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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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*(Geshe-la suggested that the air conditioning be turned on as it was quite warm. He went on to say) if you need to use such appliances then that is what they are meant for, but when we don't need to use them then of course it is good to turn them off and not waste energy. An honest person is someone who doesn't waste energy but who uses it efficiently when necessary. It is both worthwhile and practical to be knowledgeable about whether one should use something or not.*

As usual we can spend some time for meditation. So for that purpose we sit in an upright but relaxed, and comfortable posture. As regularly I emphasise, it is good to understand how adopting the practice of meditation is of direct personal benefit. So what are these benefits?

It is worthwhile to consider the state of mind that we often have, which causes so much disturbance in our lives. We can have an unruly mind that seems to be unsettled, whatever our situation. Then there are times where we might notice that we are just a bit unsettled and on edge. No matter what we do, we don't seem to be able to settle down; when we are sitting down, we feel restless, when we are moving about we feel restless and even if one's companion or friend says something nice, somehow it doesn't please us.

When we look into ourselves at such a time we will notice that there is an underlying restlessness there. And that inner turmoil is actually coming from an unsubdued, deluded mind. It is good for us to recognise that. If we really observe our mental state we will notice that there are times when it is quite obvious that our mind is on edge and unsettled, making us feel agitated. It is as if the agitation is bubbling up from within ourselves. And that is the basis for other kinds of problems.

What we need to understand is that if we don't make an attempt to settle down this agitated state mind, and if we allow it to influence our actions, then the more familiar we are with this unsettled, agitated state of mind, the more it will affect us negatively and actually harm us. That is something that we need to recognise.

If, when we find ourselves in that agitated and on-edge state of mind, we actually make an attempt to settle ourselves down by using a settling technique, then we will notice that as soon as our agitated mind settles down, we immediately feel calmer, and everything surrounding us also becomes calm.

To give an illustration, when we are on edge and feeling agitated and unsettled, we are like a balloon; when blown up it may seem quite big and impressive, but in fact it is just full of air. And when we release the air the balloon

returns to its natural size. So when we are puffed up with agitation we might feel a false sense of superiority, but as soon as we let our mind come down it returns to its natural state.

To take the illustration further, when the balloon is blown up fully, it is actually in a very vulnerable state; as it can be blown anywhere in the slightest breeze, and hardly settles anywhere.

Similarly, when we are puffed up with an unruly agitated state of mind, with a false sense of superiority, we are prone to be moved in every distracted direction, which can be very destructive. Thus when we deflate that false sense of superiority and unruly state of mind, then we become more natural and calmer. Whatever we do then becomes more meaningful.

The illustration of the balloon is analogous to ourselves and the air in the balloon is analogous to the unsettled, agitated or negative mind. When the balloon is deflated and reduced to its natural size, remaining wherever it is put, then that is analogous to ourselves when we reduce that negative state of mind and we come to our natural state. Then we are not prone to the influence of the negativities within oneself.

When we really analyse the negative state of mind we will notice that even though we may blame external situations and think that is the cause of our problems, it is not really the external situation that causes the disturbance. When we really look into the situation we find that it is really our state of mind and attitude that causes us problems, and not any external factor. We need to recognise that a negative state of mind really comes from within us.

To take the balloon illustration even further, when the balloon is inflated with air, if one were not to tie a knot in it and just let the balloon go, then there will be no way that the air will remain inside, and so the balloon will soon return to its natural stable state. Similarly, when we have an unsettled agitated state of mind, with negative attitudes and so forth, if we don't make it a big issue and hold onto them, then there will be no way they will disturb us. If we just recognise the negative states of mind for what they are, understanding that that they are not useful, but are in fact harmful to us, and use a technique to settle down, then even though delusions may arise, we won't hold onto them. Then we can naturally settle down and not be influenced in any negative way.

The main point that I am making here is that it is obvious that if we don't tie off the balloon the air naturally flows out and the balloon returns to its natural state, where it is not prone to drifting about. Likewise the meditation technique of diverting our attention from the negative attitudes and intentionally focusing on a virtuous object (which does not cause turmoil and agitation) will allow the agitated negative state of mind and attitudes to subside naturally. Just as air escapes from the balloon, the negative state of mind will naturally subside when we apply the technique of focusing on an object that does not cause the delusions to arise.

So in this way we find that the application of meditation techniques will definitely have positive effects right now

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in our life. For those of us who believe in the future life then there will also be benefits in that future life. But even if we are not concerned about the long term goal of a future life, there is definitely a short term positive effect. When we think about it in this way, we will accept the fact that meditation is something that we cannot do without—it is a really essential part of one's life.

If we make a genuine attempt to apply this meditation technique regularly and make it a part of daily life, then I can confirm that we will not be prone to big disturbances and troubles in life, or depression and so forth. But if we allow ourselves to become accustomed to negative states of mind and attitudes, and devote all our energy to the distractions of our deluded states of mind, then the result will be all the different kinds of unwanted consequences of feeling depressed and troubled and so forth. So, for the sake of our own well-being we need to really pay attention to this.

Coming back to the analogy of the balloon if we were to keep blowing air into it, what would be the consequence? We all know from experience that the balloon will burst. Similarly if we don't do something to reduce our negative attitudes and troubled state of mind, and just feed that negative state of mind more and more, we will reach a point where we might burst under the pressure of the negativity or the anxiety. The result will be physical symptoms such as heart attacks or a stroke. Doctors say that high levels of stress and so forth lead to problems like heart attacks and so forth. So on a physical level the need to deal with negative states of mind speaks for itself.

The negative states of mind that lead to these different diseases include intense anger, which is the cause of many different kinds of illnesses. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has engaged in discussions with different scientists and neurologists and mentions that doctors now agree that when one is prone to intense negative states of mind such as anger, then that actually affects health, because it compromises the immune systems. His Holiness explained that we normally have a mechanism that can fight off diseases, but when intense negative states of mind such as anger overtake us, then our immune system is weakened, and so we become very prone to different kinds of diseases.

It is worthwhile to consider the negative consequences for individuals who, out of intense negative states of mind, engage in the drastic measure of taking their own life. There are also many cases where people have harmed themselves by self-mutilation. These are not far-fetched speculations but things that take place much more often than we realise. When we think about what leads individuals to engage in such harmful activities, it is clear that it is not external factors, but that it is something within their own mind. It is their own negative state of mind that is compelling them to inflict harm upon themselves.

What I am driving at is that if one were to seriously engage in meditation as a technique for oneself, then one will be protected from negative consequences. Another example is the infamous Westgate Bridge, where so many people have jumped off that they are now building a wall to prevent that. I don't know if the wall will prevent

people from committing suicide or not, but they are attempting to stop them using the Westgate bridge. Unfortunately there are many other ways in which someone can take their own life if they are determined to do so.

As those of you who come here regularly will know, what I am explaining here to those of you who are new is my favourite topic—how to try to change one's attitude. When I look around and see the problems in our society, I find that a lot of those problems are self-created problems that arise from not having a positive attitude. I think that is very unfortunate, because the solution is just a matter of changing one's attitude. Changing one's attitude to a positive one will make life much simpler, much more enjoyable and much happier.

I feel compelled to stress this point again and again in every session I give, because when I think about the situation I feel genuine concern and compassion. I understand that if people don't know any better, and don't realise that their problems arise from their attitude then they are not to blame. But I really feel a sense of responsibility about the need to share this critical information about how it is both essential and possible to change one's attitude.

The main point is that one kind of thinking or attitude can cause agitation and/or problems in life, and adopting other ways of thinking and positive attitudes, will result in well-being. I have also related personal accounts of individuals who I have come across in the past.

For example, one day a very intelligent and kind-hearted lady who is normally very joyous and happy came to see me as usual. We have a very close kin-like relationship. On that day she sat on the floor beside me, and started sobbing. Normally she doesn't cry, but on that day that she was really sobbing and crying. So I asked her what was making her feel sad. She confided that her partner had left her.

I pointed out that she should be feeling joy rather than sorrow, because the person who has left for the reason they gave is worth nothing more than a piece of rubbish (*laughter*). 'So', I said, 'you have not lost anything. In fact you have gained more freedom for yourself, and if they have left you for that reason then what you have lost is really equivalent to rubbish.' Her tears stopped immediately, and she said, 'I am not too sure about him being rubbish, (*more laughter*), but what you say seems quite true'. (*more laughter*). In saying that he was not really rubbish, she being a little kinder to him. The main point is that she immediately changed her attitude from overwhelming sadness to a strong sense of joy. We began to talk as normal, and she was laughing and we had a normal conversation after that. So a big change took place.

I have many similar instances where replacing a state of mind and attitude that causes extreme sadness or unsettling feelings with another state of mind, or another way of looking at things, completely changed the composure of that person. But of course we can't afford to go too much into too many different stories now.

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It would be unfair not to give time to meditation after having talked about its relevance and benefits (*laughter*). The purpose of relating these stories and incidents and so forth is to explain the benefits of meditation, and of having a positive attitude. So it would be unfair if I was to not give you any opportunity to meditate, because you all have so many reasons why you don't have the time to meditate when you go back home!! (*more laughter*)

For the purpose of meditation, readjust your physical posture so that it is upright, comfortable and relaxed. It would also be appropriate to adopt a positive frame of mind, having a good motivation for the practice. Within a clear state of mind, we initially make a commitment to intentionally withdraw from all forms of external distractions, thoughts, situations and so forth, and bring our whole attention and focus within oneself. Having brought our mind to focus within, it is good to just remain in that inner space, with a sense of vacuity, and feeling centred within oneself. Having reached that stage, just remain in that space for a few moments. If one notices that one's mind starts to become distracted for whatever the reason, then at that point we focus on the object of the meditation, which is our own breath. bringing our full attention and focus completely on the breath itself we will spend the next few minutes in meditation. (*Pause for meditation*).

That will be sufficient for now.

#### 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

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2. The actual paths

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2. How to develop an awakening mind

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. The stages of training the awakening mind

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1. Training the mind in the pith instructions on the six causes and effect, which comes from the lineage traced to the great master Atisha.

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2. Extensive explanation

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1. Developing certainty in the stages

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1. Showing compassion to be the root of the Mahayana path

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.2. The importance of compassion in the middle

###### 4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.2.1. If one does not repeatedly cultivate love and compassion, one will fall into the Hinayana which is the Lower Vehicle

Having covered the subheading, *the importance of compassion in the beginning*, we now we come to the second subdivision from the earlier category which is the *importance of compassion in the middle*. In explaining this sub-division the text has two further subdivisions.

The first subdivision under this heading is *if one does not repeatedly cultivate love and compassion, one will fall into the Hinayana which is the Lower Vehicle*. As explained earlier in the text, an individual who has committed themselves to enter the Great Vehicle is taking a great load upon themselves. Out of their compassion they are taking upon themselves the great responsibility to engage in activities to bring about the welfare and happiness, and remove

sufferings of all living beings. That is a great responsibility.

As the text explains,

You may developed the spirit of enlightenment or the awakening mind at one time and then engaged in the bodhisattva deeds. But when you see that living beings are innumerable and engaged in improper acts or activities, and that the training is also very difficult and limitless, and that you need an innumerable length of time, you may lose heart and fall into the Hinayana.

What is being explained here is that having initially developed the compassion that compels one to enter the Great Vehicle path, if one actually doesn't engage in continuously familiarising oneself with compassion, and keeping that mind of compassion fresh at all times then, because of the limitless number of beings, one may begin to doubt the possibility of achieving that bodhisattva goal.

Another reason for doubt might be that the living being that one is trying to help acts very improperly or inappropriately. We may be daunted by the fact that many beings act negatively towards oneself. Or we may be so overwhelmed by the many trainings of a bodhisattva that we lose heart and give up working for the welfare of sentient beings. If we give up that awakening mind, we will fall into the Hinayana or the Lower Vehicle.

The main point being emphasised here is the importance of acquainting oneself with compassion again and again, to really familiarise oneself with compassion. This is crucial for the practitioner of the Great Vehicle path, because they have taken the responsibility for benefitting all sentient beings, and continuously working for the welfare of all sentient beings.

At a personal level, it is important to maintain and protect whatever level of compassion we may have now. And as the teachings explain, one will also find through experience that the essential practice that one needs to adopt in order to protect one's compassion is patience. The main contributing factor to the loss of our compassion for someone is the lack of patience. So it is essential that we develop patience.

If one is attempting to help others out of compassion, and they start reacting negatively towards oneself, or become unappreciative about what we are doing for them, then that is the point where we might start wanting to give up helping them. We think, what is the point? If they don't seem to be appreciative, or they are responding negatively, then without a certain amount of patience one could easily lose one's compassion for them. So we can see that if we don't develop the sense of patience with others then it is very hard to maintain compassion. Whatever concern we have for them will not really be durable if it is not based on a genuine sense of compassion.

Now we may not have reached the point of developing the great compassion that is focused on the welfare of all living beings, but we like to believe that we have a certain amount of compassion towards those with whom we are

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close such as friends or relatives or close companions. That is called a biased compassion, because it is focused on a limited number of sentient beings, and compared with great compassion it is very limited. However we can make an attempt to make even that biased compassion quite firm and strong, by developing patience and a genuine sense of concern for the other.

If one has developed a genuine sense of concern for others, even in the event that they retaliate, or seem unappreciative, or say inappropriate things, then regardless of their reaction one will be able to maintain a sense of genuine concern for them. One will be able to understand that when the other is unappreciative or saying things that are inappropriate and so forth, they are temporarily affected by some disturbance or maybe they don't really understand well. So even from a common sense point of view, we can see that there are instances where it is possible for that compassion to be developed.

The example of a mother's love for the child is a very good example to use. In our worldly context, a mother's love and concern for her child is one of the most genuine forms of compassion that we can have. We can see that regardless of the children's reaction, a mother never really loses her concern and love for her child. Sometimes the mother may reach a point of feeling a bit of distress, feeling like it is just too much to handle, but that usually fades away.

Even if some inappropriate things are done or said by the child, that can easily be forgiven when the child corrects themselves or seeks forgiveness. So a mother's love is far beyond any kind of normal biased love. If there have been earlier difficulties in the relationship, and later on it becomes clear that the child is progressing and doing well, then that gives great joy to the mother. And if the child is not doing so well, then even though the mother may not be able to voice her concern she still feels distressed. So there is a measure of a genuine concern for the child regardless of what the child is doing.

The other sort of worldly love is the situation in a normal relationship where initially there is love and compassion for the other when they are experiencing discomfort or difficulties, and joy when they are experiencing a good time. Then later that changes into feeling joy when bad things are happening to them and distress when things are going well for them. Such a so-called love or compassion is not really sound or genuine, yet this is what often happens in normal relationships.

Once I went to Tasmania where I stayed at a place near Devonport. The place was offered to me for some quiet time for myself so I took the opportunity to do a retreat for two weeks. There was a peacock there which had two or three young chicks. Once, when the mother peacock and the chicks were outside I saw an eagle hovering above. The mother peacock noticed that the eagle was above and immediately sensing the danger, gathered her youngsters under her wings. She crouched down and completely covered her young chicks with her body. She was prepared to protect the youngsters from the eagle at any cost, but fortunately the eagle didn't attack.

This example shows the intelligence of the mother peacock in spreading out her wings and bringing in her chicks under her. This was a very intelligent way of protecting her youngsters. What we can learn from this incident is that how intelligence is also necessary along with a sense of concern.

What I learnt from that incident was that with our intelligence we humans can definitely save others from great dangers and difficulties, and we can benefit them. With a genuine concern we can benefit others and save them from dangers. In our tradition there is an emphasis on love, compassion and wisdom, and if one combines a genuine intelligence or wisdom with compassion then that combination will definitely benefit others.

Before we conclude the session for the evening we again make an attempt to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the focus of the meditation is be the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As we hear the sound of the mantra we try to let go of all other concerns, thoughts and worries, and all forms of distractions, and just bring our full attention and focus onto the sound of the mantra. And as the recitation subsides, we maintain a focus on the residue of the sound of the mantra. Imagine being in that space, as if nothing exists, and that there is nothing, good or bad, that concerns us. Remain in that space for a short while, and focus on that. This is also a very effective way to engage in meditation.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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