
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We need to protect the mind from being dominated by the delusions, which are the negative states of mind such as anger and attachment. We may find it difficult, however, to entirely avoid being influenced by the delusions. This is because of our acquaintance and familiarity with those states of mind; we find they arise spontaneously.

In saying we need to protect the mind from the influence of the delusions, I am referring in particular to the strong, intense delusions or negative states of mind, such as intense anger, or intense desire or lust. By maintaining mindfulness and awareness, we can definitely protect ourselves from the influence of those intense delusions and not to give in to them.

When we practise meditation, it helps us develop awareness of the delusions and the disadvantages they cause us. We can all identify certain states of mind that can cause us real angst, like a pain in our heart. As soon as such an intensely negative state of mind occurs – whether it is strong anger or strong attachment – we can immediately feel the negative consequences, feeling unsettled and ill-at-ease with oneself.

Thus we can all identify with the ill-effects of the negative states of mind from our own experience. As well as causing us immediate distress, if we continue to allow these intense negative states of mind to influence us, they can even cause disastrous consequences for others. Therefore we need to identify these intense negative states of mind as a cause of pain, harm and destruction in our life; we need to be wary of them and protect ourselves from them.

When we allow ourselves to come under the influence of such negative states of mind, due to our long acquaintance with them, it may seem we are inseparable from them. However, if we don't do something to separate ourselves from them, we fall victim to their negative influence.

There are individuals whose entire lives seem to be dominated by a certain kind of negativity – what they would consider as being their temperament, or part of their character. They allow that negativity to become part of their identity, to the extent that they even become defensive when it is pointed out. That negative state of mind makes them really feel down: it causes them distress, and makes them feel unsettled and lose direction in life.

Nevertheless, because of their long familiarity with that negativity, when you address them about it, it becomes very personal for them. If you point out that they could

do something about their problem or difficulty, they may even become defensive and say 'I can't do anything about it; it's my problem'. It is as if they have become attached to that problem, and the intensity of that negativity just continues. Thus their life seems very bleak and they lose hope. I have seen situations where people seem to be constantly entangled in their problems, and don't seem to want to change. It really is a sad situation – there is a way to change that negative state of mind, but that person will not investigate how to come out of that mindset, instead choosing to remain in that gloom.

When we identify a certain problem within ourselves and determine to overcome it, of course, we will not immediately be free from it, but over time, we can slowly see that transformation does take place.

If we look further into the situation of having long acquaintance with one's negative states of mind, there are those who may be quite attached to such a state of mind, saying 'I have this weakness'. Some may identify themselves as short-tempered, saying: 'that is who I am, I can't do anything about it, I will not even consider changing it'. Some may have other habits they identify as a weakness, but never consider trying to give them up. But one can make the resolution: 'OK, I have identified this within myself', whether it is a negative state of mind like attachment. One can resolve: 'I'm not going to follow this negativity. I've identified this, and I am going to give it up'.

The moment we make that decision to not allow ourselves to come under the influence of that negativity, we may experience an immediate sense of relief. It may seem like a sacrifice, but when you make the decision to give up attachment or whatever negative mind it may be, in fact you feel much lighter; your mind feels relieved rather than deprived. When we make that determination to give it up, we actually feel relief.

So it is a matter of changing our attitude towards our weaknesses or negative states of mind. When we make the determination to give up our negative habits, we will actually feel liberated. Rather than allowing ourselves to dwell on the weakness or negativity and give into it and become entangled in it, we use the technique of meditation, where we divert our focus to something more positive. That familiarity with focusing on the positive is how we begin to release ourselves from negative states of mind. That is something we really need to consider.

After I have presented this meditation technique of overcoming particular negative states of mind or weaknesses, some people have later confided in me that when they apply the technique, it actually seems to work and they do experience some relief from that negative mind.

However some may automatically feel like they can't give up attachment to a certain object. I recall one individual from years back, when I was giving a presentation in Adelaide on overcoming attachment by focusing on the faults of the object to which one is attached. This person confided in me later that 'while meditation on the faults on the object does give me a certain sense of relief from the pangs of attachment, I don't feel comfortable seeing the faults of the object that I normally see as attractive'.

