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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend sometime in meditation. As mentioned previously, we need to find an appropriate physical posture that is an upright relaxed manner. It is also important to have a good motivation in one's mind. The reason why the importance of a good motivation is emphasised is because whatever actions we do, whether the action is a good or not, follow very much as a consequence of the motivation one has.

We can see with worldly activities that if we have a good attitude then the work that follows also becomes very good. With meditation, the motivation that one generates is very much an answer to the question, 'Why am I meditating. What is the purpose? Why do I need to meditate?' The motivation is very much an answer to that question. Of course one may have various different reasons for meditation. Likewise there might be different kinds of individual motivation. The importance of having good motivation is stressed in a religious context like meditation in Buddhism or in any other practise.

To understand the importance of motivation we can look at normal activities in our lives such as work, which was mentioned earlier, or relationships with others and so forth. We can see that a good motivation or a good attitude plays a very big role. We can take as a specific example any misunderstanding or problem in any relationship with others, one's friend or family, partner whatever. If one wants to resolve that problem then if we do it with a good motivation, a motivation where we really want to resolve it as a benefit for oneself and others, we would definitely see that as a result of having the good attitude things really work out for the better. Even if it is not completely resolved what we gained from that process becomes really a good outcome. This is actually true for anything we do in life. If we have a good attitude what follows, whether it is some physical activity or whether it is in relation to our speech, if it follows a good attitude in one's mind it will definitely bring beneficial results.

On the contrary, if one has a negative attitude whatever one does does not bring about a good result. In fact it harms others and oneself. How does one generate a good attitude that it is beneficial for oneself and others? This requires understanding positive states of mind and using the analytical wisdom in one's mind. One analyses what is beneficial and what is harmful in relation to one's own experience. If one finds something harmful to oneself then one uses that as an example. If I say such things it will harm others or if I do certain things it will cause pain to others. One will refrain from doing things knowing they will harm others. That is basically what it means. Developing an attitude that is opposed to harmful

intentions, which comes along with wishing to benefit others, is what we called a good attitude. What ever we do, physical or verbal, with the good intention of wishing to benefit others will be most beneficial. This is the way we use our wisdom to analyse and develop the best attitude and motivation.

What seems to be most precious, that we can cherish at all times and is always useful for us and others, is positive actions done with the three doors, i.e. body, speech and mind. This means with the positive attitude in our mind, the verbal and physical actions that follow from that. On the physical level one would have good behaviour, a respectful behaviour that will be liked by everyone else. Likewise one will have pleasant speech, which will be liked by everyone else. A person who lives their life with an attitude of wishing to help and benefit others will naturally be a person who would be considered a valuable and respected person. Everyone will cherish them regardless of whether they are religious or not. Religion is something based on a good attitude. Whether they believe in a religion or not everyone cherishes the basic human value of practising kindness. Having this attitude one for others is something that will be appreciated and liked by anyone.

The basis of a good attitude is an attitude of kindness that means a desire to benefit others. A person who cultivates this kindness in their mind and acts upon that kindness will be considered a worthwhile person. When we think about ourselves, we definitely wish for things to go well for ourselves in our work environment or in a relationship with one's family, children, whatever situation. The means to achieve that is developing a kind attitude in one's mind and exhibiting that in one's physical and verbal actions.

The opposite of this is having a negative attitude. An attitude that is closed minded and just focuses on oneself. A closed minded attitude is harmful. We try to avoid that negative attitude and cultivate a kind attitude in one's mind. In order to maintain a kind attitude in our mind we need to protect our mind. Protection of the mind comes from training one's mind through meditation to always be mindful and use awareness. Awareness and mindfulness are developed through meditation. This is where the practise of meditation becomes useful in developing and maintaining a kind attitude in one's mind. From this we can see the value of meditation in our daily life. We can see how it can benefit our daily life when we see it as a means to cultivate and maintain a kind attitude in our mind.

We emphasise the importance of generating a kind attitude within one's mind. Another way of looking at the importance of developing a kind attitude lies in what we wish for ourselves. A kind attitude in our mind helps us to achieve what we wish for ourselves rather than being against that. We can see through our experience that we want wellbeing, mentally and physically for ourselves. We want internal and external conditions to be favourable for ourselves.

Internal conditions are an attitude developed within one's own mind. What we have externally is very much related to what we receive from others. When we talk

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about external necessities it includes, first of all, our nourishment. For us to maintain our physical body, as well as our physical conditions, like the dwellings and so forth we need companionship. At our level right now if we lack good companionship it can really harm our life. We can start feeling lonely and so forth. We rely upon good companionship and that means good relationships with others. Our practise in developing kindness only contributes to having good companions, having good relationships with others.

