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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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It would it be good to spend some time as usual in meditation. In order to do the practice of meditation we need to sit in a relaxed posture.

The purpose of engaging in the practice of meditation is to acquaint one's mind with being in a positive state: that is what we are trying to achieve. To understand the benefits of meditation practice, we can analyse how our mind functions. The attitudes normally present in our mind can be divided into positive and negative. When one experiences negative attitudes, how does it affect the mind? How does it affect one's well-being? How does it affect one's life in general? Whereas when we have a positive state of mind, how does it affect us? We need to really pay attention to analysing the consequences of having positive or negative attitudes in our mind.

For example, we can compare the deluded states of mind, such as attachment and anger, with their opposites – non-attachment and non-anger or non-hatred, which are positive states of mind. To understand the benefits of the positive states of mind, let us first refer to the consequences of the negative states of mind: attachment and anger. For someone who has strong attachment, when they meet an object of desire, by focusing on that object, it will immediately bring unrest to their mind, causing the mind to feel agitated. There is no real tranquillity, no settled feeling, when attachment or desire arise strongly in the mind. For someone prone to strong desire or attachment, seeing or thinking about even the slightest object of desire immediately disturbs their mind so they feel no peace or tranquillity. Then they may go to great efforts to try and obtain that object, bringing about further negative consequences for themselves and others. Thus, these are some of the disadvantages of the negative state of mind of desire.

We need not mention the ill-effects of anger as they are more obvious. We have already discussed the great disadvantages of anger when that negative state is prevalent in the mind. At a personal level, one loses one's sleep and appetite. Then one uses abusive language that harms others. The immediate consequence of anger is that as soon as it arises, there is no mental peace: the mind is disturbed and agitated. So we can see that this negative state of mind immediately brings undesirable consequences for us.

When we come to understand the negative consequences of anger and desire through our own experience, we will then be able to identify the positive consequences of non-attachment and non-anger. The absence of anger or desire would naturally bring about a calm, peaceful and tranquil mind. This is something we can definitely relate

to. When we don't experience anger, our mind is much more settled, content and peaceful. Likewise when there's no strong desire in the mind, it is much calmer and more peaceful.

It is important to relate to our own experience, to analyse and identify the pros and cons of the negative and positive states of mind. Then we can motivate ourselves by thinking: 'If I don't wish to experience the consequences of negative states of mind, then I must make an attempt to try to overcome them through the practice of meditation, and applying the appropriate antidotes for overcoming the delusions'.

To investigate the causes of disturbance in our unsettled, agitated mind, one needs to settle down and focus within oneself, so that one can contemplate and identify those causes. For example, within a single day, there may be instances where in the morning everything seems fine – you feel quite joyful, and everything seems to be going well. Then, just after lunch, you might notice that you suddenly feel agitated, a bit distressed. The mind is suddenly unsettled and unhappy.

It is worthwhile to make a real attempt to investigate what is causing that change. In the morning, everything seemed fine, it was joyful, you were smiling, happy. But then towards afternoon, everything changed. Suddenly you were not feeling very happy and your mind felt stressed. Just within one day, within a few hours, you notice a big change. You might be in the habit of immediately finding fault outside and blaming some situation outside. But while external factors may serve as a condition for you to feel upset, if you were to sincerely investigate beyond those immediate factors, you would begin to notice something within your own mind: a change of attitude that led to you feeling distressed and to the lack of joy and happiness in your mind. So we need to do an internal investigation – not an external investigation, because that is what we are already acquainted with – to look for the cause within our own mind. If we can spend some time doing that, we would get great results from such a significant observation. I would say that doing such an internal investigation is a highly valued instruction.

The reason I say this is because there is great practical benefit from checking up on your mental attitude – really looking into your mind and pinpointing the moment when it started to feel unhappy. Investigate by asking oneself: 'When did it start and how did it start? What kind of attitude popped up into my mind?' If we investigate our mind meticulously, we will notice that it was really just a change of attitude. It's not as if external conditions suddenly completely changed to cause your sadness or lack of joy. Rather, it was something internal. It was a shift of attitude that caused the change from a happy state of mind to an unhappy one. A negative state of mind arises and then shifts everything. It replaces the joy in our mind with a lack of joy. It replaces happiness with sadness. The very process of investigation and identifying the real cause of the problem within oneself will begin to help settle down the mind again.

