
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can, as usual, spend sometime in meditation. For that purpose, we adopt a comfortable and relaxed physical posture. Likewise, we adopt a state of mind that is calm and peaceful. Having adopted an appropriate physical posture and calm state of mind, we then attempt to practice meditation to create the means to obtain genuine peace within one's mind.

When we look into what it means to have a peaceful state of mind and its causes, one would notice through one's inner investigation that it relates to a positive attitude in the mind. When we adopt an appropriate positive attitude on a continuous basis we would see that this is what will induce a natural peace in the mind.

The relationship between a positive state of mind and a peaceful state of mind may not be initially obvious, particularly if we don't pay attention to how peace of mind is related to our inner qualities and our inner state of mind. Initially it may be difficult to recognise that our own peace of mind is related to the attitudes and restraint within one's own mind. You may not be able to recognise that. That is because we are mostly familiar with looking outwards for the source of our happiness. We think the sense of joy and peace in the mind comes from outer objects. Therefore we are not naturally familiar with looking within ourselves. That is why it is difficult for us to recognise the connection between a positive state of mind and a peaceful state of mind. But, if we were to pay attention to the techniques of meditation and look within ourselves, we would begin to identify how a peaceful state of mind depends on developing the positive qualities within one's mind.

Quite a number of people have confided in me that when everything seems to be going quite well in one's life, when one has quite a number of friends or associates and is having a good time in the worldly sense by going out and enjoying oneself, it is hard to recognise and see the connection with the inner qualities in one's mind. They confide in me that developing inner qualities and positive attitudes within oneself didn't seem very relevant to one's well being. However when facing difficulties in life, particularly illness for example, it is a time when outer stimulation does not serve as a stimulus and a cause of enjoyment anymore. It is at that time that it becomes very evident that a positive state of mind and one's way of thinking very clearly comes to one's aid as a solace and helps one through the difficulties. That's when the benefit of a positive state of mind becomes very clear.

Those who have confided in me have said that their own experiences is that is at times of difficulties that they found solace in a positive attitude, and when they were

distracted with worldly activities this was not apparent. They are being very truthful about their findings.

It is very true that most of us see our well-being in relation to our social standing and wealth. When things seems to be going well there's a false notion that everything is fine and under control. One may even have a false sense of being in control of everything in one's life. However as soon as something goes wrong in one's life, one immediately feels completely devastated, overwhelmed and lose of hope. That is a clear sign that one has not paid enough attention to developing inner qualities within oneself. Being led to assume that because external circumstances were going quite well, and one may have neglected to develop the inner qualities.

Whereas if whilst outside conditions may seemingly be okay someone has paid attention to developing their inner qualities then, when things do go wrong, it will not disturb their minds to a great extent. They will not be completely overwhelmed or devastated. There is definitely a difference we can see between an individual who has put some attention and time into developing their mind and someone who completely allows themselves to be immersed in the distractions and temporary well being.

Conventionally, we often comment that someone is financially quite well off but seems to be quite depressed or not feeling really joyful and happy. We make comments about such people like, 'What is wrong with them? They have everything taken care of. They have sufficient financial means and everything else around them seems to be okay. So what could be the reasons for them to feel unsettled?' That shows that we don't pay that much attention to what is really needed for a joyous and happy mind.

If we rely upon external means as the main factors for one's happiness then that is why we will be curious about someone who seems to have everything, wealth and financial stability, but is not happy. When we look into the main cause of them being unhappy or unsettled we would find that there is something missing internally which is a positive mental attitude. Even though they are not deprived materially, there's something essential missing from their state of mind. There is an attitude in their mind that contributes to them being unsettled, feeling unhappy and lacking joy. That is what needs to be restored.

One of the essential points that I have been trying to convey is that we need to realise that a joyous and peaceful state of mind is related to positive attitudes that we need to develop and cultivate within our mind. When we recognise and understand that we can take the initiative to put some time and effort into developing those positive qualities within ourselves. Even in times of difficulties we will not be too distraught and overwhelmed and try to maintain some dignity and joy within ourselves. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, has been very kind and genuinely shared that the greatest learnings in his life came in times of difficulties. He said, 'When I have had difficulties in my life, that's when I learnt the most'.

What I am trying to share, and also practice myself, is cultivating and further strengthening the positive qualities within one's mind that are the main contributors to one's sense of happiness, joy and peace. In relating this, I am not implying in any way that we must neglect or reject material objects. Material things do contribute, to a certain degree, to our well being but the main point is that they are not the main cause. They do not serve as the main cause for one's overall well being, particularly in relation to one's mental well-being. What we can try to implement in our life is a good balance between materialistic needs and developing and cultivating the inner qualities such as kindness within one's own mind. That combination will then definitely contribute to one's well-being.

As I regularly mention in my teachings, when we consider what we are striving for in our life we will see that our goal is to gain happiness. Happiness is divided into two basic levels; physical well-being and mental well-being. There's no way for us to experience happiness other than by having physical and mental well-being. Happiness on the physical level is where material or worldly objects can contribute to our physical well-being. Physical well-being comes from external sources whereas mental well-being is entirely dependent on our inner resources. The qualities within one's own mind contribute to our mental well-being and happiness. That is what we need to recognise.

We recognise quite well that external resources contribute to our physical well-being. We not only recognise that, but that is what we normally have been spending most of our time in. We have already put a lot of time and energy into acquiring resources for our physical well-being. We are quite capable of accumulating and gathering resources from external means. Whilst being quite capable and skilful in doing that, we may have however neglected developing our inner qualities. That is why we may sometimes feel deprived of inner joy, happiness and contentment.

Having mentioned that our inner well-being such as happiness and peace is related to the positive qualities and attitudes within oneself, it is appropriate to also point out what disturbs that inner peace, happiness and joy. What obstructs whatever joy and happiness we may have and causes turmoil in one's mind are negative states of mind such as unnecessary speculations that are known as superstitious thoughts, anxieties, irrational fears and so forth. Such states of mind are completely irrational and distracted states of mind that cause disturbances within oneself. We need to recognise that if we give in to the influence of these irrational states of mind then, to that extent, our mind will remain disturbed and will not be settled.

Even if it is difficult to completely overcome certain negative patterns, unnecessary speculations or superstitious thoughts, there is a technique or method to try to slowly reduce those states of mind. That technique is what you call meditation. In the meditation technique that we adopt here we choose a virtuous or neutral object and give that our full commitment. We place our full attention and focus on that object and whilst doing this

we are naturally withdrawing from those disturbing states of mind, anxieties, speculations, superstitious thoughts and so forth. When we put our full attention on the object of meditation the mind will naturally feel settled and experience a real sense of calmness. It is through the familiarity with calmness and peace that we gain in the practice of meditation that we will be able to develop a calm and peaceful state of mind.

When we make a genuine attempt to meditate by focussing on the chosen object we will experience this for our self. We will definitely experience the mind settling down. That happens because we are intentionally withdrawing our mind from disturbing states of mind. Those disturbing thoughts that I mentioned earlier are the causes of all the turmoil and problems within one's mind and life. By withdrawing the mind one does not feel those disturbances or problems. When there's no 'fuel' to cause us the 'fire of trouble' the natural consequence is that the mind becomes settled and calm. That is how we will begin to recognise for ourselves the benefit of meditation. Our own experience will verify the effectiveness of meditation.

If one has made a serious attempt to meditate in one's life one would have initially experienced a genuine calming, soothing sensation within oneself. That is a good sign. If you don't keep up with the practice of meditation regularly and become a bit complacent then that will naturally fade away. If we make some meagre attempts but are not really serious about the practice of meditation we may not feel those initial positive effects again. If, at that stage, we think that meditation is useless and give up completely we have missed out on a great opportunity. We have missed out on gaining the real results for ourselves. The technique of meditation involves a short period of time but requires consistency and continuity and not expecting quick results. One needs to understand that this is a slow process, but one will definitely get the benefit.

Even though meditation has a religious connotation, we not be following a particular religion in order to derive the benefit of meditation. One definitely does not have to be a Buddhist in order to gain benefit from Buddhist mediation techniques. The main thing is to relate to meditation as a means to get some benefit for your self. If one can find some benefit from the practice of meditation then it is good to just continue with that practice to experience calmness and peace in your mind. The main thing is that you need to consider what is good for your own well-being.

In presenting teachings here at the Tara Institute I have no intention to convert others to Buddhism. In fact, prior to coming to teach in the west the personal advice from His Holiness the Dalai Lama on this point was that you must not go with the intention to gain more numbers for Buddhism. That is a completely wrong approach to presenting the Buddhist teachings to others. Rather you must go with an attitude of helping others and present the teachings in whatever way that is suitable for them. Thus, when I present Buddhist teachings I do so with an attitude that it may serve to benefit others and not with the intention that more people may become Buddhists.

This was the personal advice that the Dalai Lama gave me and few other geshees at his residence in India, prior to coming to the west.

We can now spend some time in the actual practice of meditation. We re-adopt a comfortable, relaxed and upright physical posture and try to generate a clear and bright state of mind. Within a clear and bright state of mind, we make a commitment that for the next few minutes I will not allow my mind to be distracted or influenced by any form of distraction. Whether it is thoughts, memories and speculations, one temporarily puts everything aside and places one's entire focus and attention upon one's breath, which is the object that we focus on during our meditation here. We are fully committed to just focussing on the breath itself for the next few minutes. First of all we bring our attention inwards and then place it on the natural rhythm of our breath and keep our entire focus and attention hundred percent on just that. So, we will spend the next few minutes in this way. (*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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2. How to develop an awakening mind

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. The stages of training the awakening mind

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1. Training the mind in the pith instructions on the six causes and effect, which comes from the lineage traced to the great master Atisha.

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2. Extensive explanation

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1. Developing certainty in the stages

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1. Showing compassion to be the root of the Mahayana path

We will cover some points from the text. Following from the earlier category in the text, we have come to the outline, 'Showing compassion is the root of the Mahayana path.'

This outline is subdivided into three:

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.1. The importance of compassion in the beginning

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.2. The importance of compassion in the middle

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.3. The importance of compassion at the end

The importance of compassion in the beginning is also divided into three subdivisions.

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.1.1 Taking upon the responsibility of the Mahayana path is dependent on developing compassion.

The Mahayana path is also known as the Great Vehicle's path. 'Great' relates to a great purpose that is the purpose of taking upon oneself the responsibility for the welfare of all living beings and bringing about the happiness and removing the suffering of all living beings. Taking upon that commitment oneself is what is called adopting The Great Vehicle or Mahayana path. Therefore when one adopts that vehicle as one's path one takes upon the responsibility to benefit all beings. That is dependent on developing compassion. One must have compassion.

The wish to free other sentient beings, and taking that responsibility upon oneself, is dependent upon compassion. To understand this one needs to understand what compassion really means. Love and compassion are both needed but compassion is specifically emphasised here. If, when one sees others' suffering and cannot bear to see them suffer in that way and wishes for them to be free from that suffering, that is *compassion*. When one sees and cannot bear to see others being deprived of happiness and wishes them to have happiness, that is *love*.

Both compassion and love have a sense of not being able to bear it oneself when others are experiencing suffering and deprived of happiness. That's the level of intensity of the attitude of love and compassion. They both arise when one is compelled to try to do something for the other because one cannot bear to see them suffering and deprived of happiness. That is how love and compassion are developed within oneself. That is the basis for one to enter the Great Vehicle path as a means to bring about happiness and relief from all suffering for other beings.

Love and compassion is explained here in relation to the great love and compassion that is extended towards all living beings. We can also bring that sense of love and compassion to our level. We can see that when genuine love and compassion is expressed to us by someone, even in a limited way, we consider that person as precious.

Now how do we gauge whether someone has real love and compassion and a genuine concern for us or not? How do we gauge that? This is measured by the way they express themselves to us. When we are in a very difficult, distressed state, it is only those who have a genuine sense of love and compassion towards us that will come to our aid. It will not be someone who was merely attracted to us out of attachment. Such a person will not come to our aid. In fact someone who was merely attracted to us may even neglect and abandon us at a time of difficulty. They will not come to our aid. When someone has a genuine sense of love and compassion towards us they will come to our aid. That is a mark of true love and compassion. We really would appreciate it if, at a time of great difficulty and distress, someone soothes, comforts us and provides us with any kind of help. We would begin to trust that person and consider them a genuine friend.

If we are infatuated and have an attraction to someone, whatever concern and love we may have expressed at that time would not have been very genuine. But the stronger the sense of genuine love and compassion we have for others the more we are not able to bear seeing them having a difficult time and we will be compelled to help them. When they are deprived of happiness we are not able to bear seeing them unhappy and will be drawn to them and help them rather than neglecting them. It is the same for others. When others come to our aid when we are in difficult times it is because they cannot bear to see us having a difficult time and being unhappy. That is a mark of true love and compassion. That is why it is really important that we try to develop that genuine sense of love and compassion.

A genuine sense of love and compassion is crucial for one's own well-being, particularly for good relationships

with others and one's companion or spouse. The real element that maintains a healthy relationship is that genuine sense of love and compassion expressed towards each other. That is why I regularly emphasise in my teachings that developing a genuine sense of love and compassion towards others is essential in one's life. When one develops this and expresses it towards others it is natural for them to return that genuine sense of love and compassion towards oneself. When mutual love and compassion has been secured in a relationship it becomes the main cause of a strong, good, long lasting relationship between two individuals or groups of people. That is why it is essential that we pay attention to this.

I can give an illustration of the benefits that are derived from a genuine sense of compassion. An immediate example that I can think of is someone whom I noticed who would come to the park and whilst collecting rubbish would take the bread from the rubbish and give it to the birds. Others would just put into the rubbish and not care to put it to good use. But this person's intention of taking out the rubbish was to give it to the birds. This is a good intention to really help others. Seeing that incident I felt very inspired that this person has a very kind mind and wants to help other creatures, even the birds. For me that was a clear sign of a good intention and a good heart. Others definitely benefit from a kind and compassionate heart therefore, at our level and in whatever way we can; it is good for us to resolve upon engaging in acts of kindness.

In this instance the person's intention of taking out the bread, which others have thrown away and which could have been given to the birds, was to help some hungry creatures. Some neglect that and just throw it away. Someone with a good intention takes the bread out and helps to feed some hungry birds. This shows how a good, kind heart with good intentions does benefit others. Examples like this can inspire us to also develop a good, kind heart.

The teachings mention methods to develop a good heart and compassion for others. One should consider that just as one does not wish to experience any kind of suffering or discomfort others are exactly the same and do not wish to experience any kind of suffering or discomfort. Just as one wishes to experience every type of happiness and goodness, others are exactly the same and also want to experience everything that is good for them. Therefore, relying upon the fact that there is no difference between others wishes and my own wishes, it is suitable for me to consider others' welfare. This analysis is said to be one of the supreme ways to develop a genuine sense of compassion and love for others as well.

We can conclude the session for the evening. Before we end the teaching session we can again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object of meditation will be the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As the mantra is being recited we try to place our full attention and focus just on the sound of the mantra itself and then when the recitation of the mantra stops we can try to maintain a constant awareness and focus on the residue of that sound for a short while. This

then becomes an actual meditation focussing on that particular object.

This is much more worthwhile than some form of relaxation where you are just 'zone-out', such as lying down and thinking of nothing. That would not have much impact on one's state of mind but intentionally focussing on something will have some positive benefit.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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