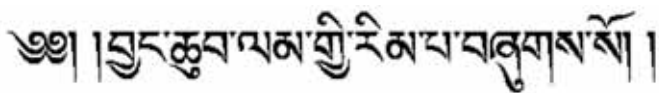


---

## The Condensed Lam Rim



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 April 2012

---

Let us adopt a comfortable and relaxed posture suitable for meditation. Then, we should bring to mind that one of the purposes of engaging in the practice of meditation is that it serves as a technique to protect one's mind. We are protecting the good qualities in our mind, such as a kind and considerate attitude towards others and, primarily, a happy state of mind within us. As mentioned regularly, these good qualities such as kindness, a genuine consideration for others and a happy, peaceful mind are the most valuable resources that we have in our life.

Let us now consider the consequences of not protecting our mind. If we were not diligent in protecting our mind, we would find that our mind would be bombarded with many different unwanted thoughts, uneasy and uncomfortable feelings and emotions. These uncomfortable thoughts and feelings would dominate our mind. When our mind is completely dominated by unpleasant states of mind such as worries, fears and anxieties, it is extremely difficult for it to be genuinely calm, peaceful and happy.

We all have the experience of a disturbed state of mind that is influenced by all sorts of negativities. We need to look into how these negativities arise in the mind and how our mind is influenced by them. We can explain this process in a very practical and easily comprehensible way. If we focus on objects that cause a disturbance to arise within ourselves then, naturally, the consequence is that our mind will be dominated by these disturbances.

We can use an even simpler analogy or illustration of how this can occur on a regular basis. We can all detect for ourselves that there are certain objects or situations that, as soon as they come to mind, cause uneasiness in our mind. Our mind becomes very unsettled or heavy or feels a bit depressed for as long as we think about that object or situation. So that is how our mind is influenced in relation to an object. If we really pay attention to our mind it will become clearer and more evident that this is how it is affected. So, simply explained, the disturbance in our mind arises because of the fault of not being able to maintain our focus within, and allowing our mind to be completely distracted.

The way to reverse that situation, whereby our mind is immersed in distractions and becomes troubled, is to intentionally bring our focus within. Having brought our focus within, we choose an object to focus on that is either a virtuous object or a neutral object—that which does not cause the delusions to arise within us. When we place our full attention and focus on that object then, during that time our mind is definitely free from manifesting levels of disturbance or the delusions. This occurs because, when our mind is completely focused on one object, it cannot pay attention to anything else at the same time. Our mind does not have the capacity to focus on different objects at one

time. So, focusing on a virtuous or neutral object will not allow the mind to be influenced by the delusions.

The more we familiarise ourselves with this technique of focusing on a virtuous or neutral object as a way to develop a steady, concentrated mind, the more we allow our mind to be settled and focussed. Thus, the mind will naturally gain the ability to become stable and steady. When the mind becomes stable and steady it will not be easily influenced by other disturbances, regardless of our external situation.

The alternative to this is having mind that is easily influenced by whatever is going on around us. As we can observe for ourselves, when we have a very distracted mind and our attention is completely dispersed, we experience chaos and a lot of anxiety. At these times we are prone to making mistakes because we are not focussed, and our mind is not steady and stable. We seem to misplace things easily or things don't work out well. The mind is affected in that way.

We all wish to have a settled and calm mind and, more importantly, we all want to have a happy mind. That is something that we all wish for. But we need to understand that that does not just come about naturally. Especially when our mind is familiar with distractions, we need to train it to become steady and calm and that will then naturally lead to a happier and more joyous mind. When we pay attention to our mind we will be able to detect for ourselves that the anxieties, fears and worries that arise in our mind are very dependent on our attitudes, the way we normally think, and the way we allow our mind to be completely dispersed and distracted.

