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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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It would be nice to spend some time in meditation as usual. Therefore it is good to sit in a comfortable and upright position. And, as we normally mention, the motivation for doing a meditation is very important. I usually emphasise the importance of generating good motivation, which basically means starting one's practice with a good attitude. It is definitely important.

Even on a very practical daily level we can see how an attitude makes a huge difference in what we engage in and what we accomplish. In the teachings, in the practice, a good motivation or a good attitude is emphasised to be initially an attitude of compassion and love, and then further on in one's practice it is a Bodhicitta motivation. Basically what this means is to have a kind mind. A kind mind or a kind attitude refers to wishing to benefit others and contribute to others' wellbeing. That is what is called a kind attitude.

We can definitely see the effects of having a kind attitude, an attitude of wishing to contribute to others wellbeing. Whatever activity we engage in is much more fruitful when we have that attitude in relation to others. It becomes much more meaningful. We can definitely see the positive effects of that in relationships. If we have a good attitude of wishing to benefit, help and care for others we can see that a relationship grows and matures and there's better understanding. Likewise, within other worldly activities such as engaging in work or whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, if we carry a good attitude people respond to us in a good way. As a result we accomplish much more.

We have to relate to others. We have to depend on others for things to work, even for ourselves. On a larger scale, the practice of Buddhism emphasises that whatever practice we engage in, such as a meditation or listening to teachings or so forth, it is definitely very important to have that good attitude or motivation, which is a wish to benefit other beings. Based on the practical experience of the results that we get in our normal daily life, we use that as an example and develop it further when we engage in a practice such as meditation.

To further elaborate on the importance of having a kind attitude. When we examine the practical benefits of having a kind attitude we can definitely see that when we try to maintain a good and kind attitude and extend it to all then, as a result, one experiences more joy, more happiness in one's mind and also makes others happy. It contributes to joy and happiness in others' minds. That naturally brings about good feelings and harmony between one and others surrounding us.

Having a kind attitude also becomes the basis for us to live a modest and honest life. Modest means being modest in one's actions, one's activities and one's engagement with others. That modesty then brings about a natural respect towards others. If we have a genuine respect for others we will not develop that sort of arrogance that others loathe. No one likes to see arrogance. The opposite of modesty is where someone starts to feel, and even appear, like they are really big and puffed up. In their mind they are feeling very pompous and very grand and looking down upon others. Even their physical appearance may look like that. That's not something that the majority of people will appreciate or will relate to as a good attitude. Therefore a pompous person will eventually face difficulties in their activities. A modest attitude is something that everyone would appreciate and would like.

Leading an honest life means to engage in whatever activity one does with a proper attitude of giving the full worth of one's time. For example, if one is being paid \$20 an hour for one's work then one makes sure that one gives \$20 worth of work in that hour. One puts in, to the best of one's ability, a sufficient amount of energy to live up to that. If we don't do that, and instead waste our time and try to find excuses not to do work and drift off from what we are supposed to be doing then, in reality, it's a bit like cheating. If, in even everyday life situations, we can develop a kind attitude based on modesty and honesty and one's service to one's work commitment and so forth one would lead a more moral life.

This is all related to having a kind attitude or a good attitude that is based on a real, genuine sense of caring and service and so forth. This is where we can see what we gain from the practice of meditation or from the teachings or the Dharma, as we call it in Buddhism, or any other practice. We can apply the Dharma in our practical, daily life, in our work situation, in our relationships. That is definitely a practical use. With that, the Dharma has served its purpose. The Dharma has served its purpose to make us a better human being and more able to do our service better in the community. That is how the Dharma can be applied and used in a very practical way. Therefore what we learn from the teachings, from Dharma, from meditation is not something contrary to our daily life or work life but something that helps us to lead a better life. This is where we can see the importance of a good motivation, a kind attitude and so forth. It's definitely related to our daily life.

On a practical level, if one engages in one's work and service in a modest and honest way then, at the end of the year, one may get a good bonus. If, however, one does not and one finds excuses here and there and does not do one's work well one may even be fired from one's job. Also on a practical note, we talk about having a better community, having a better country. A better community is based on the people who work in the community. If the people who work in a community are working and giving their service well, with modesty and honesty, then naturally the community services and

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everything within a community comes to a good standard. This is dependent on the attitude that the people have in their mind. This attitude becomes the initiator of the wellbeing of the community and that is why we are emphasising the good attitude, the kind attitude.

