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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual, we will spend some time in meditation.

Sit in a comfortable and upright position.

Sitting in an upright position allows the channels within the body to be free and the wind, or what we can call the energy, within the channels to flow freely within the body and thus, the mind becomes fresh. By sitting in an upright position the mind becomes fresh and this definitely prevents sleep from arising in the mind.

The best way to set oneself to do a meditation is to begin by generating a very positive motivation within one's mind. The stronger the positive motivation one develops, the more meaningful the meditation will become and it will become a means towards achieving one's ultimate goals. Therefore setting the motivation is very important.

As explained previously, it is very important to keep one's mind focused on the object that one chooses to focus on during meditation and not allow the mind to be distracted by the rising of conceptual thoughts. When we look into what type of conceptual thoughts arise in the mind on a regular basis we find that a lot of our thoughts are related to memories of the past. Some memories can bring us a lot of anxiety, unease or feelings of regret for having done certain things and distract the mind from the object of one's meditation. In our general life, when we have such thoughts arising in the mind it completely distracts us from whatever we are doing at the moment. Other conceptual thoughts that distract us are speculations of the future and that can generate fear and anxiety in one's mind about the future. In this way, a lot of our time is spent with these random thoughts that arise in the mind in relation to the past and the future. These thoughts are not very relevant to the present and distract us from what we need to accomplish in the present. That being so, in the case of worldly life and even more so in meditation, when we are trying to focus single pointedly on one object these thoughts definitely become a distraction. We let our mind be influenced by thoughts of the past and the future, particularly thoughts, or plans for the future. If it is something that can be accomplished and something worthwhile that we need to achieve for the future then planning it in an achievable, constructive way would be a good use of time and place and worth contemplating on that sort of thought and idea. But

most of our thoughts that arise in relation to the future are wishy washy thoughts, unrealistic goals that we want to achieve or accomplish and fears of not being able to accomplish them. None of those things are based on realistic ideas that we have about the future. These sorts of thoughts definitely become a distraction and do not bring any real benefit or help us to achieve anything. Therefore keeping the mind focused, particularly in meditation, is extremely important. We don't allow the mind to be influenced by these thoughts of the past and the future.

Keep the mind focused on the object and maintain a balance between not focusing too tightly or too loose. Find the balance between not being too tight and too loose whilst remaining focused on the object. The object that we choose here for meditation is the breath. As we maintain our focus on the breath, we try to keep it 100% focused, in that way we'll spend a few minutes for meditation. *Pause for meditation.*

It is good to train slowly in this way in meditation. As one begins to become more familiar with meditation the mind naturally becomes much more relaxed and content. Meditation practice then starts to become one's real companion wherever one may be. In this way, one will not suffer from the feeling of loneliness because one always has a real, true companion within oneself. Particularly in times where one may be facing certain difficulties or where one has to be alone physically, there's an internal companion that comes wherever one goes and is an unfailing friend and companion.

When we look into why we suffer from loneliness from time to time, we see it is because we are accustomed to external companionship. It can bring a lot of suffering to the mind when we lack external companions or when external companions or friends start to drift away. But if one has developed the inner companion, which one gains from the practice of meditation, that becomes the real source of one's happiness and contentment. If one has a happy and contented mind that is generated within oneself one does not have to fear the suffering of loneliness.

A very, crucial factor in developing a practice in meditation is to have a very realistic approach from the beginning. One should not expect quick results and one should not be hasty in pursuing the practice of meditation. Rather, from the very start develop a pattern where one spends just a few minutes in meditation and do it in a very slow, gradual process. If, from the very start, one feels that one will gain a quick result by putting in extra effort and try to do it quickly it will just lead to much more complications. Even with worldly activities we find that if we do things hastily and try to accomplish everything at once it usually turns out that we do get good results. When we look back, we have done a lot of things with great haste and expectations in achieving the results quickly,

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but it will definitely not work that way with meditation.

The realistic approach to meditation is a very gradual, slow process spending just a few minutes every day and then gradually building up on that. In that way, as one becomes more familiar, one can naturally do more prolonged meditation. Another important element, which was mentioned previously, is not to have the mind too tight. Another way of explaining this it is not to overstrain one's mind in the practice. In a lot of things that we do, like study and so forth, we notice that if our mind is too strained it will affect our physical health as well. Physically we will feel uncomfortable and that can actually lead to diseases or illnesses within the body. To have a very strained mind will not be beneficial. To have a relaxed mind and realistic expectations practicing in a very slow and steady way, is the approach.

Another very important element is to practice in a continuous manner, to have a continuous stream of practice. If one gets all excited about meditation and spends a lot of time in the beginning one may seem to make some progress in meditation, but then the mind becomes a little bit too complacent and one may be led into a deluded state of mind where one feels, "Oh, I'm quite fine, OK now." One may then leave off practice for a while and go off and do all sorts of other things and the mind then actually starts to become much more degenerate than it was in the beginning. Practice in this way isn't helpful. One has to start all over again. The realistic approach, along with the earlier approaches, is to have a continuous stream of practice.

