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# The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga  
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As usual, we can meditate for a little while on the basis of generating a good motivation for the meditation as was explained previously.

What we call meditation is single-pointed focus on one meditational object and that single-pointed focus has to be continuous – one needs to have an abiding single-pointedness for meditation.

In order to achieve this single-pointed [calm] abiding mind for meditation, one needs to overcome the wandering, scattered mind. What is the method for doing this? The method is mindfulness – a mindfulness that is well acquainted with the object of meditation.

Mindfulness is the method we use to keep the mind single-pointedly on the meditational object. But what is one supposed to do if the mind wanders away from the object? One needs to employ mental introspection, which can recognise whether the mind has wandered off or not and then bring it back to the meditational object.

I think, however, that you are all already quite aware of the way one meditates with mindfulness and introspection from our previous classes!

One also has to identify the disturbed mind that one wants to overcome with meditation – the disturbed, agitated mind that makes one unhappy. Delusions or mental afflictions are defined as those mental states that make the mental continuum agitated and lacking in peace; by definition, delusions agitate the mind when they arise. Therefore, we must identify those mental afflictions so that we can subdue and pacify them. When we do this, the mind will become very relaxed, clear, peaceful and vivid.

This should be the aim of one's meditation. If we practise meditation for any purpose other than overcoming the mental delusions and afflictions then, whatever meditation practice we do, it won't be very helpful. And, if one's meditation does not counteract the mental afflictions, one will also find it difficult to meditate – both at the outset of and during the meditation, one's focus and concentration will be disturbed by the afflictions. So, if one has this experience of losing one's focus on the meditational object, of being constantly distracted – these are signs that one hasn't pacified the delusions.

By contemplating the nature of the delusions, we should be able to clearly identify them as the enemy. We should be very clear that as long as the delusions are present in the mind, we won't experience happiness and peace. We should generate the attitude of not wanting to

remain under the control of the delusions even for one more day, thinking: 'I definitely have to pacify the delusions – my life's purpose is to overcome the delusions in my mind'.

Some of the primary mental afflictions that disturb the mind are anger, attachment, ignorance, pride, and the over-conceptualising mind. When we set out to pacify the deluded mind, we can meditate on the particular antidote that specifically counteracts that particular delusion.

For example, if the most prevalent delusion is anger, one should meditate on love and compassion, on patience. If the most prevalent delusion is attachment, one should meditate on impurity and impermanence. If one's prevalent delusion is ignorance, one should meditate on the twelve interdependent links. If one's most prevalent delusion is pride, one should meditate on the different categories of objects of knowledge. If one wants to overcome the coarse, over-conceptualising mind, one should meditate simply on the coming and going of the breath.

Each affliction has a particular antidote, and one can select the antidote in relation to the affliction one wants to overcome. One will then encounter the situation where, after having meditated on the antidote to anger, for example, and having been able to subdue one's anger somewhat, one will encounter a problem with attachment! So, one has to switch to the antidote to attachment; one will have to switch back and forth between the antidotes depending on which delusion becomes a problem.

Of course, this process of pacifying the delusions is somewhat lengthy. You will not get an immediate result after two or three months practice; perhaps even two or three years down the road, it might be difficult to say whether there has been any great result. However, if we look five or six years on, one will see some change within one's mind; if one has been able to pacify the delusions, one will experience a more happy and relaxed mind.

By experiencing the result of meditating on the different antidotes – for example, by gaining some experience of pacifying one's anger through the meditation on love and compassion – one will gain confidence in the power of the meditation on love and compassion for overcoming anger. One will feel confident that love and compassion are indeed antidotes to anger and that one can overcome one's anger with love and compassion.

Likewise if, after having pacified one's anger, one experiences, for example, a problem with attachment and switches to the meditation on impurity to reduce that attachment and is able to reduce attachment through the meditation on impurity, this will give one confidence that the meditation on impurity works for overcoming attachment.

By meditating on the different antidotes in such a way, we will gain experience in the path, and generate a valid cognition that the different Dharma methods do actually work for subduing the mind. This will enable us to generate a stable faith and conviction in the Dharma,

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arising out of our own experience. We will generate strong confidence that we can really overcome our mental problems, afflictions and delusions. It is very important that we have this type of confidence born from our own experience.

For the purpose of tonight, regardless of whether your main problem is ignorance or the over-conceptualising mind or any other affliction, we are going to meditate on the coming and going of the breath, which is the antidote for overcoming the over-conceptualising mind.

The breath is an object that is easy to meditate on and it doesn't require much thinking or reasoning when we meditate on it. Further, because it doesn't have any shape or colour, it helps to overcome the dispersed mind. Of course, one can meditate on any type of object, but if we were to select an object with a certain colour and we were attached to that colour, it would cause a type of mental excitement. However, the breath is neutral, with no colour or shape, so is a suitable meditation object for pacifying the conceptualising mind. Last but not least, I don't have to give a lot of explanation. (*Geshe-la laughing*)

Those of you who suffer from an over-conceptualising mind will feel very happy about doing this meditation. But for those of you who don't have that problem and who are quite calm, I ask your forgiveness.

For those of you who were wondering (*Geshe-la and Ven. Tenzin laughing*), there is another type of meditation that involves colours and shapes. To overcome attachment to a beautiful complexion, one can meditate on that complexion having a very unpleasant, repulsive colouring. If one is attached to someone's beautiful shape, one can meditate on – how shall I say this (*more laughter*) – the person being eaten away by worms. All these worms and maggots are all over their face, crawling out of the eyes and eating their way through the head. This helps to overcome any attachment to someone's appearance. (*General laughter*)

It is really quite effective if you are attached to the appearance of the other person to visualise their face being completely eaten by worms and maggots, drilling their way through the eyes, coming out of the mouth, and so forth. This visualisation is definitely effective in overcoming attachment to the beautiful appearance of that person. Also, if you're attached to their complexion, you could visualise blood all over them, and so forth.

But now back to this meditation on the coming and going of the breath. Sit in the meditation posture. On the basis of having seated yourself upright in the meditation posture, you have to reverse the mind from engaging with external objects – from being distracted to external objects and being dispersed to the external world – to focusing inside. You have to bring the mind back home, focusing it towards the inside. Gently withdraw the mind towards the inside so that it is completely withdrawn from external objects.

From within that space, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. The coming and going of the breath should be gentle and relaxed. The

breath should be completely unforced and one should have a vivid mental awareness of this gentle coming and going of the breath. (*Pause for meditation*)

Last year, we started with the outline (in the source text) of how to meditate and how to prepare for the meditation, which brought us to the six preparatory practices. We completed the first preparatory practice, which was the cleaning of the room, and then started the setting up of the altar.

The first preparatory practice – cleaning the meditation room – is something that you should do. In general, if one lives in a clean and tidy place, the mind is much happier.

After the cleaning the room, we have to set up the altar, which means setting up representations of the Buddha's body, speech and mind, and then setting out the offerings.

If we were to invite an important personality to our home, first we would make our home clean, neat and tidy. Then, when they came, we would want to have something we could offer them. When we prepare the dining table for a special occasion, we set out everything nicely, placing flowers on it, setting out the places nicely, the cutlery a certain way, and so forth. It is similar here.

Then, one has to set out offerings that are undefiled by disturbance or deceit – deceit arising from the cause or disturbance arising from the cause, and wrong motivation. This means, for example, if the offering substances have been attained through wrong livelihood they will not please the buddhas and bodhisattvas, so they do not become an offering. Likewise, if the offerings are set out with a false motivation or with a deceptive or wrong motivation, they won't please the buddhas and the bodhisattvas. So, the offerings should be free from those two faults of wrong cause and wrong motivation.

One example of this fault is stealing flowers to offer to the buddhas. If one thinks: 'I would like to offer some flowers to the buddhas. Over there are some nice flowers. I will just steal them so that I can offer them to the buddhas', that would be the fault of obtaining offering substances in the wrong way. Of course, once the flowers are stolen, the best way of using them is to offer them to the buddhas (*laughter*); but, even though you would have the benefit of offering the flowers, you would have first incurred the fault of stealing.

Also, one's motivation has to be pure. One shouldn't set out the offerings and make offerings in order to attain the happiness of this life – thinking of becoming wealthier or becoming more beautiful or famous or whatever. One should set out the offerings with a pure motivation – to attain the happiness of the future life or any of the other higher motivations.

The Sanskrit word for offering is 'puja' and the meaning of puja is joy or pleasure. Thus, the actual nature of the offerings is to generate joy and pleasure in the mind of the recipients of one's offering. This is the actual offering – the generation of the joy and pleasure in the minds of the recipients of the offerings. This is also why we need to

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keep the offerings pure, because if we steal the offering substances, it will not make the buddhas very happy.

The action of making the offerings overcomes the affliction of greed, and the result of making the offerings is that one will receive great material wealth.

The offerings should be nice and should also be set out beautifully. For example, if you are offering food, it should be nice and tasty and set out attractively. If it is incense or scent, it should be pleasant smelling, and so forth. The way in which we make the offerings we can do next time.

Do you have some questions?

*Question:* When you put your offerings out, for example if you put out chocolates, when should you take them off the altar?

*Answer:* Whenever you want! (*Laughter*) You can take them off any time after they are offered and you can then enjoy the chocolate or whatever was offered, but you should eat it with the thought: 'I'm eating this to get nourishment for my body so that I can work for the welfare of all sentient beings'.

After having offered food, if we just eat the food with an ordinary motivation, that wouldn't be right. So, we should eat it with the altruistic motivation that we need this nourishment in order to work for the welfare of all sentient beings and to become enlightened for the welfare of all sentient beings. You can then enjoy the chocolate.

You can also first request permission from the buddhas, asking them for the chocolate and then you can imagine that the buddhas have given you the chocolate. (*Laughter*) Otherwise, you might think: 'I have left the chocolate there for quite a few days already', and you might say to the buddhas: 'I have left the chocolate there for many days now and you still haven't eaten it, so now I'm going to eat it!'

Sometimes, if a child gives some chocolates to his or her mother and the mother still hasn't eaten them after a few days, the child will say: 'Mummy! You still haven't eaten your chocolates, so now I'm eating them myself!' (*More laughter*)

*Question:* Geshe-la, you were talking about how to prevent attachment by thinking about a person's body crawling with worms, etc., but what if that person has a nice personality and good qualities? I don't want to not be attached to that person by thinking about their negative qualities.

*Answer:* In that case, it is alright if you meditate on emptiness. I have previously given the example of Damien – if you don't look closely or critically at Damien, you will think that he looks like friendly person. But if you look closely, the friend Damien will become unfindable and disappears. That was actually a very profound instruction that I gave you at the time.

When you don't look closely, Damien just seems to be a friendly person. But then if you look more closely, there is not much friendliness to be found (*laughter*) – meaning

that when you perform the analytical process, you arrive at an absence of any type of quality. That is the meaning. So, without analysis, when you don't look critically, there seems to be just the quality of friendliness. But if you then go through the analytical process and look more closely, you will arrive at an absence of that friendliness. In fact, you arrive at the absence of any type of quality.

This counteracts the attachment to the qualities of the other person. Emptiness is really the primary antidote against all the afflictions for that reason.

And I just want to say to Damien that I have only praise for you (*laughter*), and I don't intend to put you down in any way.

So, as was explained before, focus the mind internally and place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. After having focused the mind completely internally, focus it on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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