
The Condensed Lam Rim

ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སྒྲིག་།

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30 July 2008

As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose, we will sit in an appropriate posture. As we usually emphasise, the main reason we practise meditation is so that we can gain some mental peace and happiness. That sums up the ultimate purpose of engaging in the practice of meditation.

Mental happiness is something we all long for; the longing to be physically and mentally happy seems to be our birthright. In fact, our desire for happiness can be summarised thus: there is nothing more we would want from life than gaining physical and mental happiness. Once we gain some level of physical and mental happiness, it gives us a sense of well-being.

When we look into our situation, the conscious or unconscious aim of every activity we engage in is to bring some level of happiness for ourselves and to remove unwanted experiences or suffering. The reason we strive to gain happiness is that we normally experience the opposite - the lack of peace or happiness. To achieve our goal of gaining physical and mental happiness, we first need to recognise its opposite – the nature of suffering. In order to remove suffering or unpleasantness from our lives, we need to identify it, its causes, and so forth. Likewise, to achieve happiness, we first need to identify it. What is the real happiness we seek? Once we have recognised it, we can then work towards achieving our goals.

As we said, our sense of well-being depends on both physical and mental aspects. If we look at what contributes to our physical well-being, we will notice that there are many external factors involved. More importantly, we need to investigate the inner causes and conditions for our mental well-being, and how we can achieve inner well-being or mental peace.

As ordinary beings, we are preoccupied with seeking happiness and fulfilment from external sources. We seem to be convinced that the conditions and causes for our well-being lie outside. Because of our conditioning and familiarity, even those of us who are conscious of the importance of mental well-being are constantly preoccupied with engaging in activities to acquire good external conditions, which we believe are the source of our well-being.

Because this familiarity is so strong, those of us who are not yet trained in advanced levels of meditation still believe that external conditions are the means for gaining well-being and happiness, and thus we become completely preoccupied with that: we put all our energy

into gaining external resources such as wealth, reputation and so forth.

However in the process of pursuing external resources that we think will make us happy, we actually experience a lot of anxiety, frustration and stress. If it were the case that having gained material resources, we actually became truly happy and satisfied, then we might consider it worthwhile. As we will have noticed from our own experience and from observing others, when we obtain sufficient wealth, resources and so forth, we may experience a temporary sense of satisfaction and well-being. However, if such a person, who has spent a lot of time and energy focusing outwardly and has neglected developing inner qualities, sits down and contemplates whether they are truly happy and satisfied, they will notice that internally they feel quite empty. Their life still seems to be lacking: there is no real joy or happiness in their mind. Despite having sufficient external resources, there is still a lack of true satisfaction and happiness.

What is lacking? Someone who is not keen to look into the situation may just remain frustrated - lacking inner joy and happiness, but nevertheless continuing to live that way. But someone who is interested may question why they are not totally happy or satisfied. To discover a genuine explanation for what is missing, they need to adopt a practice of looking within themselves. In fact, to identify the cause of the problem, one must actually spend some time in meditation first, observing oneself and one's state of mind, and looking into the unsatisfactory nature of our mind.

With this wish to further investigate one's lack of well-being, one will notice through one's practice of meditation that the main cause for us to feel discontent and so forth is the distracted mind. This mind of attachment is constantly clinging to temporary sensual pleasures; the distracted mind is the main cause for us to feel restless and have a lack of contentment.

Thus, being preoccupied with distractions, the mind becomes restless: this is why we lack peace of mind. Through our investigation, we will come to notice that the distractions are the main obstacles to inner contentment and peace. At that point our determination to try to free ourselves from the distractions will become firmer. Through our practice of meditation, we will put some real effort and energy into trying to distance our mind from distractions and familiarise it with focusing on objects that keep it centred.

When we take a keen interest and actually engage in the practice of meditation, we will notice that once the mind settles down, we experience a sense of joy and tranquillity. For the duration of our practice, we will notice that the mind has become restful and peaceful. In this way, we will come to see the real value and benefit of the practice, and become more enthusiastic about doing it.

Those who are young, have quite good health, and have a good job to support themselves may still feel that there is something missing in their life, even though relatively speaking their external conditions are all favourable. As mentioned previously, there is a lack of real joy within the mind, a lack of satisfaction and peace. If one feels

restless rather than experiencing mental peace, then at that point one must really investigate and look inward honestly and earnestly. Through our practice of meditation, we would begin to notice deeper and deeper levels of distractions, which are the cause of all our problems.

The distractions are not limited to external ones; in fact the main cause of our problems are the inner distractions, which in the teachings are called the delusions or negative states of mind. These are the distractions that really disturb our peace of mind. Even when we are distanced from external distractions, we might find that our mind is still disturbed. That is because we have not yet dealt with the inner distractions, the delusions within our mind. Through our practice, as we become more and more familiar with investigating our mind and seeing its different characteristics, we will begin to identify the inner distractions, particularly the delusions, such as the different levels of anger and attachment. When we begin to notice these, we will develop a strong conviction that the real enemy that destroys our peace, happiness, satisfaction and contentment is within ourselves.

