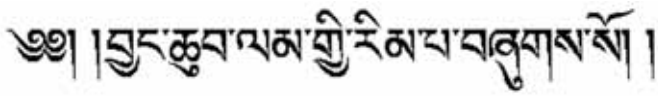

The Condensed Lam Rim



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Since we are all meditators gathered here, it is appropriate that we spend some time for meditation. However it is also important that we gain a good understanding about the meditation technique. Thus, it is appropriate that we discuss the subject first. If we were business people gathering then naturally we would talk about business.

The first thing we need to do to be able to meditate is to adjust our physical posture so it is relaxed and comfortable. As one secures a comfortable posture it is equally important to set a calm mind. The significance of ensuring that we are physically as well as mentally relaxed, is that it is this combination that allows us to find real well-being and happiness. It is essential that we use the combination of mental and physical calmness as the means for real happiness. As we adopt a relaxed physical posture we ensure that our mind is also relaxed and then focus on the essential points of our well-being.

If we don't apply that measure from the outset we might find ourselves in the situation where we are physically relaxed but, because our mind is constantly habituated to being agitated and distracted, the distracted mind will take over and we are still unsettled and not really joyful, happy or settled. What we end up finding is that while the physical body may be relaxed and in a meditative position, the mind is completely distracted, and that is what causes the troubled mind. If we don't do something about bringing our mind to where we are physically settled, then that habituation of the mind being completely overwhelmed with distractions will just continue.

We can definitely achieve something if we can apply a technique to ensure that our mind is centred, where we are physically relaxed. If we pay attention and make it a commitment and determination to apply a technique to settle or centre our mind while we are physically relaxed we can learn from that and we can begin to get in touch with the potential of our mind. We can begin to see that our mind has the ability to be focused and centred, and within that it is possible to achieve a real sense of well-being and calmness within oneself. That is something that we will be able to discover and achieve when we are able to do that.

Through this process of applying the technique of centring the mind we will begin to discover that the mind does become calm and more settled. That calm mind naturally brings a genuinely relaxed state of mind. When we begin to experience that for ourselves we will begin to appreciate that we have the potential for well-being and that a sense of genuine well-being is within our reach. If

we can obtain the outcome where our mind is not only calm and relaxed, but also feels quite peaceful then that is a genuinely good outcome for our well-being. So, at this stage, if we can begin to have an inkling that a genuinely calm and relaxed state of mind would be a really good state to achieve, then we can begin to relate to the significance of the practice of meditation and how meditation can help to bring this about.

The opposite of this is a situation where, while we may try to relax physically, the mind is in turmoil. If we find that this is true for ourselves the reason is that our mind is being influenced by the delusions. Our mind is being completely distracted with external, worldly affairs and that is what causes us to feel unsettled. If, while the mind is focused outward or inclined to looking outward, it was able to focus on a particular external thing that might have its own benefits. What we find, however, is that it never really settles on anything specific for too long. It keeps changing, it keeps moving and it is never really settled. It's never focused on one particular thing.

If we were to investigate and check for ourselves how our mind works it becomes apparent to us that our mind is never focused on one particular thing. Even when we are focused outward our focus keeps rapidly changing from one thing to the next. The constant changing from one thing to another is what is causing all the agitation in the mind. The usual analogy I use to illustrate our state of mind is a small piece of paper that is blown around by a gust of wind. When there's a breeze or some wind a small piece of paper naturally can't stay still. It keeps moving around. Eventually it may come into a corner of a room where the wind is not able to move it any more, and it is stuck in the corner.

That illustration of being stuck in a corner is exactly what happens with our mind. Sometimes, as a result of having been completely distracted and focused outward and moving from one thing to another, we eventually come to a point where, like a piece of paper stuck in a corner, we feel completely stuck in a corner and feel very gloomy and completely depleted, or completely lose our self-confidence or self-esteem.. That's what eventually seems to happen in that state of mind. There are some people who might have quite a bit of space in their living area but who prefer to go into the corner and cover themselves up and just gloomily sit there.

If we investigate we will find that that this outcome of feeling completely overwhelmed, confused and gloomy comes as a result of an overly excited and distracted mind. If the mind is constantly jumping from one thing to another and is not focused on one thing, then this is what brings that about. When we investigate how the mind comes into that state of turmoil we will notice that it is because the mind is completely distracted, overwhelmed, with the distractions.

When we notice that for ourselves we will start to appreciate a technique that offers the ways and means to settle one's mind. The way to bring about a calm and relaxed mind is by having a focused mind. This is completely contrary to a mind that is continually overwhelmed with distractions. One begins to appreciate this technique when one experiences for oneself how,

when one applies the technique of focusing one's mind on particular objects and intentionally not allowing one's mind to be distracted, one's mind naturally settles down. It actually settles down and that happens because we are intentionally not allowing the mind to be influenced by external distractions and bringing our focus inward. As a result of that one experiences a genuine sense of well-being and calmness within oneself.

The practice of meditation is a technique to keep our mind focused on a particular object. The positive consequences or results of meditation are experienced in this very life; it is not something just to be experienced in a future life. The positive consequences can be experienced in this very life; within a short time—within this very year, not only within this year but within this very month, this very week, this very day, this very hour, this very moment. Thus, when we apply the technique we actually get an immediate result. This is something we are able to experience for ourselves when we apply the technique.

Many of you have attested to this fact when you have confided in me. You have mentioned to me yourselves that if you apply the meditation technique in the morning before going to work, even for a few minutes, there's a big difference in that day. One feels much calmer and more relaxed that day. When one goes to work or goes out in one's daily life there is a big difference compared to if one has not applied the meditation technique in the morning. This is something that many of you have confided to me. So that, in itself, explains the benefits of applying the technique.

There is another way to illustrate how our mind has a natural tendency to be calm but, because we allow it to be distracted with different kind of influences, it starts getting into turmoil. When we wake up in the morning our mind, because it is coming out of a state of where it is not consciously thinking about anything in particular, is not in turmoil. But if moment after we wake up we start thinking about different things, our daily lives or whatever, our mind starts getting disturbed and troubled. But prior to that, in the first moment when we wake up, our mind was in quite a clear state.

That's why I regularly encourage people to try to utilise that first moment after we wake in a naturally calm and clear state in a positive way. For those who have a meditation practice that is, of course, a good time to meditate. It is a good time to use whatever technique to have a focused mind. It could even be some sort of music or some sort of prayer or song or something you can think about; something that can anchor your mind and keep it focused. If one were to apply that technique when the mind is quite clear and fresh then that positive habituation will allow the mind to be stronger and more focused in the long term.

To make one's meditation practice effective, one needs to be really committed to the practice. Even if it is for only a short time one needs to give one's full commitment to it. That is done by intentionally withdrawing one's mind temporarily from all concerns. The particular things that one needs to be aware of are those things that, as soon as they occur to our mind, cause us to feel troubled or

agitated. Whatever it may be, we can all identify a certain situation, a memory or object that, as soon as it occurs to our mind, causes us to feel agitated and troubled. So those are the critical things that we intentionally try to withdraw from and try not to let preoccupy and upset our mind. The more we indulge in that, the more it troubles us.

Therefore, for our meditation to be effective, we withdraw our mind completely from all forms of thoughts, distractions and so forth and bring it inward, within ourselves. Then, having brought our focus inward within ourselves, we become fully aware of ourselves here, in this room, sitting on our seat. Then, having brought our attention inward, focusing it within ourselves, we place it upon the specific object we choose to meditate on. Here that object is the breath. The breath, I find and it is mentioned in the teachings, is a very appropriate and significant object to focus on for a mind that is very distracted—a beginner's mind. This is quite simple to present. We are all familiar with our breath and it's simple for you and simple for me because I don't have to give elaborate explanations about what is basically one's own breath. So we place our full focus or attention on this simple, effective and appropriate object. For the next few minutes we will apply this technique with a full commitment to the best of our ability. (*Pause for meditation.*)

It can definitely be beneficial if we can apply the meditation technique that we have attempted now in our short session on a regular basis in our daily life.

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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2. The actual training in the stages

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1. Training the mind to strive for the welfare of others

We need to try to cover some material from the text. We have come to a topic where the actual training of developing the awakening mind in stages is described. The stages here refer to the seven causes of developing the awakening mind that were explained earlier. Those seven causes are to be developed in stages.

