
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it is good to spend some time in meditation. So we can sit in a relaxed and appropriate posture. As I regularly mention, one of the main purposes for doing meditation is to protect our mind.

We need to protect our mind because good deeds and bad deeds are directly related to the state of our mind. Good deeds are the result of the good qualities in our mind, so the positive states of mind are something we need to adopt. Negative deeds are consequences of negative states of mind or attitudes, so they are something we try to avoid. We need to pay attention to this.

A spiritual practice or a Buddhist practice boils down to adopting positive qualities and shunning the negative ones. This practice directly relates to our well-being, and sums up our character. If we are more familiar with the positive states of our mind, the better our personality becomes, and the more positive and useful deeds we perform for others. Whereas the more we familiarise ourselves with negative states of mind, then that leads us to engage in negative deeds, such as misbehaving. If we don't pay attention to this by looking within ourselves, we might not notice the connection between the mind and our behaviour right away. Once we analyse our own states of mind, it becomes clear that our personality, our character or our behaviour is dependent on our state of mind.

Positive qualities of the mind include kind mannerisms, and attitudes based on kindness and genuine concern. Whereas the states of mind which have harmful intent, such as wishing others harm, would be classified as negative states of mind.

As mentioned previously, our mannerisms, personalities and our characters are dependent on the states of our mind. When we are in a positive state of mind, we feel kindness towards others; there is genuine joy within us combined with genuine concern for others. This affects our facial gestures, our speech and physical manners. When we are in joyful states of mind and in a kind state of mind, mannerisms such as our facial gestures become pleasing to others, and our speech is pleasing and soothing.

Whereas when we our mind is affected by negative states of mind, then we find that even our facial gestures become unattractive and unappealing to others. Likewise our mannerisms and our speech also become unappealing and unpleasant to others. It may even cause others to be disturbed. It may affect others to the point of making them angry and upset. Our gestures and our mannerisms affect others, and are dependent on our state of mind.

As I regularly emphasise, it is important that we pay attention to our states of mind if we want to have a pleasant appearance. Everyone would agree that being pleasant to others is a virtue. Everyone would like to be pleasant, everyone would like to be liked by others and be pleasant to

them. There is no one who intentionally wants to get rid of people who likes being nasty to people knowing that others will not like one if that kind of behaviour continues. Since being pleasant, being sociable or being liked by others is naturally something we want, then we need to look further to find the contributing factors in being genuinely pleasing and appealing to others.

Furthermore, good behaviour and bad behaviour depends on the state of our mind. If we want to be seen as having a good character and someone who behaves well, then we need to make sure we have a positive state of mind. We need to pay attention and make sure we cultivate a positive state of mind.

Meditation is a method to protect our mind, particularly the positive qualities of our mind. Meditation also serves as a technique to get rid of the negative states in the mind. This is the purpose of meditation. The qualities of positive and negative states of mind will become clearer to us as we analyse at them in relation to our own experiences.

Once we can clearly identify the qualities of positive and negative states of mind, then it is a matter of taking the initiative to further strengthen the positive states of mind and slowly reduce the negativities of the mind. On a practical level, we are then able to relate to others in a more agreeable and pleasant way.

As we all want to have friends and companions, a genuine way to develop friendship is by maintaining a positive state of mind and presenting good mannerisms. As our speech and physical gestures are dependent on our states of mind, if we can maintain a sense of joy and a positive state of mind when we go out and associate with others, then there is no question that others will naturally relate to us positively.

There are people who naturally respond positively to positive speech. This is something I see as being valuable and important in life and I will share with you how I try to practice it myself. Of course I am not claiming that I have any great qualities, but I do feel I have a sense of joy and happiness in my mind. I try to maintain a positive frame of mind when I go out and interact with the outside world. And what I find is that a joyful mind leads to pleasant facial expressions, for example naturally smiling at others. People respond well to this. There are people who come up to me and thank me for just being joyful and pleasant. So on the basis of personal experience, I can share with you that there definitely is a connection with a joyous happy state of mind and pleasant facial expressions and gestures that will naturally attract others. We all have this potential, and we all have the ability to cultivate a positive state of mind further and get rid of the negative states of mind.

Protecting our mind means to protect it from negativities. We apply every measure and strategy to protect ourselves from being influenced by negativities. I am not saying that this is easy, but I am saying, and I can confirm, that it is possible. Thus, I encourage you to adopt meditation as part of your daily life. Not just a few attempts initially and then coming back occasionally, but more on a regular basis. Transforming the mind is a gradual process. And I am strongly encouraging you to try it out. If you do meditate, then over time you will find that a transformation does take place in your mind.

As the teachings mention, there is no limit to the development and transformation of the mind. You can perfect and transform it further and further until you reach the perfected state. There is no limitation in protecting the

mind, whereas on a physical level there is always a limit as to what we can do. For those who play sport, no matter how much they train, it is obvious there is a certain limit as to how far they can jump or run. There is of course an obvious limit to our physical capabilities, but in terms of training the mind, there is no limit—things that may seem not possible now can be achieved with training and persistence.

