
The Condensed Lam Rim

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It is good to keep in mind that when we engage in the practice of meditation we need to do it in a disciplined way. If we wish to do it wholeheartedly, then the time we spend in meditation requires some discipline. Out of the meditation session, when we are working or doing something else, we focus on whatever else we are doing, but during meditation it is important to keep our focus just on doing that. On a practical level it seems that there's definitely a benefit in keeping our mind focused on whatever one is doing at the moment. Apart from that being true for meditation this also applies to other, normal activities. If we can keep our mind focussed on what we are doing it seems that we get a better result.

Thus in explaining the benefits of meditation, one can first relate to the benefit of being able to focus. We need to train our mind to gain that focus. Besides the difficulty of being able to focus in our meditation practice, we can see for ourselves that it is not easy to keep our mind focused on even normal worldly activities. However in order to get the benefit from what we're doing, we need to focus and in order to achieve that focus we need to exert some effort and apply some discipline to our practice.

Without training and discipline, our ordinary state of mind is like a small piece of paper carried around by a breeze. Using the analogy of the small piece of paper, it is clear that the slightest breeze will immediately carry a piece of paper in whichever direction the breeze is blowing. Similarly, on an ordinary level, our mind is subject to whatever conceptual disturbances or distractions arise in the mind. The mind will be immediately influenced in that direction.

Conversely, we can use the analogy of a stone or boulder to relate the benefits of a focused mind. If a large boulder is in place somewhere it is not likely to be easily moved about by any breeze. Because it is heavy, it remains firmly in its place. Similarly the mind that is trained in meditation and focusing will naturally turn into a stable mind and wherever one places that mind, the distractions which are the disturbing thoughts will not be able to influence it. We can clearly see how much benefit it will bring us if we are protected from the influence of the disturbing thoughts that we call the delusions. When we understand that the outcome of meditation practice is a stable mind that is not influenced by the delusions, we can understand why a genuine meditator is a genuinely happy person.

We are all striving to achieve a joyful and happy mind. Whether we're conscious of it or not, we are all striving for, or wishing to achieve, a happy and joyful mind. Thus a joyful or happy mind is something that is extremely precious and, as I stress regularly, if we were to compare it to an object it would be a very precious object. It is extremely important that we try to protect whatever level of joy and happiness one already has and try to enhance that joy and happiness in our mind. The practice of meditation is

basically various techniques for enhancing a genuine sense of joy and happiness in our mind.

A happy mind and a joyful mind is something that is really precious. The disturbing thoughts, the distractions, oppose this happiness. Someone who's easily influenced by the different distractions, the disturbing thoughts, would not be a very joyous or happy person because their mind is not settled. That is an important point to note.

Furthermore, once we attain a happy and joyous mind, it will have a positive effect on our physical health as well. If we pay close attention we would come to notice the very close relationship between our mental state and our physical body. The clear sign of the close, intimate connection between the mind and the body is that when the mind is not joyful and happy and, after a certain period of time, becomes depressed and so forth, we would find that it definitely affects our health. We start to get other symptoms in our body that are related to a heavy, depressed and unhappy mind. If we pay attention to our state of mind and have a joyful and happy mind then that will, consequently, lead to much sounder health. Thus the practice of meditation enhances a happy and joyous mind. Leaving aside the long-term benefit to our future lives we can see that there are definitely positive consequences and benefits for ourselves from this practice even in this life.

If one has a happy and joyous mind it will contribute to our physical health and consequently it will become a positive cause for us to have a long life. It will benefit us, even in this life, by giving us a good, healthy and long life. We can use an analogy of the place where we are living to explain this. If the place where we're living is a happy place that we enjoy being in, then we would naturally intend to stay for a long time. Why? Because it is a joyful and happy place to be in, right? That is true for us even on a very ordinary level. Of course noble beings have the intention to stay for a long time, in order to benefit other beings. That intention and purpose is on a higher level. But on an ordinary level we can understand that if a place is joyful and nice we would want to stay there for a long time. This is similar to our health. If our body is sound and in good health then the consequence is for us to stay for a long time, to engage in the practice.

