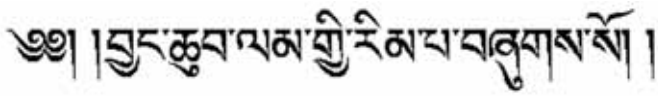

The Condensed Lam Rim



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As usual, it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose we sit in a relaxed, comfortable posture. Likewise a clear and bright state of mind would be worthwhile. One way to understand the purpose of meditation is that it is a technique that familiarises one with a positive state of mind.

In general, I would summarise our situation in life as one where we are constantly experiencing certain factors that are constructive and some that are destructive. These factors are like friends in that they are not very reliable; friends can be helpful but at times also harmful. Just as friends can be either positive or negative, similarly there are various internal factors like our thoughts, which can be either positive or negative.

Just like the external analogy of friends who may harm us, there are certain states of our mind that contribute to our distress. We would notice that as soon as these states of mind arise or manifest within us; we immediately feel distress, weighed down, uncomfortable and agitated. But when some other positive states of mind occur within us we immediately feel at ease, calm and peaceful.

There are clearly different states of mind that occur within us. When one looks within oneself and analyses in this way this becomes very clear. There are people who have confided in me that this is very true, and that when certain states of mind arise they immediately feel very uncomfortable and very, very agitated. So it is definitely true that there are particular states of mind within us that cause us to feel elated and good, and states of mind that weigh us down and make us feel uncomfortable.

It is very important for us to be able to recognise and distinguish these two so we can adopt positive states of mind and try to shun or get rid of negative states of mind. This can be done through the intelligence or wisdom that distinguishes them and then, on the basis of recognising them, we can slowly distance ourselves from the negative states of mind. This is something that we can do. We have the intelligence and capacity to do that.

Investigating these different states of mind may seem like it is giving you more work to do. Nevertheless it is definitely a worthwhile endeavour; to check one's own state of mind and analyse what is important and essential for one's wellbeing. What often happens is that when negative states of mind arise we feel we have no control over them. Initially we may feel that we may not be able to control our anger as it is quite powerful when it arises. However when we begin to notice anger for what it is, a state of mind that is destructive and not helpful in any

way, then through the virtue of being able to recognise it for what it is, its intensity will lessen.

The main thing is for us is not to completely give in to anger, not to allow ourselves to be completely influenced by the state of anger. The disadvantages of giving in to anger on a greater scale can be seen very obviously around the world. There are so many problems, conflicts and so forth which are a result of anger. For example, we see that there are people who kill many others merely out of anger; their mind is disturbed by anger. So the destruction that anger causes is really very obvious. On the larger scale the destruction caused by anger is also very obvious and is initiated by nothing but a state of mind that has gone out of control.

Therefore we need to recognise and pinpoint how anger is a destructive state of mind. There is no advantage whatsoever in giving in to anger and letting our mind being influenced by anger. If we repeatedly analyse what anger is and how destructive it is then, when it arises within us, we would be able to be wary and say to ourselves, 'Be careful because a negative state of mind is about to manifest and take over. If I give in to anger there will be no benefit for myself, only destruction and a disturbed state of mind'. If at that very moment we see anger arising we were to apply caution and be wary we will be able to distance ourselves and not to be completely under its influence. When we do this self-analysis in that way we can definitely pinpoint and recognise the negative state of mind for what it is and not give in when it arises and allow us to be influenced.

In contrast, when we feel the compassionate state of mind arising we can see the positive effects of that. As soon as we feel compassion in our mind it has an immediate calming effect for us, as much as it benefits others. The real beneficiary of compassion is oneself. When one feels compassion it immediately soothes the mind making one feel very calm and restful. So we can definitely see the advantages and the disadvantages of the states of mind within oneself and thus familiarise ourselves more with compassion.

