
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. Meditation seems to be quite an important practice in one's life. The reason meditation would be important is that if one applies the proper technique of meditation then the result of spending some time in meditation will be that the mind settles down and is freed from disturbances that occur in the mind. All the agitation in the mind can subside as a result of applying the technique of meditation. When our mind becomes settled we experience a great relief in our mind.

When we look into how to overcome those disturbances in our mind we would find that external means cannot provide a means to reduce the turmoil in one's mind. Rather it comes from within oneself. One has to find the techniques to settle one's mind from within oneself.

We can verify this from our own experience in life. We would have noticed for ourselves that in many cases how we interpret a situation is very much dependent on our attitude. When we have a positive state of mind, we might find that things are quite o.k. and that the situation is quite good. Whereas when we are feeling quite down and negative we might interpret the immediate surrounding as also being quite negative. Thus, we can see that it depends very much on the attitude in our mind.

Why would we want to overcome the disturbances in our mind? We can ask ourselves: Are we happy? Do we feel joy and happiness when our mind is troubled? When the mind is troubled with many, many different worries does that bring joy and happiness to the mind? If we find that it does not, that would be the reason why we need to try to find means to overcome the troubled mind.

All of us would be able to verify from our own experience that a disturbed mind is not a peaceful joyous or happy mind. So it is in our own interests to find the ways and means to overcome a troubled and disturbed mind.

If we look into what causes a troubled and disturbed mind by paying attention to what happens within our mind, we would come to realise that the disturbances that we experience in our mind stem from within our own mind. They come from within us. If we pay attention we would notice that.

A settled mind causes more tranquillity and peace in our mind. Putting aside the techniques of meditation, some people claim that when they listen to very soothing, nice, calm music it helps the mind to feel settled and calmer. From people's experiences, there are these other ways that help to temporarily calm the mind.

When one finds oneself in a disturbed state of mind, it is in one's best interests to try to find the means to bring about a settled, calmer mind. If one is not familiar with the meditation technique then, as others have claimed and we may find through our own experience, listening to some very soothing, calm music may calm the mind. I have personally experienced some kinds of music as being very

calm, very soothing. Some kinds of music have a unique characteristic of calming the mind as soon as one hears it. I have noticed that. Others have also made comments and claim that music can help settle their mind. I feel that music can possibly be a temporary means to settle the mind. Rather than being stuck in the situation of having a troubled disturbed mind, if one can rely upon some soothing music that would better.

I can give an example of how soothing music can be very helpful in calming one. If those who find it difficult to fall asleep play some nice music that will definitely induce a very nice sleep state.

I am trying to provide some suggestions to help bring about a calm and settled mind when one finds oneself in a disturbed state. For those who are not able to use the meditation technique I am suggesting that listening to some calm, soothing music may help to calm the mind. Others have experienced that and it seems to be helpful.

I mention calm, soothing music as there is other music that seems to cause more disturbance, and which makes us more agitated. With that kind of music it seems that it agitates you to the point where you have to shake your whole body and your mind gets excited and agitated. You seem to get verbally and physically agitated. Rather than being calm and peaceful everything about you seems to be all shaken up. Some of our younger generation might find that quite fun, quite good. But I don't know if that's really helpful for the older generation!

Some of the younger generation might find a certain kind of music that causes excitement and where you can dance to the tunes and can shake your whole body. When one gets familiar with that sort of excitement that causes you to seek more excitement and you feel an urge to go out and party with others, one then feels the urge to go out and be with other friends and party and so forth.

When one becomes too familiar with that sort of lifestyle one may not be able to feel calm and peaceful by oneself. One may feel that one always has to associate with some sort of excitement. When one becomes more and more familiar with that it then becomes a habit. Later on in life one will reach an age where one is physically not capable of engaging in the same sort of activities. Physically you will have reached an age where your body becomes quite weak and is not able to go out and party any longer.