We also need to identify the good qualities that we already possess. We all have the natural ability to focus and pay attention. We are all born with a natural sense of joy and happiness; we all have that to a certain level. At best, we need to further cultivate and develop these positive qualities that we already have or, at the very least, we need to protect what we already have. This is extremely important for one's own wellbeing and it is our responsibility to protect and maintain what we all already have. If we let our good qualities decay, then life can start to become quite unpleasant and miserable. That would be a great loss.

The main point that is being emphasised is that we need to be very diligent in protecting the positive qualities that we have, particularly our happy, and joyous state of mind. As I regularly mention, I find from my own experience that a joyous and happy mind is one of the most valuable assets I have. This is evident through my interaction with others in my everyday life. It is the most valuable asset because it comes to our aid at all times, wherever we are. If we have developed that within ourselves then, wherever we happen to be, we carry that prized possession with us. By the same token if we were to lose that then it would be a great loss, or a great lost! (*laughter*). So it is in our interest that we pay attention to protecting the good valuable asset that we have within ourselves, which is a joyous and happy mind. This is something that I emphasise again and again because it is something that it is really worthwhile for us to consider for our wellbeing.

As I have also mentioned previously, if I were given a choice between two different people, one extremely wealthy but not necessarily very happy, and another person who doesn't have much wealth but is very joyous and happy, I would choose a happy and joyous person over a rich person. If one gains riches by being with a rich person but does not gain

---

---

happiness then what use is that? That is how we need to think about it. By choosing a happy and joyous person we might not get material possessions and wealth but we gain access to a happy and joyous state of mind. I personally would choose a genuinely happy person and I guess you would also consider that for yourself.

Now I wouldn't blame those who might choose wealth over a happy state of mind. From a worldly perspective, without prior experience or knowledge, on the surface it may seem that one would not be happy without wealth. One may think, 'How could we really be happy without money?' From a worldly perspective the natural equation is that wealth equals happiness. With wealth you can buy the things that you need and this can make you happy. However if one pays closer attention we would notice that wealth does not really equal happiness.

If I probe further into worldly perception it appears to me that the worldly perception is that with sufficient wealth it is possible to find a very attractive, young partner (*laughter*). Without wealth it might be very difficult to find a suitable young, good-looking partner. Even though people might not admit that to me personally, when I look around and observe your situation, it seems to be quite evident that many carry this notion in their mind.

It seems that the reason certain individuals suffer from loneliness is not just because they haven't met someone else. Once when I was teaching at the Chenrezig Institute in Queensland, a lady came up to me during lunch and confided that she was feeling very lonely and unhappy. Even though she didn't explain the reasons in detail, she seemed very unhappy. I tried to share some very practical advice with her at one point saying, 'Have you considered maybe finding a partner?' She then said, 'Actually I have been married four times.' (*laughter*). So my suggestion wasn't really appropriate for her. If she had already had four relationships but failed, then I guess the suggestion to be with someone wasn't really helpful. She was relating her angst of being alone and feeling loneliness, and that is why I made that suggestion.

However, as one who has never married, I can say that I have never experienced loneliness. As I have shared in the past, I am an example of someone who has had to leave everything behind. At a quite young age I had to leave my home, my dear family, my friends and my relatives. I did not have many possessions but whatever I would have considered as my belongings, I had to leave it all completely behind. The only thing that I possess that saved me from feeling lonely, distraught and unhappy was a happy state of mind. When I look back that is the only possession that has assisted throughout my journey in life. Having left my home and then left my country and come to a completely foreign place and having made this journey alone, all that was with me at all times was a happy state of mind. I attribute my well being, my lack of feeling lonely and feeling quite joyous and in good shape, to the happy state of mind. That is why I share this story again and again. I try to encourage others with my own experience that a happy and joyous mind is something really valuable. Now if you feel that money and wealth have more value and that is your primary interest then, of course, my advice might not be so relevant.