Certain individuals really don't seem to want to meditate on the faults of the object that they are attracted to. My comment to that person was that they need not use another object; one can focus on the natural defects of one's own body to overcome attachment.

In summary, meditation practice protects us from the strong influence of negativities, which cause feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem and so forth; it lightens a heavy mind, a heavy heart. We really need to apply the technique of meditation to protect ourselves from that great danger. When we have very low self-esteem or a very depressed state of mind, that is when all sorts of unwanted or detrimental things could happen to us; it is a dangerous place to be in. One might do things that might not be favourable to one's well being. Thus one needs to really apply the technique of meditation.

Of course, everyone has their own particular problems they have to deal with. It's part of our nature. We won't find anyone who is free of problems. Wherever we go, whoever we meet, we will hear that there are problems. Because encountering problems is the very nature of our existence, we need to have endurance in facing problems; we need to see them as a challenge and a learning opportunity. When His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions endurance as one of the best methods to overcome problems, he is explaining that from his own life experience of having to face many difficulties. Thus we need to willingly take on that problem; facing it is the best way to overcome it. When any difficulty arises, we need to face it, understand its nature and work with it, to develop patience in overcoming it. Endurance or patience is essential in dealing with problems in one's life.

As mentioned earlier, we all are prone to certain delusions, such as attachment and anger. When we think about how this comes about, it is definitely related to a strong sense of individuality: 'my rights, my wishes'. There is a strong sense of what 'I' want; the strong feeling of 'I'. Naturally, from the strong feeling of 'I' comes 'mine'. In relation to this very strong sense of 'I' comes attachment to things that are favourable to oneself and aversion to those things which are unfavourable to oneself. That is how attachment and anger or aversion arise in relation to oneself. So attachment and anger arise naturally due to strong clinging or grasping at the 'I'.

As mentioned previously, one needs to protect oneself from the strong, intense delusions. I have also mentioned in the past the story of a particular student who was quite new. When she questioned whether she had to give up attachment to everything, I had to mention to her that it is okay to have small attachments. She seemed quite relieved. Later, she understood the point.

As mentioned earlier, to expect oneself to be completely free from anger and attachment would be presumptuous. For as long as we have grasping to the self – which is the very of our existence right now – attachment in relation to things that are favourable to the self, and aversion to things unfavourable to the self will naturally arise.

For example, when your partner or friend does something which one feels quite good about, attachment may increase. Whereas if they do something not in accordance with one's wishes, aversion or anger can

arise. However as mentioned, we need to protect ourselves from intense levels of attachment and aversion or anger. When we are overcome by strong desire or anger, it really hinders us, so we need to free ourselves from that. In particular, we need to protect our relationship with our close friends by avoiding intense anger, because anger is really what destroys our companionship or relationship with others. Whether you are living with someone or by yourself, this is something you need to do to protect yourself.

One need not feel completely discouraged or disappointed when one cannot completely overcome attachment and aversion. After having made some attempts, some people have confided in me that 'I have meditated upon the faults of attachment and I have meditated on the faults of anger, yet I still seem to get angry, I still have desires'. Unless one has overcome the very core or root of anger and attachment, which is the grasping to the self, of course attachment and anger will arise. But do not to give up hope. If we continue practising, it is possible to slowly minimise the arising of these delusions.

The main point for us is to try initially to minimise giving in to these negative states of mind. The less familiarity we have with these delusions, the more at ease one will be. We will experience well-being and ease within one's mind when we become less familiar with negative states of mind.

Having mentioned some of the main points about how meditation can benefit us by protecting the mind, we can now apply the technique for a few minutes. Again, I re-emphasise the main point about the influence of the delusions: due to our long acquaintance with them, we cannot expect to completely eradicate the delusions such as anger and attachment from our mind in a meagre attempt to meditate for a few moments. One cannot attain that right away. However, by engaging in meditation practice, we can tackle the *manifest* level of the delusions. When we engage sincerely in the practice of meditation, we are temporarily diverting our attention from objects that cause us distress and from the influence of the delusions. Due to that positive effect of temporarily not focusing on the delusions, we experience a release from the manifest level of attachment or anger in our mind. Thus we will definitely experience some sort of relief. To that extent, we can understand how the technique works.

For the purpose of our meditation, we will now withdraw the mind from all distractions, bring our focus within ourselves, then place it upon the object, which is our breath. Keep the mind focused on the breath for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

That will be sufficient for now. It would be good to adopt this meditation practice in one's daily life. The technique of meditation involves acquainting the mind with a positive object: a state of mind that is wholesome. Naturally, because of the virtue of familiarising ourselves with wholesome attitudes, the negative attitudes will naturally decrease, because wholesome and unwholesome states of mind oppose each other. As in nature, when one force that opposes another becomes stronger, it naturally weakens the other force. That is the

law of nature. Likewise as we familiarise ourselves with wholesome or positive states of mind, the negative states of mind will naturally decrease. That is how we need to understand the effects of the practice of meditation.

For example, if one familiarises the mind with compassion, anger will naturally be reduced. That is because anger and compassion are direct opponents; they are opposite to each other. By the same token, when anger arises, whatever compassion one had for the other person will naturally decrease. Thus we need to be very wary of anger. When anger arises in relation to your friend or partner, that is the time you have to be really wary because one's compassion or concern for them will decrease. This can lead to all sorts of disastrous problems in relation to one's relationship to others.

Seeing anger as a negative state of mind and noticing its disadvantages will help one to be wary of it, so that when it arises, we can immediately identify it as being a harmful state of mind. It can cause unwanted circumstances for oneself. That awareness itself will reduce the intense anger within oneself, so that one will not completely give in to anger. For any delusion, if we can identify it and be wary of it, its intensity will be reduced.

We may cover a few verses from the text, unless there are some questions you would like to address. If you have any questions, you can raise your hand.

Question: Geshe-la it seems disrespectful to meditate on the faults of another's body, so how do we deal with this in our meditation?

Answer: One needs to be clear about this point. Even though the word used is 'fault', in reality it is not the actual faults of the object we are focusing on; but rather it is the natural defects of the object that we focus on.

For example, in relation to another person, we need to consider what is it we are attached to? In relation to attachment to the physical body, attachment arises when the attractive features of the body are exaggerated. The meditation involves moving beyond the exaggeration of qualities, instead focusing on the reality of the nature of the body. As explained in the teachings, this involves thinking about what the body is made up of, such as the internal organs and so forth. That initial strong attachment to the physical appearance of the body, which comes from exaggerating the qualities of the body, will then naturally be reduced.

As the great meditation masters such as Shantideva have mentioned, if there's any doubt in your mind about the cleanliness or attractiveness of the body, go and watch an autopsy being done. These days, we can also relate to scenes shown on television, such as a medical operation, where we can see what is inside the body. When we see the inside of the body in this way, it seems quite repulsive rather than being attractive. This is not an exaggeration; when the internal components of the body are exposed, its attractiveness starts to fade.

The great master Nagarjuna has also mentioned that if anyone has doubts about the body being clean and pure; consider substances that are taken into the body, and how they come out. If it were such a pure vessel, whatever

went in would have to come out clean. But when food, for example, is taken and one chews it and spits it out, it has already become repulsive; not to mention when it comes out from the body as waste.

These examples are not so much pointing out faults, as pointing out the actual reality that the body's defects. When, through exaggeration, we regard the body as extremely pure and clean, this causes attachment to arise. By relating to the natural uncleanliness and repulsive nature of the body, we can counteract that strong attachment. The main point is to overcome attachment.

Similarly when anger is developed towards a certain object, the actual faults of the object are exaggerated. A mind of anger does not allow us to see any redeeming qualities of the object. Therefore anger arises when we see only the faults of the object. That again is an exaggeration. Meditating on compassion enables us to see the other person as appealing. Therefore compassion becomes the antidote for overcoming anger towards that person.

These are just ways of focusing on the reality of the situation, rather than allowing one's mind to be influenced by the exaggerated, tainted view we have of the object, and thus developing either anger or attachment.

Question: If one was attached to the other person's qualities rather than their body, then does this meditation of seeing faults still apply?

Answer: When we say the exaggerated qualities as viewed by attachment are not the reality, we mean the exaggerated quality that is perceived by attachment is due to what we refer to as improper attention. Due to the influence of improper attention, even faults and so forth can be seen as qualities.

One must see understand that those qualities, as viewed by attachment, do not exist. But it is not saying the object does not have any qualities. There will be certain qualities the object would have in reality. One must make the distinction. The qualities as perceived by attachment may not exist and are not reality; but the object would still have natural qualities, which do exist. It is the same with faults. We can relate to our own experience of being initially attached to another object. At first it will appear to be extremely attractive. For example, a person's features or even their character – everything about them may seem completely positive, with no faults at all. Later, of course, we begin to realise that this was not the case.

The opposite will occur if one gets angry with the person: everything about the person will start to seem at fault. When we can relate to the extreme levels of attachment and anger and see how that perception is not based on reality, we can start to understand more subtle levels of attachment. Whenever attachment is present, there is an appearance which is beyond the reality, even on a subtle level. Likewise with anger; we will slowly be able to relate to more subtle levels of that misapprehension if we can first relate to the extreme level from one's experience.

Earlier in the teaching, I mentioned how one needs to be wary of strong delusions, such as attachment and anger, arising. The point again here is that when strong

attachment arises, the mind of attachment will exaggerate the qualities the attractiveness of the object and overlook any natural defects and faults of the object. That is explained very precisely by the great master Chandrakirti in one of his works called *Valid Cognition*. In it he explained how strong attachment overrides our perception of any faults. Thus if we made decisions with strong attachment, we might regret them later when the faults become apparent.

Likewise when we develop strong anger towards the object, any redeeming qualities are completely overpowered by the object's apparent faults. Thus when we make a decision influenced by intense anger, there could be a disaster, because we might do things to harm the object which we would later regret. This is why I mentioned that we need to be cautious when strong attachment or anger arises, because it completely overpowers our mind.

As explained in the scriptures, when we investigate, we will find this to be true. Through our experience, we will begin to realise that, as explained in the scriptures, when strong attachment arises, it completely overpowers our perception of reality; everything in relation to the person might appear attractive, with no faults at all. If one made decisions based only on that faulty perception of the other person, it could actually lead to uncomfortable situations later on.

Thus I normally share this advice, particularly with younger people, about making friends or choosing a partner. Of course we all need friends and companions, but we need to use our intelligence, our wisdom in making friends with others and choosing companions. I usually use the analogy of a hungry dog – when it comes upon food, it would just eat anything. This attitude can be disastrous in the long run. If we spend time and are patient, and use our intelligence, gradually we will be able to see clearly the other person's faults or qualities. They will all become quite apparent and one will be able to make a good judgement as to whether one should commit oneself to being with them or not. While we need companions and friends, we also need to protect ourselves. Thus we need to make good judgements about our long-term commitments to friends and companions. Even though it may not be my place to talk about other people's lives, I feel compelled to share what I feel might be useful for them.

One particularly needs to protect oneself from potential great hurt later on in a relationship. One may carry a great wound later on from that relationship if one is not wary in the beginning and fails to use one's own intelligence or fails to take time to study the situation more carefully. If one immediately falls for someone from mere attraction to appearance, then while one's attachment may still be strong, there might be a point where the other person become disinterested and leaves. But one's attachment to the other person will not have left; it is still there. That is when one will feel hurt, and that will be a cause of great pain and sorrow for oneself. Therefore one needs to be wary from the very start of a relationship and really try to see the reality of the situation, rather than following mere infatuation.

On a practical level, one needs to have one's options ready. If the other turns out to be a good person after all, one can maintain a good relationship with them. But if they don't turn out to be exactly who you thought they were or don't have certain qualities you thought they had and you can see it is not going to turn out well, be prepared to find another direction in one's life. That is a more practical approach. I have many stories in relation to this, but of course we don't have time (*laughter*).

Before we conclude for the evening, it would be appropriate to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time, as we adopt a comfortable and relaxed posture for meditation, we again withdraw our mind from all forms of distraction, temporarily not being concerned with other objects. Just bring the mind within, then place it on the object we choose to meditate upon now, which is the sound of the mantra to be recited, that of Buddha Shakyamuni. As you hear the sound of the mantra, try to maintain your full attention and focus on the sound itself. As the recitation subsides, try to maintain that awareness and focus on the residual sound, then in just maintain your focus for a while.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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