
The Condensed Lam Rim

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It would be good, as usual, to spend some time in meditation. In order to engage in meditation we need to sit in a relaxed posture. Just as we adopt a relaxed physical posture it is important that we also try to create the causes for the mind to become relaxed. It is really important that we consider this. If we can adopt a relaxed physical posture, that will contribute to bringing about a happy mind through meditation.

A genuinely relaxed and happy mind would be a comfortable state to be in. If one could spend fifteen or twenty minutes in meditation with a relaxed posture and a genuinely relaxed mind, that would definitely contribute to our overall well-being.

However, what most of us experience is the situation where, even when we have the opportunity to relax physically, rather than this contributing to mental rest and peace, we actually experience more mental turmoil and anxiety in our mind. That is something that many of us actually experience.

We need to identify that this is the case. We may not initially be aware of the fact that our mind is actually in turmoil. When we relax physically we might initially feel a little bit relaxed and perhaps experience a pleasurable sensation. But when we actually think about our state of mind and begin to look internally we begin to notice that our mind lacks a genuine sense of peace and happiness.

When we are able to identify this fact, it should generate an intelligence within ourselves, which is the understanding that the reason why we don't feel relaxed and peaceful is because we lack the positive attitudes. More specifically, it seems that we are not able to protect our mind from becoming distracted with worldly affairs. Not being able to protect our mind from constantly engaging in worldly distractions is one of the main causes of our mind being in turmoil.

If we are able to recognise this fact and from that understanding attempt to engage in a proper technique of meditation, then there will be a genuine sense of relief from the turmoil and the constant activities of the mind. Our mind is actually quite tired of being constantly busy with so many thoughts, so many worries and the many other things that we are preoccupied with. The mind is actually quite tired, quite worn out. When you are able to recognise this state of mind and engage in a proper technique of meditation you will experience immediate relief and a state like a happy or joyous mind.

The point I am making is to try to introduce the main purpose of the practice of meditation. When one applies the proper technique of meditation what kind of result

one can obtain? The two main things that the meditation technique can provide us with are; first of all it helps to protect whatever joy or happiness we may already have in our mind. If we are in a joyful and happy state of mind engaging in the practice of meditation can help to maintain the joy and happiness that we have and see that we don't lapse or lose that joy or happiness. Secondly, the practice of meditation can restore happiness that may have lapsed from our mind. In certain circumstances we may be in a state where we don't have any sense of joy in our mind. For whatever reasons or circumstances that may have occurred in one's life, one may feel that there is no sense of joy, no sense of happiness, and that will bring about a sense of meaninglessness and a lack of purpose in one's life. That is a very uncomfortable and even dangerous state to be in. When one is feeling unhappy and depressed then engaging in the practise of meditation can help to restore happiness in one's mind. It can help to increase whatever joy and happiness one has already felt from the past and also help to bring about a new sense of true joy and happiness in ones mind. Those are the main purposes of meditation.

When we are able to analyse our state of mind with our intelligence and use the proper techniques to cultivate a more acute awareness of our mind we will be able to provide ourselves with real protection from disturbing states of mind; particularly protection from our inner enemies.

We are not in immediate danger of being harmed by external enemies such as weapons or any kind of external forces. There is no imminent danger to us right now as we are not under any threat of external harm. But, even though we don't have any real threats externally we seem to still experience lots of turmoil, lots of disturbances. Thus, those disturbances that we experience are caused by our inner afflictions. These are referred to in the teachings as our inner enemies. These internal enemies are the disturbing attitudes, disturbing thoughts in our mind. Applying the proper techniques of meditation then, will help to protect us from the internal enemies that disturb us.

Even though in our initial attempt to practise meditation, we may not be able to completely overcome the disturbing attitudes or afflictions within our mind, nevertheless, as we engage in the proper technique of meditation and become more and more acquainted with the technique we will notice that our mind will become more and more relaxed. We will begin to experience a sense of well-being within ourselves, a taste of inner joy and contentment. Then that will contribute to our overall well-being.

As I point out regularly, our overall well-being comes down to two essential factors, which are our physical health and our mental well being. That is true for everyone irrespective of what kind of lifestyle one is leading. Whether one is engaged in a worldly lifestyle or whether one is leading a spiritual life, we all are equally seeking to achieve genuine happiness, genuine well-being. And we are all seeking to avoid suffering. Even the slightest suffering is something that we wish to avoid.

That being the case, if we ask whether we have the right to pursue genuine happiness and avoid every type of suffering, then there cannot be any dispute that everyone has the right to obtain genuine happiness for themselves and avoid every type of suffering. We cannot exclude anyone from having that right. We cannot make a demarcation saying that certain individuals have the right to achieve happiness and avoid suffering whereas other individuals don't have that right. The conclusion is that every being has an equal right to obtain genuine well-being that encompasses physical well-being and mental well-being. That is something we have to aspire to achieve for ourselves.

We need to take the responsibility to obtain a genuine well-being for ourselves. Thus it is to our own benefit that we engage in the techniques to bring about a real sense of well-being for oneself.

To achieve the right to acquire genuine happiness and avoid every type of suffering, we need to work towards achieving physical well-being and mental well-being. As we engage in the practices that contribute to our well-being, if we can maintain a sense of mental joy and happiness in our mind it becomes much easier to protect ourselves from adverse circumstances, such as negative states of mind. For example, when someone is being obnoxious or rude we will be able to maintain patience in our mind. If we have already worked towards establishing some genuine level of happiness and joy in our mind, then we can maintain that, even in situations that would normally disturb and upset us. We will be able to apply patience because our mind is joyous. It becomes much easier to be patient in circumstances like that. Otherwise we might be vulnerable and prone to the slightest circumstance contributing to our irritation. The slightest unpleasant thing that someone says, or an unfavourable gesture that others may direct towards us, will immediately cause us to become upset and angry. We may have noticed that it is much easier to practice patience when we are in a joyous state of mind.

