
The Condensed Lam Rim

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18 October 2006

As usual, it would be good to spend some time in meditation. For that purpose, we will sit in a comfortable and upright position.

As well as having a relaxed and comfortable body, it is equally important to have a relaxed mind; we can definitely see great benefits from having a relaxed mind.

We may agree that having a relaxed body and a relaxed mind is definitely something we would wish for and something we could acknowledge as being beneficial. However, we may think: "Well, it's not really possible. It's very hard to have that".

While it is relatively easy to maintain a relaxed physical posture, we might find it difficult to have a really relaxed and focused mind. If we look into why that is so, we all realise from experience that this is because the mind is easily distracted. Any time we try to keep our focus on something, there's always some sort of distracting thought arising in the mind, influencing the mind to become distracted and thus disturbed.

So when we talk about the distracted mind, we are referring to the mind that is completely scattered and distracted by external, worldly objects. In an attempt to stop this influence through meditation, we first bring the mind inward. Then, by choosing a suitable meditation object, we maintain our focus on that particular object, not allowing the mind to be distracted.

When the mind is distracted, it is not distracted by just one or two objects for a few seconds, but rather we find it is distracted by numerous objects or thoughts. It is as though the mind is dispersed in many different directions, and this is what causes the disturbance and unrest. Therefore, when we first attempt to try to bring the mind inward and focus on an object, we will experience the mind naturally becoming more relaxed. This contributes to a subdued mind. When we talk about a subdued mind, it is a mind that is less distracted and more focused. When the mind becomes completely focused and not influenced by the distractions; this is what is called a truly subdued mind. The Buddha has mentioned in sutras that a subdued mind is a content and happy mind.

From our own experience, we know that maintaining our focus even for a few minutes or seconds can contribute to the mind becoming more relaxed. This gives us a taste of the subdued mind. An ultimately subdued mind is achievable through practice, through familiarising the mind in meditation, through slowly prolonging our focus and maintaining it. As we can see from our own limited

experience, having a subdued mind contributes to a relaxed and happy mind. It is therefore crucial for us to try to achieve a subdued mind that is more durable. For that purpose, we attempt to meditate, keeping our attention on a chosen object, then familiarising our mind with it

We will now engage in a few minutes of meditation. Even if it's just a few minutes, if we dedicate ourselves completely to that few minutes, to be completely focused on our breath, it becomes really worthwhile. For that to happen, it takes a certain amount of mental discipline and determination – we need to commit ourselves to being focused on our breath, withdrawing our mind from external distractions, be they good or bad thoughts. For the purpose of contemplative meditation, we try to withdraw ourselves from any kind of thought – past, present or future – for the time being, except for focusing on the breath, maintaining our focus 100% on the breath for a few minutes. *[Pause for meditation]*

We will have experienced some benefit from our short meditation, and this is how we should try to engage in daily practice – a short time, with continuity and commitment. These are the three main elements that are crucial to achieving results from meditation – continuity, commitment and short duration. If that short duration is slowly increased over time, it will become more stable.

Otherwise, if we try to meditate at the beginning for a length of time and then find we don't really make much progress and want to skip to something else, this is a lack of commitment or continuity. We keep skipping to something else, thinking: "Maybe it's worthwhile to do something else because meditation doesn't seem to really work for me" In that way, we habituate our mind to not really seeing things through. We never really fulfil what we intend to do. Even with worldly activities it is the same: it's important to have that commitment, continuity and short period of attention so that we can get some stable, firm results.

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

Having explained the eight attributes or qualities of a human life earlier, we now move onto explaining the causes of obtaining each of these eight qualities, the first being a long lifespan. That is something that we all, as mentioned previously, wish for. We would like to have a long and healthy life that is free from sickness. We need

to create the appropriate causes to obtain the result of having a long and healthy life.

But just having a long life would not be sufficient. We would also like to have a body with good features, good looks, which would contribute to our psychological well-being. Therefore, if we wish for good features and good looks in the next life, we have to create the causes now.

We can definitely see that being good looking is something that goes beyond the genes of the parents, because the same parents will have children who are not exactly alike. There may be some who are better looking and have good features, while some of the other brothers or sisters may be not so good looking. There's definitely a difference between the siblings of the same parents. This indicates that there are factors that go beyond just the genes or the physical constitution of the parents.

