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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

24 August 2005

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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Sit comfortably in a good position. As we have said, we meditate to increase and stabilise the positive, good mind. Usually, the mind is like a thin piece of paper blown here and there by the winds of the different conceptual thoughts. However, by training the mind in single-pointed meditation on one object, we can stabilise it up to the point where it becomes completely immovable by disturbing thoughts, just like Mount Meru.

Since the different disturbing thoughts arise most often in relation to external objects, we now focus the mind internally, not engaging external objects – although it is also possible for conceptual thoughts to arise in relation to internal objects. When the mind is abiding in this internal space, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. This placement of the mind on the coming and going of the breath should be done gently and slowly, but at the same time it has to be vivid. If one does not place the mind vividly on the coming and going of the breath, the mind ends up in some kind of limbo, not properly focused on the object of the breathing but partly engaging external objects. To avoid this, one gently but vividly places the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that way for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

That's maybe enough. I woke you up from your meditative equipoise! It's important to meditate regularly, because in the same way that a person needs boundaries for what to do and what not to do, the mind also needs boundaries. If we don't give the mind boundaries, it will go wild.

The purpose of meditation is to make the mind a good mind, a softer and happier mind. By generating a good mind, one will become a good person who will be liked by others. A good-natured person will always be well-liked by others and enjoy company and so forth. A person who is the opposite – harmful, unhappy and with a vicious and selfish mind – will generally be disliked by others, even to the point where others actually become the enemy of such a person. It is important to know this difference, and the importance of generating a good mind.

Through meditation, we can utilise the power of the mind. If we are not aware of the power of the mind, the mind will usually be completely fixated on external objects in its search for happiness; we will place all our hopes for happiness in external living conditions, wealth and friends. But if we are honest with ourselves, these three external causes for happiness – wealth, external environment and friends – are not without their difficulties. Everybody engages in difficulties to earn

wealth; there is nobody that does not experienced difficulties with friends; and there are always difficulties associated with getting and maintaining a nice living place.

If one is not aware of the power of the mind, it will become obsessed with these external objects, which are not really able to provide proper happiness. Then, one's situation will become very difficult. Therefore, especially for young students, it is important from a young age to be aware of the shortcomings of these external objects, and to practise meditation in order to utilise the potential of the mind and attain true inner happiness, which can be complemented by those external factors.

### 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 have now completed the first step in the death and impermanence meditation, which consists of the root – that death is definite – the three supporting reasons, and the consequent decision that one definitely needs to practice the Dharma.

Now comes the second root, which is that while death is definite, the time of death is indefinite.

When we do the meditation and arrive at the decision that we definitely need to practice the Dharma, this means training the mind in good mental states that are free from attachment and anger. If we generate mental states that are free from attachment and anger, we will definitely experience mental happiness. By generating pure and good mental states, our actions of body speech and mind will follow suit and will also become pure actions. From these, only a positive result can occur. So, as a practitioner one needs to ask oneself, what is the root of all the different Dharma practices, what is the root of good actions of the body speech and mind?

The root of Dharma practice is the two thoughts: “I will benefit others as much as I can” and “I will abstain from harming others”. These two thoughts form the basis of one's Dharma practice.

Of course, it may be easy to generate these thoughts if one is alone, but generally if the mind is untrained and one meets adverse conditions, it is very difficult to have these two thoughts or to translate them into practice. So, one needs to train the mind repeatedly in these two thoughts through meditation – sitting down in a relaxed manner without greed or grasping to develop and foster these two thoughts so that they become stronger and stronger. This is the root of all of one's Dharma practice. It is also the root of purifying all one's actions of body, speech and mind.

Very few people will reach the age of 100 and the age at

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which most of us will pass away is indefinite. So, after having ascertained [the first root] that one will definitely die, the next root that one needs to ascertain is that the time of one's death is indefinite. It is important that one generates a very strong conviction in this. If the time of death were definite, we could make a definite plan – "This is the time when I'll eat, this is the time when I'll go to work, this is the time when I'll socialise with my friends, and this is the time when I'll engage in Dharma practice" – but it's difficult to plan like this, because we are unsure of when we will die.