As we analyse and investigate the nature of anger and how it is destructive we become wary about giving in to anger. It is also important to recognise the opposing positive state of mind that is compassion. When one pays attention to cultivating and developing compassion it has a positive effect for oneself. Others also benefit when compassion is expressed towards them. One of the immediate positive results of expressing compassion to others is the genuine trust one gains from the others. This is evident amongst humans. Human beings have the intelligence and capacity to recognise compassion and respond to it in a positive way.

Leaving aside humans, animals can definitely recognise the positive effects of compassion focused towards them. There are many incidences we can see in the animal world, of animals responding positively to compassion or affection. Sometime ago some of you may have seen an incident they were showing on television. When they first showed it I was quite taken aback myself. It was almost frightening to watch because it was about a person who went into the wilderness to come into contact with a lion.

When the lion saw the person it started running towards him and when it came near it started to jump up. Initially when I saw that, I thought something drastic was about to happen and the person could be mauled by the lion. But, on the contrary, the lion hugged the person and was responding very affectionately towards him. It was later explained that the person had cared for and nurtured that lion as a cub and it was later released into the wilderness. Then, a quite significant amount of time later when the person went back, the lion still recognised the person who cared for and nurtured him when he was a small cub.

So the person knew that even though the lion was charging towards him, it was coming towards him with affection. The person had the trust of the animal because the animal remembered the compassion and affection the person had shown towards him in the past. These are incredibly good illustrations of how genuine trust is formed out of genuine compassion or affection. This is something that we can learn from, and we can see the value of this positive expression love, compassion and affection.

When we begin to recognise and comprehend the disadvantages of the negative states of mind, such as anger, and the positive consequences or effects of the positive states of mind, such as compassion, we begin to understand the significance and importance of meditation practice. What is called meditation practice specifically involves acquainting ourselves with the positive states of mind. The practise of meditation also means to further cultivate and develop that particular intelligence or wisdom that distinguishes between the negative and positive states of mind within, and then cultivates the positive.

In this way we can see the great benefits of meditation for oneself as well as for others. The immediate benefit for us is that through the practice of meditation, which is a way of acquainting ourselves with positive states of mind, we gain a more genuinely relaxed, calm, peaceful and happier mind. It also has a positive effect upon others. Positive states of mind gain the trust of others, make others feel comfortable around one and have a positive influence upon us as well. So, in this way, we begin to see the great benefit.

When we consider anger it is good for us to really understand the disadvantages of anger. It is only by clearly acknowledging and understanding the disadvantages of anger that we will take the initiative to do something about it. We can deal with anger by cultivating the immediately opposite positive state of mind, which is patience. The more we acquaint our mind with patience, the more we will be able to overcome or deal with anger. By seeing the virtues of patience we can, by contrast, see the negative consequences or disadvantages of anger. In this way we can train ourselves by analysing our state of mind and cultivating the positive. So this is how we can understand the significance of the practice of meditation. So, now we can now actually spend the time in meditation.

The specific technique we adopt for meditation is the technique of focusing on an internal object, for which we

use our breath. In order to make this practice a significant and proper practice of meditation we need to make the commitment that for the next few minutes we will not allow the mind to wander off with the distractions. We commit to take a hold or grip of the whole of one's attention and intentionally focus upon the breath itself.

First we bring our focus inward and then we place it on the breath. This means that, temporarily, we try not to be concerned with any other thought, be it positive or negative. We just leave everything aside and bring our whole attention and focus onto the breath itself. As we naturally inhale and exhale we place our mind on the breath itself. Periodically we make sure that our mind is not wandering off. If we find that we are wandering off we gently remind ourselves to place our focus on the breath again. We keep bringing the breath to mind again and again; the in breath and the out breath, just focusing on that. In this way we will keep our attention focused on the breath for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

It would be highly beneficial if, just as we have attempted in our short session now, we put some time into the practice of meditation in our daily life. As one adopts this technique, which brings about a more genuinely happy state of mind, it will naturally have a positive effect on our health. We will have good health as well. I normally attest good health to a happy mind. As I normally relate to you, my close associates, friends and so forth, it is really important that we try to secure a calm and happy state of mind.

