
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
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We can do some meditation as usual. As I have repeatedly said, to meditate means to establish wholesome and virtuous mental patterns; to make the mind more virtuous, wholesome and pure. One should look upon a pure and wholesome state of mind as one's internal refuge, as one's teacher, as an internal friend. When we try to generate this internal friend of a wholesome and virtuous mental state we encounter many mental obstacles, primarily disturbing thoughts that try to distract the mind to external objects. That's why you have to focus the mind internally, collect the mind internally, not letting it be distracted by disturbing thoughts to external objects, not engaging external objects, but focusing it internally. Then, within that space, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. The placement of the mind on the coming and going of the breath shouldn't be in a dual manner, as if you were looking at an object, instead the mind should actually enter the breathing. We can now meditate in such a manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

One shouldn't lose one's virtuous, wholesome mental states; the pure mental habits. If one loses them and follows disturbing thoughts one won't achieve any type of success and one's life will become pointless and disturbed. If one lets oneself fall under the control of disturbing thoughts and then acts under the control of those disturbing thoughts then those actions usually bear little fruit and only cause one to act pointlessly and cause more suffering. It is important that one doesn't lose one's pure and positive, wholesome mental states.

4.1. How to rely on the spiritual friend, the root of the path

A brief presentation of the way to strive

Actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

The 6 Preparatory practices - 5) Visualising the merit field

Last time we talked about the need to rely upon the merit field. We also talked about the three types of merit fields; the collective visualisation, the visualisation where they are stacked one upon the other and the visualisation that is called the all-encompassing jewel. We also talked about the different significance of those different merit fields. We said that since we all need to attain realisation very quickly we are going to use the visualisation that is called the visualisation of the all-encompassing jewel.

The visualisation should be located about the length of a full prostration in the space in front of you, level with the

centre between your eyebrows. When you do a full-length prostration you are lying with your arms outstretched. That should be about the distance from you that you should visualise the merit field .

First of all one visualises the base of a throne. The throne can be supported either by four lions or by eight lions. If four lions support it the lions symbolise the four fearlessnesses of a Buddha¹. If eight lions support it they symbolise the eight powerful attainments of a Buddha². In case you start to worry that the throne is just suspended in space, and might sink down if it is not supported by something, you can visualise the throne being supported by a white cloud. That might help your mind.

The ways of our mind are sometimes very strange and funny. We are normally not able to just place an object somewhere in space. It always needs to have a basis. Therefore we might feel funny about having the throne just suspended in space. If one has that problem one can just think of the throne as being placed on a white cloud.

On the four or eight lions we have a vast and expansive throne. On the throne you visualise first a variegated lotus flower and on the lotus flower there is a moon disc, and on the moon disc there is a sun disc.

The lotus flower symbolises renunciation untainted by the faults of samsara. The actual lotus flower is a very beautiful flower that is untainted by the mud out of which it grows. Likewise, here the lotus flower symbolises renunciation untainted by the faults of cyclic existence.

On top of the lotus flower we have a moon disc. It is a resplendent full-moon with a soothing white light. Moonlight has a very soothing effect on the mind and is therefore good for sicknesses related to heat such as fevers. The full moon symbolises bodhicitta which soothes and pacifies attachment and anger.

On top of that we have the sun disc. The sun disc symbolises the wisdom realising emptiness. One can interpret this symbolism in different ways. Sunlight ripens a plant or crop. Because of sunlight a crop bears fruit. Therefore the sun disc, which symbolises the wisdom realising emptiness - ultimate bodhicitta, ripens the fruits of the conventional bodhicitta. That is one way that one can look at it. The other way is that one can interpret it as the sunlight illuminating darkness. Ultimate bodhicitta illuminates the darkness of ignorance.

In this way the lotus, the moon disc and the sun disc symbolise the three principles of the path; renunciation,

¹1. Having no fear proclaiming ones abandonments; 2. Having no fear proclaiming ones realisations;

3. Having no fear proclaiming others objects of abandonment; 4. Having no fear proclaiming others antidotes.

² 1. Excellence of body; 2. Excellence of speech; 3. Excellence of mind; 4. Excellence of magical emanation; 5. Excellence of all-encompassing mobility; 6. Excellence of accomplishing all wishes with a single action; 7. Excellence of enlightened activity; 8. Excellence of residence;

bodhicitta and the right view of emptiness. The Buddha then sits on these three. This symbolises that he has these three principles of the path generated within his mind. If one wants to interpret it even further, what is being signified here is that enlightenment, the state of a Buddha, is the final fruit of the three principles of the path. By meditating on the three principles of the path the final result that one will attain is enlightenment. Reflecting upon how one will attain enlightenment by meditating on the three principles of the path will inspire one to meditate on the three principles of the path.

Sitting on the lotus, moon and sun disc is our root guru in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha. When we visualise the Buddha sitting on the lotus and the moon disc, in aspect it is Shakyamuni Buddha but we think the actual entity is our root teacher. The aspect is Shakyamuni Buddha sitting in the full lotus or posture, with one face and two arms. He is the colour of refined gold with the right hand in the mudra of touching the earth and the left hand in the mudra of meditative equipoise holding a begging bowl that is filled with nectar. His body is wearing the three robes of a fully ordained monk and he possesses all the major and minor marks and signs of a fully enlightened being.

The body that we are visualising is in the nature of light; clear and brilliant, radiating light. You visualise that at his crown he has a white *OHM*, at his throat a red *AH*, and at his heart a blue *HUM*. From the blue *HUM* at the Buddha's heart light rays emanate in the ten directions and invoke all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, the direct and lineage gurus and so forth, all in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddhas. These are then drawn back by the light rays and absorbed into the Shakyamuni Buddha that we have visualised and, in this way, the Shakyamuni Buddha that we have visualised becomes the embodiment of the three objects of refuge of the ten directions.

That's how this style of visualisation got the name the 'all-encompassing jewel', because it is the jewel that encompasses all the objects of refuge. All the objects of refuge are contained within this one visualisation. Shakyamuni Buddha is, in this way, the embodiment of all the objects of refuge.

He is the merit field in relation to which we accumulate merit. When we visualise Shakyamuni Buddha in front of us we should have a very clear and strong faith in him, entrusting our life to Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Buddha is wearing the three robes of a fully ordained monk. This signifies that he has mastered the higher training of morality. In general, the robes of a monk signify the higher training of morality. We have said that the right hand is in the earth-touching mudra and the left hand in the mudra of meditative equipoise, holding a begging bowl filled with nectar.

The Buddha is also referred to as Endowed Destroyer Gone Beyond. What he has destroyed are the four maras, i.e. the mara of the deva's son, and the maras of sickness, death and mental afflictions.

The right hand in the earth-touching mudra signifies that,

of the four maras, he has overcome the mara of the deva's son.

We said that the begging bowl he holds in his left hand contains nectar. This nectar has three characteristics; it is medicinal nectar that overcomes sickness, it is long life nectar that overcomes death, and it is transcendental wisdom nectar that overcomes the mental afflictions. This combination of the right hand being in the earth-touching mudra and the left hand holding a begging bowl of nectar possessing those three characteristics signifies that the Buddha has overcome all four maras; the mara of the son of devas, the mara of sickness, the mara of death and the mara of mental afflictions.

When we visualise the Buddha and reflect upon him having these qualities of having overcome the four maras it will be very beneficial for our practice and our mind. When we see the hand in the earth-touching mudra and when we see the bowl being held in the left hand filled with nectar possessing these three qualities it should remind us of the Buddha having overcome the four maras. That's what is symbolised and that's what those gestures and mudras and nectar symbolise. When we remember that it reminds us of the future result that we are going to attain through our practice. This will be very beneficial for our mind.

We said that if four lions support the throne those four lions signify the four fearlessnesses. The four fearlessnesses of a Buddha are: 1. Having no fear proclaiming ones abandonments; 2. Having no fear proclaiming ones realisations; 3. Having no fear proclaiming others objects of abandonment; 4. Having no fear proclaiming others antidotes.

When the eight lions support the throne they represent the eight powerful attainments.

They are: 1. Excellence of body; 2. Excellence of speech; 3. Excellence of mind; 4. Excellence of magical emanation; 5. Excellence of all-encompassing mobility; 6. Excellence of accomplishing all wishes with a single action; 7. Excellence of enlightened activity; 8. Excellence of residence.

The **excellence of body** refers to the ability to emanate a great variety of different bodies. The **excellence of speech** refers to the ability of the Buddha to speak to many different sentient beings in their own individual language at the same time. If, for example, the Buddha were to speak in Sanskrit even though there would be very few within the audience that understood Sanskrit they would all understand it in their own individual language. The **excellence of mind** refers to the Buddha's mind directly, non-conceptually, understanding all reality. The Buddha's mind is untainted by conceptual thought. It directly understands all existence. For today that is all with regards to the powerful attainments.

Do you have some questions?

Question: How can I teach my children some dharma and what practises can I do for their benefit?

It is difficult for small children to generate some Dharma practice out of their own thought. Children usually take their parents as an example. By looking at their parents and seeing their Dharma practice it is possible that they will take that as an example and also start to practise the Dharma in this way.

Some people say that when they meditate their cat or dog likes to stay together with them, side by side. Dr Adrian told of a mouse sitting in his hands while meditating. A subdued mind has this effect of attracting sentient beings.

Likewise children who observe their parents making offerings, meditating, prostrating, offering flowers and so forth will pick up those activities from the example of their parents. Even though in the beginning they might not do it purely or perfectly, will become better over time.

When, for example, we observe children killing insects we explain to them that the insects and animals experience pain exactly as we do. We tell them that animals and insects hurt exactly the same way as when we are pinched for example.

In this way parents actually have great opportunities to influence the actions of their child through their own example. The example of parents is very, very important for children. Sometimes one finds that parents offer wine and so forth to their children because the children get curious about what the parents are always drinking. Quite often parents offer wine and so forth to their child, ask if it is tasty and so forth, and in such a way introduce and induce the child to start drinking alcohol. If the parents like coffee they give the child a small coffee.

It is very important to take great care with regard to the activities that one introduces to one's child. One might think, 'Oh, it is really very harmless for the child to taste a little bit of alcohol, or do a little bit of that or do a little bit of this'. However, all those actions that now seem very harmless can, in the future, have a very devastating effect on the child. They can increase and ripen into something very destructive and devastating. Therefore one should be very, very careful with regards to what type of things one teaches one's children. Even small things that now seem insignificant can later turn out to be very harmful while very small, insignificant, positive things that one can teach now one's children can later turn out to be, when they increase and ripen, incredibly helpful and beneficial for the child.

Teaching a child about manners, behaviour, such as how to behave when one has guests, how to behave at the dining table, how to eat food properly and so forth are all things which, when taught to a child, will prove to be very beneficial. That is, in a way, actually teaching Dharma to the child.

As was explained at the beginning, bring the mind back home, focus it inwards and place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of the Buddha.

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Edited Version

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