
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. In order to engage in the practice of meditation we first of all have to find ourselves a comfortable, appropriate posture. Once in a relaxed physical posture, it is equally important to have a relaxed and, most importantly, a joyful mind. If one can use this time to have a relaxed, physical body as well as a relaxed mind, then that would fulfil part of our objective, because what we really want is physical and mental well-being. So we would have accomplished what we want for ourselves. If we can in any way find a means to have a relaxed body and a relaxed mind then what more should we ask for? Someone who has a relaxed body and relaxed mind could rightly claim that they are a happy person. If one says, 'I am happy' it refers to a relaxed body and mind.

One should think about the connection between the body and mind. There is a clear connection and it is something that we need to take note of. Because of the connection between the body and mind, we can rightly say that when the physical body feels well, 'I am happy, I am well'. Likewise, when our mind is relaxed and in a happy state we can also claim that, 'I am well and happy'. That shows the clear connection between the body and mind and how both are related to one's well-being. However between the two, the physical and the mental, it is primarily the mental state that contributes to our well-being. When the mind is in a happy and relaxed state it contributes to our overall feeling of being well and happy. Thus it is important that we regularly think about how to have a relaxed and happy mind.

The great meditators of the past have mentioned that the utmost happiness is the happiness of the mind. Therefore whatever we can do to bring about a relaxed and happy mind will definitely bring about a great benefit. The contrary to that is also true. If the mind is not happy and in a state of turmoil that will cause one to experience great disadvantages. In fact, the state of our mind constitutes the outlook for whatever we do. If we have a happy, joyful mind then whatever activity that we engage in also becomes a joyful activity, and that will maintain our interest in doing things. But when the mind is an unhappy state, it seems that we have no real energy or strength for whatever we engage in; we actually feel very down and lose interest in doing anything.

When the connection between the mind and the body and how that is related to our happiness or unhappiness becomes clear to us, then the next thing that we need to recognise is that a happy or joyful mind is something that we need to develop within ourselves. It is not a mind that

is sought externally and hard to reach. Our happy mind is not a mind that belongs to someone else and thus 'out there', but something internal that we possess within ourselves. It is something that belongs to us and so our well-being is very much in our own hands. Having recognised that the mind is something that one possesses and has control over, one must then pay great attention to protecting the mind. This is something that we need to pay attention to.

When I refer to the importance of protecting the mind, I am particularly referring to protecting the mind from the influence of negative states of mind, or what are called the negative emotions or delusions in Buddhism. These can all be brought under the one term, 'the disturbing conceptions'. The disturbing conceptions are the irrational ideas and thoughts, the worldly thoughts, which distract our mind. As long as our mind is under the influence of these negative conceptions, it is naturally led into turmoil and unnecessary worries, anxiety and stress.

For example, there are occasions when we bring up memories from the past and as those memories arise they create unnecessary agitation, bitterness and so forth in our mind. Likewise, we speculate about what might happen in the future and bring up all sorts of irrational ideas and thoughts. Allowing our mind to be constantly pre-occupied with these different conceptions contributes to anxiety, stress and thus unhappiness in our mind. Thus we need to protect our mind from disturbing conceptions.

When we allow our mind to be influenced by disturbing conceptions it brings about a lot of worries, anxiety and so forth on the mental level. That stress on the mental level then transforms into a physical unease and we start to feel tight and tense within our own body. We might actually physically feel that our body is very tight. That is when we need to go and see a masseur and get a massage, a good rub. [*chuckles*]

The correlation between the mind and the body is, first of all, that our mental state is very much related to the energies within the body; what are called the 'four elements'. The physical body is basically a composite of the four elements. There are different levels, from the gross to subtle, of the four elements. An unbalanced state of the mind affects the four elements within the body and makes them unbalanced. When the four elements within the body are disrupted and become unbalanced that contributes to the physical body feeling unwell, stressed and so forth. This explains the correlation between the mental state and the physical state.

As long as one allows the mind to be influenced by disturbing conceptions, or more specifically the delusions, it will lead to turbulence or turmoil within the mind. So, as mentioned previously, protecting the mind means recognising and identifying the disturbing conceptions or delusions within the mind.

In one's daily life there might be occasions where a particular delusion arises and we can immediately see the ill effect it has on ourselves. As soon as the disturbing conception or delusion arises in the mind it immediately creates unrest. This is something that we must identify

and recognise and we must constantly remind ourselves not be under the domain or control of delusions. One must constantly remind oneself, 'If I allow my mind to fall victim and be influenced by this state of mind then I will suffer the consequences myself. I have always suffered in the past from being under the control of such delusions and I constantly suffer now in the present. For as long as I allow my mind to be influenced by these delusions I will always experience the same negative consequences of a disturbed, agitated mind.' One must remind oneself in that way and form the determination to avert such negative states of mind. This is achieved by familiarising oneself with positive states of mind.

This is where the practice of meditation comes in. Meditation familiarises or acquaints our mind more and more with positive states of mind. That will slowly reduce the influence of negative states on the mind. In that way it will protect the mind. In the practice of meditation we are attempting to take control of our own mind. The reason why we use the phrase 'controlling our own mind' is that we are trying to ensure that our mind is not under the control or dominance of the delusions. To the extent that the mind is under the influence of the delusions - the negative states of mind - the mind is in a disturbed state and is in turmoil.

When we are not mindful and leave our mind in its natural state without paying attention to what is going on, it is likely that the mind is influenced by the delusions. It is because of our familiarity or acquaintance with the delusions that our mind seems to be naturally influenced by them. When we think about it, it is quite absurd that we allow our own mind to be influenced by the force of the delusions and thus allowing ourselves to be disturbed, agitated and troubled.

In the practice of meditation we are attempting to recognise that our disturbance, our unhappiness and all our problems come from the fact of the mind being under the influence of delusions. So we are trying to reverse this and take control of our own mind, and we have the right to do so. We possess our own mind, and it belongs to us and no else. Thus we not only have the right, but the responsibility to bring our mind under the influence of positive states that will contribute to our happiness and well-being. Just like everyone else, we also have the right to be happy and joyful. Thus the practice of meditation is the act or the practice of taking control over our own mind and not allowing the delusions to overpower or influence our mind. Instead we train our mind to be focused and in a virtuous frame.

When we choose an object to focus upon during the practice of meditation, we are withdrawing the mind from disturbing conceptions, from all worldly concerns. During that period we make a special attempt to focus our mind on a particular chosen object by not allowing it to get distracted. When the practice is done sincerely, we will immediately experience the positive effects. We will begin to notice that our mind naturally settles down and becomes calmer and more peaceful. The positive effect that we experience, even for a short time, should be the proof for oneself that if we were to regularly have a more focused, more controlled mind, it would contribute to

more and more peace and calmness within our own mind. Thus in summary, the practice of meditation is to reverse our familiarity with the delusions through the influence of a positive state of mind, and that will contribute to the calmness and peace in one's mind.

I emphasise these points to highlight the real relevance or the importance of practicing meditation. Whether I have been able to do that successfully for you or not is something you have to check out for yourself. However that is my intention and what I am attempting to do.

Through the practice of meditation we begin to experience the positive effects of meditation. It says in the teachings, 'All self-control is the source of happiness, whereas being under the influence and control of others is the source of unhappiness'. That phrase becomes relevant and one begins to understand what is being explained. The point being made in the teaching about self-control seems to be very true. Here, 'self-control' means taking control and making sure that our mind is in a positive frame. Being under the control of 'others', refers to being under the control of the delusions.

This is, of course, in relation to our internal state of mind and attitudes. But even on a mundane level we would also agree with this teaching. If we are under the control of others, in which every aspect of our life is controlled by others, that wouldn't be a very happy or joyful life, would it? Even from a worldly point of view, we all think having our own freedom is very important, right? However the freedom being referred to in the teaching is a controlled mind; that is the real freedom.

