to unrealistic goals, we tend to face difficulties. When we realise that we are not able to achieve those goals it brings unnecessary worries, anxieties and problems into our lives. The practice of meditation will actually help those with this state of mind, which is an excessively hyperactive mind, and bring about a more realistic, more focussed and calm state of mind.

When we think about it, it really seems to be the case that our minds seem to make extra worries, extra problems for ourselves. Another disadvantage of having an overactive mind and adhering to grand goals is that even if we do actually achieve certain goals that we set out for ourselves, we end up not really being satisfied. That happens because what we achieve doesn't match the highest ideals that we have for ourselves. Thus, even when we gain some practical achievements, it doesn't seem to be adequate. We are not really satisfied, happy or content with that. This is yet another way in which how our mind can create problems for ourselves.

Our mind can be excessively active, and have so many different unachievable conceptual thoughts and ideals for oneself that it leads to anxieties in one's mind, and unnecessary problems for oneself. If we are able to identify this, then we would be able to overcome that problem. It is reasonable then to think, 'How can I achieve a state which is free from all the unnecessary

anxieties and worries, unnecessary problems and difficulties in my mind.'

If one is seeking such a solution, meditation is a very practical way to help to settle down the mind. It helps the mind not to get overly excited and distracted by thinking about so many different things. We can then relate that to the practical benefits of meditation; how it actually settles the mind and brings it to a relatively calmer and more focussed state. When we examine these immediate benefits we can see that meditation has a practical benefit in our life right now.

There are those who practise meditation to achieve better conditions for future lives. Practising meditation with the intention to benefit one's future life has great benefits. However in general it is good to see the immediate practical benefits of meditation, understanding how it can bring relief from anxieties and worries in our mind that we may have now.

There are two types of meditation goals that one may wish to achieve. The short-term goal would be to gain immediate benefit of freeing our mind from extreme stress and anxiety, and the long-term goal is to gain benefit for future lifetimes. One must be able to detect that there is a difference in these two types of practices of meditation. The difference is in the profundity of the practice of meditation. One must understand that there has to be something more profound in the practice that is done to achieve the goals for our future lives.

As far as being a practice of meditation, and thus choosing an object to focus on, there would be no difference in the practice of meditation that is done for the immediate benefit of this life and the practice of meditation for the benefits of future lives. The actual practice of focusing on the object is the same. The difference lies in the intention, or the attitude, that accompanies that practice. Those who engage in the practice of meditation to derive an immediate benefit focussing on this life are merely concerned with an immediate relief from the problem, rather than dealing with the root of the problem. Thus, their aim is to settle the mind down from the disturbing attitudes and states of mind that are on the surface. The goal is to experience a relief from the immediate disturbances.

Those who are engaged in the practice of meditation in order to derive benefit for future lives will go beyond the immediate relief from the disturbing mind and try to uproot the very cause of disturbances in the mind. They will not just try to settle the mind down, or get temporary relief from the disturbance, but actually try to remove the very cause of the disturbances within one's mind. This shows the profundity of their goal.

As was mentioned earlier, the actual practice of meditation and the immediate benefit one gets are the same. Meditation that is done with merely the intention of benefiting this life and meditation that is done with the intention of benefiting future lifetimes, are the same in that the actual practice is focussing one's mind on an object. The process of focussing on the object and the benefit that one experiences now are the same. The meditation that we do with the intention of benefiting future life times, will also bring the benefit of settling the

mind now, and bring immediate relief from the disturbances of the mind. We will actually experience those benefits as well. But, because of the attitude and the intention, the actual in-depth practice itself will differ. That which is done to derive benefit for future life times will go a further step in overcoming not only the immediate disturbances but will look into the root of the disturbances. That is where we can see the difference.

The practice of meditation that is done with the intention of benefiting future life times will not only bring an immediate benefit of relieving oneself from the disturbances but, because of the very attitude and the profundity of the practice, it will bring benefit for future life times as well. Thus we can see that focusing on a long-term goal will bring immediate benefit as well as benefits to be experienced later. So, meditation done with the intention to bring benefit for a future life would seem more logical; wouldn't you agree? If it can bring benefit now as well as in the future, then it seems that it would be more reasonable to adopt that practice.

It is important that we understand what leads to a disturbed state of mind. Our mind allows itself to be disturbed by allowing itself to be influenced by distractions. When we can understand how our mind in its normal state is very busy following every thought which arises, and thus understand why our mind is very distracted and disturbed, we can start to reason with ourselves that it is much more worthwhile if our mind is more settled. We can then think about the good conditions that we have to address this by contemplating and thinking that we have sufficient clothing, sufficient food, a sufficient place to dwell in - we don't lack any of that. We have more than the basic needs for our survival, so we have sufficient conditions now.

By focusing on our good conditions we can develop some contentment from that and then reason with ourself that it is much more worthwhile to keep our mind focussed and settled within the good conditions that we have now rather than allowing it to be distracted by dwelling on things we have not achieved. There is no end to our needs and wants. It seems reasonable that others who don't have even the basic needs such as sufficient food and so forth constantly think about how to get those things. But we do have sufficient means for our survival and thus have good reason for our mind to feel content and settled, rather than being constantly distracted with what we don't have. And if we think about the things that we don't have, there's no end to that. Thus it is much more reasonable to settle the mind with the acknowledgement of the sufficient means that we do have.

