
The Condensed Lam Rim

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷོ་བ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 September 2010

While we adopt a comfortable relaxed posture physically, it would also be good to adopt a relaxed state of mind. When the physical body is relaxed and the mind is relaxed then the person who possesses the body and mind will also be relaxed. This relaxed physical and mental state is an important relationship for our well-being. A relaxed physical posture becomes conducive for our mind to become relaxed and peaceful, which in turn brings about a real sense of relief for ourselves. On the other hand, if our mind is not really in tune with our body and is completely distracted with many different issues, thoughts and ideas, then we experience the ill effects of that. Therefore, if we can centre our mind within and focus on an inner object that will prevent the mind from going in every direction and bring about a more focused and relaxed state of mind.

If we look into our normal situation we would find that, as mentioned previously, we are like the owners of our body and mind. While the body is solidly with us, when we look into the state of the mind we can see that it is going in every direction which causes doubts, worries and anxieties to arise in our mind. When we allow the mind to be in such a distracted state, then that gives rise to a very tired mind, a mind that feels weighed down. To actually reverse that situation we need to focus the mind inwards and try to settle it down—then we can feel the relaxed state of the mind. It is really worthwhile to look into this.

One of the main points to consider is that when we are in a relaxed state of mind this can relieve us from many difficulties and problems, which our mind would otherwise be preoccupied with. A relaxed and peaceful state of mind becomes essential for our well-being. The normal situation for most of us is that our mind is busier than our physical body. It is busy with different plans, thoughts and agendas. If we find this is true for ourselves then it is worthwhile to ask, 'Why is my mind so busy and agitated? What is the cause of that?'. The simple answer is that it is our habit of allowing our mind to be in a very distracted state.

When asked why their mind is excited, some answer that it is because there are a lot of external distractions that cause the mind to be disturbed and to be in a state of anxiety. There may be some truth to that, however the real cause for the distractions of the mind lies within us, because of our habit of allowing our mind to be distracted. That habit itself is really the main cause. So without identifying the inner cause we may assume that it is only the external conditions that cause our mind to be busy. If it was indeed the external material things that are

the real cause for the disturbance in our mind, then we would have to resolve that there is nothing we can do about it, as there is no end to external objects.

If external objects were actually the main cause for our distraction then there is nothing much we can do. As we have to go out, for example, to shop at a supermarket, we have to go out and interact with others and so forth. If it were the external objects that cause our disturbances then we might have to go with our eyes closed. Then of course we will have to find someone lead us around!

However we have to use our eyes to go outside which means seeing and encountering different things. If external objects were actually the cause of distractions or delusions to rise in our mind then there would be nothing much we could do.

If we really consider the reality and look into the situation more closely we would find that we would be able to identify within ourselves situations where we may see something attractive but we don't feel strong attachment towards it, or we might see some unattractive, unappealing object that does not cause so much aversion in our mind. Normally we would say that a beautiful object would be a cause for attachment to arise and an unappealing object is the cause for anger to arise. More specifically the objects serve as a condition for attraction and anger to arise. If they were the actual causes for the delusions such as attachment and anger to arise, then every time we saw a beautiful object we would have to feel attachment and desire for the object and every time we saw an object which is unappealing we would have to feel angry.

From our own experience, however, we find that this is not the case. There are times that we might acknowledge a beautiful object that doesn't arouse strong attachment towards it. And although we might acknowledge an unattractive object it doesn't cause so much agitation or anger to arise in the mind. That is a proof that our attitude depends on how we perceive the object rather than the actual external object.

Consider the case where the external object alone serves as a condition for us to feel attachment or anger to rise or where we consider it is a combination of an attractive object and our attachment to that, which gives rise to desire. It is similar with an unappealing object, the object is there and we also have the delusion of anger, and it is that combination that arouses the anger towards that object. In either case, what we need to try to overcome is that disturbance, the attachment and the anger in the mind. What serves as a technique or method to overcome the delusion in our mind? It is the practice of meditation.

