
The Condensed Lam Rim

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24 September 2008

It would be good time spend some time in meditation. As I mention regularly, meditation serves as a technique to settle our mind and for looking within ourselves. When we are able to withdraw our mind and settle our mind that helps to clear the mind. The mind then becomes more focused and that allows the good qualities within our mind such as kindness and consideration for others to develop within us.

The benefits of a regular meditation practice are that the mind becomes clearer, more focused, kinder and more intelligent. These qualities are something that we can definitely see are useful for ourselves.

The benefits of these qualities can be seen both on a mundane level as well as on a spiritual level. That means that for people who are engaged in normal worldly activities, these qualities are beneficial in accomplishing worldly activities as well. For those who are spiritually inclined and want to develop themselves spiritually, then these are the qualities that definitely assist one to develop oneself further.

As I regularly mention, when we investigate and sincerely look within ourselves we can divide our states of mind, or attitudes, into two specific groups. Certain attitudes are in their very nature beneficial for oneself as well as for others. These are attitudes that are constructive, which help us to feel courageous, strong, and which give a sense of purpose in life. There is yet another group of attitudes within ourselves that we come to experience as harmful to ourselves as well as to others. At the very least they are not useful; at worst they are harmful. These are attitudes that, as soon as they arise in our mind, weigh us down and bring discouragement, lack of enthusiasm and direction in life. They are also not constructive for others. In whatever normal activity we do, wherever we are, we can come to see that there are these two different kinds of attitudes.

We can relate to these two kinds of attitudes within ourselves. Once we realise the value of positive attitudes, such as kindness and so forth, then we will begin to see the value of spiritual practice. Basically, what spiritual practice is inclined to do for us is to cultivate and promote the positive attitudes within ourselves. That is where the spiritual practice comes in. Thus protecting such positive attitudes becomes a great responsibility for us.

When we identify these two kinds of attitudes within ourselves and recognise one as positive and the other as negative or harmful, then our responsibility as an individual is to try to adopt and increase the positive attitudes and decrease the negative ones. Whatever seems conducive to promoting or increasing the positive attitudes is what we should be inclined to do; we should consider the negative attitudes that we identify as being harmful, like an enemy. We should try not to associate with the negative attitudes and try to avoid them in every possible way.

When we reach a point of being able to clearly identify these two kinds of attitudes—positive and negative—within ourselves it would be wonderful if we could find the means and techniques to remove the negative states of mind, make our mind clean and develop the positive states of mind. That would be very beneficial for us.

Being able to discern to what extent we have been able to reduce the negative states of mind and increase the positive attitudes, is what we use as a measure to gauge whether one has been a good practitioner or not. From the practice point of view, whether one is a good spiritual practitioner or not is measured in that way. If one is successfully eliminating negatives attitudes within oneself and adopting positive attitudes and becoming more and more positive-minded, then that is the measure of having become a good practitioner. Even in a worldly sense we have a demarcation between people who would be considered as good people, and the not-so-good people. What we call a good person, a kind person, is a person who has developed these qualities to a greater extent. When those positive qualities are developed then, to that extent, we can say these are good and kind people.

In this analysis, we find that what actually contributes to being a good person, or a good practitioner is developing positive attitudes within oneself. When we can identify and relate to that, then we can come to understand that being a good/spiritual person is not entirely dependent on the physical changes of the person but rather on the transformation that takes place in their mind. There is something besides the physical aspect of the person that creates the demarcation between whether the person is good or bad. It's rather within their mental state.

In referring to a person as being a kind or good person, we can clearly see that there is something besides the physical aspect of the person that serves as a measure as to whether they are a good person. We can initially relate to a person being selfish, rude and so forth, but then later on they become a much better person. That demonstrates that, even with one person, the qualities that we ascribe to that person are beyond the physical aspect. It is something within their mind that can be transformed.

From this analysis what we learn, on a practical level, is that it is possible for anyone to change. It is a matter of changing their attitudes. When their positive qualities are further developed, an earlier bad person can later become a good person. Understanding this should encourage us to put effort and energy into developing ourselves, because transformation is possible and not beyond our reach.

