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# The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga  
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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Sit in a good meditation posture, and we will meditate for a little while as usual.

The self/the person/the 'I' and its consciousness always go together – they are paired up for good. One leaves the body behind at the time of death, but the mind and the self always go together.

Therefore, it is important that one has an agreeable, friendly and mellow mind as a companion for the self. If the 'I' or the person has as its companion a mellow and agreeable consciousness or mind, then the 'I' can be happy.

In order to get such a mellow and agreeable mind, one needs to subdue it. If one doesn't subdue the mind, it will not listen to what it is being told. So, one needs to subdue the mind and that's where the significance of meditation lies.

We all want happiness and don't want suffering and what gives us that happiness is a subdued mind. We engage in all our activities to attain happiness and to avoid suffering, but to achieve that aim we have to subdue the mind.

If one has a happy mind, whatever situation one is in, one is happy. However, if the mind is unhappy, even if one has many friends or a nice living situation, one still will not experience happiness. In order to experience happiness, one needs to have a happy mind. The mind needs to be stable and clear, and then it will experience happiness.

The root of one's happiness is the mind. If the mind is happy, even if one experiences external difficulties that come about through adverse conditions, one will still be mentally happy.

From experience, everyone knows that happiness is elusive while problems arise very easily. Why is that? Why is happiness so elusive? Even if one can attain happiness, why is it so transient and so easily lost? The answer lies within one's fundamental consciousness – one hasn't really worked with one's fundamental awareness. One needs to work with one's fundamental consciousness to be able to be satisfied and happy with what one has.

It's like trying to build a house on uneven ground that hasn't been properly prepared as a sound foundation. When one experiences happiness, because one hasn't really worked with one's fundamental consciousness, that happiness is elusive and easily lost. Why? Because one hasn't really prepared one's fundamental consciousness for a stable happiness. If the site for a

building is not properly prepared and there are piles of earth and sand around, no matter how good the materials for building the house, because of the lack of a good foundation, we will not be able to build a really solid house that will stand for a long time.

Likewise, why we lack happiness, despite having many conducive conditions for the attainment of happiness, is because we haven't really worked with the mind, or fundamental consciousness. To experience satisfaction and happiness from the conducive conditions we have, we need to work with the mind, to prepare the mind.

If one has a subdued and happy mind, one can experience happiness in any situation, even when facing many adverse external conditions.

If one has many conducive external conditions, they will complete one's happiness – one will have external happiness and internal happiness. But that can only happen if one has a happy mind. That's why it's important that we generate a happy mind, and for this purpose, we need to meditate.

Sit yourself in a good meditation posture and collect your thoughts, focus the mind internally and not engage with external objects. If the mind is engaging with external objects, this generates many disturbing thoughts. Through its conceptualising, the mind becomes disturbed and unstable; its power is dispersed by the many conceptual thoughts. To avoid this, instead of allowing the mind to engage with external objects, focus it internally.

Then place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, and meditate in that way, on the coming and going of the breath, for some minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

### 4.1.1.3 The way for the disciple to rely upon the spiritual friend

#### 4.1.1.3.1 Reliance through thought

#### 4.1.1.3.2 Reliance through action

We have reached the point in the Lam Rim where it explains how a student who wishes to attain liberation should rely upon the spiritual friend who can guide the student to liberation. Here, we have reliance through thought and through action.

Reliance through thought is divided into generating faith by remembering the qualities of the spiritual friend; and generating respect by remembering the kindness of the spiritual friend. We have already completed these two points. Now, we come to how one relies upon the spiritual friend through action.

It says here from 'The fifty verses on proper reliance on the spiritual friend', that one should do what pleases the teacher – this sums up how one should rely upon the spiritual friend in action.

This principle can be applied not only to one's spiritual friend but also to all one's relationships. One should always do what pleases the other person and should avoid doing those things that annoy them. This principle doesn't just apply to the spiritual friend, but to all one's

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relationships.

Engaging in actions that benefit one's partner or friend and not harming one's partner or friend is the practice of the Dharma in relationships; it's what one does as a Dharma practitioner.

To have a happy and stable relationship, one should engage in actions that benefit others. Since one has to live with others and has to interact them, if one engages in actions that benefit others, one's relationship with them will be harmonious and happy, and one will be able to live comfortably with them. By benefiting others, one's relationship with them becomes stable, confident and comfortable.

From the point of view of the teacher, what makes the teacher happy is if the disciples engage in the practice of virtue. The disciples' practice of virtue is what pleases the teacher; if, however, the disciples engage in the practice of non-virtue and negativities, that will sadden the teacher.

If one adopts the thought: 'If I engage in this action, then it will please all the Buddhas; and if I engage in that negative action, it will sadden all the Buddhas', it will greatly help one's Dharma practice. For example, as a child one had the view: 'If I do this, it will make my mother happy; if I do that, it will make her sad' and from that thought, one would engage in the action that made the mother happy. Adopting the same attitude towards the Buddhas will greatly benefit one's Dharma practice.

There are three ways of engaging in actions that please the teacher:

1. one is based on the offering of materials,
2. the next is paying respect and homage through actions of one's body and speech, and
3. the third is to act in accordance with the lama's advice, which is the main way.

Regarding the offering of materials to one's teacher, 'The 50 verses...' says that one should have the mental attitude being able to offer to the teacher objects that one is ordinarily unable to give – such as one's children, wife, husband, and so forth (*laughter*). There is not much danger that the lama will ask for (*laughter*) your wife or children or husband! But one should have the mental attitude of being able to give what one is ordinarily not able to give should the lama ask for it.

When one has this attitude, the practice of offering ordinary material offerings – food, drink, clothing, medicine, housing and so forth – becomes very easy. For example, if the teacher is very partial to sweet tea, then you offer very nice sweet tea and so forth! (*Geshe-la laughing*). Making material offerings to the teacher becomes the making of material offerings to all the Buddhas.

Secondly, we engage in actions through the 'door' of one's body that please the teacher – for example, washing one's teacher. If the teacher is old and frail, one helps the teacher to wash his body. This is similar to taking care of old or invalid people – washing them or helping them to

wash their body. Next, one might rub oil on the teacher's body and give the teacher a massage, applying oil and so on – giving a massage can be very healthy and help overcome many ailments and discomforts in the teacher's body. This is something that one can offer not only to the teacher, but more generally to old people, one's parents and so forth. Then we could apply a pleasant scents to the teacher's body. The next point is to care for or nurse the teacher when the teacher is sick. The text then says 'and so forth', which means there are many more ways through which one can engage in offering practices to the teacher.

Thirdly, one must follow the different spiritual advice that one gets from one's spiritual friend. When the teacher tells one how to practice morality and ethics, one must practice in accordance with that advice. When one is taught how to practice generosity, one must practice in accordance with that advice. When one is taught how to practice patience, one also must practice in accordance with that advice. Here, one has to engage into the practice of virtue and avoid the practice of non-virtue, because that is the teaching of the spiritual friend – to practice virtue and to avoid non-virtue.

Engaging in the virtuous practices one is taught by one's teacher is what pleases the teacher most, providing that the teacher is a fully qualified teacher – what pleases a true spiritual teacher most will be the disciple's practice of virtue.

Another way of making offerings to the teacher is to compose or sing praises to the teacher.

If a qualified student relies upon a qualified spiritual friend in such a correct manner, certain benefits will arise. One will want to know what benefits arise from relying properly upon the spiritual friend. It is important to keep in mind the benefits that one will receive by engaging in that practice. This is why the next outline in the text is the benefits of relying upon the spiritual friend. We will go into that next time. Maybe for tonight, if you have some questions, we can have a few questions.

*Question:* I have just listened to a CD of 'Prostrations to the 35 Buddhas' in which it says to take refuge in the Guru, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Could you please explain, what is the Sangha?

*Answer:* When we talk about Sangha, we refer to any person or being that has realised emptiness or selflessness directly – what we call a superior or Arya being, meaning a being or person who has realised emptiness directly. Also, a community of at least four fully ordained monks or nuns is referred to as the Sangha. Do you understand?

*Questioner again:* Are Sangha existing beings or is it like a spiritual being that has the nature of pervasiveness?

*Answer:* When we talk about Sangha, we talk about actual beings, an actual person. The Buddha is the source of the teachings, so the Buddha is the source of the Dharma, and the Sangha are those that practice the Dharma.

Also, one can use the analogy of the doctor, the medicine and the nurse for the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. If we are sick, first we need a doctor who can

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cure the sickness, then we need to have a nurse to help us take the medicine to get well. Likewise, the Buddha identifies our problems and prescribes the medicine of the Dharma, so we go for refuge in the Buddha as the teacher – the Buddha is the one who prescribes the medicine. The Dharma is the actual refuge or that which we must take in order to get better. And we look towards the Sangha for inspiration.

*Question:* Geshe-la what do you do when people have the perception of you that you're doing something that is non-virtuous, when in fact you haven't done anything that is non-virtuous?

*Answer:* The other person does not know your motivation. We may also think other people have made mistakes although they haven't, or perceive faults in them that they haven't really got. Likewise, others will sometimes also have a similar perception of us.

Maybe they say: 'You have engaged in non-virtue', but whether they actually know what non-virtue is is questionable. So, you should put them on the spot and ask them: 'What is virtue and what is non-virtue?'

*Questioner continues:* I feel as if I'm constantly defending myself and it's starting to be a pain, a real pain!

*Answer:* You should reflect upon the fact that whatever other people think of you or say to you doesn't change anything in your reality, because even if other people say that you've created non-virtue, it doesn't mean that you actually have created non-virtue.

Immediately, this brings us to the eight worldly dharmas. Two of the eight worldly dharmas are being attached to praise and having aversion to criticism. The Bodhisattva Shantideva said very clearly that whether you are praised or criticised doesn't change anything in your reality – one receives neither benefit nor harm from praise and criticism. So, when one is upset by criticism, it is a sign that one hasn't yet overcome the eight worldly dharmas.

The great Bodhisattva Shantideva said that one shouldn't behave like a small child that will start to cry when its sandcastle is demolished! In reality, our mind is like this – as soon as we receive a little bit of praise, we puff up incredibly, and if we receive a little bit of criticism, we become completely depressed and despondent. We are constantly going up and down in relation to the praise and criticism we receive, just like a small child.

Therefore, we need to become more independent internally so that we don't always become dependent on the praise of others, because in reality there is always less praise than criticism. As long as one is dependent on what other people say, one will always have more unhappiness than happiness.

Actually, the Kadampa lamas are very pleased when they are criticised. They don't like to be praised, but criticism they quite enjoy!

*Question:* My grandmother has dementia, she doesn't realise where or who she is. I am going back to Japan to stay with her for a while. How can I help her?

*Answer:* It is said to be very beneficial to recite the mantra

of Shakyamuni Buddha and Chenrezig's mantra, and also the Medicine Buddha mantra. If you can recite it so that she can hear it, say it into her ear, that is very beneficial.

Also the recitation of the mantra should be done with a good motivation, like a motivation of bodhicitta, and the motivation for your grandmother to always encounter the Buddhadharma and Buddhas in all her future lifetimes and to be reborn in the pure land of Amitabha, the pure realm of great bliss.

When you recite the mantras to her with that type of motivation, it will definitely be very beneficial.

*Questioner continues:* And Tara Praises?

*Answer:* That's also good. As well, you can recite the tenth chapter of the 'Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life' by the great Bodhisattva Shantideva. When you read the tenth chapter, in your mind pray that whatever is mentioned in that prayer may come about exactly as the great Bodhisattva Shantideva intended. This is also very beneficial.

If you go to Japan and do those things, those practices, your visit will have had great purpose.

Maybe that's enough for tonight. As was explained in the beginning, bring the mind back home, focus it internally, and then place it on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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