
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual, we will spend some time in meditation. For that purpose, we sit in a comfortable, relaxed posture. While we adopt the appropriate physical posture, it is equally important to ensure that we have a positive mind. If you don't have the right state of mind prior to engaging in meditation practice, there's the danger of not being able to focus on the object of meditation. So while we may seemingly engage in meditation practice, we will not be able to apply the technique of meditation because we haven't paid attention to the appropriate state of mind.

When we consider the main reasons for engaging in the practice of meditation it is good to remind oneself that meditation is a technique to subdue the mind, protect one's mind from negativities and control one's state of mind. In summary, this is the purpose of meditation.

It is worthwhile to consider the fact that when we pay attention to having a state of mind of better quality then, naturally, we will have the benefit of being in a positive state of mind. As I regularly emphasise, paying attention to our state of mind is crucial for our well-being. There are two factors that contribute to our well-being. On a physical level it is having good health and on a mental level it is having a positive, healthy state of mind. This summarises the essentials that we need for our well-being.

This is very clear. In relation to our physical health, if we were not feeling physically well then that would be reason for us to claim, 'I am not well'. It is the person who is in possession of that physical body that does not feel well. That is when we claim, 'I am not well, I don't feel well'. Likewise when one's mind is in turmoil and not settled we would say, 'I am not well, I don't feel altogether well'. We feel there is a person that gets affected by that.

This is a clear indication that when our physical health is good and our mental state is also good then we, who are in possession of our body and mind, will naturally feel the positive effect of well-being. This is something that we need to pay attention to. It is very clear when we think about how this is related to ourselves. In contrast, we never claim that we are feeling well and healthy when someone else is in good health or that we feel happy and joyous because someone else's mind is in a happy state. That doesn't necessarily contribute to our feeling well and happy inside. Thus it is own health and our mental state that we have to relate to, not someone else's health or well-being.

The well-being of others does not contribute to our overall well-being. It is our own state of mind and body

that secures our well-being. This main point is what we need to take into consideration. Thus, in order to improve the state of our well-being we have to rely upon ourselves and not look outside.

Of the two essential elements that contribute to our well-being—our physical body and our mind—it would be quite obvious to one that it is much more difficult to secure the conditions or causes for mental well-being. Relatively speaking, it seems easier on the physical level, especially in terms of acquiring the right conditions. When we get ill we have access to many different kinds of remedies, medicines and so forth. Of course there are times when it is difficult to have complete control of your health, which can be a difficult situation. However of the two, it seems the mind is much more difficult to control, in finding the right conditions for our well-being.

It seems we are prone to our mind being in turmoil and upset. The mind seems to be much more vulnerable to conditions that oppose the state of well-being. So, as much as we need to pay attention to our physical health and apply measures to protect one's physical health, we really need to pay attention to protecting the state of our mind and identifying what opposes the well-being of our mind. We need to try and recognise the negative states of the mind and apply measures to overcome that which disturbs the mind. That is really what we need to look into and invest our time in.

We can further illustrate the difficulty of controlling the mind. When we look into our situation it seems that, relatively, we are able to take some responsibility to protect our physical health. It may be something that, if we had a proper education, we adopted as we grew up, and we have got into the habit of trying to protect our physical health. But it doesn't seem that way with the state of mind. It doesn't seem that we get that education. When we were quite young our mind might have been quite innocent and fresh and not influenced by different kinds of negative attitudes and so forth, but as we grow up it seems that we get into the habit of the mind being distracted. and we allow ourselves to be immersed in these distractions.

There is a term we use, 'daydreaming'. We seem to spend a lot of time daydreaming. The connotation seems to be that you don't really get something constructive out of it. We just allow the mind to wander off. Daydreaming can actually lead to situations where we start feeling anxiety, worries and so forth. Each of us may have something in particular that seems to constantly come back to our mind. As soon as that situation or thought or imagination comes to our mind, it starts to make us feel uncomfortable and uneasy. This is because of the time and energy we have already given to it, and it has become like a habit and seems quite spontaneous.

When the mind reaches that state it is difficult to change it because of the familiarity we have given to the distraction. We have given a lot of time and energy allowing our mind to be distracted in that way. So it is difficult to change it immediately. We find that whenever we make an attempt it is quite difficult. That is because we have already spent so much time developing this habit.