Why, if the parents are quite good looking, will they have children who are not so good looking? And why, if the parents may not be so good looking, will they have children who are quite good looking? It is because the appropriate causes need to have been created in the past. If the children themselves had not created the appropriate causes, one will not see the results of having good features and being good looking.

So what are the causes to obtain good features or good looks? As the teachings explain, the particular causes would be generosity – making light offerings to the holy objects and so forth, or appropriately constructing or painting holy images such as statues or paintings of the Buddhas. Also, if there are statues and so forth that need repainting, offering to do that, and if there are damaged statues or paintings of the holy images, helping to reconstruct them. Also stupas, any kind of holy objects...constructing them, repairing them, painting them – these would be causes to have good features in future lives. Also offering new clothing or fine cloths to holy objects.

One of the main causes of obtaining good looks is the practice of patience – refraining from getting angry or upset. Practising patience is one of the main causes to have good features.

We can definitely see the consequences of wrath or anger. It distorts even a seemingly good looking person. Initially they are quite good looking, but the moment they get angry or upset, their whole facial expression changes, and is not so attractive any more. Someone may seem attractive, but the moment they get angry, they can turn into something to be feared.

One cannot overestimate the benefit of patience. It is really one of the most prized qualities that one can obtain, as it contributes to so much of our well-being. Leaving aside looking attractive and having good features, which is just one of the external qualities of patience, the real quality of patience is that it contributes to our inner well-being. To the extent that we are able to develop patience, to that degree, our mind will not be disturbed. We will have a more peaceful mind. We can definitely see that those who genuinely practise patience are genuinely happy people.

Practising patience means not allowing insignificant circumstances, like small mishaps and other circumstances that normally make one upset, to get to us. We try to not allow these small insignificant situations to upset our mind, whether it be someone criticising us or things going wrong around us. If we are not able to be patient with these things, if we allow these circumstances to upset us, there would be many reasons for us to be upset most of the time, as things are bound to go wrong.

It is especially important for us to practise patience to maintain harmony in our relationships. If your friend or partner mentions something to you and you haven't developed some patience, even the slightest thing out of place that they mention would upset your mind. In return, your friend or partner will not be happy. Therefore, practising patience to the degree that you are not influenced by the normal mishaps around you will really contribute to your real inner well-being, to being really happy and content.

As with offerings and generosity towards holy objects, being generous with clothing, ornaments and so forth towards ordinary beings also becomes a cause for good looks.

We can see the relationship between creating causes for good features and giving ornaments to others when we see anyone who wears nice ornaments, earrings or necklaces that beautify their body. When we see them, it brings joy to our mind and anyone else around. When someone is well-dressed and looks nice, it brings joy to others' minds. So if one contributes to the joy of themselves and others by giving ornaments or good clothing, it will create the causes for one to have good features and to be good looking.

Further, refraining from jealousy of others, and rejoicing at others' good features and good qualities also become the cause for one to have good features.

This point about refraining from jealousy and rejoicing at others' good features is extremely important advice, as we can see the many downfalls or faults of jealousy. So many disputes and arguments arise because of jealousy; much harm is caused by jealousy. On a personal level, the moment jealousy arises in our mind, from that moment onwards we are totally engulfed by jealousy. It brings real pain to the mind and knots us up inside. We are not able to bear to see others with that jealous mind. Whereas when we rejoice over others' good fortune, whether they have good features or well-being, it will bring a real sense of joy in our mind. So we can directly see that benefit for ourselves.

Even in a family, we can see so many disputes that arise out of jealousy, with siblings or partners and so forth. When there's jealousy there, it brings so much unrest in the mind and leads to disputes. So the advice given here is to refrain from jealousy and have a real sense of rejoicing in others' wellbeing. That really brings great benefit.

Having practised rejoicing in others' good looks and refraining from jealousy, the results one achieves for this lifetime and future lifetimes is that one will enjoy well-

being and benefits, both worldly and dharma benefits. Having the full right to enjoy well-being secularly and in a dharma sense has a profound meaning – this is when we will have obtained the appropriate causes to achieve something that is rightly ours, something that will definitely come about for us, no matter what the circumstances. Even if there seem to be obstacles, it will eventually come about that we will experience a result, and we will obtain that which is rightly due to us.