The mind may, however, still want to go out and party. A conflict then arises from your mind still having those urges from the habituation one has formed in one's life. But physically you are not capable of doing that. This seems to cause some turmoil in the mind and one is not able to settle down. The body is naturally settling down because of its age and it cannot go out and party anymore but the mind has not reached that level. That brings about turmoil and unease in the mind.

What I am trying to point out here is that it is inevitable that one will reach an age and stage where one will not be able to party. Consequently it is worthwhile that we put some time and energy into looking into means to be able to calm ourselves and settle our mind naturally in our youth. I am not trying to suggest to the younger generation that one should completely stop going out with friends and partying. Sometimes, of course, because of the age and time, that is what one does to be able to engage in a social context.

The main point that I am emphasising is that it may be worthwhile not to put one's complete time and energy into

being distracted with that kind of excitement and try to remind oneself that that excitement will not last forever. That kind of excitement and partying is not something that will last forever and one will not be able to maintain it. Thus, it is much more worthwhile to pay a little bit of attention to the techniques to bring about a natural calming and soothing in one's mind and to be able to feel settled within oneself. That is something that I feel is worthwhile paying attention to.

Some young people have actually sought advice from me. I have periodically shared advice to keep the important things in life in focus. While enjoying oneself with friends and so forth one should try to maintain focus on what one wishes to achieve in life. Try to always keep that in focus and try to work towards that. I have noticed that some young people have followed that advice. Their lifestyle seems to develop in the following way. When they reach the age of 18, 19 and they are capable of engaging in some work they begin working and live a modest life. If they need a car to go around, they will buy a cheaper, second-hand car. Using that they would try to save money from their work. While they may still go out with friends, they will try to minimise that and pay more attention to one's own work.

Then, after a few years, they are able to save money to buy a better car. Already their life has improved a bit when they can own a better car with their personal earnings. As they look at society they see that what brings about some financial stability is buying one's own apartment or house. After a number of years they are able to save a bit of money to start buying a house. In this way they have been able to sufficiently secure their livelihood from an early age. They gain a great advantage from establishing themselves at a young age.

If their lifestyle has been spending most of their time and energy in partying and going out with friends and on vacation and using all their money on the weekend, it seems that their life, both spiritual and worldly, becomes quite shallow. One will not be able to achieve much in security, financially and otherwise. Later on in life they may start to experience real difficulties. I am just relating the sort of practical things that I witness and advice that I share with others.

Returning back the main points made earlier, when applied appropriately the meditation technique will help to relieve one from a disturbed mind, a mind full of worries and turmoil. When one adopts the meditation technique and applies it regularly in one's life one will notice for oneself that it will help to settle a troubled mind and bring about more and more stability. When one experiences a sense of peace and stability, a sense of joy within oneself, as a result of a less troubled mind not only does it directly benefit oneself but it also helps whomever one associates or lives with.

If one pays attention to what causes the arguments or disagreements that you may have with others you would notice they happen when one's mind is troubled. When the mind of either of you is troubled that is when arguments start. If you look into it you would find it would be in those situations that arguments and disagreements begin. When the mind is settled and quite calm and peaceful, on both sides, it contributes to enjoying being in each other's company and having a nice time together. That comes about when the mind is joyful and settled. A settled and less troubled mind definitely contributes to a good relationship. There are definitely advantages that one can experience in

one's life as a result of a less troubled mind. It is worthwhile paying attention to that.

We are able to reach a point in our own self-investigation and self-analysis where we are able to clearly detect that an agitated mind causes trouble, disputes, arguments and so forth. Any kind of unwanted situation is a result of an agitated mind. When one is able to clearly identify this then one will be able to become one's own advisor. When one notices that there is some agitation in the mind, in relation to whatever situation or for whatever reason, one will be able to advise oneself to be careful. Agitation leads to a troubled mind that will then lead to more uncomfortable situations, disputes with one's partner or children and so forth. One will be able to advise oneself to be careful. Rather than interacting with others and going out and getting too social and so forth with an agitated mind that can lead to more trouble one would be able to resolve upon maybe listening to some calm, soothing music and just being quiet by oneself. Maybe one could retreat to one's room and try to have a nap or just be by oneself. That would be much more effective and beneficial than carrying on with an agitated mind and bringing about turmoil for oneself and others.

