
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual it would be good to spend some time meditating. So for that purpose we need to sit in a comfortable and upright position. Furthermore, prior to engaging in the actual meditation practice it is very important to generate a good motivation. If one is not able to manage to have an extensive motivation, at the least it would be good to generate a positive motivation along lines such as generating the attitude in one's mind that by engaging in the practice of meditation, for whatever time that I spend, whatever energy that I put into meditating, may it become a means to contribute to having a quiet peaceful mind myself, and may I then be able to contribute to help others also to have a quiet and peaceful mind. So that would be an ideal attitude to have.

As described previously many times, the object of our meditation, particularly in contemplative meditation, is to keep the mind focused on one single object. So that means keeping the mind entirely focused on the chosen object and not letting the mind be influenced by other distractions, such as thoughts of other activities. They may arise but always keep guard of one's mind and don't allow the mind to be influenced by the distractions. Constantly remind oneself to keep one's mind just on whatever object that one has chosen to focus on. That is the objective of contemplative meditation.

It is important, for whatever time we may spend in meditation, to keep the mind focused on the object that we choose to focus on. We begin, and choose the breath as our object to focus on. Initially it is important to keep the mind from wandering away and being influenced by distractions and to keep the mind focused inward on the object. If one can already focus on the object, then improvement can be made by focussing even more clearly on the object; one will be able to maintain one's focus on the object for a certain duration of time.

Initially the attempt is just to keep the mind focused on the object without being influenced by the distractions. To keep the mind focused we can strengthen or improve the quality of the focus. The manner of focusing on the object is not by keeping the object and the subject, which is the mind focusing on the object, separate. In other words, to view the breath as though it is something external and something separate from the mind is when one loses the main point of meditation. The attempt in keeping single pointed focus on the object is to come to a point where the object becomes almost like one with the subject, the mind itself.

In this case we focus on the breath rather than trying to

focus on external object. We try to internalise that focus on the breath, as though the mind itself and the breath become one. When one reaches the point where one can see the mind as being like one with a breath and maintaining the focus on that sort of aspect of the object, then it becomes a real meditation, a real concentration. So with those instructions in mind, we begin from our level: to focus first on the object without being influenced by the distractions, and then trying to lengthen the time and improve the quality of our focus on the object. In this way we engage in a few minutes of meditation.

Pause for meditation

In the same way as we have jointly spent some time in meditation now, if one can actually apply and commit oneself and set some time aside to do the meditation on a daily basis, one can begin to really notice that it begins to bring some real tranquillity and peace in one's mind. When we begin to notice a transformation in our life due to the small effort we put in meditation, we will begin to really see the benefit for ourselves.

Right now we are relying on the benefits which are explained in the teachings, but when it becomes the experience, then we begin to notice that the real protector and the real saviour become the results of the practice of meditation which we have developed within our own mind. In other words that protector and real unfailing friend is within oneself.

Right now it may be hard for most of us to try to imagine that, because we rely so much upon external friends and protectors. A sense of protection for us is something we commonly think is out there - an external person or situation. That is something that we are more familiar with and more commonly identify with. However as we familiarise our mind to be focused inward and start to get some real feeling and some sort of experience from our meditation, then we will begin to notice for ourselves that the real protector, the real unfailing friend, the real companion, is within us.

There are many who have had that experience, particularly after having attempted to meditate for some time when they have experienced some great difficulty, such as illness. There are those who have related to me personally that in times of illness, when they are quite lonely in the external sense - they might be by themselves and experiencing some great difficulty - that the real unfailing companionship and friend is their internal practice. The results they have gained from their internal practice of meditation really begin to help them to bring some inner strength within. This is something that is not experienced just by one or two people, but quite a number of people have had that sort of experience, especially those who were feeling great difficulties such as illness, particularly terminal illnesses. For the rest of us it is good to be prepared for the difficult situations that we may face in the future. We can prepare now by using our time to engage in some practice of meditation on a daily basis. That is how we can develop that inner companion and friend for ourselves.