When we consider the practical benefits of meditation we will see how it helps us in this very life and how it will enhance the joy and happiness in our mind. When we begin to see and understand the value of that, we will develop the inclination to protect our mind. To protect the mind means to protect it from the influence of the negative states of mind, or the delusions.

It is good to note that there is a distinction between protecting the mind and restraining the mind. Restraining the mind means from the very onset not to allow the mind to be under the dominance of the delusions. Whereas protecting the mind means, when one notices that a particular delusion has already arisen in ones mind, not to allow that delusion to overpower oneself. Not allowing oneself to be under the influence of a delusion is what we would call protecting the mind. So there is a slight difference between these two states of mind.

Recalling the benefits of the practice of meditation, we first sit in a comfortable, relaxed sitting posture to engage in the practice of meditation. In order to engage in the practice, we first make the commitment to withdraw our mind from all internal and external distractions and bring our mind inward.

Withdrawing our mind from all conceptual thoughts and distractions, means to place our full focus on an internal object. The object that we use here is our breath, the natural inflow and outflow of our breathing. The teachings instruct that the rhythm of the breath should not be laboured. We should try to come to a natural rhythm that is free from the extremes of being too shallow or too deep. We should try to come to a natural equilibrium where the inflow and outflow of the breath is very natural, without any labour and, if possible, without any sound of the breathing.

Then, as one actually places one's attention and focuses on the breath the specific advice, even though it is initially quite difficult to reach this point, is to reach a state where one's focus is also natural. One avoids straining or relaxing one's focus too much. If we constantly go back and forth between trying to focus too hard and then relaxing our focus, it will obstruct the natural flow of our focus and attention. Even though it is hard to reach that state of equilibrium initially, it is something to bear in mind. It is important that we have that understanding from the beginning so that we don't go to those extremes. When we do find ourselves going to those extremes, then we try to slowly bring our mind back to a natural state of focus, neither too much strain nor too relaxed.

Even in our training it seems to be important to start with a focused mind and with a strong commitment such as, 'I'm going to focus on my breath now and not allow my mind to be concerned with any other thoughts and ideas'. Then once one reaches the point of actually focusing on the breath, try to maintain whatever degree of focus one exerts in the beginning and avoid adjusting it too often. With familiarity our mind will naturally become trained to focus in the right way. So, we can now focus on our breath for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

It is good to regularly train ourselves in the practice of meditation in this way. However, even though the meditation is termed 'focusing on the breath', one needs to understand that in the practice of meditation it is not the physical breath that we focus on. If we were constantly trying to focus on the physical breath coming in and going out, it would be hard for the mind to maintain a stable focus. What one comes to understand, according to the instructions in the teachings, is that having first identified and familiarised oneself with the physical aspect of the breath one comes to a point of forming a mental image of the breath. As explained in earlier sessions, even when using an external object to focus on, it is not the actual physical object but rather the image of the object that the mind focuses on. Similarly with the breath, it is the mental image of the breath that we need to focus on.

Those who have done some Buddhist study will be familiar with the term 'generic image'. Generic image means, the mental image we get of something that we had seen or come into contact with earlier. When we first come into contact with an object, it may be through our senses, however later on when we recall the object, we get a mental image of that object. That mental image of an object is basically the 'generic image'. So, it is not the physical object itself but the mental image of that object that one actually focuses on in meditation. One will come to a point of identifying the generic image of the breath. So while we are actually breathing, on a physical level inhaling and exhaling, the focus is on the internalised image of the breath coming in and going out in its natural rhythm. When one is able to focus on that image, one can then reach the point described

in the teachings where it is as if the mind and the object become one. Because the object is a mental image it is possible for the mind to become inseparable with the object. Thus it is important to identify that what we are actually focussing on in meditation is the mental image of the object that we are introduced to. If we are actually focused on the object itself then we have missed the point.

I'm relating this specific instruction from the scriptures. However you are, of course, allowed to follow whatever appropriate meditation technique you find suitable for yourself. Nevertheless, what I'm sharing now is an extraordinary point that is mentioned in the teachings. The teachings mention that to be accomplished in meditation one needs to familiarise oneself with the object, and this is done with the mental consciousness rather than the sense consciousness. So this clearly indicates that the object to focus on is a mental image rather than a physical one.

We can elaborate that point a little bit further. Consider an external object such as this clock. We can use that object as a reference object to meditate on in order to develop concentration. If the specific instructions in the teachings were that meditation to develop concentration is developed in relation to the sense consciousnesses, then there would be no fault in actually observing the physical clock with our eyes and focusing on that. However, the instructions in the teachings are that meditation to develop concentration is developed through the mental consciousness. What that means in relation to the clock is that in meditation, it is not the physical clock that one focuses on but rather the image of the clock that one brings to mind. Having observed the clock with the eye consciousness, which is a sense consciousness, one then recalls that image of the clock in our mind. It is therefore the mental image of the clock that one trains one's mind to focus on. Familiarising our mind with that mental image will then eventually develop into concentration.

The instructions that I am imparting to you now are in accordance with the specific instructions or explanations given by the great masters such as Dharmakirti and the great Indian master Asanga in their treatises. Likewise the great Tibetan masters have also explained this in the same way.

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

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.3. The shortcomings of the afflictions

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.3. The way to cultivate the antidote: Applying the sayings of past masters

In our discussion of the teachings, we will continue with an earlier topic, which in relation to the four noble truths, is the explanation on the truth of origination. The truth of origination itself is classified into two types; the deluded karmas and the delusions themselves. Within the two, the deluded karmas and the delusions, the primary cause is identified as being the delusion of ignorance.

The teaching then goes into identifying the delusions. The delusions are divided into two groups; five that are the speculative delusions and five that are non-speculative delusions or alternatively what are called views and non-views. These were identified in earlier sessions and the

teaching went further into explaining the specific causes that influence these delusions to be generated and arise in one's mind. The teaching then explained the disadvantages or the faults of the delusions. In identifying the faults, the teaching instructs that having identified the faults of the delusions one must then regard the delusions as being like an enemy.

We have reached the point where the teaching goes into explaining that if the delusions or faults need to be regarded as an enemy, then how do you overcome them? How do you overcome the internal enemy? The point that we examine now is the antidotes and how to apply the antidotes to combat the delusions.

Having identified the faults of the delusions and the delusions as an enemy the teaching goes into explaining how to apply the antidotes. This explanation is given in relation to how previous great masters have explained to combat the delusions. One must then apply that explanation.

The text then says that you must have an understanding that accords with that of the great master Gon-ba-wa, who said:

To eliminate afflictions you must know the afflictions' faults, their characteristics, their remedies, and the causes for their arising. After you have recognised their faults, regard them as defective and consider them enemies. If you do not recognise their faults, you will not understand that they are enemies. Therefore, it is said that you should reflect on this, following what is said in the *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras* and *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*.

We have already covered the explanations of both quotes from these texts in earlier sessions. The text further reads:

Study Vasubandhu and Asanga's texts on knowledge as well in order to understand the characteristics of the afflictions. At the least, study Vasubandhu's *Explanation of the Five Aggregates*. Once you know the root and secondary afflictions, then when any attachment, hostility, or such arises in your mind-stream, you can identify it—thinking, 'this is that; now this as arisen'—and fight the affliction.

Asanga's text on knowledge is the text I referred to when giving the definitions of the delusions, which we covered earlier. We have covered the root afflictions earlier and we have also touched on some of the secondary afflictions in our explanation. There are twenty secondary delusions. We have actually explained some of them. Even if we haven't gone into each one in specific detail we have covered some of them. Of the root afflictions we have covered attachment, hostility, doubt and afflictive views and so forth. Of the secondary afflictions we've also covered the deluded states of mind such as jealousy, resentment, miserliness and so forth.

