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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to do some meditation. To engage in the practice of meditation we sit in a comfortable, upright position. It is also important to try to keep the mind in a clear, fresh state. With that clear state of mind as a basis, we can then generate a positive motivation. A good motivation is emphasised at the beginning of the practice of meditation because, as with any activity, the outcome of the activity depends very much on the motivation or attitude we have at the beginning. We can see there is definitely the relationship between the motivation for doing an activity and the outcome. Thus, if you want to have a good meditation practice, setting a good motivation is essential.

We can all see that, depending on whether the motivation is good or not good, the activity that follows turns out to be either fruitful or not so fruitful. There are variety of good motivations one can generate before engaging in meditation so depending on one's own inclination, one can generate any positive meditation. However, our tradition generally emphasises a motivation that includes all other beings – not just focusing on oneself, but generating the thought that the practice one engages in will bring happiness for other beings.

If we set the mind in this way when we engage in the practice of meditation, our mind will be more subdued, content and peaceful. Just by having peaceful mind ourselves, we can help so many others to feel peaceful as well. So with the intention of helping other sentient beings, one then engages in the practice to subdue one's own mind.

When one actually sets one's motivation as mentioned above – engaging in the practice to bring about benefit for all sentient beings by leading them to happiness and well-being – it encompasses the whole purpose of the practice. This, in itself, is considered to be the noblest motivation one can develop. How does that motivation benefit oneself and others? First, from the very outset, if we dedicate our practice for the benefit of other beings, as we experience the benefit of a subdued and peaceful mind ourselves, in addition because of our initial motivation or attitude we will naturally be inclined to help others. So we will be successful in helping others because of our motivation. Thus from the very outset, if we prepare ourselves with the motivation to benefit others, as we gain more benefit ourselves we will naturally be inclined to help others.

Also, if we are concerned about only benefiting ourselves when we engage in the practice of meditation, through familiarity with that state of mind when we actually gain the result of having a peaceful mind ourselves, we will

not be so inclined to benefit others. Thus although one may get some benefit, it will be limited just to oneself. However if we have generated the wish to help others, this attitude will then allow us to spontaneously and naturally be able to help others when we achieve the goal of having a peaceful mind ourselves.

This attitude is applicable to our everyday life, to whatever activity we engage in – for example, studying to get a good career to make money, then actually going to work, and so forth. If we have this wider motivation from the outset, for example, engaging in work so that we can make money to help our family – whether it is one's parents or immediate family – although our motivation is limited to our own family, because it is an intention to help others rather than just oneself, that in itself is quite a noble attitude. Whatever activity we engage in, if we can have that intention of doing it not merely for ourselves but to help others, it makes that activity much nobler, more worthwhile.

This is something we need to relate to. Even in a worldly context, people who only work for their own ends are considered selfish. We don't like to relate to people who are selfish. When we look at others and think 'he/she is selfish', that characteristic is considered quite inappropriate and unacceptable.

If we agree that a selfish person is unacceptable and not worthy of praise, then rather than focusing on others and thinking about whether they are selfish or not, it is much more practical to look at oneself. If we don't like seeing selfishness in others, it wouldn't be appropriate for us to be selfish. We can begin by making sure that our own thinking is not based on a selfish attitude. From the outset, if we have an attitude to benefit others, we are training our mind by making it familiar with an altruistic attitude rather than a selfish one.

With the proper attitude and the best of intentions in our mind to benefit others, we then engage in the practice that will help to calm and subdue our mind. Prior to engaging in meditation, it is worth taking note of why we are engaging in the practice. What is it we are trying to overcome? We can all relate to the mind in its normal distracted worldly state as being a troubled, discontented mind because of the various distractions, such as focusing on things that appear nice. We focus on such things that seem attractive, then generate the attitude 'I want to possess that' for the numerous things and situations we would like to acquire and possess, because they seem attractive. These numerous objects may not even be attainable, yet we still have attachment towards them. This very attraction is the distraction: that is what disturbs the mind. We can see that this is what causes the mind to be always dissatisfied and discontented.

To reverse that situation of our mind being completely immersed in distractions, we centre our mind by focusing on an object that does not cause it to be disturbed. The object we choose here is the breath, a neutral object. The actual technique involves withdrawing our mind from all distractions – from thoughts, ideas and other distractions – and trying to keep it focused on the breath itself. As we settle the mind by focusing on the breath, we notice that our mind starts to become calmer and more peaceful.