This topic 'The actual training in the stages' is explained within three sub-divisions. The first is 'Training the mind to strive for the welfare of others'. The second is 'Training the mind to strive for enlightenment'. The third is 'The effect of that training', which is the wakening mind itself. What is being explained in these three sub-divisions is that to develop the causes of an awakening mind one needs first to know how to train one's mind to work for the welfare of others. Then, following that, one trains the mind to strive for enlightenment and, following that, one develops the awakening mind itself.

What is being explained under the first heading, 'Training the mind to strive for the welfare of others', is that one needs to identify the main states of mind to be cultivated as an aid to working for the welfare and benefit of others. These are the three main states of mind that were presented earlier. They are the love that sees other beings as appealing, i.e. heart-warming love, followed by a feeling of compassion towards others and then the superior intention.

As presented earlier, *heart-warming love* is an unbiased love towards others that sees others as appealing to one and when one sees others as genuinely appealing then naturally one would have the wish for others to be happy. When they appeal to us, we naturally want them to be happy. What is specifically mentioned here is a heart-warming love, an attitude of wishing others to be happy. That is how love is defined. *Compassion*, which will be explained even further in more detail, is a state of mind of wishing others to be free of suffering. That is how compassion is defined in the Buddhist teachings. When one does not wish to see others suffering and wishes them to be free from suffering, that is an attitude of compassion. *Superior intention* is an intention that takes upon oneself the personal responsibility of bringing others into happiness and freeing them from suffering.

One can see how incredibly precious and worthy these states of mind are. Heart-warming love, followed by compassion, and particularly the superior intention are an incredible way to benefit others. When we have those genuine attitudes towards others then the wish to benefit others comes naturally and spontaneously.

One needs to understand that what the teachings describe as heart-warming love or great love as it is also called, is a love that transcends what we would normally call love. It transcends what we normally call love because heart-warming love towards all beings is not tainted with even the slightest attraction or attachment towards the other. It only has the wish to benefit others and has no attachment or attraction to others. It's hard, however, to really ensure that the love that we express as ordinary people is without attachment. Heart-warming love, as well as true compassion, is without any of the stains or defilements of attachment.

True love, as it is explained in the teachings, is a love that transcends mere fascination with the other and mere attraction to the other's looks and so forth. Rather it is a love that is expressed out of a genuine concern for the other's well-being. When love is expressed with that genuine concern in mind, the concern of how one could actually help the other to be happy and free of suffering, there's no question about the other naturally appreciating that. There would be no hesitation for the other to appreciate that because with that sort of love they would not even have the taint of wishing to harm the other. The only wish would be to help the other because it stems from a genuine concern for their well-being and for them to be happy and not experience suffering. How could the thought of wishing to harm them come with that feeling of love? That's how we can see that such an attitude of love is extremely worthwhile and precious.

We can relate this to ourselves. When someone expresses genuine concern for our well-being, and we know from our experience that this person has a genuine concern, and it is not because they are merely attracted to us or fascinated with us then how much appreciation do we feel for the other person? We can validate that kind of love from our own experience. Whoever it may be, when we have an experience of others having a genuine concern for our well-being we know for ourselves how much we appreciate that person and it is because of that genuine concern that they have for us. Therefore it is based on these altruistic wishes and attitudes that have a practical benefit that it is emphasised that we need to develop such an attitude.

Now of course, for us beginners to be completely free of attachment, having no attachment in our relationships, is quite difficult and it would be farfetched to assume that we could have relationships based on a genuine concern without any sense of attachment. However, what I am saying now and in my regular teachings and advice to you is emphasising that we need to strive to perfect our love for others. Even though it may have been based on a general attraction or attachment, try to transcend that to make the level of genuine concern stronger and have a genuine concern for the other's well-being. Start to reduce the attachment or mere attraction to them. If one feels that they have love for the other, then try to make it a more genuine love. Then that becomes really worthwhile and in any relationship that is something that can be developed. Mere attraction and fascination fades away anyway, but if one strives to develop genuine love and concern that will be maintained and become stronger.

It is hard for us to understand the love that sees others as appealing, without attachment, as described in the teachings. In our mind it might be hard to accept that. If others appeal to us we might equate that to the other's attractive looks and we might wonder how we can develop a genuine love towards someone who is attractive. We need, however, to understand the real implication of seeing that they are appealing not because of mere attraction but for who they are, for what they stand for as a human being, and taking their well-being into account and seeing them as appealing and developing a genuine concern for them. That is what one needs to understand from what is presented here.

