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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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30 June 2004

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Sit in the correct meditation posture so that we can meditate for a bit. On the basis of sitting in a good meditation posture, we need to adopt a correct state of mind. But, first we need to analyse the state of mind that induces us to engage in meditation.

What are the mental conditions that make us meditate? We need to think about the reasons that make the mind happy to meditate; we need to motivate our mind so that it wants to meditate.

Ordinarily, our mind is very interested in various types of external objects. But it is sometimes not naturally inclined to meditate, to abide calmly internally. To motivate the mind to want to turn inwards and remain still and calm, one has to think about happiness. There are two categories of happiness: physical happiness, or the happiness of the body; and mental happiness. My opinion regarding the approach to happiness is that it should be twofold: one should consider both one's physical happiness and mental happiness. So, really, there are two reasons for meditating. We know through our experience that our disturbing thoughts do indeed disturb the mind, and thus take away our opportunity to experience happiness. With a disturbed mind, there is no satisfactory experience of happiness. We also know from our own experience if the mind is free of disturbing thoughts, it will remain calm and peaceful. We must remember that, as a human being, we each have the potential to attain human happiness and to eliminate human suffering.

Generally, we accumulate external wealth and external conditions for attaining happiness. The external wealth we have accumulated should have become a conducive condition for our physical happiness, as well as our mental happiness. External wealth, by itself, can accomplish our physical happiness, but it cannot generate mental happiness for us. And without mental happiness the physical happiness is not satisfactory. To generate mental happiness, we need to do something else – we need to work with the mind. This is where the significance of meditation comes in.

We need to tell ourselves that, as human beings, we have this ability to eliminate our human suffering and attain happiness.

Therefore, we can understand the importance of taking the mind from under the control of the disturbing thoughts. At the moment, the mind is under the control of the disturbing thoughts, but through one's continual meditation practice, the disturbing thoughts will gradually subside. But this won't happen without

meditation practice.

So now, on the basis of sitting in a good meditation posture, we turn the mind inwards, focusing it internally and not allowing it to engage with external objects. Then, after having turned the mind inwards completely, we place it very clearly and vividly on the coming and going of the breath. This placement is done in a non-dual manner, so that the mind actually enters the breathing in a clear and vivid manner. By doing this, the disturbing thoughts will gradually subside, and the clear nature of the mind will be able to manifest and become vivid.

The skilful way of establishing a meditation practice is to begin by meditating for a brief time, but making sure it is a good meditation with good mental placement. If, from the beginning, one trains the mind to have a good mental placement, this habit will carry through to one's later meditation practice. If one tries to put too much onto the mind from the beginning, and expects it to meditate for a long time, the mind will get tired and will wander away and not want to return to the meditation object. This habit will then carry through to one's later meditation practice.

By meditating daily, one will receive the benefits of meditation. We should compare the quality of days when we are able to meditate with the days where we didn't have time to meditate. One will probably find that those days where one didn't find the time to meditate in the morning because one had to rush off to work were of lesser quality than the days when one meditated in the morning. This comparison will make one want to meditate even more, until one will feel that one doesn't want to stop meditating.

### 4.1.2.A brief presentation of the way to strive

#### 4.1.2.1.The actual way of striving

##### 4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

**The six preparatory practices: 5) Gathering merit and purifying negativities**

Now we have reached the third of the seven limbs, the limb of confessing.

Last time, we explained the negativities that we should confess. These negativities also make it difficult for one to meditate. So, on the one hand these negativities distract the mind constantly and, on the other hand, they make the mind unclear and foggy. They give the mind a dark, unclear quality.

Negativities are generated from the root: the three poisons of anger, attachment and ignorance. These three poisons cause one to engage in non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. When one starts to practice the Dharma, one starts with the practice of ethics, specifically, the practice of abandoning killing. Because one's practice is based on non-harmfulness, one starts by avoiding giving harm to sentient beings. The first harm that one stops engaging in is that of killing other sentient beings. This is the very basic practice of Buddhist ethics or morality since the practice of non-harming is the basis for all other Buddhist practices.

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The meaning of purifying non-virtue is to take away the power of the non-virtue to project a result. It is said that the only good quality of non-virtue is that it can be purified. That is its only good quality.

Why do we need to purify non-virtue? When we think about it, nobody wants to experience the results of negativities. Killing, for example, is regarded as a non-virtue in most religions. It is definitely regarded as a non-virtue in Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity.

The karmic effects of killing are threefold:

the 'fruitful effect'

the effect similar to the cause; (a. the experience similar to the cause; b. the action similar to the cause.)

the environmental effect.

The fruitful effect of killing is having the body of a being in one of the three lower realms. The effect similar to the cause is twofold: the experience similar to the cause, and the action similar to the cause. Regarding the karmic effect of killing, the experience similar to the cause is that one will have a short life span, and the action similar to the cause is the result that one will have a predisposition to kill. An example of the environmental result of killing is being reborn in countries where there is a war, strife and so forth.

An explanation of the individual results of various non-virtuous actions comes in more detail later in these teachings.

Now we will talk about how one goes about purifying the non-virtuous karma one has created. The meaning of purifying non-virtuous karma is that one purifies the potential of the karma to project a result – this is the meaning of purifying negativity. It means that one takes away the potential of the negativity to project a result. It doesn't mean that the negativity or the negative karma becomes completely non-existent in one's mental continuum. But it means that the potential to project a suffering result is taken away.

Being able to purify negativities is the one single virtue of negativities. The way of purifying them is with the four powers.

The first power is the power of repudiation.

The second power is the power of the complete application of the antidote.

The third power is the power of the promise not to engage in the action again.

The fourth power is the power of reliance.

### **The Power of Repudiation**

The power of repudiation is that of generating strong regret for one's action – by reflecting upon the karmic results of one's action one should generate strong regret. It's as if one has been informed that one has eaten poison – one will generate very strong regret that one has eaten the poison, and will want to get it out of one's system as soon as possible. For example, when one has inadvertently caused great harm to another person, one will regret having done the action, wishing that one

hadn't done it, wanting to make it right again etc.

Likewise, one generates strong regret for one's action by reflecting upon the karmic results that that action will bring about in the future. One has to meditate on generating strong regret.

### **The Power Of The Complete Application Of The Antidote**

Secondly, one relies upon the power of the total application of the antidote. After having generated regret and fear regarding the results of the action, one will want to apply the antidote. In general, the complete application of the antidote may be any virtuous practice – any type of virtue can act as an antidote against negative karma. But there are also specific types of practices that can be done.

The antidotes are classified into six categories. The first is that of reading the sutras. For example, one can recite a sutra that deals with emptiness such as the *Vajra Cutter Sutra* – one can simply recite it, but one can also reflect on the meaning. What type of benefit does that have? The karma that would otherwise have a very heavy ripening effect in future will ripen in this life in the form of slight discomforts.

We can continue with this next time. For tonight, we can have some time for questions. *Question:* What is the meaning of 'fruitful effect'?

*Answer:* Our body, for example, is a fruitful effect of previous virtue. At home you have a dog? The dog's body is the fruitful effect of non-virtue...because it's a dog's body – not because it's with you! (*Laughter*)

*Question:* I understand that Buddhism doesn't agree with killing animals, but with Christianity, I have some Christian friends who say it's OK in their religion to kill animals.

*Answer:* However it may be in Christianity, definitely in Buddhism to kill any type of sentient being is non-virtuous, even down to small insects and even smaller beings.

Of course, there can be variation in the non-virtue accumulated. I'm not quite sure about the distinction in Christianity, whether they make a total distinction between humans and animals, or whether there is a distinction between different types of animals. However it may be in Christianity, in Buddhism all sentient beings are included – all animals, insects and even smaller beings.

*Question:* I'm studying and have to use lab animals for research. At the end, we have to kill the mice, but we are doing it to save human lives. Is it less non-virtuous to kill because of that?

*Answer:* From the point of view of the motivation, there is less negativity. If the motivation for the action is based on compassion for humanity and compassion for the mouse, the negativity is less.