Furthermore, understanding this analysis can also help us to relate to others on a different level and become a little bit more patient with them. When we see others that we feel are short-tempered or selfish, we would normally immediately get upset with that person, because we identify those qualities with the person themselves. However, in understanding that it is the delusions that make the person selfish or short-tempered, we have a little more understanding that the person is not intrinsically bad. It is just that they are afflicted by the negative emotions or the delusions. Thus it is the delusions that are to blame, not the person themselves. Rather than feeling annoyed and upset with the person we can actually begin to develop some compassion for them, feeling sorry that they are in that state. We can feel compassion and develop patience within ourselves so we do not become upset and annoyed with the

person; instead with a little bit of understanding we can develop tolerance for that person.

We need to develop the qualities of patience and compassion in relation to others that we consider obnoxious or short tempered, irritable and so forth. If we can relate to a person with that understanding it actually helps us to develop those qualities within ourselves. On a practical level, the people that we should try to develop these understandings with, are the people that we associate and live with, people who are close to us. That is where we begin our practice.

A further great benefit of this internal analysis is that we can develop a conviction about the causes for disturbances that arise within the mind and see that it is possible to overcome this. The possibility for a transformation to take place within oneself and others will become a personal conviction rather than just relying on what someone else said. When we base our understanding just on what someone else says, it is not very stable. We are still not very certain. But when it comes from our own understanding and experience, then it becomes a really sound conviction for us. When the truth and reality of any situation is understood from personal perspective then we develop a conviction, which is really valuable.

Having identified the differences between the two different attitudes, we can remind ourselves that since we wish to develop the positive attitudes within ourselves we should engage in the practice of meditation which is a technique that helps to promote the positive, and reduce and slowly eliminate the negative states of mind within oneself.

So, that is why we engage in the practice of meditation. In order to undertake some formal meditation, it is important to first sit in an appropriate posture, which is a relaxed and comfortable posture. Having found the appropriate posture for ourselves we then prepare ourselves mentally. In order to engage in the proper technique of meditation we commit ourselves to withdrawing our minds from the distractions. That means to stop our usual busy mind. If we were to pay attention to our mind we would notice that our mind is constantly busy, constantly jumping from one thought to the next. So we need to try to withdraw our mind from that habit and try to place our mind on a single object that we choose as our focus. In our case the object we choose to focus on, is the breath. We intentionally withdraw our mind from all other thoughts and objects and place our focus upon the breath. We try to find a natural breathing rhythm where we're not breathing in a shallow or a laboured manner, but in a natural rhythm. Finding the natural rhythm of the breath we just keep our mind focused on the inflow and outflow of our breathing and maintain it in that way for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

That should be sufficient for now.

If we can attempt to meditate like this regularly, even just five minutes per day reflecting and focusing on our breath, we will see that this brings very positive consequences for ourselves.

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

We are at the point in the text where the teaching describes the faults of the delusions. By seeing the faults of the delusions the teaching advises that we should consider the delusions as enemies. We are referring to a quote from *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva.

The text uses the analogy of an enemy to describe the delusions. If one can identify how harmful the delusions are and further relate to them as an enemy, then just like with an external enemy, we won't want to associate and live with the delusions, as the very definition of an enemy is someone or something that constantly wishes to harm us. We wouldn't, in our right mind, want to be near someone who is constantly harming us. Likewise, when we recognise that the delusions are states of mind that constantly harm and afflict us we wouldn't want to associate with them—we wouldn't want to harbour an inner enemy. So, trying to overcome them in every possible way becomes a priority in our life.

We can apply this on a personal level to our personal practice. If one identifies strong delusions within oneself, such as strong anger or attachment, then one tries to apply this advice and recognise that strong negative emotions such as anger and attachment are an enemy, and try in every possible way to overcome them through one's practice. Now if one doesn't consider oneself as having strong delusions within oneself, then these instructions can be related to understanding others who have strong delusions. When one recognises others as having strong anger or strong attachment and so forth then, rather than becoming annoyed or considering them evil, one tries to develop compassion for them. Because they are afflicted by strong delusions such as anger or attachment they are being harmed and are now suffering from that. So we try to develop an understanding with compassion for others.

Some people may feel that, 'I don't really have a strong delusion now. This may not relate to me because I don't have a strong delusion such as anger or attachment right now'. If that is the case, then it may be fine for you right now but, some time in the future, a strong delusion such as anger or attachment may arise. If one doesn't yet have the certainty that delusions will not arise in the future, then familiarising oneself with the techniques and the instructions given here will assist and help in the event that a strong delusion does arise.

It seems that, at the very least, we have to prepare ourselves, to always be diligent and prepare for the worst. To use the analogy of an enemy again, even though there may be no enemy around right now, we still need to protect ourselves in case an enemy does come; so we need to know how to combat and fight the enemy.

The first two verses from the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* say:

Enemies such as hatred and craving have neither feet
nor hands and are neither brave nor intelligent. How
then have they enslaved me?

While they dwell within my mind, they are pleased to do me harm. They are not to be endured without anger. Tolerance of them is ridiculous.

The meaning of these verses is quite clear. Nevertheless we can go into a more specific detailed explanation. The first line says 'enemies such as hatred and craving'. These are the two delusions that have been explicitly mentioned but 'such as' means there are other delusions. 'Such as' would include other delusions such as pride, envy, jealousy and so forth. The delusions are referred to as enemies. What is being referred to here is that these are inner enemies. These inner enemies, as it reads in the second line, 'have neither feet nor hands'. This gives a very vivid image of the delusions as being states of mind. They are not physical. It is not as if they have hands and arms that can carry weapons and so forth and that they have feet that can come towards us. That is not the case. Furthermore, it is not as if they have a mind of their own, and thus are brave or intelligent. Being devoid of these circumstances the last line in this verse reads 'how then have they enslaved me?' Even though the delusions such as hatred and craving don't have these features how can they overpower my mind and enslave me?

This single verse clearly illustrates the situation that we fall into when strong delusions dominate our mind. When strong delusions such as hatred dominate our mind it is as if we are completely overpowered by that delusion. It completely taints our whole attitude. Our very being is under the power of anger or hatred. It is the same with craving, or attachment. We are completely overpowered. It is as if we have no control over ourselves. It is as if we will do whatever those state of mind influences us to do. Thus the text refers to this state as like being enslaved.

Again using the analogy of the external enemy, we might be enslaved by an external enemy as a result of their might. Because of their physical tactics, with arms and feet and having intelligence and courage they would try to overpower us. Once an enemy overpowers us, we might be enslaved by that enemy. In the past there would be times when people were enslaved. They had to do everything that their master demanded. They had no power themselves. Using that as an analogy, it is similar to when a strong delusion takes control within us. It completely overpowers us. That is why it is described here as being enslaved.

In the second verse the first line says, 'While they dwell within my mind'. Again using the analogy of an enemy, the delusions are unlike an external enemy. An actual, physical, external enemy will have a residing place, and because they reside externally we can remove ourselves from them. We can use our intelligence and find ways to remove ourselves and not be in close proximity to the external enemy. Unlike an externally enemy the delusions dwell within one's own mind. Thus, it is as if we have no escape because they are actually within us.

As long as the delusions are within one's own mind they harm us. The second line reads, 'they are pleased to do me harm'. This means that when the delusions arise we willingly accept them. When we have attachment we take upon that attachment. It is as if we are willingly accepting the attachment and work with it and that is how the attachment harms us. When we feel angry, we feel righteous about our anger. We feel good about our anger and that is how the anger harms us. It willingly harms us. It is as if it is pleased to harm us.

By understanding the delusions in that way and seeing how the internal enemy harms us we must develop the attitude that this shouldn't be endured without anger. When we see that an external enemy harms us we become upset and angry with them. If we are not upset about having the delusions and just endure them it is as if we are harbouring the internal enemy within ourselves. Thus as the last line reads, 'tolerance of them is ridiculous'. What is being indicated is that we need to develop the virtue of patience, but not with our delusions. To develop patience with our own delusions is a complete misuse of patience or tolerance. We must regard the delusions as an enemy and try to completely remove them from ourselves and not tolerate the delusions in our own mind.

As explained in the verses here, and referring to other teachings, when the delusions arise and dominate us they act as if they are assisting and befriending us. But, in fact, they are harming us.

When attachment arises within us it taints our mind, it covers the faults of the object and we only see the qualities of the object, and thus strong grasping for the object arises. It is just as the great Indian master Dharmakirti mentioned in his treatise. He says that when attachment arises it completely covers up the faults of the object and only focuses on the exaggerated qualities of the object. That is how attachment deceives us; by covering up the faults of the object and influences our mind to only see the good qualities. Then we believe in that. It is as if we are not to be blamed for finding the object entirely attractive. We fall for that, become influenced by that and develop the strong wish to possess that object. Dharmakirti says that attachment is actually influencing the mind in a negative way to cover up faults.