When one is able to identify that an agitated mind causes a troubled and disturbed mind one can see then it is in our own interest to apply the meditation technique regularly in one's life.

We can now actually engage in the practice of meditation. First of all we remind ourselves where the agitation in the mind comes from. The agitated mind comes about as a result of a distracted mind. When the mind is distracted with the external objects of the five senses then, for as long as the mind is distracted with these different objects or different thoughts, it is bombarded with so many thoughts and ideas and objects that it becomes pre-occupied with them. These sorts of distractions then cause an agitated mind. The agitation in one's mind arises either in the form of attachment or anger. As soon as anger or attachment arises in the mind they cause it to be disturbed or troubled. As long as we allow the mind to be influenced by distractions and thus allow agitation to arise the mind will be troubled and in turmoil. Thus the meditation technique requires us to withdraw our mind from all the distractions. Temporarily we try not to pay any attention to any form of distraction. We try to put all thoughts aside. We withdraw our mind from all concerns, all external and internal thoughts.

In order to anchor the mind in a settled state one needs to choose an object to focus on. The object that we choose in our meditation technique here is our own breath. The level of focus needs to be our full attention, with a strong determination to keep our attention on the breath itself. As we naturally breathe in and breathe out we try to keep our full attention and focus on that natural inhalation and exhalation of our breath. We keep our focus 100% on that. When we are able to do this practice with a full commitment, even for a few minutes, we will find that as a result of the mind being withdrawn from all distractions we will experience a sense of real relief from of all the distractions and worries and so forth. We would have a sense of joy within ourselves, even within a few minutes. That will definitely be the positive result from the attempt to meditate for even a few minutes. That would be one's own personal experience. So, in the next few minutes we follow this technique of withdrawing the mind completely and focusing on the breath. (*Pause for meditation.*)

That will be sufficient for now. We could go through the text or I could answer questions if you have any questions

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Question: I have heard some say that one should have one's eyes closed during meditation, and others say that we keep them open. What is Geshe-la's advice?

It is true that some people give advice to have your eyes closed. There is different advice in different traditions. Some say to have the eyes completely shut and some say to have the eyes wide open. We adopt a system where they are neither wide open nor completely shut, just gently lowered down. The advice that we follow is the balance between the two, not completely open or completely shut.

The reason why we adopt the system of not keeping the eyes completely wide open is because, apparently, keeping the eyes open can cause excitement to occur in the mind. If one has the eyes completely shut it may seem comfortable and one may seem to be able to focus on the meditation object for a while. However, when one becomes more familiar with the practice and engages in prolonged meditation, it is said that having the eyes closed can cause dullness. It is as if some darkness can occur in the mind that obstructs one from having a clear image of the object one focuses on. This particular advice is for those who take up the meditation technique and do it on a more serious level.

One must understand that the technique we use here is not an actual, physical observation of the object but instead generating a mental image of an object and then focusing on that mental image. When one focuses on an object it is done through one's mind, through one's inner sight, rather than actual eyesight. Some techniques may advise looking at an object with one's eyes but according to our tradition that would not be appropriate. One will not be able to develop single-pointed concentration by focusing on an external object. It is emphasised that one needs to focus on the internal object, which is the mental image of an object. Thus, when the eyes are slightly lowered and external things are not clear visually, it does not obstruct one from focusing on the meditation object.

One will eventually be able to get to this point through one's practice. Someone who has adopted the appropriate technique and is able to bring about that clear mental image and focus on it will not be obstructed, even if his or her eyes open either. It will not obstruct one from that inward focus. However, initially as beginners, if we keep our eyes open it can cause excitement.

We can now cover a few points from the text.