Having mentioned all of this, we must be able to feel assured that it is something that is possible to achieve: is it actually possible to achieve a state of calmness? I can assure you that my advice doesn't solely come from spiritual experience. In my life I have had some experience of having to deal with hardships and difficulties while maintaining a calm state of mind. Just to mention some of the hardships that I had to endure in our escape journey from Tibet, we lacked sufficient food and there were obvious dangers along the way, and we didn't have a roof over our head and had to sleep on the snow, however because of the state of my mind, it all seemed quite pleasant. With the right attitude, it can be quite joyous even to sleep on the snow (*laughter*). The joyous feeling may have come from the fact that we were near to the border of India and the imminent danger of the Chinese soldiers was not evident. Maybe it was just that I was feeling joy because we were about to reach freedom, I am not sure.

Every individual will have different types of difficult circumstances occurring in their lives. For some they can be quite difficult circumstances. Or sometimes they are

awkward circumstances that can only be resolved by applying some training one has had. Thus having the proper attitude can be a real source of protection in times of difficulties. The main point I am making is not to neglect the actual practise of meditation thinking, 'Oh well, everything is fine in my life right now and it unlikely that difficult situations will occur. Everything seems OK'. However one can never be quite certain when difficult circumstances may occur, thus one must not neglect the practice of meditation, as one may be able to use those techniques some day.

In relation to particular states of mind, some may feel, 'I don't really have a problem with anger; I don't have an issue with anger', and thus feel that the meditation technique is not relevant for themselves. Yet, when certain circumstances occur that very person who felt that they didn't have an issue with anger might turn out to be the angriest person (*laughter*). When an actual circumstance occurs when one is provoked and anger arises, at that point, one may feel, 'Oh yes, there was some technique mentioned but I didn't really pay attention'. One then feels, 'What can I do?' But by that time it is a little bit too late because when the technique was provided one didn't really pay attention and try to cultivate it. So at the time of need one doesn't have it.

Having related some of the benefits of the practise of meditation we can now actually apply the particular technique of meditation of focusing on one's breath. We reassume the appropriate posture sitting upright and relaxed. Then, most importantly, one pays attention to one's state of mind. One makes a commitment for the next few minutes to focus only on one's breath and try not to entertain any other thoughts in one's mind. In order to be fully committed and focus on one's breath one must intentionally withdraw one's mind from all other thoughts, ideas or any form of distraction. One places one's complete focus on the natural outflow and inflow of the breath. We can spend the next few minutes with that focus. (*Pause for meditation.*)

That should be sufficient for now. The technique of meditation is not very complex. It is something that we can do. Whether we are able to maintain a single-pointed focus or not is something else. But as far as the technique is concerned, it is something that is manageable.

Thus it is good to try to apply the technique in our daily lives and try to acquire a more acute focus and attention. The main obstacles to achieving a focused single-pointed concentration are laxity and excitement. When these two obstacles are present we will not be able to obtain genuine single-pointed concentration. As we further engage in the practice of meditation and become more familiar with the technique we must always be diligent that our mind is not lapsing into either laxity or excitement. Particularly when it comes to more subtle levels, it is said that we might seemingly be in a meditative state while actually having fallen victim to subtle laxity. When we are in a state of laxity, even though we may think that we are in the practise of meditation it contributes to the mind to become duller. Rather than gaining more intelligence our mind will actually lose intelligence.

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 strives 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
4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.2. How is it gathered
4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.2.1. An explanation of who gathers the karma that projects one through cyclic existence

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The topic we are covering from the text is karma. More specifically we are discussing throwing karma, the particular type of karma that throws or propels you into further existence in samsara. That is the type of karma that is being specifically identified. In identifying that karma the text first explains that there are virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and within virtuous karma there is contaminated and uncontaminated virtuous karma. The karma referred here is contaminated karma.

Having identified the type of karma that propels us into our further existence in samsara the question becomes, 'Who accumulates the karma? Do all beings accumulate that karma or are there only particular types of beings who accumulate that karma?' What is being introduced in the text is the types of beings or individuals who accumulate what we called throwing karma. That is where we have reached in the text. Since we have limited time left, I will give people an opportunity to ask questions, if you have any questions in mind. Otherwise we can just continue for a few more minutes.

Question: From the explanation on invariable karma given last week, it seems that the gods don't create the karma to be experienced in samsara. Do beings in the god realms accumulate karma?

That is, of course, a complete misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Beings in the god realm or the form and formless realms definitely accumulate karma. This misinterpretation or misunderstanding might have occurred when the description of the difference between variable and invariable karma was explained. Virtuous or meritorious karma that is accumulated in the desire realm was explained as being variable karma, whereas the karma that is accumulated in the god realm was identified as being invariable karma.

The text says, 'Invariable karma is contaminated virtuous karma in the minds of beings of the form and formless realms. And why is it called invariable karma? In the desire realm, karma that should bear fruit while you are deity may instead bare fruit while you are a human or an animal or a hungry ghost; thus its effect is variable. In the realms of the higher deities karma that should bear fruit at a certain level does not mature at any level other than that. Thus it is invariable.' Hopefully this makes it clearer.

Before we conclude for the evening we can again spend a few minutes in contemplation. This time we focus on the sound of the mantra being recited which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA