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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation, sitting in an upright comfortable position. As we engage in a practice of meditation it is important that we remind ourselves of why we meditate and what is it that we are attempting to achieve. The main purpose of meditation can be summarised as 'to subdue the mind'. As the Buddha said, 'a subdued mind is a happy mind'. When the delusions in the mind are overcome, then the mind will naturally be happy and contented.

We can further elaborate by saying, that meditation is for the purpose of maintaining kind and positive attitudes in the mind that we may have already developed. We must try to maintain positive attitudes that we have already developed, and we try to cultivate those which we have not yet developed. It is in fact extremely important that we maintain a positive and kind attitude in whatever activity we engage in, as the success of the activity is entirely dependent on the attitude we have in our mind. If we have a positive attitude in our mind, naturally what follows will also be worthwhile. To protect the positive and kind attitude in our mind then we need to practise meditation, particularly using the main tools of mindfulness and introspection. Through mindfulness and introspection we can train ourselves to check and make sure that we have a positive attitude, and further maintain and secure that in our mind.

As we train ourselves in cultivating mindfulness and introspection or awareness, that then becomes a very good tool enabling us to distinguish between what is positive and what is negative within our mind. If we cultivate mindfulness and awareness, then we are further strengthening our analytical wisdom - the ability to distinguish between what is positive and what is negative, thus adopting the positive and discarding the negative attitudes in our mind.

In regard to generating positive attitudes and a kind attitude, as I emphasise regularly, we need to begin by cultivating a kind attitude with those very people that we live with and associate with in our daily lives, particularly the person we live with. That very person or those people around us are the ones that we must begin generating a genuine sense of caring and kind attitude towards. That is extremely important, because that is where we have to begin.

Leaving the people that we associate with aside and then trying to find someone else to practise with instead, is completely unrealistic and unpractical. The person we associate with in our daily lives is the person who is the most important in our lives, and is the very person that we can practise with because we deal with them on a

daily basis. We can train our mind in developing a genuine attitude of kindness, concern, patience, tolerance and so forth with this person.

If we don't pay attention to that, then we are living in a life of denial and constant misery, because being in conflict with the person we live with will contribute to the trauma of an unsatisfactory life. So training with the people you live with, is the means to gain some temporary happiness, at least, in this life. For those who are seeking happiness in this life, this is the first step that we must take, and it becomes the major practice in our life that will bring real happiness and satisfaction. For those who accept that there is an after-life, and thus believe in a future life, then this practice also becomes a means for happiness in the next life. The practice of tolerance, patience and genuine kindness and concern for the person that you live with, becomes a practice that contributes to obtaining our goal of having a better future life. Furthermore, for those who aspire to achieve liberation and enlightenment, this practice is the basis that becomes a cause for achieving those ultimate goals.

One of the most prevalent and dreaded miseries or sufferings that we talk about, especially in the West, is the suffering of loneliness. That is something that everyone dreads. Now if we look into what causes loneliness, and analyse what kind of attitudes contribute to that, we will come to realise that a lack of real concern and compassion for others becomes the initial cause to experience loneliness. Lacking compassion for others naturally distances us from others. If we cannot extend a genuine sense of love and compassion towards others, then we cannot expect genuine love and concern in return. It is a two way thing - as you give, so you receive. So if we do not pay any attention, or do not make any attempt to extend love, compassion and concern towards others, then it will not come towards us. When we feel a distance from others, as we see earlier friends start to dwindle and stay away from us, we begin to suffer the real effects of loneliness. I feel that the lack of genuine love and concern is a cause that contributes to loneliness. Whether this is true or not, is something you may find out for yourselves.

Conversely, if we pay attention to cultivating love, compassion and a real genuine sense of concern for others by cultivating love and compassion within, then immediately we feel a real genuine sense of calmness and happiness. Before we even get external friends, the very act of cultivating a real genuine sense of love and compassion, will make us feel warm and give us a sense of fulfilment. That then becomes our best friend, which we carry within us wherever we go. Developing love and compassion becomes the ultimate companion, the best friend which is with us at all times, because the resources are within us at all times. So, if we develop a real sense of love and compassion, we will never experience the suffering or pain of loneliness.

On a practical level, as we practise love and compassion, then naturally others are attracted to us because of our kind attitude. They will want to be with us, and so will many other friends and companions. We can see that this proves that the real cause for external friends and companions is the positive attitude within us and not

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material objects such as wealth and comfort, which are not the real source of contentment. When we look around we can see that there are many wealthy people, but we also notice that there are many who are lonely, who don't have that many companions and so they suffer the pain of loneliness. If material wealth were to give real satisfaction and happiness, then they should be really happy regardless of whether they have outer friends and companions or not.

Conversely, we may also notice that those who may lack material wealth but practise genuine love and concern towards others, are rich in having many friends and companions. Many people are naturally drawn to them, and the reason people are attracted to them is because they are a kind and nice person. People are attracted and like to be with someone who has genuine love and compassion.

To emphasise the main point that I am making. As mentioned earlier, if we wish to put effort into developing a genuine sense of love and compassion, then the people that we begin to practise with, are the people that we live and associate with on a daily basis. This is extremely important to remember, because if we begin to lose our concern and genuine sense of love and compassion for the person that we live with, then that is where things start to go wrong in our life. We may have a notion that it is OK to disregard the person that we live with as long as we have love and compassion towards others, but it doesn't work that way. If we begin to lose the sense of real concern, love and compassion towards the person that we actually live with, then that effect will be carried on towards everyone else too. We might think that we can love and really take care of someone else even if we disregard the person that we live with, but this will not work.

Now of course this is not easy, but it is the only way. We have to practise with the person we live with, developing a deep genuine sense of concern within our heart towards them, cultivate and slowly practise that. When we notice that our love and compassion begins to wane towards the person that we are associated with or live with, then we will notice that it is replaced by a negative attitude of anger which can slowly turn into hatred. That is when a real strain on the relationship begins to take place and where all the conflict arises from. If we want to maintain a healthy long lasting relationship, then we must constantly work at developing genuine compassion and love towards those that we live with.

As we identify with the positive attitudes within us, such as love, compassion, a kind attitude, and concern for others, then we must try to work at maintaining what has already been cultivated, constantly reminding ourselves of the great value of the positive attitudes within us. As we see the value of these attitudes, we will naturally want to protect them just as we wish to protect our valuables, and the kind attitude is particularly our inner valuable possession. It is our most valuable possession and when we recognise its value, we will use every means to protect it. This becomes the real practice - maintaining the positive attitudes - that is how we can really put into

practice what we have heard and understood from the teaching.

To protect our positive attitude, first of all we need a focused mind. If our mind is completely distracted to begin with, then there is not much chance; we could not even begin to maintain our positive qualities. Meditation will help us initially to have a focused mind which then can help to protect the valuable positive states of mind.

When the mind is very distracted, it is like a small piece of paper or cotton wool that is blown about by the wind; it first begins to drift all around and flies up and down and then eventually ends up in a corner. Because it is trapped in the corner it just swirls around - and that is what happens in our mind. Initially our mind may be very distracted thinking about all sorts of things, following every random thought and idea, daydreaming. We just completely follow every whim of the mind and then eventually come to a point where we are stuck with one particular negative thought or idea which controls us and makes us feel tight and tense. When the mind is cornered into a negative state and there is no escape, that is how we develop the tension that can end up in depression.

And now for some meditation: Focus your mind by sitting in the appropriate posture as mentioned before, in an upright and relaxed posture. Then, by reminding ourselves that we need to have a focused mind, withdraw it from all distractions and keep it focused on the breath, which is the object that we meditate on now. *(pause for meditation)*

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

##### **4.2.2.1.2.2 Training the mind in the stages of the path held in common with beings of the medium scope**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1 The actual training in the reflections: the way to develop the mind that longs for liberation**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1 Reflection on the truth of suffering – the faults of cyclic existence**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2 The actual meditation on suffering**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2.1 Reflecting on the actual sufferings of cyclic existence**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.1.2.1.2 Reflecting on the six sufferings**

From the text, we are covering the topic of contemplating the faults of cyclic existence by thinking about suffering, which is divided into the general types of suffering and the particular sufferings. Within the particular suffering there are the eight types of suffering which we completed in our last session, and we now come to the six types of suffering.

The text lists six types of suffering and then it combines them into three type of sufferings. The six types of suffering are referred to as faults in the text. The first suffering is the fault of uncertainty, the second is the fault of insatiability, the third is the casting off of bodies repeatedly, the fourth is the fault of repeated rebirth, the fifth is the fault of repeatedly descending from high to low, and the sixth is the fault of having no companions.

Relating to the *first suffering, the fault of uncertainty* refers to the fact that being reborn in cyclic existence is one of uncertainty. There is uncertainty in relation to everything to do with cyclic existence. We can relate it to the

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uncertainty between being rich and poor: we all know through many examples that someone who may have been wealthy at one time can later on turn out to be the poorest of the poor, and yet someone who was very poor initially and living in poverty can later turn out to be very wealthy. And someone who was very rich last year can lose all their wealth and become extremely poor this year, and likewise someone who was poor can become very rich. That is also true for ourselves: uncertainty is prevalent anywhere at any time. Understanding this can help us to reduce strong attachment towards objects and situations that comes from the wrong conception that they are stable.

In relation to feeling good and feeling bad, we know through our own experience that there is no certainty about the feelings we experience from one moment to the next. Within a day we know that when we are feeling well and happy in the morning, due to some situation we may feel really sad and depressed by noon. One moment we could be very happy and very excited, but then in the next moment something goes wrong and suddenly we feel very depressed and very low. So from feeling very good and very happy, we could move to feeling very bad. There is no certainty in the feelings that we experience.

We can learn from that on a practical level. Because of this reality, the uncertainty in relation to feelings, we understand that if we reduce our attachment to feeling good, then we will also feel less agitated, upset or angry. When things are going well what happens is that we start developing very strong attachment to that wellbeing, and when things go wrong we feel very disappointed and depressed. So we need to reduce our attachment to things going well. We can remind ourselves that even if things are going very well now, we shouldn't be too attached, because it can change at any moment. This means we need to reduce attachment to feelings of wellbeing, so that when things are not going so well, we can protect ourselves from getting upset and angry about it by reminding ourselves that this also will pass. Try to maintain a sense of equilibrium in the mind, in both situations - of well being and when things are not going well.

For a real practitioner the practice goes beyond not just getting upset when things don't go well and not being attached to things going well. A real practitioner, someone who really wishes to engage in the practice with an understanding of karma, will train their mind to be pleased when things don't go well and be unhappy when things go well. A real practitioner who understands karma understands that when things do go well from a worldly perspective, it is actually using up the good karma created in the past for a mere temporary worldly benefit. By understanding that, they feel upset that their good karma is being used up for such a meaningless gain. But when things are not going well, they understand that this is actually a sign of past negative karma ripening and exhausting past negative karma. When past negative karma is exhausted, that brings pleasure and happiness in the mind. By knowing that past negative karma is being exhausted, they understand that experiencing difficulties and problems now will reduce great suffering in the future. It comes with an understanding that the

experience of what will otherwise be experienced in very heavy negative results in the future is ripening now.

Real practitioners are happy that problems are occurring now because they can get rid of or expend that negative karma. This is a profound practice that comes with a deep understanding of karma; it is the practice of overcoming worldly concerns.

We can relate this to our own concerns. If we are a worldly person we are happy when things go well and we get upset when things don't go well. This is of course completely normal from a worldly perspective. But overcoming that does not mean that we voluntarily look for trouble and problems and try to avoid every pleasant thing. That is not the case. The practice is to go beyond the worldly concern of being attached to things going well and being upset when things don't go well. For a real practitioner the problems will lessen. We can't say that bodhisattvas are experiencing more problems than everyone else because they are doing that practice. In fact they are experiencing fewer problems than we do because of engaging in the practice. The result of practising that way is that the real problems lessen, and as a result the mind becomes much happier.

To explain this with an analogy: if we have some possessions that are not valuable and we don't really like, then when they get used up, we actually feel glad because we don't really like them anyway. If they are used up quickly, then we are happy that we are getting rid of them and we can maybe get something new. But if we have something valuable we want to hang on to, then we don't want it to finish quickly. Similarly with karma, when we understand how karma works we wouldn't want to use up our good karma for something meaningless, and a good practitioner would want to get rid of their negative karma. Negative karma is being used up when things are not going well and problems are being faced, so if we really understand that, then we can be glad about that.

In terms of relationships with others we can categorise three types of people; those we consider friends, those we consider enemies and those who we consider strangers. There is no certainty in relation to this life or even from past lives of friends, enemies or strangers. Sometimes those who have been strangers at one time can be friends now, those who have been friends in the past can be enemies now, and enemies from the past can be friends now; so there is no certainty in our relationship with others.

