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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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We will meditate for a little bit as usual. First, sit in a good meditation posture. Then, on the basis of sitting in a good physical posture, you have to also adjust your mental attitude, generating a good motivation for the meditation.

As the great Lama Tsong Khapa said, black and white karma arises relative to pure or impure motivation. This is the essence of the whole path – from a pure motivation white karma arises, and from an impure, harmful motivation black karma arises. As the great Bodhisattva Shantideva said, analyse your own mind; only after checking up on your mind and being absolutely clear that you have a positive motivation should you engage in an action of body or speech – but not before.

Also, the great Atisha said that the supreme oral instruction is to watch the mind. Only by watching our mind will we become aware of the qualities and faults that are present within it. And only upon becoming aware of those qualities and faults will we endeavour to get rid of the faults. Without being aware of our mental situation, our faults and qualities, we will not aspire to purify the mind. To purify the mind, we need to take the mind out from under the control of the disturbing thoughts. This is the purpose of meditation, and that's why we all should now meditate for a little bit.

We have to slowly turn the mind inwards – to stop engaging with external objects and focus the mind inwards. After having turned the mind inwards, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Here, the idea is to first let the mind enter the breathing; the mind focuses single-pointedly on the breathing by becoming one with the breathing. Ideally, one's mental focus should be on the coming and going of the breath, (which can be facilitated by counting the breathing). If that is not possible, at least the breathing should flow so softly that one doesn't have any tactile sensation at one's nostrils. Lama Tsong Khapa in his 'Great Lam Rim', as well as Kamalashila in the 'Stages of Meditation' both explain this as the best way to meditate on the breathing.

So, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, allowing the mind to enter the breathing. It shouldn't be like the subject over here looking at the object over there. Rather, the mind should single-pointedly absorb into the breathing and that will greatly help you to stay focused on the breathing. Otherwise, you might find it difficult. (*Pause for meditation*)

When we meditate, the focus of the meditation should be primarily internal. A single-pointed internal focus is what

we are trying to achieve. For example, when we take the visualisation of Shakyamuni Buddha as the object of meditation, we don't make the outer representation – a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha – the object of meditation, because the statue is an external object. If we focus on the statue, the mind is already focused on an external object. Rather, what one takes as the object of visualisation of meditation is the reflection of the form of Shakyamuni Buddha that arises in the mind – the reflection in the mind of the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha becomes the object of single-pointed concentration.

In the case of the meditation on the coming and going of the breath, the focus should also be an internal one. One should focus on the mental awareness of the coming and going of the breath, being mentally aware that now the breath is coming, now the breath is going. If one focuses on the external coming and going of the breath, the mind will again be distracted.

### 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

Last time, we completed the third of the seven limbs, the limb of confession. Now, we are onto the fourth limb, the limb of rejoicing.

#### Rejoicing

Because the practice of rejoicing is actually a bodhisattva practice, one might not naturally feel a great affinity for this practice. Therefore, one should approach the practice with a long-term point of view. There is nothing that the mind cannot be trained in, as the great Bodhisattva Shantideva said. If one puts one's mind to it and engages in the practice, there is nothing that the mind cannot be trained to do or to become.

So, although we might not naturally feel a great affinity with this practice of rejoicing, over time, that will change. If we meditate on rejoicing and we are able to naturally rejoice in the good fortune of others then, when we see someone else's good fortune, we will not generate jealousy towards that person. In such a way, our mind will not be disturbed by the success and good fortune of others.

Often, we quite unnecessarily generate mental unhappiness because of unnecessary thoughts such as jealousy. Disturbing trains of thought are set in motion by things we hear, or see. However, by training the mind well in the seven limb practice, and by being aware which of the seven limbs counteracts which of the mental afflictions, we can offset this mental unhappiness by preventing those disturbing trains of thought from arising.

In the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, it explains the practice of rejoicing in the merits of the five

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types of beings. Initially, it explains rejoicing in the merits and good fortune of the Buddhas of the three times (past, present and future) and the ten directions; then, the merits of the bodhisattvas; then, the Solitary Realisers; then, the Hearers, the trainee Hearers and those that have already completed their training; and finally, ordinary individuals. In such a way, one rejoices in the good fortune of the five types of beings.

Also, there is the practice of rejoicing in one's own merits, in the merits of one's friends and relatives, and in the merits of one's enemies. By rejoicing in your own merits, thinking about the good fortune and material comfort that you have encountered in this life, the good fortune with regard to the Dharma – having a precious human body, having met the Dharma, having met a qualified teacher and so forth – thinking that all of these good conditions in your life have come about through the virtuous karma that you created in the past. Then you rejoice in that virtuous karma that you have created in the past to bring about such a result.

By rejoicing in the virtuous karma that you have created in the past, you create virtuous karma in the present. So the past karma that you have created will be increased and you generate virtuous karma in the present so that, in your future life, you have a natural inclination to practise virtue. Therefore, even if you only generate some small merit in this life, by rejoicing about having done these positive actions, you will greatly increase the power of those virtuous actions.

One should rejoice in one's good fortune and the positive and virtuous actions that one has done in one's lifetime without generating pride. Generating pride becomes counter-productive. And, if one's mind is well trained in the practice of rejoicing, one will not easily generate jealousy. This is very important because, regardless of whether one is a Dharma practitioner or not, one can engage in harmful actions because of jealousy.

People engage in actions harmful towards others because of jealousy. It can also happen to a Dharma practitioner. One may have practised the Dharma and have been able to train one's mind, but may find oneself generating jealousy and engaging in actions that are harmful to others. This happens only because the mind has not been trained well. If the mind has been trained well, this will not happen. One's Dharma practice is present within one's own mind – subduing one's own mind so that one will not be affected by mental disturbance. One doesn't have to look elsewhere for dharma practice

We also have to talk about the benefits of rejoicing in the merits of others. Shakyamuni Buddha said that the practice of rejoicing is a very convenient practice for accumulating a huge amount of merit in a very brief amount of time with very little effort. In other words, there is no physical or verbal action required; one doesn't need to exert oneself physically or verbally, but can just sit there, very relaxed, and with a relaxed state of mind contemplate the way that the holy beings and great yogis of the past practised the path, accumulated merits, purified negativities, and progressed along the path. One

can then rejoice in the way they were able to practice – that's all that one needs to do. No physical or verbal exertion is involved. That's why it is said that rejoicing can be done with very little effort.

If one rejoices in the virtuous actions of somebody who has fewer realisations than oneself, one will generate greater merit than the person who engaged in the virtuous action. If the other person is of equal realisation to oneself, one will create equal merit. If one rejoices in the virtuous action of somebody who has higher realisations than oneself, one will create half the merit created by that person.

By training your mind in rejoicing, you counteract the affliction of jealousy. Jealousy is particularly prevalent at Christmas time, I think. That's why I always tell you to be very careful at Christmas time, when you get invitations to go to functions and parties and the thought of jealousy can easily enter the mind. If you are in a situation where you are able to dress well and show up with a very impressive partner, perhaps you may be full of pride – so it might be not so bad from the point of view of jealousy! However, if you cannot stand the happiness and success of others, that thought will bring you misery.

You just need to consider how much you yourself like receiving money, how much you would rejoice, how happy you are when you have success: it is exactly the same for the other person. That other person wants happiness to the same extent as you, and they will be as happy about their success you would be.

In this case, you have to take responsibility for your own happiness by watching your mind. If you cannot stand the success of others, it becomes a blockage to your own happiness, because that thought of jealousy will make you miserable.

Once, there was a prince who wanted to become king. He wanted to take on the responsibilities of a king but also practise the dharma, so he asked the Buddha for some Dharma to practice. We are the same as this prince. We also would like to practise the Dharma, but we don't like to give up our worldly activities – we want to have a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, and so forth. It was the same for this prince, who wanted to practise the Dharma but did not want to give up his royal activities and responsibilities. The Buddha advised him to do three practices: bodhicitta, rejoicing and dedication.

It is true that, without having to give up one's worldly activities and responsibilities, one can meditate on bodhicitta; rejoice in the virtues and good fortune of others; and engage in the practice of dedicating the merits thus accumulated. In such a way, one keeps one's mind free from jealousy and competitiveness. We have to apply this principle to the actions of our day to day life – rejoicing in our positive and virtuous actions, such as generosity and so forth, and on the other hand, generating regret for the harmful and non-virtuous actions in which we have engaged. In such a way, over time, the mind becomes purified and changes.

Also, the whole point of counting the mantras that one

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recites is be aware of the number done, so that one can rejoice in the number of mantras recited.

That was a very brief presentation on rejoicing. One should rejoice in one's virtuous actions, and should not be jealous of the good fortune of others. Others desire happiness as much as we do. Instead of being jealous of their material fortune, their well-being, their appearance, or perhaps their circle of friends or partners, and so forth – there are different areas of life in which people can be fortunate and successful – it is important that we are not jealous of others' fortune in these different areas of life, and that we don't begrudge them their success, but rather rejoice in their spiritual and worldly success.