It is because of the great, unimaginable value of the genuine concern, what we call an expression of true love which comes from a genuine concern, that I emphasise it again and again. It's extremely important that we cherish our friends and partners and companions who have that genuine concern for us. It is really important that we cherish and protect those relationships with others who have that genuine concern for us, because those who have that genuine concern for us will not forsake us at a time of difficulties, unlike someone who may be expressing concern or a love that arises out of mere attraction and attachment.

It is, in fact, at times of great difficulty and hardship that the level of another's love and concern for ones is shown. When in times of difficulty others start to shy away, that is a true sign that their so-called concern and love is

superficial and just on the surface. Whereas those who come to our aid and are particularly concerned when we have difficulties are the ones who have genuine concern and love for us. So we need to distinguish between the mere fascination of others towards us and the true love that others have for us, and cherish those who have a genuine concern for us, whoever they may be.

Now I personally feel that if others shy away when we're having difficulties and problems it is a marker that there is a mere attraction, a mere fascination, for us. Then I feel that it's okay that they leave. If someone walks away when we are having difficulties it might be worth losing such a person who never had true love for us to begin with. If the love they were showing us was based on either our temporary physical attraction or maybe our influence or our wealth, then let it be if we lose such people, particularly during times of hardship, because they are going to forsake us sooner or later anyway. Those are the ones who will not really come to our aid, and who are not really a true companion when we need them. So if they shy away, even when some temporary minor difficulty arises, don't be too sad about that. It might be worth it.

Whereas with those who show genuine concern for you, recognise them and cherish them and try to hold them dear and express genuine concern in return, because you can only receive true love from others when you start to express true love yourself. It's a mutual expression. So the best way to appreciate and cherish others who are showing genuine love and concern for you is to develop a genuine love and concern for them in return. When that is done on a mutual level it will withstand any kind of hardship or difficulty and you know that to the best of each other's abilities you will be there to help each other. That is why I say we should cherish true friends. That is what is really important in one's life, which is why I keep emphasising it.

The reason why I emphasise the importance of paying attention to developing a genuine true sense love and concern for others is because we already have the basis of love and compassion within ourselves, within our heart. Each and every one of us already has those qualities; they are inborn qualities that we all have. It is a matter of recognising and further strengthening those qualities within us. If these were qualities that we lacked then it might not be reasonable to emphasise this.

The whole purpose of meditation comes down to developing and further strengthening those qualities. There are many different types and techniques of meditation. But when it comes to the essence of a technique, if it doesn't contribute to developing love and compassion then it doesn't carry much weight. But when it does, we need to recognise what it is meant for and go to the main source itself, love and compassion, recognise it within oneself and work towards developing it further.

That's not something that is beyond our capacity because we already possess those qualities within us. Now, as mentioned earlier, those qualities might be a bit tainted now, they might be a little bit biased, and we might not feel the same kind of genuine concern and compassion towards all. However, that is why the teachings are here.

They are presenting ways and techniques to transform our biased love and compassion for others, our tainted love that is mixed with a bit of attachment, into genuine love and compassion towards others. This is the whole point of the text and what is being presented here. It is about working on the values that you already have, and further developing them to perfect them. That is the point.

We cannot underestimate the great value of love and compassion because ultimately we are the real beneficiary of expressing true love and compassion for others. So, we do love ourselves and have a concern for ourselves. What the teachings have presented is that the best way to gain genuine well-being and happiness for ourselves is by expressing genuine concern, love and compassion towards others. By genuinely expressing that towards others we benefit ourselves.

We are the immediate beneficiary and there are many different ways that we can see how true that is. Someone who expresses genuine concern, true love and compassion for others will naturally be liked and appreciated by others. That is just the superficial level of the benefit. On a deeper level it brings a genuine sense of well-being and happiness within one's own mind. So it's not as if one is neglecting oneself and forsaking one's own well-being by trying to be there just for other's sake. Rather we ourselves get the benefit from expressing genuine love and compassion for others.

Therefore it is valuable for our own well-being to consider these points. I also mentioned earlier that in expressing genuine love and concern with others we can also sometimes have a good time. We can get together and know that can be all, but we can still enjoy our lives with a genuine sense of companionship and concern for others. In that way, we can enjoy our time with others in a much more meaningful way.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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