*Question:* Geshe-la, what does Buddhism think about abortion, considering there were over 70,000 taxpayer-funded abortions in Australia last year?

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*Answer:* In Buddhism, this is non-virtuous, similar to Catholicism. Catholics are not allowed to have abortions – that’s why Catholics have so many children! It is a difficult thing – negative karma is a natural law that sometimes conflicts with one’s self-interest.

In the case of abortion, the question is, what is more important? The mother’s interest or the unborn child’s interest? As soon as one’s own self-preservation is involved, suddenly other things become less important. But that still does not mean that the action we engage in is not non-virtuous. It is still negative, even if it is done out of a motivation of self-preservation.

There are probably cases where it is certain that the mother can’t give birth, or that it would be fatal to the mother to have the child and so forth. Perhaps in Christianity there are special provisions for the mother to have abortions, but in Buddhism, it would still be regarded as non-virtuous.

Also, the problem of abortion quite often arises from rushing into things. It’s as if someone is incredibly hungry and hasn’t had anything to eat all day. Then, when something is placed in front of them, they gulp it down without much consideration or restraint. Maybe that’s how unwanted pregnancies sometimes occur. Because of your strong desire, you forget to think about preventive measures like contraception and things like that, and you end up with an unwanted pregnancy...I assume! (*Laughter*)

If you were very hungry, you would eat anything given to you without considering whether it will agree with you. But once you have eaten it, you can’t change it – you have eaten it and if it doesn’t agree with you, you end up with a problem in your belly!

I tell many of my students when in India that, although they might be hungry, they should be careful about what they eat, because once you’ve eaten something, the result is irreversible. It’s the same for unwanted pregnancies. If you’re not careful, you can end up with something that becomes a burden in your stomach!

*Question:* Say you have a bird – would it be OK to clip its wings so it can’t fly? Or to put a fish in a fish bowl?

*Answer:* If it’s done to preserve the life of the animal, then it’s alright. If you can keep it home and it gets good food and it’s well looked after, maybe it’s of some benefit to the animal.

When they are treated affectionately, animals respond by returning affection to their owner, even animals that one would normally consider unlikely to do so, such as tigers and lions.

Also cats – cats are normally independent animals, but when one treats them affectionately, even though they will walk around as if they are completely independent, they will still want to keep that tie with the owner because of that affection. If the cat’s owner has to go away and it is put somewhere to be looked after, for the first few days the cat won’t eat very well, because it will constantly think about its owner. Maybe it will also make lots of noise!

*Question:* Not referring to the current conflagration in the Middle East, is there such a thing as a just war? How do we think of killing in the event of a war, for example, if a country attacks our country and we need to retaliate to protect ourselves like the struggle against Nazism in World War 2?

*Answer:* I’m not sure whether there can be a good cause for war or not.

Of course, the people who go to war will always say that there is a good cause. This idea of a just war is a difficult principle to apply, because if you take the present war against Iraq as an example, it looks like there are more problems being generated by the war.

The external enemy is without limits, and if you try to overcome one external enemy, then two or three other external enemies will pop up. So trying to attain peace and happiness by overcoming external enemies is not a very efficient way.

*Same student responding:* How about the poor guy in the army? I guess he’s in the army because of his past karma. So the guy is drafted into the army and blows someone’s head off, is that bad karma?

*Answer:* Of course, it is non-virtuous. There is a motivation to kill, the action and so forth.

When the Chinese were invading Tibet, and they came to our region, there was one old geshe and meditator who said to the Chinese: “Just shoot me, just do your job. That’s what you do, that’s your job, so just go ahead and do it. I won’t be angry. You are just doing your job”. He pointed at his head. But this geshe was a very special person who had control over his life and that evening he left his body on purpose.

Because it is the job of the soldiers, there is really no reason to get angry at them. Similarly, sometimes we get angry with the police when they use force, but it’s really their commander-in-chief, or the generals and so forth that order the soldiers to engage in different actions. There is no point at getting angry with the ordinary soldier; they are just doing their job. Similar to the police – no need to get angry with the normal police person when they use force and that’s their job. They are ordered to do so by others.

So we will turn the mind inwards and recite the mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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