
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend some time for meditation, so we can sit in a comfortable, relaxed posture.

It is equally important that we have the proper mindset, which is to generate a positive motivation for doing the practice of meditation. As mentioned in the teachings, any virtuous activity is preceded by a positive motivation. The reason the teachings mention this is that every activity we engage in, is preceded by a thought. Without the initial thought, we would not engage in that action. If we start out with a positive mindset, the actions that follow will be positive; however, if our mindset is negative, the action that follows will be a negative one. This is what determines whether an action is positive or negative.

We need to really understand this mechanism of how every action is preceded by a state of mind or thought, not only in a spiritual context, but even in a worldly context. If we are not aware of the state of our mind, it may happen that we are not aware that we have a negative state of mind and just mindlessly engage in an action. As a result, we would end up engaging in actions that we would later realise were not very constructive or productive, but were quite harmful. In relation to everyday activities, we would realise, too late, that we had made mistakes. All we could do would be to feel regret thinking: 'I wish I hadn't engaged in such deeds'. But that came about only because we had not been mindful of the thoughts preceding our actions.

We can take the example of an everyday activity such as communicating with others based on having a dialogue with them. If we already have a kind and compassionate state of mind prior to having the dialogue with them, naturally that interaction with the other person will be fruitful and positive. It is essential that when we engage in communication with others, we have a positive state of mind. That makes the outcome of our communication or dialogue fruitful. While this is true for normal activities, it is even more so for practices such as meditation. Whether our meditation becomes fruitful and productive or not is entirely dependent on our preceding motivation or thought.

People today appear to be quite familiar with meditation; we hear a lot about it. In fact, in this era, meditation seems to have become a bit of a fad or fashion. People talk a lot about it. There are even some self-created meditations, where you just seem to adopt some nice imagery and say 'that is my meditation'.

However, in our case, the main purpose of practicing meditation is to overcome the distractions in our mind. If we looked into our own situation, we would come to realise that we have a lot of distractions in our mind. Those distractions lead to a lot of problems such as anxiety. All these problems arise because of the distractions.

Meditation is a method or technique to reduce those distractions. If we look further into what causes those distractions or disturbances, we each have different kinds of disturbances. But whatever disturbances we may have, if we looked at where they all stemmed from, we would notice that at the centre of all of this anxiety and distraction there is a sense of 'me' or 'I'. Everything we do is in relation to the self or I that we cling to. So problems occur because 'It doesn't agree with me.' Everything relates back to the 'me' that seems to be the centre of everything. That 'I' or 'self' seems to be at the core of our existence: when that self is not satisfied or feels lonely, it becomes troubled and needs some sort of companionship or help. That is the reality. The 'I' that we refer to is, of course, not like a solid object. Nevertheless it seems as if this solidly existing 'I' or self is at the centre of everything: it constantly preoccupies us.

Now in relation to that 'I' or self, for as long as we are preoccupied by the 'I' and let ourselves remain completely under its control, following whatever it craves, to that extent our mind becomes completely distracted. When we look at the core of the problem – 'Why is the "I" not satisfied; what does the "I" need to be satisfied and content?' – we would realise that what is lacking is a real sense of contentment and peace within oneself. So, that is what we are ultimately seeking: a peaceful, tranquil state of mind.

When we further investigate the causes behind the self feeling dissatisfied, deprived, unsettled and disturbed, we will come to notice that in our situation, our dissatisfaction doesn't come about because we have insufficient food, clothing or shelter, because we have all of that. Some of us at times may feel a little deprived of an intimate relationship and that might be a slight problem for a while. Nevertheless we do have companions – even though we may not be satisfied with one particular companion, generally speaking we have friends and family, so we are not deprived of companionship.

So we have all the necessary external resources – sufficient food, clothing, shelter, friends and companions – yet we are dissatisfied, our mind is not completely settled. That is when we need to ask ourselves: 'Why is that so? Where does that dissatisfaction come from?'. We have everything that should make us happy, yet we are not completely happy and content, so what is lacking? It is at this point in our investigation, through the explanations from the teachings, that we come to realise it is because the mind is in a constant state of agitation and distraction. It is constantly preoccupied by different thoughts and ideas that constantly flow through it, worldly thoughts and concerns, which we call the distractions. These various distractions and conceptual thoughts deprive our mind of real peace and tranquillity.

So we can basically conclude that what we are deprived of is real contentment, peace and tranquillity in the mind. And what is depriving us from experiencing real peace, are the disturbing thoughts and distractions.

Thus we can then refer to the self as being disturbed, dissatisfied and unhappy: the situation of the mind being dissatisfied and lacking peace relates to the self being disturbed. Then we will come to realise that to make the self happy, we have to work on the mind becoming happy and content.

In the process of practising meditation, we are attempting to bring about genuine peace and contentment to the mind through practices such as cultivating love and compassion and other positive states of mind. When kindness, love and compassion increase in the mind, this brings about natural peace and contentment to the mind and thus to the self. When the mind is peaceful, the self – the person or individual – is peaceful, content and happy. This is why we strive to engage in the practice of cultivating positive states of mind. When we have a positive state of mind, the consequences are that we naturally experience a sense of well-being. When the mind is agitated or has a negative attitude, that will affect us negatively.

We can realise clearly through this analysis and through our experience that our happiness or unhappiness entirely depends on the attitude of our mind. We realise that having negative attitudes and distractions disturb the mind. Thus in the practice of meditation, we are changing our attitude from a negative state of mind to a more positive one by withdrawing our mind from the distractions and negative attitudes. To enable us to withdraw our mind from the disturbing negative attitudes or distractions, we focus on a particular object that does not cause the mind to be agitated or distracted. Once we are able to withdraw our mind and focus on the object successfully, our mind will become more peaceful and tranquil.

Let's take the example of the negative state of mind of anger. We will all have had the experience that, when anger is prevalent in our mind, we do not feel happy. Our mind is agitated, disturbed. By experiencing this mental disturbance caused by anger, we realise that to be free from that state of mind, we need to reduce the anger and overcome it. If we manage to do this, the mind will be free from anger and thus be in a happier, more peaceful state. This is the case for all the disturbing attitudes and distractions. When we reduce them and are progressively freed from those negative states of mind, we will experience the positive consequences.

The practice of meditation is to familiarise our mind with being in a focused state, distanced from all distractions. In the next few minutes while we engage in the practice of meditation, we can remind ourselves that we need to distance our mind from all distractions and maintain a 100% focus on the meditation object, which is our breathing. So we focus on our breath and do not allow anything else distract us away from the object of our focus. So for the next few minutes, we will put 100% effort and diligence into focusing on the breath; that is how, by engaging in the practice of meditation, we

familiarise ourselves with being in a focused, positive frame of mind. *[Pause for meditation]*

That would be sufficient for now. As we had made the attempt just now to use the practice of meditation to settle our mind, we will notice that as a result, we have experienced some tranquillity and peace in the mind. That is essential for our life: it is really important to try to gain some real peace and tranquillity in our mind.

As we gain some level of tranquillity and peace of mind, that will consequently benefit others. And when we see that our positive attitude helps bring benefit to others, as a result we will also feel more contentment in our mind, knowing that we have helped to benefit others. On a practical level, when one extends some benefit to others, naturally they will respond to us in a beneficial or positive way. His Holiness the Dalai Lama often stresses this point in his teachings – that from one's own side, if one has an authentic wish to benefit others, they will definitely respond positively. He half-jokingly says he is not sure whether that is true in every case, such as with animals: he's not sure if all animals, such as insects can respond in the right way! But for humans at least, when we extend a genuine attitude of benefiting others, it seems they will definitely respond positively to us.

We find that the essential element for experiencing real joy and satisfaction in our mind is an attitude of kindness, love and compassion. Kindness imbued with love and compassion seems to be the most essential factor for bringing about a happier, more contented life. Thus it is important that we try to cultivate loving kindness within ourselves and protect whatever loving kindness we have already developed, to the best of our ability. That is the essence of the practice of Dharma. If we can understand that, we've understood the true meaning of the practice of Dharma.

To summarise, the essential point of Dharma or spiritual practice, it is developing kindness, love and compassion in our heart, and to strengthen whatever qualities that have already been developed so that they don't diminish but increase more and more. The means to bring this about is what is called Dharma practice or spiritual practice.

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 on from the topic we are covering in the text, we have come to the category of the causes of the afflictions or the delusions. There being six causes, we have covered the first three: the basis, the object and social context, which all serve as causes for delusions to arise in the mind. Now we come to the **fourth cause**, which is called the **explanation**.

Explanation refers particularly to faulty tenets and so forth. They are referred to as faulty because they cause

the delusions to arise in the mind, rather than subduing the mind and promoting tranquillity and peace. These include explanations such as books or texts that have a context that promotes the arising of delusions in the mind –for example, historical or fictional texts about wars like the First and Second World Wars. Because the context of such books is about fighting and destroying an enemy, it's easy for ordinary people like ourselves, whose minds are not yet trained, to take sides and feel righteous about one side and consider the other side the enemy. We then feel that destroying the enemy or killing them off is acceptable. Negative states of mind such as anger and hostility can arise in the mind by merely reading these books.

However, when a trained person reads about how there was so much killing and disaster, he or she can feel a true sense of compassion and even enhance the love and compassion for beings who are involved in this sort of conflict and war. But for ordinary people, without a trained mind, such books may actually do the opposite and cause delusions to arise in the mind.

Thus the explanation here refers to certain kind of textbooks, or even gatherings and communications with others – any kind of explanation that encourages the delusions to arise. In our communication with others, we may talk about things that cause delusions such as desire or attachment or anger to arise in the mind. That sort of communication or explanation becomes a cause for the delusions to arise. Here explanation includes giving explanations to others that cause delusions to arise in their minds, or listening to others' explanations, as a result of which delusions arise in one's own mind.

Another example is that of treatises that cause lust and attachment to arise in the mind. The treatise we often hear about called the Kama Sutta. I think that you know what I am referring to: textbooks that have come out in the name of the Kama Sutta, which explicitly explain how to engage in sexual activities and so forth. These treatises cause attachment to arise in the mind. Refraining from engaging in reading such texts is a way of limiting the causes for desire to arise. From the Hindu tradition, there are certain treatises in relation to Shiva that are particularly about lust, engaging in desirous acts and so forth. Relating to such treatises doesn't really benefit our mind. It only causes desire to arise in the mind and strengthens and increases it. Because there is no benefit to ourselves in terms of subduing the mind, it is best to avoid engaging in such texts.

The **fifth cause** as explained in the text is what is called '**habituation**'. Habituation refers to the process of becoming accustomed to past afflictions. Here, it particularly refers to becoming accustomed to the delusions already in our mind such as desire or anger. The more we enhance those feelings of anger or attachment, the more we become habituated to them, with the result that they seem to arise quite spontaneously and strongly in our mind. When we realise the faults of attachment and anger, we have to make the specific effort through diligence, and the mental decision not to indulge these states of mind, anger and attachment. When they arise, we need to recognise them

and try to overcome them, and not allow ourselves to tolerate that state of mind.

The **sixth cause** referred to in the teaching is called '**attention**'. Attention here refers to incorrect attention. This is a state of mind that projects, for example, pleasantness upon things that have an unpleasant character. When the mind focuses on an object one perceives as pleasurable, one will pay attention to it and start to exaggerate the object's qualities. This state of mind is called incorrect attention because the more you focus on the object of attachment, the more you exaggerate its qualities.

If we take a common example of a person, when one is attached to a particular person, one may first think about the features of the person, beginning with the clothes they wear. The more attention you pay, the more attractive every aspect of their clothing, ornaments, jewellery and so forth appear to you. The mind goes further and starts thinking about, for example, their beautiful physical features such as their face. That faulty state of mind due to incorrect attention starts to exaggerate the qualities of the facial features and other parts of their body. The more one pays attention to those features, the more one exaggerates those qualities and the stronger the attachment towards the object becomes. In this way, due to incorrect attention, attachment increases in the mind.

Similarly, with objects of hostility, one thinks about the unattractive features of a person, for example, and then exaggerates them. The more one focuses on that person, the more one exaggerates their unattractive features. For example, when one thinks about someone who has harmed oneself and thus comes to view them as an enemy, they will appear completely at fault. When one starts to pay attention to that person and how they have harmed us, even though there might have been some initial harm to oneself, the more one focuses on that, the more one exaggerates the harm they may have inflicted on us. We start to have a completely distorted view of how that person is completely at fault. And the more we pay attention to that, because it is an incorrect attention, the more that person's perceived faults increase in our mind causing our anger towards that person to increase and become very strong.

So when we analyse every aspect of what we are either attached to or feel aversion towards, it is due to that incorrect attention, which leads us to see either the exaggerated qualities or faults of the object, causing negative states of mind to arise. This is how incorrect attention serves as a cause for the delusions to arise.