One of the main obstacles that we face in the beginning is not being able to recognise our own state of mind. We are not able to identify the functioning of our own mind and are led into many wrong conclusions about our own practice. It can be very misleading if we don't recognise the functioning of our own mind and how the delusions arise in the mind. Certain thoughts may arise in the mind and appear favourable when, in fact, they are not favourable at all. They are actually harmful to us. To identify what is favourable for our practice and what is unfavourable is actually very hard in the beginning. With time and practise, one begins to be able, slowly and naturally, to identify the favourable things that are conducive for our practice and those things that are unfavourable and which we need to disregard. When we are able to discern that we have made some progress. Even if we are not able to do a lot of practise right away, to be able to discern that makes whatever practise we do become steadier.

One of the results of not being able to discern the favourable (or conducive) and the unfavourable thoughts for one's mind will be that we are completely influenced by the delusions that arise in the mind. For example, for as long as anger arises in the mind and we're not able to discern that which opposes anger,

that which is conducive for a calm mind and overcoming anger, then the unfavourable circumstances are prevalent which fuel anger even further. When anger arises we rationalise our anger and think that we have all the reason to be angry, and our mind seems to get more courageous. In fact, to the extent anger becomes stronger it makes us more miserable and creates harm for oneself and others. In that way it leads to more complications in the mind.

In the beginning it is, of course, very difficult and for that reason we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves and others when people have difficulty in controlling their mind. But it is very important to realise that it is possible. It is possible to overcome anger. It is possible to slowly develop the favourable circumstances or conducive thoughts in the mind that oppose and overcome anger. It is possible. Likewise, it is also possible to overcome attachment. In the beginning it may not seem possible. It may seem quite overwhelming when attachment arises in the mind. However, as we train our mind in discerning the advantages of not having attachment and the disadvantages of having attachment in the mind, we will be able to slowly work toward overcoming attachment.

This method of looking and checking into our mind and being able to slowly work out how to deal with the delusions in our mind will, as a natural result, also help our relationship with others. For those who are in a mutual relationship with a companion, partner, whatever, that relationship can become better and much more meaningful as one works on one's own mind. It becomes mutually beneficial for others. For these reasons it is really very important that we look into these matters with much more thought.

Being able to discern the favourable from the unfavourable or the conducive from the unconducive thoughts in one's mind and thus being able to slowly overcome the delusions such as anger and attachment in one's mind is the main purpose for meditating. The meditator's goal should be to reduce the delusions such as anger and attachment within one's mind and develop the positive states of mind that oppose anger, such as patience, love and compassion and so forth. That is what the result of meditation should be and therefore, as we are all interested in meditation and are attempting to meditate we should always remind ourselves of the main goal, the main purpose of why we are trying meditate and what we are trying to achieve. With that sort of goal in mind, every attempt at meditation will help in achieving a calmer state of mind.

#### **4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence**

##### **4.2.2.1.2.1. Training the mind in the stages of the path of the small capable being**

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#### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1. The actual way of training in the motivation common to the being of small capacity**

#### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2. Relying on the methods for achieving happiness in future lives**

#### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Developing the faith of conviction in karma and its effects.**

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

#### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1.2. Reflecting on the individual divisions**

In our last session we were covering what is called the causally concordant effects. The causally concordant effects can be divided into two: that which is concordant with experience and that which is concordant with the actual cause which is the action created previously. We have already explained the effects which are causally concordant with the experience.

Now to explain the causally concordant effects that are similar to the action. With killing, for example, the causally concordant effect that is similar to the action would be, even when one is reborn as a human being, after experiencing the ripened results in the lower realms, one would have a natural tendency to enjoy the act of killing. The causally concordant effect that is similar to the action of stealing would be, that in this life one would have a natural tendency of liking to steal. We see this in young children. There are some who just naturally wouldn't hesitate to engage in an act of killing and others would be naturally inclined to stealing, taking things from others. They would not hesitate to do that. That would be examples of that effect.

There are some people, even though they are quite wealthy, still be inclined to engage in acts of stealing. One may think that it wouldn't be necessary for them to steal, because they are already rich, but if they have that tendency, then it's the effect of having engaged in stealing in the past.

So now we come to the third type of effects, the environmental effects of karma. The environmental effects of killing in the past would be that even if one is reborn as a human being the things that sustain ourselves such as the environment, food and drink and medicines will have little strength and be ineffective. We see circumstances where certain people, even if they get sick, by taking certain kinds of medicine or certain kinds of nourishment, it really helps them to get better quite soon. Medicine and so forth is very effective for them and they get better very quickly. There are others who, even if they have the same illness and they take the same medication, their disease prevails and they are not able to get better quickly. Likewise with food and nourishment, there are certain people who can eat just about anything and they are happy with that, it tastes good and it

nourishes them. Whereas there are some others who may seem to eat a lot, but actually their bodies never get well nourished, don't gain weight, and they are always weak. They are experiencing an environmental result of having engaged in killing in the past.