So having thought along those lines, it is good for us to

actually take some initiative ourselves and prepare to develop our unfailing real protector or inner companion within oneself; that is something we can prepare for now. That would be good to do and worthwhile to think about.

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

We have described the eight attributes or qualities of a perfect human life. The first of the eight is a perfect life span. This means to have a long life. The teaching goes into explaining how that can serve as a benefit. To have a long lifespan depends on the karma created in the past. For example, to live for a hundred years: if we can actually experience the result of living a hundred years in this life, then this would be met with the results of experiencing the benefit. Just as it would have been projected from past life karma to live up to a hundred years, actualising that in this lifetime would be a benefit.

The actual benefit of having a long life, is to have the means to accumulate extensive merit by practising dharma on the spiritual path in order to benefit others. This is the actual practical benefit one can have with a long life.

The next in the eight attributes is having a perfect complexion. To have a perfect complexion is to have not only good looking features, like looking nice with a good complexion, but it also refers to having all one's sense faculties intact and having all the organs and so forth intact.

Having a good complexion also means having kind looking features. The immediate benefit of this is that those features make it easy to attract others to oneself, which makes it easier to help them with the dharma. This is a very practical benefit because we notice for example when one is relating to others, whether it's a teaching or whether it's just giving advice to others, or any kind of circumstance where one is relating to others, when we do it with a smiling face and with a good attitude, this naturally appeals to others. Even our external appearance appeals to others, so naturally people seem to be keener to listen to what you have to say and therefore pay more attention.

Particularly in relation to the dharma it is very important that others are keen and interested in what you have to say, as it beneficial for them in the long run. Even on a practical level in everyday life situations we notice that, whether it's in relationships or any other kind of

circumstances, if you have a kind attitude with good gestures and good manners, then that really allows others to listen and communicate well.

We also notice, on a practical note, people who pay quite a large sum of money to go and see, for example a psychologist. Apparently there are people who are sometimes in a little bit of an awkward situation, where at home they have difficulty communicating with the ones that you're supposed to be having good relations with and that are close to you. So to pay a total stranger you have to go very willingly and you listen to them and spend a lot of time with them. It feels very very good and you feel very good when you come back from such a person. It seems a bit ironic that you have to pay money to someone to listen to you, and on top of that you have to go to a stranger. It seems how they speak and so forth seems appealing, and that's why people even pay money to go to listen to someone. That same sort of mannerism of speaking and relating to others can be adopted and learned within one's family and friends.

A perfect lineage means coming from a line of a renowned family where people naturally admire or naturally have reverence towards you because of the lineage you come from. It seems that this is also very true in a worldly sense. When some people who have a great name and are well-known give a teaching, it seems like everyone is drawn to them and everyone goes just because they are renowned and come from a good lineage.

Having this attribute of a good lineage does not refer only to a lineage such as in the caste system, Brahmin and so forth, but refers more to a respected lineage. Generally if we say good lineage it may refer to a king, prince or high status aristocratic lineage, but here it means coming from a respected family or from a respected background. Naturally people are drawn to that respect. The benefit of this is in imparting the dharma or to give dharma teachings. We can see that someone who is well-known and respected naturally and spontaneously seems to draw big crowds. We can see that that is very true, isn't it? Even in a worldly sense we see that there are those who may spend up to \$2000 or \$3000 just to have dinner with someone who is respected and well-known. We can relay these worldly examples back to the dharma and see how it is useful and beneficial to help others in that way.

The perfect power is after the perfect lineage. Having perfect power refers to having power and influence over others. It could be power through having a lot of wealth, or being a leader who influences many others who work under them. Having material wealth is a means to directly benefit others. If it is used directly to benefit others then that will naturally draw others towards respecting and liking you. And having given wealth first, then one could offer other assistance. In relation to the dharma, being generous with wealth is the first among the four means of attracting students or disciples.

