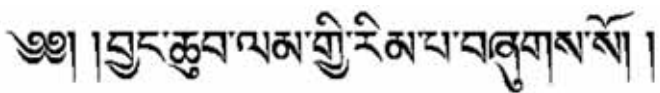

The Condensed Lam Rim



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18 May 2011

We will adopt a comfortable and relaxed posture. As we secure a comfortable physical posture, it is equally important to have a clear, relaxed and bright state of mind. In fact it is essential to have a clear and bright state of mind. Furthermore it is essential to develop the quality of kindness and a genuine concern for others within our state of mind. That state of mind is essential in one's life. Then, accompanied with kindness, we also need to have good wisdom and intelligence.

The reason these are essential for one is because all these qualities become an aid to acquire or accomplish what we need for ourselves

. When I investigate what would constitute the meaning of life for someone, I personally feel that if we can secure these qualities within us then they would be the main condition for us to have a happy and joyful life.

These qualities are not something that we lack from the beginning. In fact we already have these qualities, such as having a clear state of mind, are inborn within us. We all have a certain amount of intelligence. We also have kindness, genuine concern and joyfulness within us. These are inborn qualities we already have. However what often happens in the course of life is that, if we don't pay attention to maintaining or protecting these valuable qualities, then external factors or conditions may cause them to start to diminish, or wane and weaken within us. If that were to happen it is an unfortunate and sad situation for an individual.

In my own life, the way that I conduct myself is to recognise qualities such as clarity, kindness, a joyful and happy state of mind as being valuable and consider them as being like one's best friend or companion. When I investigate the various experiences in my life I have fully developed a conviction that these qualities are the best companion for me and best aid when facing difficulties and hardships. These are the qualities that come to my aid and help me. So I constantly further investigate the value of these qualities and how to further strengthen them within me. I pay a lot of attention and interest to these issues. I dedicate my life to understanding these qualities more profoundly. Having seen the benefit for myself, I feel it is fitting to share this with you and encourage you to make an attempt to further develop these qualities yourself.

On a practical note, because I work towards maintaining a joyful and a happy state of mind, the consequences are that when I go out for a walk or for a meal or wherever I go in a social gathering many people - outside the immediate circle here, have actually taken to me. They come up to me, compliment me for what I am doing, and acknowledge that I seem to be happy and joyful person. Certain individuals who have become acquainted with me come up to me and ask me how I am. I have lots of friends who would normally

be strangers and have no real connection with otherwise. But these people come up to me and seem to acknowledge something. So this is a practical benefit that I seem to have.

People outside, whom we would normally call strangers, come and acquaint themselves with me. There are also a lot of children who naturally seem to take to me. I have a lot of fondness towards children anyway, but when children see me, they wave and smile and seem to take to me. Then, of course, their parents can't help but to acknowledge that. When their children show some interest they seem to take an interest as well. I can attest to this. Even without any particular attempt to try make friends people naturally come up to me and acknowledge me. What I attribute that to is the fact that I have worked towards developing a sense of joy and happiness within myself. So when I go out, people seem to appreciate and acknowledge that. What I am trying to point out here is that developing these qualities, particularly joyfulness and happiness, within oneself is our best aid and companion, because having cultivated that within oneself friends come up to you naturally anyway. So this is the most valuable companion that one cares for within oneself all the time.

What I am attempting to relate to you is, of course, from my point of view not mere words or mere speculation but a fact that I can attest to from my own experience. When we are able to maintain a clear and bright state of mind and within that clarity the quality of kindness that naturally contributes to joyfulness and happiness we naturally have companions around us. They are naturally drawn towards one and one would not be deprived of friends or companions. So there is no fear of loneliness because true friends and companions will always surround one.

We may however reach a point in life where we begin to feel that we don't have as many friends around us any more and people are shying away or we are beginning to feel the pangs of loneliness a bit. When one investigates this and looks into the cause one might detect that in fact one is losing the genuine qualities of a clear and bright state of mind and kindness and joyfulness within oneself. When those qualities diminish within one, and one is not exhibiting a sense of joyfulness and happiness, then other people will naturally not want to be around us. They will shy away and even if they are around us, because of the lack of sense of joy within oneself, and it seems as if we don't have any friends or companions. We actually bring this upon ourselves and it is through our own mind or attitude that this occurs. Seemingly we lose our outer friends but actually this is because we have lost touch with our inner qualities of happiness and kindness.

Real companions and friends are gained through our inner qualities rather than material means. With wealth and money it is hard to get real, true friends. We might have some people who are interested in us when we have wealth and so forth, but those kinds of friends are questionable. Those who will become our real companions are those who are drawn to us because of our inner qualities and accept us because of that and for who we are. They come about by one having developed these qualities within oneself to begin with. So that is how we need to see the connection between the outer world and our inner world.