We can see certain people who have that quality of always receiving what is rightly due to them. From a dharma sense, we know of certain lamas who, when engaging in a teaching, if one particular person is missing, will look out for them and ask where they are. If they are not present, the lama may even refuse to give the teaching, saying that the group will have to wait until the person arrives. This is because from the dharma side, the lama knows that this particular person has that right to receive that teaching and it should not be taken away from them; that person has the karma to obtain it. It's rightly due to them, from a dharma sense. We can see practical examples of lamas even stopping a teaching if someone is not present.

Even from a worldly sense we can see examples. For example, if a picnic was planned but a particular person was missing, the picnic might have to be cancelled or postponed because that person is not present. We hear people asking after the person and saying they will have to wait for him or her to come for the picnic or party to go ahead. Again that is because they have the right to participate in that gathering.

Having the qualities of a long life and good health plus a good complexion and good looks may not be good enough. One needs to have further qualities in order to be well-established in society. One of these qualities, as mentioned previously, is coming from a good lineage that others naturally respect because you have been born with a certain sort of status. This is something we all wish for. We would want to have a certain amount of respect from others, so our lineage is the next quality for which the causes will be explained.

The particular cause for having a perfect lineage is overcoming pride. Pride is a sense of feeling superior to others, and generating pride is one of the main obstacles to achieving a good status or lineage. Overcoming pride and making obeisance to the teachers and respecting others in every way are the causes to achieve a good lineage for oneself in the future.

The disadvantages and the faults of pride cannot be underestimated. There are many faults that arise from boastfulness and pride. Excessive pride prevents a person from further developing themselves, getting more qualities, because pride brings about a natural feeling that one need not learn from others, or refer to others for certain knowledge and so forth. Furthermore, a proud person naturally will not be appreciated in society because of their arrogance: people don't really like to associate with them. They become quite lonely because of their pride.

To overcome pride, as the teaching mentions here, one should have respect for others and not see others as one's servant. This doesn't mean that we bend over and do everything for others. It means that the attitude we must have is that of developing humility in relation to others, whether we are with others of higher or lower status, whatever social standing or background they may have. Whoever we meet, we should always maintain humility and have a genuine respect for others. That is the opposite of pride. When we have a sense of real humility in our mind, this is something that others will really appreciate and such a person becomes a friend of everyone.

Are there any questions now that we may address?

Question: Geshe-la, as a young monk training in the monastery, how did you motivate yourself to study?

Answer: It's not so different to how children would motivate themselves to go to school here and study well.

Of course, there would be circumstances where certain young monks would have a natural dharma motivation in their mind. That is prevalent in some younger monks. However, the real encouragement comes from the parents really encouraging the child to study when they are young, which is also the case here.

Perhaps what would be unique in monasteries is that the teachers take full responsibility for the young monks. The teacher clothes the young monks and feeds them, because there are some monks who join when they are very young, as in my own case, and the teachers even care for them to the extent of carrying them on their back when they have to go somewhere. That sort of real personal love and care from the teachers leaves a very good impression; it brings about a natural motivation to try to please them and to study well.

It's because of this real personal care that a teacher extends to the pupil that there's a natural strong bond. This connection is unique.

So when we remember the kindness of the teacher, it can be twofold – from the material point of view and from the dharma point of view. Materially, the teacher has taken care of all your needs, from food, clothing and so forth. From the dharma point of view, the teacher imparted their knowledge to us. This becomes a way to remember the kindness. Then of course one starts to take responsibility oneself.

However, when children grow up here, before they are mentally mature they may feel that now it's time to be independent. They want to go off on their own and don't follow their parents' advice. Then they may end up being in all sorts of trouble. Rather than being motivated to study, they might end up in all sorts of unfavourable situations. There are also cases like this within monasteries. No one is perfect, and there are also cases where certain young monks may take their independence and not listen to their teachers and end up in unfavourable situations.

In Tibet, there was a class of monks known as *dob-thops*. These monks were not inclined to do much study. On the

other hand, they served the monastery very well and some of them are really very kind people. Even though they were not studying, they nevertheless had a kind attitude and would care for others when in need. But amongst themselves, they had the attitude of being a little bit proud and would boast of their physical abilities and like to compete amongst each other.

These *dob-thops* monks had a red ribbon tied around their biceps to indicate that they were quite strong, to show off their muscles! During a football match here, I think some people also wear a cloth around their biceps. We can see similarities here, where there are people who are really into sport, and are quite good at it, and others who support the winners. Some of them can be actually very jovial, kind-hearted people. We find people who are really into sport and who can be quite kind-hearted and really help others when in need. There are certain qualities in that.

The so-called *dob-thops* monks, when they mature, leave aside that youthful way of being proud and going around with the ribbons. Later on, they become responsible monks, taking care of other younger monks. Even though they hadn't studied well and may not be able to impart direct knowledge of the studies to the younger pupils, they would take care of their personal needs and find other teachers to instruct and teach them while they themselves would spend their time doing a lot of prayers. They would spend the rest of their life, their older years, in doing a lot of prayers. Therefore we can see that there's a certain amount of real virtue that they also develop.

There are numerous cases where some so-called *dob-thops* in their old age who, after having spent their younger years taking it easy and not really studying, when they actually go through the death process, have remained in the meditative posture for many days. This indicates that they were quite unique, that inside, they were actually doing great practices.

Actually, taking care of younger pupils or monks is quite a big responsibility. I personally haven't taken that responsibility myself, but it is definitely the case where elder teachers who take care of young monks have great responsibilities.

My personal experience with young monks was when I lived in Kopan monastery, before coming to Australia. Our translator- Lobsang Yeshe, was there as well as a young monk. During that time, I remember that we had quite a number of young monks, but we didn't have that many teachers then, being a new monastery.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa were travelling quite a bit at the time. Besides Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa, there were a few other teachers, but not many who were able to take care of the needs of all the young monks. There were some western students who were there at that time, particularly a lady from New Zealand called Maurine and another American lady called Judith: actually she was known as Amala, meaning 'mother'. All the monks, even the teachers, would call her Amala. These two took care of the young monks, their daily needs, washing them and making sure that their clothes were clean and

taking care of their medical needs. I can remember that Maurine and Amala spent a lot of time taking care of the needs of the younger monks, some of them as young as 3 or 4 years old.

Later on, when the teachers noticed that it was difficult on everyone to take care of these very young ones, we had a meeting and decided that it was better not to have monks who were too young, so the acceptable age was to be 7. However, knowing that there was a general rule that young ones would not be accepted into the monastery, certain parents would approach Lama Zopa and ask if their young ones could be admitted into the monastery as young as 4 or 5. Lama Zopa seemed to agree and said: "Okay, Okay". That is how we ended up again with more young monks!

An audience member asks when this was.

Answer: 1979. I went in 1979 I think and stayed in Kopan until 1983. (*Translator continues*) You had to also use the mala sometimes to control the young ones. (*Laughter*).

Question inaudible.

Answer: The Shaolin monks? Why they practise martial arts? It must have been initially a means to maintain their physical health and so forth. It may have initiated as a physical exercise. But then it may have been misused for other things.

In fact it may not be just as physical exercise. The real martial arts is meant to develop the mind as well. Actually it was art that physically enabled you to maintain control over the mind as well. That was the main purpose initially.

There seems to be some practical benefit from these martial arts being known around the world, because apparently there are some who feel that Tibetan monks in robes must know some martial arts. When we are in India or certain remote places, some people would keep their distance from us (*laughter*), so it seems to be of some practical benefit without us having to do anything. We don't need to use any kind of weapon. It's just the appearance of knowing some martial arts that seems to keep people away!

Those who are skilled in martial arts seem to be able to use their body very efficiently without needing a weapon. For example, when they train well, it seems they can use a hand to break many bricks at one time.

I've heard that for some children who take up martial arts here, such as karate or kung fu, it helps to develop their courage, to make them brave. It seems to help if the child is quite timid. Going to martial arts makes them more resilient and brave.

Maybe we will end this session here for tonight. We can again spend a few minutes in contemplative meditation, this time sitting in a comfortable and relaxed position, we bring our mind inward, away from the distractions, and focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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