Identifying the delusions, which are likened to an inner enemy, is when we begin to really get a grip of our real problem. We can then begin to solve the problem as we apply the antidotes to overcoming this inner enemy. However, it is only through the scrutiny applied in our practice of meditation that we will be able to identify this enemy. We may identify a particularly strong delusion - for instance, one day we might notice we are feeling a bit of agitation in our mind. That agitation is like a seed that can cause us to be upset and angry at any moment. So on such a day when we notice that we are prone to becoming upset, rather than doing our normal practice, which may not be immediately effective for that particular problem, we should leave that routine practice aside and engage in a practice that will help us to settle our restless, agitated mind. As the mind settles down, it becomes fresher and we would be able to deal with the outside world and other situations. Otherwise, we would become so touchy and easily irritated that, wherever we went, we would constantly be prone to confrontations.

Likewise if we noticed on another day that we have strong attachment arising in our mind, we should try to apply particular antidotes for overcoming attachment on that particular morning or whenever one does one's practice. In that way, on a practical level, we would be able to effectively and efficiently deal with situations as they arise when particular delusions are more prevalent in our mind.

The main point here is that if we engage in our practice with a certain amount of awareness and mindfulness, we will definitely reap the benefits in our every day life.

In our daily analysis of our thoughts and attitudes, it will become very clear to us that if our mind is controlled by certain attitudes, the rest of our being will be influenced by that. For example, when a compassionate attitude is more prevalent in our mind, it will affect the rest of our being, such as our speech and our interaction with others: these actions will be much gentler, much kinder as a natural consequence. Because our mind is dominated by

that positive thought, our actions towards others will be kinder and more positive. The opposite of that is also true - when a negative state such as anger dominates our mind, our general attitude and our physical and verbal actions will also be aggressive and negative. So we can see for ourselves that if certain attitudes, or states of mind, are prevalent at any particular time then that affects the rest of our being.

If we fail to notice the workings of our mind, we will fail to know the workings of others' minds and it will seem to us that others are very unpredictable. Thus sometimes they seem kind and generous and you have a good time with them. But just when you thought that they were good company and easy to get along with, after a week or so, they seem to become difficult. It is not as if the person himself or herself has radically changed, but it is the prevalent attitudes in their mind that has changed. At certain times, the more positive attitudes are prevalent and you will have a good time with them. But when a negative mind takes over, or the delusions become stronger, you may not get along well. It is good investigate for yourself: if you felt you had a good time with someone last week, and you met them again this week and it didn't work out so well, where does it come from, what actually went wrong?

Earlier we took example of our mind changing from one day to the next, but in reality our mind can change more quickly, from one moment to the next. To give a particular example, there was an incident I witnessed during my travels in India, when we had to catch a plane that was meant to leave at seven in the morning but was delayed. As we were waiting in the lounge, I noticed a couple who seemed to be having a good time together and really enjoyed each other's company. However, soon after the delay was announced, the girl went over to get some tea. She came back with the tea and as she was about to sit down some tea got spilled; her partner laughed it off. However the lady seemed to get very upset. Because of that one incident - despite the fact that earlier, things were fine between them - the lady stood up and frowned and walked away. It seemed like they did not sit together again for a while. I noticed this change in their companionship taking place right in before my eyes. So it reminded me that while smiling and laughing are good things to do normally, one has to be careful sometimes as it may actually harm others.

Having explained the benefits of meditation practice and the application of the antidotes, now we will spend some time in meditation. Here, the benefits of the practice of meditation come when we are able to progressively withdraw our mind from the distractions and focus it on the chosen object. When we are able to do that, we will feel the immediate benefit. So we make the commitment in our mind that we will not allow the mind to be distracted by any internal or external distractions, and keep it focused on the meditation object, which is our own breath. We will keep our mind focused on the natural inflow and outflow of our breath for the next few minutes. *(Pause for meditation)*

That will be sufficient for now.

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
4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.1. Identifying the afflictions
4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. The stages in which delusions arise

Following from the last session, the topic in the text we are dealing with now is the order in which the afflictions or delusions arise.

In explaining how the delusions arise, first the text went into explaining that the primary cause of all delusions is ignorance. The different philosophical schools have different presentations of ignorance. There are those who consider the view of the perishing aggregates as being distinct from ignorance, and then there are the higher schools, which consider the view of the perishing aggregates as being identical with ignorance, known as primary ignorance.

Following the presentation that accepts ignorance and the view of the perishing aggregates as the same, primary ignorance is the refined view of the perishing aggregates or the view of the transitory collections: that is identified as primary ignorance, which is the cause for the other delusions or afflictions to arise in the mind.

As we also explained last week, the sequence in which the delusions arise seems to correspond with how we actually feel. When we investigate, initially it seems that we have strong clinging or grasping to the self, which in lay terms is the attitude of self-importance - one's own interests are one's primary concern. From that strong sense of self-importance, we have strong grasping or clinging to the self and anything that is related to oneself - such as one's ideas, opinions or wishes. The only reason one's opinion seems to be the most valid is because it is 'my' opinion!! Likewise one's wishes seem to be the most important. If we reason why that is so, we come to realise that it is because of strong grasping or clinging to the self. In relation to one's friends, belongings or whatever one considers favourable, there is a strong feeling of attachment, and aversion to that which seems to oppose one's interests. This is how the delusions such as attachment and anger arise from the ignorance of grasping to the self.

As the text explains, when investigate or observe ourselves we will notice that ignorance is the primary cause of all the other delusions. Here the presentation of ignorance from the school we follow is called the reifying view of the perishing aggregates or the view of the transitory collections, which is the strong grasping to a self.

We can see in relation to ourselves how that is true. Again in our self-investigation we can clearly see that we have the notion of 'I like this', 'I don't like that': how and why do these attitudes arise within us? The reason is because the 'liking something' and 'disliking something' is in relation to the self - the 'I' to which we grasp strongly. Because of the strong grasping to the 'I', we

grasp on to things that we consider to be favourable to the 'I'; thus we say 'I like this'. The reason why we say this is because it seems to give us some gratification, some enjoyment. Because of the pleasant sensation we get from what we like, we develop attachment. Likewise, the reason we refer to some things as being objects that 'we don't like', is because they seem to oppose our enjoyment and bring us unpleasant feelings. Thus we say, 'I don't like this' and aversion or anger arises in relation to those objects.

Just as attachment and anger arise primarily from ignorance, likewise other delusions such as pride and so forth also arise from ignorance.

As the text reads:

When the view of the perishing aggregates apprehends a self, discrimination arises between self and other. Once you have made that distinction, you become attached to what is associated with yourself and hostile or angry towards that which pertains to others. As you observe the self, your mind also becomes inflated.

As mentioned earlier, that is how pride arises in relation with that misconception - the view of the perishing aggregates.

The text continues:

You develop a belief that this very self is either eternal, or subject to annihilation, [this is one of the wrong views or misconceptions presented earlier.] You come to believe in the supremacy of a view of the self and the like, and you also come to believe in the supremacy of the detrimental practices associated with such views. Similarly, you develop the wrong that view that denies the existence of things, such as the teacher who taught selflessness and that which he taught - karma and its effects, the four noble truths, the three jewels, and so forth; or you become doubtful as to whether such things exist or are real.

What is being explained in the text is that from the initial misconception that one develops - which is the view of the perishing aggregates - other delusions arise, such as attachment, anger, and pride. Likewise, one develops the wrong view of perceiving the self as being either eternal or completely annihilated and other wrong views such as perceiving unethical behaviour as being ethical. This is something we can definitely see in society: a lot of a people assuming unethical behaviour to be fine; thinking that it's 'OK' is where unethical behaviour comes from. So, all of the rest of the delusions arise from that initial misconception, which is the view of the perishing aggregates.

Thus what is being presented here is that the main cause of all the delusions or afflictions is the view of the perishing aggregates. The text then quotes another master, Dharmakirti who in his commentary *The Compendium of Valid Cognition* said:

Once there is a self, there is an idea of other.
On behalf of self and other, there is attachment and hostility.
All of the faults come about
In association with these.

It is worthwhile to notice the unique presentation of these teachings in relation to our own understanding; how the sequence of the presentation of the teachings relates very much to how an ordinary person would logically think about these topics. First, the teaching states that, as a means to achieve a peaceful and happy mind, one needs to overcome the delusions. The delusions are then identified and classified into ten specific categories. We went over these specific categories of delusions. Once the delusions have been identified, one may then still think: 'There are different delusions but I wonder how they actually arise in one's mind? Which one comes first? Which comes next? Is there an order in which the delusions arise?' To answer these questions, the next presentation of the teaching is the order in which the delusions arise. In presenting this topic, as mentioned previously, the text explains that the root delusion or the main cause of all our delusions is the particular ignorance explained earlier.

One may then wonder what causes the delusions to arise in the mind. The extensive Lam Rim presents the explanation of the causes for the delusions to arise in the mind. One may think, what's wrong with delusions arising in the mind? Then the teachings go into great detail, further explaining the faults or the disadvantages of delusions arising in the mind - how the delusions harm one and others. In this way, we can see that the whole sequence of the presentation of the teaching is related to how we would logically think through these topics, as well as the practice of how to deal with them effectively.

The next topic after the delusions is a presentation of the types of actions those delusions create. This is the presentation of what we call karma, which is basically the cause-and-effect of actions done under the influence of the delusions. Thus in this presentation we also come to see that the causes of our unsatisfactory existence is karma and delusions, with delusions being the primary cause; in this presentation we can see that delusions are the primary cause because they come first.

That will be sufficient for this evening's session. But before we conclude, let us again spend a few minutes in contemplation. This time, as we sit in an appropriate posture and withdraw our mind from the distractions, the focus object that we use is the actual sound of the mantra to be recited, the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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