By generating the expectation that one will die this very day, one will not procrastinate and leave one's Dharma practice for a later time in one's life. When we recognise this, we realise the need to start Dharma practice immediately, not only on this very day, but continuously after that.

So, the time of one's death is indefinite and being young is no protection from death. It is no great secret that young people die. Often a young person may think: "My parents are quite old and are probably soon going to pass away", but then it is the child who will die first. Also, to be healthy is no protection. There are plenty of completely healthy people who die suddenly.

**This root – that the time of death is indefinite** – is supported by three reasons. The first reason is that the lifespan of beings on the earth is indefinite. There is no guaranteed number of years that we can expect to live. It is generally difficult to find somebody who has lived past the age of 100; it is more common for people to pass away before they reach 100.

While there is a general perception that our life expectancy is increasing, actually it is decreasing. According to the Abhidharma, after the creation of the universe, the life expectancy was many hundreds of years – in fact, it talks about many thousands of years. Now, because we are in the age of degeneration, our life expectancy is gradually decreasing. The Abhidharma explains that our life expectancy will decrease further until human beings will live for only 10 years.

Also, if we analyse our situation, we will find there are many conditions for death and fewer conditions that support life. From the point of view of external elements, many people die because of the external forces of water, earth, fire and wind. They can also die due to a strong imbalance of the elements, causing the person to pass away.

Then also there are many other conditions for death. One might feel fortunate to live in a nice house, but then the house collapses and one gets buried in the rubble. It is obvious that the different conditions for death are all around us, all the time. And, while there are many conditions for death, very few conditions are conducive to life. It was just in the news that people got buried in a building that collapsed. Often, even conditions that ordinarily support life can cause death. For example, we can die from food that ordinarily supports life because it goes down the wrong way into our airway.

We can also think about the dangers of being in traffic; there is the risk that we will not be able to leave our car

alive. If we get into a car, we have to be willing to risk our life, because we cannot be sure of what will happen. If we are driving, we might be distracted for a moment and cause an accident, even though we may have been perfectly fine when we started out. Or our driver might have a momentary lapse of mindfulness, and that is too often all it takes. Also, we have no control over other drivers. It just needs one distracted driver to cause an accident involving others. This is easily observable. So, there are many conditions for death.

Even if we feel strong, our body is very fragile. It doesn't take much to kill a human being – for example, being pricked with a tiny amount of poison. The amount may be insignificant compared to the mass of the human body, but this tiny amount of poison can kill a human being. We only need to touch an electricity outlet and we can die. Also, if we eat the wrong food, we can die. So, the human body is as fragile as a water bubble.

After having thought about these three reasons, we need to arrive at the decision that we need to practice the Dharma right now.

By thinking about these three reasons, we become afraid and apprehensive thinking: "If I don't start practicing Dharma right now, it is uncertain when there will be time". If we don't make use of our able body and sound mind now, it is uncertain that we will be able to make up and practice some Dharma later, when we may have great regret but find that the mind has become feeble and the body has become weak.

Meditating on the second root of the death and impermanence meditation will help us overcome the laziness of procrastination, where one thinks: "I will do it, but not just right now, when I have to finish other things first. I will do it tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or some sometime later". The Buddha said that a person with laziness will not come to possess the Dharmakaya, the enlightened mind. Why? Because they will always procrastinate and when they decide to practice the Dharma it will be too late.

So, we have to overcome the laziness of procrastination by doing this second step of the death and impermanence meditation. The decision one needs to make at the end of this is that one is going to practice the Dharma right now and that one is not going to procrastinate. By having become sufficiently worried and apprehensive through these steps, naturally one will want to practice the Dharma straight away. To start practicing the Dharma straight away means that on the one hand you abstain from harmful intent and harming others, and that on the other hand you generate the good attitude of wanting to benefit others. One will benefit others as much as possible and foster these mental attitudes while also translating them into action.

As was said earlier, focus the mind internally and place it on the mantra. While reciting the mantra, focus on the sound.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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