Each one of us may have a particular instance where we notice for ourselves that as soon as a particular thought or idea comes up, it disturbs us. We can take attachment as a particular example. Attachment arises in relation to an object, usually when we bring that object of attachment to the mind. First we voluntarily spend time thinking about the object of attachment. We want to think about it. Then it comes to a point where it starts to disturb us. As soon as the object of attachment arises in our thoughts we immediately feel agitation and uncomfortable. This is really difficult to overcome. It is as if our mind is completely obsessed and because of the time and energy spent in thinking of the object of attachment, now it has become involuntarily. It seems very hard to divert our attention from the object of attention. It seems naturally spontaneous that our mind goes to the object of attachment. But in doing so it brings up agitation and discomfort within us. This is one example to show how it disturbs our mind.

When we pay attention to how disturbance and agitation arises within us we see how it is related to a certain attitude in the mind of being obsessed with a particular object. We can see that, to the extent that we familiarise our mind and pay attention to objects of disturbance, the mind reaches a point where it does not have much control over itself. There's not much opportunity for the mind to feel at peace and rest because it is constantly busy bringing these objects to the mind.

Some have confided in me that they reach a certain level where they begin to question their sanity. Some people have confided in me that if there is no measure of control then maybe this is the point where someone might be going crazy. Actually they are being honest in sharing that with me because if one does not apply a certain measure of control and is completely obsessed with this sort of disturbing attitude then it may lead to a state similar to being insane. Therefore we need to really catch our thoughts before they escalate and become out of control.

We need watch our own state of mind and be able to identify its patterns and how it becomes obsessed with certain attitudes or objects of distractions. When we are able to clearly identify and recognise these patterns in our own mind we can begin to do something about it. We can begin to apply measures to divert our attention.

This is where the technique of meditation comes in. In the practice of meditation we choose a virtuous or neutral object and intentionally keep our focus and mind on that. When we apply the technique appropriately and sincerely, even for a few minutes, we will definitely get relief from the mind being focussed on the object of distraction that causes the disturbance in the mind. Because we divert our attention and focus and place it upon either a neutral or virtuous object, particularly a virtuous object, we would find that the mind immediately feels at ease and settled. This is a clear indication that it is possible, when we apply the appropriate technique of meditation, to get some relief from obsession with the object of distraction.

Meditation is a process of familiarising ourselves with positive attitudes or thinking. As we consistently apply

the appropriate technique of meditation then slowly, slowly we begin to see that maintaining focus on a virtuous object becomes easier and easier. We are able to control our mind in a positive frame for a longer duration of time. It is definitely a gradual process. As we begin to slowly familiarise ourselves with the proper technique we will feel the relaxed and a peaceful state of mind. The mind will naturally start to become clearer and brighter. As the mind becomes clear and bright, we will naturally feel a sense of joy and happiness. This is the main point of the practice of meditation.

Applying the appropriate technique of meditation is a means to combat negative states of mind. The reason we need to combat negative states of mind is because they disturb us. The negative state of mind has no benefits for us. It only disturbs our mind and we feel the ill effects of it. It is detrimental to our well-being. The state of daydreaming and all the distractions are something that we all need to overcome. The weapon that we use to combat these is the technique of meditation. That is how it works.

The reason I spend some time explaining all of these details about meditation is so that you know the real purpose of meditation. What is the appropriate technique of meditation? How does it bring about a genuine sense of ease and peace, clarity and brightness in the mind? What is the meditation technique opposing? How should the meditation technique be applied so that it opposes that which disturbs us, and that which is detrimental to our well-being? When I spend time describing these details it is an attempt to present the overall picture of what meditation is really about. We can now come back to our meditation session.

Let us readjust our physical posture to a comfortable and relaxed state. As mentioned previously, in order to apply the appropriate technique of meditation we need to apply some discipline to our mind, and make a determination to divert our attention from the distractions, not allowing our mind to be influenced by them. We completely, one hundred percent, withdraw from all forms of distraction. As we withdraw from the distractions we bring our attention and focus inwards. Then, to anchor our attention and focus we need to focus on an object. The appropriate object for us beginners to use is our breath. We focus on the natural inflow and outflow of our breath. We just keep our focus and attention on the breath itself for the next few minutes (*Pause for meditation*).

Just as we have attempted now, it would be good to try to apply meditation practice regularly in one's daily life. It is only with regular and consistent practice that we will get the real benefit. We would then begin to notice the real transformation taking place within us. We cannot expect a big transformation right way. It will happen in small steps. For example, we might be a person who gets upset very easily even with very minor things going wrong. Having applied one's meditation practice regularly one would come to a point where one begins to notice that insignificant things that would have affected one previously don't affect one so much anymore. One begins to see that the transformation takes place on that level. That is a significant achievement because there are plenty

of minor things in life that could otherwise disturb us. To that extent, we will experience some ease in one's mind.

Now, of course, this is not easy. There might be still things that will disturb one, maybe bigger issues, and we would find it difficult to entirely overcome and be patient with that. To be able to deal with every situation in life, big or small, will take much more practice and time. However given time, we will be able to endure all hardships. But for now, if we don't apply measures of meditation practice and apply endurance and patience with small issues, then how could we ever expect to deal with the bigger issues. So we have to begin dealing effectively with the relatively insignificant small things that disturb us now. If we can be patient with that then with practice we will be able to deal with bigger things in life. There are a lot of things that we have to apply our practice with.

So we train ourselves to deal with, endure and be patient with small insignificant things that going wrong in our life now. If we don't apply measures and try to deal with that appropriately it will be very difficult for our partner, friends or companions to deal with us. It will be very difficult for them to associate with us. Therefore it is in our own interest and benefit that we try to do something about changing our attitude.

The main point comes down to training ourselves so that we are able to begin to experience some real sense of joy and happiness and a real sense of ease within one's mind. Through our experience so far we would know that happiness is not just having a sufficient amount to eat and nice clothes to wear. Having nice food and nice clothes to wear is not, in itself, sufficient to bring about a happy state of mind. That is something that we need to recognise. The main point I am trying to make is you need to find the real measures of getting happiness in the mind.

When we reach the point in our practice where we are able to become a little bit more patient and develop little bit more endurance and not get upset and agitated with small things going wrong, then that will be a significant point where we will be able to then begin to pursue some real meaning and achievements in our life. If we are prone to getting upset and agitated with small things going wrong it will be difficult for us to achieve anything constructive and concrete in life.

I can relate a personal anecdote to illustrate this point. In my early years when I was living in Tibet I had a good friend who was two or three years younger than me. He was a very good person, a good friend of mine. But one of his weaknesses was that he would get upset very easily, even with minor things going wrong. He was quite short tempered.

Knowing that, and because he was a good friend, I would tease him. Of course that would irritate him even more and sometimes I even had to endure some physical blows. Whenever he hit me I would just smile and laugh because I didn't mean any harm. I was just trying, maybe, to help him with his short temper. Initially he would get upset and angry about it, but after some time he started to become much more easy-going and didn't get upset at all when I teased him. He even started to become

embarrassed about the previous times that he had got upset.

As I mentioned he was a few years younger. I would have been about nineteen or twenty years old and he would have been around sixteen. Because he was quite young I could afford to tease him a bit. There were times when he was sleeping and I put small balls of clay or mud in his mouth and when he woke he would run after me and try to catch me and get even.

The main point or moral of this anecdote is that the reason I could afford to tease him was because I knew that he adored me. He had a close friendship with me and because of that I could tease him, and when he got upset with me I didn't take it seriously or personally, and was still able to be friends with him. Because of that he also developed a very strong sense of trust and companionship with me. Because we had that mutual affection towards each other, I didn't allow his being upset to disturb me and cut off my relationship with him. Rather, I just found ways and means to make him become a little, less angry and he accepted that from me even though he would chase me and so forth. We ended up being very good friends to the point of actually escaping together from Tibet.

When we escaped out of Tibet when the communists took over we reached a point of our escape route where we were going over very high mountains and one night I was a little bit ahead in our team and he was a little behind. He was captured by the Chinese and was imprisoned for eighteen years and then released. Very sadly, two days after he was released he passed away. When I got the news later on that he had passed away there was, of course, nothing I could do about the situation besides making strong prayers and dedicating my prayers to him, which of course I did. That's what I could do. It's hard to know, of course, exactly whether my prayers dedicated to him would help or not, but from my side it was with an intention to help him. So, from my side, I had a good intention.

The measure of his closeness and sense of kinship with me was the extent to which he would share with me whatever he had. He would always share his food with me, even if it were just some tea he had made. He would always make sure he brought some to me. He would call me over to have some tea. In that sense he was totally devoted and shared whatever he had with me.

