
The Condensed Lam Rim

ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བརྒྱུག་པ་ལོ།

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As usual it would be good to spend some time for meditation. For the purpose of meditation, it is important to sit in a relaxed and comfortable position.

Having adopted a comfortable physical posture it is important to generate a positive motivation. If you and I have a mutually good motivation, the outcome will definitely be beneficial. From my side, it is just as important to have a good motivation. The positive motivation I adopt is the attitude of being of service to you. Even though by tradition I sit higher than you up on a throne, in reality, it is as if I am putting myself at your level to be of service to you. This is the sort of attitude I need to have.

It is important to pay the utmost attention to our motivation in everything we do, as it is the preceding motivation we adopt that will predict the outcome of what we do. If at the outset we adopt a good motivation – in this case both from the students' side and the teacher's side – then from the very start we will have a natural calm feeling when we come together, and whatever we do after that becomes conducive. Whereas if we are uncertain about our motivation, or we do not have a proper motivation, it can actually bring turmoil: from the very beginning of our interaction, we can have an agitated mind.

Having adopted an appropriate motivation, we then engage in the practice of meditation. As described many times previously, the literal meaning of meditation is to familiarise the mind with a positive state; acquainting oneself more and more with generating a positive state of mind.

One of the primary benefits of meditation is that it acts as a way to protect the mind from negativity. We have to clearly identify what we are protecting the mind from, which is not to be under the dominance of the three poisons: attachment, anger and ignorance. So, not allowing the mind to be completely dominated by the three poisons is how we protect the mind.

When we see for ourselves the ill-effects of the delusions such as attachment and anger, it becomes clear why we need to protect the mind from them. When our mind is completely dominated by attachment, how does that affect us? We can see that our mind is in turmoil. Likewise, if our mind is completely dominated by anger, we will definitely feel tormented and agitated. And under the influence of ignorance it's the same: the mind becomes completely dull, which only leads to more confusion.

When the mind is completely dominated by attachment, it obscures the faults of the object to which one is attached. It taints the mind, causing it to see only good qualities in the object. Thus, because of seeing only the good side, only the qualities, and not seeing the faults of the object, the mind then completely believes in the object of attachment. That is how the mind comes under the control of attachment, causing us to engage in a lot of activities that will harm us. The particular danger here is that attachment prevents the mind from seeing the realistic aspects of the object. It influences the mind to see only qualities. Likewise, when the mind is under the influence of anger, it prevents the mind from seeing any positive qualities, and thus influences the mind to be completely averse to the object. This is how being under the control of a delusion prevents the mind from seeing the reality of an object.

However, if we can begin to recognise how the delusions such as attachment and anger influence the mind, then even if they continue to arise, we will at least not completely trust in those states of mind. Even though we may still feel attachment, we will have one part of our mind reminding us of the pitfalls of attachment; likewise with anger. If we can begin to recognise how the delusions trick us, and thus not allow the mind to come under their control, that will help us to minimise the intensity of the delusions in the event that they arise in the mind.

Otherwise, if we allow ourselves to be completely dominated by a delusion such as attachment, we will be completely drawn to the object. It is as if we fall victim to the mind of attachment and will do anything in order to gain or please the object. We have no control any more over ourselves: we will do whatever it takes to gain the object, or to win its favour. This is how we give complete control to the object of our attachment, and engage in deeds that harm ourselves and others. We can see many examples of how true this is. Just as it is true for the delusion of attachment, likewise it is true for anger. We are in grave danger of committing misdeeds under their strong influence.

In the practice of meditation, we attempt to withdraw our mind from all objects – external objects as well as internal conceptual thoughts. When we withdraw our mind from distracting objects and place it single-pointedly on a chosen neutral or positive object, that familiarity of focusing on the object will naturally settle the mind. The mind will become much calmer and clearer, because the mental agitation we normally experience is due to the mind being swayed by the objects that distract us. In fact, the distractions we fall prey to are conjured by our own conceptual thoughts. It is as if all the feelings or emotions that arise in relation to objects are actually manifestations of our own mind. Thus if we allow our mind to be carried away, it will continue to manifest many different distracting objects. To prevent this, the initial meditation technique requires withdrawing our focus from all distracting objects and focus single-pointedly on the chosen object. This allows the mind to settle down and prevents it from being caught up in turmoil.