In relation to the uncertainty between friends enemy and strangers, to quote from one of the great Indian master Shantideva's works, in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, he says 'leaving aside uncertainty of friends, enemies and strangers from past lives to this life and onwards. Even in this life from moment to moment we can see the changes'. So what he says is actually very true. We have many examples from others' lives and from our own lives: from one moment to the next someone who is considered a cherished friend can turn into an enemy.

We must try to overcome our strong opinions in relation to these three objects. Relating to these three different objects contributes to increasing the three delusions within our mind. With friends we develop a very strong

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attachment, and the more we focus on enemies, the reason why we dislike them, anger increases in our mind. As we feel indifferent to strangers, that contributes to stupidity or ignorance arising in the mind. Being indifferent to someone is said to be a cause for future ignorance to increase in the mind. So for as long as we make that distinction between enemy, friend and stranger and develop strong attachment to a friend, develop strong aversion towards enemies, and feel indifference towards strangers, then we are contributing to strengthening the delusions in our mind.

In an attempt to overcome the delusions in our mind we must change our attitude or opinion in relation to these three objects, by trying to reduce strong attachment to a friend with the understanding and recognition that this person we consider to be so close could turn into an enemy, and realising that they have been our enemy in the past and could turn into our enemy at any time again. Understanding and cultivating that attitude can help reduce strong attachment to a friend or someone who is very close to you.

When we feel strong anger and aversion to enemies then we to train the mind to realise that the only reason that we feel strong aversion or anger towards this person is because we consider them as an enemy. But in reality they have been our friend in the past, and could become our friend in the future, so there is no reason, there is no point, and it is absurd to feel such strong hatred for this person now.

Likewise strangers who have been our friend in the past could become our very good friend, so why should we be indifferent to them. Training our mind to overcome strong attachment to friends, aversion to enemies and indifference towards strangers will help our mind to cultivate equilibrium in seeing all of them equally, regarding all friends, strangers and enemies as equal. Actually we don't pay much attention to how we think but if we really look into our psyche and our mind we can really pinpoint that most of our problems arise because of our attitude of distinguishing between friends, enemies and strangers.

I have related stories in the past of how an enemy can become a friend. I have had personal experience of that. I have related a story in the past so those who have heard it before will know it. In my early days I was living in the monastery there was another monk that I used to have a lot of fights with, and in fact we had quite vicious fights where we actually got marks and scars on our head. I have scars from his blows and he has scars from my blows on him, so we both have shared scars of our fights. However, later on we had to live close together and then started becoming very good friends and ended up sharing whatever we had. We would share our food and belongings and help each other. This is really from my own personal account that someone that I used to fight with later turned out to be a very good friend.

You might also have experiences of fighting and becoming very close again. We hear and see cases where sometimes people have a fight and someone ends up bleeding, then the other person feels sorry and helps the other person and even wipes the wound and helps soothe

the other person who has the wound, and then they turn out to be very good friends.

One of the previous Dalai Lamas, Gyalwa Kelsang Gyatso, mentions in one of his texts that by seeing how a friend today turns out to be an enemy the next day, he personally developed a strong aversion towards being close to some and distant towards others, and overcame that feeling. He seems to be relating to his own experience and practice of seeing how a dearest friend today could on the next day suddenly turn out to consider you an enemy. Such uncertainty from one day to the next, overnight the whole situation changing, has prompted him to engage in the practice to overcome that strong attachment to what we call attachment to friends and aversion to enemies, and thus practising equilibrium in the mind and seeing everyone as an equal.

That covers the first fault, which is the fault of uncertainty in relation to the six sufferings. The next is the fault of insatiability - being dissatisfied with whatever we have or engage in. This can be explained further in our next session.

Before we conclude the evening, we will engage in a few minutes of practising of meditation. As we meditate we will recite the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni. As the mantra is being recited, for those who have faith in Buddha Shakyamuni, it is good to develop a strong aspiration and make a strong prayer to the Buddha as we recite the mantra. You can mentally say: 'Please bless my mind, so that I may never lose the valuable, precious attitudes of love and compassion within me. May the positive attitudes ever grow to become stronger, and may I be able to put into practice the precious attitude of love and compassion.'

For those who are not yet familiar with the Buddha and have not yet cultivated strong faith in the Buddha, simply focus on the sound of the mantra and keep your mind focused on the sound of the mantra. That in itself becomes the meditation practice of focusing your mind.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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