If we wish for genuine wellbeing and happiness then the way to go about achieving that is by constantly checking one's own mind—one's intentions, one's motive and one's attitudes. One also constantly tries to avert negative

attitudes and unwanted states of mind and tries to cultivate the positives within oneself. If one lapses or does not maintain a constant vigilance over one's state of mind then that is when we are easily influenced by negativities, fears, anxieties and so forth. Thus, if we maintain a grip on our state of mind and are vigilant or aware at all times that will assist us.

If our primary focus is on maintaining positive states of mind and a happy joyous mind through developing the qualities of kindness and so forth, and we do gain wealth and sufficient external conditions through our work, then these will assist us to further enhance our joy and happiness rather than destroying it and becoming a hindrance. At the end of the day the reason we work so hard and put so much energy into studying, acquiring a good job and amassing possessions and wealth is so that we will be happy. That is the main purpose. It would be a shame if, after having put so much time and energy into acquiring possessions, rather than giving us happiness it actually destroys it. If we pay attention and don't lose sight of our primary focus and what we need to be working on, which is our state of mind, then good external conditions can be a way to further enhance our joy and happiness. That is possible.

I can relate an example of how it is possible for the kind of attitude we adopt to overcome worries. This is a story that I have related in the past and I bring it up whenever it is relevant and useful. We can learn a lot from each other's life stories. This particular story is about the time when we escaped from Tibet in 1959 and had to cross the Himalayas to come to India. This is a very arduous and long journey and we travelled in different groups. This story was related to me by one of the senior monks of the monastery, Geshe Kachen. Being a senior geshe, Geshe Kachen, had five or six other students along with him. He was, of course, responsible for their wellbeing. When they were escaping Geshe Kachen started to become worried that they would run out of provisions. All they had was a little *tsampa* (ground roasted barley) and that was slowly being used up. So Geshe Kachen was getting worried and he started to voice his worries, 'What should we do now, our provisions are running out?' Among his students there was a monk called Pempa, and he said to Geshe Kachen, 'Teacher, why should we worry too much? There is really no need to worry too much because wherever we are going to end up will be a country where the people will be eating. They will have food to eat. We will end up the same place as them and we will end up eating the food that they eat. We will be provided with whatever they eat. So there is no need to worry, is there?'

Geshe Kachen later related to me that this was really useful advice from his own student. It really helped his mind and, of course, it was true. We ended up in India after the long escape and sure enough we were given Indian rice and dhal to eat, and that sustained us and kept us going. The worry and fears of Geshe Kachen were relieved by a comment from one of his own students. I have similar stories about how even a student can sometimes make sincere suggestions to their teacher that can help and benefit them in many ways. I have many stories like that, but we will leave them for another time.

To summarise the main points, we can consider our own situation and ask ourselves, 'Do I want to be a good person?' and if the answer is, 'Yes, I want to be a good person.' then the way to become a good person would be to develop kindness in one's heart. When one develops genuine

kindness one naturally becomes a good person. If we ask ourselves, 'Do I need well being?' and the answer is, 'Yes, I need to have wellbeing' then the method to achieve that is to develop joy and happiness in one's heart and one's mind. When one has a happy and joyous mind then one will naturally have wellbeing. The way to obtain genuine kindness and genuine happiness is through the technique of meditation. So that summarises the purpose of meditation.

We can again adopt for a few minutes the appropriate posture for the practise of meditation. Having adopted the appropriate posture, which is an upright but comfortable and relaxed posture, the next step mentioned in the teachings is having a good motivation. So that implies that prior to engaging in meditation we need to ensure that our intention, our motivation, for doing the practise is secure in the most positive way. The most positive motivation that we can develop is when we take upon ourselves the plight of all sentient beings who are suffering and in need of happiness, and cultivate the motivation, 'May my meagre attempts at practising meditation become the ways and means to bring about happiness for other beings. May I be able to benefit other sentient beings through my practice.' That would be the optimum motivation for our practice.

As mentioned previously, being influenced by the distractions is what causes our mind to experience all its turmoil and disturbances so we need to make a commitment to ourselves that, 'For the next few minutes I will not allow my mind to follow the distractions. I will not allow my mind to focus on external distractions, as well as my own thoughts, memories and so forth. I will instead bring my whole attention and focus within.' Having brought our focus and attention within and being centred within ourselves, we then place our focus upon the particular object that we intend to focus on, which is our own breath. So we place our full attention and focus on the natural rhythm of our breathing. We use our breath as the medium for our focus and place our attention entirely, one hundred percent, on that. That is the technique that we will adopt for the next few minutes. So we can begin now. (*Pause for meditation*).

That would be sufficient. As we have only limited time left, we might use it for questions.

*Question:* In the scriptures I have come across the term Great Enlightenment; is this like a prophesy that everyone will become enlightened some day?

*Answer:* The term enlightenment actually refers to three types of enlightenment. There is the enlightenment of a hearer and the enlightenment of a solitary realiser, which is self-liberation. Thus, the term enlightenment is also used for the self liberation of those following the path of the Lesser Vehicle. And there is the enlightenment of the bodhisattva who is following the path of the Great Vehicle.

When you become a buddha that is referred to as great enlightenment, because there is no more supreme enlightenment than that. Thus it is the ultimate enlightenment.

In the Buddha Shakyamuni mantra TAYATHA OM MUNI, MUNI, MAHA MUNIYE SOHA, the Sanskrit word *muni* literally means having the might or ability to subdue. So, the meaning of the mantra can be translated as 'The Subduer, the Subduer, the Great Subduer'. The term 'subduer' means that the Buddha has subdued or overcome the delusions in the mind. The term 'great subduer' refers not only to subduing the delusions but also completely eradicating the

imprints of the delusions in the mind. So the Buddha is referred to as the Great Subduer.

*Question:* How do we develop true detachment? In my meditation I seem to be able to overcome attachments, but when I come out of meditation, I find that I still have attachments; especially to people?

*Answer:* We need to understand that to develop detachment in its proper sense we need to apply the appropriate antidote for overcoming attachment. If the proper antidote is not applied then detachment doesn't really come about naturally. That is one of the main points.

In his commentary on the awakening mind the great master Nagarjuna explains how to overcome attachment by meditating on the unattractive features of the object. First of all he explained that when one is attracted to an object, such as a man being attracted to a woman, there are three different ways that attachment can arise. It is said that in the perception of a great meditator yogi an object of attachment such as the beautiful body of another person would appear like a corpse. That's how a great yogi would perceive it. However a dog would perceive the same object as something to be eaten or consumed. But for those who are obsessed with attachment an attractive person would appear very beautiful and very attractive.

So the same object can appear in different ways depending on what level you are at or what kinds of perception you have. This presents the possibility that one object does not always have to be viewed in the same way. An attractive person does not always have to be seen as attractive thus causing lust and attachment to arise in your mind. With the proper training of your mind it is possible to see them as a neutral object or something that does not cause attachment to arise.

Now, as ordinary people, when we engage in meditation we have not yet developed the optimum level of concentration that is called calm abiding or mental quiescence. That is a significant state that one obtains through the different stages of concentration. There are many stages of concentration. The optimum, ultimate stage of developing concentration is called calm abiding. That is a state where the mind will not fluctuate greatly. It will naturally remain in a very, very stable and calm state. But until we reach that stage the best we are able to achieve when we engage in meditation as an ordinary person focussing on a neutral or virtuous object is to overcome some of the manifest levels of attachment. Because we are focussed on something other than the object of attachment during our meditation practice, attachment temporarily does not arise. However because we still have the imprints in our mind, when we come out of meditation, attachment will start to arise again as soon as we come into contact with its object.

