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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose please sit in a relaxed, comfortable and upright posture. Adopting an appropriate posture for meditation (straightening out our physical posture and relaxing) helps to freshen the body. Do you feel that that helps to freshen the body? As the body freshens it is good to have the mind fresh as well. Do you find that your mind is in a joyous state?

You may notice that it is actually much harder for the mind to be in a fresh and joyous state, and that is because something is missing from our mental state. I normally find that if one's mind is not in a fresh and joyous state, then this seems to effect our meditation as well.

Normally we rely upon the five sense objects to bring joy into our life. These are forms, sounds, smells, taste and tactile feelings. We rely upon beautiful sights, sounds, smells and so forth to bring us joy. When we investigate and acknowledge this to be true, then we will accept the fact that our mind is constantly preoccupied with sensual objects.

Though we rely on these objects for joy, we will notice from our own experience that there's actually a lot of suffering in relation to indulging in the sensual objects. We first experience some suffering when we are not able to come into contact with objects of sensual pleasure. Then after we have come into contact, even though there is some fleeting joy initially, later when we get separated from the objects of our attachment we will experience suffering again.

When we rely upon our interaction with sensual objects we find that a lot of anxiety, problems and so forth arise due to our attitude towards these objects. When we are in close proximity to an object that seemingly gives us pleasure, it seems to give us some joy as well; and when we are not in close proximity to that object, we experience anxiety and an unsettled mind. Because of our attitudes to these objects we experience a lot of different disturbing states of mind in relation to these objects. These are all considered to be unsettling and disturbing states of mind. To summarise the main point made earlier, because of our preoccupation with sensual objects in our everyday life the residue of that preoccupation is still going on in our mind when we actually try to meditate. That is why we find it very hard to settle the mind.

We can see that our mind goes around preoccupied with sensual objects. Because the mind goes around in circles, one is not able to be centred and focused on one particular object. If the result of the mind being preoccupied with sensual objects is only the mind not

being centred and focused, and nothing more than that, then it would be one thing. However what we find is that the person with an unsettled mind becomes affected, and at the very core of that person's being they are unsettled and unhappy. They seem to lack a joy and happiness in their life.

Thus if we allow our minds to be constantly drawn in the direction of the sensual objects, it will cause our mind to be constantly unsettled and in turmoil. Such a mind is considered to be a distracted or disturbed mind. In order to reverse that situation one needs to try to withdraw the mind from the objects of sensual pleasure. When we withdraw our mind from the five sense objects and just maintain our focus on a particular chosen object, a virtuous or neutral object, that then helps to train the mind to become less and less preoccupied with distractions in our normal everyday life. We would then be less and less preoccupied or swayed by sensual objects. That will lead to an overall settled and centred feeling of well-being within oneself. Thus it is important that we first understand how our mind becomes preoccupied and then learn how to reverse that situation.

If, through one's own investigation, one can discern the two different states of mind and find out for oneself which state of mind is more conducive for oneself, one would become clearer. From our own experience we can look into the state of the mind when it is preoccupied with objects of distraction. How does the mind react at that time? What are the sensations or feelings within yourself when the mind is completely influenced and immersed in the objects of sensual pleasures? Conversely what are the sensations or feelings within you when withdrawing attention from sensual objects and maintaining it on a chosen object for a while? What kind of experiences do we have if we maintain that focus and attention and the mind becomes focused and centred? If one honestly engages in that analysis within oneself one will come to notice that a focused and centred mind is, comparably, much more relaxed.

Doing that comparison of the sensation that one has within one's mind is actually a very good means for one to find out what is more conducive and better for oneself. In one's normal life one would come to notice that a lot of the suffering that occurs in relation to friends and companions arises because of an unsettled mind. A lot of this suffering can be reduced if we can adopt the right state of mind and are centred upon this. If you were to do this analysis yourself and find out for yourself you might find that there is some validity in this.

As one familiarises oneself with the state of mind that opposes a distracted and troubled mind one would come to notice the effectiveness or validity of a focused and centred mind. We can see this in relation to particular disturbing states of mind. If, for example, we were to take desire, or what we call attachment, we would see that attachment arises in relation to an object. For as long as one is obsessed by an object and has strong attachment towards it then, to that extent, one's whole being becomes influenced by that state of mind of attachment. For as long as one has strong attachment in one's mind one

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would notice that it disturbs the mind, and that the mind becomes unsettled.

The way to overcome that strong attachment in one's mind is by meditating or applying an antidote, which is an opposite state of mind to attachment. The manner of doing this is considering the natural impurities of the object and not focussing as much on the attractiveness of the object. When one shifts one's focus one is able to withdraw one's mind from being obsessed with the object of desire. The more one is able to withdraw one's focus and attention from the attractiveness of that object, the more the mind of attachment to the object will naturally reduce. When attachment reduces, the mind naturally becomes more settled and focused. This is the measure of how one applies these meditation techniques. What I am attempting to do is give you some practical techniques of meditation.

We can also apply this technique to other forms of distraction or negative states of mind. The application of the technique itself will definitely benefit one by settling the mind and making it less disturbed. Even though we may get some temporary pleasure when we think about the object we need to be concerned with the overall consequences or the effect that we experience in relation to that object. If we allow our mind to constantly indulge in the immediate pleasure or immediate good feeling that we have by focusing on the object, if we just rely upon that, then that is when we go astray. That is how our overall wellbeing is affected. Rather, it's good to have a broader perspective, a long-term perspective, of what contributes to our overall wellbeing. When we focus from that point of view we can see the effectiveness of these meditations.

If we can train our mind to have the right attitudes then, when certain circumstances arise, we will be able to apply the appropriate antidotes to overcome that negative state of mind. It is all based on the training that we need to have, and what I have been introducing here is how to engage in that training.

The technique that we adopt for our meditation now is focusing on our breath. The technique of focusing on the breath is very suitable for those of us who have the tendency to have a very distracted mind that is full of thoughts, ideas and plans; a lot of conceptual thoughts. The technique of focusing on the breath is one of the most suitable techniques for overcoming that particular obstacle within us. As a technique it is also not too complicated and actually quite simple. The object is our own breath, so it is very easy to identify. But what it does require is a commitment from ourselves to be fully engaged in the focus on the breath. In order to get some positive affect from the practice one needs to intentionally, temporarily, withdraw our mind from all preoccupations, all thoughts and ideas, and bring our focus fully on the breath. We maintain our focus and mentally observe our breath coming in and going out. So, for the next few minutes we will engage in this technique and try to maintain our focus upon the breath. (*Pause for meditation.*)

If we can engage in some meditation practice on a daily basis just as we attempted now, that would help to settle

our mind and consequently bring about some real joy and happiness in our mind. That would be something worthwhile and good to achieve. It will serve a purpose in our life, as all our activities, whatever we engage in, are directed towards being happy.

My daily schedule is to wake up around 5 o'clock in the morning and then spend the whole day doing something all day long. Maybe your lives are similar where you wake up quite early and have to start a busy life, always being busy with something. If we look into the purpose of being busy and why we are engaged in what we are doing, it is to bring some sort of benefit for oneself, some real joy or happiness for oneself. That is the ultimate purpose. If engaging in the practice of meditation can bring about that sort of result for oneself, then it serves a purpose.

If, as a consequence of doing some practice of meditation, one can settle one's mind and experience a joyous and happy state of mind, that will naturally affect our physical and verbal mannerisms as well which will naturally be a kinder attitude towards others. Our speech will be more soothing and kind to others. One would be able to utter nice and kind words, show nice facial expressions and gestures toward someone that one is closely related to. In that way it brings some joy to others as well. Relating to others in a positive way that brings joy for others is something really precious in our life.

If one can actually bring about those consequences as a result of one's practice of meditation then one's partner or companion, whoever one associates and lives with, will encourage one to do further meditation. Even though they may not be initially inclined toward meditation they would actually encourage us as a result of our positive mannerisms. They would say, 'Please go and do your meditation. I am placing no restriction on that'.

If one actually brings about a good, positive result, then someone who may not have initially supported you doing meditation, and not inclined towards the practice of meditation, may change their attitude towards the practice as well. They would be someone who supports 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**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2. The way one gathers karma**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.1. Identifying the karma that is gathered**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.1.2.2.1.1 Karma that is intention**

In our previous sessions we have covered the topics of identifying the defilements and then applying the antidotes for overcoming the defilements or delusions. If we go further back, the defilements or delusions are derived from the explanation of the four noble truths, specifically the second noble truth that is the truth of origination. You would recall from the earlier explanations that when the truth of origination was introduced it was categorised into two factors. These are the defilements or the afflictions, and karma.

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Within the two categories, afflictions and karma, the primary one is the afflictions. It is primary because of the fact that it is due to the afflictions that one creates karma. The karma referred here is the karma that serves as an impelling karma, which is also translated as a 'throwing' karma. This means a karma that is accumulated and serves as a cause to propel us into the cycle of worldly existence. The karma that propels us into being born again in cyclic existence or what we technically call samsara, is a karma that is motivated by the afflictions. That's why the afflictions are the primary cause of all the suffering and so forth that we experience in cyclic experience.

Having identified the afflictions we went into detail about the definitions of particular afflictions, there being many different kinds of afflictions, and the causes for the afflictions to arise. Then, by recognising them as false, we went into understanding how to apply the antidotes to overcome them. In that way the text explained how the afflictions are the primary cause for us to be in cyclic existence and how we engage in the causes that lead us into the cycle of existence.

The next topic is identifying the type of karma that serves as the medium for us to create the causes to be in cyclic existence. There is a great significance in the sequence that is presented in the teachings. Reflecting upon the sequence itself becomes a mode for our practice of meditation. Thinking first of all about the four noble truths, identifying them and then thinking about the truth of origination, then thinking about the primary cause that is the afflictions. Then think how the afflictions arise and so forth and how one engages in creating karma. This sequence becomes a very good topic of meditation by itself.

The topic of karma falls into two main categories. First is identifying the particular karma that serves as a cause for us to be propelled into cyclic existence. Second, is how that karma is accumulated, that is how does one engage in accumulating that karma? We will follow these two main categories of karma in our next sessions.

As we don't have much time left this evening we will not go into more detail of the topic right now. But we can have leave some time for questions if anyone has any.

*Question: If one should avoid all desires then how about our desire for study and practice? Is feeling joy from seeing holy objects wrong?*

Because we experience some pleasure in engaging in the sensual objects it is hard for us to identify attachment as a fault first of all. It is unlike the other defilements such as anger, which in its very arising is uncomfortable. Therefore it's quite easy, even for us ordinary people, to identify anger as a fault. The reason that it is harder for us to recognise attachment as a fault is because there is seemingly some pleasure or some joy in it.

Following our ordinary perspective, there are also some treatises that consider attachment and desire as being one and the same thing. This implies that without attachment we cannot really have any joy or any pleasure so it is something useful. That is, of course, an entire misrepresentation of desire.

From the point of view of our text, our system, there is a distinction between desire and attachment. In Tibetan there are two terms, *do-chak* and *do-pa*. *Do-chak* is the negative form of attachment. Whereas *do-pa* is more neutral and can be translated just as desire, and when desire is used in a positive form it becomes more like an aspiration.

The joy that one experiences from attachment is something that we are deeply reliant upon and influenced by. That is the deception. The deception of attachment is that it seems to give some pleasure. As long as we are deceived by the pleasure that comes along with attachment we cannot really be free from the state of mind of attachment. That is because of the deception. That is why, even from a normal perspective, there would be many who would expressly say, 'Without attachment how can there be any joy? How can there be any pleasure?'. It is important to understand that even though there may seemingly be some sort of pleasure, the suffering that is associated with attachment is much greater. For example, the suffering of separation from a loved one is much greater than the joy of attachment towards them.

The primary two negative states of mind are anger and attachment. The distinction between these two is readily experienced, even on our level. Anger is much easier to identify as negative and harmful, and even from an ordinary perspective it is something that we would be inclined to try to give up or try to overcome.

With attachment it is much more difficult. As the teachings mention, the faults of attachment are very subtle. Because they are so subtle it is hard to identify the actual faults of attachment. Because it is very hard to identify the faults of attachment, it seems to be one of the major factors that contribute to the misconception, 'without attachment there can be no joy'. So it binds us to cyclic existence. The way attachment harms us is also on a very subtle level and thus not obvious in comparison with anger. That's why the teachings mention that attachment is much more difficult to overcome.

The great Tibetan master Lama Tsong Khapa has explained the difficulty of actually overcoming attachment with an analogy. The way attachment is deeply engrained in our mind is likened to an oil stain on a piece of paper. When a drop of oil falls on a piece of paper it slowly immerses into the paper. It is as if the drop of oil becomes one with the paper, and it is very difficult to remove. Lama Tsong Khapa likened our mind of attachment to that. Just as it would be very difficult to separate the oil from the paper, likewise it is very difficult to separate our mind from attachment.

*Question: Geshe-la, when you use the term 'anger' are you equating that to aversion? As I understand it, in a state of meditative equipoise one is free of anger and attachment, free from either attraction or aversion. At what point of the withdrawal from attachment does aversion take over? I imagine it is an equal negative to attachment.*

If the proper technique is not applied it is possible that seeing the faults of an object of attachment may develop into aversion or anger. But that would mean that the proper technique has not been applied. When the proper

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techniques are applied there is no danger that the lack of attachment to the object turns into aversion to the object.

The danger of attachment turning into aversion is something that occurs on an ordinary everyday level where the antidotes are not applied. One day you may focus on the attractiveness of an object, and it appeals to you, and you have attachment. But the next day, due to some other circumstances, you might see the faults of the object and develop aversion or anger towards it. That is something that occurs in everyday life without applying antidotes. The feelings that occur are not from the antidotes being applied, but rather come from our normal tendencies of going to the extremes. When the appropriate antidotes are applied with the proper technique that state of mind will not occur.

Of course, when one is initially training one's mind it is necessary to engage in the practice of meditation to reach the state of mind called equanimity. However once that state of mind of equanimity has been obtained and one sees others with equanimity it is something that will be able to be maintained. As a result of training their mind bodhisattvas will, in whatever they engage in, have a state of mind of equanimity. A bodhisattva would not have to be in meditative equipoise to have that state of mind of equanimity.

As mentioned in the prayer that you've quoted, there are different techniques to develop a state of equanimity. There are two different techniques in particular. One is explained in teachings as the 'equanimity that is developed in relation to the seven causes and effect to develop bodhichitta'. The second is the 'training to develop bodhichitta through the technique of exchanging self with others'.

Equanimity is developing the state of mind of seeing all the three objects; friends, enemies and strangers, as equal. Not feeling close to the friends, distant to the enemy and indifferent to a stranger, but have an attitude of equality towards all three. The equanimity that is developed in relation to the seven-fold cause and effect sequence is the equanimity of mind of seeing all as equal. In the technique of exchanging self with other, on top of seeing all beings as equal one sees friends, enemies and strangers as being equally kind to one. One sees them not only as being equal in general, but as equally kind to one. As one trains one's mind to see all beings equally kind to one, it promotes the attitude of kindness. Thus it is mentioned in the teachings that the equanimity that is developed with the technique of exchanging self with other is a higher level of equanimity.

The questions were very good questions. Thank you very much for those questions. The reason I thank you for good questions is because the questions themselves help to remind me of certain points in the teachings. It serves as a way to rekindle or revise certain points. Because there is a benefit for me it is appropriate for me to thank you.

Before we conclude for the evening we can again spend some time in meditation. This time we focus 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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