When we reach the point of being able to focus on the chosen object by withdrawing our mind from all distractions, we will begin to experience a settling of the mind. At a certain point when the mind is settled, we will then begin to experience joy and happiness. This may offer only temporary relief from the gross delusions. However, even though we may not have been able to tackle the subtler levels of our delusions, merely settling down the mind from the gross delusions can temporarily induce a feeling of joy and happiness. From that experience, we will be able to 'guesstimate' what it would be like if we were to overcome the delusions entirely from their root. That is how we work towards reaching the ultimate goal.

Right now we may not be able to tackle the subtle delusions through simply settling the mind. But because the mind has been temporarily settled, after we come out of meditation, we will not fall completely under the influence of the delusions such as attachment and anger as an effect of our practice. Because of our attempt to deal with the mind, we will be more aware of delusions arising. In fact, even when delusions such as attachment and anger do arise later, it could serve as way to benefit our practice. When delusions such as attachment and anger do arise, we will be able to say to ourselves: 'When I let the mind follow its natural course, this is what happens. The delusions arise again, and if I'm not careful they will overpower my mind.' We can use this as a reminder of how the mind plays tricks on oneself. So when the delusions arise again, rather than disturbing us, they can encourage us to be ever more diligent.

Even though we get some benefit from attempting to meditate on an object single-pointedly, so that the mind becomes peaceful for a while, we may notice after we come out of meditation that when we come into contact with the objects of distraction that caused us turmoil earlier – such as objects of desire or anger – the delusions manifest again, just like before. That is a clear sign that in our meditation we have not applied the antidote to overcoming those delusions. We have been merely attempting to settle down the mind by focusing on a particular object, but we have not applied the actual antidote for overcoming the particular delusion. This shows that merely familiarising ourselves with the practice of single-pointed meditation is not sufficient to overcome actual delusions, the negative state of mind. When we come out of the meditation, we again have the same amount of attachment and are again influenced by the object.

To tackle a negative state of mind such as attachment, we need to apply the actual antidote for overcoming that particular delusion. The antidote to desire, for example, is meditating on the faults or unattractive attributes of the object. After we come out of that kind of meditation, even though we have not overcome the delusion from its very root yet and attachment may still arise in our mind, we will be better able to deal with it and not come under its control. That is due to our familiarity with meditating on the antidote to attachment. This is how meditating on specific antidotes serve the purpose of dealing more effectively with certain delusions.

It important that we understand the specific antidotes to specific delusions, and that we try to apply these in our daily meditation. While it is important to train our mind to develop single-pointed concentration, it is also important to meditate on the antidotes for overcoming delusions. As the teachings indicate, for us beginners, rather than trying to tackle every delusion at once, it is advisable to try to deal with the most prevalent delusion in our mind at any particular time. For example, if one is prone to strong attachment, one should initially meditate on the antidote for overcoming attachment: this is much more beneficial. If we can begin to familiarise ourselves with the antidote for overcoming a particularly prevalent delusion, then try to apply that in our meditation; that will be much more beneficial in our daily life.

Having explained the benefits of different types of meditation in general, now we will adopt the meditation technique of dealing with the distracted mind. The object we choose to focus on here is our own breath. In order to properly apply this technique, we have to be committed to completely focusing on the object. First we completely withdraw the mind from all objects of distraction, all delusions, then we determine to focus single-pointedly on our breath. The practical advice for us beginners is to maintain a constant awareness of the breath itself. Try to keep a continuous focus, for as long as possible, on the breath itself. Keep the mind focused on the breath without letting it be influenced by any distraction. For us beginners, that practice itself is said to be most beneficial, very useful, in settling down the mind, so that it is not swayed by the distractions. In this way, for the next few minutes, we will keep our focus on the breath. [*Pause for meditation*]

Just as we have attempted a few minutes of meditation practice now, if we were to adopt a regular meditation practice in our life, it could really be beneficial. As we familiarise ourselves with the practice of meditation, it helps to restore clarity in our mind: the mind starts to become clear and fresh. Both during the practice and even afterwards, for a while the mind is relaxed, it gets some relief from all the disturbance and turmoil.

Otherwise, if we allow the mind to follow its normal course, it seems to be constantly busy with distractions, which leads to more turmoil, frustration and anxiety in our life. Adopting a meditation practice in our daily lives can help us to really settle the mind down and bring some relief to it. If we could put in some time to practise meditation every day, it would be highly beneficial. The main thing is to always maintain the awareness that meditation is really beneficial for one's life.

