

---

## The Condensed Lam Rim

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྡན་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 November 2006

---

As usual it is good to spend some time in meditation, so we will sit in an upright and relaxed physical position. Along with the proper physical posture we should generate the right mental state of mind. Withdraw the mind from external distractions and bring it inwards to focus on the object. As we bring our mind inward on to the chosen object- in this case the breath - we maintain our focus and stabilise our mind on the breath. As the mind separates from external disturbing thoughts and distractions and focuses on the breath itself, we notice that the mind becomes settled and more subdued.

The reason this works is because we are distancing our mind from the other distractions which disturb the mind, and we are moving our focus from the normal distraction to a neutral object such as the breath. Naturally when our mind is distanced from distractions it becomes subdued and calm. From this experience we can also understand how to apply other mediation techniques, such as when the mind is completely overpowered and influenced by negative thoughts like anger. As long as the mind is under the influence of and overpowered by the negative state of anger, the mind becomes agitated and disturbed. The technique then is to distance the mind from the negative state of mind of anger and change the focus of the object whenever we get angry. The more we focus on the new object the more the mind gets involved in that. We can change the focus to thinking or meditating on love and compassion; this is the antidote for overcoming the earlier object of anger. Now the mind can work to overcome anger, and similarly we can use appropriate antidotes to overcome other delusions.

We can use our limited experience from meditation to understand how distancing the mind from a disturbing object and focusing it on a virtuous object, becomes the antidote to that negative state of mind. If the appropriate antidote is applied to any negative state of mind, we can overcome it. This brings a real sense of calmness and achievement to our mind.

There are many people who have related experiences to me where they get some sort of a real deep sense of satisfaction and deep sense of calmness from meditation, which they have never experienced in their lives. When meditation can induce an experience that nothing else has induced, then there must be a reason for that, and it is important that we understand the reason. Just quoting 'if you focus single pointedly on a virtuous object then the mind becomes subdued' is not sufficient. It has to be based on a sound reasoning so it becomes not just an assumption or just a quote but a real intellectual

understanding and a sound basis for one's experience as well. As mentioned earlier, the reason why the mind becomes subdued and settled when one meditates is because when the mind is focused on one single object then it naturally has a soothing effect on the mind. But the main reason is because when the mind, at that moment, is focused on the virtuous object of meditation it is not under the influence of a negative state of mind. It has become the opposite of a disturbing state of mind. By recognising what disturbs the mind - the negative state of mind which is distracted or deluded - then one is able to distance oneself from that. This is the main reason why the mind becomes subdued. If one can think about why the mind experiences a calm soothing effect from meditation, then it becomes really very useful for us. Experience combined with a good, sound reason becomes a very firm basis for our practise to become stable and continue.

In order to get a sound result - a stable lasting experience - from our meditation, it is crucial to have the right technique. The upright and proper meditation posture is only a very small part of the actual technique of meditation. It is just the physical aspect. The real technique lies in the proper state of mind, which is to focus one hundred per cent on the object one is meditating on. This means that whatever meditation we are doing or whatever techniques we are using, particularly in cases when we are meditating on an antidote to overcome a delusion, it is very important that we keep one hundred per cent focus in applying the actual antidote and really meditate on the antidote very clearly.

For example, the antidote for overcoming attachment is said to be meditating on the faults of the object of one's attachment. Grasping onto the object of attachment strongly within one's mind is the main thing, and then one can apply the secondary technique of meditating on the faults.

In order to overcome the attachment of the object, there should be one hundred per cent focus on the faults of the object. How can one be meditating on the faults of the object, if that very object is held dear at centre stage in one's mind? When one does not apply the technique fully, then obviously one will not be able to overcome or deal effectively with the delusion one is trying to overcome. One cannot claim that one has meditated on overcoming attachment and meditated on the faults of object of attachment if one hasn't applied the technique correctly. Achieving the result is not really possible if one has not actually applied the technique fully. So it is very important that we really understand how to apply the technique in a proper way.

Now we spend some time in meditation. Reassess our physical posture, and most importantly, set our mind in a proper way. First, bring our mind inwards and just slowly withdraw our mind from the external distractions such as thoughts or other distractions which may occur around us. We completely just withdraw ourselves from that. As we bring our mind inwards and settle into that space inside ourselves, we may experience a relief in our

---

---

mind from all the normal distractions and disturbing attitudes. Turning our mind inwardly can bring a pleasant sensation in our mind. So, initially we can remain for few moments just experiencing that.

When one begins to think that the mind is going to be distracted again, then at that point one should focus specifically on the breath and maintain one hundred percent focus on the breath - just on the natural inflow and outflow of the breath. That is how meditation becomes effective. If we can put some time and effort into familiarising our mind with meditation, then it becomes a real means to have a more relaxed and calm mind. It is worthwhile to try to find means and ways to have a relaxing and content mind. Judging from our own experiences, we can relate to the outcome and our attitudes in relation to how we feel within ourselves.

Now we look into what kind of outcome one experiences when the mind is calm and relaxed. What kind of effects does a calm mind, with no prevailing delusions, have on us? Does it give us a good attitude? What kind of outlook do we have in life? We notice that we definitely have a more positive outlook. As a result of having a good attitude in our own mind, what kind of effect does it bring to our surroundings? To those who are around you - your immediate relations, family - what kind of effect does it have on them? One will notice that a positive and happy outlook and a positive state of mind will naturally contribute to a pleasant feeling and a happy attitude where one gets along with others. And that definitely does have a good positive effect on others.

In contrast, when we find our mind is disturbed or agitated, what kind of outlook do we have towards ourselves and towards life, and what kind of effect does it have on our surroundings? We can definitely see the difference from our own experiences. We can see that if we put some effort and time towards a positive state of mind, then that effort can definitely be useful and meaningful for ourselves and others.

Now to continue with the topic from the text; the cause of the sixth attribute is perfect renown and great power. What are the causes for renown and great power? The cause for obtaining the attributes of renown and power is to first of all, making aspirational prayers to acquire various good qualities in the future. Based on the aspirational prayers, one then makes offerings to the three Jewels. Also making offerings to one's parents, the Hearers, Solitary realisers, abbots and masters and teachers. So in this way, making various offerings to a number of holy beings and who have been kind to us becomes the cause.

The seventh attribute is to be born with male features. The cause for that is to be delighted in the attributes of a male and have a lack of delight in female attributes and see their disadvantages. Stop any yearning to be reborn in woman's body, and rescue those whose male organs are to be cut off.

With our attitudes, we could actually end up being the reverse of what we want. There are males who like the attributes of females and like the qualities of females. So a

male could create the cause to be born as a female. And if there are females who like the attributes and features of males, then that will be the cause to be born as a male in the future. All of us have certain different inclinations and likings. There will be certain males who like female features, and females that like male features. There are many different varieties of our attitudes and our likes, likewise different kinds of results can be experienced.

The eighth attribute is having strength. This relates to having physical and mental strength. The cause to obtain both physical and mental strength is to help others in accomplishing things which they cannot accomplish alone. If there's a certain situation where one does not have the full capacity or ability to do that, then seek help from others and collaborate with them to help people accomplish their needs.

Giving food and drink to others becomes one of the main causes for us to obtain strength. We obviously see the benefits of giving food and drink to those who have lost strength in their body. For anyone who has lost the strength in their physical body, their mind also becomes very dull. Giving food and drink has the immediate effect and benefit of nourishing their physical body. This gives strength to the body and clarity to the mind.

Because of this practical benefit I often advise others when they have friends or relatives around who are feeling down and their mind is feeling depressed and a little weak, then it is good to take them out and give them a good meal. Take them for a walk, perhaps to a nice place. That will replenish them and give their bodies and minds more strength. We can definitely see the immediate effect of caring for others. This is a really practical way to benefit others. We don't have to look far to help people; we don't need to try and find a completely destitute impoverished being. In our immediate surroundings we can see that when people are a little bit down, where they may even neglect their own needs, such as having a good meal. We can offer help just by being a good companion and offering them a meal, take them for a walk. It is not something that they might have thought of doing themselves. Contributing towards others' physical strength and mental clarity is definitely a cause for us to gain strength.

There are further causes where the eight causes are combined and are condensed into these three main causes.

### **Questions**

*Q: Geshe-la, I have difficulty with the perception of being born as a male because in our society now, I see that there are many advantages of being born a female. Your brain matures earlier, you live longer, and only females give birth to a child. So it seems to me that there are many advantages of being a woman over being a male.*

*A: I agree that women can have a longer life. I have some reason to agree with that (laughter) and accept that it is true. If one sees the good qualities and attributes of a woman, and that is how one feels one can be effective*

---

and good, then there is nothing wrong with that. As a male now, if you see attributes of a female and wish to be reborn like that, then that can definitely be a cause as well. This attribute is not explained as a male or female being more superior to the other; it is not explained with the male being more superior to the female.

When it really comes down to what the main quality of this attribute, the name of the features here are male features. The attribute comes down to having the energy, the strength, the zeal and the energy for the practise of the dharma with least obstacles as possible. It is generally considered that things may have changed now, but generally females experience more obstacles. For example, it is much harder for a nun than a monk to go off to a remote area to do a meditation retreat, just because of the kinds of dangers involved in that. Also I feel that it seems that over time males have actually lost a lot of their attributes, even physical attributes. It seems that in general the more prominent male attributes have diminished to a certain extent. It seems that one contributing factor to a male's physical zeal and energy is the seminal fluids within the body. As the seminal fluid began to be wasted a lot, then that affects the strength of the body as well. And it seems in comparison that the female body doesn't have as much waste of seminal fluid as the male's body. In times of degeneration it seems that somehow the seminal fluid is being more wasted than in the past. Generally speaking, a woman's body has less physical strength because of the loss of blood with their periods; this can affect the physical strength of the body. However as you are doctor you may be know more about those things (laughter). There are a few doctors here, so you would know more from the medical side.

*Q: Was it mentioned somewhere about saving people from changing their sexuality?*

A: Actually that was in relation to the seven causes, which is specifically a cause to be reborn in the male body by saving a male - human or animal - whose organs were to be castrated. It seems also to relate a little bit, to old customs in old times where the monarchy would apply some sort of rules where males have to be castrated. In those circumstances if one extends help and protects that from happening, then that will be a cause to be born a male. It also seems to relate to a monarchy where a king would have many queens, and in order to protect the queens, all the male servants had to be castrated. This is not just a myth, but this sort of practise has actually happened in the past.

*Q: I was at an exhibition in Sydney last week and I saw some Buddha statues that were half female half male. What is the background of that?*

Translator: Was this an actual Buddhist exhibition you are talking about?

A: Geshe la feels these are actually not Buddhist statues. They may come from the same period of time but are non Buddhist figures. A certain belief of a particular system

which prevailed in some non Buddhist schools in the past, where there is a school or ideology which believes that having both a male organ and female features might give cause for more pleasant sensations arising in the body. So that sort of ideology depicts images of half male and half female to personify the greatest pleasure that one can have. Those ideological accounts and explanations are in textbooks that I have. But how feasible they are, whether they were actual ideologies which were held by believers during that time, in reality I am not sure. According to that historical system, then these would not be specifically Buddhist images. It might have been called a Buddhist exhibition, but it is important for us to know whether it really is entirely Buddhist art, and whether the images and so forth are authentic.

We shall again spend a few moments in contemplation, sitting in an upright relaxed position, we bring our mind inward and focusing on the sound of the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed from tape by Kim Looi  
Edit 1 by Cynthia Karena  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version  
© Tara Institute*