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That is the immediate benefit of this meditation. We familiarise our mind with this technique, keeping it centred and focused. Now we will spend a few minutes attempting to distance our mind from all distractions and keeping it centred on the meditation object, which is the natural inflow and outflow of our breath. *[Pause for meditation]*

It is good to adopt a daily routine of engaging in a few minutes of meditation like the short period of meditation we have just attempted. If we can do this, that daily routine, of a few minutes' practice of meditation will definitely culminate in a good result in the future.

There are those who claim they don't have time for meditation. But, if we think about it, we can all find at least five minutes a day for some quiet contemplation. In fact, the advice on the practice of meditation is that it is not suitable to do a long meditation session at the beginning, but instead to do short sessions. We should all be able to find five minutes to have some quiet time to ourselves, wherever it may be and in whatever circumstances. It needn't be at home. Even if we are at work, during our lunchbreak just before we have our meal, or during our tea break, we can spend a few moments just to focus on our breath, keeping a quiet mind. If we can use the first part of our break to contemplate and focus on our breath, it can also be a way to offer our meal or tea before we consume it. Actually if we spend some quiet time in contemplation, we may end up enjoying the meal or tea much more and it will taste much better!

Through these short periods of trying to focus single-pointedly on a meditation object such as the breath every day, we will slowly develop familiarity with this practice, which will become the basis for us to have a good practice later on. However, don't spend too long in contemplation before a meal or tea because it might get cold. As a classic example, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, is well known to spend a long time in meditation – sometimes up to half an hour – before a meal, by which time your meal would be completely cold! *[laughter]*

#### **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 strains for liberation**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Reflection on the causes of suffering – the faults of cyclic existence**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. How afflictions or delusions arise**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. Identifying the afflictions**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1. In identifying the afflictions**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Anger**

Relating to the topic that we are covering in the text right now, which is identifying and defining the various types of delusions, within the five non-speculative delusions we have broadly covered the delusion called attachment: the definition of attachment, the faults or disadvantages of attachment, and how to meditate on the antidotes to overcoming attachment.

Now we come to the second delusion in the text, which is anger or hostility. This is a delusion that we easily identify in others. I have heard people relate to me personally that 'my partner/friend is short-tempered/gets angry easily'. And we often comment how a certain person is short-tempered or easily irritated. So when someone confides in me that their partner – or friend or whomever they are associating with – is short-tempered and easily irritated, my usual direct and open response is: 'Have you tried to ascertain whether you are a short-tempered person yourself? Do you find that you get easily irritated yourself or not? Wouldn't that be much more practical and worthwhile to try to fix before trying to fix someone else's problem of being short-tempered. Isn't that much more manageable?' On a practical level, we all need to try to look within ourselves and identify anger to see if that is a problem for ourselves or not.

When we don't do any such self-analysis or investigation and just get into the habit of looking outside and seeing others as being short-tempered and easily irritated, it is often the case that what is within our own mind is more apparent in others. In other words, we project our own faults onto others, who appear to be at fault, when in fact it is really our own fault, our own state of mind.

The definition of anger in the text begins by first defining what it focuses on, then what its aspect is. Anger focuses on three different kinds of objects as the causes of suffering or discomfort: first, other beings; secondly pain or any uncomfortable sensation or suffering within ourselves; and thirdly inanimate threatening objects such as thorns. Focusing on any of these three types of objects gives rise to a harsh, tormented mind that contemplates harming these objects. So this definition includes focusing on a particular object that one sees as a cause of suffering for oneself; then, as a result of the pain one experiences in relation to that object, one wishes to cause the object harm. That is what is defined as anger or hostility.

Reflecting on this definition, we can understand a bit more about the nature of anger and how it occurs within us. Clearly it occurs under unfavourable circumstances; anger does not occur when everything is going well. It always involves pain, suffering and misery. Because one sees the nature of the object as harming oneself, this causes more torment in the mind, which gives rise to a harsh mind that wishes to harm.

When we reflect upon how anger arises within ourselves, we can clearly see that it is an unpleasant, undesirable state of mind. Recognising that it is an unpleasant state of mind will make it easier for us to understand others when they are experiencing an angry mind. Thus when one sees others in an angry state, by identifying with the anger and seeing how it causes torment in the mind, one could actually relate to the other's suffering and feel compassion for them, rather than feeling upset oneself about their anger – one can actually use that situation to develop compassion for them, seeing that they are not in a happy state of mind.