As we begin to experience some relief from turmoil and anxiety through the practice of meditation, there may be times when we start feeling complacent thinking, 'I am feeling good now; things are OK', and start lapsing from the regular practice of meditation. If one falls into that trap, later on problems might re-occur, perhaps with even more intensity. Then we would find it to be quite disastrous to our life. So while we can be satisfied when we find things are going well, we should remind ourselves that we still have to keep practising; it is a long journey. We have to keep persevering and continue with

our practice of meditation until we reach our ultimate goals.

We can use the maintenance of our own body as an analogy. To maintain our physical health and keep our body functioning, we have to eat regularly. If we become slack and start missing meals, after a while the body becomes weak and we start experiencing ill-health. So, to maintain or physical health we have to maintain the habit of eating regularly. Likewise this is also true for maintaining the well-being of our mind. We should pay as much, or even more, attention to maintaining and protecting the well-being of our mind.

A person who spent an equal amount of energy maintaining their physical and mental health would be living a good life. As a consequence of that approach, they would gain both physical and mental well-being. Anyone who has both physical and mental well-being would be considered a happy person. That is what we are all striving for. Then we could relax and have a happy life. We could ease into a comfortable state, as long as we maintained the upkeep of our body and mind. We would have a secure internal environment and rest with the thought: 'Now I've got things together'. That would definitely bring satisfaction to the mind.

If anyone has a question, we can address that now.

Q: Someone was doing something that could have hurt me and so I felt the need to stop them from engaging in their act. But I felt anger arising within myself. So can I stop anger arising while dealing with the situation?

A: The reason we get angry with someone who apparently appears to harm us, or with anyone else, is that we rationalise to ourselves that they are doing it intentionally: that they are basically glad to harm us. So we get angry because we feel that 'that's not right' and we perceive them as being completely wrong. That is one way of justifying our anger. Anger arises self-righteously within us.

However we can consider this thought: 'The person who is harming me is not in a joyful state of mind. There is something definitely something bothering them. If that person was in a clear state of mind, they would not intentionally want to harm me, or anyone else for that matter. So the fact that they are engaged in an act of harming me means that they are disturbed. It is due to the disturbance in their mind that they are inclined to harm me'. When we reflect upon this fact, instead of getting angry, we can start feeling compassion for them.

As mentioned in the past, this is why it is very important that we thoroughly analyse why the delusions arise. We should be able to see that the reason the other harms us is from a delusion such as anger; it is the anger within the other person that influences them to harm us. It is as if that person does not have any control over themselves. They are dominated by the delusion of anger, which taints their mind. It does not allow them to think rationally. Thus their act of harming one, or anyone else, is a negative act influenced by the negative state of mind of anger.

When we reflect upon this, we can see it is not the person who is at fault. Normally, when we get upset with the

other's actions, we immediately get upset with the person. But if, through reasoning, we can go further and see what's behind the person doing that negative deed, we will find it is the delusion of anger. In our right mind, if we were to get upset or angry with anything, it should be directed at the delusion of anger itself, rather than the person. Just as we have found that when we are dominated by anger, we don't have any control over ourselves, it's the same for the other person.

This process of analysing how a person engages in negative, harmful deeds under the influence of the delusions such as anger is a really good mental technique that will help us develop patience. Patience does not come about naturally and spontaneously; we need to use logical reasons for developing the positive state of mind of patience.

For example, in mentioning just now how to go beyond judging the angry person themselves, and looking into what is influencing the person to do the harmful deed, we can use the analogy of a traffic accident. If a car bumps into the back of yours, initially when you looked back, your immediate reaction might be getting angry at the person who hit you from behind. But if you noticed that they were hit by another person behind them – if there were three cars and the third car had slammed into the car behind you, forcing them to hit you – you would not get upset with the person in the car behind you, but with the person behind them, for not being careful and slamming into the car behind you.

Using this an analogy, rather than getting upset with the person who seems to be the immediate initiator of the action that harms one, if you look beyond that and see that it is the negative state of mind, the delusion called anger, which is causing the person to harm you, you would be able to develop patience with the person who is under the control of anger, and which is causing them to do the negative action. So it is the delusion behind the action, not the action itself; what prompts a negative action is a deluded state of mind, such as anger or ignorance.

Before we conclude for the evening, we can spend another few minutes in contemplation. This time we focus on the sound of the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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