Before we developed that very strong bond of companionship we were in the same class and we actually had a fight, where we exchanged blows. I hit him and he hit me. At that time when we were having that argument and fight we even reached a point where we decided that we should go off somewhere where there was no one else. In the Tibetan tradition, if you are going to have a real fight you have to do it where there's no one watching (*laughter*). So we had a mutual agreement that we would go off somewhere where there was no one else and we could have a real fight. He agreed upon that and said, 'Yes, okay, let's go'. We actually did go a distance.

After the decision was made and we agreed to go off and fight, I started to become a bit fearful because he was much stronger than me. There was a bit of doubt in my

mind, 'I wonder how it will go?' But I had to go along as we had made the decision. We went for a distance where people wouldn't see us. But then we reached a point where we both suddenly felt overwhelmed with a feeling of 'calmness'. We looked at each other and he and I mentioned it at the same time. We had the thought at the same time that there's no point in having a fight. We both looked at each other and said, 'Maybe we shouldn't do this, maybe we shouldn't be fighting'. We both agreed and we both felt very calm. It was after this that we developed that strong bond and our friendship developed. So there definitely are instances where after having a good fight with someone you can end up very good friends. That can definitely occur.

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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.1.8. The illogic of cultivating minor subsidiary meditations when one is not meditating primarily on bodhichitta

Now we can come back to the subject matter. In the text we are covering we have come to the eighth subdivision: the illogic of cultivating minor subsidiary meditations when one is not meditating primarily on bodhichitta.

The main point this outline is making is the risk of leaving aside the most essential thing and getting side-tracked or distracted by something that is of lesser importance. This advice can, for example, be related to the practice of tantra in Mahayana Buddhism. Meditation on the generation stage and completion stage is said to be the most essential point of the tantric practice. If one ignores that fact and just does recitation of mantras and assumes that one is doing tantric practice one would be missing the point. That would be an example from the tantric practices. An example in sutra practice would be engaging in some form of practice of meditation while not being mindful of generating the awakening mind, or what we call bodhichitta. Ignoring bodhichitta and doing other practices is missing the point.

The practical application of these points to ourselves, on our level, would be to bear in mind that even if we have not developed the actual state of awakening mind or bodhichitta we do have its basis of love and compassion. We have the basis for a certain degree of love and compassion within ourselves now. That love and compassion is then the basis for developing the bodhichitta mind. So if we can apply every measure to further cultivate and develop that then our practice would be a full practice and would have some meaning for ourselves.

This is in contrast to spending all our time and energy focussing on an object such as one's breath, or whatever object one chooses, to develop concentration. Now, of course, concentration and a focussed mind is useful and beneficial, but if we have neglected developing love and compassion in one's own heart, and spent all our time and energy just developing a focussed and concentrated

mind that will not have as strong an impact on one's well-being. It will not have as big a result for oneself as cultivating and further developing love and compassion within oneself. Whatever measure of love and compassion we have developed will definitely bring about a positive result through a genuine sense of overall well-being. The more we familiarise ourselves with love and compassion the more we would feel a real sense of ease, joy and happiness within one's mind. This is really the point that is being made here.

A very practical obvious benefit of developing love and compassion is that we would acquire true friendship and companions. People would naturally be drawn into one's circle of friends and companions.

The explanation of the text in this outline is related to the immediately preceding topic and reads:

If, in this way, even the wisdom that realises emptiness is not specifically a Mahayana path, it goes without saying that there are other shared paths as well.

This is implying that one must apply every effort and method to develop the awakening mind within oneself. What is being explained here is that, as related in the preceding explanation of the text, the wisdom realising emptiness is not an uncommon path of the Mahayana. Rather it is shared with the Hinayana, or the Lower Vehicle, as well. The wisdom realising emptiness is not, in itself, the unique technique or method for achieving the ultimate goals of the Mahayana or Great Vehicle path. Rather, the unique path is bodhichitta. The wisdom realising emptiness is not a specific feature to obtain the ultimate goal of the Mahayana; not to mention the other minor realisations.

Before we conclude the session for the evening we can again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object of the focus of our meditation is the sound of the mantra being recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As the mantra is being recited we just focus on the sound and as the recitation comes to an end we try to maintain that focus on the residue of the sound and feel the essence of the sound of the mantra. That becomes the appropriate meditation practice.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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