The great Indian master Vasubandhu said, in a text that he composed, that there are three conditions for attachment to arise in our mind. The first is that we have not abandoned the seeds of desire or attachment. The second condition is when we are in close proximity to the object of attachment. The third is when our misconception or improper attention influences our mind. When these three conditions are met, desire or attachment manifests. If we haven't abandoned the delusion of attachment in our mind and we are in close proximity with the object of attachment, and we possess the particular state of mind called improper or incorrect attention, then these serve as the conditions for attachment to arise again. That is how the process occurs.

---

The conceptual state of mind called incorrect attention is a faulty state of mind that causes our mind to exaggerate the qualities of an object. While there are actual qualities on the object, the conceptual state of mind called incorrect attention, exaggerates these qualities. Then that exaggeration of the qualities causes us to view the object as extremely beautiful, and attachment arises.

I can give a contemporary example here. Very recently I noticed on television many young girls who were going wild and crazy over a band that is visiting Australia right now from England. Is it called One Direction? It seemed to me that these five singers were not particularly more handsome than other kids around here (laughter). There are many youngsters here who could fare the same or even better. So why are these young girls so fascinated and infatuated by this band? It is just because they are influencing each other to have the same over-exaggerated view about their qualities. That clearly shows that when there is over-exaggeration caused by incorrect attention then extra qualities are superimposed on the object.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has shared in his teachings a finding he was told at a meeting with scientists. A scientist, who might have been a psychoanalyst, said that he had found through observation and investigation that when someone is obsessed with anger that ninety percent of the faults that they see in an object actually come from one's own mind. Only about ten percent of the faults they see in an object actually exist in the object. His Holiness remarked that this finding was quite astounding as it matched the way the Buddhist scriptures teach that everything, good qualities or bad, is mostly a projection superimposed by our own mind. So the explanation given in the Buddhist scriptures, which goes back over thousands of years, is now being investigated and found to be true by scientists. The Dalai Lama was sharing this as a remarkable sort of investigation.

That was in relation to anger but it is the same with attachment. From your experience all of you may have come across occasions where in moments of anger you have perceived someone as completely at fault, completely mistaken and you might even have reacted upon that but later however, when the anger subsides, you have thought, 'Oops', it was not entirely their fault and you begin to see your mistake that was caused by intense anger.

Similarly, when the mind is infatuated by extreme attachment we might see many qualities in an object; attachment serves as a veil to prevent us from seeing any faults in the object. Consequently we become completely infatuated with the object. Later, however, when attachment subsides we can begin to notice some faults. So, in that sense, reducing attachment might be a good thing for us because we begin to see the reality a bit more clearly, and we won't fall completely head over heels. Understanding how our perception is tainted when strong attachment or anger arises can help us not to make hasty decisions based on strong attachment or anger. In fact it helps us to make proper decisions and right choices and not act upon false perceptions in such moments.

The technique that is presented in the teachings as a way to overcome attachment is to focus on the unattractive features of the object. Now, as ordinary meditators or ordinary beings, when we make an attempt to apply this technique of meditating on unattractive features it seems that even while we are attempting to see the object we are attached to as an unattractive object, deep inside we are still seeing it as

beautiful. We are still holding on to the belief that they are in fact beautiful. For as long as we hold on to this belief deep inside it is as if we are saying to ourselves, 'I am making this up. I am thinking about the unattractive features of the object but, in reality, they are beautiful.' Deep within ourselves we are holding on to the fact they are beautiful and we are not letting go of that. So it is not surprising if it seems that meditation on the unattractive features of the object doesn't seem to work, because we have not actually applied it. We may have just skimmed the surface, so to speak, but not really applied the technique in its fullest.

That question was very good, thank you very much. The reason why I say it was a good question is because I have an easily accessible answer (laughter).

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us again take a few minutes to engage in the practise of meditation. This time we will use the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited as the object of our focus. When we engage in the chanting and hear the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra we place our full attention and focus on that sound. Then, when the sound subsides we try to maintain that focus for a short while. That then would suffice as a focus of meditation.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed by Kim Foon Looi*

*Edit 1 by John Burch*

*Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

*Edited Version*

*© Tara Institute*