When we relate to these points it is good for us on a personal level to periodically remind ourselves of that fact that next time strong attachment for an object starts to develop we will notice that we begin to see the qualities of the object. We start to think, 'Oh, the object's really nice and very good.' As soon as that starts to happen we can remind ourselves, 'that's what appears to me but as I am just being influenced by attachment. That's not really true. My mind's being tricked. I'm beginning to be deceived by attachment'. By reminding ourselves of this our strong obsession to have the object will be reduced.

As the great masters have explained in the teachings, when we investigate our own experiences we might come to notice that this is very true. Attachment, as mentioned in the teachings, exaggerates the qualities of the object. When there is excessive attachment one does not see any faults in the object. If we take a particular example such as a person then, in the moments of strong attachment towards the person one would be completely obscured to the reality of the faults of the body or the unattractive, unpleasant aspects of the body. They would not be seen. The body of that person would be seen as entirely attractive and beautiful. But the reality is that there are many unattractive aspects in every ordinary person's body as well. There are a lot of unclean aspects of the body. However, that is not seen in the obsessed state of mind of attachment. In that moment, while strong attachment to the object occurs, only the attractive aspects of the object are seen. But later, when attachment reduces, one would begin to see and notice that in reality there are also faults in the body.

It is exactly the same with anger. When strong anger arises one does not see any redeeming qualities in the object, but

sees it as completely full of faults. That again is an exaggerated view of the object. In that state of mind of strong anger one entirely sees faults and does not see any qualities. This is again an exaggerated view of the object. When anger reduces one may begin to notice that there are actually some qualities in the object as well. In this way we can clearly see the exaggerated state of mind when strong delusions take place in our mind, and later we can notice this as a fault ourselves.

The following two verses of the text are:

Even if all the deities and demi-gods should rise up as my enemies, they cannot lead me or force me into the fires of the unrelenting hell.

But this powerful enemy, the afflictions, casts me in an instant into fires so hot that if they met even Mt. Meru, not even ashes would remain.

What is being explained in these two verses is that even if all beings, humans as well as the gods, were to rise up as enemies and try to harm us the most they can do is cause us some physical pain and at the very worst they might even hinder this life. External enemies cannot lead us or take us to an unfortunate rebirth in the hellish states in a future life. They cannot do that. Whereas internal enemies, delusions or afflictions, can lead us to the most unfortunate states of existence such the hell realms, where suffering is immense. The analogy given is that the immense heat of the hell realms has the intensity to cause even great mountains, such as Mt Meru, to become like ashes. This is pointing out of how immense the sufferings are that can be caused by the delusions that grow within us.

The next verse reads:

The enemy that is my afflictions has lasted a long time without beginning or end. No other enemy has the power to last for such a long time.

In comparison to external enemies, the internal enemy, which is the afflictions, is said to have lasted a long time. This refers to it lasting throughout one's previous lifetimes. One has always carried the delusions within oneself. An external enemy in this life, on the other hand, may turn out not to be an enemy later on. They do not last as long. In comparison with the external enemy that we consider so evil and bad, the internal enemy is far worse. It causes a far greater harm and lasts within us for a far greater time. Reflecting on that should encourage us further in every means to try to avert or overcome the internal enemy that is the afflictions.

The next verse reads:

Given appropriate service and attention, everyone helps you and makes you happy. But if you serve your afflictions, they only inflict further suffering.

This verse is again a comparison to the analogy of an external enemy. If you were to benefit and help an external enemy it is possible that they can turn around and become your friend. That is possible. If you give them gifts or certain objects they can turn around to become one's friend. The internal enemy, which is the delusions, is never like that. The more you assist the internal enemy, the more you assist the delusions, the more you try to endure them, the more they cause harm. That is the case.

I have a personal account that I have related earlier of how an external enemy can actually become a good friend.
[Geshe-la chuckles]

What is being clearly explained in the texts illustrates the fact that the faults of the delusions are like an enemy. But the delusions are portrayed as being far worse, a far greater harm than the external enemy. Reaching a point where one is able to identify the delusions as an enemy is not, in itself sufficient. What one must do with that understanding is overcome the delusions. If we identify an external enemy, someone who harms us, we must try to avoid that external enemy. We need to do the same with an internal enemy. Having identified the disadvantages of the delusions, the faults of the delusions, the next thing is to try to find the means to overcome the delusions and overcome the internal enemy. Thus the next part in the teaching introduces the antidotes for overcoming the delusions. It identifies what the antidotes are and how to apply them.

Before we conclude we can again spend a few minutes in contemplation. This time, as we sit in an appropriate posture, a relaxed and comfortable posture, we focus on the sound of 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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