To give an example of our physical limitations, no matter how hard we trained or exercised in our twenties, by the time we reach our thirties or forties we may not be able to exercise to the same extent as before. Our physical capabilities decrease as we age, rather than increase, because our strength and stamina decline. However, on a mental level, we may have thought some things not possible in our twenties, but with regular practise and training in meditation, our level of mental capability increases so much more in our late thirties and we develop mental states which seemed not possible earlier. If we continue to meditate regularly, our capacity increases even more as we age. So this goes to show that when we train the mind it can only increase in its capabilities rather than decreasing like on the physical level.

This also shows that acquiring positive qualities may seem difficult or hard right now, but it is a matter of training; it is a matter of putting some effort in developing them. We have to put some enthusiasm and zealously in developing the qualities ourselves.

Keeping in mind the intent of meditation, which is to protect the mind, we can now re-adjust our physical posture to adopt the meditative posture, so we can better engage in the meditation practice. Just to remind ourselves that what we are attempting to do here is to protect our mind from delusions, which are the various negative states of mind. The way to train our mind is by intentionally withdrawing our mind from all forms of distractions—external distractions or internal disturbing thoughts.

Next, we choose an object to focus on that does not cause delusions to arise; such as a virtuous object. After choosing an object, the actual technique involves keeping our full attention and focus on the virtuous object. By doing so we are training our mind to single-pointedly focus on the virtuous object so that it does not become influenced by negativities or delusions. The training itself, and the effort we put into focusing on a virtuous object becomes the method to familiarise our mind to be our central focus; this helps the mind to become bright and clear, which naturally becomes calmer and more peaceful.

Sometimes we have a particular agenda, something that particularly bothers us. As soon as we think about it, it causes a disturbance in our mind. We may think that the object or the situation is the cause of our problem, but it is a matter of how we interpret that situation. What is it in our mind that causes that pain or unease within us? We need to identify that. Some people may realise that it's obvious that certain states of mind or certain kinds of attitudes we have are causing our pain. As soon as we bring our mind to something that bothers us, it causes us an immediate agitation and disturbance. It is advisable and helpful to recognise that rather than trying to avoid it or escape from it. It is better to actually face the problem and try to recognise it for what it is. It is our own state of mind and our own attitudes that cause us pain and suffering. This is the real enemy.

An enemy is someone who causes us misery and robs us of our happiness and our joy. Anyone or anything that causes us to lose our happiness and causes us misery is identified as an enemy. As soon as this unhappy state of mind overpowers us, as soon as it manifests itself within, it robs us of our joy and peace. It causes us misery; it causes us agitation and unhappiness. This is our real enemy, the enemy within, which we call the internal enemy. This is what we need to overcome, not the external enemy. It is the internal enemy that causes us misery, not so much the external enemy.

We need to remind ourselves that we need to combat and overcome the inner enemy. We must not appease it and we must not allow ourselves to be under its control. We can bring our focus inward and focus our attention onto our breath as our internal object. We can spend the next few minutes just focusing on our natural breath with one hundred percent attention. (*meditation*)

Just as we have attempted a few minutes of meditation, it is worthwhile to spend some time regularly practising meditation in our daily life, particularly because meditation is a means to protect our mind from adversities or negativities. We can cultivate the positive qualities within our mind to further strengthen them.

We protect our positive qualities through mindfulness. The positive qualities within our mind are useful for us, and the negativities are harmful. With this understanding of the demarcation between positivity and negativity, let us try to spend some time periodically to check our state of mind. Check by asking ourselves if our mind is in a positive frame of mind right now, or is it in a negative one? If we find that our mind has a tendency to be in a negative state of mind, then we can put some effort in making it a little bit more positive. If we find that our mind is in a positive frame, then we can be happy about that and just try to maintain that in whatever way we can.

One of the main points to take into consideration is to maintain a sense of joy and happiness in our mind. Make sure that we have some sense of joy; this is one of the most precious things that we could ever possess in terms of our overall wellbeing. We need to protect our joy. If we notice that it is beginning to decline in any way, then we should have a sense of urgency, like 'O I need to do something here so that I don't allow the sense of joy and happiness in my mind to completely decline'. We need to have a sense of urgency because maintaining a sense of joy is so precious.

The main point of what we are studying in the text is the ways and means to further develop and strengthen a sense of love and compassion for others. The most precious state of the mind is one of love and compassion for other beings. The text further explains how to develop love and compassion to benefit others. So whatever sense of love and compassion we have now is also the basis for the sense of joy and happiness that we can have in our mind. They complement each other, the sense of joy and happiness and sense of genuine love and compassion to others go hand in hand. We can consider these states of mind as being precious, like an inner jewel. An external jewel, such as money, can be valuable, but is not as precious as the inner jewel.

I am of course not underestimating or condemning the value of money, there is definitely a need for and value in money because it does provides certain needs in our daily lives. However as we acquire money, as we begin to achieve

things, we don't get a sense of real satisfaction from those achievements. But the inner precious jewel of love and compassion gives us a sense of accomplishment and contentment. We need a balance between our desire for external resources and the source of real contentment of our internal resources. The combination of the true sense of love and compassion combined with external resources can definitely bring about a genuine sense of wellbeing within us.

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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.1.7. The Mahayana and Hinayana are not distinguished by means of the view, but by means of conduct, such as the awakening mind and so forth

We have come to the seventh subdivision: the Mahayana and the Hinayana are not distinguished by means of the view, but by means of the conduct which is the awakening mind. The Mahayana is literally translated as the Greater Vehicle and the Hinayana as the Lesser Vehicle. The demarcation between these two vehicles is not distinguished by view but rather by conduct. The four different schools are distinguished by the different views they hold, whereas the vehicles do not distinguish between their views but rather their conduct.

Within the Great Vehicle there is the tantric vehicle and the sutra vehicle, and also the Greater Vehicle and the Lesser Vehicle. Even the very term, 'vehicle' rather than 'schools' shows that the differentiation between them is not on the views but rather on the conduct. The differences between the tenets are with the differences in views, whereas the demarcation between vehicles is the conduct. More specifically, within the Greater Vehicle, which is divided into the tantric vehicle and the perfection vehicle, they are not referred to as the tantric tenets and the perfection tenets but rather vehicles. This also shows how the demarcation is made.

The text first quotes another great master's work, Nagarjuna's *Praise of Perfection of Wisdom*, which says:

*The path of liberation upon which the buddhas,
Pratyekabuddhas and the shravakas definitely rely
Is just this.*

It is certain that there are no others.

In explaining this quote, the text reads:

*The perfection of wisdom is the mother of both
Hinayana and Mahayana disciples, for it is also
spoken of as 'mother'. Consequently, do not
distinguish Hinayana and Mahayana by the
wisdom that knows emptiness but by the
awakening mind and the greatly effective
bodhisattva deeds.*

Another quote by Nagarjuna's in *Precious Garland* says:

*Since the aspirational prayers, deeds,
And complete dedication of the bodhisattva
Are not explained in the shravaka vehicle,
How then could you become a bodhisattva through it?*

The main essence is that the three types of vehicles are the *shravakas* or the hearers, the *pratyekabuddhas* or solitary realisers and the *bodhisattvas* or the noble beings' vehicles. Wisdom realising emptiness serves as the view to

accomplish the goals of obtaining our individual liberation. As far as views are concerned, there is no difference in the three paths of three vehicles because they rely on wisdom realising emptiness to achieve their individual liberation.

The demarcation between the three vehicles relies upon the awakening mind, which aspires to achieve enlightenment for the sake of other sentient beings. This state of mind called the awakening mind is related to Nagarjuna's *aspirational prayers* in the previous quote. *Aspirational prayers* relates to the prayers made by someone who has developed the awakening mind and who has taken the responsibility for engaging in six perfections of superior beings. Those who have developed the awakening mind and engaged in the six perfections do aspirational prayers that make them superior to the lower vehicles. The main point is that the development of the awakening mind, which is related to conduct, and which distinguishes the three vehicles from each other.

The wisdom realising emptiness doesn't distinguish between the three vehicles because it is the common view or wisdom that is developed in order to achieve individual goals. It is not the view that distinguishes the two types of vehicle, but rather the conduct. So what is the conduct? The conduct is whatever activities such as aspirational prayers, dedications and the actual deeds of the six perfections that are based upon having developed the awakening mind.

This conduct distinguishes the superior beings vehicle, the bodhisattva, from the two lower vehicles, which are the hearers and the solitary realisers. A bodhisattva or superior being engages in practices that a person following the lower vehicle would not engage in, such as practising the six perfections, generosity, moral conduct, and patience. The bodhisattva practice is based on the motivation of an awakening mind. Likewise, aspirational prayers and dedications are motivated by the awakening mind. This is something that the bodhisattvas have that the hearers and solitary realisers do not have.

Now the question is whether the hearers and solitary realisers engage in the practice of generosity and so forth? Yes, they do practise generosity, moral ethics and so forth, but it is not motivated by the awakening mind, because they have not developed the awakening mind. Thus, what distinguishes the noble beings or the superior beings from the hearers and solitary realisers is the conduct of the awakening mind.

Before we conclude the session for the evening it would be good to spend a few more minutes in meditation and this time the object of the focus of our meditation is the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni mantra. As we hear the sound of the mantra, keep our full attention and focus just on the sound of mantra. When the recitation stops we can try to just remain in the residue of the sound. Try to just imagine having nothing really solid to hold on to, as if in a vacuity. With that sense, try to maintain and keep focus for a few minutes.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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