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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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11 May 2004

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Everybody wants to have happiness and doesn't want suffering; if one can achieve the happiness that one desires and avoid the suffering that one does not desire in this life, one can say one has achieved the purpose of this life.

The happiness we desire is both mental and physical, and the suffering we don't desire is likewise both physical and mental. So, since our desired happiness is both physical and mental, we need to look after our physical health. Our physical happiness depends on our physical health, which is why we need to look after what we eat and drink, and look after our lifestyle and so forth. Since physical happiness in certain cases also depends on external conditions, it is also important that we look after our financial situation.

Both mental and physical happiness and mental and physical suffering arise through certain causes and conditions. In order to have mental happiness and physical happiness, we need to have the conducive conditions for these happinesses. If these conditions are not there and the obstructive conditions are there, we experience suffering.

For example, mental happiness is obstructed by a mind agitated by disturbing thoughts. A mind agitated by disturbing thoughts is not a happy mind, so one does not experience mental happiness. Disturbing thoughts created by the conceptualising mind can also induce physical un-wellbeing as well as mental unhappiness. But if the mind is subdued and not agitated by disturbing thoughts, one can experience mental happiness.

Looking at mental happiness from this point of view – a mind that is undisturbed by conceptualising – one can get a feeling for what real inner happiness is about. Being undisturbed by conceptual thoughts, the mind is peaceful and calm.

Mental happiness is not the happiness that springs from distraction by external objects. Sometimes it looks as if there is mental happiness to be gained from outside objects, but these outside objects are fleeting. The happiness they generate is a fleeting, superficial type of happiness – this is not the happiness I mean.

Although it looks as if there is happiness in the external object, the happiness experienced in the mind is not mental happiness. It is only a fleeting, superficial happiness given by the transitory object. Real mental happiness arises within the mind through the condition of the mind being undisturbed by conceptual thoughts.

There are situations where external objects may promise happiness, and one feels that if one engages these objects,

it will generate happiness in the mind. However, this type of happiness is dependent on the condition of the external object, and so is beyond one's control. It is unreliable and unstable. But the other type of happiness – where instead of engaging external objects with the mind, one focuses the mind inwards and stills the conceptual thoughts – is true inner happiness that does not depend on contact with the external object. Therefore, it is happiness that is under one's control.

For example, the happiness that arises through a relationship with a boyfriend or the girlfriend depends on the girlfriend and the boyfriend, and as such is beyond one's control. However, the happiness that arises through focusing the mind internally and pacifying the conceptual thoughts is a happiness that is under one's control.

In order to experience true inner happiness, one needs to subdue the mind and in order to do that, one needs to practise meditation.

The meaning of Dharma is reversing the mind from a mistaken and distorted direction and placing it on the proper and accurate path. Meditation is the process of familiarising the mind with that accurate path, with virtuous objects.

For example, anger is a distorted state of the mind. When the mind is under the control of anger, we say it is blinded by the anger. Here, the practice of Dharma would be to reverse the mind from the state of anger towards a valid state of the mind such as love and compassion, and through meditation, we would familiarise the mind with love and compassion. So, the meaning of Dharma and of meditation have the same focal point.

Therefore, the actual Dharma is not something to be found in external objects but in one's own mind.

To meditate, we need to sit upright, because when we sit upright the channels in our body will be straight, which facilitates the coming and going of the psychic energies in these channels; this facilitates having a clear and stable meditation.

Next, you have to focus the mind internally to stop engaging external objects, and collect it internally in a gentle manner. After having totally focused the mind internally, you can leave it in this space without thought for a little while. Then, you place it single pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, again in a very gentle manner, but with a vivid focus. You let the mind become one with the breathing, so that it is single-pointedly focused on the breathing. Then, by placing it gently on the coming and going of the breath, it provides a specific type of happiness. We can do that for a few minutes. *(Pause for meditation)*

I think it would be good for you to meditate like this daily. It is not necessary to spend a lot of time, but to practise a little bit of meditation.

You can also adjust the meditation that you do according to the specific disturbing state that you want to counteract. By analysing your mind, you can recognise

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which mental disturbing mental state is giving you unhappiness. Then you can choose the appropriate meditation that is the antidote to that specific disturbing mental state. By doing this, one can counteract one's disturbing mental states, and one will generate faith and conviction in the meditation. One will start to see the qualities of practising meditation.

As long as we don't practise meditation, or don't practise it properly, it might be difficult for us to see these qualities.

#### **4.2.1 Exhorting the disciple to take the essence of this basis with endowments**

##### **4.2.1.2 Reflecting on their great importance**

Last time, we said that there are four points to contemplate in order to take the essence of this life.

*First*, we need to reflect on the *necessity* of practising the Dharma. All sentient beings desire happiness and do not desire suffering, and the holy Dharma is that which eliminates suffering and gives happiness. From this springs the necessity to practise the Dharma. It is similar to we were talking about earlier.

*Secondly*, one has to reflect on the point that *one is able to practise the Dharma purely*, because even if one recognises the necessity for practising the Dharma, one might doubt that one is able to practise the Dharma. Although one might see the necessity for practising the Dharma, one might think: 'I'm not able to practise the Dharma purely'.

Therefore, one needs to reflect upon the fact that one is able to practise the Dharma purely. Here, we can reflect upon the conducive external and internal conditions for practising the Dharma we have; the conducive external condition of a virtuous friend, a spiritual teacher; and the inner conditions of having the interest, the strength of mind; having Buddha nature and so forth.

*Thirdly*, after having recognised that we need to practise the Dharma and that we can practise the Dharma purely, we need to recognise that we *must practise the Dharma in this life*. If one doesn't practise the Dharma in this life and procrastinates, thinking: 'I can practise the Dharma in some future life', that might be very difficult, because a precious human rebirth with the conducive conditions for practising the Dharma comes about only once – it is not something that comes about repeatedly. One cannot rely on having this same opportunity again in a future life. In this way, one stops the procrastinating laziness that thinks: 'I can practise in some future life. I don't have to do it immediately'.

*Fourthly*, one needs recognise that *one must practise the Dharma immediately*, right now. This overcomes the procrastinating laziness that thinks: 'I can practise the Dharma next year or next month or next week'. One recognises the necessity to practise the Dharma right away, which arises from the indefiniteness of the time of death. While on the one hand death is definite, on the other hand, the time of death is uncertain. Therefore, we must practise the Dharma right now.

This can be summed up in three points: one needs to practise the Dharma; one can practise the Dharma; and

one needs to practise the Dharma quickly.

We need to contemplate these different points of the precious human rebirth again and again – identifying the precious human rebirth; the eight freedoms and the ten endowments; the great meaning of this rebirth from a temporary and from an ultimate point of view; its great rarity and so forth.

For tonight, do you have a question?

*Question: Geshe-la, my cat died the other day, and I'm not sure what to do with his body at this stage, whether or not to bury him and say prayers. I've already said some prayers for him. I've put him in front of my altar at home. I'm not sure whether that's correct or not, but I'm going to bury him after I get home tonight. Have you got any advice for me that will help him along to his next life?*

*Answer:* You need to recite the Chenrezig mantra, the Shakyamuni Buddha mantra, and the mantra of the Medicine Buddha over the body of the cat, or the carcass of the cat. Although it has already died, it will still benefit the cat.

And if possible, you could make the prayer for rebirth in the pure realm of great bliss by Lama Tsong Khapa, if you can get hold of that prayer. Also you can do your own prayers, praying that the cat will have a higher rebirth, as a human or god, and will meet all the internal and external conditions for Dharma practice – that it will meet Dharma and a virtuous teacher, and will be free from all obscurations to Dharma practice and so forth. And that it may quickly become enlightened.

Maybe the cat is already reborn in the realm of great bliss, in the pure realm of great bliss and is now looking down, looking at you thinking: 'Ah, there's my previous owner!' (*laughter*)

*Question: Geshe-la, why is it so difficult to eradicate an angry mind?*

*Answer:* To eradicate anger from the root is difficult, because you need to overcome self-grasping.

You can check up on yourself when you are very angry. At that time, there is very strong grasping at the self. When there's such strong self-grasping, if one sees something pleasing, one will generate strong attachment; if one sees something undesirable, one will generate strong aversion. When there's less self-grasping, there's also less attachment and anger.

For example, if one is insulted by another person, there is this strong sense of a self that is being harmed and that is being insulted by the words of the other person. This sense of self comes about because of self-grasping. From that arises the strong need to protect the self, because one has this very great sense of self.

To counteract anger, it is also useful to contemplate its disadvantages and faults.

*Question: What sort of meditation can one engage in to help one overcome attachment towards a person?*

*Answer:* There is a meditation on impurity, where one meditates on the impurity of the human body, because even though one is attached to the other person, in most

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cases what one is actually attached to is the body of the other person.

To counteract the desire for the body of the other person, one needs to meditate on the impurity of the body. Sometimes people find it difficult to believe that the body of the other person could contain any impurity! But it is also sufficient to meditate on the impurity of one's own body, analysing the internal nature of one's body, starting from the tips of one's toes, going up through the legs, through one's body up to one's crown, and then the same in return, analysing all the different organs and so forth that are in the body. In such a way, one will counteract the attachment.

Shantideva advised that if a person laments that they cannot abandon attachment, just show that person a body that has been cut open. Attachment goes away very quickly!

*Response from same student: It's not a sexual relationship, but the relationship with my father. I am always trying to make him happy. Sorry for the misunderstanding!*

*Answer:* What would be wrong with that? Probably your father is giving you advice out of concern for your wellbeing. You're probably quite safe as long as you follow the advice of your father.

*Student's response: But he told me not to come here tonight! (laughter)*

*Answer:* Here you have to be skilful because of course your parents may have a concern that you might wasting your time or worse. This is a common situation. However, if you are skilful, over time the parents usually recognise that their child has actually become happier after coming to Tara Institute for some time. By observing the benefit it has for their child, usually they change their mind sooner or later, so you have to be skilful.

Sometimes, also it is not necessarily a dislike of religion that will motivate your parents to say: 'Don't go', but because they need some company. They say: 'Don't go to the centre. I need somebody to watch the movie with me'. This can also happen with ones partner.

This kind of situation can be difficult where there are demands made on one's time by one's parents or by one's partner, saying that they need company to go here or there. But it doesn't mean that they are actually against the religion per se. It's just that they need some company.

As was said in the beginning, turn the mind inwards and place it on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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