
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose, we sit in an upright and relaxed posture.

While it may be relatively easy to adopt a relaxed posture, if we don't actually utilise that relaxed posture in the practice of meditation then we won't really get that much benefit. If we were to utilise that relaxed posture to actually develop an attentive and focused mind, then we will definitely get some benefit.

The practice of meditation serves as a way to protect one's mind, in particular the sense of joy and happy state of mind. So as I regularly emphasise, it is really essential that we pay attention to protecting the sense of joy and happiness in our mind. That is something which is really important.

The essential need for protecting the mind will become apparent particularly when we are facing some difficulties in life. Due to certain situations and conditions, when we experience some problems in life, at that point we may give in to despair; the mind can be really weighed down and become negative. It's at those particular times, when we face some difficulties and challenges in life, that we need to use methods and techniques for protecting our state of mind.

If we can access the techniques and methods to protect the mind particularly in times of difficulties, then it really becomes worthwhile. We will gain real protection and that will be really suitable for ourselves.

As I mentioned earlier the meditation serves as a technique to protect our mind, so it is then appropriate to know how to apply the measure of protecting our mind.

The measure of protecting the mind was explained earlier. If the body is relaxed but the mind influenced by negative energy such as anger, then while the body may be in a relaxed posture, the mind is in turmoil. The mind does not feel relaxed when influenced by anger. Thus what is happening at that time is that while we take the measure of adopting an appropriate physical posture, we have not actually taken a measure of protecting the mind. The fault of the mind being influenced by anger is when we have not paid attention to protecting the mind, thus the mind becomes influenced by anger and becomes disturbed.

When we are in a relaxed posture and the mind is also relaxed, then we will not be affected by the turmoil. However, if it's a time when the mind is affected and influenced by a negative state of mind such as anger, then that mind becomes disturbed. Applying the measure of protecting the mind means to really pay attention to

when we lack joy and to understanding why we lack joy in our mind.

When we notice that the mind has been influenced by anger and thus make an attempt to reverse that situation, then the sense of joy in the mind will be restored. So we find there is a great benefit in the technique of meditation.

Just as the mind is influenced by anger, likewise when it is influenced by strong attachment and we experience the pang of attachment in our heart, then the mind becomes disturbed to the point where we would lack the sense of joy and happiness in the mind. When we notice that, we are able to see that the mind is being influenced by attachment. If we then focus our mind inward, the sense of joy and happiness will return. This illustrates how the lack of protecting our mind will influence the mind towards a disturbed state. This is the case with many other states of mind as well, whenever the mind is influenced by any form of distraction. In any situation when we feel disturbed and sense a lack of joy in the mind we can determine that to be due to the lack of protecting the mind. By recognising this and applying protection, the sense of joy and happiness will come back again. In this way we find great benefit in this technique.

When we reflect upon our own situation these instances will not be alien to us. We all would have experienced situations where the mind is negatively influenced in that way leading to a disturbed mind. So when we reflect upon the situation in relation to our own experience, we will then find the truth of this and understand the need to apply the measure of protecting one's mind.

When we come to the point of recognising what is disturbing our mind, such as anger or strong attachment, then we have the right to protect our mind from these influences. We don't need to give in to anger and attachment. We don't need to befriend and remain close to anger or strong attachment. We have the right and ability to actually distance ourselves from that influence.

When I mentioned not befriending the negative states of mind such as attachment and anger, if I were to merely mention attachment, that is something you might not accept easily. So when I refer specifically to a strong attachment that brings pain to the mind, then you would agree that it is something that you would not befriend. Likewise with anger, it is something easily identified as being a negative influence on yourself, so you would agree with not befriending anger.

It is good for us to understand how meditation actually serves as a very useful and important technique to bring about a more happy and joyous state of mind. If we can recognise that, then we would actually feel inspired to adopt the technique. We will find that if we know about the benefit then we will be more inclined to be interested in the technique.

