
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose it is good to adopt a comfortable and relaxed posture. It is important to have one's body straight, not leaning too much forward nor too much backward or sideways. One should have a straight posture. Just as we adopt an appropriate physical posture it is important for the mind to also be directed away from thoughts from the front of us or thoughts from behind or thoughts from the side. One should maintain a very clear, focused and straight mind.

Prior to engaging in the practice of meditation it is important that we adopt a positive motivation. That is true for every occasion whether one is giving instructions on meditation or imparting the teachings. On this occasion, just as it is important for the listeners to generate a positive motivation, it is equally essential that the teacher has a proper motivation. From the teacher's side, having a proper motivation means to be free from certain adverse states of mind such as pride, jealousy or a sense of competitiveness.

Being free from pride means that the teacher should be free from the thought that others will praise them for their teaching skills. Having jealousy would mean that the teacher thinks, 'because others are giving teachings, I must also give teachings, otherwise I will not be regarded as worthy enough'. If one engages in teaching just because they are uncomfortable with the fact that others are teaching then that is teaching out of jealousy. Competitiveness arises if one feels one should teach in order to be equal or better than other teachers. Being free from these states of mind is extremely essential from the teacher's side.

Mentioning that now is, of course, a way to remind myself to adopt the most positive motivation. That is also important. I do, of course, try to maintain a positive motivation free from those adverse states of mind. Whether it is 100% pure, I am not sure!

This is the attitude or motivation that a teacher should adopt. When we consider that instruction, we can see that if a teacher were to teach whilst free from these adverse states of mind, in a pure state of mind, that it can really bring a lot of benefit just on the basis of their positive motivation. We can see the importance of adopting such a pure motivation from the teacher's side through the effect that teacher's teachings will have on their listeners. In any kind of religion or tradition, the teachers are the ones who expound the teachings and give advice. Any transformation and so forth should come from the advice and teachings. In that regard, the teacher is like a forerunner. If there is a tainted attitude or tainted

motivation from the teacher's side then that will naturally affect the listeners and will then corrupt the listener's minds.

The importance of having a pure motivation from the teacher's side has been stressed. Essentially a teacher's motivation should be free from attachment to one's own side and aversion to the other's side. A sense of prejudice, sectarianism and the like comes about when a teacher has that sort of attitude in their mind. If the teachings are taught with a mind free from prejudice and discrimination then that teaching would be naturally coming from a pure state of mind. Likewise, if the listeners to the teaching also adopt a positive motivation we can see that there will definitely be some benefit due to the combination of the teacher's positive mind and the listener's positive mind.

The motivation of the teacher's mind should be free from two main adverse circumstances, or states of mind, which are attachment to one's own points of view and criticising other's point of view. If the teacher's mind is not free from these then, naturally, the teaching would consist of praising one's own points of view or philosophies while criticising or denigrating the other's views.

If a teacher were to teach in such a way there may be someone amongst the listeners who is really intelligent and looks into why the teacher does that. Why is the teacher praising his own point of view, his own doctrine and criticising others? If, when that analysis is done, it is found that the teacher is doing that out of attachment to one's own tenet and feeling resentment to others then it will seem that there is a flaw in the teacher himself. That is really important. One of the main things that we must always guard against is attachment to one's own views and denigrating or criticising other points of view.

Now we come to the point of the actual practice of meditation. Having adopted the appropriate motivation for the practice of meditation, it is good to remind oneself that the whole purpose of doing the practice of meditation is to promote a happy mind. Its purpose, to begin with, is to promote well-being and happiness within oneself. That will then impact on others. As one looks within oneself and looks into what one really wishes for it comes down to wanting to be happy. That is one's main goal. The technique of meditation provides the means to gain a happy mind. If one has already achieved some level of happiness with one's mind then meditation practice helps to further expand and maintain one's happy state of mind. For those who feel they lack a sense of joy and happiness in their mind and feel a little bit down or depressed, the practice of meditation helps to restore a happy state of mind. Thus, in every way, the technique of meditation helps to promote a happy state of mind.

One's main goal is to have a sense of joy and happiness in one's mind. If that is something that one can readily accept and relate to then the next thing one must look into is what contributes to joy and happiness in one's mind. Through one's analysis and practise of meditation one comes to realise that the main factors that contribute to happiness or unhappiness in one's mind are basically one's own attitudes. If the attitudes in one's mind are

based on anger, resentment, or strong attachment then those kinds of attitudes will definitely lead to an unhappy or disturbed state of mind. Whereas having a positive attitude leads to a happy state of mind. Looking within oneself and using one's own experiences, and analysing one's own mind serves as the main way of verifying this.

That sort of analysis, what we call a self-analysis, is basically analysing one's own states of mind. It is a very essential technique for the betterment of ourselves, and our well-being. Self-analysis is actually quite simple. It is being honest with oneself and checking the consequences when a certain kind of attitude arises. For example, what are the consequences when a negative state of mind such as anger or attachment arises? How does it arise? Where does it arise from? Then, as the Buddhist teachings present, one can go further into analysing who is the self? What is the self I am so concerned about? In relation to being hurt, what is the self that is feeling hurt? Where is that self? Analysing and investigating what the self or person is, is a very useful technique. When one does that self-analysis and honestly checks into oneself one will begin to notice for oneself that there actually are great benefits in that practice.

The best way for us to gauge the progress of our practice of meditation is whether our practice of meditation, or even an attempt at a practice of meditation, leads to reducing the intensity of the negative states of mind we call the delusions. If one finds that one has a gentler and kinder mind then, for us ordinary beings, that is the best result that we can get from the practice of meditation. That is how we can gauge the practice of meditation.

Another means to gauge whether one has gained some result or not would be in relation to one's span of attention or focus. If one finds that in place of a mind that was completely distracted, as a result of one's attempt to practice meditation one's mind has become a bit more settled and focused, then that is also a good result of the practice.

The ultimate result of the practice of meditation is, of course, to achieve a completely subdued mind. A completely subdued mind is a mind that is not influenced or affected by the delusions in any way. As the Buddha has mentioned, a thoroughly subdued mind is a happy mind, a peaceful mind. In accordance with what the Buddha said, the opposite is also true. A mind that is not subdued is a disturbed mind, a mind in turmoil. It will not be a peaceful or happy mind.

Thus our ultimate goal is, of course, achieving a thoroughly subdued mind. That might be a quite long-term goal. If the immediate results of our practice of meditation are that we can minimise the intensity of the delusions in our mind then that will have its own effect and bring about a more joyful, happier and a relatively more peaceful mind. If, in our daily life, our attempt to engage in the practice of meditation can reduce the intensity of the delusions in our mind it will bring about a joyful solace within us that can be shared with others.

In our daily practice of meditation it is really important that we try to tune into ourselves to recognise what it is that prevents happiness and joy in our normal life. If we find that we're not able to maintain a sense of joy and a

happy state of mind on a regular basis we should really try to identify what it is that is preventing that. Those who have made some attempt in the practice of meditation and have been able to identify the particular causes within oneself, delusions such as attachment, that disturb one's mind on a regular basis, then in one's practice of meditation one should purposely engage in practices to reduce attachment and apply antidotes towards attachment. Through the practice of meditation one may gain a certain amount of relief from the intensity of attachment. This is also true for anger.

When, during the practice of meditation, the mind becomes free from the intensity of attachment we would feel a sense of well-being, a sense of peace in our mind. This arises with the release from the intensity of that negative state of mind or negative emotion.

Even though during the practice of meditation it may be that we feel calm and peaceful, what happens when we come out of the practice of meditation? If we were to have spent an hour doing the practice of meditation of applying particular antidotes for overcoming attachment then during that hour one's mind would have been free from the intensity of attachment and thus relatively more calm and peaceful. But, when we come out of the practice of meditation, does our mind maintain that? Is it able to maintain that state of tranquillity and peace? When we go out and engage in our regular activities do we notice that our mind gets disturbed again in relation to a particular object of attachment? At that point one must be able to pinpoint and recognise this and remind oneself by thinking, 'It is this sort of state of mind and particular kind of attitudes which disturbs my mind. Earlier I was in a peaceful state of mind in the practice of meditation. Now what disturbs this and causes my mind to lack peacefulness, joy and happiness is this attitude within my mind.' Pinpointing it and identifying it is necessary, is important.

What has actually happened, according to the instructions in the teachings, is that one's mindfulness and introspection has waned after one comes out of the practice of meditation.

What I have been relating in the earlier part of the evening is the necessity of developing self-awareness. The technical term that we use is analytical wisdom. Analytical wisdom basically means the intelligence to be able to analyse one's own states of mind, attitudes and so forth and then adopting positive states of mind.

Having discussed the benefits of the practice of meditation and how that leads on to our temporary and ultimate goals, we can now adopt the practice of meditation for the next few minutes. The object that we use for our practice of meditation is our own breath. The significance of focusing on one's own breath and trying to maintain our focus there is that this practice is said to be particularly helpful in overcoming the agitated and distracted mind.

It is good to initially remind ourselves that it is a distracted mind that opposes one's progress in every way. One's spiritual practice of meditation, or any other practice that one wants to do, is obstructed by a distracted mind. Likewise all the problems in our lives,

all disturbances, every misfortune and every aspect of a disturbed mind come from the mind being distracted. Having identified and recognised that the distracted mind opposes our own well-being, our own happiness and peace, the practice that we are adopting here is a technique to overcome that distracted mind.

When we engage in the practice itself it is essential that we are fully committed to focusing on our breath, bringing our full attention to the breath. The particular technique requires that after we settle our mind and make sure it is withdrawn from all distractions that we diligently maintain our focus on our breath. As the specific instructions indicate, our focus shouldn't be too strained or too relaxed. The balance between being too strained or too relaxed is not immediately recognised by someone who is initially attempting meditation. Those who are a little bit familiar with the practice of meditation will be able to identify that.

The main point is that if one uses a very intense focus initially but then wanes and lapses out of that later then it doesn't serve the purpose. Likewise, if at the very beginning we have a really relaxed approach and are not really focusing very hard, and at a later point in our practice we try to exert a very intense focus on our object, then that will also not serve the purpose. The instruction is to try to place the mind on the breath with a balance between being too tense and being too relaxed from the very start and maintain that during the practice of meditation. We should not go back and forth too often. That is the main point. So, with whatever ability we have now, we bring our attention or focus on the breath and maintain it for the next few minutes. *(Pause for meditation.)*

That should be sufficient for now.

4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.2. Training the mind in the stages of the path held in common with beings of the medium scope

4.2.2.1.2.2.1. The actual training in the reflections: the way to develop the mind that strains for liberation

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Reflection on the causes of suffering – the faults of cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2. The way one gathers karma

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.1. Identifying the karma that is gathered

4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.1.1 Karma that is intention

We don't have much time left but, nevertheless, it would be good to continue with the subject that we are covering. As mentioned in our previous sessions, the current topic follows on from the earlier topic that was the delusions. We spent quite a bit of time explaining the different aspects of the delusions. The teaching mentioned that the delusions are a cause for our disturbance and sufferings and how, when one is under the influence of the delusions, one engages in certain actions. What is then explained in the teachings is that due to the delusions we create certain karma. So the next topic is how do we create that karma? What is the manner of creating the karma?

The main topic is the way one gathers karma. That topic is divided into two main subdivisions, which are identifying the karma that is gathered, and how you accumulate the karma.

The first area that we cover is 'Identifying the karma that you accumulate'. In order to talk about how one accumulates karma one has to first identify what karma is. Thus, from the sequence itself one can gain some understanding of how meaningfully the teaching is presented.

Following the earlier topic of the delusions, the current topic is how one creates karma. They are in this sequence because the delusions are the main cause of suffering and the creation of karma. Lama Tsongkhapa, the author of the text that we are studying, presents it in a very comprehensive way. This is particularly useful for us who are beginners and who need to engage in the practice step-by-step. Many great masters mention that Lama Tsongkhapa's presentation is very unique. As other great masters have mentioned, we can see from the presentation that the sequence of the teaching itself is really very meaningful. Rather than going straight into the manner of accumulating karma it is logical that one first needs to understand what karma itself is. So Lama Tsongkhapa in this presentation first identifies what karma is and then, in sequence, explains how one accumulates karma.

The manner of this presentation is not just giving us a topic about karma and explaining in general what that is. The presentation also relates karma to ourselves. What is the karma that is to be identified within oneself?

The teaching is presented in a way that will sharpen our intellect. Sharpening of the intellect means using our intelligence in a correct way with logical reason and so forth. This is something that is very useful in our everyday life. Leaving aside how it can be essential for our practice, even in our everyday life we know that intelligence and reasoning are very important, aren't they?

The presentation is not dogmatic, 'this is how it is' where the student has to accept and not question it. Instead of that the presentation is a way of igniting the intelligence or wisdom within oneself. The presentation itself allows for the intelligence or wisdom within oneself to become stronger, through investigation and analysis within oneself.

Thus, even amongst the listeners, it gives the opportunity for everyone to understand it in a different way leaving room for questioning and understanding. So in one presentation you don't all come out as the same product with the same understanding that you all have to agree with. Instead it actually allows individual beings to sharpen their understanding further.

The subdivision identifying the karma that you accumulate is then divided into two: karma that is intention, and karma that is the intended action

In order to grasp the definition of karma given here, that which is intention, one needs to have an understanding of the category of mental factors called the five omnipresent mental factors. Mental factors are subdivided into different categories and within that there are five that are called 'omnipresent' or 'ever-present' mental factors. They are called omnipresent or ever-present because those particular mental factors are said to be present whenever there is consciousness or awareness.

The first of the five omnipresent mental factors is *feeling*. Feeling is something that we can relate to. Feeling itself can be divided into three types of feelings: pleasurable or pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings and neutral feelings. Whenever there is an awareness of anything there is always a feeling that is associated with that. It can be either a pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling.

After that there is *recognition* or another term used in the translation is *discrimination*. Whether we use recognition or discrimination, it is the awareness that is able to discern the particular characteristics of an object. Using colour as an example, when we look at an object this mental factor recognises or is able to discern blue from yellow, or big or small in relation to shapes. That awareness that is able to discern this is the mental factor called discrimination.

The third omnipresent mental factor is called *intention*. This is what is referred to here in the teachings as karma. In the teachings the definition of intention is, that which moves the mind involuntarily towards any object that one focus on. That is the function of intention. In accordance with the definition, intention is a mental factor, which moves our consciousness towards an object. It has the connotation of being involuntarily, meaning that whenever we interact with something it is as if there is no choice. As soon as we open our eyes we see something and our mind or consciousness moves towards the object and grasps the object, and then perceives it through our eye sense faculty. So in brief, that which moves the mind towards the object is called intention.

The next omnipresent mental factor is called *contact*. This is the particular mental factor that allows the contact between the object, the sense faculty and the consciousness to occur. That is how we perceive something, through the contact of the object, the sense faculty and the consciousness. It perceives the object due to these coming together and contact is formed. This then forms the basis for feeling. Contact is said to be the basis of feeling because as a result of contact, feeling arises.

The fifth omnipresent mental factor is called *attention*. Attention is that mental factor that allows the mind to narrow in and focus on a particular object or particular characteristic of an object, whatever it may be. That which allows the mind to focus for any length of time, is called attention.

Getting a good understanding of how these mental factors function is really quite essential to understanding how our mind or consciousness actually works. According to the descriptions given in the teachings, every state of mind, positive or negative, will always have these five mental factors associated with it. Understanding the five omnipresent minds, in relation to their functions, will bring much more relevance to their existence. When our consciousness or mind cognises anything it cognises that object at that particular moment. Even if we are not aware of it there are certain things that are happening at the time when the mind cognises the object.

The reason they are called mental factors is because there are particular components of the mind cognising an

object that allow the mind to cognise it. The element or component within the awareness that allows the mind to discern the characteristics, shapes, colours of the object is the mental factor of discrimination, or recognition, which is a component within the state of awareness.

That which actually moves the mind towards the object, even though we are not aware of it, is a component within the awareness that is called intention. Due to that there is contact. Allowing the connection between the three—object, sense faculty and consciousness—is the particular function of the mental factor called contact. As mentioned previously, contact serves as the basis for feelings to arise.

The particular feeling that arises when we come into contact with an object is the component that is called the mental factor of feeling. The ability of the mind to remain focused on the object for whatever duration of time is the mental factor of attention. The mind may be engaged with the object through seeing the object, hearing or any of the five sense consciousnesses.

As we consider the particular functions of each of the components of awareness, which are called the five omnipresent mental factors, we gain a better understanding of how our mind functions.

So far we have introduced the five omnipresent mental factors. But there are many other mental factors, positive and negative. Within the negative, for example, we can relate to the negative states of mind such as anger and attachment. In understanding how the mind functions and works we get a better understanding of how we are affected by negative states of mind.

In the descriptions of states of mind, the teachings state that anger itself is not a feeling. The reason why we feel uncomfortable is because in association with the state of mind of anger there is a suffering that is associated with that state of mind. It is the mental factor of feeling that is associated with that suffering that we experience. Basically, we feel uncomfortable when we are angry because anger is associated with feeling. It is good to note that anger itself is not a feeling. When those negative states of mind such as anger arise, due to the feeling that we have within ourselves we experience the pain.

With attachment we may experience some fleeting pleasure. Attachment itself is not pleasure. It is not a feeling. But associated with attachment there is a momentary pleasant feeling. Thus when we are influenced by attachment we do experience the consequences of a temporary pleasurable feeling from that. When we analyse the different states of mind and how they are interrelated and how they influence each other, we can get a better understanding of how our mind functions.

Before we conclude for the evening let us again spend a few minutes in meditation. As we did earlier for the practice of meditation, we withdraw our mind from all distractions. Having withdrawn our mind from all distractions we focus on the sound of the mantra being recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. We remain with that focus for the next few minutes.

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