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 medium scope

4.2.2.1.2.1 The actual training in the reflections: the way to develop the mind that strives for liberation

4.2.2.1.2.1.2 Reflection on the causes of suffering – the faults of cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.1.2.3 The way in which one approaches death and is conceived (in the subsequent rebirth)

4.2.2.1.2.1.2.3.4 The mind by which one establishes the intermediate state after death

The topic that we are covering now is, 'How an individual assumes an intermediate state body after death.' Referring back to the explanations in the teachings, death is when the consciousness or mind completely leaves the body. That is when death occurs. To put it simply, death occurs when the

body and mind are separated, and that is when the intermediate state body is assumed.

The abode, or place, where the intermediate state body is assumed is from the heart, because the consciousness or mind departs from the heart. As explained in the text, when the consciousness or mind enters the body, it enters through the heart and when the mind departs, it also leaves from the same part, the heart. It is at that point that the intermediate state body is assumed.

The text now goes into explaining the various different forms or shapes of the intermediate state body. There are different shapes of the intermediate state body.

First of all, the *shape or form* of the intermediate state body is one that has all the sense faculties, the eyes and so forth. Furthermore it explains that the actual shape of the body is similar to that of the next rebirth of that individual. This means that if an intermediate state being were to be reborn as a human then the intermediate state being's physical appearance would be of similar body shape to a human.

Similar shape must not be understood to mean similar in every aspect and with all characteristics. For example, if the karma of that intermediate state being was to be reborn as a hunchback or blind and so forth, that doesn't mean that the intermediate state being also would be a hunchback or blind and so forth.

Furthermore, the intermediate state being has similar characteristics to a worldly god, such as having the sight of a worldly god and miraculous feats similar to a worldly god. That doesn't mean that the intermediate state being actually has those qualities, but it is similar to them. Having the divine sight, means being able to see long distances. And having miraculous powers means that there is no physical boundaries and obstruction to the movement of the intermediate state being.

Those who can see the intermediate state being are higher beings as well as those who are on the same level of that intermediate state being. They will be able to see each other as well as the place where each of them will be reborn.

There are different presentations in different texts. In the text *Treasury of Knowledge* it explains that once a certain type of intermediate state being has been assumed, that intermediate state being will definitely be reborn in whatever aspect it assumes. So if an intermediate state being has assumed a human appearance they will definitely be reborn as a human and cannot be reborn in other realms. However, another text called *Compendium of Knowledge* explains that it is changeable. Even if you have assumed the intermediate state being of a human one could still be reborn either as a worldly god or even in lower realms. It is possible to change.

The text here then talks about the *appearances* an intermediate state being has: the intermediate state being who has cultivated non-virtue has an appearance like a black blanket or a pitch-black darkness. Intermediate state beings who have cultivated virtue have an appearance which is like a white cloud or a moonlit night.

The I of the intermediate state being's body is explained next in the text. The colour of an intermediate state being who is to be reborn as a hell being is dark like a charred log. Someone to be reborn as an animal is like smoke. Someone to be reborn as a hungry ghost is like water. An intermediate state being that is to be reborn as a deity of the desire realm or a human is golden. One to be reborn as a deity of the form realm is white.

The text goes on to explain what *types of beings* assume an intermediate state existence. Not all beings assume this state. The text explains that there is an intermediate state when you are born into the lower realms, the desire and form realms, or from the formless realms. But when you are born into the formless realm from the two lower realms, you attain the aggregates of a formless being immediately upon dying and there is no intermediate state.

What is being explained is that when someone from the lower realms, such as a human from the desire realm, is to be reborn in a worldly god's realm, one does not have to go through the intermediate state. One is born miraculously into that worldly god state.

The text goes on to explain how intermediate state beings *move about*. Beings of intermediate state that are to be reborn as deities ascend when they move. Those to be reborn as humans move straight and forward. Those to be reborn in the lower realms move with their heads lowered and their eyes cast downward.

An intermediate state being has a lifespan of up to seven days until the being has found the conditions of a rebirth. Once it has found such conditions its lifespan is not definitely seven days.

When an individual dies and is reborn into the intermediate state if the conditions are right after the first day in the intermediate state, then even after a day, they will be reborn. Further it explains in the text that if the intermediate state being does not find the conditions for rebirth within seven days it assumes another body within the intermediate state. It may stay in the intermediate state from one to seven weeks. However, as it will certainly have found the conditions for rebirth within that time it stays no longer than that.

The text *Compendium of Knowledge* explains that a being of the intermediate state that is to be reborn as a deity may die after seven days and either again reach the intermediate state of a deity or else reach the intermediate state of a human or some other form. This is possible because a change in its karma can transform the seeds for the intermediate state. The same holds for other beings in the intermediate state. The presentation states that there can be a change between intermediate state beings. This is how the change occurs: after the death in seven days of a particular intermediate state being to be reborn as a deity it can assume the intermediate state being of a human if it now has the karma to be reborn as a human. Karma can change within each intermediate state.

The lifespan of the intermediate state being is said to be seven days. Even if it were to be reborn again as an intermediate state being, it actually has to experience what is called 'a small death' within seven days. In the Tibetan tradition offerings are made after each seven days up until the 49 days from the time a person died. Offerings may be made to the Sangha, the Three Jewels or donations made to the poor and so forth. Rituals like that are performed.

Making specific offerings after each seven days is a way of accumulating virtue on behalf of the deceased person. This is done by relations and family in particular, because of the special connection they have with the deceased person. Because of that unique karmic connection you have had with that deceased person you can actually help that deceased person to assume a better rebirth when you make offerings and accumulate virtue on their behalf. If they have accumulated karma to be reborn, for example, in the unfortunate realms there is still a possibility after seven days

for their karma to change to assume a higher rebirth, because a change of the intermediate state being is possible. When virtue is accumulated and dedicated on their behalf it can definitely help and benefit that deceased person. It is good for us to understand the implications of those practices because there is some benefit in that practice.

When these practices are done particularly by persons who have had a direct relationship with the deceased person, because of that connection, there can definitely be some benefit.

We have now covered the intermediate state being's existence and have explained some of the details according to the explanation in the teaching. The next topic is how, after existence as an intermediate state being, one takes rebirth in the next life. That can be explained in further sessions.

It is good for us to relate to these teachings when anyone dies. Death doesn't mean that it's the end of everything. We don't stop existing. That's not the end of our existence. There is some continuity that goes on. It is quite helpful to understand that.

It seems that even those who normally do not consider that they believe in reincarnation and past and future lives seem to talk in some instances about someone coming back from the dead or they have some sort of experience. They seem to talk about that.

One of the persons who comes to cook for me, a lady, once told me that her son asked a question about what happens after someone dies. So she explained according to the Buddhist explanation, 'Oh, one does not cease to exist, but will come back.' The boy's response was, 'Oh, how wonderful. That's great!'

When one has some acceptance of past and future lives, and thus rebirth being possible then these teachings become relevant for us as a way to reflect upon what happens after death and what kind of existence one would assume. One can reflect upon what it is that determines the kind of existence and intermediate state one will have after death. Following that one can reflect upon what kind of rebirth one would possibly take. As explained in the teachings, this is all dependent on the karma and the causes one has accumulated in one's lifetimes. That is how we understand this.

One starts to have a clear understanding of the implications of what it means to take rebirth and how taking rebirth is not an end to our existence but is rather a cause for another death and another rebirth. It could be an endless succession of birth, death and rebirths. When one considers those facts one would come to a realisation, as one of the great masters of the past mentioned, 'I have no fear of death itself. But I actually fear rebirth'. This is how one would come to begin to understand there is not that much to fear in death itself because it apparently takes just a few moments. The actual death process happens in a few moments. Rebirth is something that will take a longer period of time and that we have to experience for long periods of time. That's something of more concern that we need to consider.

Before we end the session for the evening, we can again spend a few minutes in meditation this time focusing on the sound of the mantra being recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA