

---

## The Condensed Lam Rim

# ༄༅། བྱུང་རྒྱུ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 October 2010

---

As usual we can spend some time in meditation. To do this we sit in a comfortable and relaxed posture. It is also important to have the appropriate state of mind to practise meditation. One should try to induce a clear, bright and joyous state of mind. This is quite important for meditation practice. A clear and bright, happy and joyous state of mind is essential even in our normal daily life. When we question what we need in life it can boil down to these states of mind and that is really what we are seeking.

The question then arises as to whether it is possible to adopt such a state of mind. The answer is that this is definitely possible. It is possible because one has the capacity to bring that about. The reason that it is possible is because it is something that we can develop ourselves. The ability lies within us, rather than with others. Now if something is dependent on others it is questionable whether we can receive it from them or not. It is more difficult. But when it is within our own hands then it is something that is possible.

When we develop a state of mind that is clear and bright and is combined with a joyous and happy state of mind we will be joyous and happy wherever we are and whatever situation we may be in. We will always maintain some sense of well-being and happiness and also contribute to others around us feeling comfortable, joyful and happy. So there is definitely a great benefit from this.

The potential for developing this state of mind lies within us. We have the capacity to develop that. It is good for us to further investigate how this is so. That very act of looking within oneself and asking how this is possible and if whether it is within one's reach, itself brings about a certain amount of calmness. That very act of looking within oneself brings about a transformation in our mind.

As we look within and investigate how it is possible to adopt such a state of mind, we firstly come to recognise the factors that oppose a clear and bright, joyous and happy, state of mind. When one genuinely and honestly looks within oneself one will come to recognise that it is what are called disturbing conceptions or disturbing attitudes that oppose this state of mind. It is certain negative attitudes within us that prevent the mind being in a clear and bright, happy and joyous, state.

As one begins to recognise that the disturbing concepts or attitudes within us are the cause of the turmoil or troubles within us and that which hinders a clear and bright, happy and joyous, state of mind one will have taken the first step. After having recognised this we can

then take the initiative to lessen our familiarity or acquaintance with those negative states of mind. This means that we don't allow ourselves to be influenced by negative states of mind.

We can take anger as an example of one negative state of mind or attitude. As soon as anger manifests within oneself, it immediately disturbs the calmness and peace within one's mind. As mentioned many times in previous sessions, the very nature of anger is that as soon as it manifests within one, it immediately disturbs one's peace of mind. When we clearly recognise and understand that, we can begin to understand that when someone else serves as a condition to make us angry, regardless of what the other person does or says, it is the state of mind that causes the disturbance and unrest within us. When we recognise anger as a disturbing state of mind that causes us agitation and unease, then it is for us to avoid giving in to anger and allowing anger to dominate us. That is how we begin to lessen our familiarity and acquaintance with anger and to become familiar with adopting the opposite state of mind called non-anger.

As we investigate within us we would also recognise that we have times where we feel joyous and happy. That is also a natural quality that we have. We might find, however, that this does not last very long. We seem to lose that joyous and happy state of mind very easily. That is also something that we would notice for ourselves. I have mentioned an anecdote about this in the past. This is a personal story that occurred once when I was travelling to India. Having reached Delhi I was waiting to catch a flight to Bangalore in south India. The departure time was meant to be 7 a.m. in the morning so of course we woke very early to get to the airport in time. When we got there, however, we were informed that because of bad weather the flight was delayed and we had to wait quite a long time. The airline compensated us with breakfast. There was quite a nice cafeteria and we were given tea and breakfast, which was quite nice (*Geshe-la chuckles*).

I noticed that there was a western couple sitting in another corner. They seemed to be having a joyous time, laughing and drinking the tea. Then the lady, who was standing up holding a cup of tea, spilt a bit of tea and some of it went on her hand. Her partner laughed a bit about that incident, but she somehow took it very seriously and was obviously very upset and put the cup down forcefully and walked away. This whole incident was unfolding in front of my eyes within a short span of time. One small incident completely changed the whole atmosphere for them. Maybe she reacted to her husband laughing or maybe it was something else, but she put down the tea and took the newspaper and walked off seeming very upset. Her husband had to pick himself up and slowly follow her. There was nothing much else he could do. We noticed he was looking sheepishly at us. When I saw all this in front of me it seemed a real pity that a joyous and nice atmosphere could, because of a small incident, suddenly completely change and become uncomfortable and uneasy.

