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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can meditate for a bit as usual. As well as sitting in a good posture, you also need to have a good motivation. A good motivation induces good actions of body and speech. When you have a good motivation, your speech and physical actions, such as your facial expression, become pleasant and wholesome. Therefore because good motivations induce good actions, try to generate a good motivation for the meditation.

To generate a virtuous motivation, you need to initially focus the mind internally. This should not be just a half-hearted effort, but from the depths of your mind, you should make an effort to stop engaging external objects and turn the mind inward.

After having focused the mind internally, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. The actual object of placement of the mind is the *internal reflection* of the coming and going of the breath. Whatever the object, it will always generate a certain appearance or reflection in the mind and this, rather than the actual object, is what you take as your meditation object.

Now place the mind fully within the reflection of the coming and going of the breath in the mind. Regardless of what else is in your mind, just place it within that appearance of the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes, letting the mind completely enter into that appearance. (*Pause for meditation*)

We can stop here, so you have to arise from your deep meditative equipoise!

You should try to meditate every day, because it is your own responsibility to make your mind clear, pure and vivid. Generally, there are many opportunities for external happiness, but few for internal happiness, so it is important that we repeatedly generate a mind that abides peacefully and calmly. Then, over time, although you may not immediately experience a 'mind-blowing' effect from a few meditations, if you continue to practise every day, you will notice a change in the mind – it will become calmer and clearer and more peaceful. This may happen after meditating daily for a few months.

If you have a peaceful and happy mind, you will also attract more friends. However, if your mind is unhappy, disturbed and angry, this tends to repel other people. If a person has an unhappy and angry mind, usually even people close to that person eventually distance themselves from that person and new acquaintances will not want to get close in the first place. On the other hand, if you have a happy, satisfied and peaceful mind, you will naturally attract other people. Even in this life, you

will receive the greatest benefit – a peaceful and happy mind. So it is very important even for the happiness of this life to have a peaceful and calm mind.

As Lama Tzong Khapa said, you need to be your own teacher, so you need to identify the positive and negative aspects of your mind then purify the negative and increase the positive. In this way, you become your own teacher, educating yourself about your mind and then transforming it. By investigating your mind, you generate insights into the way your mind works. Then you have to act in accordance with that insight.

### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.2.1. Thinking about the Law of Cause and Effect in general

*Thinking about the Law of Cause and Effect in General* has two outlines:

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.2.1.1. The actual way of contemplating karma in general

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.2.1.2. The individual explanation.

#### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.2.1.1. The actual way of contemplating karma in general

##### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.2.1.1.1. The definiteness of karma,

Last time we started with the outline of karma, then discussed how to train in the root of all happiness, which is faith in the law of cause and effect. Before that, we had talked about refuge and how, by having single-pointed refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we will not take rebirth in the lower realms. But to make very sure we will not take rebirth in the lower realms, we need to train in the practices that come with taking refuge, specifically the practice of karma. This is how we arrived at this outline of training in having faith in karma, which is the root of all happiness and goodness.

By thinking about the law of cause and effect, we will generate wisdom, and that wisdom will steer our actions in a wholesome direction. There are many types of intelligence and these days we can see that not every type of intelligence is necessarily wholesome. In recent years, we can see that our worldly knowledge about certain things has increased significantly, but is this knowledge being used in a wholesome manner? Quite often it is not. But by thinking about the law of cause and effect, we will generate a specific type of wisdom that will steer our actions in a wholesome direction, ensuring we use our intelligence positively.

If we look at the meaning of different religions, we will find they all have the same message – to use our intelligence for the welfare of others. Generally, the different religions were taught for the benefit of human beings, and there are millions of human beings who follow different religions. The essence of the different religions is to behave well, speak well and use one's mind for the welfare of others – in short, to act in accordance with the law of cause and effect.

Of course, there are those who only have an intellectual knowledge of their religion but don't really practise it. We find this in all types of religion, including Buddhism – people who only have an intellectual knowledge but

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don't really practise what they know. But if we were to really practise what we knew, we would act in accordance with the law of cause and effect. If you think about in this way, you will come to understand my point.

There are many conditions for outer happiness in this world. Our knowledge about outer phenomena and our development of conducive outer conditions has vastly advanced. However, that does not seem to have made the world more peaceful. Rather, despite all the external development and advancement, many people experience fear, anxiety and unhappiness. In principle, when we practise the law of cause and effect, we are using our intelligence in a wholesome manner.

There are three outlines in the text: thinking about the law of cause and effect in general; thinking about the different karmas and their effects in particular; and then engaging in the practice of adopting and rejecting.

The first outline or heading, contemplating cause and effect in general, has two sub-headings – the actual contemplation and then a more detailed analysis and contemplation. The first, the actual general contemplation of the law of cause and effect, has four points.

The first of the four points is that karma is definite. This means is that happiness always arises from virtue and that suffering always arises from non-virtue. Whether is the small happiness of experiencing a relief from heat in the lower realms because of a refreshing breeze, up to greater happinesses, it all arises from virtuous karma. Similarly, all the great sufferings, down to even the small sufferings of the arhats, arise from non-virtue.

The point that karma is definite refers to the definite relationship that we will never get happiness from non-virtue, or unhappiness from virtue. There is a definite relationship between suffering and non-virtue, and happiness and virtue. We can use the analogy of different plants and their seeds. If we were to plant barley seeds, the only plant we would get is barley. If we wanted some type of vegetable or another type of grain, we would never plant barley seed, because we know that we would only get barley. Similarly, if we plant the seed for a spicy hot plant, we cannot expect to get sweet fruit, and if we plant the seed for some sweet fruit, we cannot expect to get hot chilli.

