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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend some time in meditation. We can seize this time as an opportunity to apply some techniques to try to calm down the mind and subdue it a bit. This is how we can use this time.

The physical posture for meditation is advised to be an upright, relaxed posture. When we are in the appropriate physical posture we then set the mind with a good motivation. As you set your mind with a good intention, or motivation, for the practice, from my side I also will generate a positive meditation. That combination will be very worthwhile.

As the Buddha has mentioned, a subdued mind is a happy mind. The converse of that is when a mind is not subdued it is a disturbed mind. Furthermore, the great master Sakya Pandita has mentioned that when one has control over one's mind then that is when one gains true happiness within oneself. The converse of that is also true. For as long as one doesn't have control over the mind one lacks a real sense of genuine happiness within oneself. If we were to take this advice as true then we would strive to obtain some control over our mind. Whatever we do, we would try to apply some techniques to control the mind. That is what we would attempt to do.

In order to subdue the mind one first of all needs to rely upon an object to focus on. Having chosen the particular object to focus on in our meditation we then need to apply what is called mindfulness, a sense of awareness, to constantly remember that object of focus. Mindfulness is one of the essential tools for meditation. Another mental tool is called introspection, which is a particular state of mind that makes an internal investigation as to whether one has maintained one's focus or not. The state of mind that does that investigation is called introspection.

The essential tools that secure our genuine practice of meditation are the inner tools that we develop within ourselves. They are mindfulness and introspection. These are not something that we can acquire externally but rather we have to develop them within ourselves.

That is the technique. We could, of course, elaborate and explain the technique more extensively but, in brief, this summarises the main technique to tackle the very excited, agitated, or what we call distracted, mind. A way to do that is through this three-fold method: focus, mindfulness and introspection.

We can explain a bit about the particular features, or attributes, of the object that we focus on. First of all one must understand that what we choose to focus on in meditation must be an internalised object. Whatever object we may use as a reference point, needs to be internalised. It is the image of the object that we choose that one is focusing on in meditation. Whatever object we choose for our meditation, it is advised that we try to imagine that object being in the nature of light and radiant. It is also advised that we imagine

that it has some weight. Those attributes are said to be essential attributes of the object itself.

When we focus on an appropriate object with the appropriate attributes we will begin to notice that as a natural effect of maintaining our focus on the chosen object of meditation, is that our distracted mind begins to naturally subside. It prevents the mind from wandering off in every direction. That is a positive effect that we will begin to notice.

When we really begin to understand the technique of meditation, with all of the advice and attributes, we begin to experience for ourselves the meditation technique as a very sound technique to tackle our distracted and disturbed mind. It really helps the mind to make that transformation.

As we apply the technique of meditation we also begin to notice for ourselves that the capacity of the mind to analyse, what we call analytical wisdom which is a particular intelligence of knowing what is right and what is wrong for oneself, also increases and we are able to more efficiently use that wisdom.

As we further practice the appropriate technique of meditation we also notice through our own experience that as meditation brings about a calmer, more settled mind we can begin to identify the main causes of the very distracted and troubled mind. We begin to notice for ourselves that the causes of our troubled mind ultimately lie within ourselves. They do not depend on external conditions as much as internal factors.

Normally we don't pay attention to this. In the normal course of life we are used to relating our problems to some external cause or condition. Whenever we experience some disturbance we immediately jump to the conclusion that it is some external factor that is causing that disturbance. Even when external conditions only serve as a temporary cause we immediately jump to that conclusion and think, 'That's my problem. It's this external factor that is causing me this problem'.

This is because we are not used to looking within ourselves and generating the self-awareness and self-analysis. As we develop the self-analysis, we begin to notice for ourselves that the main causes and conditions for our problems lie within yourself. When we begin to identify that then, even when there are some temporary external conditions causing disturbances to occur, we will begin to notice that we have control within oneself. Even in the event of some external conditions serving as a cause to disturb one, one will not allow those external conditions to disturb one's mind. In that way we begin to get a real sense of control over one's mind regardless of the external conditions.

As the mind becomes calm and settled through the practice of meditation we begin to notice that the causes for one's mind to become calm, also lie within oneself. For example, even in a five-minute meditation, we experience calmness and a settled mind.

What kind of external cause and condition can actually cause us to be calm and peaceful? We don't find that normal, external things can actually contribute to that calmness and peace within oneself. That actually comes from within oneself. Having understood that then one also begins to understand that the very fundamental causes for our disturbance also lie within one self.

It becomes more clear and evident that the main causes lie within oneself when we look into situations in our life. For example, a couple may, for whatever reasons, come to a

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conclusion that they can not live together any longer, and that they have to lead separate lives. If that relationship was based on very strong attachment towards each other then, due to that strong attachment, when separation takes place whichever side had strong attachment, or both sides, would start to feel a great sense of pain and hurt. What was earlier felt as concern for each other now turns into anger and it can even turn into hatred. That is because of the factor of strong attachment being involved in that relationship. In another situation, where both sides have trained their mind, or the relationship was not based mainly on attachment but a more genuine sense of concern, if both agree that they need to lead separate lives and they're not suitable to be together any longer there's not as much hard feeling towards each other. It is much easier to bear on both sides. Both have acceptance. The separation in both cases is exactly the same. In one case there is a lot of hurt and pain and even anger, and in the other there's more acceptance and it's manageable. Where does the difference lie in those two situations? It is all dependent on one's attitude.

Let us now reassess our physical posture for meditation. If we get too distracted we might not get the time to do meditation. The main point again is that through understanding the benefits of the practice of meditation we actually apply the technique.

In order to engage in the practice of meditation we must find the appropriate posture. One of the points of the posture is to have a straight back, to have one's spine straight. When one has the spine straight then that will naturally align all the channels within our body to allow the energy to flow well. This freshens one's mind. Physical posture contributes to the practice of meditation itself. As we adopt the appropriate physical posture we also need to have the right state of mind. We make a commitment to ourselves that for the next few minutes we will not allow our mind to be distracted. We intentionally withdraw from all forms of distraction, all thoughts and temporarily leave everything completely aside and bring our mind's focus inward. As we bring our focus inward the object that we choose here for our meditation is our own breath. We place our focus entirely upon the image of the breath and just try to maintain our entire focus on the natural inflow and outflow of our breathing. So, for the next few minutes we will just maintain our focus. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Just as we attempted now in our short session, it would be worthwhile in our daily lives to try to apply this technique and set some time aside for meditation as a priority in one's life. It would definitely benefit one and also help one's companion if one is living with someone. The positive effects that we get from the practice of meditation can help our partner as well, because as we become calmer and more and more subdued that will naturally have a positive effect upon them. Otherwise, when our mind gets disturbed it naturally has a negative effect upon our partner or companion. Thus it is worthwhile to consider meditation practice as a gift to one's own partner as well.

The reality of our situation in life is that we have to associate with and relate to others. We do need a companion in life. Thus while we are together with others it would be worthwhile to have a good relationship, good communication and a good harmonious feeling in that time together. That would be really worthwhile.

When one has good communication and a good relationship with one's companion then that companion becomes a real friend contributing to one's happiness rather than one's

distress. If the element of mutual concern and understanding is lacking then one's companion might actually contribute to one's distress. That would be unfortunate.

The importance of having a harmonious relationship pervades one's associates and family relationships. A good harmonious relationship between the parents seems to be one of the most essential and crucial elements for a child's happy upbringing. When the parents have a good, harmonious relationship that naturally seems to contribute to a happy childhood. Otherwise I have witnessed myself how even with a very young child who is not able to say much yet clearly show signs of distress when their parents do not have a good communicating relationship. Some children even say, 'I'm unhappy today because my parents are quarrelling'. It is very clear that this does have an effect on the life of young children. It seems there can be a lot of distress if the parents don't have a mutual, good relationship.

If one looks into what is causing the disturbance in the relationship, whatever complaints each may have of the other, it boils down to negative emotions and negative attitudes in one's mind, such as anger and so forth. These are the real source of what causes the distress and misunderstanding and so forth in the relationship. Thus if one partner, or both, take up the practice of meditation in their life it is definitely a means to try to deal with the negative emotions within oneself and thus bring about a more subdued mind that will then naturally lead to good communication and a good relationship.

#### **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**

##### **4.2.2.1.2.2.3 Dispelling misconceptions about the mind striving for liberation**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.2.3.1 Introducing the misconception itself**

Following the outline from the text we have come to an outline that is called 'Dispelling misconceptions about the mind striving for liberation'. That is subdivided into two main further subdivisions. The first is called 'Introducing the misconception itself'.

What is being explained here is the misconception that may arise if someone were to apply what we call 'seeing the faults of cyclic existence' and meditate just upon that. The followers of the Buddhist path who are called 'the Hearers' see the faults of samsara and only wish to be free from samsara and achieve self-liberation. That would be suitable for followers such as the hearers but it would not apply to bodhisattvas who are striving for enlightenment. That is a doubt that has been raised.

This very doubt and question actually was asked a few months ago by one of our students, Vanessa. It is exactly the same doubt and question that is raised here.

The followers of the Buddhist teachings called the hearers have as their main goal to seek self-liberation. The means are to develop a very strong sense of disenchantment by seeing the faults of cyclic existence. One contemplates this sense of disenchantment with the pleasures and the miseries of samsara again and again to the point where one cannot rest or feel settled until one can be free from the cycle of existence. The hearers reach the point where they feel the very strong intention to be free from cyclic existence in this life if this is possible. If it is not possible in this life then they want to achieve this as soon as possible in the next few lives. That is the level of striving for liberation that is generated

within the hearers. By seeing the faults and being disenchanted with cyclic existence the mind that is generated from that is the mind to strive for liberation. Since that is the case then it would be suitable for the hearers who seek self-liberation to develop that mind. But it is not a suitable mind for bodhisattvas.

The reason why this doubt is raised here is that it couldn't apply to bodhisattvas because, according to one of the sutras of the Buddha called the *Inconceivable Secret Sutra*, a bodhisattva does not intentionally seek to be free from samsara and does not develop disenchantment with samsara.

The particular words in the quote are that 'a bodhisattva does not fear the cycle of existence'. Because they do not fear cyclic existence it is no appropriate for them to develop that disenchantment with cyclic existence. The text then goes on to explain that quote from the sutra where it says that bodhisattvas do not fear the cycle of existence. What is explained here is that not fearing samsara does not mean that a bodhisattva does not fear being reborn in samsara due to the influence of delusions and karma and does not fear the sufferings to be experienced in samsara. It does not relate to not fearing the sufferings of samsara particularly what we call birth, sickness, aging and death. It does not mean that bodhisattvas don't fear that kind of suffering.

The meaning of the quote is that a bodhisattva, out of great aspirational prayers and also out of great compassion, does not fear to remain in samsara in order to benefit sentient beings. Rather than having fear, they have great joy. When the teaching is explained in this light we can see a whole different interpretation, a whole different meaning, in not fearing samsara. It means that even though there obviously are great difficulties and so forth in samsara out of great compassion and aspirational prayers to benefit sentient beings a bodhisattva generates a sense of joy from being in samsara to help other sentient beings. That is what is explained as the meaning of that quote.

The text further explains that, contrary to what was explained earlier, if one were reborn into cyclic existence from the influence of delusions and karma and thus experiences the various types of sufferings in samsara, one cannot even benefit oneself let alone help others. While one is immersed in the sufferings of samsara and completely overpowered by the delusions and karma there is no way that one can benefit others, let alone oneself. That is the source of all one's downfalls. Thus a bodhisattva needs to overcome that sort of instance of being reborn in samsara. The wish to be free from being reborn in samsara out of delusion and karma is even stronger than the hearers. However, out of aspirational prayers and compassion, the wish to be in samsara to benefit others, is seen as a great joy as it is a great opportunity to benefit sentient beings.

The text then quotes from another sutra that explains that bodhisattvas, as a means to ripen sentient beings' minds, intentionally make themselves close to sentient beings in samsara. That is the reason they intentionally generate the wish to be in samsara as a means to be able to ripen and thus lead sentient beings out of the sufferings of samsara.

The text further mentions that if one actually claims that the bodhisattva wants to be in samsara without knowing this distinction it would be a breach of one's bodhisattva vows. One needs to know the distinction in the quote that says that the bodhisattva does not fear samsara. It is not that a bodhisattva does not fear the influence of delusions and karma, but rather out of the great compassion and making

aspirational prayers a bodhisattva does not fear being in samsara. That distinction has to be understood and made.

The text continues that according to the explanation given in Aryadeva's text *The Four Hundred Verses*, as well as the commentary on this work by Chandrakirti, what is being clarified and illustrated is that the means to develop great compassion and love for other sentient beings is by first developing that great sense of disgust and disenchantment with cyclic existence within oneself, and by bringing to mind the sufferings of cyclic existence. First one develops a keen wish to be free from suffering oneself and having developed that very strong wish for oneself, one then applies that to other sentient beings. As one recognises the predicament of being in samsara for oneself one understands that it would also be true for all other beings that are in samsara. They would have to face this suffering. Thus, from one's own experience of suffering and the keen, strong wish to be free from that suffering one generates a sense of renunciation in relation to oneself. When one applies that to other sentient beings it becomes a great love or compassion for other beings.

When, based on that love and compassion that one develops for other sentient beings, one develops a keen wish to free other beings from all the sufferings of samsara one develops what is called the bodhichitta mind, which is the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. This process shows how to develop superior intentions in relation to others by first developing them within oneself. That is how it has been explained in these other texts as well.

As explained in the text, it is good to try to bring to mind the understanding that in order to be able to wish others to be free from certain kind of sufferings one needs to recognise those sufferings oneself. If one has not developed a strong, keen wish to be free from suffering oneself how could one possibly wish others to be free from that? If one lacks the understanding of what the sufferings are then there is no way that one can develop that keen wish to free others from that suffering as well. This is the main point that is being made here. It is good to understand the deeper implications of these explanations.

It is, as I mentioned in our last session, like immediately criticising others for being short-tempered or angry while failing to see the faults of one's own anger. Finding fault in the bodhisattva's deeds without fully understanding their deeper significance is similar to that.

Before we conclude the session for the evening we can spend a few minutes in contemplation. This time as we bring our focus inward and try to settle our mind we focus upon the sound of the mantra being recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's manta.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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