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## The Condensed Lam Rim

# ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

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It is good to spend some time in meditation so let us sit in a comfortable, upright position. While we adopt a comfortable physical posture the mind should also be in a relaxed and calm state, which definitely contributes to genuine happiness. An individual, who has a genuinely relaxed physical body as well as a relaxed mind, will have a true sense of calmness and a true blissful feeling. A joyous feeling will definitely be experienced.

It is important that we consider these facts. Within the two aspects of ourselves – regarding relaxation on the physical and mental level, if we were to look into the importance between these two it seems that the relaxed mind is much more essential and important. Even if we have the proper conditions to be relaxed physically, if the mind is not settled, if it is not relaxed, then even if one attempts to relax physically one can see that one still experiences disturbance, the mind is still not very settled and happy. That is because we lack the appropriate conditions for a relaxed mind.

If we were to compare physical and mental happiness, mental happiness is much more essential, much more important. The opposite of that is true, i.e. that in terms of suffering experienced on both levels, physical and mental, mental suffering can be more severe and an intense experience.

To emphasise the importance of mental happiness being more essential and important, if we look at a situation where one has mental happiness then even if some suffering is experienced on a physical level, because of the mind being in a happy and joyous state, it can lessen the suffering experienced on the physical level as well. Whether it contributes to actually removing suffering or not, one can definitely feel a bit more at ease due to the mind being happy.

When we look into the conditions that cause suffering on the physical level we find that it is much easier to identify them, whereas the conditions of mental turmoil and suffering are sometimes hard to really pinpoint. It is much more difficult to find and identify the causes of mental suffering.

Because it is much more difficult to identify the causes of mental suffering, we have to spend more time in really investigating the particular causes of it, in order to overcome it. If we really look into it, we can find that it is quite evident that when the mind is happy it has the power of controlling physical suffering. The joy on the mental level will override the physical suffering, which becomes easier to bear. So, if you investigate you might find that is indeed true. Whereas physical happiness or

pleasure does not in any way really contribute to real mental happiness.

Mental happiness and wellbeing can definitely override physical discomfort and one can manage for example a disease much better. Whereas, even when all the conditions for physical pleasure are intact, there could still be a lot of mental unrest and suffering. So, this goes to show that even with all the conditions for experiencing physical wellbeing that doesn't necessarily contribute to mental wellbeing and happiness.

The main point of emphasis here is how mental happiness is really a priority; therefore we really need to pay attention to how to develop the means of acquiring real mental happiness. I am trying to convey the importance of this in one's life.

Further, in relation to the physical condition, it is obvious that even in a short span of time external conditions can improve, in fact they can improve tremendously. Even during the short time that I have been in Australia, I can see that the external conditions for comfort and wellbeing have improved greatly [*Geshe-la laughs*]

Even though the physical conditions may have improved, it seems to have contributed to more longing, more desire and a lot more distracted mind rather than to more happiness and contentment.

So if the mind, rather than becoming more contented and more settled, becomes filled with more anxiety and so forth then it will prove very difficult to get real mental happiness.

When we really consider the unrealistic expectations and all the doubts that we have in our mind, it becomes clear that it's all related to trivial concerns.

Just to relate an incident of my own experience. I was invited to Ararat to the family home of a student of mine, a lady whose house belonged to her dad and mum. It happened to be on a weekend when there was a footy show going on. As it was in my early days, I don't remember specifically but one team I remember was the Sydney Swans.

The match was playing and I noticed that the father was barracking for the Sydney Swans because he used to live in South Melbourne.

At a certain phase of the game the Swans were winning, getting more points so he was sort of relaxed and quite happy, enjoying the game. He was shouting out for Capper to do well. The father's sister sat together with us and watched the game. So as the Swans started to lose points, the father got annoyed and upset and was actually criticising the sister saying 'you are very bad'. [*laughter*] So as the game came to the end the Swans lost the match. The dad was really upset and he stood up obviously very annoyed and went up to his room and stayed there for about two hours [*laughter*]. I do not know if he had a nap, however he came down and joined us again later. What I learned from that incident was how true it is that when expectations aren't met, that it becomes a great disappointment, causing one to get very upset.

So this story shows how indeed a lot of frustration comes from unrealistic expectations. Having too high

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expectations of something, leads to feeling disappointed, down and depressed later on. So in this case, one would have enjoyed the match far more with an unbiased attitude, i.e. 'it is fine whoever wins, everyone has to win, everyone needs to have a fair chance, so it's okay whoever wins'. If one watches the game with that sort of attitude then if the opponent wins one would not feel too upset, it would be okay as one would not have had high expectations.

So this is just an example, an illustration from one incident. However in life we find that there are so many examples of people completely destroying themselves because their expectations are not met or that they have been disappointed in some way or another. So, what this goes to show is if we have our mind filled with high expectations and doubts then it creates the conditions for us to definitely suffer.

In the earlier example it clearly shows that the cause of unhappiness, of being upset and so forth was not due to a real harmful external situation as there was no one criticising or hurting one. However what caused the dad to feel upset and annoyed was his own unrealistic expectation. Thus, it is due to one's attitude that one creates the real cause for one's own mind to be disturbed, to feel upset and so forth.

It really depends on one's attitude, if one is too concerned with one's own side having to win and the other having to lose, if one consistently maintains that attitude, then that is what causes mental unrest. Whereas if one can train to have an unbiased attitude towards all, that everyone needs to have a fair go, not only to win a game but in all aspects of life, really wishing others to have equal rights and chances; such positive attitudes will then definitely help one's self to cope with difficult situations when they arise.

In this case one of the main attitudes causing distress in the mind is to be jealous of the other team winning, not being able to bear the fact that the other team is winning, and so one can not be patient. That is the cause, feeling jealous that the other team is winning and feeling distress that one's own team is losing.

If one can replace the sense of envy and jealousy towards the other team by wishing them well and thinking that it will be fine if the other team wins, one will be able to maintain one's own peace of mind. So if one has a genuine attitude such as this, then if the other team wins one would not have negative experiences, which definitely helps to maintain a happy state of mind.

Taking this advice in our personal life, we need to remind our selves not to be influenced by negative attitudes which will only cause further unhappiness. So by recognising negative attitudes within one self one tries not to be influenced or taken over by them; one tries to clear one's mind of all of these negative attitudes.

We derive huge benefit from using analytical wisdom, from utilising the intelligence of really analysing one's own state of mind, differentiating positive from the negative attitudes and recognising that negative attitudes are states of mind that disturbs us. They not only disturb our peace of mind but can lead to further complications.

By recognising the negative attitude as such then we work towards reducing and eliminating those negative states of mind. By identifying and recognising positive states of mind we can cultivate them so they become stronger within our mind, resulting in kindness and genuine concern for others. So these are positive attitudes to really develop further and strengthen, which definitely leads to a more secure and balanced life. What disturbs our state of mind is the negative attitudes as well as the distractions within one's own mind.

Having reminded ourselves of the distractions or the harmful effects of the negative state of mind, we will now make the attempt to distance ourselves from the distractions, by not following the distractions. Our thoughts should not be completely influenced by external distractions. We change that by bringing our full attention and focus inwards.

Having brought our attention and focus within we then need to focus on an object, in this case our own breath, as a way to anchor our mind to the inner focus and attention. We need to focus on our breath with one hundred percent determination and commitment that for the next few minutes I will not allow my mind to be influenced by distractions; rather I will maintain one hundred percent focused on my breath. And so in this way for the next few minutes we will just bring our full attention to our own breath.

*[Pause for meditation]*

Just as we attempted now, it is essential to implement the practice of meditation in our daily life. The reason why I say this is because as we engage in the practice of meditation and use the proper technique then it definitely contributes to the mind settling down, to become clearer and calmer. Then as a result of the mind becoming calmer and genuinely more settled it is consequently kinder to others. So when one has a gentler and kinder mind as a result one's speech will be a bit gentler and kinder when relating to others. One's physical action will also be a bit gentler and kinder in relation to others. In this way on all three levels – mental, verbal and physical, we become gentler and kinder towards others. This is a natural and conducive way in gaining genuine friends, genuine companions wherever we go. Whoever we may associate with, will definitely appreciate us, and it will be a joy for them to be with us. So this is how we can contribute to the wellbeing of others as well.

To have gentle and kind speech and physical gestures in relation to others requires first of all having a gentler and kinder mind to begin with, as it is very obvious if you look into it, our verbal and physical actions definitely follow after the mind, after the intentions in our mind which is where it all starts.

Beginning with ourselves having a gentler and kinder outlook in every aspect definitely contributes to the wellbeing of our immediate associates such as our family, relatives or partners. Even within a small family such as a husband and wife with one or two children, the benefit of a kind and gentle attitude or outlook will definitely contribute to the wellbeing of that family. This is something that we all wish for, a good and harmonious family, happiness within the family. We can see clearly

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that parents who are naturally gentle and kind definitely have a positive effect on the children. The children seem to be more gentle and kind, so the positive effect is transferred. Thus it is worthwhile putting some energy into developing this.

If one were to really consider these points, how engaging in the practice of meditation contributes to having a more clear and bright state of mind, followed by a kinder and gentler mind. Then obtaining all of those results that we wish for can inspire us to actually engage in the practice of meditation. So that's why it is good to be reminded of these points.

If there are any questions you can raise your hand.

*Question:* As according to the line from the four immeasurable thoughts, "May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free from the attachment to friends and hatred for enemies" would it be reasonable to expect those who profess in Buddhism to treat us with fairness?

*Answer:* When I mentioned expectations and doubts that lead to frustration and more turmoil, I was of course relating to unrealistic expectations and doubts that cause us worry. Expectation itself is a neutral thing. It can be used positively, to expect something positive from a positive result is not unrealistic at all, that is something that we can rightly have. To be inspired with expectations for blessings and so forth, that is something definitely worthwhile.

Of course, in relation to the prayer, being free from attachment for friends and anger towards enemies, comes from the practice of developing love and compassion. So for someone who is actively engaged in the practice of developing love and compassion, that sort of non-judgemental and unbiased attitude towards others can definitely be felt.

Otherwise with unrealistic expectations that cause mental torment, they are expectations that are influenced by the self-cherishing mind, an attitude which is mainly focused one's own self interests.

If there are no further questions we can conclude for the evening. In terms of actually covering the material from the text book, there is no real rush; we can go through the text slowly.

The reason why I spend time explaining meditation and benefits of meditation is because it is related to everyday life experiences. So I share my advice and insights with the intention that it will be of benefit to you in your daily life. As mentioned earlier a lot of our problems come from our own attitudes, so we need to change, to bring a more positive attitude in one's life. So that is my intention. Of course, in doing that we seem to get side-tracked from the actual subject matter. However it is all related.

Before we conclude for the evening, we can again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object we focus on is the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

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TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA