
The Condensed Lam Rim

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10 September 2008

As usual it would be good time spend some time in meditation. For that purpose we try to find a relaxed and comfortable posture. The purpose of the practice of meditation, as I normally stress, is explained in a saying of the Buddha that says: 'a subdued mind is a happy mind'. This saying of the Buddha seems to be quite true. If one's mind is not really subdued or settled then it is quite difficult to be happy.

Happiness, particularly mental well-being and happiness, definitely seems to be related to a subdued mind. One may question whether it's really necessary to have a subdued mind because even with our fleeting distractions we seem to experience some temporary happiness and joy. However, we can all relate from our own experience that the happiness that comes from the distractions is not very stable. Whatever happiness or joy we experience seems very fleeting. It doesn't remain for long and then it's overtaken by worries and so forth. In order to have a firm, long-lasting and stable sense of real joy and happiness in one's mind, it seems necessary to have a subdued mind.

The fleeting joys and pleasures that we experience on an occasional basis throughout our life may seem to be pleasure or happiness. But the fact is that they are not lasting, and that are not stable, and if we investigate within ourself, we find that soon after that pleasure there seems to be a sense of empty feeling within one's mind. Rather than being fulfilled and feeling content after the sensual pleasure that we experience, we seem to feel an empty feeling, a feeling of dissatisfaction in one's mind. This is true for all the distractions or sensual pleasures that we experience from external factors. Because that sense of pleasure or happiness comes from external sources and is not developed from an inner source within ourselves, it is not stable.

It is not what would be considered real happiness, because whatever we experience is not very stable. It is not what we call joy. In fact, as mentioned previously, it leads to a sense of dissatisfaction, discontentment and so forth. This is because we are not relating to the sources of happiness within ourselves and are instead pre-occupied with external sources. It is as if we are constantly seeking externally for happiness and we try one thing after the other, but it's all fleeting and we never seem to get a real sense of contentment and satisfaction. That is because we are neglecting the *inner* source of happiness. We are failing to understand that the actual source of happiness lies within ourselves. When we spend most of our time and energy focussing externally and fail to focus within ourselves and identify the inner sources of happiness, we

will not experience a real sense of lasting happiness and joy in our mind.

For as long as we are pre-occupied with distractions and believe that external sources bring happiness, we are constantly seeking the ultimate object of pleasure. When one object fails to give us pleasure, we seek another object. We constantly change the objects that we focus on. There is always something else that seems to fulfil us and give us real contentment. Nevertheless, so far we have not found anything that has given us real contentment, and as long as we focus on external objects, we will not come to realise that the real sense of happiness and fulfilment lies within oneself.

When we actually look into why we don't seem to be content with any of the external sources, we find we are never really stable in any situation. We seem to be constantly seeking and constantly changing our objects of desire. Why is that so? Why is the mind not stable? Why are our relationships and so forth not stable? In order to understand why we are not stable, we must look within ourselves and seek the causes within us, rather than focusing outwardly on external phenomena, and examining external objects. If we look within ourselves and investigate we will come to realise that it is actually all based on an attitude. The reason why we are not stable with objects and relationships and so forth is because there is something lacking within ourselves. Some attitudes that we hold are not the proper way to find happiness.

When we start to investigate within ourselves we will come to identify that our dissatisfaction and instability is caused by an improper attitude within ourselves. When we investigate in this way we will come to notice that, as described in the teachings, all our actions are motivated by certain thoughts and attitudes within ourselves. As we investigate further we will come to identify that certain attitudes motivate certain actions that are undesirable and certain attitudes bring about positive actions. It is good to investigate one's motivation, what we call the initiating motivation, for our actions in this way.

Through our investigations we can come to understand for ourselves that our motivating attitude plays the key role, or is the main cause, for our actions. Positive attitudes motivate positive actions, which bring about positive results. Negative attitudes lead to actions that bring about unfavourable results. When we are able to clearly identify this then, because we are intelligent, we will naturally be inclined to follow the positive thoughts because they bring positive results. That would be a positive outcome for us.

To use an analogy for how we would be naturally more inclined to follow our positive thoughts when we recognise that those positive thoughts are the motivator for our actions and bring about positive results, let us take the example of our association with others. In our companionship with others we are naturally inclined to associate with those who are positive towards us. The people who influence us in a positive way are the people that we are naturally inclined to associate with. Whereas, as soon as we associate with certain other people, we notice that we actually are negatively influenced by them.

Then, naturally, we will be inclined to avoid those people. Why? Because by associating with them one is influenced to do negative things that harm one. So we naturally try to avoid them.

Just as this is the case with external factors like friends and enemies, we can use that same analogy for internal factors. When we identify the positive attitudes that are beneficial for us, we will be more inclined to associate with those positive thoughts. And when we identify the negative attitudes in our mind, we will be inclined to start to try to minimise and slowly avoid those negative thoughts, knowing the consequences that they will bring. As a result of this investigation we start to feel naturally and more spontaneously inclined to follow positive thoughts and avoid negative thoughts. That is when a real transformation starts to take place in our life, within us. We are on the right path.

The advice I normally give is to pay most attention to not losing the positive attitudes within us, which are our inner friend. Many have confided in me that this is very essential good advice that they keep to heart and find very useful. If that is true for some, then that should be true for all of us. Maintaining that positive attitude, as I stress regularly, is our real, unfailing friend. As a companion, it is the best companion that we can have. As a friend, it is the best friend that we can have. When we generate and cultivate positive attitudes, it will never fail to bring us real joy and happiness, even at times of difficulty. External friends or companions may change or fail us. There might be a point, because of a change of circumstances, that they will not bring us benefit. If one completely relies on external companionship, then when they fail us it will create great disappointment and sorrow in one's mind. Whereas if one has worked towards maintaining inner companionship, which is the positive attitudes and the good virtuous mind within ourselves, it will never fail us, and in times of difficulties it will bring us solace and a sense of strength within our mind.

Relating all of this to the practice of meditation, we can see that the practice of meditation is actually a technique that assists us to maintain that inner companionship, that inner friend, which is the positive attitudes, within ourselves. In the practice of meditation we are attempting to withdraw from all external distractions and that very attempt of withdrawing from external distractions and maintaining our focus on an internal object brings about a sense of relief from a chaotic, very disturbed and agitated mind. It will bring relief to our mind and, in that way, it actually strengthens the positive attitudes within our mind. We can see how the technique of meditation actually contributes to protecting our inner companion.

To engage in the practice of meditation now we again adopt a comfortable, relaxed posture. Prior to engaging in the actual technique of the practice of meditation, let us again remind ourselves of what we are attempting to do. We are attempting to bring about a settled, calm and focused mind. One must identify that we have an agitated mind, a disturbed mind, a mind full of anxiety and so forth because the mind is constantly distracted. As

long as the mind is distracted all of these shortcomings will naturally fall upon us.

In order to reverse that situation and settle our mind and not to be influenced by these shortcomings we must intentionally withdraw our mind from the distractions. This is done by a commitment that we make to ourselves. The commitment that we make is that, 'For the duration of my practice I will not allow my mind to be distracted. I will withdraw my mind from all external and internal distractions. I will bring my full attention with one hundred percent focus to the object to be meditated upon.' In our case the object is our own breath. We place our focus upon our own breath and maintain our focus just on the natural inflow and outflow of our breathing. Thus we do not allow our mind to be distracted with other thoughts and so forth. In order for it to be a genuine practice, one must maintain one's focus one hundred percent on the breath and not allow it to be influenced by distractions. If we engage in this practice for about five minutes it will be highly beneficial for us to gain a positive experience. Now, we can engage in that meditation. (*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

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.1. Identifying the afflictions

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. The stages in which delusions arise

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.3. The faults of delusions

In our last session we came to the point where the teaching identifies the faults of the delusions or the negative emotions. As Lama Tsongkapa explains in the teaching, having identified the faults of the delusions one must regard them just as we would regard an external enemy.

We discussed this in our last session. To give an example of a delusion and how to regard a delusion as an enemy, let us take the example of anger. If we don't see the disadvantages and the shortcomings of anger then we won't see anger as a fault. But, when we begin to identify the faults and shortcomings of anger, we will consider it as our enemy.

The main point that one must understand in relation to seeing the delusions as a fault, particularly anger if we take that as an example, is that once we are able to identify the faults of anger, it will be quite natural for us to be inclined to try to avoid the state of anger.