I am sharing this with you now out of a genuine concern. I am not trying to just say nice words but rather trying to relate something that you might take heed of and try to implement in your life. I am saying it with the hope that it

will bring about some change and transformation because what I see sometimes really saddens me. When I see someone who has lost a sense of joy and happiness, it's so sad to see a situation where they have unnecessarily brought hardships and difficulties upon themselves. For those who have lost that sense of joy and happiness, everything seems to go wrong in their lives in relation to friends and companions, work or environment. Whatever their surroundings it seems bleak when they have lost these inner qualities within themselves. It saddens me because it is something that can be restored. This sense of joy and happiness is a natural quality we already have and when we seemingly lose it, it has just been weakened temporarily but we can restore it. It is something that can be restored, can be strengthened again.

Of course we all have moments of unhappiness and sadness and we all have moments of happiness as well. These are all part of our being and nature. Just as we are sometimes unhappy and sad we can come out of that. It is only a temporary situation. The genuine nature of oneself, of one's inner being, is that sense of joyfulness that we can maintain. If it were something that we could not maintain or cannot be restored when it seemingly weakens, that would be really unfortunate as there would be nothing we can do about it. However it is possible to restore these qualities and we have the ability. We all have the intelligence and the means to further develop the inner qualities I am presenting. That's why I am sharing this with you and encouraging you to take heed of this.

I have noticed certain people who are seemingly sad or depressed, or who have lost hope in their lives, where everything seems bleak. When I see that particular situation what I have noticed is that this is very much related to certain attitudes that they hold on to in their minds. It is a matter of really changing one's attitude. If one could just detect that it is an attitude that one is holding that is bringing about all of the unwanted or uncomfortable situations then we can change the situation by changing our perspective. It is actually not so difficult. It is not impossible. It is manageable.

Now if the situation of sadness or depression was related to real disasters in life such as being completely deprived of even the basic necessities like clothing, shelter, food and so forth then, of course, one would think that maybe there is reason to be depressed or sad. But this is not the case for most of us. We all have the best of the conditions for our livelihood. Now when we find ourselves being sad or uncomfortable or disturbed if we really look at it, the solution is a matter of changing our attitude. I have noticed that sometimes people are not willing to change their attitude, or are not willing to endure some sort of hardship, or be a little patient with the situation. Lack of patience or willingness to transform and change is what I feel prevents one from feeling the real sense of joy and well being within oneself. So this is something that you could investigate.

So the main point I have been emphasising is that the qualities of a clear and focussed mind, kindness, joy and happiness are born within us. We all have these qualities, but if we neglect them by not paying attention and nourishing and further developing them, then there's a danger of them slowly diminishing within oneself. So we need to protect those qualities within us.

Having mentioned that, we come to the relevance of meditation because meditation is basically a technique that

helps one to protect and further develop all those good qualities within oneself. The way that meditation protects one is firstly, on a very basic level, by helping one to maintain a clear mind. The lack of that is what is actually causing the disturbance within one. An unfocused mind allows our mind to be completely distracted and carried away with so many kinds of distractions. The technique of meditation is a way to intentionally bring our focus and attention upon a specific object. Doing that helps to clear the mind of all forms of distraction. As we adopt this meditation technique of focussing on the chosen object, our mind becomes naturally clearer. It distils the negativity from our mind and we get in touch again with the real nature of ourselves, a clear and bright state of mind and a sense of joy within us. So this is how the meditation technique is a relevant practice for us.

As I have mentioned regularly, one practical benefit of maintaining a joyful and happy state of mind is that it will have a natural, good effect on our health. When we are in a happy and joyful state of mind our health becomes quite sound and good. There is definitely a direct relationship between a contented and happy mind and good, sound physical health. So we can see how, on a practical level, we need to maintain a sense of joy and happiness within us. This comes with the clarity and brightness of the mind. So the technique of meditation involves distancing ourselves, temporarily withdrawing our mind from all forms of distractions and placing it upon a chosen object. When we keep our full attention and focus on the chosen object of our meditation our mind naturally becomes clearer and brighter. That becomes the attitude or the quality that will then lead us to further develop positive qualities within our mind.

We come across some elderly people who boast about their well being and their good health and so forth. I know of someone who is 93 years old and in good health. He boasts about his good health and says that he has been in good health because he has led a happy life. 'I have a joyful and happy life and I have not abused my body with substances such as drugs, drinking or smoking. It is because of that I have a happy and joyful life and I am in good health now.' It very well may be, as they claim, that this is the reason for them to be in good health. I say that it is definitely is because of their maintaining a happy and joyful mind. That is something that we also need to take into account for one's own well-being.