Now to practice the meditation; we readjust our physical posture and state of mind, particularly the state of our mind. We need to make the resolve for the next few minutes not to allow our mind to be influenced by any distractions, thoughts or memories and so forth. Just bring our complete focus inwards, not allowing our mind

to be influenced by any form of distraction. Focus inwards and place the attention upon our breath. So for the next few minutes, we will maintain our full attention and focus on the breath making it worthwhile. So that is what we will do. *(Pause for meditation)*

If we can regularly practice in this way, that will be good. If we apply the same manner of meditation regularly in our life it will be beneficial. When we apply the meditation technique in this way then we will also begin to recognise it as one of the means to bring about some happiness and joy in our mind.

When we are feeling distressed about a particular situation, if we know about the technique of meditation, it will help us to focus on something different. So just by the mere fact of focussing on something other than the condition that causes our distress, will definitely bring a temporary relief from that disturbance. That then becomes a truly practical way to gain some benefit.

As mentioned previously, the regular practice of meditation helps us to maintain a kind and happy state of mind. Kindness is very much related to feeling a sense of joy in our mind. You will notice that when we experience a sense of joy and happiness in our mind that will influence us to become more kind to other people.

Based on kindness love and compassion can definitely be developed. What is really important in our lives is to develop love and compassion particularly towards those who we associate with in our lives.

When there's a sense of discomfort within our mind in relation to others, whoever that 'other' may be, we feel angry towards them imagining that they are the ones causing us discomfort. However when we can actually relate to the unhappy state of mind as a cause for anger to arise within ourselves, then we will be able to relate to situations in which others are in an angry state of mind, and determine that it is due to their mind being unhappy. There is no one who would get angry when they are in a happy state of mind.

Such understanding is really crucial in our everyday life because we do associate and live with others. If we can understand what is the cause of distress in someone else's mind it will help us to be more tolerant and patient with them. This in turn will be more beneficial for us in our life.

The teachings explain meditating on love and compassion as the remedy for overcoming anger. And it is definitely possible to feel love and compassion for someone who is in an angry state of mind. When we recognise that anger arises due to an unhappy state of mind, then when we relate to someone close to us who is angry and thus in an unhappy state of mind, we can naturally feel concern for them and develop love and compassion. This is a practical approach of developing love and compassion towards someone who is upset. When we generate this attitude, it will definitely benefit the other as well.

We do have a natural concern and wish to benefit those close to us. However at times when we are becoming upset and angry towards someone, we lose our sense of concern for them. What is happening is at that time we are not applying the measure of protecting love and

compassion within ourselves. When love and compassion towards others begins to wane, then that is replaced with a sense of intolerance and we feel upset with them. Then the sense of nurturing and caring would also begin to weaken. The main point is that it's really important to cultivate and protect the natural sense of concern and compassion we have towards others.

On a practical individual basis of practice, the main point is to recognise the attitudes which harm us and others. That is possible when we are able to recognise the negative attitudes within ourselves, and also the positive attitudes. Then we need to apply the techniques, regardless of whether we are religiously inclined or not. There are those who claim, 'I don't have any particular religion, I can manage by myself. I have my own methods and techniques'. If they apply their techniques of reducing negativities and cultivating the positive states of mind, then that would be the appropriate measure.

To relate one incident in relation to this, once when I went to the Dentist and was waiting for my turn, there was someone else who was also in the waiting room and he kept glancing at me and smiling. Two times he looked and glanced at me and then eventually he came up to me and he said, 'I don't really follow any kind of religion but we are in a similar situation as I also have some measures to take care of myself'.

So he was implying that his solace is within himself and he adheres to that, He seemed to be quite confident and joyful. That was what I understood from what he was saying. Then he asked my age. I would have been 73 at that time and when I related that to him, he seems very astonished because he was 58 himself, and he said, 'I would have assumed that you are around 55!' *(laughter)*

Even though I would not have understood everything he was telling me, what I did understand in essence was that he seemed to imply that even though he doesn't have many friends, a girlfriend and so forth, he had inner solace and felt quite joyful and happy. That is the point he seemed to make. He was saying that his spirituality is within himself. That's the point he was making. The main point for me was that he seemed quite happy and joyful. So, whatever he adhered to was worthwhile for him.

The example of this person's point of view illustrates that the main reliance he has is a good attitude within himself; a good and a kind attitude within himself.

He was opening up and really sharing all of that with me, sharing a lot about himself; there is a lot to learn from that. His actual demeanour itself indicated confidence that he was experiencing the same thing. That is something good and positive.

The main points so far are that firstly it is important to protect one's state of mind. The second point is, how to actually apply the protection for one's mind, and the next point is actually protecting our mind by identifying and recognising the state of mind. If the mind is in a negative state of mind, to transform that by adopting a state of mind which is focussing on the positive, definitely not focussing on the negative side, and in that way restoring the positive and joyous state of mind. Then I made an appeal to you to apply that protection in your life; to

apply the technique of protecting the mind in your life. If you can easily recognise the benefit of the practice and it is something that you are able to do, then it is appropriate to do it.

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

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2. The type of path one cultivates to overturn cyclic existence

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2.3. The way to train in ethics

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2.3.4. How to train in ethics

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2.3.4.1. Instructions on the four antidotes for abandoning downfalls

4.2.2.1.2.2.4.2.2.3.4.2. Applying the lessons of old: The way it is inappropriate to be lax about even minor [lapses of discipline]

Now the topic that we are covering from the text is the four causes of infraction, which we have previously touched on. The last one is the various afflictions that serve as the cause for infractions. For those of us who may have taken vows and commitments, even though we may have an initial wish to observe and abide by those commitments and vows, nevertheless we find ourselves breaching the commitments. We may find ourselves lapsing in moral ethics and going against the precepts. The reason we find ourselves in that situation is because of the various afflictions in the mind. It is therefore necessary that we recognise the various afflictions and apply the remedy. Last week I explained that whatever affliction was most predominant in the mind, that is the first one to which we apply the remedy.

In our last session we discussed the remedy for those who are affected by strong attachment, which is to meditate on the natural faults or unattractive attributes of the object. For those who are affected by strong anger in their mind, the remedy is to meditate on love and compassion. For those who have strong jealousy in their mind, the remedy is to meditate on being happy and joyful about the success of others, this removes the jealousy from the mind. Then when affected by strong pride, the remedy is to meditate on the constituents within one's body, the different categories of suffering and the categories of the different realms. By reflecting upon that and the vastness of how much there is to know and to fully understand this helps to overcome the pride in our mind. For those afflicted by strong stupor and ignorance, meditating on the interdependent origination of phenomena will overcome that.

Focussing on the breath is the remedy particularly to overcome distractions. For someone who is affected by many distractions in their mind, the remedy is focussing on the breath. Then the remedy for overcoming all delusions and all afflictions in general is to meditate on emptiness. So when one meditates on emptiness that will remove all afflictions.

As we come towards the end of this chapter, which is on the medium scope, there is further explanation of the remedy for overcoming the causes for an infraction. Now the text goes on to explain how it is important even if it's a small misdeed, not to ignore it. Rather one must apply the remedy even for a very small infraction. The text then goes on to give an account of certain individual beings whose ethics lapsed, and the kind of results they experienced. However we need not go into the details of that story.

The main point in the teachings is that, we must definitely observe our ethics even on the smallest level. The examples as mentioned earlier in the teachings are how even a small spark from a flame can cause the whole haystack to catch fire and be completely consumed by the fire. So, even a small spark is considered very dangerous. Likewise on the positive side even a drop of water is not to be ignored as insignificant, because drops of water can fill up a huge container. So applying that in general we understand that even a small negative karma can become a cause for a lot of misdeeds and faults to occur and the consequences can be very grave. Whereas even a small positive deed or seed of virtue can be a cause for great benefit in the future. That is the same for all beings alike. There is a particular story in relation to fully ordained Sangha, and how it is really important to observe our moral code and creed of vows. I will not relate the actual story in relation to that. It is not necessary to go into those details.

Before we conclude for the evening, we will again spend a few minutes in contemplation and this time we focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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