It is very important that we understand this point of incorrect attention, because that serves as the basis for delusions to arise. Every delusion is said to arise due to the basis of incorrect attention. When we investigate further how that incorrect attention serves as the basis for the delusions to arise, because of the incorrect attention, our mind tends to project things. Our mind has the tendency to project because of our incorrect attention. The projection may be of the object's qualities, as mentioned previously – the more one exaggerates the qualities of the object, the more our attachment increases. It reaches a point where it becomes almost absurd to anyone else; in

that person's mind, the attachment has been so exaggerated that it is as if that person cannot survive without the object of attachment – cannot eat, cannot drink, cannot sleep, cannot go anywhere without being obsessed with that object of attachment. It is as if their very survival depends on the object of attachment, which is of course absurd. That state is reached because of incorrect attention. The more one focuses on it, the more one exaggerates. And the more one exaggerates, the more the attachment increases, in the case of an object of attachment.

It is similar for anger. Due to incorrect attention, one focuses on the faults of the object, then one begins to exaggerate those faults, causing anger to increase in one's mind to excessive levels. It is essential for us to recognise how all the faults arise because of that incorrect attention, and the projections that incorrect attention produce in our mind. We impute those projections on the object and see it in that way, in a faulty state. That is how the delusions arise.

When one begins to understand how the delusions arise in the mind, this will help us recognise the delusions when they actually arise. In seeing the mechanism, one actually begins to see how the mind starts to exaggerate the qualities of the object and how the attachment starts to become stronger and stronger. Even though at our level we are not able to entirely overcome attachment and anger, when we notice attachment and anger arising and starting to increase, what we must attempt to do to protect ourselves is not allow our mind to become completely influenced by the negative minds of attachment or anger.

Once we are under the control of attachment, we actually give control of our mind to the other person, the object of attachment. We lose our control over ourselves. We become submissive to the object of attachment. Then one starts to make many mistakes, which only come to light later on when the attachment is reduced. In cases of excessive attachment, one becomes blinded to the faults of attachment and thus becomes completely submissive to the attachment itself as well as the object of attachment. So when we begin to notice that attachment starts to become strong in one's mind, one can remind oneself of its faults and disadvantages. If we are not careful, attachment may reach a heightened level where it may get out of control, bringing us great disadvantage. When one thinks of these disadvantages, one can start to reduce one's strong attachment. If we were to ask what the disadvantages of attachment are, in the most excessive cases, as mentioned previously, one can lose complete control of oneself and cause damage to oneself and others.

From my perspective, when I look at the problems of relationships here in the West, I feel those problems are due to attachment. How that manifests is that one side of the relationship might be very attached towards the other. If the other side were equally attached to one, for the time being the relationship would go well, because it seems that you are equally matched for a short time. That is when we would say that the relationship is going well. However, I feel that where the problems arise in a

relationship is when, from one side there's strong projection, exaggeration and so forth, causing strong attachment towards the other partner, who may not show the same response towards one's intensity. You may feel that you have a strong sense of caring for the other, but if you are feeling attachment and there is not an equal amount of feeling towards you, then you will feel that the other is neglecting you or not responding to you, being mindless, careless and so forth. Then you will start to feel pain and hurt because your expectations are not met from the other side.

I feel that is where the pain of attachment comes into a relationship. It seems that from one side, the mind of the person who has strong attachment to the other is completely obsessed by that one object. So one expects that the other will have that same attitude to oneself. But when one notices that they are actually focusing on others as well, one starts to feel disappointed and hurt.

If you notice that the other person is not paying as much as attention to you as you are to them, at that moment you should remind yourself: 'Okay, I shouldn't put all my attention and focus on that one object, when there seems to be a lack of response from their side. If I continue further, it will only lead to more disappointment for me.' When one has reached the stage where one feels one is giving all one's attention to the other but there is a lack of that same attention towards oneself, if one keeps trying and fails to admit to oneself that there is a fault of attachment there, all of the other faults mentioned earlier – how the mind how exaggerates to the point of absurdity, and the other faults of attachment explained before – will then occur.

Thus we must at that point attempt to transform our mind and look elsewhere. In very practical terms, if one gives a nice smiling face to the other but the other only frowns at one, if one then keeps smiling with an expectation that the other will smile and if that expectation is not met, the more one smiles the more pain one will feel. Thus when they don't smile but frown at you, if you could actually turn around and frown yourself, then you become equal! The image of their face will not be stuck in your mind. You can try to forget about it.

In giving practical advice to some, I have mentioned that, 'you know, if you turn around and face the other way, you can see other smiling faces'. [*laughter all around*] Some actually seem to be interested in what I say, and ask me, 'Is it really true?'

Before we conclude for the evening, we can spend some time again in meditation. This time we will focus on the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version*

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