When we reflect on the importance of the harmony and the joy that we get from harmony, we find that it is all related, again, to having the proper, good and kind attitude. We can see definitely see that the joy of harmony does not come just from mere external factors such as living together, sleeping together and eating together. That is not sufficient to have the peace, the joy or the happiness of harmony. What contributes to the real joy of harmony is not just the factors of what you do together and how you live together, but rather the quality of the attitude one has for each other. This is true within a relationship, whether it's two people, whether it's a family or the community at large. It is all basically the same. If we wish to experience the joy and the happiness of harmony and general wellbeing within society it is dependent on having a good attitude for each other and extending one's own good attitude to others and encouraging others to have a good attitude and so forth. That is how it is all related. The main point which is to be emphasised is that having done this analysis and determined within oneself that the joy of harmony, the happiness of harmony within a family or a community or a relationship is dependent on having the kind attitude, then one determines that that is what I need to develop within myself.

Having emphasised the importance of having a good attitude, we can use this information to actually generate a good attitude, a good motivation, for doing our practice. We will now engage in an actual practice of meditation. Meditation can actually be understood quite simply. It's not that complex to understand what meditation means. Meditation basically means to familiarise the mind with a positive attitude or to train the mind to be in a positive frame of mind. There are different types of meditations. Initially we train the mind to focus on a particular object of our choice. Here we use the breath. So with the basis of a good motivation, a good attitude, which is a wish that "may my practice benefit others", we can engage in the practice of focusing our mind on the breath. We try to maintain our focus 100% on the breath. We withdraw our mind from normal distractions, external or internal thoughts and so forth, and maintain our focus entirely on the breath itself. We avoid doing the meditation half-heartedly, where one part of the mind seems to be focusing on the breath and the other half of the mind is still continuously busy following all sorts of thoughts and ideas popping up in the mind. The practice here is to remind oneself constantly during this short period of time to maintain one's focus entirely on the breath and just observe the natural breathing internally within oneself. We'll spend a few minutes in this way. *(Pause for meditation)*

Having emphasised the importance of meditation, the measure of progress of meditation is if one notices that

one mind is becoming calmer and kinder. That would be a measure that one's meditation is working well. There are other kind of results that are explained in the teachings such as developing clairvoyance and being able to have a light body whereby we can maybe soar in the sky. Those kinds of results might be not possible for us right now. Aiming for a practical result is much more meaningful. If one can develop a kinder mind that will definitely contribute to our own happiness. We will experience wellbeing in our life, and be really happy in life. That is something that is achievable and of practical use for us right now.

#### **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. Developing the faith of conviction in karma and its effects.**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1. Thinking about the Law of Cause and Effect in general**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1.2. Reflecting on the individual divisions**

Continuing on from where we left off earlier. The passage which was read out in our last session on the text was that the ripening results of having identified the ten virtues and adopted the ten virtues would be to obtain a good rebirth for the next lifetime. Even if one has obtained a good rebirth, which is something quite remarkable, it would be much more meaningful to use that precious human life to obtain an even higher goal, which is liberation and enlightenment. Therefore, to use our human life in a conducive way, to achieve the highest goals, would be the optimum way, the optimum benefit of having obtained a higher rebirth as a human.

A higher human rebirth can be used for liberation and enlightenment through the eight qualities, the eight attributes of a human life. How we can understand the qualities of the ripened result? The ripened result in our own situation would be a human rebirth. The qualities of a ripened result would be, while having a human rebirth, to have a long life free from illness. This would be a quality of the ripened result of the human life.

The text goes into the eight attributes individually. It shows how each of these attributes actually contribute to the qualities of a human life. The first is the perfect lifespan. The second is perfect complexion or colour. The third is perfect lineage. The fourth is perfect power. The fifth is trustworthy speech. The sixth is perfect renown. The seventh is a perfect body and the last is perfect strength.

The seventh, a perfect body, is explained here as a male's body. It's good to explain this right from the beginning so there are no misconceptions or misunderstandings. Otherwise there might be questions like, "What's wrong

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with a female's body?" A male's body is explained here as a body which is physically built up to have more stamina. Generally speaking, male's bodies have more stamina and are able to endure more hardships. Therefore, in terms of practising the Dharma, it is considered in a general sense to be a body that, because of its stamina, has more power. In brief, having stamina means having strength and therefore less obstacles in the practise of whatever one does.