Resentment is said to be a sub-category of anger. However it is quite different from anger. Anger is classified as a root delusion whereas resentment is a secondary delusion. So there is some difference there. The distinction was explained in a conversation between one of my own main teachers, Geshe Ngawang Dhargye and Khensur Rinpoche. Khensur Rinpoche was asking, 'What is really the difference between anger and resentment?' Geshe Ngawang Dhargye explained that anger can arise in relation to inanimate objects, whereas resentment arises only with animate objects, living beings with minds. That seems to be the difference. There can be further explanations as well but personally I rest with that explanation as being profound and quite a good explanation of the difference.

Anger can arise with animate and inanimate objects, even with one's tools and so forth, one can become angry towards them when they cause suffering and pain. Resentment is a particular aspect of anger that arises when an object causes us pain or suffering and we hold onto that anger and don't let go of it. That feeling seems to arise only with sentient beings who harm us. When we recall that harm and think about it, we never give up that sense of bitterness or anger towards that object. Resentment is a sense of holding on to anger in relation to a particular object and not giving it up. When one identifies a slight difference between anger and resentment one can see why there are different classifications with anger listed in the root afflictions and resentment listed in the secondary afflictions. We have also gone through the explanations of jealousy previously so we won't spend much time on that now. I just thought I'd mention that point about anger and resentment.

The text then says that when any attachment, hostility or such arises in your mind stream you can identify it, thinking 'this is that and now this has arisen' and in that way fight the affliction. What is being explained here is that having familiarised oneself with the definition of a particular delusion one would identify it that point it rises up as an emotion in one's mind then think, 'Okay, this particular delusion is arising in my mind.' Having identified it within oneself one can then apply the antidotes.

What the teaching says here is a very important point. Using the analogy of the external enemy, if we don't even know who the enemy is there's no way to be able to try to prevent, avoid or combat the enemy. This being the case with an external enemy, it is exactly same with our internal enemies that are the delusions. If we can't even identify them then there's no way to try to combat or overcome them.

To identify attachment and anger again: Attachment is, as explained previously many times, the mind that when it comes into contact with an object that appears attractive exaggerates the qualities of that object and generates a strong sense of clinging to the object. Anger is the reverse of that. When coming into contact with an object that appears to be unattractive or unappealing the mind of anger exaggerates the faults of that object and develops the wish to harm or destroy that object. That is what is called anger, wishing to harm the object.

When one isn't even able to identify and recognise attachment in the first place then we are oblivious to it and we won't recognise it. So there's no way to apply the antidotes to it. If we don't even recognise that it is an affliction then we will be completely influenced by it, thinking it is a positive state of mind. When one is able to recognise it and identify it as being attachment or anger then, at that point, one would be able to apply the antidotes that have been described earlier.

The immediate antidote for manifest attachment is to meditate on the faults of the object and then the exaggeration of its qualities becomes very apparent to one's mind. Adopting a mindset that is the complete opposite to attachment is to touch base with the reality of the object, to identify the faults of the object and this would then become the direct opponent or antidote for overcoming that mind that exaggerates the qualities. So it becomes an antidote for reducing and eventually overcoming attachment. There are times when attachment arises quite strongly in one's mind; if one applies the antidote then, the positive effect becomes evident. When one doesn't feel attachment in one's mind and one is meditating on the faults of attachment, one may

not really see the relevance or evidence in one's mind. That is because one is not really able to identify attachment yet.

The antidote for the particular delusion of attachment is familiarising the mind with the realistic faults of the object. When that process takes place that is what the meditation is. That is meditating on the antidotes for overcoming attachment and familiarising one's mind with the opposite to attachment, which is non-attachment, and generating the state of mind that is non-attachment.

To go a little bit further into how that works. When strong attachment arises and one is influenced by attachment, or what we call in English obsessed with the attachment, that is a time when one's mind becomes completely immersed and completely influenced by the object and it is as if we lose control over ourselves. We allow ourselves to be controlled by that state of mind and consequently by the object of attachment itself. We allow ourselves to be under the control of that the object. Clearly, it disturbs our mind. We are not able to function normally or properly in that obsessed state of excessive attachment.

