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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Seat yourself comfortably in a correct meditation posture. It is also important to adopt the right frame of mind. We meditate to make the mind clearer, wholesome and happy. It is good to adopt such a mental state from the beginning, contemplating the fortune of having a precious human body and thinking, 'I am so fortunate that I have this precious human body. Because of this precious human body I can engage in this activity of meditation and practise the Dharma and generate joy in my mind'. It is very important that one feels this joy. This joy will then also express itself through one's facial expression to others.

It is also important that the person who explains the Dharma adopts a cheerful, happy mental state and expression. The people who listen to the Dharma should sit there joyful and happy and the person who explains the Dharma should also be joyful and happy. They should all smile at each other and through this one will generate a very nice and joyful atmosphere. One can take this principle into one's daily life because it applies everywhere. If one is happy, joyful, and smiles at others then they will be naturally attracted to one and one will easily make new friends. People that one didn't know will want to get to know one and one will get on better with friends that one already has. Otherwise, if one is always frowning and grumpy, not only will one not make new friends, people that are close to one will usually distance themselves from one.

It is important for a Dharma practitioner to adopt a happy and cheerful outlook because through that one will make others happy and happiness is what others want. Otherwise, if one is in a grumpy mood and has a hurtful mental attitude, one will hurt others and that is something that nobody wants. Therefore it is important to adopt a happy and cheerful mental state.

We can meditate for a little while. Generally there is a difference between single-pointed placement on the object of meditation and single-pointed placement on a single meditation object, on one meditation object. Single-pointed placement on one meditation object is referred to as *engaging meditation*, which is a continual, single-pointed engagement of one object. Single-pointed placement on the meditation object is not necessarily engagement meditation as that also happens in analytical meditation. Single-pointed placement on the meditation object applies to both concentrative meditation as well as analytical meditation, but single-pointed engagement of one single object is engagement meditation.

Our meditation is engagement meditation because the

meditation object is one single object, the coming and going of the breath. To focus the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breathing one first focuses the mind internally and then places it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

With regards to the mind being on *one single* meditation object it is important to understand that this does not mean that there has to be only one meditation object. What it means is that it is the same meditation object. From the start of the meditation to the end of the meditation one does not switch meditation objects or focus as is done in the calm abiding meditation. In the calm abiding meditation, from beginning to end, the mind will remain focused on the same meditation object but that meditation object can actually consist of multiple objects. For example, in the case of a tantric deity there are quite often very complex visualisations.

### 4.2.2.1.2 The actual way to take the essence

#### 4.2.2.1.2.1 Training the mind in the stages of the path of the small capable being

##### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1 The actual way of training in the motivation common to the being of small capacity

##### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2 Relying on the methods for achieving happiness in future lives

##### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1 Training on going for refuge

Last time we had started with the outline of offering the first portion of whatever one eats or drinks to the Triple Gem with respect and clear faith. To illustrate how one generates respect for the merit field and for the practice of offering the text gives an analogy of two farmers. One has a larger amount of land and the other a slightly smaller amount of land. The farmer with the greater amount of land did not plant his crop at the correct time while the farmer with the smaller field planted his crop at exactly the right time. Therefore, when harvest came, the farmer with the medium size field actually had a much better crop than the farmer with the larger field. The farmer with the larger field, seeing this, generates regret about not having planted his crop at the right time. Contemplating this analogy generates respect which is in the nature of admiration and liking for the object of refuge and the practice. Contemplating this analogy will generate respect for the merit field and the practice of offering the first portion of one's food.

One has the opportunity now to plant the seeds of enlightenment by making offerings to the merit field. This is a far superior field to the ordinary field of a farmer because the food that is gained from the crop only provides happiness for a very finite time, but the seeds that are planted in the merit field by making offerings are the seeds for infinite future happiness.

Making offerings to the merit field is very important. One is often in the situation where one can't grasp the Dharma explanation that one is listening to or where one cannot comprehend the meaning of the Dharma that one is contemplating or where one cannot meditate properly on the Dharma. When one is in this situation one needs to

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rely on the power of making offerings to the merit field.

The merit field can be threefold. There is the field of qualities, the field of kindness and the field of misery. The merit field of qualities is the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Dharma, the Sangha and so forth. The merit field of kindness is one's parents and the merit field of misery is sentient beings that are very sick, miserable with sickness. By making offerings to the merit field of qualities, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or by making offerings to the merit field of kindness, the parents, or by making offerings to the merit field of misery, very sick people, one accumulates a great amount of merit.

The Buddha taught that those three fields are superior objects to accumulate merit. All of those three actions are regarded as superior activities for accumulating merit. For example, if one is given food while one is hungry one appreciates that much more than when one is given food when one is not particularly hungry. This is something that you probably cannot really appreciate but it is something that I have had personal experience of. When we came from Tibet to India food was very scarce for us and I still hold in very high regard, I still pray for, the people that gave me food during those times. Helping people that are sick is a very special action. It is a very important thing to do. Likewise to help one's parents, make offerings to one's parents, is very important. It is also important to make offerings to the Buddhas, the Dharma, the Sangha and so forth. By thinking about the importance of the three types of merit field one will also generate respect for the merit fields of qualities and kindness, and one will generate love and affection for the merit field of misery.

One needs to progress along the path according to one's mental capability. In order to enhance one's mental power, one's mental capability, one makes offerings to these three types of superior merit fields. In this way, by gradually enhancing one's mental power and ability, one gradually and slowly advances along the path.

For those that have faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha it is also good to make offerings like setting out the offering bowls and the mandala offering. One can also make offerings to the merit field of objects that have no owner like, for example, the flowers in the fields. When one sets out the outer offerings one should not be stingy. If one can afford nice offerings it is not a good thing to be too stingy to set out nice offerings. On the other hand, if one cannot afford more, one should not feel that even tiny offerings are too inferior. Sometimes practitioners are very poor and can afford only very small offerings. But even if one offers just one flower with faith in one's mind one should not think that is too tiny an offering because, over time, one will be able to offer more and more. As the biography of Geshe Kudrum shows, he started out with very simple offerings but, through the continual practice of making offerings to the merit field, over time he was able to afford better and better offerings.

One has the outer offerings and this includes also the offerings of objects without owner. One can also offer

one's merits, such as the merits of practising generosity, morality and so forth, which would be the offering of practice. As a practitioner if one sees flowers without an owner in a field one can immediately use them to mentally make an outer offering. If there's a mountain without owner one can immediately make a mandala offering and so forth.

The purpose of making offerings is to train the mind in faith. That is really the main objective, to increase one's merits, to train the mind in faith and then, correspondingly with the increasing of one's merits, one's mental powers increase and one is able to better grasp the Dharma that one is listening to, better ascertain the meaning of the Dharma that one is contemplating, and better able to go deeper and properly meditate on the meaning that one had contemplated.

The purpose of making offerings is to enhance one's merits, to train the mind in faith and in this way then gain greater mental ability to enable to progress better along the path. Progress along the path happens in a gradual manner and it is good to make these offerings for that purpose.

Making offerings and practising generosity is also an antidote against greed. Greed is a big troublemaker that gives one lots of problems in one's life. To counteract greed is also very important.

Do you have questions?

Question: In the Guru Puja, verse 101, it says, " We seek your blessings to complete the perfection of generosity..... to the objects desired by each sentient being." What does that mean - " to the objects desired by each sentient being"?

Whatever they need. Inevitably somebody will ask the question, 'Does that mean that I have to give alcohol to an alcoholic?' With a mind that doesn't grasp the object, one freely gives *whatever sentient beings desire*. By definition, generosity is really a mental attitude, the mental state of generosity. During different births, the Buddha gave away his son to somebody that wanted his son. He gave away his wife to somebody that wanted his wife. He gave his carriage to somebody that wanted his carriage and so forth. By practising in this way the Buddha perfected the perfection of generosity.

If there are no more questions we can stop here. It's also quite hot. As was explained at the beginning, bring the mind back home and place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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