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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga  
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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Seat yourself comfortably in a good posture. But if one does not change one's mind then sitting in a good posture will be meaningless. If one leaves the mind under the control of disturbing thoughts and negative mental states one will not receive any benefit. The meaning of meditation is to change the mind and to improve the mind. As long as the mind is under the control of negative thoughts and harmful thoughts arise without control one will experience suffering. What one needs to do is improve the mind and generate positive and good mental states.

If the mind is under the control of unsuitable mental states one does not experience any happiness. The mind becomes enclosed by unsuitable mental states and regardless of what the person does there is no experience of happiness. This is something that can happen to anybody and probably everybody has some experience of this. One needs to free the mind from the control of these unsuitable mental states and generate positive and virtuous mental states in order to be able to experience happiness. If one keeps as the minimum purpose of one's meditation to free the mind from unsuitable mental states then, through continual practise over time, one will experience an improvement in one's mind.

The different types of thought that are generated in the mind have a very great power to disturb the mind. Quite often one first of all experiences external difficulties but then, through the internal way of thinking, through the different thoughts that are generated, one disturbs the mind even further, much more than the external difficulty could ever do. It becomes really important to be able to pacify these disturbing thoughts. Sometimes they even have the power to disturb the mind without any external condition present. Even though there is no external condition there is a disturbance in the mind that arises from the conceptualising mind. To be able to overcome this is very important.

Through one's practice one can gain experience of how the mind becomes clearer if one is able to keep it focused on a virtuous object. If one can gain this personal experience from one's meditation practice it will also greatly increase one's faith and conviction.

So first of all please seat yourself comfortably in a correct meditation posture and then turn the mind inwards. Collect the mind inwards recalling it from external objects and focus the mind completely inwards. After you have focussed the mind completely inwards keep it in that thoughtless stage for a little while and then, when you find that the mind is trying to escape to the outside, place it single pointedly on the coming and going of the

breath. Place the mind single pointedly on the coming and going of the breath letting it enter the breathing. We can meditate on that for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

I think you should practice this meditation on a daily basis. In order to gain some benefit from meditation practice one needs to practice it over a long period of time on a regular basis. One will not gain the benefit of meditation by just meditating for a few times, two or three times, or even for three years. It needs to be for a long period of time because the mental continuum has been under the control of mental afflictions for a long time and is therefore very strongly filled with different types of mental afflictions. It takes a very long time to purify the continuum from those afflictions and to get a grip on one's mind.

The great Lama Tsong Khapa said, 'If one has a great fruit that is sour it will not become edible by just sprinkling a little bit of sugar here and there. One needs to cover the whole thing with sugar by putting a little bit here and a little bit there again and again. Slowly the whole surface is covered with sugar and then one can eat it.' The point is that one needs to practice sincerely for a long period of time and one should not have the attitude, 'Oh, I have meditated for three years and maybe I get some benefit while I'm in meditation, but in general the afflictions arise again.' One should not have this type of attitude. One needs to be aware that one needs to persist for a long time and one needs to investigate the causes for unhappiness in one's mind. One needs to identify the disturbing mental states and counteract them in a gentle manner. By persisting in this way over a long period of time one will gain the benefit.

The success of one's practice is directly related to one's persistence and effort. This actually applies to any type of activity. Being successful will always be related to one's persistence, one's endurance and one's effort.

### 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

###### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.1 Generating the aspiration for happiness in the future life

###### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.1.1 Remembering death, becoming aware that one is not going to remain for a long time

###### 4.2.2.1.1.1.1.1.1 First one contemplates the faults of not meditating on remembering death

Last time we started talking about the disadvantages of not remembering death. We said that the first disadvantage of not being mindful of death is that thoughts of dharma practice will not enter one's mind. One will not remember the dharma at all. The second disadvantage is that even though one might remember the dharma if one is not mindful of death one will not start to practice.

If one is not mindful of death then, even though one

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might listen to dharma teachings and might remember the dharma teachings, one will not actually engage in dharma practice. When the mind is overcome with concern for this life one does not remember dharma practice. By remembering death one becomes aware of the future life and if one has an awareness of the future life the mind is not singularly fixed on this life. But if there is no awareness of death the mind becomes fixated on this life and it becomes very difficult to practice the dharma. And even if one practices the Dharma it will not be pure. Even if one engages in activities that look like dharma practice, such as doing a retreat or engaging in dharma study, thoughts such as, 'Oh, by this study I will become a great renowned scholar' or 'Through my meditation practice I will become a renowned meditator', will enter one's mind. Then one will become upset if one does not become a renowned meditator or one will be happy if one is a renowned meditator. This is a sign that concern for this life has entered the dharma practice. One's practice will not be pure.

To avoid one's practice being carried away by worldly concern one needs to be mindful of death. If one has the motivation, 'I'm doing this dharma practice in order to purify my mind to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings' and one engages in dharma practice on that basis then one has a pure dharma practice and some seeds of bodhicitta are also placed in one's mind. But if one's mind becomes overcome by a worldly concern then, even though one engages in dharma practices or what looks like dharma practice to the outside, it will be very difficult to avoid rebirth in the lower realms.

Further, if one does not remember death and impermanence one's mind will be controlled by procrastinating laziness. Even though one recognises the importance of practising the dharma one thinks, "Oh, I will practice the dharma but not just right now. First I will have a nice sleep or watch a good movie (or any other type of meaningless activity) have a nice meal and enjoy my coffee and tea." If one does not remember death and impermanence one always finds something that is more important than dharma practice just now. In this way one procrastinates about one's dharma practice more and more. Those three things; sleep, different types of meaningless activities and eating food and drink, are the three main objects for which one procrastinate in one's dharma practice.

If one does not remember death and impermanence then, through the force of self grasping, attachment and anger will be generated. If one does not remember death and impermanence one has a very strong belief in the permanence of one's life force and one has a very strong belief that one has a very long life ahead of one and there is lots of time. This creates an opportunity for the mind to generate attachment to gain, attachment to praise and so forth. One generates attachment for the different things of this life and then one generates very strong anger towards anything that would form an obstacle to one being able to obtain the different things that one desires. Regardless of whether they actually obstruct the

obtaining of these desires or not one generates anger for these different things when they are perceived as obstacles.

This very clearly explains everybody's day-to-day experience. Attachment is generated for that which one perceives as giving happiness and anger is generated towards that which one perceives as harmful. Happiness usually falls into the category of self. One generates attachment for that which one puts into the category of self and anger towards that which one puts into the category of other, which one perceives as harmful.

One does not perceive the faults of attachment and anger because of ignorance. Ignorance is at the basis of these two but then because of ignorance one also does not perceive the faults of attachment and anger. Also because of ignorance one generates pride if everything is going well and one generates jealousy if one perceives somebody is having more success than oneself. One generates pride with regards to those that have lesser success. In this way one's three doors of body, speech and mind fall completely under the control of harmful mental states and one engages in the 10 harmful actions of body, speech and mind.

By one's continuum becoming consumed in this way by different harmful mental states and different harmful mental actions one goes from one day to the next creating different types of non-virtuous actions of body speech and mind. The mind being overcome in such a way also makes it very difficult for the nectar of the dharma to take hold in one's mind. It cuts off the root of the nectar of dharma in one's mind if one does not take care and lets one's continuum be overcome in such a manner. This will lead to rebirth in the lower realms as is explained in the text below.

This is a disadvantage that happens if one is not mindful of death and impermanence. If one is not mindful of death and impermanence one has a conviction in one's mind that one is somehow immutable and has a very long lifespan. One has a strong belief in one's longevity and that opens the door in one's mind to all types of harmful emotions because one always feels there is plenty of time. One does not see the proximity of one's death and does not worry about what is beyond. Why? Because one does not remember death and impermanence. By remembering death and impermanence one can counteract all these different problems.

The great Aryadeva said in his book "The 400 Stanzas" that one does not have power over the three realms. It is the lord of death that has power over the three realms and one never knows when the Lord of death is going to strike. Therefore there is nothing more unsuitable than to waste one's time with resting, sleeping and so forth. The great bodhisattva Shantideva said that if one does not know that one has to go and leave everything behind one will, in relation to friends and enemies, accumulate a great deal of negativity. One has to go sooner or later and leave everything behind apart from one's karma. If one is not aware of this then one will spend one's time creating

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different types of negative karmas in relation to friends and enemies.

These are the different types of faults that occur if one does not remember death and impermanence. Next time we can do the next outline on the benefits of remembering death and impermanence.

*Question: What is the karma of suicide?*

The question was in regards to the karma of suicide and the karmic effects of suicide in the next life. We have said before that when one commits suicide it is not possible that one experiences the complete action of killing. One does not create the full karma of killing. In order to accumulate the full karma of killing the person that is being killed has to die before oneself. If one commits suicide that is not possible. Apart from that all the other karmic factors are complete. But if one commits suicide it is less negative karma than killing somebody else.

*Question: Geshe-la, understanding that when somebody ceases to exist the continuum moves on to a womb before rebirth, I am having some difficulty understanding that that is not a permanent reoccurrence and therefore not inherently existing. I don't see where the continuum finishes.*

The mental continuum continues from life to life as an impermanent entity changing moment by moment and the different karmas that are accumulated in this life, such as the different virtuous karmas and non-virtuous karmas, place a karmic potential on the mental continuum immediately after their accumulation. These karmic potentials go on the continuum from life to life.

To be impermanent does not mean that one ceases to exist altogether. It means that one is changing momentarily. For example the person who came into the gumpa is gone. That person is gone but one is still sitting there so it is not as if one ceased to exist. The person that existed at twelve o'clock is gone by the time it is one o'clock. But that doesn't mean that the person became nonexistent altogether. The person changed momentarily. That is the meditation on subtle impermanence and it is a very good to meditate on the momentariness of one's mental continuum. To meditate about how one changes from moment to moment is an important meditation.

The karma that is placed on the mental continuum is, in a way, like a photographic negative. After one takes a photograph, in the by now probably antiquated way with a film, one will not get the actual picture until it is developed. Until the different causes and conditions are met the picture will only exist in the form of potential. It is similar with the karma that is placed on the mental continuum.

It's important that you practice being a good person and that you practice being a happy person. It is very important to be happy and not to worry too much. The less worries one has the happier one is. Quite often people are quite happy when they don't have a lot of money but when they come into money the worry and unhappiness starts. If one is not worried, if one can remain unworried regardless of whether one has money or not, one is happy regardless. This shows that when

worries are generated in the mind one becomes unhappy. It is important to be happy and not to worry too much and to practice being a happy person.

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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