Attachment is based on a faulty state of mind, an incorrect intention that is focused on the object and exaggerates the qualities of the object. The opposite of that is to familiarise the mind with the realistic faults of the object. The more one familiarises oneself with that state of mind the more one will distance oneself from the object. One will not be under the domain of the mind that is obsessively attracted to the object. As the state of mind that sees the faults of the object becomes firmer and more stable the mind that is obsessed with the object and exaggerates its qualities will naturally subside. That is what we call reducing attachment. Using the process of reducing attachment, one can eventually overcome attachment entirely.

It is the same with anger. Anger is a state of mind that exaggerates the faults of the object and sees it as being entirely unworthy, having no virtue, no redeeming qualities at all. The more that level of exaggeration is developed, the stronger the harmful and hateful thoughts arise towards the object. A direct antidote for overcoming that state of mind, as mentioned in the teachings, is familiarising the mind with developing love for the object, love that is based on appreciating the object. One tries to focus on the realistic qualities of the object and by training one's mind to see the object as attractive, developing love for it. Generating a genuine sense of love becomes the antidote to overcoming extreme anger towards the object. Once the sense of love and genuine kindness increases in one's mind the anger naturally reduces and that is how one overcomes anger in one's mind. Familiarising one's mind in that way to strengthen non-attachment, compassion and particularly love in our mind is what we call the meditation. That process itself is the meditation.

At a personal and practical level some people have commented to me that it seems difficult to see the faults of the object, especially in someone that one is attracted to. Some may feel that maybe it is a little bit inappropriate to try to focus on the faults of another person. Some may find it is uncomfortable or unsuitable to do that. On another level, it seems that in fact it may not really serve the purpose because even though one may seemingly try to meditate on the faults of the object on one hand, on the other hand there still is an underlining appreciation and attachment felt towards the object. Therefore it may initially be difficult to actually practice focusing on an object that one has attachment towards.

However, it is not really necessary to use the actual external object or another animate object for one to focus on in one's meditation. One can focus on the faults of one's own body to begin with. Try to focus on the realistic impurities of one's own body from the bottom of our feet, going up slowly and investigating, analysing. Go beyond the skin, the bones and the flesh and look within our body and see what our body is really made up of. When one identifies the impurities of one's own body it can help one's mind to lessen and overcome attachment to bodies in general.

Even though we may have a notion that our bodies are clean and pure and so forth, in reality if we actually, seriously investigate the nature of our body it becomes quite clear that there's nothing really pure about our bodies. One example is that if our bodies were so pure then having consumed something, what comes out of our body should actually be in a very pure state too. When we have a delicious meal it is something very beautiful when it goes in. But even before it goes further down from the mouth and we have just chewed on it, if we spit it out it becomes quite clear that it is not really attractive any more. That nice beautiful food is not very appealing any more. If our bodies were so pure then why wouldn't it make the food even purer? When it comes out it should still be pure and clean and nice and attractive, but clearly that is not the case.

Once we have swallowed the food we can use a more vivid analogy of vomiting. Now if it's our own vomit we may still be able to bear it and that's because we still have very strong attachment to ourselves and we might think that it's okay. But if it's someone else's vomit, we definitely won't want to be in close proximity to it. But it is the same as our vomit. The reason why we feel that our vomit is maybe a little easier to handle is because it is 'our vomit'; there is no other real reason.

Though these analogies may seem a bit gross, the main point is that these are ways to apply antidotes for overcoming attachment. Attachment is something we must begin to understand. In terms of a sickness it is like a chronic disease that is very difficult to overcome. Attachment is a difficult disease to overcome because unlike physical illnesses that can be cured either through medicine, diet or other forms of help, the disease of attachment is not something that can be cured by taking a pill or by engaging in some vigorous exercise and so forth. Even our friends and so forth cannot really assist us in uprooting and taking away our disease of attachment. It can only be cured through us identifying our own attachment as being harmful and destructive to us.

Attachment is identified as a much more severe mental illness than anger. Why? Anger is something that can readily be identified as being harmful and it's something that can also subside. Even when strong anger arises periodically, it is relatively easy to subside and deal with. Even in western societies, there are so called 'anger management' treatments and so forth. Attachment, unlike anger, is something that arises as a help to us. Attachment is produced or generated within us as an aid to ourselves. The harm of attachment is not immediately manifest or readily present. Instead once we are under the domain of attachment it begins to harm us very gradually and slowly. Attachment harms us in a very subtle and slow way. It is more difficult to identify attachment as being harmful but in the long term attachment does us much more harm. That is the main point. So it is important for us to generate the state of mind of applying the antidotes.

When we examine the teachings we might find that there are many different instructions on different levels of meditation. Having heard the different instructions one may find that certain points are really applicable to oneself at one's own level. Those are the particular ones that one tries to use at that time and familiarise oneself with.

The main point that I mentioned earlier is that antidotes for attachment and anger that are presented in the teachings serve as an immediate way to resolve the manifest or intense emotion. However the actual antidote for overcoming attachment and all delusions is meditation on emptiness. When one gains an understanding of emptiness and one is able to apply that in one's practice of meditation it is said that there's no more supreme antidote to overcome all delusions.

The realisation of emptiness serves as an ultimate antidote for overcoming all delusions because delusions arise out of the incorrect attention that we have. When we further analyse we find that that incorrect attention, which is a faulty state of mind, arises primarily from the ignorance of grasping to the self. The ultimate antidote for overcoming grasping at a self is the realisation of selflessness or emptiness.

From the Prasanigika point of view, there is a mention that grasping at the self, and attachment, are synonymous. There is still some doubt and question whether all attachment arises from self-grasping, however in general terms it really seems to be true; every attachment is really a form of grasping at a self.

The important point to understand in relation to attachment is that it is said to be a faulty state of mind. It is faulty first of all in relation to how attachment perceives the object. If we were to ask whether the object has any qualities the answer is yes, the object definitely has qualities. If we were to assert that attachment is the mere fact of seeing the qualities of the object then attachment would not be a faulty state of mind and a wrong consciousness. What one must understand is that due to incorrect attention and a faulty state of mind attachment influences the mind to exaggerate the qualities of the object. Thus the conclusion is that insofar as we see the object and some qualities of the object there's nothing wrong. But attachment is a faulty state of mind or a wrong consciousness which is due to incorrect attention—it sees exaggerated qualities of the object that are not present and beyond reality. The qualities that attachment sees are actually non-existent and are not a part of the object. To the extent that attachment perceives qualities of the object that are exaggerated, it is a wrong consciousness and a faulty state of mind.

We can be more specific in differentiating how perception works. Take, for example, attachment to a flower. If the question is whether the attachment has the appearance of the flower the answer should be, yes, it has the appearance of the flower. But does it actually grasp the flower? Does it apprehend the flower or not? If the answer is that it does apprehend the flower then the attachment would be a correct state of mind. It would not be a faulty state of mind. What has to be specified here is that in the perception of the mind of attachment to the flower, it has the appearance of the flower but it doesn't apprehend the flower, because if it does apprehend the flower it would be a correct state of mind. One has to conclude that it doesn't apprehend the flower; rather it apprehends an exaggerated appearance of the flower.

This is how the teachings explain attachment or anger to be a wrong consciousness. One has to understand how these are wrong consciousnesses. The main point is the apprehension. The wrong consciousness doesn't apprehend the object. It perceives the object but doesn't apprehend the object of either attachment or anger. In this way one establishes attachment and anger as a wrong consciousness. Even though I've given these explanations previously, I emphasise it again, as it seems for those who have an interest and want to do further studies, this is a crucial point to understand.

Before we conclude, we again sit in an appropriate, relaxed, comfortable posture and engage in a few minutes of contemplation. This time we focus on the sound of Guru Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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