One also begins to notice another positive effect of the practice of meditation, or even the attempt to practise meditation, which is that one's mind begins to become clearer. It empowers our mind to make good decisions because of the increase of intelligence in our mind. We will be able to think properly and thus the decisions we make will become much more effective, and much more positive. Basically, the practice of meditation clears the mind and increases the positive intelligence, what we call in Buddhism 'the wisdom'. The analytical wisdom increases in our mind. With the increase of wisdom in our mind we will be able to naturally make the right choices for ourselves that contribute to our happiness and joy rather than suffering. Increasing the intelligence or wisdom within oneself is a really significant positive effect of the practice of meditation.

When one actually puts some effort and discipline into practising meditation regularly, one begins to experience the positive effects of meditation and that becomes the real confirmation for oneself of the value of the practice because it is something that one discovers oneself and one is not just relying on what others have said or just basing it on faith. That confirmation is a really sound confirmation and from it one can develop a real conviction in the practice of meditation. When one gains a particular experience of the positive benefits from the practice of meditation, one will then be able to relate to further benefits and the necessity for regular practice in one's daily life.

Having explained the practical benefits of the practice of meditation we will now actually spend a few minutes in

the practice of meditation. In our practice here we use our own breath as an object to focus upon and the technique is that one focuses on one's natural breathing - the inflow and outflow of our breath. As mentioned previously, we must make a determination to withdraw our mind from all other thoughts and ideas. Temporarily we just leave aside everything else, positive or negative, and just place our focus onto the breath and try to maintain our focus 100% on the breath. In that way we train our mind to focus single-pointedly. (*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

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.5. Doubt

In the text we are now studying the topic of identifying the delusions. The delusions themselves are firstly categorised into two types: the speculative delusions that are views and the non-speculative delusions that are referred to as the non-views. There are five non-speculative delusions. We have covered the first four, which are attachment, anger, pride and ignorance. These are all identified as delusions and definitions of each and their disadvantages have already been explained. The fifth non-speculative delusion is referred to as 'doubt'. The doubt that is referred to here has to be particularly understood as a deluded doubt. Doubt is something that we would all be able to relate to and understand.

The definition says doubt is a state of mind that has qualms in two directions. Indecisiveness or being unclear about two points is called doubt. Considering doubt in general, we can see how a doubt can hinder an activity that we wish to engage in. For example, if we were going along a path to reach a certain destination and we came to a point where there is choice of two different paths and one is not clear which path to take and one stops and thinks, 'Could it be this way, or could it be that way?' For as long as we are indecisive it is hard for us to actually embark on the journey and that, in itself, becomes an obstacle to completing our journey.

The doubt that is referred to here is deluded doubt, a doubt particularly in relation to our spiritual journey to reach the ultimate states of liberation and enlightenment as Buddhist goals. Having doubts and not being sure which direction to take in reaching the ultimate goals becomes an obstacle. Here it is in relation to doubts concerning the ultimate goals to be sought on the spiritual path of liberation and enlightenment. That is a deluded doubt. Generally there can also be positive doubts, and that's why the doubt here is referred to as a deluded doubt.

The general definition of doubt is a mental state or mental factor that has qualms in two directions. In our daily life, whenever we have a state of mind where we are not able to decide one thing or the other, that is basically what we

call doubt. Even when we take it on a mundane level, we can see how doubt can hinder one's progress. For example, there are many who have finished their elementary schooling and then had doubts about whether they should continue doing other studies or not. For as long as they remain in doubt as to whether they should do further studies they don't actually embark on the study and it never gets done. Some they could remain in that state for many years.

When my advice is sought about whether someone should do further studies or not, my advice is usually that it is better to just do it, even if it seems a little bit complicated, and then find out. You might actually be able to complete the studies. Doubt can be an obstacle and hindrance to our progress. Doubt is opposed by intelligence or wisdom. In relation to the spiritual or Buddhist path we would call a particular type of intelligence, wisdom. When one has this wisdom one will be able to make the right decisions. Then one will be able to do whatever one endeavours and accomplish it swiftly.

The definition of wisdom is engaging in something after having analysed the object that one wishes to engage in. It is not just a blind attempt to do something without knowing the pros and cons, the advantages and disadvantages of doing it. Rather, having investigated and clearly seen what the pros and cons and what the benefits of something are, and then engaging in that, is what is called wisdom.

The doubt that is specifically explained here in the topic that we are covering is being uncertain whether factors such as the four noble truths or the Three Jewels, the law of cause and effect or 'karma', exist or not. Having that doubt is what is referred to in the teaching as deluded doubt. Being uncertain and having doubt about the validity and existence of the four noble truths or karma or the Three Jewels - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - is called doubt.

The disadvantages of having doubt, in relation to the Three Jewels - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - is that as long as one has a doubt about the validity of the Three Jewels it will hinder the development of positive states of mind, what we call realisations, within oneself. That is a disadvantage. It will prevent spiritual realisations in accordance with the Buddhist teachings from being developed within one's mind.

For as long as one has doubts about the validity or existence of karma it will hinder one's capacity to obtain a fortunate rebirth in our next life. A fortunate rebirth means having good status such as a human being or being reincarnated in the god realms in a future life. More specifically, having doubts about the existence or validity of karma will keep one from engaging in actions in accordance with the law of karma. Having doubts about karma would mean, for example, doubting whether the teachings are true or not. It would mean doubting whether it is actually true that if you engage in positive karma you will have a positive result, and that if you engage in negative karma there will be a negative result. That is how cause and effect has been presented.

If one has doubts about whether it is really true that one will experience negative results as a result of engaging in

negative deeds, then there would be nothing much to prevent one from actually engaging in negative deeds. Likewise, the teachings explain if one engages in positive karma, virtuous deeds, there will be positive effects not only for this life but for the next life as well. The positive effect would be being reborn in a good rebirth, such as a human rebirth or in the god realms. If one has doubts about the validity of that there would be nothing much to prevent one from being lax and not really paying attention to engaging in virtuous deeds. We can see how having doubt actually hinders one from engaging in positive deeds and refraining from negative deeds.

Having doubts about the existence or the validity of the four noble truths will hinder one from attaining the goal of freedom or liberation, which means freedom from the cycle of existence. That is because the presentation of the four noble truths is basically a very detailed outline of how to achieve liberation, or freedom, from cyclic existence. If one has doubts about that presentation then one will have doubts about whether it is true that that we are of the nature of suffering and as long as one is in the cycle of existence one will experience suffering.

Further, having doubts and not being sure about the presentation of the causes of suffering in the four noble truths, that the cause or the origin of suffering is delusions and karma, would mean that one would not prevent oneself from engaging in avoiding the origin of suffering. The third noble truth is cessation, the truth of freedom from the cycle of existence and from all suffering. If one doubts whether that cessation is actually possible, whether it exists or not, then for as long as one has that doubt it would prevent one from engaging in the fourth noble truth which is the path that leads to cessation. That's the fourth noble truth.

Consequently, having doubts about the presentation of the four noble truths will prevent one from fully embracing and engaging in the practice in relation to the four noble truths. If one does not practice in accordance with the presentation of the four noble truths then their goal, which is freedom, would not be possible for one to achieve. That is how it is said that doubts will hinder one's practice.

Now, for some of you it may seem that the teaching is a little out of context as it refers to a future life. Why doesn't it refer to a more immediate and tangible result and benefit? Why does it refer to another life, something in the future beyond our grasp right now? But, when we think about it, it seems that every religion has this aspect. This is where religion is different and unique from worldly means. Every religion presents its results in relation to a future life. For example, other religions that have a belief in God, present teachings about what affects one's future after death; whether one goes to heaven or hell is determined whether one believes in the existence of God or not. So the presentation of an after life is not unique to Buddhism but is shared by every true religion.

Before we conclude the session for the evening we can again take a few minutes for contemplation. This time we contemplate the sound of the mantra being recited; Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

Transcribed from tape by Peter Boothby
Edit 1 by John Burch
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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