At our level it may be quite hard to develop the opposing state of mind to anger, which is non-anger. Developing that right now might be difficult for us. However, the more we identify the faults and disadvantages of anger, particularly strong intense states of anger, the more we can see that as a great disadvantage to ourselves. Then our anger will actually lose its intensity. Even if we cannot completely overcome anger we can reduce the

intensity of anger in our mind. With that, we can develop a conscientious mind, so that when intense anger is about to develop with ourselves the warning bells start to go off saying, 'Oh, This is going to be dangerous for me. I must be careful, for if I allow my mind to be influenced by intense anger there will be great destruction and harm.' Recognising that, will reduce the intensity of anger. Does that make sense to you?

The definition of delusion or defilements was explained earlier. The teaching defines a delusion as 'a secondary mental state, which as soon as it arises in the mind, causes a disturbance to the mind'. We can find that this is true for any delusion. As soon as a delusion arises in our mind, on an obvious or even the subtlest level, it begins to agitate and disturb our mind. That is the function of a delusion. Furthermore, as the text explains, when the delusion arises and we allow it to be prevalent in our mind, it will cause us only harm.

The teaching refers here to the consequence of a delusion arising in the mind. It will cause one's virtuous mind to decline and be replaced by a non-virtuous state of mind. This refers to our mind when it is in a disturbed state and any of the delusions are prevalent. For example, when attachment is prevalent it will naturally, without much effort, be inclined to a sense of covetousness, which is a form of desire towards certain objects or things, and at other times there might be a desire to harm others. That sort of state of mind may be prevalent. Or a state of mind of miserliness or perverted views may arise. When these states of mind are prevalent, quite naturally our mind will be inclined to engage in non-virtues.

When any of these non-virtuous states of mind are prevalent within ourselves it will cause our perception to be tainted and we will have an incorrect perception that influences us. Furthermore, as it is explained in the teachings, as long as we have a non-virtuous mind with any of the delusions prevalent within ourselves, it will cause those latent delusions to become firmer and more stable. Furthermore it will cause consecutive states of delusion to arise. Desire will constantly arise for one object and then the next. Likewise agitation in the mind will be the cause for consecutive agitated minds to arise.

All of these factors will become the cause for us to engage in non-virtuous karma, non-virtuous activity. Thus, in that way, we will distance ourselves further from reaching the goals of liberation and enlightenment. Furthermore, having delusions prevalent in our mind disturbs both oneself and others.

The next point is a quote from a sutra called *The Ornament of Mahayana Sutra*. We can leave the explanation of that quote for our next session. Before we conclude for the evening, would any one like to ask a question?

Question: There are different levels of anger - touch something hot, someone tricks you, you get angry. So there are different levels. I was wondering if you can expand on that? Sometimes those angers are natural. Sometimes, if you prick yourself, you get angry at yourself.

In part of your comment or statement you said that anger seems to be natural. If it were natural it would not have to depend on circumstances. In fact all the examples that

you gave were dependent on certain circumstances for anger to arise. Even though the comment, 'it seems natural', may appear to make sense to you, the fact is that anger relies on circumstances and is not natural.

One must try to understand that there are different circumstances that cause anger or agitation to arise in the mind. For example, when there is a mishap then, because of the suffering that we experience, we can have some agitation in our mind. We might also have agitation or anger towards what seemed to cause that suffering. Whether it's a person or an object, we would have some anger towards whatever seemed to cause that mishap. A person may even use some sort of tools to cause the actual harm. So, we would have anger towards whoever initiated it, the person themselves, as well as the direct objects that cause us pain.

When we examine the circumstances of how our suffering occurs we can see we would have different states of agitated mind in relation to all those circumstances. However what one must identify within us, regardless of the circumstances or different causes, is that they all have the same characteristic of being a form of agitation, of anger itself. On that level it may be a different degree, but they can all be identified as anger. That is good to understand.

We may also notice in relation to its different causes that our anger towards inanimate objects may be intense at that moment but is not very long lasting. Whereas with animate objects, human beings or otherwise, we can see that our anger seems to be much longer lasting. We can identify that from our own experience. If we cut ourselves with a sharp object like a thorn or a knife we get angry with whatever caused that pain. We might even throw it on the ground or sometimes we might break it out of frustration. In that moment we might have intense anger towards the object, but soon after we will forget about it and carry on. Whereas, when it is a person that cause us harm it seems that our anger towards them is much longer lasting. This is something that we might investigate and ask, 'Why is that so?' Could it be because they also seem to be angry with us and show an emotion towards us, that we feel that we have to be angrier with them? That's something worth investigating.

As the teachings describe, the reason why we seem to have a more prolonged sense of anger or agitation towards an animate object is because our reasons to be angry with inanimate objects are not long lasting. The inanimate object is an immediate cause of some harm but we don't see the object as initiating that harm by itself. Thus after we experience that initial harm and upset we can start to forget about it.

Whereas with animate objects, we churn over in our minds what are called 'the nine reasons'. The nine reasons in relation to a person would be that the person has harmed me in the past, is harming me now and will harm me again in the future. We are quite adamant that this is the case. Then, again in relation to that person we feel that the person has harmed not only me but also someone close to me in the past, is harming my friend in the present, and will harm my friend in the future. That becomes further reason for us to develop agitation and

anger towards them. Then, in relation to our enemy we feel that the person has helped my enemy in the past, is helping my enemy right now, and will continue to help my enemy in the future. These reasonings fuel our anger.

If we don't use good opposing reasons to overcome these perverted reasons in our mind it will be actually quite difficult to subdue the anger towards the other person. As you know, it is very difficult to subdue. Does that help you to understand?

Question: If it was said that anger is not natural because it depends on conditions, therefore is it right to say that loving-kindness and compassion are also not natural because they are dependent on circumstances that are not always there?

That is true. In fact to develop loving-kindness it seems we must rely on many more circumstances and causes, thus it is much harder to develop. In comparison, anger is something that is much easier to develop, much more spontaneous to develop, without much reasoning. To develop loving-kindness we have to use much more logical reasoning and work really hard. It is true that it depends on causes and conditions.

Perhaps we need to understand what 'natural' means. There can be different interpretations of what 'natural' means. Therefore in order to be clearer, what we are referring to has been whether anger or loving-kindness and compassion are natural or not. We have said they are not natural because they are dependent on causes and conditions.

When we refer to something as natural we can mean that something is 'its natural entity'. For example, heat or burning is a natural entity of fire. That heat or burning as a natural entity of fire is the very fact that it is natural for fire to be burning and hot. Another analogy is molasses. We refer to the nature of molasses as being sweet. Therefore sweetness is in the very entity of molasses. Likewise burning and hot is in the natural entity of fire. Thus we refer to burning and hot being 'the nature of fire'. This is a different interpretation, on the conventional level, of what we call 'being natural'.

When we refer to anger or loving-kindness and compassion as not being natural but rather being dependent on causes and conditions we are referring to another level of 'being natural'. If we were to say here that anger or loving compassion is natural then the 'natural' that we refer to would be a nature that does not depend on causes and conditions for it to arise. That is clearly not the case for anger or loving compassion and many other factors. They depend on causes and conditions to arise. In that sense, it is not natural.

The difference between sweetness being the nature of molasses and burning and hot being the nature of fire is that whoever experiences molasses will experience that sweetness. There is no difference between those who taste molasses. Given that their taste faculties are intact they all experience the same thing. Whoever experiences fire will experience burning and hot. That is why we say it is the nature of fire.

However if loving compassion were natural in our mind then we would have to experience a sense of love and compassion for whoever we focus on or relate to. We

would have to feel love and compassion for any living being that we come into contact with. But it is our experience that that is not true. We don't experience that.

Where it becomes difficult to understand the connotation of 'nature' is when it is used in a general, conventional sense versus the more implicit meaning of nature. That is where we sometimes get confused. In relation to the conventionality of nature in relation to anger and love and compassion, we can say that even from a conventional point of view that someone who has a stronger inclination of love and compassion in their heart is more likely to be kind to whomever they meet. Whereas someone whose mind is more inclined to agitation and anger, is more inclined to be harmful to others. Thus conventionally we would say, 'That is a kind person.' or 'So-and-so is a very agitated or short-tempered person.' It is in relation to their interaction with others that we use those terms.

Before we conclude for the evening, let us again sit in a relaxed and comfortable posture. Then, sitting in a meditative posture, we will focus this time on the sound of the mantra being recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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