
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual we can spend some time in meditation, sitting in a comfortable relaxed posture. We can likewise try to adopt a relaxed state of mind. Of the two mental states, the physical and mental, having a relaxed mental state is more important. Within a relaxed physical and mental state we can practice meditation. Meditation is something that is well known now in the west; it seems to be talked about a lot. While meditation is an old technique from ancient times, western countries in particular, where meditation may not have been so prevalent in the past, are seeing meditation as a new technique to help bring about a relaxed state of mind and to help solve inner mental problems. Meditation is beginning to be seen as something that is useful in the west. It is seen to be new in the west even though, of course, it has been around for thousands of years.

In relation to how meditation benefits us personally, it is worthwhile to see meditation techniques as effective techniques that bring about happiness, and to regard meditation as a useful personal tool.

As I emphasise regularly, try to develop a clear and focused state of mind. This can bring about a kind mind and a kind attitude within us, which then brings about a happy state of mind, which is essential for our well-being. When our own state of mind has those qualities, it not only helps our own well-being but we can see how much benefit this will bring for others as well. When we fail to pay attention to the state of our mind as being the source of our own well-being and happiness, when we allow ourselves to be distracted by external conditions, and when we think that they are the source of our well-being or our problems, then this causes us to have a very distracted and busy mind. This heightens the excitement in our mind, which can then cause problems for us. Relying on our external situation for happiness can create another extreme state of mind where we lose any sense of hope and we feel down, losing our self-esteem.

These two extreme states of mind are detrimental to our well-being. At one extreme we have a much heightened excited state of mind and on the other end of the spectrum we have a very depressed state of mind. If we can find the balance between these two extremes, where our mind is in equilibrium, then that would make us happier. In particular, a depressed state of mind is what seems to be really detrimental to our well-being. Applying appropriate meditation techniques can bring our mind up from that depressed state, putting it in a more balanced state again. We need to pay attention and not allow ourselves to slide into a depressed state of mind. As the Buddha said in his teachings, a depressed

state of mind does not benefit us and it doesn't help our situation in any way. We can achieve much more by bringing our mind up to a heightened state and being courageous in facing whatever comes our way in life. The Buddha says we need to have a courageous state of mind, rather than a depressed mind with low self-esteem. We need to pay attention to this.

By reflecting on these points it is worthwhile to take the initiative and look into our own state of mind and try to identify what kind of state of mind we are in, whether it is in an extreme state of excitement or whether we are feeling depressed and losing self-esteem. We are able to identify our own state of mind through a particular intelligence called 'analytical wisdom', a state of mind that distinguishes between the positive and negative states of mind. By recognising our state of mind, we can bring ourselves out of a negative state of mind that is detrimental to our well-being. There are two choices, we can go down the road of feeling depressed or we can lift up our mind and be courageous. We can choose what is most useful or beneficial for us, just as if we were driving a car down a road and we know that to reach a certain destination we could take a bumpy road or another better, smoother road. If we know that there are two options, we would probably choose to take the smoother road. But if we didn't know that we had options, then we could be in danger of falling victim to the rough road and having a bumpy ride.

Buddhism and most other religious traditions present the concept of negative and positive states of being. They encourage us to engage in virtuous good deeds and cultivate a positive state of mind. However, regardless of what is presented and rather than having to accept it, we need to use our own intelligence, and investigate ourselves to find out whether a negative state of mind is really useful or not, whether it has any virtue, or whether it has any benefits for us or not. Likewise, we can investigate whether having a positive state of mind delivers any personal benefits.

For example, we could consider anger as having a negative state of mind. We all have experienced anger, so we can investigate, looking into situations where we have become upset and angry. We can start by honestly checking our own state of mind, of the mind with anger, and see whether it is a comfortable state of mind or not. When we feel anger, do we feel good, happy and peaceful? What are the consequences of this anger? What happens when we carry out that anger in our actions? Are the consequences beneficial or useful? If we honestly investigate in this way, then we will come to realise that anger as a state of mind has no redeeming qualities or benefits, and that there is no real advantage to being angry. It has only disadvantages.

Instead of allowing our mind to be influenced by anger, we could adopt a state of mind of kindness towards others and have a compassionate attitude towards them. We can ask ourselves how we feel when we express kindness and compassion, how it relates to others, how does it influence our actions. When we honestly check into our own state of mind and experiences, we would come to clearly realise that there is no benefit whatsoever

in expressing anger, and that it doesn't contribute to our well-being. Whereas expressing a kind positive attitude has real benefits for us.

This process of doing an internal analysis, of checking out our state of mind, its qualities, and how it affects us, is a form of meditation—we can just sit quietly for a while and observe our state of mind, and we can imagine expressing anger and seeing how that affects us. We can check if there are any benefits or disadvantages in expressing anger. We can also check on the positive side, looking at a positive state of mind, such as love and compassion. We can check out how that feels within ourselves, and what kind of benefits or advantages there would be if we expressed our feelings of love and compassion through action. The process itself will make us calmer and have a soothing effect. When this is done sincerely, by really focusing inwards, then this is an actual practice of meditation that can bring calmness to our mind.

When we express anger it is always in relation to an object. When it is in relation to another person, we get angry either with people close to us, or towards an enemy or a stranger. In all cases, there is no benefit for us in being angry; there is only loss. We lose any calmness we have, as well as losing any peace in our mind. There is no benefit at all in expressing our anger, regardless of who the person is. Everyone falls into one of these three categories, either they are your friends or they are enemies or strangers. Regardless of who they may be, we will feel the ill effects of feeling angry towards them.

On a positive side, when we feel love and compassion towards our friends, or our enemies or strangers, it brings about a calm state of mind. We can discover for ourselves the effects of the different states of our own mind. This becomes a real practice.

When we express a genuine attitude of love and compassion towards our friends, the benefit is that our friend becomes closer to us and they trust us more. When we express an attitude of love and compassion towards an enemy, even though that may be harder, we notice naturally that slowly they also start to become closer to us; they start to transform because of our positive attitude towards them. When expressing genuine love and compassion towards strangers, they will definitely turn around and become our friend, and become closer to us. In all cases, expressing genuine love and compassion towards others will encourage them to become closer to us. Whereas, expressing a negative state of mind such as anger will form a gap between us and our friends, and an even larger gap with our enemies. And strangers remain strangers; you can't get close to them when you're angry with them. By expressing anger and feeling angry, there is no benefit at all under any circumstance. There is no benefit, only harm for us. The harm with anger goes even beyond this lifetime; it will harm our future lifetime. Even if we may not be able to relate to a future life right now, what we can definitely relate to is the harm that anger brings us in this very life, in this present moment. Let us understand and acknowledge the ill effect of anger right now, then that can help us to want to change our attitude, and to want to transform. Regardless of being explained

in the teachings, from our own experience we know that anger doesn't benefit us; it affects us in a negative way. This is good to recognise and understand.

What we need to try to develop within ourselves is an attitude of love and compassion, and what we need to try to shun and avoid is anger. To relate the benefits of love and compassion in a small practical way, a few days ago while watching TV I noticed young person, perhaps a vet, taking care of animals. He was holding a young lamb and feeding it with bottled milk. The lamb was drinking it passionately and then afterwards it put its head on his shoulder, resting its head. The person seemed to have tears in his eyes from feeling that affection from this young lamb. And when I was watching, it definitely had an effect on my mind too. What we can learn from this event is that even animals can definitely recognise affection. This lamb was following the person. Even when the lamb was put among many other sheep, still it came running towards the person. The lamb was clearly recognising the person's affection towards it.

I regularly emphasise the importance and great benefit from developing the positive state of mind of love and compassion. It is a good reminder for us when we see that even animals can respond to love and compassion, and can feel the positive effects. People also feel and respond to love and compassion. There is a positive effect for us and others from developing love and compassion.

There seem to be many examples around that show us the positive effects from expressing love and compassion. There are positive effects for both the people who express an act of kindness and others who receive it. Another example on TV were accounts where people were explaining how their pet dog is one of the most dearest one to them in their life, and taking care of their pet dog has brought so much meaning and so much love in their life. This clearly shows that whoever is taking care of an animal also receives the benefits of companionship and will feel a great solace in the companionship. This goes to show that love and compassion definitely has mutual benefit. When we experience it, there is a definite benefit for us. Some people have told me that their pet dog or cat is their best companion because it helps them to be free from the suffering of loneliness. A companion in their life means their suffering is relieved. For example, someone told me that they have been with their cat for last 16 years and the cat is always positive and always showing fondness. For 16 years there was only a positive attitude from the cat, whereas with some people it is hard to get that.

The main point that I am emphasising is that love and compassion is a valuable and precious state of mind. If we invest our time and energy in developing love and compassion there is no doubt we will benefit from it. There are no disadvantages. Our practice of meditation can enhance a loving and compassionate state of mind. This is the main point. By recognising the value of love and compassion, we will then generate a keen wish to develop love and compassion within ourselves. However, we must also recognise that we need help. We need another state of mind called patience, which is needed to

develop and express love and compassion. Without patience this will be difficult.

Meditation is a technique to find mental equilibrium and a balanced state of mind that is free from the extreme of an excited, heightened state of mind and the other extreme of a very depressed, low self esteem state of mind. The main purpose of practising meditation is to find that mental equilibrium.

So, you can readjust your physical posture so that your body is in an upright but relaxed state. We again intentionally withdraw our mind from all forms of distractions and thoughts. Completely withdraw the mind and bring your focus inwards. We don't have the ability right now to just keep our mind centred inwards without focusing on an object, so we need to choose an appropriate object to focus on during the meditation. Thus, as we bring our focus inwards, free from all distractions and thoughts, we use our own breath as an object to focus on. Concentrate on our breath, the natural inflow and outflow of our breath. We just focus on that one hundred per cent. For the next few minutes we try to maintain that focus. *[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 covered the point of what it means to be called 'a child of Buddha or the conqueror'. The second part of the text explains how having the awakening mind will outshine the hearers and solitary realisers.

I think there is also a term in Christianity 'Son of God' or 'children of God'. Once, I asked how Jesus is regarded—is Jesus regarded as god himself? The answer that I got then, if I understood correctly, was that Jesus himself is not considered God but he would be referred to as son of God. We have a similar terminology, with a son of Buddha. The term 'child or son of Buddha' is understood to be a bodhisattva. Someone who has developed the awakening mind is called a bodhisattva. The awakening mind was developed as a result of receiving the teachings from the Buddha. Thus it is a result of having heard the instructions and the teachings of how to develop the awakening mind. It is in relation to that cause and effect sequence that a bodhisattva is referred to as a child of the conqueror. Furthermore, when someone becomes a bodhisattva they outshine the other followers of the Buddha, known as the hearers and solitary realisers. Outshining means they excel or they are superior to them, because of the lineage, or because of what they have developed which is the awaking mind. So they naturally outshine the hearers and solitary realisers. The text here quotes from the teaching of the Buddha, a sutra called *The Life of Maitreya*. The quote reads:

O child of good lineage, although a precious diamond breaks, it still outshines all special ornaments of gold. It does not lose its name

'precious diamond' and it still removes all poverty. O child of good lineage, similarly, those who have developed the precious diamond which is the awakening mind and the aspiration to omniscience, although they lack its application, still outshines all the golden ornaments which are the good qualities of the hearers and solitary realisers. They do not lose the name 'bodhisattva' and they will remove all the poverty of cyclic-existence.

The main point of this quote is illustrated with an analogy of a precious diamond. Even a small diamond apparently is unique and, as I understand, if it is a genuine piece of diamond then it is very expensive. It seems to be the case that even a very tiny, small piece of diamond is much more expensive than gold. This is what is meant to outshine other jewellery and other ornaments; it can relieve poverty because it is precious. We are referring to the purest of the diamond, the real and authentic diamond, which is apparently really expensive.

The analogy of the diamond is related to the awakening mind or bodhicitta. Anyone who develops bodhicitta, just as a diamond outshines other ornaments, will naturally outshine the qualities and the achievements of the hearers and solitary realisers. Their bodhicitta will not decline because of their state of mind; they will always be a bodhisattva even if they do not fully engage in virtuous activities. Just as even a small broken piece of diamond is always a diamond regardless of its size.

Many years ago, when I was in Sydney with Geshe Dawa, we went to The Rocks, near Sydney Harbour. We were walking in some shops and happened to come into a shop that was dealing with diamonds. I remember that the shop owner was showing us a piece of diamond, an authentic diamond, and it was just a very small tiny piece. He said it costs just over ten thousand Australian dollars. He said that another lama called Lama Samten had purchased a diamond to take back to Tibet as an offering for a statue, so the shop owner was excited that we were in the shop! He asked us to sign his guest book, though we didn't purchase any diamonds.

Before we end the session for the evening, we can spend another few minutes in meditation. The object of our focus is the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As we hear the sound of the mantra, and for those reciting it, we create an image of the sound of the mantra, whatever image we get from focusing on the sound; try to maintain and focus on that image. As the sound of the mantra recitation stops, just maintain your focus for a few more minutes.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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