Having related the benefits of meditation and identified what is it that we are trying to overcome, which is the distracted mind, we can again readjust our physical posture for meditation. Sitting in a comfortable position we again reset our mind for the practice of meditation by temporarily withdrawing our mind from all thoughts, ideas, plans and so forth. We intentionally keep our complete focus on the object of our meditation, which is our own breath. We must make the attempt to focus just on our breath for the next few minutes.

This practice of focussing on our breath cannot be underestimated. It is really beneficial. If we practise keeping our mind focussed on the breath and achieve familiarity with this, even in general, we will gain a clearer and more focussed mind. We all know that a clear and focussed mind is definitely beneficial. Even in a working environment we will all have had the experience that when the mind is focussed and clear then whatever activities we engage in becomes much more fruitful. The task becomes much easier and much more effective. We can definitely relate to the benefit of having a focussed and clear mind, and the practice we are going to do now is to gain that. We need to discipline our mind by keeping it focussed on the natural in flow and out flow of our breathing. So, for the next minutes, just keep one hundred percent focus on the breath. (*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. Non-speculative afflictions

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Anger

Within the four noble truths, the truth of suffering was related in great depth in an earlier part of the teaching. We are now on the second noble truth, which is the truth of the origination of suffering. In identifying the truth of the origination of suffering, the teaching identifies the two main causes are karma and the delusions. as explained earlier, the delusions serve as the main cause of the origination of all our sufferings.

The teaching then goes into identifying the types of delusions that are within our mind. The delusions, or afflicted emotions, as some translations use, are basically the disturbing thoughts or states in our mind. The text explains that there are ten categories of delusions. These are subdivided into five that are views or speculative delusions and five that are non-views or non-speculative delusions. Within the five that are non-speculative delusions we have looked at the first, which is attachment or desire. We have now come to the second delusion, which is anger. We explained this in our last session and we can follow up a bit more today.

In our last session we went over the definition of anger in which we described what anger is, how it arises and what is its mode. Having described that, we also talked about the disadvantages of anger and how to apply the antidote to overcome anger, which is the practice of patience. We did touch on these points earlier, however it is important that we really identify the disadvantages of anger and really contemplate the disadvantages of anger.

Initially it may be hard for us to overcome anger and completely uproot anger from our mind. From the outset one must identify anger as being a negative state of mind having great disadvantages. One must, at the very least,

try not to allow oneself to be under the control of anger. Even if anger arises in one's mind, by immediately being able to identify anger as being a harmful state of mind, one must try to avert that, and try not to feed on the anger and fuel it further so that it increases in the mind. That is how we allow ourselves to be dominated by anger.

We must try, at least, to not be completely under the control of anger. We can practise patience when we see others who are angry as well. It is important to further reflect on the disadvantages of anger. The great Indian master, Shantideva, mentioned in his work *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* that when someone is dominated by anger, the harm that it brings them can be to the extent of taking their own life. Anger can lead to the point of taking one's own life. Shantideva further mentions in the same verse of that text, that when we clearly see the harm that some people inflict upon themselves out of anger, we should ask ourselves whether the object of that anger is an object for us to be upset with? It shouldn't be. It should actually be an object of compassion rather than being an object that we are annoyed with.

In relation to Shantideva's explanation, we find that it is definitely true that some people inflict harm upon themselves to the point of even taking their own life out of anger. Now taking one's own life is not an easy matter. Why? Because one's own life is dearest to oneself. Amongst the whole human race, one considers oneself as being the dearest. There is no one who does not cherish himself, or herself, and thus wish to protect himself or herself. We can see that even the tiniest insects have an instinct to protect themselves. This shows the strong self-cherishing that every being has for their own life. We notice how when some small bugs feel threatened, even just by touching them, they suddenly curl up pretending to be dead. That is their way of trying to protect themselves.

When we relate this to ourselves and to others, we can see how we go to great measures to protect our own lives. That is because of the strong self-cherishing that we have for oneself. But, out of anger one can destroy the most precious and cherished being, oneself. That shows the ill effects or the disadvantage of anger. When we relate to someone who we notice is angry, we should try to practise compassion for them rather than getting upset and annoyed, because we realise the great harm they are inflicting upon themselves. In that way we are practising patience with them. That is the best way. By developing compassion towards them we are practising patience so that we don't feel upset and annoyed with them. When they criticise us, we will not retaliate because of that attitude of compassion in our mind. When we see, or relate, to someone who is dominated by anger we will see that there's no reason to get upset and annoyed with a person who is afflicted by anger.

Shantideva further mentions, if getting annoyed or upset could be justified then it should be towards the anger, the negative state in their mind that we get upset with, not the person themselves. If we felt that getting upset was reasonable, then we should be upset with their anger rather than the person.

As we further identify the disadvantages of anger we can see how anyone who is dominated by that negative mind of anger does not experience any peace and joy in their mind. For as long as anyone is dominated by anger they are in a disturbed state of mind and have a mind that lacks joy and happiness. Because of that, they go out of their way to express it and this comes out in an abusive manner. Why that is so is a mystery? Why do people express their anger to the extent of harming others? There have been mass killings that have taken place. Such as the incident some time ago in Tasmania where a person first killed many others; I think about eight people, and then he took his own life. Later they found in his diary that he was suffering a lot of episodes of being upset and angry. Finally to bring out the anger and to show it, he went to the extent of killing many others. That was a sign to show how upset and how disturbed his mind was. Then he took his own life. This clearly shows the great damage and harm the angry state of mind can bring about.

When anger is expressed, it is usually expressed in a negative way. Actually it is always expressed in a negative way that brings about harm, if not immediately for others then definitely for oneself. If one remembers one's own experience of anger, one can see that whenever one has an angry state of mind, one is not too joyful, and not really happy. Because one is not happy and joyful one may say things or do things that may naturally be a bit harmful and hurtful. By relating to our own experience one must be able to recognise this when others express their anger and say abusive words and so forth out of anger. With people you associate and live with, especially someone you have close ties with, it is unrealistic to think that they will always have a smiling face and be joyful. If one is expecting that, it is completely unrealistic.

If they make abusive remarks and so forth one can immediately relate this to the fact that their minds are disturbed and they are dominated by anger. We should think, 'It is not because they don't like me or they don't love me. Normally they are nice to me and are kind. If they are making certain remarks that are out of the norm, it definitely indicates there is some disturbance in their mind. Because their mind is disturbed I should not react negatively towards them. It will only contribute to their mind becoming more agitated and them feeling more hurt and more disturbed'. It is at that time that one must commit every ounce of one's practice of patience to helping them settle down, and to their joy. One does not respond with anger but actually tries to soothe them and calm them and not react negatively towards them. Then, when their mind settles down, they will respond as they would normally towards us, which is not out of anger. It is very, very important that we have that attitude towards those people that we live and relate with.

We may notice that there are people who live together and, even though they are in a committed relationship and there is no question that they want to live together, it seems that they spend a lot of time arguing over small petty things, and have lots of heated discussions or conflicts. If that is out of a disturbed state of mind of each of them then it is not really a joyful experience. On one hand they have the joy of living together and being in each other's company, but then this joy is disturbed by

arguments. This may happen because they both might feel agitated and disturbed at that time. In order to avoid that, and have a more harmonious and peaceful relationship with the one you are living with, it is really worthwhile putting every effort into practising patience. If both can learn how to be patient, particularly in difficult times when the other is disturbed, that will contribute to the long-term harmony of the relationship. That way you will end up having more joyful times together rather than more times of heated arguments. If initially you have conflict and arguments you will notice if you practise patience that your time of enjoyment and peace with each other starts to lengthen, becomes longer and longer. That would contribute to the benefit of both, wouldn't it?

The great master Shantideva also mentions in his work that if one earnestly puts effort into restraining one's mind from anger and practises patience that the benefit will be experienced by oneself as well as others. The benefit of this practice will definitely be experienced. Furthermore, the great master Lama Tsong Khapa has mentioned in one of his works that the result or consequence of practising patience is that one will not lose the joy one has in one's mind. Rather one will actually secure joy in one's mind. In that way patience becomes the cause of a happy mind now as well as bringing the benefits of a happy future. He further comments that a happy future relates to having the favourable circumstances of a good rebirth in a future life, which then becomes a cause for our ultimate goal achieving liberation and the ultimate state of enlightenment, becoming a Buddha.

Having talked about the virtues of patience one can ask if it is ever possible. When that doubt or question arises in the mind we can again refer to the great master Shantideva's work. To quote again from a verse, he says that, 'There is nothing that is not achievable through familiarity'. When one becomes familiar with practising endurance or patience with small harms one will eventually be able to withstand and be patient with great harms. Shantideva is saying in his text that we can achieve anything through familiarity, if we put an effort into familiarising ourselves with it. If one familiarises oneself with the practise of patience, and the familiarisation is indicated in the second two lines of that verse where he says, 'By practising endurance of small harms', we can learn to be patient in more difficult situations.

If we immediately get upset with small things then the heavier things will overwhelm us. This occurs in relation to criticism. We might hear a small thing said about us and immediately flare up and get upset and angry because we are not able to be patient. Then, when we hear certain news in relation to our family, or some news that is not pleasant, it might disturb our mind as soon as we hear it and we will not be able to be patient with it. The more we contemplate and fuel that disturbance, the more our mind becomes disturbed. If we can practise with small things and learn to endure and be patient with them, then eventually we will be able to withstand and be patient with greater disturbances that may occur in our life.

The actual description or explanation of the practice of patience comes in much more detail in a later part of the text. It was, however, relevant to explain a bit about the practice of patience now. It seems I don't have control of myself and explain things that seem relevant now rather than waiting for later. *(laughter)*

Before we conclude for the evening we can again spend a few minutes in contemplation or meditation. This time what we contemplate, or focus on, the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. We keep our mind focussed on the sound of the mantra and try to be completely focussed on that for the next few minutes.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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