It is the same with karma. If we create virtue, we should have no doubt as to whether that will cause happiness or not: it will definitely cause happiness. We should have no doubt about that. If we create non-virtue, telling ourselves that it doesn't really matter that much, that it won't produce much suffering, and continue to produce non-virtue, we should instead have no doubt that we will definitely experience the suffering result of that non-virtue: it will definitely come, there is no doubt about that. Why? Because of the definiteness of karma: non-virtue produces only suffering, and virtue produces only happiness.

The meaning of virtue is that which produces the pleasant result that one desires, while non-virtue is that which produces the unpleasantness one does not wish for. So virtue produces happiness, and non-virtue

produces suffering. We can understand this if we observe the effect or influence that a virtuous mental state has on us and the kind of imprint it leaves on our mind. Similarly if we look at the influence or imprint of a non-virtuous mental state, we can understand how suffering comes from non-virtue.

If we give a talk to others on the basis of a pure motivation, then speak pleasantly, we can positively affect the minds of the people who are listening, causing them to be drawn to us through the power of that virtuous motivation. This is something we can observe directly in day-to-day life. The actual virtuous karma disintegrates the very next moment after it was generated, but it leaves its power in the form of a karmic seed, a mental imprint on the mind that produces happiness at some future time. This effect is more subtle – it is something we cannot recognise directly.

Similarly a non-virtuous state of the mind – an angry mind or a mind controlled by pride and so forth – will have the reverse effect on the audience. It will repel them rather than attract them. If we look carefully, we can see that this impure motivation produces unhappiness right there in the mind of the speaker. It also leaves a non-virtuous karmic imprint on the mind, which will continue to abide there until some future time when it will produce suffering.

So because of the definiteness of karma, we should first become aware that our suffering and happiness do not arise from discordant causes. Happiness does not arise from non-virtue, and suffering does not arise from virtue, in the same way that candle-light in a room is not generated from darkness. Happiness and suffering do not arise from a discordant cause and they are also not generated by some external cause, but they arise from causes and conditions within us. All the buddhas have taught that all happinesses arise from virtue and that all sufferings arise from non-virtue. This view of karma is called the “white Buddhist view” and by contemplating it, we should arrive at the decision that we definitely have to practise virtue and abandon non-virtue.

We need to relate this to our own mind and way of thinking. When we are trying to sort out our thoughts, we should contemplate the effect of non-virtuous thoughts, for example, anger. We should think: “This anger is a non-virtuous mind, which will have a suffering effect in the future. A mind free from anger is a virtuous mind, a mind that produces happiness in the future.”

We can see the immediate suffering effect of the different non-virtuous minds in this life. By contemplating how the different non-virtuous mental states have an adverse effect on our life, and how the different virtuous mental states have a positive effect on our mind, we can generate some faith in the law of cause and effect. Then we can look more deeply and further into the future, thinking that these non-virtuous mental states will produce not only suffering in this life, but also in the future way. In this way, we will generate faith in the law of cause and effect by what we observe directly in this life and by applying this law of karma to our mind.

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One distinction that it is good to keep in mind is that while anger is a non-virtue, it is not karma. Anger is a mental affliction, but karma is a mental effect that is mutually exclusive from the afflictions. Because mental afflictions and karma are mutually exclusive, anger is not karma.

Do you have a question?

*Question:* What about a feeling of guilt? Is that karma?

*Answer:* I'm not completely sure how to translate guilt; I'm not sure if there is a word for it in Tibetan.

However, if we talk about regret, we can definitely say that regret is not karma. So guilt would not be karma. For example, say we have made an offering towards a Buddha statue, then we generate regret about having offered the money towards the statue: this regret would be non-virtue. If we regret a virtuous action, the regret is non-virtuous. However, if we regret a non-virtuous action, such as harming somebody, that regret is virtuous.

So whether regret is virtuous or non-virtuous depends on whether we are regretting a virtuous or non-virtuous action. As explained in the *Abhidharmakosakarika*, the actual way of practising is that we generate regret for non-virtuous actions and rejoice in our virtuous actions. We can purify strong non-virtuous karma by generating strong regret. Regret is actually an indispensable tool to purify non-virtuous karma; it is something that we definitely need.

Also strong regret not only purifies non-virtuous karma, it also helps us to avoid the same action in future. On the other hand, if we regret our virtuous actions, this prevents us from engaging in further virtuous action.

*Question:* Last week you talked about positive, negative and neutral karma but I hadn't heard about neutral karma before. I thought karma was talking about actions that sowed a seed that was positive or negative. How can you have neutral karma because that wouldn't sow a seed?

*Answer:* An example of neutral karma would be a carpenter making a table. If we look at it from the point of view of the action itself, an action like making a table or building a house would be neutral actions. Building a temple, on the other hand, would be a virtuous action.

Of course a neutral action can be transformed into a virtuous or non-virtuous action depending on the motivation. For example, if we built the house with attachment it would no longer be a neutral action. But if we look at the value of the action itself, without the influence of any particular motivation, this type of action would be neutral.

We can also look at the meditation on the coming and going of the breath independently of the motivation. The meditation on the coming and going of the breath itself would be a neutral action. It is done to calm and pacify the mind and bring it to a neutral state. Then when your thinking has subsided and the intrinsic clarity and purity of the mind becomes manifest, that is then when the

actual meditation starts.

As was said at the beginning, bring the mind back home and place it single-pointedly on the sound of the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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