Next, one can reflect on the disadvantages of anger. As one great master has mentioned, when anger is experienced, that very experience of anger has an

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immediate consequence – it disturbs the mind so that it becomes agitated. Because it is agitated, the mind will not be peaceful, and because it is not peaceful, it cannot be joyful. Thus in that moment of anger, the mind lacks joy and happiness.

Even on a physical level, as the great master points out, there is really no joy or happiness – a situation that is obvious to all of us who have experienced anger. When we have intense moments of anger, we start to lose our appetite, so there is no joy in eating. Then with a state of mind of intense anger, if we try to go to sleep, we are not able to sleep comfortably and peacefully. The body then experiences fatigue from lack of sleep. So the physical body is harmed as well.

When we reflect on the consequences of anger, mentally and physically, we can definitely relate to its disadvantages. Relating to those experiences ourselves will help us to generate compassion for others who have anger, rather than getting upset or angry ourselves because the other is angry. When one sees an angry person, one will generate a feeling of compassion and feel how unfortunate it is for them to experience that, then we will wish them to be free from that disturbing, tormenting state of mind.

On a practical level it is very important, first, that we use ourselves as a measure to gauge how we feel when anger arises in the mind. We need to really look within ourselves and see that when we are in a state of anger, we do not experience joy and happiness. Leaving aside enlightened beings and bodhisattvas, we can assume that there is no one who has not experienced moments of anger. Amongst ordinary beings, is there anyone who can claim that they had never once been angry or upset in their life? If we really think about it, we will find no-one, including oneself, who has not experienced a moment of anger or being upset.

When we relate to the experience of being upset and angry and ask: 'Do I experience any joy or peace or happiness during that time?' It is clear we do not have a peaceful state of mind. We must relate that uncomfortable experience to the situation of others. It's exactly the same. Just as we do not experience any joy, peace or happiness during moments of anger, it is exactly the same with others. When others are upset, angry or agitated, that state of mind is not a happy one. If it is one's friend or partner who clearly suffers when experiencing anger, then that would be the most crucial time for us to help them. It is not the time to scorn them or use harsh words towards them. When your partner or friend – anyone close to you – is experiencing anger, if you want to help them, then it is not useful to criticise them. Even if they use critical words towards you, you should be able to use your wisdom and knowledge to understand – from your own experience – that they are saying those abusive, critical words because their mind is disturbed and agitated. Do not take it personally. Rather than taking it personally and feeling hurt, one should try to understand that they are saying irrational or unreasonable things because they have a disturbed state of mind; their mind is not joyful and happy. To return

their abusive, critical language will only contribute to their suffering.

At such a time, one should recognise the suffering of one's friend and try to bear with their criticism. Accept it for the moment, even though it seems baseless and irrational, because they are saying it out of a disturbed and angry state of mind. This is the practice of patience. When someone is saying irrational things out of a disturbed state of mind and anger, if we can bear that and not retaliate, this is the practice of patience. In response, we should try to say pleasant words and soothe them.

Actually, in dealing with someone with an angry mind, the teachings instruct us that the best way to help them try and overcome their agitated state of mind immediately is to give them nice food, nice clothing, take them out for a stroll – generally, to give them an enjoyable time and make them feel restful and happy. This will help their anger to subside. On the other hand, giving nice food and other pleasurable objects like good clothes to someone who has a lot of attachment will not help them; it will only increase their attachment and desire. If they already have a greedy state of mind, giving them more things will just make their mind greedier.

So when someone is angry with us, rather than retaliating with more abusive words and critical remarks, we should try to help them at that time because we consider them as our friend and they are in an uncomfortable situation and a state of suffering. Then they will really appreciate our help. The nice words we say, the nice meal we give them – whatever we do to make them feel comfortable – will be really appreciated because they are in a state of suffering. Because we helped them instead of being critical and abusing them, it will help them settle down, and that good deed we did for them will never be forgotten. It is human nature to always appreciate help that is given at the time of greatest need. Whoever extends help at a time when help is most needed will naturally be considered trustworthy, a good person and a true friend. So if you wish them to consider you a true friend, you need to help them at their moment of need – not just when everything is going fine, but when things are not going well, when they are suffering and experiencing unease. When a friend is disturbed and agitated, that is the time when we need to extend real help.

Not allowing our mind to be disturbed in a situation when there are causes for retaliation is what is called patience. Practising patience in such a way will only contribute to strengthen one's relationship with others. We can see how the practice of patience is a really valuable tool or technique to strengthen one's relationship with others. To have a good long-lasting relationship it is essential that we try to develop and practise patience. That practice of patience comes with the clear understanding of how that person is in a disturbed state of mind when they are angry. It is a state of mind in which nothing appears to be attractive. When someone is in an angry state of mind, as defined here, it is a mind that contemplates the unattractive attributes of objects and thus feels agitated, harsh and tormented.

Desire or attachment, as was explained earlier, is the opposite. By seeing the attractive qualities of an object,

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one wishes to possess that object. Thus, on the one hand, where one has the mind wishing to possess attractive-looking objects, on the other hand, the mind of anger has a repulsion for objects, wishing either to harm the object – because of seeing and exaggerating its unattractiveness – or being hostile towards that object. When anger arises, that is basically what happens. The mind is influenced to see and relate to objects in a violent or hostile way. So when someone is disturbed by anger, one must be able to understand the symptoms they are experiencing and expressing. Understanding that and not retaliating in a negative way, but rather practising patience, is how we should apply the teachings in a practical way.

The misconception often arises that patience means not retaliating physically or verbally. But the mere prevention of physical or verbal retaliation is not necessarily patience. If we refer to the definition of patience, it is the quality in which the mind is not disturbed when it is facing an object of disturbance or suffering, or an external object that threatens to harm us. Patience does not allow the mind to be disturbed and, from within that undisturbed mind, not to retaliate. So the main point about patience is not to feel disturbance in one's mind in relation to objects that appear to threaten us. It is not just about enduring harm and suppressing our response by physically not reacting and not saying anything. One must clearly understand what patience is; it's a mental state.

However practising patience does not necessarily mean that one does not respond at all. Here one must understand that 'not retaliating' refers specifically to not retaliating out of anger or hostility. But in terms of correcting others' mistakes, practising patience does not necessarily mean that we don't respond at all, that we just endure whatever the other does and not try to correct their misdeed. That is not the meaning of patience. As mentioned previously, practising patience means not allowing the mind to be disturbed. One can still respond and act out of compassion to correct others' misdeeds. If others are doing things that harm themselves and others, one must definitely correct them to ensure they don't continue to engage in harmful actions.

The main point here is to correct them not out of hostility or anger, but rather out of compassion. If one corrects them out of compassion, they will accept it. If, in retaliation, we use anger and hostile measures, that will only increase and escalate the negative deeds of the others. You are not able to correct others effectively out of anger, but the actions you take to correct others out of a compassionate mind will be very effective. Because one does not lose one's own reasoning, one will be able to effectively help others. Whereas if we get angry ourselves, we lose our ability to analyse the situation properly. Thus out of anger and hostility in our own mind, any countermeasures we take will only be harmful and not really beneficial for the other. We must understand this. Otherwise there are many who feel that the practice of patience would be very awkward if someone hit you on the head and you sat there and endured it, and they kept hitting you. That is not what patience means – that would be stupidity rather than patience! *[laughter]*

Further, if we use harmful methods to stop others' harm and that harm were to stop, that would be one thing; but the harm doesn't stop there. Such a response just seems to inflict more and more harm. I have had some of that experience myself, when I was in a teenager of about 13. There were about five other kids who used to tease me a lot. Once there was another younger boy accompanying me, and when the others began teasing us quite harshly by throwing stones at us, in order to defend myself and the younger boy, I started throwing stones at them. Because the five other kids were surrounding us, I could not throw stones at the ones behind me and I got hit twice. Trying to stop them by my actions aggravated them further and they hit me from behind; I got hit and started bleeding. So that was a clear example from my own experience of trying to stop harm: I actually got more harm myself! *[Geshe-la laughs]* In that instant, when I started throwing stones at them, I thought I was showing great bravery, and being a real hero. But in fact, there was no real bravery, as I came out weakened from wounds and blood loss. There was no good result from that act.

There is perhaps a little more that can be said on this topic of anger and my experiences, but we'll leave that for another time. Before we conclude for the evening, we can again spend some time in contemplation. This time the contemplation is to focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra, so just keep our mind focused on that.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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