Meditation is a technique where we intentionally distance our mind from all forms of distractions, all sorts of superstitious thoughts. For the period of meditation we need not be concerned about any kind of thoughts, whether they are good or bad thoughts. We temporarily withdraw from all forms of thought and other distraction and just bring our full attention and focus within ourselves. So the first part of the process of meditation is to bring our focus within and to settle within oneself.

Having brought our focus and attention within ourselves the object that we choose to focus on for our meditation here is our own breath. We keep our full attention and focus on our breathing, being fully aware and mindful on each in-breath and out-breath. When we adopt this sincerely we have to make the commitment to keep a one-hundred-percent focus on our breath itself and not allow our mind to be distracted and influenced by other thoughts. If we noticed our mind is distracted we bring it back on the breath itself. When we spend even a few minutes very sincerely in this way, we will notice the immediate effect is that our mind will naturally be

at ease. Calmness will occur within oneself and that is because our mind is being released or relieved from all the forms of distraction that are constantly bombarding it. When our mind is released from that pressure we also get a feeling of relief within us. We can adopt this technique for the next few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

That will be sufficient for now. It would be really beneficial to adopt a meditation practice, just as we have attempted in our short session now, for even a few minutes in one's daily life. If one can keep some consistency in one's practice one will begin to see the real benefits.

To summarise, the main point I was making earlier is that what we need as a true companion, the most valuable thing that we need to cherish within ourselves, is a clear mind imbued with kindness. That can then lead to a joyful and happy state of mind. That then needs to be complemented with intelligence or wisdom that can see the need and the way to maintain the clarity and kindness and joyfulness within one. If we begin to see that those qualities are beginning to weaken within us then our wisdom or intelligence will be able to understand how to further strengthen and cultivate those qualities. Meditation is a means to cultivate, protect and maintain one's qualities. That, in summary, is what I have been relating to you.

We don't have that much time left so we can either just continue in the text or if you have any questions I am happy to address that as well. If you have any questions you may raise your hand. If you don't have any questions we can continue with the text. So, if there are no questions it will be easier for me to teach from the text, rather than to have to address questions that might be difficult.

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 in which the highest intention and the awakening mind are the effects of compassion

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.2.1. Doubts

In the text we have come to the second division from an earlier category: The way in which the highest intention and the awakening mind are effects of compassion. That is subdivided into two explanations: doubts or qualms, and response.

The text reads:

Qualm: Once you develop compassion through a gradual training of the mind, you generate the desire to attain buddhahood for the sake for all living beings. This should be enough. Why is it necessary to have the step of developing a whole-hearted resolve [also translated as *superior intention*] in between developing compassion and generating the awakening mind?

We can further clarify this qualm. As mentioned in our previous session there are stages in the way to develop the special state of mind called the awakening mind or bodhichitta. The stages are recognising all beings as being

like one's mother, remembering their kindness, developing a wish to repay their kindness, followed by developing heart-warming love towards all beings, followed by developing compassion towards all beings. When one has reached that stage of developing compassion towards all living beings, one has reached the stage where one wishes all beings to be endowed with happiness and to be free of all sufferings and the wish to achieve enlightenment for that sake. The qualm here is, shouldn't compassion be sufficient for developing the awakening mind? Why is there a step before developing the awakening mind that is called superior intention? That is the question.

So that is the doubt that is raised. The response is again subdivided into two. The first subdivision is: Although one may have immeasurable compassion, they might not possess the highest intention to assume the load of freeing beings from their sufferings.

The text explains:

Reply: Although the trainees called the hearers and solitary realisers have immeasurable love and compassion whereby they think 'if only beings could have happiness and be free from sufferings' these non-Mahayana followers do not think 'I will take on the responsibility to remove the suffering and provide happiness for all living beings'. So therefore you must develop the whole hearted resolve [superior intention] that surpasses all other courageous hearts.

As explained here in the text, although the trainees called hearers and solitary realisers do have immeasurable compassion for all living beings they don't have that particular thought or commitment of taking the responsibility upon oneself to free all beings.

To further understand the point being presented in the text, one needs to recall that one develops unbiased love and compassion for all living beings in a sequential manner. It is unbiased in the sense that it is focussed. Love means the spontaneous altruistic wish for any living being, not leaving out even a single living being, who is deprived of happiness to be happy. Compassion arises when we see any living being suffering and form the spontaneous, altruistic wish for them to be free from suffering.

In this process when love and compassion is developed, there is also great love and great compassion, because it is focused on all beings who are deprived of happiness and experiencing various types of suffering, without bias or discrimination wishing all beings to be endowed with happiness and free from suffering. That, of course, is a very altruistic and noble thought or wish. However the reason why the awakening mind has not yet developed within that person is because they lack the personal responsibility for bringing about happiness for all beings and removing suffering from all beings. When that is not developed then the extra or superior intention is lacking. The moment when one develops that personal responsibility of taking it upon oneself to bring about happiness for all beings and engaging in ways to remove or relieve all beings from suffering is when superior intention has been developed within one's mind.

What is referred to here as superior intention or extra thought is that personal responsibility that one takes upon oneself to bestow happiness on all living beings, not leaving any single living being out. One takes on that personal responsibility of thinking, 'I myself, alone, will take upon

this responsibility of bringing all beings to happiness and removing every type of suffering or misery there ever is. I will take the responsibility of freeing them from that misery'. So this superior intention is a resolve to take this responsibility upon oneself regardless of whether there are others helping or not. When one has made the commitment of taking that responsibility upon oneself in this way then that is called superior intention. This step is the final stage of developing the awakening mind within oneself.

The point at which the altruistic mind develops even further and becomes the basis for the awakening mind to be developed within oneself occurs when one takes the personal responsibility upon oneself and develops a very heart-felt unceasing spontaneous wish, not just a randomly occurring wish. That is the responsibility of, 'I, myself, will take upon this to free all beings from all suffering and to place them in ultimate happiness'.

Now when one has reached that point of developing such a noble and superior intention within oneself, one will then, of course, come to consider the reality of one's own situation and whether one has that ability now. So when one questions whether one is able to do that right now, the reality of one's own situation of not having the full potential and ability to do that dawns upon oneself. Even the hearer and solitary realiser trainees who have actually reached their ultimate personal goals of self-liberation and freedom from personal suffering don't have the ability to free all beings from suffering and lead them to happiness. Even though they are not suffering themselves they don't have the full ability to free all other beings from suffering. So, when investigated in this way and in accordance with the explanations of the teachings; one investigates as to who may have that kind of ability. How could one possibly get that ability for oneself?

When one reflects on this and understands the qualities of an enlightened being, a buddha, one comes to understand that it is only a buddha, a fully enlightened being, who has the full capacity to free all beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. Only a buddha is free from all negativities, endowed with all positive qualities, has an omniscient mind and is completely free from all defilements. Every stain is completely overcome. Reaching such a state of buddhahood or enlightenment is the only ultimate way to benefit other beings. 'When I reach that state, then I will have the full capacity to help sentient beings, to free them from suffering and to lead them to a state of happiness.' Until and unless one reached enlightenment one could not possibly fully benefit others because one would have some taints of negativities within oneself. If one has not purified oneself completely then one naturally lacks the capacity to fully help others to be free from suffering because of the subtle defilements one lacks omniscience. So reaching the stage of an enlightened being, which is a completely exalted and pure state, is the ultimate state. When one develops the intention to achieve enlightenment for the sake of living beings to free living beings from suffering and leading them to happiness, one has reached the point of developing the awakened mind, or bodhichitta, within oneself.

The analogy used is to have a piece of meat for a meal. We have to first nourish ourselves before we can help others. This analogy comes from a story. The story is that, at a certain time, a country was experiencing drought and famine and people were deprived of food and everyone was becoming very weak and on the verge of perishing

completely. The father of one family found a piece of meat. When he found the meat his first thought was to divide it between his big family. It dawned upon him that if he were to divide the meat between his relatives and family each might get a small piece that would not be sufficient to nourish anyone. It occurred to the father that if he consumed the meat himself he would gain the strength and nourishment to go out and find the means to provide sufficiently for his whole family and relatives. Of course some may feel that the father is a tricky person who wanted the meat for himself. But in reality by eating the meat and nourishing his own body he then had the capacity, strength and energy to go out and provide for his family and feed the rest of his relatives.

We can use that analogy in relation to helping other sentient beings. One can only get the full ability and capacity to free all beings from suffering and lead them to happiness when one's own mind is completely free from even the tiniest defilements and negativities that are the causes of suffering. Only when one has reached the complete state of purity will one have the full capacity and ability to help other beings. So it is in that regard that one aims towards reaching enlightenment, becoming a buddha, for the sole purpose of benefiting other sentient beings.

Before we conclude for the evening, we can again spend a few moments in meditation. We adjust ourselves to find a comfortable and relaxed posture. Again we make a full commitment to withdraw our mind from all forms of distractions and this time as we bring our focus inwards the object that we will place our focus upon will be the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As we hear the sound of the mantra, we try to place our full attention and focus on the sound itself and when the recitation stops we can maintain that attention and focus on the residue of the sound for a few moments. In that way our practice becomes a full practice of meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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