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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can meditate for a little while as usual. Please sit in the appropriate posture.

In general, when we talk about meditation, we mean to firstly focus the mind on a virtuous object, and then to familiarise and habituate the mind with that object. At the moment we are under the control of our mind, and our mind is under the control of the delusions and mental afflictions; therefore, we are constantly exposed to the disadvantages and problems arising from those mental delusions.

So, if we analyse our present situation, firstly, we are under the control of our mind, and our mind is under the control of the delusions and mental afflictions; because of this, we experience sufferings and problems caused by the mental delusions. Therefore, we need to make the decision that this is an unsatisfactory situation that must be reversed; we need to free the mind from the control of the delusions. We need to make the mind serviceable, so that it is not under the control of delusions, but rather will do what we tell it to do. To accomplish this, we need to meditate.

Because the mind is under the control of the delusions and mental afflictions, it is disturbed, distracted and agitated; because of this, we don't experience mental happiness. And, because we don't experience mental happiness, the material and physical happiness we experience becomes empty and unsatisfying. Therefore, we need to analyse the causes and conditions for delusions to arise in one's mind, and determine whether those conditions can be reversed or not. Then we need to make the decision that we are not going to remain under the control of the delusions and mental afflictions, and that we will engage in a method to reverse the conditions that cause the mind to be agitated and cause delusions to arise.

We must recognise the fact that, to attain mental happiness, we must make our mind more serviceable. If we do not do that and accept as the status quo that our mind is under the control of the delusions, we will be unable to experience proper happiness; as we know from our own experience - the mind will continue to be disturbed.

If we meditate with this motivation, I think our meditation will be quite fruitful.

We also need to analyse the delusions and their nature. We need to analyse whether the delusions are valid types of perception or not. Is the way we perceive ourselves and our surroundings through the delusions and mental

afflictions concordant with reality or not? Or do the delusions and mental afflictions perceive reality in a distorted way? If the delusions are distorted types of awareness, they can be counteracted. However, if the delusions were not a distorted awareness and if what they perceived were concordant with reality, there would be nothing that one could do.

We need to contemplate the different points mentioned in order to recognise for ourselves the importance of meditation. Other people may tell us that it is important to meditate, but if we don't confirm this through our own investigation and experience, we will not be clear about why it is important to meditate.

Regarding the analysis of the delusions and mental afflictions, it is not really that difficult to understand that the way the delusions perceive reality is not supported by valid cognition.

For example, if we perceive an object with attachment, then the whole object, all the parts of the object, will appear desirable and attractive. The more attachment one has, the more desirable and attractive the object appears. However, one can confirm from one's own experience that when attachment for the object lessens, not all parts of the object will appear attractive and desirable any more.

Likewise, with anger, one perceives all the parts of the object to be undesirable and unattractive and one generates anger for the object. When we look at an object with anger, we don't see anything good in it. However, when the anger subsides and we look at the object with a clear mind, we can see that it is not as bad as we made it out to be when we were angry.

Most of us have often been in the situation where we greatly exaggerated the attractiveness of an object at the time of attachment - the object appeared to be completely, wholly desirable. But, when the attachment subsided, one found that one was quite mistaken regarding the way one actually perceived the object when one was attached to it.

Understanding these important points, we can understand how meditation works to subdue the mind. If someone just meditates without understanding these important points, they will arrive at a situation where they may have meditated for a long time and may be even able to remain sitting calmly for long periods of time, but because they haven't really understood the significance of meditation, they will not have subdued their delusions, despite their long efforts. Then they will feel that meditation hasn't worked for them.

However, if we understand the way the delusions work and the way we have to overcome the delusions, one will understand the importance of meditation and why it works, and this type of situation will not arise.

Please sit as was explained at the beginning. Then, turn the mind totally inwards, not letting it fall under the control of the delusions. After having turned the mind totally inwards, place it clearly on the coming and going of the breath. Keep the mind single-pointedly on the

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coming and going of the breath with your mindfulness. We can meditate like this for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

#### **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**

We had started with the limb of confession and purification, where we explained the different results that come about from a non-virtuous action. Then we said that this non-virtuous karma has to be purified with the four opponent powers. One shouldn't just leave this non-virtuous karma alone, but one should purify it with the four opponent powers.

The first opponent power is the power of repudiation or regret. The second is the power of the thorough application of the antidote. Now, we come to the third power, which is the power of the promise not to repeat the action.

So, initially one generates regret for one's action which, in itself, is very purifying; it has a powerful purifying effect on the non-virtuous karma. The stronger the regret, the stronger the purification of non-virtuous karma. However, when we have the thought: "What I did wasn't right", we don't just leave it at that; rather, after generating regret, we will want to engage in an action to purify. So, one comes to the second power, by which one engages in a virtuous action to purify the negative karma. However, that by itself is also not enough, if one does not make the promise not to repeat the action again in the future.

###### **Power of the Promise not to do the Action Again**

If one generates regret and purifies, but doesn't put a stop to the action, the purification becomes somewhat meaningless. So, one needs to make the promise not to engage in the action again in the future. The stronger the regret we have, the more effective will be the power of the antidote and the power of the promise.

When we make this promise not to engage in a non-virtuous action again in the future, the question may arise in the mind: "Would that be honest?", because it is possible that one may engage in that action again in the future.

There are two possibilities here:

If, at the time of applying the four antidotes, one makes the promise wholeheartedly not to engage in that action ever again, then although it might happen later that one engages in the action, because at the time of making the promise one was sincere, it doesn't become a lie. Of course, the question could arise: 'If I make the promise, but later I do the action again, it would be like lying to the Buddha'. It depends on whether one was sincere at the time of doing the purification – if one really did not want to engage in the action ever again, it would not be a lie.

One can just make the promise for a period of time that one feels comfortable with. If one feels reasonably sure

that one can avoid this action for that amount of time, one just promises not to do the action for that amount of time – one day, two days, three days, one week, a month, or whatever.

While the four powers as a whole purify the action, each of the four powers on its own is very purifying. The power of the promise by itself is very purifying and purifies the negative karma of non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind that one has engaged in, caused others to engage in, rejoiced in the doing of, as well as the non-virtuous karma of the delusions. All these non-virtuous karmas are purified by the power of promise. The sutras thus explain the power of promise to be very powerful.

###### **Power of Reliance**

Now, we come to the fourth power, which is the power of reliance. The power of reliance is meditating on refuge and bodhicitta. The reason for doing this is that the non-virtuous actions one engaged in were done either in relation to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, or in relation to sentient beings.

When one has engaged in a non-virtuous action, instead of letting one's mind be disturbed, one should reflect upon the four karmic results that the non-virtuous action will create – the ripening result; the result similar to the cause, in which we have the experience similar to the cause and the action similar to the cause; and the environmental result of the action.

By generating regret for an action, engaging in an antidote, and applying the power of the promise, then the power of reliance, there is no non-virtuous action that cannot be purified. It is said that the one quality of non-virtue is that it can be purified. If one doesn't purify the non-virtuous action one will experience loss. It would be like when one takes out a loan from the bank; the longer one waits to repay the loan, the more interest is accumulated. It is the same with karma: the longer one lets the non-virtuous karma remain, the more non-virtuous 'karmic interest' is built up. Now, however, one is in a situation where one knows how to purify, so not making use of this opportunity would be a great loss.

If one accepts the truth of non-virtuous karma and the results of non-virtuous karma, one is in a very good position to apply the antidotes. If one doesn't believe in non-virtuous karma and the results of non-virtuous karma, that's a different situation. If you compare two such people, the person who accepts non-virtuous karma and the results of non-virtuous karma is in a better position.

Generally, somebody who believes in the law of cause of effect is more honest and upright, although the benefits of engaging in purification and so forth are not as immediately obvious as the benefits of material gain. One can see material gain more easily. However, the benefits of practising the Dharma and of purifying the mind and improving the mind are observable. One can observe the difference between a person who practises the Dharma and somebody who doesn't, although it may be a bit more subtle than material benefit.

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One has only to observe whether one's own mind becomes purer and better, or whether it becomes worse and more degenerate. If one finds that one's mind has degenerated, one needs to do something about it.

This principle is not confined to people who accept the Dharma; rather, it is a general principle that applies to everybody. Even if one doesn't accept the Dharma, by analysing one's actions of body, speech and mind, one comes to recognise the right and wrong in one's behaviour. Do the actions we engage in make other people happy? Do the things we say cause hurt to other people? Also, one should analyse the states of mind that precede one's actions of body and speech. This is a universal practice. Since we have to live in a society, we need to observe our actions. Are our actions harmful to society, are they beneficial? How can one's actions benefit our society? How can one interact harmoniously with others?

*Question:* Last week, you spoke of the 100-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. You said if you do it 8000 times, it will assist you in attaining visualisations. I was wondering if there were other deities like Chenrezig which would also assist in the same way?

*Answer:* We said that if you recite the one-hundred syllable mantra 100,000 times, you can purify the five uninterrupted karmas, the five immediate karmas that arise from the five heinous actions. You can even purify breakages of the tantric root vows. If you recite it 21 times daily, it will stop the increasing effect of karma. It won't purify the action, but it will stop the non-virtuous karma from increasing.

Regarding your question, of course, there are also other mantras, such as the mantra of Chenrezig, which is very powerful for purification, and the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha, which purifies many eons of non-virtuous karma just by one recitation. Also, the recitation of the names of the 35 Buddhas is very powerful for purification. These are all very powerful.

The recitation of the Medicine Buddha mantra is also very powerful at the time of death. If one can purify with the 35 Buddhas prayer, and then recite the Medicine Buddha mantra, this is very powerful. Also, if one can do it for others and recite it at the time of death, people can die very peacefully when they hear the Medicine Buddha mantra. I have an acquaintance who told me that he does this, and the person then passes away very peacefully.

Of course, the benefits that arise from the recitation of the mantra arise relative to the way the mantra is recited. It is said that the minimum benefit one gets when one recites a mantra is that one purifies the fault of idle gossip.

In [Shantideva's] *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, it says that if a mantra is not recited with single-pointed concentration, it will not have any benefit. Shantideva said this from the point of view of the full benefit that one could get from mantra recitation. What he means is that one will not get the full benefit of the mantra recitation if one doesn't recite it with single-pointed concentration. However, that doesn't mean that

one doesn't get any benefit at all.

As was explained in the beginning, turn the mind inwards, then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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