When we talk about having good companionship and good relationships it begins with the ones closest to ourselves, such as our family. If we are living with a partner then our partners are the ones that are closest to us. The ups and downs in our lives are very much dependent on our close companions. We can see that while we can have good connections with those who are close to ourselves, we can also receive abuse and criticism from those who are close to ourselves and that can be hurtful. Either real well-being or its reverse comes from those that we are closest to rather than from those we call enemies and with whom we don't have much association. We receive more wellbeing or negatives from those close to ourselves. Thus we must cultivate a healthy relationship, a mutual respect, and a mutual communication with those who are close to us. That is where we begin.

When we practise the Dharma or religion it is those that are very close to us that we begin our practise with. In that way we can see our development. Thus it is important to really understand and utilise what we call the kindness in our lives. When we look and investigate we can see that our suffering comes primarily from those who are close to ourselves not from those who are enemies or anyone who is at a distance. The main point is that we must extend our kindness towards those who are close to us. That is the most practical way.

We have emphasised the importance of developing of a kind attitude in one's mind. Those things which hinder having a kind attitude in our mind are the delusions. In the practise of meditation we attempt to focus the mind so that it is not influenced by delusions. We keep our mind focussed and this cultivates awareness in our mind. If we allow the mind to be in its natural state we would find our mind will become easily distracted by the delusions. When the mind becomes distracted by delusions a form of laziness occurs in the mind. If the mind becomes lazy then, as described in the teachings, one will lose the purpose of one's activity. The purpose of one's activity will dissipate.

We can find that, even in worldly activities, if we are not using our awareness to focus on what we need to do we become a little bit lazy and the work is not fruitful. We can see this in people who are in competitive sport. If someone becomes a little bit lax and doesn't train as well then the others who are training well might slowly overtake them. If you are in a good position but become a little bit lax and lazy others can take over your position. We can see that this is true for worldly activity. Likewise in our meditation and our practise to cultivate and maintain a kind attitude in our mind we definitely need

our mind to be focussed and to be able to identify when delusions arise in the mind and try to overcome those delusions. In the training of meditation we choose an object such as the breath and try to focus our mind completely on the breath for a particular duration of time to strengthen the awareness and the focus of our mind. That is what we attempt to do.

To summarise the appropriate motivation for meditation. The answer to the question, 'Why do we need to meditate?' should be, 'I wish to have a focussed mind that is not influenced by delusions so I can maintain a kind attitude towards all.' That should be the motivation for our practise of meditation. The object that we choose to focus on now in our meditation is the breath. This is a neutral object and training our mind to focus on the breath will help the mind to settle down and become calm. In the practise itself we sit in a proper posture and remind ourselves of the purpose and then focus on the breath and use the full capacity of our mind to focus on the breath. We try to maintain a hundred percent focus on the breath. We will meditate in this way for a few minutes. *(Pause for meditation).*

#### **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**

###### **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**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3. The way one engages in virtue**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3.2. The way to train by means of the four powers**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3.2.3. The four powers**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.3.2.3.2. The power of the opponent force**

We will continue with the text. When we left off in the earlier session we were covering the four opponent powers that are a means to purify negative karma. We have covered two of the opponent powers and we have come to the third that is the power of turning away from faults.

In this topic it is explained that after we engage in the practise of applying the antidote for purifying negative karma to make the purification complete we need to make a promise not to engage in the negativity again. The benefit of making the determination not to engage in the negativity again is explained. If we engage in the power of turning away from fault, which basically means applying a restraint from engaging in the ten non-virtuous actions, the teaching explains that the negative karma one has created and the delusions which cause them as well as the obscuration to practising Dharma, all the negativities that we have done ourselves, have encouraged others to engage in, as well as those we have rejoiced in will be purged, purified and overcome.

Encouraging others to commit negative karmas and rejoicing in others creating negative karmas should be understood as part of the negative karma that we have

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created. What is being identified here is not only the negative karma, such as the ten non-virtues, one has created oneself but also those one has encouraged others to engage in and those one has rejoiced in others doing. There are times when even though we don't commit the negative action ourselves, we see others engaging in negative karma and might feel glad and happy or rejoicing in others committing negative karma. All of this negative karma will be purified. This is explained in the sutra, such as the sutra of the Buddha called 'Essence of the Sun'

We create negative karma through engaging in it ourselves as well as encouraging others and rejoicing in others creating negative karma. Likewise we can gain positive, virtuous karma in these three ways. We create virtue by engaging in virtue ourselves, encouraging others to engage in virtue and rejoicing when others are creating virtue. By understanding this one can try to engage in different ways of accumulating virtue or positive karma and try to avoid or overcome negative karmas.

The relevance of rejoicing cannot be underestimated. It is actually a very powerful means of engaging in the positive side of virtue. Leaving aside the karmic aspect of rejoicing in others activity that one will experience as a consequence in the future there is an immediate consequence that we experience now. We can definitely see the effect of rejoicing either in the negative or positive. When we see others doing well either in a worldly activity or on the spiritual level if we are happy for them we, in return, actually feel quite well ourselves. It makes us feel good if we can feel happy about that. On the contrary if we feel jealous about their well-being then we were not able to rejoice in their good status or their success and so forth. If we start feeling jealous the immediate consequence is that one actually feels unhappy in one's mind. It burdens our mind.