Do you have a question?

*Question:* If someone has very good merits, but is a really bad person, do you only get half the merit for rejoicing in them?

*Translator:* If it is a person of bad character, you get even more merit than that person gets.

But if one looks at it from another point of view, it's very difficult to judge another person's character from the outer appearance, because there is always the mind of the person to consider. The outer appearance doesn't always necessarily reveal the mind of the person.

When one very famous lama, Longdo Lama Rinpoche, first entered Sera Monastery, one of the jobs of the new monks was to help carry bags of flour, from Lhasa to Sera Monastery, which is a few kilometres. It takes about an hour and a half to walk. On one of these trips, Longdo Lama Rinpoche stopped to take a rest. He was exhausted from carrying the big bag, so he took a rest by the side of the road. As he rested, a pretty young girl walked past and she saw this exhausted monk wearing tattered clothes and looking dirty. She made the prayer, "May I never have such a rebirth". But actually Longdo Lama Rinpoche was a very high realised yogi, and he told her that she needn't worry, there was no chance that she would have a rebirth like his! (*Laughter*)

The real person is internal; outwards, we have only the appearance. The appearance can be one way or the other, but that doesn't necessarily show how the person really is on the inside.

Gyal-tsab Rinpoche said that although glowing embers might be obscured beneath ashes, it doesn't mean they are not there. So, while somebody might appear ordinary, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are ordinary, as all holy beings take many different forms. If you think there are no glowing embers below the ashes and you put your hand in there, you will be very badly burned. Likewise, if you think, "That is just an ordinary person" and generate anger and so forth, you will be very badly burned because of your anger. You will destroy much merit.

*Question:* Thinking back to last week's teaching, someone asked about Theravada and you explained that that this vehicle was the lesser vehicle and could only lead to nirvana. Does that mean that people practising that brand of Buddhism are unable to attain Buddhahood?

*Answer:* Sometimes we refer to such a person as someone who holds the Hinayana tenet. Such a person who follows this tradition, the Theravada tradition, does not really think in terms of wanting to become enlightened. They think only in terms of attaining nirvana and becoming an Arhat. Their aim is to merely abandon the mental afflictions and abandon cyclic existence.

Regarding what was said last Wednesday, the monk the student was referring to probably doesn't have the faintest clue how Buddhism is practised in the Tibetan tradition. This happens quite often – without actually having investigated the other tradition, one makes an uninformed judgement about that other tradition.

It is not appropriate for a Buddhist to make a judgement about Christianity without being very well informed about Christianity. As a Buddhist, once one is well aware of the different Christian tenets, one can say, "That's how Christianity and Buddhism differ". But before one has really investigated the other religion, one is not really a suitable person to make such a judgment or such statements.

So, practitioners who hold Hinayana tenets don't believe in the possibility of themselves attaining enlightenment. They believe that there can be only one Buddha and that's it, while in Mahayana Buddhism, one believes in countless Buddhas.

This Teravadas only hold that view because they hold those tenets; they are not really making an informed judgment about the Tibetan tradition because they haven't really investigated the Tibetan tradition.

The teachings belonging to the Hinayana tenets are inclusive in the Tibetan Buddhist study program. What the monks study in Burma is not really different from what is included in the studies of Tibetan Buddhism. Sometimes, one finds some difference – for example, in the Tibetan tradition, we only talk about 51 mental factors, because the essential Hinayana scripture, 'The Treasury of Knowledge', lists 51 mental factors. In Burma, they don't really follow the tradition of 'The Treasury of Knowledge', and they have about 300 mental factors. But the actual Hinayana tenet only asserts 51 mental factors.

Both traditions – the Burmese Theravadan tradition and the Tibetan tradition – are pure traditions. The Tibetan Sangha has a very high regard for the Burmese Sangha, but unfortunately that high regard is not returned!

I once had the opportunity to stay for one month in Kushinagar for the yearly rains retreat, and there were some Burmese monks there. After having observed me for one and a half months, they became quite good friends with me, and they told me that they thought I was a good monk. They also gave me lots of food because they received many donations from Burmese pilgrims! We also have Burmese monks in Melbourne with whom I am very friendly.

So, my personal relations have always been very positive. Also, His Holiness is always very positive towards the other Buddhist traditions. Whenever there are teachings with His Holiness, he always asks each Buddhist

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tradition to recite prayers according to their own tradition before the teachings.

As was said before, place the mind internally, then place it single-pointedly on the mantra of the Buddha.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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