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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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23 June 2010

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As usual we can spend some time in meditation. To meditate we sit in a relaxed, comfortable position. We can understand the purpose of meditation as being a way to set our mind in the right direction. Whatever activity we engaged in, if we can engage in it with a positive state of mind, particularly a kind attitude in one's mind, then it becomes very meaningful and worthwhile.

When we look into what makes an activity meaningful we find it is dependent on the attitude that accompanied that activity. If we have a positive attitude then the activity naturally becomes positive as well. This is something that we would notice if we paid attention. It is indeed important to recognise this, as it can become a great aid for oneself. Not just recognising and understanding this fact but putting it into practice is important.

We can also see the great value of positive states of mind in how they affect those around us. When one has a positive state of mind, those surrounding one will have an appealing gesture towards oneself too. They will naturally be drawn to one as a friend and a good companion. Conversely when one has a negative state of mind then the people surrounding one will seem intolerable like enemies. One will also appear like an enemy to others.

For those who analyse in this way, it becomes quite apparent that someone who adopts and maintains a positive attitude within oneself will, as a consequence, be more joyful and happier. Someone who harbours negative states of mind or attitudes experiences more distress and misery in their lives. This is the main point to understand.

When we analyse and adopt that positive state of mind then it will contribute to a happy state of mind and our wellbeing in the long run. Negative states of mind can actually cause one distress and unhappiness. When we recognise this it further enhances the analytical wisdom within us.

Analytical wisdom is an intelligence that knows what is useful for one and what is harmful for one and which further cultivates positive states of mind and overcomes negative states of mind. This intelligence is something that will become a great aid for us. This sort of analysis is something we need to begin to do within ourselves. This analysis of one's own states of mind and recognising what is useful and what is harmful is the key to bringing about clearer, more conducive states of mind. This is something I emphasise regularly as it is important in our life.

The reason why this self analysis is essential is because this becomes the way of transforming our state of mind and working on ourselves. The only way we can recognise certain negative states of mind is through our own analysis rather than someone else pointing them out to us. For example, if someone else were to point out to us that we are short tempered and get angry easily it is hard for us to accept it. If someone else points it out to us it feels like criticism and we feel attacked. We feel we are justified and immediately feel unhappy and weighed down.

However if we recognise it for ourselves then, through that recognition and acceptance, we don't become angry and upset about it and instead we take the initiative to do something to overcome the negative states of mind. We are able to confirm to ourselves that an angry state of mind is something that is not useful or conducive to one's own well-being and that it is something one needs to overcome or transform. In this way this sort of analysis is essential for us to bring about transformation within ourselves.

One needs to relate this self analysis to the actual practice of meditation. The practice of meditation is, in fact, a technique to begin that real transformation within us whereby we adopt a more positive state of mind and reduce the negative states of mind.

Initially when we begin to analyse our own state of mind and begin to honestly scrutinise our states of mind we might see that there is quite a lot of negativity within one's mind. It is not that we don't have positive states of mind but, in comparison, the positive states of mind seem to be minor. If the negative states of mind were tangible and we were able to measure it, this whole room may be filled with it. Whereas the positive states of mind seems to be very minor, like a small object in the corner of the room. It is not as if our mind is completely engulfed or dominated by negativity, rather we normally allow the negative states of mind to influence ourselves while ignoring the positive states of mind. We give in to negativity and that, in itself, further cultivates more negative states of mind which causes stress.

If we find ourselves progressively weighed down, distressed and unhappy, it is our negative states of mind or attitudes that are causing that. Sometimes, for certain individuals, this leads to a state of being completely lost and without purpose or direction in life. It seems that whatever one does is without meaning. This is a dangerous state that the negative states of mind can lead one to.

In contrast, someone who has worked at cultivating a more positive state of mind and attitudes is more content and relaxed. There is a general sense of well-being for such a person. That even brings about a good physical effect. Someone who is joyful, happy and content has a better appearance. When we honestly analyse the positive and negative states of mind it is clear that the positive state of mind is much more useful and conducive for us.

The advice to transform and develop one's positive states of mind is something practical. It is not religious advice but very practical advice that is essential for one's well-being.

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It is the practice of meditation that helps one to cultivate this positive state of mind and thus the practice of meditation is really beneficial. One will notice the benefit, one will feel the benefit, and it is a practice that will help us in our life. It is through the practice of meditation that one begins to clearly recognise the positive states of mind that we need to adopt, further cultivate and enhance within ourselves and certain negative states of mind that we don't allow to influence us. We need to try not to follow them and try to avoid being influenced by them. That is something we need to begin to recognise.

To summarise, there are certain positive state of mind that we ought to befriend and see as companions and certain states of mind that we need to see as being like enemies and discard. The more we befriend and cultivate the positive states of mind, the more it enhances one's happiness and joyfulness. If we cultivate the negative states of mind that will lead to more unhappiness. So avoiding them leads to a happier state of mind.

The conclusion is that there is no choice but to discard the negative states of mind and adopt the positive states of mind; to keep a distance from the negative states of mind and to bring the positive states of mind closer. There is no choice but to do that. To further distance oneself from the negative state of mind means that you don't familiarise yourself with them and adopt the positive states of mind.

The main point is to avoid a state of mind that causes disturbance within oneself. Those are the states of mind that we need to recognise and it is only by recognising them we can combat them, and not allow ourselves to be influenced by them. Having recognised them, the next step is to distance ourselves by not allowing ourselves to associate with them.

Having recognised the unruly state of mind we then need to contemplate whether there is a method to overcome this disturbed state of mind. If there is a method then it is to our advantage that we apply that method. The method consists of finding an object that does not cause the unruly or disturbed state of mind to arise within oneself. We need to keep our focus on an object that does not cause the unruly mind to arise.

The main cause of an unruly or disturbed state of mind is not keeping our focus inward but allowing our mind to follow the distractions. It is when the mind follows the distractions that the unruly mind comes to surface and influences us. Thus the meditation technique is to bring one's focus inward and, having chosen an object that does not cause disturbance to arise in the mind, to keep our attention or focus on that object. When one adopts this technique one will notice that the mind immediately becomes very calm and tranquil.

To engage in the practice of meditation we adopt a relaxed upright posture and set our mind making a commitment to engage in the practice of meditation. That commitment involves intentionally withdrawing our mind from all forms of distractions and bringing our focus inward. Having brought our focus inward we use our own breath as an object to focus on and keep one hundred percent of our focus on the breath itself. We can keep the focus there for the next few minutes (*Pause for meditation*).

That is sufficient for now. You may continue with the practice of meditation when you go back home. The practice of meditation is something that would be useful and meaningful if one could adopt it in your everyday life. This particular technique of focusing on one's breath is very effective to help calm or quieten a very distracted mind. When the mind is in turmoil if we can find some space where we can focus on our breath we will experience that. The practice itself seems to be a very common practice. Using the breath as an object to meditate on is common in many traditions. It is not a particular Buddhist practice as others also adopt it.

While, the technique of focusing on the breath is a common technique adopted in different traditions, what would be unique in the Buddhist context would be to imagine that as one breathes out that all the different aspects of one's sufferings as well as one's negativities are completely leaving one's body. These come out in the form of black light and completely dissipate into the space before oneself. As one breathes in, one imagines that one is breathing in white light that represents the qualities of all enlightened beings. As the light enters one, one imagines that it simultaneously purifies all negativities within oneself and one gains all the positive qualities. In imagining one's negativities being purified one imagines one's body becoming very clean and clear, just like a clean crystal glass. This type of visualisation along with the breath is a unique Buddhist practice. This visualisation is regarded as being a very powerful practice. It might be worthwhile to know about it and introduce it into one's practice.

#### 4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence

##### 4.2.2.1.2.3. The way to train the mind in the stages of the path of beings of the great scope

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.1. The link

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.1.1. It is illogical to disregard the welfare of others when seeking to accomplish one's own aims and thus, from the very beginning one must enter the Mahayana

The topic that we are covering is the way to train the mind in the stages of the Great Scope or the Great Vehicle. It is divided into the link and the actual path. There are four subdivisions of the link. We briefly covered the first subdivision, which is that it is illogical to disregard the welfare of others when seeking to accomplish one's own aims and thus from the very beginning one enters the Mahayana path.

As explained in the last session, this is indicating that even to fulfil one's own goal one needs to engage in the practice of benefitting others. To fulfil one's ultimate goal one has to engage in the welfare of benefitting other sentient beings. Therefore it is reasonable to enter the Great Vehicle from the very beginning.

The main point being presented here is that in order to fulfil one's own goal one cannot forsake the welfare of others. That is the main point. This is very true even in a worldly context. For example, in a family situation, for the father to fulfil his own aims and goals of being the head of the family he needs to look after the family. He needs to have the support of the rest of the members of

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the family. If he works towards fulfilling the aims of his family members that will naturally be supporting his ultimate goal, whatever it may be. If we take that on a larger scale then to fulfil one's own goal it is logical for us to work for the benefit of others in the community. Therefore we can see that this advice is applicable in all situations.

What is being presented under this outline will be explained in further detail later in the text. In order to fulfil one's own ultimate aim and goals, which in the context of Buddhist teaching is achieving enlightenment, one needs to fully take upon oneself the responsibility for the welfare of other sentient beings as one's prime focus. The way to do that in the practice of the Great Vehicle, or the Mahayana path, is primarily the practice of engaging in benefiting other sentient beings. That is the main point.

After extensive meditation on the faults of cyclic existence from various perspectives you will see that cyclic existence is like a raging fire where you will be completely consumed, and develop a longing to be free. Thus, desire for liberation comes from understanding the nature of suffering and afflictions. The extensive meditation of the faults of cyclic existence refers to the practices that were presented in the earlier chapter of the text on the Medium Scope. As you will recall from the earlier teachings, the faults of samsara are the various sufferings that are to be experienced when one is bound in cyclic existence, such as the sufferings of birth, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of old age, and eventually suffering of death. Then there are particular sufferings such as the sufferings of never being content, the suffering of changing from high to low status, the suffering of separating from loved ones, and never meeting with the object of one's desire, and so forth. By contemplating these sufferings one then develops a very strong sense disenchantment with cyclic existence. That then enhances the strong wish to be free from cyclic existence. When one has this unceasing wish to be free from the cyclic existence, that is when one obtains the state of renunciation; where one has a very strong determination to obtain liberation.

Having reflected on the various sufferings that were explained in great detail on the path of the Medium Scope, one develops the understanding that suffering does not come about randomly but from a cause. Therefore one further contemplates the causes of suffering that is the various afflictions or negative states of mind. Within the two main causes, which are karma and the afflictions, the delusions or afflictions are the main cause. As one further contemplates the origination of suffering one understands that the main cause is the afflictions. Therefore one develops an intense determination to overcome the afflictions in one's own mind. At that stage one develops renunciation, which is the strong determination to overcome the afflictions within one's mind as a means to overcome the suffering of cyclic existence and thus obtain liberation.

In order to achieve liberation one needs to engage in the practices. The text mentions if we learn the path of the three higher trainings we will attain liberation. Contemplating liberation and the possibility of achieving

that is accompanied with the understanding that one can actually overcome the causes of cyclic existence, which are the delusions. Therefore one needs to adopt the three higher trainings: the training in ethics, the training in concentration, and the training in wisdom. It is only by engaging in the practice of all these three trainings that one can create the causes for attaining liberation.

The text explains that by engaging in the three trainings, you will attain liberation that is free of cyclic existence and is irreversible, unlike the glory of high status within cyclic existence. However the elimination of faults and the attainment of good qualities will be incomplete. You will not have accomplished your own aim and can only accomplish the purpose of others in limited way. Eventually the Buddha will exhort you and you will have to enter the Mahayana. Because of this, intelligent beings should enter into the Mahayana from the very beginning.

What is being further explained here is that when one is prompted by the wish to be free from cyclic existence one develops renunciation with the intention to obtain liberation. When one actually obtains liberation the delusions that are the very causes of suffering within oneself completely cease, and one obtains a peaceful and blissful state that is irreversible. However, as the text explains, one has not completely overcome all faults and reached the ultimate attainment.

The explanation that one has not eliminated all faults and one has not obtained all good qualities refers to the fact that within the two obscurations one has only overcome the deluded obscuration. The obscuration to omniscience has not been eliminated yet. That means that even though the delusions have been uprooted and abandoned the imprint of the delusions has not been abandoned yet. The obscuration to omniscience are the imprints of the delusions that are still in one's mind. Therefore, even in relation to oneself, one has not completely overcome all the faults. One has not yet obtained all the good qualities because one has not yet obtained the ultimate state of enlightenment. Even though one has obtained self liberation one has not attained enlightenment. So, one has not accomplished one's own ultimate goal. Therefore, the outcome when one engages in the practice of benefiting others is partial or limited because one has not fully obtained the ultimate goal.

The text further explains that the Buddha will exhort you. This is in line with the explanation given in the teaching of what happens when an individual obtains the state of foe-destroyer or an arhat. An arhat is said to remain in a blissful meditative state for a long period of time. It is said that the Buddha will exhort the arhat by sending a ray of light from the Buddha's body which wakes them up from their meditative state. The light ray exhorts the arhat by bringing them out of the blissful meditative state, and reminds them that they have not fully accomplished their goal.

The Buddha then gives them the teaching to let them know that even though they have crossed the ocean of cyclic existence and abandoned the causes of suffering, they have not yet fully accomplished all the qualities that are possible to accomplish, which is to become a Buddha. The Buddha says, 'In order to fulfil the real purpose of

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my teaching you need to further develop yourself by entering the Mahayana path'. The Buddha exhorts them in that way. As explained here, thus an intelligent person would consider entering the Great Vehicle from the beginning rather than striving for self liberation.

The followers of self-liberation are categorised into a few categories, hearers and solitary realisers. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has emphasised that those who practise sincerely on that path, the hearers and solitary realisers, are great practitioners. It would be incredible to meet someone practising as a hearer. They are wholeheartedly working towards achieving liberation. The practices that they engage in are highly worthwhile and meaningful. The reason they are called beings of a Lesser Vehicle is not because their practices are less worthy but because their purpose is to obtain self liberation. Their aim is to overcome and be free from the delusions. The ultimate state of liberation overcomes and uproots the delusions from one's mind.

Followers of the Great Vehicle or the Mahayana path are individual beings whose purpose is to benefit all sentient beings. That is the very purpose for them to engage in the practice and their ultimate aim is to achieve complete cessation from both obscurations and reach the state of complete enlightenment. Therefore, because the purpose and the aim are much greater and more extensive it is called the Mahayana path. But it is not place of the Mahayana Vehicle to condemn the practices of the Lower Vehicle. It is important to understand the demarcation is not in relation to the value, but rather the intent and the purpose.

Another way to understand how the practices of the Lesser Vehicle, the Hinayana or more traditionally the Theravada path, are not inferior is to remember that except for one particular practice the Hinayana or Theravada path is the practice of the Great Vehicle. The particular practice is the wish to achieve liberation for one's own sake. In the Mahayana Vehicle what replaces that is the wish to achieve enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. Besides that intention of achieving liberation for oneself, all the other practices have to be adopted in the Great Vehicle path.

Looked at in this way one can understand that all the practices, except for that particular one intention, are valid practices. It is similar with the vows. For example, the full ordination vows from the Mahayana tradition and the Theravada tradition are the same except for some minor differences. The numbers and so forth are exactly the same. If we further scrutinise the ways they all come to the same vows to be adopted. Even from that point of view one can see that the practices are exactly the same.

In relation to the self liberation vows, or what are commonly known as the ordination vows, within the Theravada tradition there are different sets vows, different sectors or different classifications of the actual vows. The ones that are adopted in Tibet come from a particular lineage or particular sect and still have the Sanskrit name of a particular sect of the Theravada tradition. The vows in countries such as Thailand and Burma now follow another tradition. Even the full

ordination vows that we follow in Tibet come from one of the sects of the Theravada tradition.

His Holiness has also mentioned that what is commonly called the Theravada tradition is the same as what we call the Hinayana. It is actually the same but only given a different name. His Holiness also specifically mentioned that Theravada also implies Lesser Vehicle, it actually means the Hinayana vehicle.

It is important to understand that while there are specific distinctions there is no competition between the practices as the Great Vehicle practices encompass and adopt all the practices of the Lower Vehicle except for one point mentioned earlier. In this way we can see there is no contradiction in the way the teachings are presented and that one follows the other in sequence.

Having this understanding will prevent us from holding on to views or ideas that there is some sort of hierarchy or distinction, and that one is superior or one is inferior. Harboring such a state of mind in following the Great vehicle or the Mahayana path would be criticising the Hinayana path, or for those who are following the Hinayana path would be criticising the Mahayana path. Holding onto such views is said to be an incredibly negative state of mind. One actually incurs negative karma by harbouring such thoughts.

It is not only within the Buddhist tradition that it is considered to be unethical to hold such negative views. Most religions assert that one must not hold or harbour negative or critical thoughts of other religions. Just as one must protect oneself from harbouring such negative thoughts, one needs to protect oneself from others who adopt such views so that one will not be influenced in that way. When someone starts talking about a certain religion being better than another, or certain religions being superior, one must be quite wary. As soon as someone speaks in that way one must immediately be wary because holding such negative thoughts is the cause of all sorts of conflicts that arise within different societies.

The great master Aryadeva mentioned that when one listens to any teachings or talk one must adopt a sound intelligence of being able to distinguish what is proper and what is not proper. So the advice that he is giving is very profound advice.

Before we conclude this session for this evening we will again adopt a meditative posture and then a clear state of mind. This time we focus on the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. We maintain complete focus on that by distancing all other distractions and after the mantra recitation has stopped we try to maintain that focus within oneself for the next few minutes.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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