For example, when we get angry, rather than immediately blaming external causes or conditions that

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may have contributed to our anger, we should look into our own mind and check to see, how does the anger arise? Was it our own choice to get upset and angry, or not? If it was our choice, then by getting upset and angry, did that benefit our mind? When we clearly see the disadvantages of anger – the way it disturbs our mind and makes it unsettled – we may also begin to notice that our reasons for getting angry are baseless. As we arrive at that conclusion by investigating how anger arises, the interesting thing is that the anger itself will subside. When we look into our own anger, somehow the anger starts to dissipate.

Having done this internal investigation, we will also start to understand the words of the Buddha where he says that we are our own protector, and that we are the creator of our own happiness. We will see the meaning of those words when we do that internal investigation, which is part of the practice of meditation. Our internal investigation will become sharper and more acute as we progress in our practice of meditation. We will become much more skilled, our self-analysis will become more natural and spontaneous as we progress in the practice of meditation due to a process of familiarisation. The literal meaning of the Tibetan word for meditation – *gom* – has the connotation of being familiar with something. So the very process of meditation is familiarising oneself with a virtuous object. Having chosen a virtuous object, as we focus on it and become more familiar with focusing on it, this process helps the mind transform from being scattered and distracted to being less distracted, much more focused. The mind moves from an unclear state to a much clearer, more focused and stable one.

So stability, clarity, and focus will be developed through familiarity with the practice of meditation. Once one gains that positive result of the practice – a stable, clear and focused mind – then our ability to analyse ourselves will become much more acute. Buddhism calls this ‘analytical wisdom’: an acute, sharp intelligence that can carry out internal investigation. That will bring great benefit for to us in our lives.

We can now spend a few minutes in meditation. The practice here is to use the breath as the object on which to focus. First, we develop the strong determination that ‘for the next few minutes, I will not allow my mind to be distracted by thoughts and other internal or external distractions’. We withdraw the mind from all internal and external distractions, not allowing it to go out in every direction, but rather bringing our full attention, our full mental focus to the breath and observing the natural inflow and outflow of our breath. As we breathe in, we keep the mind completely focused on the incoming breath and then keep it completely focused on our exhalation. In that way we keep our mind one hundred percent focused on the breath itself. We spend the next few minutes doing this. [*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 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. Non-speculative afflictions**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.3. Pride**

Within the topic of the ten delusions in the text, the delusions are divided into five that are non-views, and five that are views. Within the five that are non-views or non-speculative delusions, we have covered attachment and anger.

It is good to reflect on the definition of a delusion.

Now we come to the third delusion within the non-speculative delusions – pride. The definition of pride given in the text is: Based on the wrong view of the transitory collection, observing internal or external qualities that are high or low, good or bad and thus allowing your mind to become inflated.

‘Based on the wrong view of the transitory collection’ refers to a view that grasps onto the five aggregates. We grasp onto our self-identity, a sense of ‘I’ or ‘me’. What is being explained here is that this grasping to ‘me’ serves as a basis for pride to arise in the mind. The text further mentions that when you allow the mind to become inflated, you assume the aspect of superiority.

Where the text says ‘focusing on either internal or external qualities that are high or low, good or bad’, these are qualities related to oneself, such as beauty or wealth, or talents such as a melodious singing voice, or physical accomplishments such as being good at sports and so forth. By focusing on certain qualities or talents that we may have, we develop a sense of superiority. With that sense of superiority, our mind becomes ‘inflated’.

There are various categories of pride explained in the text, such as having a sense of superiority when one sees others less talented, or having fewer qualities than oneself. There is also a category of pride where one has a sense of pride in relation to those who are superior. One would think: ‘Well, I am a little bit less talented than them, but I still have talent’. That too is a sort of pride. So, in these different circumstances, the sense of an inflated mind or pride arises in the mind.

It is however very important to make a clear distinction between self-confidence and pride. One should understand that there is a difference between those two states of mind. Pride is defined as a deluded, negative state of mind, whereas we need self-confidence to develop further in whatever activity we are engaged in. Self-confidence is a sense of encouraging ourselves to engage in practice or other activities and feeling: ‘I will be able to accomplish it despite possible difficulties’. Self-confidence is based on sound reasoning and is something we need in our development to transform ourselves. So, we need to maintain self-confidence while trying to remove pride.

I wouldn’t blame those who find it difficult to make the distinction, because the literal explanations of self-confidence and pride may seem similar. But as an attitude, they are completely different. As described earlier, pride is a deluded state of mind, a sense of

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superiority. It is always in relation to the sense of someone else being inferior. It is not merely focused on developing one's own qualities, but is a sense of being better than others, being superior to others. The analogy given in the teachings is that it is similar to being on the peak of a mountain and looking down on the rest of the valley. You have the sense 'I am on top, I am above everything and everything else is below me'. When you are on the peak of a mountain, you naturally feel elevated and that everything else is below you, under your domain. Similarly, when one has pride in one's mind, one feels that others are inferior, below oneself.

Self-confidence differs from pride in that it is a state of mind focusing on a task to be done, whatever it is. One has the feeling: 'I have the capacity, I have the ability to do this'. That is self-confidence: a sense of having the capacity to engage in an endeavour. The feeling is not in relation to seeing others as inferior. It is merely having a sense of having the capacity to do something. That is self-confidence. Thus we can see that there is a huge difference between pride and self-confidence. Pride is where you look down upon others, whereas self-confidence is a sense of having the capacity to do something. Thus self-confidence is positive – we need to have that. We need it to accomplish whatever we set out to do.

When we lack self-confidence, it will be difficult to accomplish any task we engage in, because doubts arise – 'Will I be able to do it or not?'. When the task seems quite large we feel immediately discouraged and start having doubts about our capacity to do it. Whereas if we have self-confidence, because we are focusing on our capacity to be able to do it, thinking 'regardless of the difficulties, I have the ability to do that', then naturally one does not lose the courage, the determination to continue with the task.

Having explained the difference between pride and self-confidence, we can definitely see that pride is a deluded state of mind. Because pride has the sense of superiority; others would notice and identify such a person as being very proud. Normally we say someone is proud because they have an attitude that is noticeable.

Pride is definitely a state of mind that only obstructs one's spiritual development. As long as has pride in one's mind, in relation to those who have fewer qualities, one will have a sense of contempt towards them. I have witnessed this myself: someone close to me confided that they did not want to live with someone else 'because they really don't have that many qualities, they are inferior in many ways, so I don't respect them'. It was a clear sign of having contempt for the other person and thus not wanting to stay with them. That is a very selfish reason for not wanting to stay with someone.

We can see that in every situation, whether in a work environment, a study environment, or a practice environment, those who have pride have contempt for those who have a little less intelligence or whatever. With pride in one's mind, one develops competitiveness towards those one sees as equal. And towards those who appear superior, one develops jealousy. We can see the ill-effects of jealousy. As long as one has jealousy, there is

no real peace in one's mind; one will always have an unhappy state of mind. Further, it can lead to disastrous situations. We have all heard of people committing suicide out of jealousy: for example, if they had been top of the class at school or university, when others started excelling and getting better marks, not being able to bear the fact that someone else is suddenly better than them. So we can see that in extreme cases of jealousy, people can even take their own life.

If we contemplate the mind of pride, we can see its negative consequences. We will notice that having pride does not contribute to a joyful and happy state of mind. Someone who harbours pride will naturally feel contempt for others who seem less talented, less intelligent, or otherwise inferior. As long as you feel contempt for others, they are bound to notice and feel uncomfortable about it; they will always have a negative feeling towards you. So already you have caused others to feel ill-will towards you; you have created enemies. Likewise when you feel competitive towards others, they are not going to appreciate your attitude towards them. There will be no end to the feeling that one must measure up to their standards. That also brings an uncomfortable feeling in one's mind. And when one has jealousy towards those who seem superior, for as long as one harbours jealousy, there is always going to be uncomfortable feeling, a lack of joy. The very definition of jealousy has an element of a lack of joy in one's mind. Thus if we were to compare the two different states of mind – one with pride and one without – it would become quite clear to us that a mind free of pride is much happier, much more joyful and content. So having identified this, we would conclude that it is in our best interest to overcome pride.

When one identifies the disadvantages of pride, one particularly notices that feeling jealous of others is a very painful state of mind that makes it hard to be joyful and happy. Since there are always bound to be others better than us in one way or another, the best antidote to overcoming jealousy, as explained in the teachings, is to rejoice in their qualities and achievements. If we notice others that are wealthier than us, be happy for them. Feel joy, think: 'It's great that they have a better house or better car or whatever. I don't have it all that myself, but that's fine. I am happy for them'. If it's in relation to studies, or whatever accomplishment it may be, feel joyful. Rejoicing means feeling joyful about others' well-being, feeling happy for them. If one feels happy for them, that is the direct opposite of jealousy, because jealousy is defined in the teachings as a state of mind that is not able to bear others' success and well-being. The direct opponent of jealousy is to feel happy about others' success and well-being.

I jokingly mention to others when we go out that there might be people who come well-dressed; whatever the situation, they dress very elegantly. They even walk in a such a way that you can see by their mannerisms they are quite proud of the way they are dressed. But then you might notice someone else coming along who is dressed even better! Then you can see that the attitude and facial expression of the first person changing from an attitude of feeling very pompous to feeling deflated – the facial and bodily expression shows that suddenly jealousy has

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arisen in their mind. They are uncomfortable with the fact that someone else dressed better than them has come along. That clearly shows that if they hadn't had pride in the first place, they wouldn't feel jealous and that uncomfortable situation would not have occurred.

Relating this to oneself, there is always going to be someone else who is better than you. Rather than feeling unhappy about it and not being able to bear it, feel joyful and happy for others. That will definitely help our mind not to feel jealous. It is a matter of changing our attitude. Gaining joy and happiness, or maintaining whatever level of joy and happiness we already have are related to the attitude we have in our mind. If we start to feel pangs of jealousy in our mind, immediately we should try to recognise and identify that and then apply the antidote, rather than feeling unhappy about others' success. If we feel happy for others and feel joy for them, we have changed our way of looking at things. We will be free of the pangs of jealousy.

That is how this practice works. We can train our mind by applying more realistic, more appropriate attitudes whenever we notice a negative attitude arising. As mentioned previously, when we train through self-analysis or internal investigation, it will equip us with the tools to ensure we are joyful and happy wherever we go. For example, when we go out to a party or other event, we can prepare our mind by using the right tools and techniques to ensure we don't harbour pride or jealousy. If we notice jealousy arising, apply the appropriate antidote. If we feel contempt for others, try to apply the proper antidote. And if we feel annoyed or upset with others, immediately try to apply the appropriate antidote for overcoming that sense of annoyance or anger. In that way, if we can prepare our mind prior to going out, it will help us to maintain a sense of mental stability so that we will experience a joyful time. When we go out, regardless of how well others are dressed or how eloquently they speak, it will not affect our mind. We could come back from the outing feeling quite joyful.

Otherwise, if one is not equipped, when one goes out there will be many conditions that may then trigger negative states of mind, such as jealousy, anger or annoyance. When these emotions arise, one is not equipped to combat them and ends up feeling upset and annoyed with the person one is with – one's partner for example. As a result, instead of feeling joyful and happy when you get home, you might come back arguing with your partner because you have no one else to show your unhappiness or disagreement with. That ends up then harming your relationship with your friend or partner.

To summarise the main points that I'm making, the purpose of the practice of meditation is to have a controlled mind, to develop a subdued mind that is not easily influenced by whatever adverse circumstances may arise. The diligence and protection one gains from the practice of meditation is something one can use wherever one goes. In fact, that very diligence we maintain wherever we go is part of the practice of meditation. Meditation doesn't necessarily mean sitting down in a formal setting in a quiet place. If one is constantly using one's diligence – mindfulness and awareness – that level

of awareness or mindfulness that we maintain is part of our practice of meditation. That is how we benefit from meditation in a practical way.

Before we conclude for the evening, let us spend a few moments in contemplation, this time focusing our mind on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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