We can see the immediate effect of rejoicing in the positive way. We can also see if we actually rejoice in a negative way that it brings a heavy state of mind. In this way, we can use our immediate experience to see what we gain from these actions. As we learn from our experiences, it is good to apply these practices and train the mind in being joyful and happy with others success rather than feeling jealous. We can apply this to every practise and slowly that is how we train our mind and make progress for ourselves. In this way we can see that by changing our attitude we can contribute to creating well being and a joyful mind within ourselves. It all depends on changing the attitude within oneself. This is how we can see how we contribute either to our own mental wellbeing or to feeling negative or unhappy in our mind. We can train in this way.

The text further emphasises that when we cultivate a restraint from engaging in negativity that restraint should not just be utterance by word. For example one should not merely say, 'I will not do this again.' Restraint should be cultivated from the depth of one's mind. One must really feel and make the commitment within one's mind to restrain from negativities.

It is explained further that because cultivating restraint from the depths of one's mind is important in the confession ceremony for monks there is the part where the abbot asks, "Have you seen the fault as fault?" and the answer should be, "I have. I have seen the fault to be a fault." The next question that is asked is, "Would you subsequently restrain yourself?" and the answer is, "I will."

This ritual shows the importance of restraining oneself. First of all one has to identify the negativity and accept it as having been negative. Then one makes the promise to restrain oneself from engaging in this negativity. Many have doubts and feel it wouldn't be appropriate to make a promise not to engage in negativity because they would definitely engage in some negativity later on. They feel if one cannot make that restraint it would be inappropriate to do a practise of purification. In fact, it would be like a lie rather than making the actual restraint.

When one makes the restraint from the depths of one's heart one is sincerely acknowledging the negativity as being negative and not wishing to engage in the negativity. If one does not have a strong wish not to engage in negativities and at that moment one makes the promise not to engage in negativity it is based on a strong wish it does not become a lie, it becomes a sincere wish. One needs to cultivate the sincere wish not to engage in negativity. If we made the promise, "I would not engage in negativity" with a sincere wish at that moment in time it is a sincere promise. There is no fault such as being a hypocrite or lying if one engages in negativity again in the future. It is not one's wish, and it is not one's intention. If at the time when one does the purification practise one's intention is not to engage in negativity and one makes a sincere promise along those lines it is appropriate practise. That is what should be understood.

In the practise of purification, applying the four opponent forces, it is explained that of the four opponent powers the first and the third, the first being the power of regret and the third being the power of turning away from faults or the power of restraint, are the most essential to make the practise complete. Within these two it is said that if the power of regret is cultivated strongly in one's mind the power of restraint will follow naturally. These two powers work as a cause and effect sequence within the four opponent powers.

We can relate this cause and effect sequence to normal worldly activities. In whatever kind of job or activity we are doing in life if we clearly see that we have done something which is a grave mistake and which has disastrous consequences, if we are conscious about that and we see the mistake, we would apply every possible means not to repeat the mistake again. That would be based on the experience of how disastrous it was. That being true in the worldly sense an exact analogy can be used in the purification process. If we can really identify the negativities we have engaged as being negative and how they are harmful to ourselves and to others both now and in the future, if we can really begin to acknowledge and really understand that, then the wish to generate restraint and not to engage in the negativity again can become very strong in the mind.

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It is also mentioned in the teachings that the severity of engaging in negative karma is like consuming poison. If one were to have consumed poison one would make every attempt right away to get rid of that poison from one's system. One knows what the consequences would be. You can either get sick or it can cause death. If we are aware that we have consumed poison we'll make every attempt to get rid of that poison right away. Likewise this should be applied in the purification practise. When we acknowledge and see that we have engaged in negativity we must apply the restraint of not wishing to engage in that action again.

The fourth opponent power is called the power of the object or the reliance. The teaching identifies the reliance as being two fold, cultivating refuge in one's mind and generating bodhicitta. The sequences in the teaching leaves the power of the object to last. This follows the sequences of how it is explained in the sutras. In some other texts the power of the object comes first, in relation to our practice one needs to take refuge and generate bodhicitta to first.

As described earlier, the importance of generating or cultivating a kind attitude is really the most important. All of these practices should be a means to developing the kind attitude within oneself. We should remind ourselves this is the core practise and apply every means to develop this. It is also important that we engage in practise with the attitude of developing these qualities in a gradual process. It is very unrealistic to think that we can develop everything and cultivate ourselves and have a kind mind right away. It is natural for us that a negative state of mind sometimes overpowers and influences us and we find ourselves engaging in non-virtue and making mistakes. That's part of our natural being right now. However, we also have the capacity to slowly develop ourselves and progress. Therefore it is really important that we try to have a broad view and try to slowly engage in practises that cultivate our mind. We will conclude the teaching for this evening here.

Before we finish we will again spend a few minutes sitting in an appropriate posture for meditation and applying our awareness and our focus on the sound of the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni and try to maintain our focus on that.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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