When we consider this situation, that couple would have, of course, planned upon having a nice holiday together

---

---

and up to that very instant they were seemingly very joyous and happy. But because of a minor incident, and we can consider it minor because it was just a matter of spilling a bit of tea, the situation changed. How she reacted to the incident related very much to her attitude. Her husband, of course, giggled and laughed a bit but that, in itself, wouldn't seem to be a big insult or criticism or anything like that. If we just take the incident in itself it seems quite minor, but what it shows is that what made that situation uncomfortable was a mental attitude. Because of what we call a disturbing state of mind, a conception in the mind, that incident was taken out of proportion and the whole situation became uncomfortable. This is how we can see that a disturbing state of mind, or attitude in the mind, can make one feel very uncomfortable. The main point that I am relating here is how our unease and unhappiness is very much caused by the disturbing conceptions in our mind.

There is another illustration I can give of how the disturbing concepts in the mind are the cause of much unease within us. It is mentioned in a text that when someone has an eye disease, an uncomfortable sensation in the eye, the thought that 'I might go blind because of this', may be much more uncomfortable than the actual pain in the eye. This goes to show that the actual physical pain is more minor than the worry that comes from the doubt in the mind. The point of this illustration is that that the worrying is not based on any reality as it is not certain that the eye will go blind. The reason doubt and worrying cause so much unease is related to conceptual thoughts in the mind. This illustration points out an important factor in our life.

If one has some irritation or unease in the eye and one were to worry and speculate that I might go blind, then that is an unnecessary worry that causes us even more suffering. Therefore there is no point in causing oneself more suffering when it is not necessary. The alternative attitude that one could adopt is, 'Well, my eye feels a little uncomfortable but there is no point in worrying about it. Worrying is not going to help my eye get better. There is no real purpose or benefit in worrying about it. It is better if I just try to deal with it in whatever way it can be solved.' That will be a more practical approach and one would be saved from the unnecessary suffering of worry and speculated doubt.

We adopt lots of unnecessary speculations, what we call conceptual thoughts, in our life. Disturbing conceptual thoughts includes all the unnecessary speculations, doubt and worries and so forth in our mind. When we really look into what is causing that we find it all lies in the kind of attitudes that we have in our mind. So we come back to the main point again. The attitudes that we are detecting in our mind are causing us suffering in our life. So that is something we need to deal with, to overcome.

The way to adopt this into one's own personal practice is to look within oneself and find how this is true for oneself rather than pointing to others and finding fault in them. I think what was being related earlier might easily lead to pointing at others and saying, 'Oh, he or she has an attitude.' It is much more worthwhile to look within oneself and check one's own attitudes, and how one is

thinking and how our problems are related to our own attitudes. That is one of the main points,

We can relate all of this to the practice of meditation. Meditation is a specific technique where one intentionally brings one's focus inwards and intentionally withdraws from all external influences and negative inner influences. That is really what the technique of meditation means. Meditation is a way to develop a clear and bright state of mind that is then followed by a joyous and happy mind.

We will now actually take the time to engage in the practice of meditation. We can readjust our physical posture to an upright, comfortable posture. In order to engage appropriately in the practice of meditation we firstly intentionally withdraw from all external distractions and all internal disturbing conceptual thoughts. We withdraw from all that and just bring our mind inwards. As we bring our focus and attention inwards we place our attention and entire focus on the specific object that we choose for our meditation, which is our own breath. We will try to place our full attention and focus on the breath and just observe the natural inflow and outflow of our breath for the next few minutes. *(Pause for 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

#### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.1.5. [The awakening mind] is like a seed as only by developing it does one become a Buddha

In the text, we have come to the fifth subdivision in this topic which is, 'The awakening mind is like a seed as only by developing it does one become a Buddha.'

This subdivision compares the wish to benefit others to a seed that has to develop. The 'awakening mind' literally refers to the unequalled state of mind of wishing to benefit other beings. That is the state that becoming a Buddha relates to. The text quotes from the Buddha's own words in the *Array of Stalks* sutra. The quote reads:

*O child of good lineage, the awakening mind is like the seed of all the Buddha's qualities.*

What is being explained here is that the mind of wishing others benefit is the key which, when matured, will lead one to become an enlightened being, a buddha.

To understand it in more lay terms, the attitude of wishing benefit for others, and doing whatever is possible to bring benefit for others is the seed or the basis for developing all the supreme, unexcelled qualities of an enlightened being. So it is the seed, or basis.

#### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.1.6 Although buddhahood can only [be attained by] developing among other things the view of emptiness, of all such [requirements] the awakening mind is foremost

We have come to the sixth subdivision from this category and the outline reads, 'Although buddhahood can only be obtained by developing amongst other things, the

view of emptiness, of all such requirements the awakening mind is the foremost.'

What is being explained in this outline is that, as explained earlier in the teachings, the two most essential requirements in order to become a buddha, an enlightened being, ourselves are method and wisdom. Wisdom is what is referred to here as the wisdom realising emptiness, the ultimate reality of all existence. That is the particular wisdom of understanding the ultimate reality of all existence. The method referred to here is the awakening mind, which is the mind or the attitude that encompasses the wish to benefit all beings. Between these two essential requirements the most essential is the method that we call 'the awakening mind'.

The text explains the meaning of the earlier quote of the sutra:

*'O child of good lineage, the awakening mind is like the seed of all the Buddha's qualities'.*

*Because you must fully comprehend this statement, I will explain it. When water, fertiliser, warmth, earth etc., combine with a rice seed they act as a cause for the rice to sprout. If they combine with a seed of wheat, peas etc. they act as causes for these types of sprouts. Therefore these factors are the general causes of the sprouts.*

What is explained in the analogy is that water, fertiliser, warmth and earth, serve as a common or general cause for any kind of seed to sprout. It is not the uncommon but the common cause or condition that you need for a seed, whether it is a rice, wheat or pea seed to sprout.

The text further explains:

*But it is impossible for a barley seed, though it combines with those conditions, to be the cause of a sprout of rice, and so on. Thus a barley seed is the specific cause for a barley sprout, and the water, fertiliser and so forth that are linked with the seed, become the general causes of the barley sprout.*

What is being explained here with the analogy is that the specific cause of a rice sprout is a rice seed, and a wheat or pea seed cannot become the specific cause for a rice sprout. It has to be rice seed. That is why it is referred to as a specific cause. Likewise, with barley and so forth, the specific cause is its own seed. So, while water, fertiliser and warmth and so forth act as the general causes for all seeds to sprout, each specific one it has to depend on its seedlings. This analogy is given to illustrate that the wisdom realising emptiness is the general cause of the three types of enlightenment i.e. the hearers, the pratyekabuddhas (or solitary realisers) and bodhisattvas. For all three, the wisdom realising emptiness serves as a general cause.

The awakening mind is the specific seed that causes enlightenment or buddhahood. In order to further support this explanation the text quotes Maitreya's *Sublime Continuum*. In it he says:

*Aspiration to the supreme vehicle is the seed, wisdom is the mother for generating the buddha quality.*

So, the awakening mind is like the seed or father of the buddha and the wisdom that realises emptiness is like the mother. This is how it is presented in the teaching. In this

analogy of the father and mother, the wisdom realising emptiness is likened to the mother and the awakening mind is likened to the father.

This analogy of a father and a mother particularly relates to the traditional customs of ancient India. These are not as prevalent in Tibet but even to this day India has a caste system. The caste a child belongs to is dependent on the father. Whatever the caste of the father, the child would be of that same caste. For example, in order to be a prince of the lineage of holding to become a king, one's father had to a king. The lineage of the children was not related to the mother but to the father.

The analogy is used here to illustrate that the awakening mind is the specific cause of buddhahood or becoming enlightened, and so it is like the seed of the father. The awakening mind ultimately produces the enlightened being, the buddha, but does not produce hearers or solitary realisers. The wisdom realising emptiness is like the mother. Within the analogy the mother could have children of different lineages. Similarly the wisdom realising emptiness can produce result of all three types, hearers, solitary realisers and bodhisattvas.

This analogy or illustration may not really work well here because we don't have such a thing as castes or lineages and so forth. Your mother and father are considered equal. The main point is that the awakening mind is the main seed, the main cause, for enlightenment.

The text continues to explain further the demarcation between the lower vehicle and those of the greater vehicle, the Mahayana. We can leave that explanation for the next session. What is presented in the text is how the demarcation between the Theravada and the Mahayana is not in relation to the views but rather in conduct. That is how the difference is presented.

For those who are driving home, be careful and mindful of the weather and drive well. You need to apply your concentration while driving. It goes to show that concentration is necessary everywhere.

Before we conclude for the evening we can spend again a few minutes in meditation. This time we will focus on the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. We place our full attention and focus on the sound and that is how we will spend the next few minutes.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from tape by Su Lan Foo  
Edit 1 by John Burch  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version  
© Tara Institute*