The environmental effects of stealing would be, if one were a farmer and so forth, that one would have fewer fruits and the fruits will be not perfect and will be partially spoiled. There's also times when the fruit doesn't ripen at the right time, it dries up on the trees. These effects that some experience in their hard work is an environmental effect of acts of stealing in the past.

The environmental effect of sexual misconduct is said to be, when we are reborn as a human being we have to live in a filthy place filled with excrement, urine, mud and filth. We can obviously see that there are circumstances where people dwell in such places. There are certain people who are just born into situations like that and they can't do anything about it. That's just their environment. It may appear so filthy to us, but that's how they have to live. Within one country we can notice that while some people in that country live in a very clean and nice environment, others live in very filthy places.

The environmental effects of lying would be to be live in an area or place where everyone seems to be deceiving one. It could be either the case that they are deceiving you or it could be one's own imagination. In either case, the feeling that is experienced is that others are deceiving one, is a result of having engaged in deceit and lied to others in the past. As a result of that, one experiences that sort of environment.

The environmental effects of having engaged in divisive speech in the past would be to be born in an environment where the actual abode, the place itself, is bumpy or cracked or uneven and in that way it is very uncomfortable terrain that one has to live in.

Likewise the environmental result of offensive speech is being reborn in an environment where there are a lot of thorns and sharp objects like sharp rocks and stones around. That would be the environmental result of offensive speech.

The environmental result of senseless speech or idle gossip, is to be reborn in a place where the crops, particularly fruit trees, do not bear good fruit. Either they bear fruit at the wrong time, or they do not bear fruit at all, or unripened and so forth and do not give good results.

The last three non-virtuous actions are covetousness, malice and wrong views. Respectively, the environmental results of covetousness is that the good things in the environment that one may live in slowly deteriorate and diminish year by year, day by day, month by month. Even if there are good things they slowly deteriorate and completely diminish. That

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would be the environmental result of covetousness. The environmental result of ill will or harmful intention would be that one would be reborn in an environment where there is a lot of sicknesses, illnesses, epidemics and infectious diseases and a lot of quarrelsome people. The environmental result of wrong views is to be born in an environment where the good resources disappear and instead of good resources, unclean resources, unfavourable resources take their place. So far we have covered identifying the ten non-virtues and then gone into the effects that are experienced as a result of having engaged in the ten non-virtues. When we look into the ten non-virtues it becomes quite clear that they are definitely faults. If we refer to first of the ten, the three on the physical level, killing, stealing and sexual misconduct and we leave aside religious doctrines and look on a practical, common sense level, I wonder if there would be anyone in their right mind who would consider these acts as good acts, beneficial acts.

Likewise, the negativities of speech are even considered by common people as harmful. Lying – no one would like someone to lie to them. Similarly divisive speech and harmful speech – no one likes harmful speech. You don't have to be religious to reject that. Idle gossip is something that we may wonder about. We do find ourselves engaging in that a lot. But when we really look into idle gossip, senseless speech, we can begin to see the faults of senseless speech as well. We can see how, when we mindlessly engage in idle gossip, it can lead to all sort of other emotions arising in the mind. Therefore idle speech or idle gossip is also something that would lead to a disturbed state of mind and something that can contribute to unease in the mind. Therefore it's definitely a fault.

Recognising these as faults one needs to try to adopt the opposite of the ten non-virtues, the ten virtues, and engage in the righteous way of living by refraining from killing, stealing and so forth. As we adopt that way of living, adopting the ten virtues, it becomes a real way to lead a moral life or what we would call in common terms a well-behaved life. One will be respected by others because one will be well restrained and behave in that way. This is something that is really beneficial.

As mentioned previously, if one and others were to follow the moral conduct of refraining from the ten non-virtues and adopting or engaging in the ten virtuous deeds that would definitely contribute to peace, – peace in the environment, peace in one's own family, peace in the neighbourhood, peace in the world. That is something that can definitely be achieved. There would be no-one with intelligence who could contradict the fact that if people were living in this way, refraining from the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtues, it would lead to a peaceful and good environment.

We should try to really look into this and try to convince ourselves, to begin with, before we try to convince others. It is important that we develop a real conviction within one's own mind. Now we all have a sound mind with intelligence and are able to discern what is right from what is wrong. On a very basic level we have that intelligence, that analysing, discriminative awareness. We do have that. If we really pay attention, it becomes more and more obvious that adopting the ten virtues and discarding the ten non-virtues becomes a real means for one to be happy and peaceful. Then if we can slowly bring that awareness to others and if others can start to adopt that way that can definitely bring about good results. This is something very important that we need to look into.

Before we conclude for the evening we'll spend a few minutes in meditation again. This time by sitting in an upright, comfortable position we will keep our mind focused on the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni. While we recite the mantra, we keep our mind focused completely on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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