
The Condensed Lam Rim

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It would be good to spend some time in meditation. Prior to engaging in meditation it is good to set a good motivation for doing the practice. I will, from my side, set the most positive motivation and if you can also develop a good motivation, wouldn't that be a good way to start?

Indeed, when we engage in any activity, even normal activity such as communicating with others, if we begin with a good motivation or good intention we will find that definitely makes a huge difference. We would find that when we either speak to others or listen to others' conversations with a good intention we can definitely derive some benefit from the other. Rather than seeing faults in the other we would actually see some positiveness in what they say.

Likewise, from the practice point of view, when listening to teachings and giving the teachings, if it is done with a positive motivation, there is a huge difference as well. It becomes much more worthwhile from the listener's side. If they come with a good intention they will be able to derive the qualities of what is being said. If the teacher has a good motivation they will be able to derive the qualities of the listeners who come to listen to the teachings. In this way there is definitely a mutual benefit.

A positive motivation or intention can be basically summed up as generating a kind attitude. A kind attitude is essential in any activity we engage in. There are indeed many benefits from generating a positive motivation or intention prior to setting out to do any practice or activity. A positive attitude can contribute to a more relaxed, calmer and clearer state of mind and we will then be able to derive the real benefit in what we are engaging in. This makes the activity more positive.

We can all relate to the importance of having a kind attitude. We all recognise that we possess that kind attitude. We all have a kind mind. It is something that we already have and it is a matter of further strengthening and developing it. That is something we can relate to.

While we can acknowledge that we have a kind mind or a kind attitude within ourselves we might notice that it is actually very difficult to utilise it and put that kind attitude into practice. That is something that can be difficult. When we look into the reasons why it may be difficult to put the kind attitude into practice in our daily lives, if we actually investigate this, we would come to understand that it is because an opposing negative state of mind overwrites the kind attitude within oneself. That is what hinders the kind attitude manifesting. In any particular moment, whatever mind is more prevalent becomes manifest.

For example, if anger is prevalent then that manifests and dominates one's state of mind, one's entire being becomes tainted with anger in that instant. If a person generally has a kind mind and attitude toward someone else but if anger is

manifest in the mind then anger hinders the kind attitude being expressed because the anger is more prevalent in the mind. That is how the opposing negative state of mind overwrites or overpowers the positive kind state of mind.

That being the case, what helps us to overcome that negative state of mind is first of all to recognise it; then to distinguish the difference between the kind attitude and the more negative states of mind of anger. One has to distinguish these states of mind and see how when one is dominated by a negative state of mind it obstructs one from expressing one's kindness to others. The analytical wisdom of distinguishing between the two will help one to recognise when that negative mind arises, then we can work at reducing the negative state of mind and encouraging the positive state of mind of kindness. That is how it becomes possible to overcome the influence of the negative states of mind.

One may wonder, what is the practical benefit of analysing one's own states of mind, using the analytical wisdom to distinguish between the positive states of mind and the negative states of mind? The practical benefit, even if one may not be able to overcome the negative states of mind, is that the awareness of the negative state of mind will assist us when we are associating with those we are close to, such as a partner. If, due to one's own familiarity with analysing one's mind, when one is associating with them one would be able to immediately detect a negative state of mind such as anger arising within oneself. Because of that identification or recognition we will not carry it through. We will be able to remind ourselves by thinking 'if I allow the anger to manifest and take over it will lead to uncomfortable consequences'. 'I may say things, or do things that will be unpleasant for the other, which I would not appreciate'. In that way with one's own awareness, if anger were beginning to manifest within oneself one would be able to prevent oneself from carrying it through. With the warning signal coming within oneself, one prevents oneself from getting angry with the other. That really is a benefit, a real contribution, to a harmonious relationship. We all know that the tension in relationships arises when one gets upset or angry with the other. Therefore if we look at it from the practical point of view, we can see that there are definitely benefits in this practice.

If we pay attention to our own experience we would notice that when anger arises in relation to another person it initially affects our outlook towards the person. The other person appears to be unappealing or we dislike the person. Due to the anger in the mind, a dislike for the person starts to manifest and we feel uncomfortable being with them. When that occurs in relation to another person one would feel uncomfortable within oneself. There is unease or discomfort within oneself. Do you find that to be true for yourselves? Would you find this is true in relation to your own experiences? When the feeling of dislike towards the other manifests, then one's own joy is lost. We lose the sense of joy within one's own mind.

The great master Shantideva has mentioned in his treatise that whatever the situation may be we shouldn't allow the joy in one's mind to cease. No matter how others react to one, one should try not to develop the mind of dislike towards them. The mind of dislike will not be of any benefit to oneself. In accordance with what Shantideva is saying, when we analyse the situation it is very true that whatever situation we may be in, but particularly a difficult situation, if we lose that sense of joy within one's mind then that

situation will become uncomfortable and cause us to feel unease and discomfort. That's how having a sense of dislike within one's own mind affects the mind.

Regardless of how others treat us, developing the mind of dislike will not in any way affect the situation for the better. That state of mind will not improve the situation. It would, instead, worsen the situation for oneself. According to the teachings, if, when others hurt us or harm us in any way, we develop a state of mind of dislike towards them - a sense of anger in one's mind, that only causes our own mind to lack joy. What Shantideva is actually recommending, is that it is far better to develop patience. If one develops a sense of patience within one's mind that will help enhance one's composure. He is really talking about the practical benefits of developing patience rather than anger in one's mind.

Following those verses Shantideva also mentioned that if there is something that can be done to change the undesirable situation, then there is no point feeling upset and worrying about it. Whereas, if there is no way to change the situation, again there is no point in worrying and getting upset about it. What Shantideva is pointing out here is that if someone is criticising us or dislikes us and we can change that tense situation then there is no need for us to worry and get upset about it. However if the situation cannot be changed in anyway, then the act of worrying itself is not of any use. He is pointing out a very practical way of dealing with the situation.

To come back to the main point mentioned earlier, we were discussing how even though we may have kind attitudes within one, it is very difficult to act accordingly. It is sometimes very difficult to express it. What is preventing that is a negative state of mind, such as anger, that would prevent that kind attitude from manifesting? The point is to deal with this through developing the analytical wisdom, to detect positive and negative states of mind within oneself. That can be done through the practice of meditation.

An essential point from the Buddhist teaching we need to recognise in analysing and distinguishing the positive from the negative states of mind within oneself, is that the ultimate state of mind, the undefiled clear state of mind, is the basis for one to be completely free from all defilements and all negativities. As explained in the Buddha's teachings, the ultimate nature of the mind is clear and unpolluted. The nature of mind itself is not defiled, which means that the negative states of mind are not imbued into the nature of our mind. Thus it is said that with time and practice it is possible to completely manifest that clear state of mind that is unpolluted by any negativities. This is one of the most essential points in Buddhism.

The fact that the ultimate nature of our mind is not defiled by negativities can even be experienced in our everyday life to some extent. We can definitely relate to the truth of that statement because of the fact that our mind is not perpetually dominated by any one negative state of mind. If the nature of our mind were defiled with a negativity that would imply that that negativity would always be manifest. We would feel that negativity, such as anger, all the time. If the very nature of our mind were affected by anger then we would always be in an angry state of mind. Likewise with attachment: we would always feel attachment. However the fact and reality is that there are moments where we don't feel angry, particularly in moments where we feel compassion towards someone. During that time where we feel compassion towards someone we don't have any sense of anger towards him or her. Likewise with attachment,

there are times when our mind is not affected by attachment. In this way we can see from our own experience that the nature of mind is not polluted.

The initial way to deal with our state of mind is to try to find the technique that prevents negativity and strong emotions such as anger or attachment, from becoming manifest in our mind. We try to prevent that manifest level of negativity. Through one's practice, if one is able to prevent a very strong level of negativity such as anger and attachment becoming manifest in one's mind then, as a result even the outer appearance of the person will become calmer and more settled. The effect of applying a technique that initially tackles the very strong or manifest level of delusion is that the person will naturally become calmer and more settled.

When one is relatively calmer and more settled, one would then be able to slowly tackle the more subtle aspects of the defilements within oneself. Initially we have to try to tackle the very strong and manifest level of the delusion, only then can we slowly begin to work on the more subtle level. As we begin to work on tackling the subtle levels of delusions, we can slowly remove the delusions from our mind until the very core of the delusion has been uprooted within oneself. These positive results are achieved through the practice of meditation.

In order to engage in the formal practice of meditation now, we remind ourselves to generate a positive motivation within one's mind. First of all we sit in an appropriate posture that is upright and relaxed. We then generate that positive mind. To engage in the practice itself we withdraw our mind from any distractions, whether positive or negative. Whatever it may be we try to refrain from all mental engagement and distraction and bring our mind inward. To bring our focus inward involves temporarily letting go of an object that one might be obsessed with, for example an object of attachment. It is explained that if in an attempt to meditate, one part of our mind is still holding onto an object of attachment, then regardless of how we may try to meditate one's meditational practice will not be effective, because one part of our mind is still obsessed with the object. For meditation to be effective it is advised that we completely let go of all objects, irrespective of whether it is a good or negative object. One completely withdraws one's mind and focuses one hundred percent inwardly on the object to be meditated on. The object to focus on in our meditation now is our own breath. Thus we bring our full attention and focus to our breath. We remain focussed on our breath without allowing the mind to become distracted by any other influences. So, in this way, we will focus on our breath for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*).

That is 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

4.2.2.1.2.2.4. Resolving the nature of the path that leads to liberation

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2. The actual resolution of the nature of the path

We will continue from the text, as we haven't been able to cover much in our last sessions. We have come to the second subdivision from the earlier category which is the type of path one cultivates to overturn cyclic existence, and that is subdivided into three. The three subdivisions are: 1) Making the link now that we have identified the path; 2) Teaching

the other precepts that will be explained further; and 3) In particular, the way to train in ethics.

What is particularly being identified here is a link to the earlier topic of the three higher trainings; the higher training of ethics; the higher training of concentration and the higher training of wisdom. The higher training in ethics implies the training in ethics that is complimented with taking of refuge in the three jewels. When training of ethics, concentration and wisdom is accompanied with refuge they become the higher training.

In relation to the connotation of higher, there are different forms of ethics that can be adopted. When ethics are adopted with pure refuge, as is emphasised here, then that form of ethics is said to be higher than general ethics which is observed without refuge in one's mind. It is similar with concentration. When concentration is accompanied with a pure refuge in one's mind it becomes extra in relation to normal concentration. Similarly when wisdom is accompanied with the pure refuge in one's mind then it becomes a higher form of wisdom.

What also needs to be understood in this context of the three higher trainings is that the higher training of ethics specifically implies the ethics of taking vows and observing those vows. The higher training of concentration specifically refers to the training in concentration to develop the single-pointed concentration called calm abiding. The higher training in wisdom specifically relates to the higher training in developing special insight. That is because the three trainings in this context are training as a means or method to obtaining liberation. So it is the combination of observing the ethical or moral vows that one is able to develop calm abiding, and then based on having developed calm abiding one can develop special insight, which then becomes the main method for obtaining liberation.

At this point it would be good to reflect upon the definitions of each of the particular trainings. In brief the definition of moral ethics is the mind with the intention of restrain. The definition of concentration is developing the ability to concentrate continuously, single-pointedly on an object. It involves one particular element. Having the ability to concentrate single-pointedly continuously on an object is what is defined as concentration. Wisdom is defined as being able, through analysis, to differentiate between what is positive and to be adopted and what is negative and to be discarded. To have that intelligence is what is defined here as wisdom. This also illuminates the statement that what one needs to meditate upon is that which has been discerned by wisdom. Wisdom is the analysis of the positive attributes of an object and keeping one's mind focussed on that would be the way to develop the meditation.

One would be familiar from earlier presentation that the way to actually meditate upon an object or any particular subject is by first hearing about it. One gains a certain amount of wisdom by hearing about the subject. Then one contemplates or analyses the subject that one has listened to. Then one uses the wisdom one gains from that analysis or contemplation to develop one's meditation.

It is essential to understand this process of how one goes about the practice of meditation. It is based first upon hearing the subject matter, then thinking or contemplating about it for ourselves and then, finally, actually meditating upon that subject. We can see that when we first hear about something we gain a certain amount of wisdom. That, however, is not a very stable wisdom because it is based

merely upon what one has heard. With further investigation on that subject through contemplation the understanding or wisdom one gains is much more stable because it is not based merely upon something one has heard from others but rather upon some level of experience that one has gained through that analysis process. One then implements what one gained in one's practice. Meditating upon that subject and the wisdom one gains from one's contemplation is said to be the most stable meditation. One gains more profound experience from meditation on the subject.

This process of first hearing, then contemplating and then meditating on the subject is how the process is described. This process also works in a sequentially progressive manner. The more one hears the more one has to contemplate and think about the subject. The more one hears about the subject, the more one is able to contemplate it. The more one contemplates the subject the more one has a basis to meditate upon. This is really a progressive way. This process helps to settle one's mind when it becomes really firm and stable within one's mind.

As it is quite a warm and humid evening we will conclude for now. Before we conclude the session, we can again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time as we sit in an appropriate posture, we keep our full focus upon the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra as it is recited. During the time that the mantra is recited it would be good to really bring our focus inward and use that inner focus to actually focus on the sound of the mantra.

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