The four means of attracting disciples is:

Being generous with wealth and so forth

Extending one help to others on a practical level

Giving advice to others with kind and pleasant speech

Putting that advice into practice oneself

Having engaged in the practice oneself one encourages others in the practice of dharma. These are the four means of gathering, and then benefiting students or disciples.

The fifth attribute is trustworthy speech. Trustworthy speech is mentioned in teachings along with trustworthy behaviour, so trustworthy speech and behaviour becomes a means to further gain respect and trust from others. Trustworthy speech means to speak the truth and be honest with kind gestures and a kind manner. In this way one will naturally develop trust from others. Trustworthy speech is also the means to attract students and then benefit them.

The sixth attribute is perfect renown, or being renowned. Perfect renown is related to the earlier attribute of having the power of wealth. Having engaged in extensive activities of generosity, then naturally one will get the renown. We will be renowned and be praised by others. Renowned here particularly means well-known and becoming famous amongst many. Being famous is another way of imparting the dharma with a quality or attribute. Others can benefit through one's renown.

This quality, perfect renown, can be used to benefit others. The way that one becomes renowned is, as mentioned earlier, through acts of generosity. When one engages in acts of generosity and benefits others one becomes renowned and has a strong influence over others. This becomes an attribute to be able to benefit others through one's renown, one's status and one's fame. This has an influence when one imparts practices or advises others. Others will naturally follow that practice or advice because of one's status. In that way perfect renown becomes a means to benefit others in a positive way.

The seventh attribute is having the perfect body, what is described as a male body. The main attribute of having a male body is having the stamina and the ability to endure hardships while practising the dharma.

The eighth attribute is having strength. Having perfect strength here relates to physical as well as mental strength. This attribute, in relation to the physical body, means that one has a good physical body that has the ability to fight off diseases. Having a good immune system contributes to living a long life. The combination of having a strong body and a strong mind will naturally enable the person to be able to endure hardships and put forth great enthusiasm in practising the dharma. And particularly, the combination of having a good body and a good mind will allow that individual to be able to endure the hardships in meditation and thus develop perfect concentration, which leads to developing calm abiding meditation.

Having courage and mental strength also enables the individual to go further into practising developing the special insight. When the union of calm abiding and special insight has been obtained, then one will gain the

natural qualities of having clairvoyance and in that way one can then obtain these realisations. Having perfect strength means to have a sound, strong physical body as well as a strong mind; which allows the individual to endure the hardships of the practice of the dharma.

When we consider the eight qualities that are obtained as a human being, and their benefits, we can definitely feel for ourselves that it will be wonderful if one can have these qualities. Having a life and strength and renown and so forth are definitely good qualities that can be of a great benefit to oneself and to others.

Now the next doubt that may arise in one's mind is whether it is possible to achieve these qualities. Definitely these qualities are obtainable. It depends on creating the causes, as there is nothing which cannot be obtained if there was no cause. If we engage in creating the causes, we can definitely achieve the results which are these eight attributes. When all the causes have been accumulated, then there is no question that the results will be experienced. So the next part of the teaching is explaining what the causes for the eight attributes are. The causes will be explained in our next session.

Does anyone have any questions now? It's good to understand how the teachings are presented, the actual very structure of the presentation is actually very logical. The teachings talk about certain qualities which seem very attractive and very nice to have, and naturally the question arises in the mind if these qualities are so good, is it possible to have them? How can one achieve them? Then the teaching therefore goes into explaining the causes of these attributes or qualities.

Question: At home it seems very difficult to get my mind still. Why does it work here but not at home?

Answer: Maybe you are afraid of not letting the mind go out because of Geshe-la's presence here. On a practical note, the difference may be that when you come here you have definitely allocated some time just to do that and you try to leave everything aside just for the time being. So that might be a practical reason as to why you're able to focus a little bit better here in this environment. When you are back home, naturally you are in environment where you have the responsibility of taking care of the rest of the family or other kinds of things in one's life. The environment might have an influence on the distractions that one has. Even if one is trying to focus, it is very easy for the mind to go onto some sort of other responsibility that can come up more easily. And also in relation to being focused and writing something, there are others who tell me that when they are trying to write the dharma here in the class it is much easier, whereas at home when they are trying to write dharma it's very easy to get distracted. So it's the same thing with meditation.

However, on another practical note from a dharma or spiritual point of view, there is definitely a presence, a blessing, at a holy place. The blessing of the place itself might contribute towards the mind being focussed better. And in fact there are many who come here and have said that just by the mere presence of being here in this environment, in this particular gompas, gives a soothing

and very nice feeling for the mind. That can also be due to the blessings we say that the place has.

In terms of the blessings, it is said that great beings, holy beings, send out their blessings when they go to a place and this blesses a place. When ordinary beings go to a particular blessed place, then the blessings are something that we receive from the place. So there are the great holy beings who bless places, and ordinary beings receive the blessings from being in that environment or place. That seems to definitely be the case for meditation as well; that if one visits areas or places where other great meditators have been, then because of the place itself having been blessed by previous great meditators, then it naturally has a very conducive effect on the mind of even ordinary people who try to meditate there. It can definitely have that effect.

However, having mentioned that, it is not impossible to focus the mind wherever you are. It is possible to focus the mind, particularly if one deals with the stronger distractions, by identifying them and trying to prevent our mind from engaging with them. Work with the stronger distractions first and then slowly, by working in that way, deal with the more subtle levels.

If one's attitude from the very beginning is 'if I try to meditate at home, my mind will be distracted so I cannot do it', if one already decides that, then naturally one would not even attempt to meditate. So the distractions are actually already present before you start to meditate because you have already set up your mind in that way.

Question: Is the number of children in the family influenced by the karma of the parents or the karma of the children?

Answer: It seems to be a combination of the siblings. The children were able to have more brothers and sisters; it's the karma between them as well as the parents. It's a combination; it's not one or the other but rather a combination.

Question: Whose karma is it for people not to have children?

Translator. It couldn't be karma of the children because there are no children yet, so what is exactly the question?

Question: What is the karma of the couple?

Answer: The parents need to have created the karma. There seem to be various different types of karmas that the parents have. Some parents may have the karma to have only girls born, and then in other cases only boys. So therefore it seems there is some sort of variation in the karmas of having children, that some either don't have children because of the karma between the partners or some have karmas to have only girls in their family and some only have boys.

Having said that, it seems that there are also some sort of immediate conditions as well that also fall into place. So even though there is an overall karma that is in effect, there might be also immediate conditions - if certain conditions are not met by the parents, then that will result in either not having children or maybe having only

girls or only boys. There must be some other immediate conditions as well. There are cases where if the male has stronger attachment to the female, then having a union, what we call conception, and the female has a lesser attachment, then that seems to contribute to having a girl. And then if it is vice versa, when the female has a stronger attachment and the male has less attachment, then that contributes to having boys. Maybe there is something in that explanation which can be investigated and looked into.

Question: Untimely death would appear to defy the laws of karma.

Answer: Along with the explanation of karma as mentioned in the previous answer, there are also the conditions which need to work together with karma. So the reason why it is called 'untimely' is because even though there is an initial karma to live to a certain lifespan, for example, let's say a hundred, even that's projected karma due to certain conditions not meeting, not coming together or other conditions which unexpectedly arise that contribute to an earlier death. Karma is not something that works just singularly by itself, but rather in union with the conditions. So the karma works together with the conditions, not just by itself.

So we can stop here for this evening. Before we end the session we can sit in an upright comfortable position for meditation and we can focus on the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni. We should focus on the sound of the mantra rather than the letters. It is the melody that we focus on and we keep our attention and focus on the melody. Those who are familiar with music know that the notes indicate what kind of tone you need to have in different parts when you sing the words. Similarly, the different melodies we have in the chanting have these similar kind of notes that indicate how the tone should be. It actually can be quite complex. So if we get the tone right then it can sound very well.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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