When we relate to the inner cause of our distraction, it is the habit or familiarity that allows us to be influenced by the delusions such as attachment and anger. When we relate to that as a cause for the distractions, the technique of meditation works to overcome that situation. The technique of meditation is a technique where we intentionally familiarise our mind by maintaining focus on an inner object that would not cause the delusions to arise, thus causing distraction. For as long as we familiarise ourselves with the inner object that does not cause delusions to rise, due to that familiarity it will

become possible for us to slowly become more acquainted with focusing inwards on that inner object. And to that extent we will become less and less concerned with the external distractions. This will reverse the situation where we are highly influenced by the distractions within our mind. We will become more familiar with focusing inwards giving less power to the delusions in the mind which we will slowly overcome.

If we were to take the other situation where we consider the external object as a cause for our delusions to arise then, as we familiarise and focus within we will be able to slowly forget the external object, and become less concerned with it. We know from experience that it is possible to forget about an object. Therefore if we don't recall a particular object that causes our delusions to arise (such as an attractive object or an unappealing object) then we know from our own experience that it doesn't cause us distress, because we are not focusing on it. Therefore from our own experience we would know the validity of focusing inwards. The more we familiarise and focus on our inner object, the more we will distance ourselves from the external object that causes the delusions to rise in the mind and thus it will prevent us from being obsessed with it. And that is how we will begin to notice the positive effect of meditation. These are the two main points that we are considering as the benefits for the practice of meditation this evening

Recalling the significance of the practice of meditation we can now actually adopt the technique. Readjusting our physical posture and making a particular commitment in our mind to not allow the mind to be distracted with external distractions, to bring the mind to focus inwards and having brought the focus inwards we choose, the object that we wish to focus on. The best object at our level now is to just focus on our breath, our natural breathing. We focus on the breath and this very technique is said to be really effective, bringing our full attention on our breath and completely letting go of all other thoughts, ideas and distractions. By focusing on the breath itself we will find an immediate relief from all the disturbances in our mind. As we experience that (even temporarily) it will be a good reminder for ourselves of the effectiveness of the practice of meditation. And as the great masters have repeatedly reminded us, it is a matter of making the positive familiarity and habit. When we adopt the good, positive habit of acquainting the mind with the object of meditation, the more we familiarise the mind with it, the more the mind will be attuned to that and the greater the benefit from the practice.

In this way for the next few minutes we will try to bring our entire focus and attention on the breath itself.
[Meditation]

4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence

4.2.2.1.2.3. The way to train the mind in the stages of the path of beings of the great scope

4.2.2.1.2.3.2. The actual paths

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.1. Teaching that the awakened mind is the sole entrance gate to the Mahayana

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.1.3. It is only by means of the awakening mind that one becomes a child of the conqueror and that one outshines hearers and solitary realisers

We come to the third subdivision from the earlier category in the text which is 'It is only by means of the awakening mind that one becomes a child of the Conqueror and that one outshines hearers and solitary realisers'.

Following on from the earlier explanation the awakening mind serves as the entrance to the great vehicle of the Mahayana path. It is only by developing the awakening mind that one would be considered a great practitioner or to have entered the Mahayana path. Following that, the characteristics or benefits of developing the awakening mind is that one becomes known as a child of the Conqueror, or what is known as a bodhisattva, thus outshining the hearers and solitary realisers.

What is being explained here is the preliminary stage of explaining the qualities, the values of the awakening mind or what is also known in Sanskrit as *bodhichitta*. The literal translation is the awakening mind which is basically a state of mind that one develops to take on the responsibility of other sentient beings' welfare. In particular that welfare includes taking the responsibility of bringing about the ultimate happiness and removing all adverse situations and sufferings from all living beings, as well as taking upon oneself the responsibility to be able to present the means to remove all sufferings and guide others to the ultimate state of happiness. Taking that personal responsibility upon oneself in order to benefit others is the basic way of explaining the awakening mind.

A more extensive explanation of the awakening mind and an actual definition of awakening mind or bodhichitta will come later in the text. However, it is good to relate to what it actually signifies and in relation to ourselves. If we were to feel inspired to also develop the awakening the mind, at our own capacity right now we can develop this positive attitude of an awakening mind by developing a positive motivation. Then when we do a practice of meditation or when we come to a teaching, prior to actually engaging in the meditation practice or listening to the teaching, we develop the positive motivation that 'I am doing this for the sole purpose of gaining the methods and techniques to be able to benefit other sentient beings' and we wish for other sentient being's sufferings and the causes of their suffering to be removed, and we aspire to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. Even though it might still be a contrived state of mind, which means that it is not spontaneous and effortless, this good intention actually has an incredible benefit. It becomes the basis for us to develop the actual awakening mind in the future. This positive motivation that we are encouraged to develop every time we do practice is said to be highly beneficial for us.

The awakening mind or bodhichitta is explained in the teachings as being the unexcelled, unmatched state of mind. As an attitude, it is the supreme attitude. There is no other attitude which could surpass the attitude or state of mind of the awakening mind. To get an insight into what that actually means; for someone who has developed the awakening mind the only attitude within them is an attitude of benefiting others. There is not even a hint of a selfish motive in such a being. Their only wish

or intention is to benefit other sentient beings. So it is in that way that the awakening mind is considered to be such a supreme state of mind.

What we can learn from that, in simple language, is that it is actually the state of mind wishing to benefit others which makes the awakening mind such a precious mind. We can understand that when there is a wish to benefit others it completely cancels out any wish to harm the other; if we have a genuine wish to benefit others there is no way that we would harm them. We can see that when the mind is developed to such a state where there is only concern to benefit others and there is no ulterior motive, or selfish motive then we can see that there is no way such a mind can ever cause any harm to other sentient beings.

Now we may not have developed the awakening mind yet. But we can be inspired to develop the awakening mind, when we hear about the qualities. Even though may not have developed it yet, at our level what we can see within ourselves we do have a wish to benefit others. There are times when we genuinely wish to benefit someone else. This is the basis that we have within ourselves; the basis of an actual awakening mind to be developed later. That is the sign of the potential we have within ourselves. It is by improving that state of mind, and going beyond a mere wish and actually engaging in whatever way we can to benefit others and not harming them in any way, which is how the awaking mind is developed. That will then become the cause for the actual awakening mind to be developed within ourselves. Thus, the value of such an attitude is really unexcelled and extremely beneficial.

Even though I am not claiming that I have any high level of experiences whatsoever, I can safely say that I do have a strong aspiration to develop a positive attitude in my mind based on the wish to benefit others and not harm others. In my regular practice I spend some time, just trying to adopt that state of mind, for example, thinking 'Today I will at the very least not harm any other living being, I will not voluntarily engage in any way to harm others and I will only engage in ways that can benefit them'.

When I develop that attitude within myself and actually focus on it and maintain my focus on it for a while, then without any doubt it definitely brings about a really calm and very pleasant sensation within myself. So this is something that I can share as an experience that I have when I make the sincere attempt to develop this positive attitude. So therefore based on whatever small experience I have, I would encourage you to try to develop such a positive attitude of benefiting others, try to develop it as best you can and you will see that it definitely has some positive effect on yourself too. So this is the way that we can slowly, slowly train our mind in the right direction. We can begin to see how the awakening mind is something we can develop, that's a possibility.

The actual Sanskrit term for 'awakening mind' is *bodhichitta*. I will begin my explanation with the meaning of the Sanskrit term. The word *bodhi* refers to the Buddha's enlightened mind, and the word *chitta* literally means 'mind'. So the literal meaning of *bodhichitta* is

'mind of enlightenment'. But one needs to understand the full implication of that. I don't know how closely the English translation 'awakening mind' relates to the meaning of *bodhichitta*, but it is good to first understand the literal source of the Sanskrit word.

One needs to apply the meaning of *bodhichitta* to the English translation, awakening mind. As I said, *bodhichitta* is a combination of two syllables, the first, *bodhi* actually means, the 'Buddha'. This word has the implication of an opening of a lotus, which further implies opening or awakening from ignorance. Thus, the term 'buddha' has the connotation of being awakened from the darkness of ignorance and gained all knowledge and wisdom. When we apply that meaning of Buddha to the English translation then I would relate it to awakening from ignorance and the state of mind that is completely awakened, and which has eliminated the darkness of ignorance. It thus encompasses the complete wisdom of knowing everything and is omniscient.

If we apply the literal meaning of Buddha to awakening then even the English term 'awakening mind' would have this deeper meaning. Otherwise 'awakening' by itself just means waking up from sleep. If you don't understand the implication of what to be awake means in this context, then awakening mind itself may not have that much meaning. If we were to relate it only to the very literal connotation of being awake then we could assume that we all have an 'awakening mind' because we are awake right now. So if one doesn't know the actual meaning behind the term then some might assume, 'Oh, I have an awakening mind, we all seem to have an awakening mind. It is not that complicated, or difficult to achieve'.

The Tibetan translation of *bodhichitta* is *jang chub sem* which carries out the full implication of the Sanskrit word. In Tibetan, *jang chub* is again made up of the two syllables *jang* and *chub*. *Jang* has the implication of completely eliminating all ignorance. *Chub* has the connotation of proliferation or increasing all wisdom and knowledge. Then *sem* literally means 'mind', which directly relates to the Sanskrit word *chitta*. Thus the full implication of *bodhichitta* is found in the Tibetan translation *jang chub sem*, i.e. the Buddha's mind is the mind that has completely removed all ignorance and completely accomplished the wisdom of knowing all things.

Based on having a clear understanding of what *bodhichitta* or awakening mind means then we go further into the explanations in the teachings in the text of how to develop that and the implication of what it means to have developed that and so forth. So in relation to the outline it is only by the means of awakening mind that one becomes a child of the conqueror and thus outshines hearers and solitary realisers. Based on the outline our text quotes from the text of a great master called Shantideva. In his work *Bodhicharyavatara*, one of the verses mentions that the moment a helpless being bound in the prison of cyclic existence develops the awakening mind, they are called a child of the conquerors.

The meaning of this verse is that from the moment even ordinary sentient beings who are bound by miseries and

sufferings and so forth, develop the awakening mind, they are referred to as the children of the conquerors. This is another term for the Sanskrit word *bodhisattva*. Being referred to as the children of the conquerors, is similar to a king's son being called a prince. It is due to the king's status and the lineage that the child bears as a result of being born from the king that the prince therefore outshines other ordinary people. When bodhisattvas are referred to as children of the conquerors, it means that they are beings who have developed the qualities and great realisations in their mind. They have developed that awakening mind as a result of practicing the advice and teachings of the Buddha. It is symbolic of being called the Buddha's son because it is as if they were born from the Buddha's wisdom, the Buddha's teachings, so they are referred to as 'the children of the conquerors'. That very term, the children of the conqueror or more formally, the Sanskrit word *bodhisattva* carries so much meaning, and so much status. They are referred to in English as 'the noble beings'. A 'noble being' is achieved at the moment the awakening mind is developed regardless of who they are. So that is how we need to understand the meaning and implications of awakening mind.

Also in the *Bodhicharyavatara* in the chapter which explains how to take the bodhisattva vows, it also mentions in a verse that when one develops that mind, that is a confirmation within oneself that from this moment onwards one enters the lineage of the buddhas and that thus one has become a child of the conquerors. So this is when one takes the bodhisattva vow. It is to that extent that we try to develop that positive intention within ourselves, which serves as a basis for us to actually become a bodhisattva. There is also a further quote from a sutra called *The Life of Maitreya*. We can leave the actual explanation of that quote for our next session.

To summarise this evening's session in two main points: The first is that the ultimate means to develop a peaceful, tranquil and settled mind within oneself is by adopting the practice of meditation. By adopting the practice of meditation we actually gain the means to develop a tranquil and settled mind; a quiet mind within oneself, a peaceful mind.

Based on that then we can relate to the second point that we described this evening, which is that the wish to benefit others, the actual intention to benefit others is a very precious and noble intention. To aspire to actually developing that, altruistic means of benefiting others, the wish to benefit others is something which is really valuable. That is the second point that we can reflect upon.

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 to be recited which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As the mantra is chanted we try to maintain a complete focus on the sound itself without any distractions. When the recitation comes to an end, we try to maintain that focus for a short while. This is how to engage in the actual practice of meditation.

Transcribed from tape by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 Venerable Lozang Rigsal
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute