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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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29 October 2003

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We can practise some meditation as usual. Seat yourself in a good physical posture. Then, on the basis of sitting in a good physical posture, one needs to look after one's mind. It is good if you investigate your mind; looking whether it is in a positive state or whether it is in a harmful state. Ask yourself, 'What state is my mind in at the present time? Is it a more virtuous, positive and pure state or is it a more harmful and negative state?'

You can determine which state your mind is in by checking whether it is in a happy state or in a disturbed state. If the mind is somewhat happy, peaceful and calm then your mind is in a pure and positive state. But if your mind is somewhat disturbed and unhappy then the mind is in a non-virtuous, harmful state. It is possible that you'll find that your mind is unhappy, somewhat miserable, suffering and that you feel there is something missing. You have the feeling that no matter what you do it doesn't give you happiness. No matter what you do it doesn't have any sort of 'taste'. That is a sign that the mind is in a harmful and disturbed state.

It is good to then reflect that there is not really any value in having that state of mind for one's whole life. If one were to have such a state of mind for one's whole life it would really make one's life very difficult and miserable. There wouldn't be any opportunity for happiness and peace. Then it is important to create some opportunity for the mind to experience happiness and peace.

You should reflect upon the importance of a happy and peaceful mind. First of all we can recognise, in relation to ourselves, the significance of having a happy and peaceful mind and we are able to identify whether we have such a happy and peaceful mind. By having such a happy and peaceful mind one first experiences that happiness and peace and then that happiness can be conveyed to others. It can make all the difference for another person when we greet them with a smiling face. If we experience inner happiness and peace we are able to project that to the outside. So we can understand the significance of having inner happiness and peace both for oneself as well as for those around oneself.

If one loses one's outer wealth as well as not possessing any inner wealth one is in a really very difficult and dire situation. If one doesn't possess any inner wealth then, no matter how much outer wealth one accumulates it won't give one any happiness. If one possesses the inner wealth of mental happiness and peace then it won't matter if one loses one's outer wealth because one still has the inner wealth. Therefore, one should desire inner wealth. Attaining this inner wealth is very important for one's life.

Here lies the significance of practising meditation. By practising meditation regularly even though the meditation time is very brief, one will be able over time to generate and accumulate this internal wealth of happiness and peace. If that is then complemented by external happiness one is also able to enjoy that too.

It's important that one subdues subtle disturbing thoughts and in such a way is able to experience the profound and subtle mental happiness that arises in the mind. It is a very good thing if one can do that on a daily basis for at least for half an hour, and experience that subtle and profound happiness. We should be clear that the motivation for meditation is to subdue disturbing thoughts so that one can attain the internal peace that arises from subduing the disturbing thoughts.

You have to remove the mind from external objects and concentrate the mind internally. This should be done in a complete manner. One shouldn't go to the state where one partially removes the mind from external objects and remains in a relaxed state that is a little bit engaged with external objects and a little turned inwards. That is not the state that is desired. The mind should focus 100% towards the inside and it should be removed completely from external objects.

When we are under the control of strong anger the mind is completely focused on the object of our anger. If our mind is under the influence of strong attachment then the mind is completely focused on the object of that attachment.

So, likewise the mind should be focused totally towards the inside now. All the power of the mind, the power of the sense consciousnesses and the power of the mental consciousness, should be focused inside and then, after having focused the mind internally in such a way, it should be placed single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can then meditate in that manner for a couple of minutes on the coming and going of the breath. *Pause for meditation.*

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Last time we went through the definition of the spiritual friend and we went through the definition of a disciple. Next comes the point of how the disciple has to rely upon the spiritual friend; how the disciple has to make friends with the teacher.

#### **4.1.1.3. The way for the disciple to rely upon the spiritual friend**

The third outline of how the disciple has to rely upon the spiritual friend has two points. 4.1.1.3.1. The way of relying in thought, and then 4.1.1.3.2. The way of relying in action. The point, how to rely upon the teacher in thought, deals with two topics, 4.1.1.3.1.1. The topic of generating faith and 4.1.1.3.1.2, the topic of generating respect.

##### **4.1.1.3.1. The way of relying in thought**

###### **4.1.1.3.1.1. Generating faith**

Generation of faith comes about through becoming mindful of the qualities of the teacher and generation of respect comes about through being mindful of the kindness of the teacher. We can use the analogy of parents. If one is aware of the qualities of one's parents one will have faith in the parents. If one is aware of the kindness that has been shown to oneself by one's parents that will generate respect for the parents. The principle is the same but there is a difference as the teacher has greater qualities than parents. There are of course parents that are also Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. For example, His Holiness's mother is an emanation of Tara. Some people say that Mother Teresa was also an emanation of Tara.

Without remembering the kindness that has been shown to one the wish to repay that kindness won't arise. This is a principle that applies everywhere. If we become aware of the kindness that has been shown to us by the Buddha and we generate the wish to repay that kindness we have to abandon harming other sentient beings. Sentient beings are that which is most close to the Buddha's heart and therefore avoiding, at the least, giving harm to sentient beings is the principal way of repaying the kindness of the Buddha. There are, of course, further ways like ensuring the continuation of the Dharma.

If one wants to be successful in one's action one needs, in general, to have a very strong aspiration to succeed in that action. This aspiration is then the cause to engage in enthusiastic effort. But aspiration is preceded by faith; having faith in what one is doing and in the aim that one wants to achieve. If, for example, one wants to have success in one's meditation practice one needs to have faith in the results of the meditation practice. Through having faith in the results of the meditation practice one will generate very strong aspiration to engage in

action to attain those results. That is the cause to engage in enthusiastic effort.

There are different types of faith. There is the faith in the teacher. There is faith in the law of cause and effect that states from virtuous action comes a happy result and from a non-virtuous action comes suffering. By practising the Dharma one will generate more and more faith in the law of cause and effect.

There is the faith that is generated by those of dull faculty and there is the faith that is generated by those of sharp faculty. Faith that is generated by those of dull faculty is faith generated in mere dependence upon the words that one is being taught. It is generated merely upon hearing the teaching or hearing certain words. That is the faith of a person with dull faculties. The faith of a person with sharp faculties is generated in dependence upon individual analysis and checking what one has been told. In these days there's a very common misconception that faith always has to be blind faith, always has to be dull facultied faith. This is not true. While generating faith there is the opportunity for individual analysis and investigation. In fact that type of faith is the faith of the sharp facultied person.

The Buddha, in his kindness, said to his disciples, 'You don't have to accept what I say just because I say it. You should investigate for yourself whether what I say is true or not. Then, when you find that what I've said is true, adopt it and practise it'.

Initially when we hear a teaching, when we're taught something, we generate a certain type of faith in what we are being taught. Generally we feel a type of affinity. We feel that it fits us and we feel an affinity with what we are being taught. Subsequently to that we should investigate the teaching through our own reasoning. We should investigate for ourselves, whether what we were told is actually accurate, whether it actually corresponds to reality and so forth. Confirming through our own thinking, through our own investigative powers, that what we were told is true generates a very strong and stable faith. Here again we have the sequence of listening and contemplation; first generating the wisdom that arises from listening and then the wisdom that arises from contemplation.

The text then quotes a sutra. It says that faith precedes all qualities similarly to the way the mother precedes the child. Without a mother, one can't be born. Likewise, without faith qualities will not be generated. Faith causes qualities to be generated and then it causes the qualities that are generated not to degenerate but to be stabilised. It

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also causes those qualities to increase further and further. So faith is firstly the cause for the generation of qualities, then it protects those qualities that have been generated and then it actually increases those qualities. If one doesn't have faith, then one doesn't have aspiration and if one doesn't have aspiration then one doesn't develop enthusiastic effort

In the same way, it says in the *Sutra of the Ten Dharmas*, that faith in definite emergence is the supreme vehicle. A vehicle is something that can carry something from Point A to Point B. Here faith is that which carries the qualities from Point A to Point B and then, on top of that, it also actually increases those qualities. It generates those qualities and carries and increases them. Therefore those who have discriminating awareness will rely upon faith.

So how should one view the teacher? As it states in the *Tantra of Vajrapani* disciples should view the teacher like Shakyamuni Buddha. It talks here about not so much looking at the teacher with one's eyes, as looking at the teacher mentally by looking at the inner reflection of the teacher that arises within the mental consciousness.

If we think very strongly about a person and that person's qualities they will appear very vividly to our mind. By thinking about that person's qualities we generate a certain clarity in our mind and a certain faith in our mind for that person. Likewise, by thinking very strongly about Shakyamuni Buddha and Shakyamuni Buddha's qualities of body, speech and mind Shakyamuni Buddha appears very vividly to our mind. We then generate some clarity about those qualities and faith in those qualities within our mind and the blessing of Shakyamuni Buddha can enter our mind. The inspiration and blessing of Shakyamuni Buddha can enter our mind in such a way..

In ordinary, worldly terms if we think about someone, presently alive or who lived previously, who had lots of qualities and we reflect upon the qualities of that person it will make a great difference in the way we view that person in comparison to someone who has no understanding of that person's qualities. Likewise, by contemplating the qualities of Shakyamuni Buddha one will purify lots of negative karma and generate faith. But we can go more into the way of viewing the teacher like Shakyamuni Buddha next time. So do you have some questions?

*Question inaudible.*

Yes [*Laughter*]. I think the question was if you think of the teacher as being Shakyamuni Buddha do you receive the same qualities as if you just think about Shakyamuni Buddha by himself; the same

inspiration? You are actually able to receive even more profound inspiration and blessing by meditating in such a way. It is explained in the sutras that by reciting a mantra with strong faith in the teacher, even if one recites the mantra incorrectly, one can attain what is termed the ordinary or common realisations.

There's a story of a bikhu and his mother. It is the tradition that every year the ordained community observe what is called a rains retreat during which the monks and nuns don't go into the towns and villages. Consequently this monk didn't see his mother for a long time and it was during a time of famine. He was worried and thought, 'Maybe she has already died'. So he went to look and when he found his mother she was actually looking more vibrant and bright than before despite the famine. The reason was that she had received the lineage of a mantra that could turn stones into food. I don't know if it's the whole mantra or just part of the mantra but there are the syllables '*tsali tsali*', which she misunderstood to be '*bahli bahli*'. She was reciting the mantra wrongly but, because of her strong faith, she could still transform stones into food. However when the monk, her son, came to her and found out that she recited the mantra wrongly he told her, 'What you recite is wrong'. Then she couldn't do it any more [*Laughter*].

There are other stories where practitioners, because of their strong and pure faith, could attain what is called 'ordinary realisations' or could perform 'ordinary feats' with mantras they'd received even though the recitation was completely wrong. There's the story of someone who was requesting a teacher for a mantra, for a teaching, but the teacher actually told the student, probably in Sanskrit, to go out of the room. The student thought that he had received a special teaching from the teacher and thought it was a mantra that he'd received. He repeated the words over and over again and, because of his pure faith, he could attain some common feats and he attained some ordinary realisations. He could pacify some harms and so forth, with the mantra. So, even if the teacher is not a fully qualified teacher, if you have a fully qualified faith there will be some benefit to the mantra.

*Question: What are the eight dangers the Tara mantra protects from?*

There are a variety of dangers, such as the danger of water, fire, weapons and so forth. There's a story regarding each of those fears in which Tara was requested to liberate someone from those fears. One should understand that when one is, for example experiencing the danger of fire, this danger would be subdued by single-pointedly requesting Tara.

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Likewise, when one is in danger of crocodiles, by single-pointedly making a request to Tara that danger of crocodiles will be pacified [*Laughter*]. There is also danger from snakes and so forth. No, that's really true. I have many stories to tell from when we were living in 'Bahksa' in north eastern India. The eight dangers can also be related to the different afflictive delusions such as the danger of attachment, the danger of anger, the danger of jealousy, the danger of greed, the danger of ignorance, the danger of doubt and so forth.

*Question inaudible*

If you think about it you can see that if you have strong faith you won't generate non-virtuous karma anyway. If you have strong faith that virtue is the root of happiness and non-virtue the root of suffering you won't generate any non-virtue. You will only generate virtue. You will become attracted to the generation of happiness.

However, in these days we always give ourselves a special status. We give ourselves a little bit of VIP status, thinking, 'We'll be alright. Just a little bit will be alright'. That's the common way.

*Question inaudible.*

With regards to faith, we don't talk about better types of faith and lesser types of faith. The difference lies more within the fact of stability. A blind faith, or the faith of the dull facultied is a faith that is more changeable. It's more easily swayed. It is similar if someone tells us, 'This person is a good person', and we think 'Yes, that person is a good person'. Then someone else comes along and tells us, 'That person is actually a very bad person', and we think 'Oh, it's a very bad person'. We haven't really ascertained for ourselves the nature of that person and we are swayed by whatever we hear. That's an analogy. If you have ascertained by yourself that the other person is a good person, then, even if people come along and tell you it's a bad person you won't be swayed by what they say.

*Question inaudible.*

The question is that she has difficulty in having faith and confidence in herself. By thinking that your virtuous actions are positive you generate faith. Faith has to be generated within the mind. You generate self-confidence by thinking about your own ability.. In that way you generate what you probably call faith or confidence in yourself by keeping in mind your abilities and your potential. As I was also saying previously, having faith in one's own capabilities, having self-confidence is very important. It's very important to be aware of one's potential, of one's ability, because if one loses one's awareness of one's potential and of one's

ability one's practice collapses. One has to think, 'I'm a human being and I have the right to happiness. I have the potential and I have the ability to attain happiness. I have great potential because I'm a human being' and so forth. In such a way you build up your self-confidence.

As was explained in the beginning bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards and then place it single-pointedly on Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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*Edited Version*

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