
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Sit in a good posture and generate a good motivation. Whether one's actions become good actions or harmful usually depends on whether the motivation is a good or harmful one.

The motivation with which we meditate determines the effect of our meditation. If we meditate with the motivation of wanting to have some immediate mental relaxation and peace, that is the result we will achieve. If we meditate to have happiness in this life, then that is the result we will achieve. If we meditate to become an altruistic person and generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment, then that will be the result that we will achieve from our meditation. So, the fruit of our meditation depends very much on the motivation with which we meditate.

If we think about our relationship with others, we have to recognise that others are very kind to us. If we tried to measure the kindness shown to us by others, it would be very difficult to measure. Basically, the good life that we live is due to the kindness of others; it is due to the kindness of others that we can experience happiness in this life. So, we need to meditate on love and compassion for others, regardless of whether they are our friends or enemies. Even if they are our enemies, we need to meditate on love and compassion for others.

Upon recognising the kindness of others we reflect on how they lack happiness and experience suffering. Therefore we then wish them to have the happiness they lack, and to be free of the suffering they experience. When we recognise this, we can then see the need to generate love and compassion for our enemies, because even they, like ourselves, do not wish for suffering and want to experience happiness. When they experience suffering, they suffer exactly the same as we do, and if they are separated from happiness, they experience the same lack of happiness that we feel. Of course, this also applies to our friends, but we need to meditate on love and compassion for our enemies as well.

We can recognise that when we lack love and compassion, our suffering increases correspondingly, and that the more love and compassion we have, the happier, clearer and more balanced our mind will be. We can see very clearly this relationship between love and compassion and mental happiness, clarity, peace and balance. Conversely, when we lack love and compassion, we experience sadness, suffering, mental imbalance and so forth.

We can directly observe that if there is a lessening of love and compassion or a lack of love and compassion in our mind, it becomes dark and quite often vicious and

harmful. In the context of our relationships with others, we can experience how a lack of love and compassion destroys the harmony in our relationships with others; a lack of love and compassion brings disharmony into the relationship. Therefore it is important that we specifically practise love and compassion for those with whom we live and work together.

It is important that we practise love and compassion in our relationships with others. Of course, our relationships are usually partially based on attachment, but I always say at least try to have a greater emphasis on love and compassion than on attachment, because quite often the nature of the relationship will change, and the attachment will go away. But if the relationship is based more on love and compassion then just because attachment goes away it does not mean that the relationship will break up. If a relationship is purely based on attachment, when the attachment subsides, one will feel that the happiness of the relationship has completely gone, because it was completely based on attachment. However, if a relationship is more based on love and compassion, when the attachment subsides, it will not become a reason for the happiness of the relationship to end.

In accordance with the immeasurable thoughts of love and compassion – wishing all sentient beings to have all happiness and wishing all sentient beings to be free from all suffering – we should meditate very strongly on the motivation of wanting to free all sentient beings from even the slightest suffering, and wanting to establish sentient beings in the most perfect happiness. On the basis of these strong altruistic thoughts we generate the mind of enlightenment, recognising that we need to become a fully enlightened Buddha in order to achieve this aim, and thinking: “In order to establish all sentient beings in perfect happiness and freedom from all their suffering, I’m going to attain the state of a completely enlightened being”. If we meditate with this motivation, our meditation will become very effective. We need to train one’s mind in this motivation, starting out from where we are at the moment, and then slowly, slowly increasing this motivation.

The meaning of meditation is to familiarise the mind with a virtuous object. To lessen the disturbing thoughts, here we meditate on the coming and going of the breath, so as to lessen the conceptualising mind. Initially you focus the mind internally, letting go of external objects and not engaging them. Then, after you have focused the mind internally, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate on the breathing for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*).

You should always be mindful of being loving and compassionate. You should regard your love and compassion as the root of your practice, and protect it as you would protect a precious jewel. You should always be loving and compassionate, regardless of your activities, whether walking, sitting, eating and so forth.

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

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.1.1.4 The way of meditating on remembering death

We were talking about the first root – that death is definite. This is supported by three reasons. The first reason is that, regardless of place, birth and so forth, one has to die. The second reason is that one's lifespan is constantly running out, and we cannot add to our lifespan.

We cannot add any life force to that which we have. Even though one's life force is running out continuously, one cannot add any more to it. People here who were young once will one day find that they are old. When they started coming to classes they were young, but then all at once an old person is coming to class. That's because young people slowly, slowly become old. Most of you are still quite young, but once you reach 60 or 70, it will be different.

The sufferings of old age creep up on one slowly and gradually. If a young person were transferred into the state of an old person overnight, they would have a great shock, because old people have many problems and sufferings. If a young person were to be exposed to that all at once, it would be quite a shock! In fact, when young people look at old people, they often can't help but wonder what all the fuss is about, and what the old person is complaining of – back pain, this pain, that ailment, etc. The young person may think: "Is he or she just making it up? Can it really be so terrible?" The young person does not have the experience. But then, when one gets older oneself, one gets the experience!

Generally one can say that as a human being one is not likely to live past 100. Of course there are cases where people live to over 100, but they are not the majority. We should not deceive ourselves and should not take false comfort in the thought: "It's possible that I will live to one hundred and that I reach one hundred will not happen for quite some time". That is mistaken because one's life force is running out continuously. One's life force is running out year by year, month by month, week by week, and day by day. It is running out in the morning and in the evening; there is no time in which one's life force is not running out. For example, even if a child is born with the karma to live 100 years, by the time it is born, it has less than 100 years left to live. So time is never static, and one's life force is running out continuously.

We cannot add to our lifespan. As it says in *An Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, there is no time during the day or during the night when one's life force is not running out continuously, so how can one doubt that one will have to die?

We draw inevitably closer to death without interruption in the same way that water flowing down a waterfall does not break half way for a rest, but flows down in a straight line from the top to the bottom. As we are falling, we might not necessarily be sick or experience any great physical suffering, but we would not feel very comfortable! When someone is being led to their execution, they may not necessarily experience any great physical suffering or sickness, but they would also not feel particularly happy because they are sure they are going to die. That is our situation – like a person being led inevitably to their execution without hope for a reprieve.

Our life force is running out continuously like a piece of cloth being woven strand by strand. In the end, after many strands are woven together, they make the whole cloth. Similarly, one's life force is running out continuously, bit by bit. In such a way, we have to contemplate how we are inevitably drawing closer to death at every moment. This contemplation will not be effective if it is only done occasionally, but it is something we need to contemplate continually..

At the end of one's life, one is taken by the lord of death. The lord of death is not an actual person that takes away one's life, but refers to the actual parting of the consciousness from one's body, to the actual death. Not only does one have to go to the next life when one is taken by the lord of death, but while one is in this life one is continuously going towards one's death.

The next point is the third reason – that at the time of death there will be no extra time for the practice of Dharma. From the point of view of a person living to 100 years one can say that the first 10 years are spent without any thought of Dharma practice, because as a child, the thought of Dharma practice does not enter one's mind. During the last 20 years of that life, one is not able to practise the Dharma because once one reaches eighty the body has become too weak and so forth. As for the time in between, half already goes to sleep, and during the other half one only practises the Dharma intermittently, from time to time, in between eating, going for walks and so forth. So the thought that: "I'm quite strong, and therefore I have lots of time to practise the Dharma" is very deceptive, because if one looks at it from an overall point of view, the time available to practise the Dharma goes very quickly.

When the time to die comes, all the happiness that one experienced in this life will be just like a dream, without any meaning or essence. Therefore, one should make the determination not to let one's mind be preoccupied with such happiness, but to practise the Dharma.

So, we have the first root supported by three reasons. The decision we have to make at the end of this is that: "I definitely have to practise the Dharma". This decision that one will definitely practise the Dharma overcomes any doubt about whether or not one should practise the Dharma. One may think: "How important is it really for me to practise the Dharma? Shall I practise the Dharma?. However, with this decision: "I definitely have to practise

the Dharma”, one overcomes this ambivalence.

We need to make the decision that we definitely need to practise the Dharma. This means that we definitely need to train the mind in mental states that are free from attachment and anger. At the end of one’s life, all the perfections of this life will be just a mere memory; all one’s friends, possessions and even one’s body will just be a mere memory. This does not mean that we have to throw out all of our possessions or stop having friends – that is not what I mean. Rather, it means that we need to give up our attachment to these things, and that we need to also give up anger. These things have to be considered slowly and continuously

By training the mind in mental states that are free from attachment and anger, one practises the Dharma. Then one attains mental pliancy – the mind becomes very serviceable – and in such a way one will have rescued oneself. The Dharma is a refuge. How is the Dharma a refuge? By generating the Dharma in one’s mind. Being rescued by the Dharma does not mean that somebody comes and takes us by the hand and guides us. That is not the meaning. The meaning is that we have to generate the Dharma in our mind and through that we will be rescued.

We can finish here for tonight. Turn the mind inwards, focus it internally, and then place it single-pointedly on the mantra of the Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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