Again talking from a general point of view, the strength of a male's body contributes to being able to face hardships and difficulties, even if one was travelling individually and having to live in isolated places. For example, even with an ordained person, it is said there are more restrictions for example for a nun to travel alone because of being, generally speaking, more prone to obstacles. A male, generally speaking, is more able to handle travelling alone. These circumstances are mentioned in a general sense. There are in fact some females' bodies that are much stronger than some males. Therefore males who are weaker physically would not have that quality and a female who has a stronger body would have those attributes of stamina and strength. If they were able to handle things by themselves they would have that quality. It is the same with having power and so forth. There are some males who don't have much power and some females who do. We can see that it is a generalisation that is made here. In reality, when we go into individual cases, then of course we can see that sometimes males lack these qualities and females have them. Some females lack these qualities and males have them.

It is the main quality that should be understood rather than just the description here, which is a male body. To understand the quality is more important. The main quality therefore to have in a human rebirth is to have stamina and experience less obstacles because of that stamina or physical strength.

Leaving aside the general description in the teachings it seems that it can be a misused quality of man. This physical stamina and strength can be misused and cause more problems. I find that women in general, and I don't know if it's related to the physical body, or the physiological makeup, are much more timid and kinder in general. They have a much kinder and more timid attitude. Males seem to be a little bit more arrogant because of their stature.

I'm not, of course, saying this just out of mere assumption. We see that a lot of the problems caused in the world, wars and so forth, were, initiated by men in a world governed and ruled by men. We don't have as many instances where women have actually caused great wars and so forth. This is why I think women generally have a quieter and kinder mind. I'm not trying to flatter you (*laughter*). That's what I find in general.

Elaborating a little further on those lines. When we look into the history of humankind, as far as our history traces back, we find that there have been many, what are known as, powerful and great men, like kings, generals

and so forth. But many of these were the very ones who initiated so many wars and so much bloodshed. We have also had many powerful queens but I, personally, haven't heard about big wars started or initiated by queens. Even to this day we have many powerful men and women and we still have some kings and queen. But we still find in this very age, in this time in our century, that most of the wars and so forth are initiated by men. I haven't heard about women in power initiating big wars that cause a lot of bloodshed. It is from these reasons that I feel that women have a kinder heart. It is not just assumption, but based on those sorts of reasons.

I don't know, some may feel that I am saying this because of the many very kind women who bring me nice food (*laughter*). Some might think that I'm being flattering here, but that's not the case. Even if some were to think that I'm flattering women, why not? Generally speaking, it is normal from a human behavioural point of view to appreciate and want to talk to those who are nice to you. That is something very natural anyway, isn't it?

I will go into more detail about the qualities and how these contribute to the practise of Dharma in the next sessions. So for this evening, if you have any questions, we can have some time for questions.

*Question: On leaving your homeland how did you deal with leaving your family and homeland behind?*

It doesn't make me feel upset or sad personally. Someone else asked that question earlier. The question was more like, "You look very happy, you seem so joyful, and how is that so?" I answered that it is because I had to leave my country and everything else behind that I am joyful and happy now. Of course the person was confused and couldn't understand what I was saying. It seemed contradictory, but when I explained further it made more sense to the person. It is true that generally I don't feel too bad about that.

The person who asked the question seemed to have understood the point I was making before I went into length of explaining the reasons. He responded himself with what I was trying to express. Before I could he was saying, "Oh, it's because you don't have much attachment, isn't it?" He seemed to have actually understood the main point.

In my personal case it is not something that started when I had to leave Tibet. When I was about seventeen years old I left my home in the eastern part of Tibet to travel to the central part to the capital Lhasa, to study in a monastery. I actually left home much earlier, when I was seventeen, and from then on my life was based on being by myself, without family and so forth.

The main things which contribute to my overall attitude about this seem to come from a practical appliance of not thinking too much about it, even from the very beginning. It was something I had to give up, leave behind and not dwell on. Instead I had to move on and not dwell on the past, which is not going to be any benefit because it's already past. Moving on and continuing what I have to do, looking forward, seems to help my own personal way of dealing with it.

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It seems that the main cause of suffering is attachment. In some cases it is also because of concern and real genuine love for each other but it seems that when the subject arises it's mainly due to attachment. In dealing with separation, I have a general advice that I give to others that they seem to appreciate and say works for them. This is, if separation is due and we cannot avoid it, then once the separation takes place it is best not to try to look back and long for that again. Instead, turn your back so to speak, on the attachment and move on. It's not going to work anyway. It's like trying to run after a car when the car is definitely, without any question, faster. You can't catch up with a car.

My practical advice is rather than trying to go back towards a relationship, which is clearly not going to work, and trying to hang onto that, which will cause more suffering to the mind, it's better to just leave that aside and move away. If you move in another direction, you may actually find more friends, more relationships, better relationships, and then you may get all excited about it saying, "Oh, is it really true? Could I find someone else?" (*laughter*).

The great master Asanga explained in one of his teachings that the reality of our situation with relationships is that when one is doing well, financially or physically and has good resources, one would have many close ones. Even if one tries to distance oneself from them they will run after you. If things are not going well and you're distressed and having hardships, financially and otherwise the ones that you want to be close with, even if you run after them, will run away. You won't be able to be with them, they will distance themselves from you. When we think about this it is actually very true. This is the nature of our worldly or samsaric existence.

*Question: When you were talking about differentiation between men and women and that women seemed to be kinder, why is it that it seems men dominate in spiritual paths? eg in the Tibetan Mahayana path we have Geshe Doga, the Dalai Lama and Lama Zopa?*

From a worldly point of view it seems that more men are leaders of nations. Most leaders of countries and generals and so forth are men. This seems again to be about the general acceptance of males having more stamina and having more physical strength and so forth. In a worldly situation, for example, it seems that men have more power or strength and physical stamina to go off to war. From a worldly point of view, that seems to be one of the main reasons. Therefore, naturally, men, having that ability of stamina and physical strength are elected to be leaders and rulers because again, in a worldly sense, that's what is needed. But, nowadays, even in a worldly sense, the opportunity to be leaders and whatever is there. Even when equal rights are provided, there might be a difference in whether you are able to achieve that or not and whether you choose to take that right or not. Maybe there's something along those lines too, to be actually considered. Whether women generally don't wish to take that opportunity or whether they don't have the ability to take the opportunity, what could it be? That's something that maybe one can look into. I've also

heard, on a factual basis, that it seems that girls are doing better nowadays, at school.

The main point derived from the teaching is, again, the generalisation of having stamina and so forth. Having mentioned that, one must not misinterpret this to understand that women don't have the ability or don't have the stamina to achieve enlightenment. It is definitely not the case that they don't have the stamina to practise. That is definitely not the case. One has to understand that this is a generalisation and that the path towards enlightenment is open to all without discrimination. Males and females definitely have the ability to achieve that. In fact when you come to the higher teachings in Buddhism from Tantra, many attributes and qualities of women are described. Geshe-la mentioned eighteen. If we look into the details of even the first one, there are amazing qualities of women which are quite unimaginable when we talk about them.

Many qualities are explained, for example having a natural, sweet odour from their body and their breath being naturally sweet smelling and so forth. These are some of the qualities. They are many more detailed and on the physical level, these are some of the qualities that are said to be unique for females. It is like the upala flower. A very rare flower. It lasts for a day or two but has a very sweet smell and is blue in colour.

One must understand this from the higher point of teachings as explained in the Tantra, but also in other Sutras one can see references where the Buddha refers to the 'sons and daughters of the lineage'. When he talks about sons and daughters of the lineage, he is talking about a pure lineage of those who are able to practise the Dharma. There are further references in the teachings where it talks about the lords and ladies, the powerful Dakas and Dakinis. They're always named in unison, without discrimination. Where the Buddha was referring to the disciples who can achieve enlightenment, he was referring to all of them without discrimination in male and female aspects.

When we invoke the object of refuge, the refuge field, we have to visualise all aspects, male and female as well. There are lots of references to abbots and abbesses. This indicates that there are abbots and abbesses.

I personally feel that Buddhism is, if not the only one, one of the very few religions that gives completely equal rights. Not rights in the sense of just general rights, but opportunity, explaining the complete equal opportunity of achieving enlightenment and so forth for both male and female. I think it's really only in the Buddha's teachings that one can find that.

We can stop here for this evening and, as mentioned earlier, sit in an upright and comfortable position to do a few minutes of meditation by focusing on the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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