If we allow our mind to be agitated, and allow anxiety to take over, we start feeling pains and aches in our body, especially tension in our back and so forth. That is when you might have to decide to see a therapist or a masseur to get a massage. Sometimes the pain is so severe that just having a soft massage is not enough and they have to use their elbow. Some masseurs have to use the elbow to get to the pressure point. Those pressure points are nothing more than physical manifestation of knots in our mind, anxiety and stress manifesting in our body.

Conversely, if we have a relaxed mind we would notice that we don't have that many pains and aches in our bodies. So if we don't pay attention to having a more relaxed, happy mind we might have to spend half of our salary just to go and see the therapist. Furthermore, a happy mind definitely seems to contribute to a long life. This is apparently also beginning to be claimed in the medical field as well.

The medical field is beginning to find that there is a definite relationship between a happy mind and a healthy body. Then, naturally, a healthy body will contribute to having a long life. If we can give ourselves a happy mind and a healthy body it may be possible for us to have a long life. Why not have a long life if one is happy and in good health? Otherwise if we are depressed and unhappy mentally, then physically we will have a lot of ailments and sickness. We have the right to have a long and healthy life. But it seems quite unlikely that we will have the prospect of a long life if we are not content, and our well-being is not secured.

On a very practical note, I have heard from people who help in aged care that it is often quite difficult to go and

help old people. Some of them can be quite grumpy and unhappy. I have been told that when you try to feed them they sometimes get so agitated and annoyed that they start pinching you. When elderly people who are in need of care or assistance are grumpy, and on edge all of the time and uncooperative, it makes it difficult for those who are trying to assist them to appreciate giving the help to them. Whether it is the nurses, doctors or other attendants, they can start feeling that it has become a burden to try to care for them. In contrast, there are certain older people who are joyful people. They have a happy state of mind. Those kinds of individuals become a joy to be around for those who care for them. On the positive side I have heard that some elderly people are joyful and easy to get along with. Those who attend to them feel a great sense of joy to be around them. It is fun to be around them.

That elderly stage we are referring to is something that we are heading towards ourselves. If we want to live to a ripe old age and want to be happy, joyful and surrounded by joyful people in our old age then we need to do the preparation now. It is our responsibility and within our hands to prepare for that. This again stresses the importance of meditation that helps us towards that.

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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.2. The way the other causes and effects are the causes and effects of compassion

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.2.1. The way that the reflection from knowing all sentient beings to have been one's mother, up to and including loving kindness act as a cause of compassion

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.2.1.3. The way to see all beings as being appealing

Now we will cover some parts from the text. The text has come to the third subdivision from an earlier category, which explains the sequence of recognising all beings as having been one's mother and, based on that recognition, remembering their kindness and then developing the wish to repay their kindness. By virtue of remembering the kindness of all beings and wishing to repay their kindness, all living beings will start to appear very appealing to one. Based on all beings having very attractive, appealing features, one will develop a strong affection for them. That affection is specifically called heart-warming love in this teaching and followed by developing compassion. That sequence is then explained in more detail in the following passages.

Specifically what has been explained is that by seeing beings as appealing, love is developed towards them.

Consequently in order to have affection for living beings, cultivate the view that they are close to you like friends and your relatives. Since your mother is the closest person to you cultivate the recognition of all beings as your mothers.

So that is the recognition. Then the text continues,

Also recollect their kindness as your mothers and develop the wish to repay their kindness. These three steps are how you learn to cherish and have affection for living beings. The result of these three steps is a love that considers living beings to be beloved, just as a mother loves her only child. This love then gives rise to compassion.

This explains the sequence of how, based on the earlier steps, one develops a particular type of love, the affectionate love that sees all beings as appealing to oneself. This particular love will then give rise to what is called compassion focusing on all living beings.

What is explained in the next part in the text, under a specific sub-division, is the sequence of developing love and compassion particularly the appealing affectionate love and compassion. What is being explained in this section is the cause and effect relationship between heart warming, appealing love and compassion. The sequence is that firstly love is developed by seeing other beings as appealing and developing an affectionate feeling towards them. Then, based on that, compassion arises towards them. But generally speaking there is no sequential order between general love and compassion.

Now the text goes to the fifth subdivision, which is, 'Whose system these instructions belong to.' The text discusses which particular lineage, and which master, these teachings come from. The text explains:

The masters Chandrakirti, Chandragomin and Kamalashila explained that cultivating the view that living beings are your friends or relations, is the cause of developing the awakening mind.

This presentation, which will be explained in more detail later, is basically the seven-point cause-and-effect sequence of developing the awakening mind.

The earlier steps were introduced briefly previously. This sequence is based on the recognition of all beings having previously been one's mother, and then remembering their kindness and wishing to repay their kindness. This is followed by heart-warming or affectionate love towards all beings, which is in turn followed by compassion. Compassion will be explained in more detail later. It is followed by wishing to repay the kindness of all living beings. Assuming that personal responsibility specifically causes a special or superior intention to arise. From that the awakening mind is developed.

This is the specific sequence that was explained by the great masters mentioned earlier. The presentation itself involves great logic and reasoning. This logic or reasoning may not have much effect on those who don't have an affinity with, or acceptance of, past and future lives, because these logical reasons are based on acceptance of there being successive lives for all living forms. When someone has acceptance and appreciation for the continuity of successive lives then this presentation becomes a very sound and logical reasoning

to show how each and every being has at another time been one's mother and in that way remembering the kindness of each and every living being. That is how, when one has that acceptance, the presentation is a very logical.

We can conclude for this evening on this point. To summarise, the main point presented here is providing meditation techniques to assist our mind to perceive all beings as one's relation, rather than one's enemies. How do you do that? Rather than perceiving enemies around you how do you perceive all living forms as one's closest relation?

As explained in the text, our closest relation in our worldly context is our own mother. So to train one's mind to develop affection towards all beings one would have to have the same affection for them that one has for one's mum. The specific analogy used for the particular type of affection that is to be developed towards all living beings is a mother's love for her only child. In the worldly context there is nothing that would exceed the strong affection or love that a mum has for her only child. That affection is even greater when the child is going through any difficulty. If the child is suffering in any way then the mum's affection would become even stronger, to the point of doing whatever is in the mum's capacity to try to relieve the child from that distress or suffering. When the mother witnesses that suffering there is a spontaneous, very strong, desire to remove the suffering from the child. That is the extent of the affection a mother has for her child. She will do anything in her capacity to help to relieve the suffering of the child.

This is the degree to which the teachings say we need to develop affection towards all beings. When we can develop affection towards all living beings then, to that extent, we have developed the great love or heart-warming love towards all living beings. Then, based on that, one develops compassion and the wish to remove all sufferings from all living beings.

So, in this way, the text presents a very systematic way to develop great compassion—love and compassion focused on all beings indiscriminately. Of course at our own ordinary level we may only have a biased love right now, that is focused on certain living beings who we consider close or our relations. However by training our mind in meditation we can transform the biased love that we have within our mind now, and slowly extend this partial love or biased-love towards all beings. That is something that we can train ourselves in. We can come to the point where we begin to have affection towards all beings as if they are one's closest relations and see no enemies but only those who are close to oneself. That is the point really.

Before we conclude for the evening we can take again an opportunity to place our mind in meditation form. This time we use as the focal object the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As the mantra is chanted we try to keep our full attention and focus on the sound by withdrawing our mind from all other forms of distractions and placing a one-hundred-percent focus just on the sound itself. Then, as the recitation stops and the sound subsides, we continue our focus on the residue of

the sound. In this way we will place our mind in a focused state.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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