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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. If we reflect upon what we are doing as we settle down in our physical posture to relax, we can see that our attitude at this time can also have an effect on us. Externally we all appear similar, sitting in a relaxed physical posture, in a quiet and conducive environment. From the external or physical level we could say that we are all similar. But when it comes to the attitudes, each of us would definitely have various different thoughts or attitudes within our minds.

Whilst individually we may have different sorts of attitudes we all equally share a wish to settle and calm our mind. However, I feel the reason why there may be different attitudes in different individuals does not relate to the physical aspect of ourselves, because we can assume, as mentioned earlier, that we are all quite relaxed physically. However the fact that the mind can still be quite busy and troubled even when we are physically relaxed arises because that is what our mind is accustomed to. Even if the body is physically relaxed, if we find the mind is not settled and quiet then it has not really served the purpose of what we wish to achieve. So, as we relax physically, it would be worthwhile attempting to bring about a settled, calm and quiet mind as well. That will then definitely contribute to our overall well-being.

What state of mind are we in right now? When we examine ourselves we begin to notice that every single day we go through many mental phases; we may go through many ups and downs during a day. If we investigate further why our state of our mind is so vulnerable to these changes, sometimes feeling elated and other times feeling depressed, we would come to notice that it depends very much on the attitudes we have in our mind. If we have a positive attitude such as kindness or genuine concern for others, we would find that this sort of positive attitude contributes to a more settled state of mind. Whereas a negative state of mind will cause more turmoil and a more troubled state of mind. This is something that we would be able to notice if we actually analysed the state of our mind. In fact from the Buddhist practice point of view it is really important to check our mind and look within ourselves.

If one were to analyse and scrutinise one's thoughts and attitudes and really check within oneself which attitudes contribute to a more peaceful, more calm composure for oneself and which kind of attitudes lead to a disturbed state of mind, one would definitely come to realise that a positive state of mind, such as concern for others and taking others welfare into account, contributes to happy mind for ourselves.

We should also think about the practical reasons why we should consider well-being of others. Just as we wish for happiness, others also wish for happiness and just as we do not wish for any kind of suffering, unpleasant feelings or experiences, likewise others don't wish for that. In regard to

these natural wishes to be happy and not wishing for any kind of suffering, there is no difference between oneself and others. Thus rather than contributing to the misery and suffering of others, we should contribute to the happiness of others. If one can try to really develop and cultivate those sorts of attitudes in one's mind, beginning in the morning when one wakes, one would notice that those sorts of positive attitudes will have an immediate positive affect upon one's own mind.

If we find that we are elated at one time and suddenly feel depressed and miserable in another moment quite frequently during the day, it is worthwhile to stop and think about what may be causing that. Rather than looking for faults outside one could check within oneself and see if one's own attitudes contributes to that. If one does that investigation sincerely one would come to notice from one's own experience that positive attitudes definitely contribute to a more settled, and calm state of mind for oneself. Whereas whenever negative feelings, such as hostile feelings or the wish to harm others, rise up in our mind they contribute to a disturbed state of mind.

If we were to have to choose between the positive states of mind and the negative states of mind what would we be inclined to choose? When it becomes clear that positive states of mind contribute to one's own well-being and the calmness of one's mind, and that negative states of mind contribute to a disturbed and unsettled mind, what would one be inclined to choose? At that stage we would have to resolve that there is no choice but to choose a positive state of mind, for the simple reason that one wishes to be happy and does not wish to experience any kind of suffering. If that is true for oneself, then it is true for everyone else and we can resolve that there is no choice but to choose a positive attitude because we want to be happy.

The wish to experience joy and happiness in one's mind and not want to experience any kind of suffering or misery is a natural, in-born wish that we all share. Even animals, creatures that we may not consider to be conscious or aware, also basically deep down inside have the same wish. It is even more so for human beings. Now we may not be consciously aware of this fact and we may need to be reminded, but we always need to remember that ultimately one is striving for joy and genuine happiness in one's mind. That is what one is actually seeking. One is also seeking to eliminate misery and suffering within oneself.

This is true for all living creatures, all humankind. Deep down inside, this is the ultimate wish that we all share. We need to be more conscious about that. Being 'conscious' means to check how can one bring about real genuine joy and happiness within oneself and remove the causes for one's misery and suffering. How can one do that? As long as we remind ourselves that this is our deepest, ultimate goal and our deepest wish then naturally we would strive for that. It is our right to strive towards everything that contributes to real joy and happiness within oneself and that which eliminates all suffering within oneself.

We can investigate the basis of that in-born wish that we and all others have for happiness, and we can use our intelligence to look into the factors contributing to joy and happiness for oneself and the factors opposing joy and happiness that causes a troubled mind and misery within oneself. Within the negative attitudes, if we were to investigate anger then it is obvious that when we feel anger it immediately disturbs our own peace and calmness.

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Furthermore it disrupts the peace and happiness of one's friends, relatives or partners as well. The moment we get angry our whole demeanour changes and we start uttering words that are unkind and hurtful to our partner or friend. Those words are uttered out of anger rather than out of concern, thus it definitely does hurt the other. We can clearly see that anger is destructive. It destroys one's own calmness and peace of mind and it also destroys one's relationship with others. I regularly emphasise that we need to identify the sources that disturb us, and harm our relationship with others.

We must begin with those with whom we are closely associated. If we want to have genuine good companionship, and a good relationship with others, we must work at contributing to that relationship beginning with minimising the negative states of mind, such as anger, within oneself. When anger arises we should try to be more diligent about one's demeanour and more careful with what one says and does. With that sort of awareness and mindfulness within oneself we can start to train ourselves to become a little bit more tolerant when conflict arises, trying to develop a little bit more patience and a more genuine sense of concern. The more genuine concern that we have, the more endurance and patience we can develop as well. If we begin in this way with those that we closely associate with, we can then extend this attitude further. It is essential that we begin our practice of genuine concern, tolerance and patience with those with whom we live.

The reasons that I go through all these different points and attitudes in the mind is really an attempt to explain the purpose for the practice of meditation, because developing that mindfulness and cultivating those positive attitudes is what meditation is all about.

As we begin to identify the virtues of, for example, developing patience, one begins to recognise that there is no choice but to develop patience. If we want peace and calmness for ourselves then we must develop patience as developing patience is, unlike the expression in English of 'being a doormat', a way to *strengthen* one's mind and maintain one's calmness. Patience is most essential. When we begin to really recognise that, as the teachings explain, we can start to develop patience with one's enemy. The need to not become angry with one's enemy but rather to develop patience, will start to make sense.

It will start to make sense as one begins to realise that it is not as if we are doing a favour for our enemy but rather a favour for oneself. If we can practise endurance and patience, especially with an enemy, it means that we are really protecting the calmness and tranquillity of our mind. If we wish for calmness, if we wish for a happy and joyful state of mind then there is no choice but for us to practise patience. As we reflect upon this and analyse it in this way with logical reasons, then slowly, slowly we can begin to identify and recognise for ourselves that tools such as patience, and trying to overcome the negative states of mind such as anger, are something that are essential for oneself, as well as for others in our relationships. They are essential in every circumstance.

The main points that are being emphasised here are that if we wish for a genuine sense of calmness and a tranquil, peaceful mind, then we must develop these essential tools within ourselves. If we don't develop those tools within ourselves the consequences would be that the slightest provocative situation would disturb one's mind. When we

are relating to external situations we normally tend to blame the slightest external situation or condition for disturbing our peace of mind, because we are not able to endure it. Not to mention when there are really difficult situations when things really go wrong. How could one endure that situation?

If we were to train our mind through mindfulness and the practice of meditation to develop these essential tools within ourselves, one will be able to withstand small situations becoming provocative for oneself and even the really difficult situations that occur in one's life. One will be able to endure them, where 'endure' means not allowing them to disturb the calmness and peace of one's mind.

In our present situation we may find that it is so difficult to endure even the slightest situations without them becoming provocative, because we lack the training. We are not yet familiar with positive states of mind. We have not really acquainted ourselves with developing those tools, such as patience, within our mind. Thus what we are attempting to do here and in our daily life, and what we need to regularly try to do is to slowly, slowly, with understanding and reasoning, develop those tools within oneself.

At this point some of you may feel that what I am proposing is a little far-fetched. It may not seem to be really possible. Even though it sounds reasonable and good to try to cultivate these tools one may wonder if this is actually possible. What I need to emphasise and stress is that it is quite reasonable and possible to develop the tools and the positive states of mind that I have mentioned so far. I say it is possible because of the verified experiences of others.

There have been many students who have confided in me that in earlier parts of their life they have faced many difficulties. There were times when they couldn't even face dealing with others. They were just so withdrawn within themselves that they were not able to function properly in society. Yet having come in contact with these meditation techniques and through regular practice they have reached a point now where they feel much more settled, much calmer. They are able to function properly.

Others have mentioned that because of external circumstances there were reasons for them to feel really depressed and miserable because of things going really wrong in their life. Many things were not working out well. Yet those situations have not disrupted their life to the point that they were not able to function. Rather they were able to withstand these situations and persevere. They have confided in me that this was possible because of their regular practice of meditation.

Others have confided in me these stories from the earlier part of their life and the later parts after they have used these techniques. Because they have seen definite positive results, I relay this to you now to show that it is definitely possible to adopt these techniques.

To emphasise the main point that I am making again, it is worthwhile to consider meditation if you want to have a peaceful mind. It is worthwhile to consider those techniques if we want to have a calm, joyous and happy mind. Thus you should spend some time regularly in meditation to practice these techniques.

Of course we may wonder at this point if we need to spend time and energy in our work and job to pursue wealth and so forth in our life. However the reality is that in order to sustain ourselves we need a certain amount of wealth. Thus

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we need to have a regular job and need to engage in activities to sustain ourselves. That is our situation. We need to support our families and ourselves. So I am not implying at all that one should neglect pursuing one's career, work and so forth.

Nevertheless, one doesn't need to spend all one's time and energy focusing on the worldly aspects of wealth and so forth. It is reasonable to acquire a certain amount of wealth for our basic needs and basic comforts in life. But one could avoid being obsessed with obtaining better things all the time. Those extra things don't necessarily contribute to our real happiness and joy. One can become obsessed with things, just because someone else has them or just because it is advertised and looks better and in that way pursue things that are not really essential for one's sustenance and which, in fact, are detrimental to one's happiness and calmness of one's mind.

One could start to reduce spending one's time and energy in pursuing merely material possessions and instead use some time and energy in one's practice of meditation. As one becomes more familiar with the technique of meditation, analysing one's mind and being more mindful of one's actions, thoughts and deeds that will then contribute, eventually to more calmness in oneself. Then if one is genuinely calm and has achieved a relative level of peacefulness, one will be able to withstand difficulties and so forth. What one has achieved will definitely help whoever one is living with. If one has a partner it will definitely contribute to the calmness and well-being of the partner as well.

I have regular visitors who bring lunch for me. We have chats. There was one occasion where a couple were bringing lunch for me and as we were having a conversation the husband confided in me that often there are circumstances where he would nag his wife saying, 'Oh, this doesn't work, that doesn't work'. And then he said that his wife is *really* good! He said, 'I'm not good because I am nagging and so forth. So I am not good. But my wife is really good because she is able to remain calm. Whatever I say she doesn't seem to lose her composure and remains calm. I consider myself bad because I am the one who nags all the time. But because she remains calm and quiet, at a certain point I can recollect and remind myself that I have to be careful here. I am the one who is starting this off. I am nagging her. So I tell myself that it is time that I keep quiet and shut up'.

There are actually many stories that they have related to me. In fact they are a good couple and get along quite well. Nevertheless there are lots of these small things that they have to go through in their daily life and there are times of small conflicts.

Basically these are experiences that others relate to me. There are those who confide to me that their mind is really very troubled. Even though they may be in society and may appear to be normal, internally they have a lot of conflict and disturbance in their mind. They are being very honest. They are honestly confiding in me how they feel internally and experience internal turmoil. Others may assume a very calm, quiet composure but that may not really be the case and they may be pretending that everything is okay and fine.

If we were to investigate within oneself one could at least be honest to oneself, if not to others. And if one honestly looks within oneself and finds that one's mind is really troubled and in turmoil, then that is the reason that we need to

resolve that it is definitely worthwhile to put some time and energy into the practice of meditation. As the Buddha said, 'A subdued mind is a calm and peaceful mind'. A mind that is constantly bubbling with delusions is a disturbed mind.

Regular students have related to me their feelings and experiences. Others have mentioned that when they are in a troubled state of mind that quietening down their mind with the technique of meditation really brings some level of calmness. And they say that they really get that experience, even though they are not able to constantly be in that state. When they do resolve to practise the technique of meditation it does bring solace to them, and it is really beneficial in their life. So I am relating the experiences of others who have found it beneficial.

Having spent quite a bit of time relating the benefits of the practice of meditation it might be worthwhile now to actually spend some time in meditation. We cannot let this be on the level of just talking, even though my explaining the benefits and the technique of meditation can have some benefit. In itself that will not bring you much benefit. If you do find that it has made sense so far, then the next step to experience some benefit for oneself is to actually engage in the practice of meditation.

When we understand the literal meaning of the Tibetan word for meditation it makes a little more sense of what practicing meditation really means. The literal meaning of meditation is 'familiarisation', to familiarise one's mind. Here it specifically means to familiarise one's mind with positive thoughts and positive attitudes. It also implies reducing our familiarity with negative states of mind. As mentioned previously, positive states of mind contribute to our own well-being, our own calmness and joy and happiness in our mind. To familiarise our mind with the positive states and positive attitudes is ultimately what meditation is all about. There are, of course, different techniques. There are many different positive states of mind so there are many different meditations, and many different techniques as well. Here we adopt a very simple technique and in order to adopt that technique first of all we again resolve to sit in a comfortable and relaxed posture.

There are many different techniques of meditation that are adopted to oppose particular negative states of mind and to cultivate particular positive states of mind. As mentioned in earlier sessions, the technique that we adopt here is to put all our attention and focus on our breath. This particular technique is said to be a very useful technique to overcome a distracted mind. Having a lot of distractions, a lot of thoughts in our mind, is the reason that we are in turmoil and our mind is troubled. If we resolve upon the technique of focusing on our breath and are able to maintain our focus on the breath then, to that extent, our mind will be relieved from that obsession of pursuing different thoughts in our mind.

In order to really engage in the proper technique we must develop a determination that, 'for the next few minutes, I will not allow mind to be distracted in other thoughts. I will put my full attention and focus on the breath.' We focus on the natural in-flow and out-flow of our breath. It is good that we try to adopt the proper technique right from the beginning. The technique involves just observing the natural in-flow and out-flow of our breath and mentally seeing our breath going in and out and just focusing on that. Try not to have any other discursive thoughts. Try not to strain the mind in any way. Just resolve on being fully attentive and

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aware of our breath coming in and out naturally. For the next few minutes we will adopt this technique. (*Pause for meditation.*)

You many now come out of your deep meditative state. (*Geshe-la laughs.*) We may have experienced in our short meditation session a relatively calm state of mind, a relatively more settled mind. That is something that is essential and conducive for our well-being. Thus it is worthwhile that we pay attention to trying to have a calm mind. It is possible to have a calm mind in our daily life. It is possible to have a relatively more tranquil mind. Thus it is possible to have a happy state of mind. Having a happy state of mind is very worthwhile as it really seems to contribute to our overall well-being. If we are in a happy state of mind the endeavours we engage in seem to be more constructive. Things seem to work out better if one is in a happy state of mind. On the contrary, if one is unhappy things don't seem to work out so well. Thus it is really worthwhile that we pay attention to having a happy state of mind.

Many of you have attended the Wednesday evening sessions throughout the year. I would really like to thank all of you, those who have been coming regularly as well as those who have come occasionally. What I have noticed is that you come with a really open mind and with keen interest. When you listen you really pay attention in what is being conveyed and shared. I haven't noticed anyone coming with an attitude of wanting to disagree. Everything seems to have been taken in quite open-mindedly. So, I would like to thank you for that. From my side, I can assure you that even though I may not have the full knowledge to impart the teachings with great skill, I have nevertheless shared whatever I know with the best intentions and motivation.

The intentions that I have are in accordance with the Dalai Lama's own advice. He advised that when imparting the teachings and advice of the Buddha, one should not do so with an intention to convert others into Buddhism as way to get more members in our Buddhist society. That is not what the intention should be. Following that advice I can assure you that I have not imparted the teachings with an attachment to my own religion, Buddhism, and I have not had an intention to make anyone become a Buddhist. I can assure you that I have not, at any time, suggested to anyone that they should become Buddhist.

Having resolved to follow the Dalai Lama's advice myself I have come to realise that the advice that the Dalai Lama has given is profound, unique advice that includes a genuine concern and love for others and a desire to benefit others. This advice was not given in 'sense of political correctness' way in front of many people. The Dalai Lama personally gave this advice to me and some other teachers.

I can definitely see that this is profound and unique advice and have resolved to remind myself constantly not to impart the advice and teachings of the Buddha with partiality, with an intention to gather more students or disciples, or to have more people on the side of Buddhists. I have noticed that if you are attached to your own side, it naturally means that you have an aversion to the other side. The stronger the attachment one has towards one's own denomination or faith then naturally you would develop an aversion to other denominations or faiths. How could the mind be really pure if the teacher teaches with that sort of intention? Even though the advice itself could be quite good and might have useful techniques, because the intention itself is flawed, it will not be received in a beneficial way.

The main point that I was making earlier was that having resolved how genuine and unique the advice of the Dalai Lama is, whatever I impart with that positive motivation and pure intention seems to really become beneficial for others. It has helped many others, not with intention of gathering more people on one's side but with the intention that this advice may be of help. Regardless of whether they develop a keen interest in Buddhism or not, whether they become Buddhists or not, if what I impart can be useful for them then that is the main thing. That intention seems to be a quite noble intention in comparison to giving advice or teaching just to gather more numbers on your own side. Having resolved that, I have genuinely felt that this has contributed to my teachings being received well by others.

If sharing what I know has indeed helped others, I would say it is because of those intentions that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has given. This is because the Dalai Lama is really concerned to genuinely help others regardless of who they are, regardless of whether they are religious followers or not. The Dalai Lama says that it is a time when there is a need for genuine understanding amongst different faiths. It is not a time to try to debate, or argue with other faiths, or try to convert people to your own faith and religion. Instead it is a time for understanding of the genuine companionship amongst different religions. When I have met leaders of other faiths at inter-faith events and when I met with followers of Christianity they have told me how fortunate I am to have such a noble leader and guide, referring to the Dalai Lama. I didn't have to say to them how good the Dalai Lama is. They made the comments themselves that I have a good spiritual master. It is because of the genuineness of the Dalai Lama imparting his wishes to others that those feelings of appreciation come about, even from other religious leaders.

I resolve to have the best intentions myself and I encourage you to also have good intentions or motivation in receiving the teachings or advice. When we both have resolved to have good intentions and motivation for gathering here then we will find that the outcome naturally has a good outcome. There is a benefit for the listeners as well as the teacher.

Just as we see the positive outcome and benefit of resolving upon a good intention or motivation in a gathering such as this, we must again resolve on a personal level that if this works in a big gathering, then it definitely must work also for a mutual relationship of two people such as your partner, or within your family. If you were to cultivate the best motivation and concern for each other, then there definitely would be benefit from that as well. It is good to resolve upon that as well.

Thus I end this evening's session with a formal greeting that we have in Tibetan, 'tashi delek', which has the connotation 'may all be auspicious and good for you'.

I'll be having a small break. I feel that I need a break as well. These sessions have run continuously from February 8 it is timely that I have a break. That being the case this will be last Wednesday evening for this year. However on January 14, which is a Wednesday, one of our senior students and a member of Tara Institute, Allys Andrews, will conduct a Tara meditation session. It would be good if you were able to come to that.

It will be good for those who are familiar with the Tara practice and Tara meditation to partake of that, as you are familiar with the practice. Even if you are not too familiar with the Tara practice itself one can resolve to do one's own

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practice of meditation in a conducive environment, whatever meditation technique one is more familiar with. One can come here and do those practices of meditation oneself. In either case it would be useful and beneficial.

The Monday evening sessions begin again on January 5. The reason why we do not leave too long of a break in the programs of the centre is that it allows people to maintain a continuity in their practice. That's why there is just a short break during the Christmas holidays but then the programs resume in January.

One of the things that I committed to when I first came to be the teacher here at the Institute is that from my side I will try to maintain a continuity as much as I can, and even when I have to leave the centre for vacation or for various other reasons, I will try to see that some of the students will be able to maintain a continuity of the program. It's in line with that earlier commitment that I made that I try to see that we have the program running continuously.

In accordance with tradition, I would also like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone.

I consider Christmas a time to rejoice in the good deeds that many engage in. Christmas is an occasion for many to engage in very generous acts and deeds, resolving to remember the kindness of God. With that in mind, they engage in deeds of really helping the needy and poor. I notice there are many organisations that go out of their way to try to help others at this particular time of the year. That is something that I have total admiration for and thus it is a time to rejoice. Apparently, even our government has been a little bit more generous in some ways this year. That's also something good to note.

For those who believe in God and follow the teachings of God, the main thing is to develop a sense of gratitude to God. By remembering the kindness of God and feeling gratitude and then resolving to put into practice what the teachings say is really the main purpose.

At Christmas time it almost seems that it would be better to be impoverished because the impoverished get so many presents. (*Laughter*) I have seen that there have been many, many boxes prepared. I am not sure where they are being sent but apparently they are to be distributed amongst the poor and the needy. They might be sent overseas and be distributed there as well. I have heard that elderly people actually get meals delivered to them in boxes. In any case it seems that if you are poor you will receive something. If one can get something without having to spend any money, that's something worthwhile because others are going through the headache of having to do a lot of shopping for presents. That is a lot of anxiety in itself.

The main point that I am emphasising here is that this is something that we can all rejoice about and feel inspired by. And as we rejoice in the good deeds of others then it is good to make that resolution within oneself, 'It is really good and incredibly kind of others to help the needy and poor. May I be able to do that myself even though I am not capable of sharing much now, as I don't have that much. But, may I be in a position and have the capacity to also be able to share with the needy and the poor'. I also would like to say that this is a tradition we must keep. This is a very good tradition. Maybe we can say culturally it is a very good tradition that we need to maintain for the country and so forth.

For those attending special Christmas lunches with your family and so forth it is good to do it with a happy and joyous mind. Try to be joyful so that you can share that joy with others as well. Have a good motivation. The reason why I emphasise a good motivation again is that if one is not careful with one's attitudes and motivations when one goes to a Christmas lunch or gathering with the family it could also be a time for envy and jealousy and so forth to arise. One may see that one's relative, sister or brother may have more clothes or seem to display more things and so forth. That can easily be a situation for one to feel envious or jealous and thus disturb one's mind. Rather than feeling joy and happiness it can actually bring about misery in one's mind, leading again to a troubled state of mind. If one goes prepared to face the reality that others may have more wealth and so forth it will be fine. Feel happy and joyous for them. If your relatives and so forth are prospering and things are going well for them, you can feel happy about it. If one can prepare oneself with that attitude then one can maintain a sense of joy. Rather than disturbing oneself it can actually contribute to more joy in one's mind.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, we shall spend a few minutes again in contemplation. This time as we sit in a relaxed posture, we focus our mind on the mantra being recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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