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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Please seat yourself comfortably in a good meditation posture. One then needs to make the mind clear and fresh. The purpose of meditation is to bring peace to one's mind. It is important that one identifies the mental states that cause suffering to the mind; to identify the mental states that make the mind unhappy. There are a variety of mental states that make the mind unhappy. Some people are unhappy because of attachment. Attachment is a very pervasive prevalent cause that disturbs the mind. Some people's mind is disturbed by anger. Some people's mind is disturbed by jealousy. Some people's mind is disturbed by pride and so forth.

At the time when one feels one's mind is unhappy and one's mental happiness and peace have been lost, one should focus the mind internally and investigate the internal cause for one's unhappiness instead of looking externally for the cause. As we said, there are various causes such as attachment, anger, competitiveness, pride, jealousy and so forth. When the mind is under the control of any of these mental afflictions a person cannot experience happiness. As long as these mental states are predominant in the mind it is very difficult for the mind to relax. Such a person will not be able to relax, will not be easy going and will not experience mental happiness. If they eat, their food won't be tasty. If they talk with others, they will not find the conversation enjoyable. If they go for walks, they will not be able to derive happiness from the walk. Even if they sleep, their sleep will be heavy and not refreshing and their body will be very tight.

The bodies of people who are very strongly controlled by these different emotions are usually very tight. When the person starts to meditate and is able to free the mind somewhat from the control of these different disturbing emotions it is as if something loosens within the chest. One is then able to stand upright and breathe freely and the mind becomes clear. It is as if a new clarity dawns within the mind. The meditation that we are going to engage in now is the meditation on the coming and going of the breath. This is the antidote against the conceptualising mind in general. It pacifies the conceptualising mind in general.

Meditation provides the opportunity for the mind to have a respite from objects that cause it suffering. Ordinarily, when one brings certain objects to mind they cause suffering. However, if one does not recall those objects and does not bring them to mind, then the suffering they cause does not arise and one does not experience that

suffering. The sequence in which this usually works is that initially sense objects are perceived by the sense consciousnesses, and then, after having been perceived by the sense consciousnesses, one generates a conceptual mental consciousness. The sense consciousness induces the conceptual mental consciousness that then continues to think about the object.

There are two types of conceptual mental consciousnesses; those that induce happiness and those that induce suffering. If one analyses one's life and one's mind it is very likely that the conceptual thoughts that cause suffering are greater in number than the conceptual thoughts that cause happiness. It is very important during this meditation that one turns the mind inwards and lets go of those external objects that ordinarily cause suffering. When the mind is overcome by disturbing thoughts it also tends to induce worry. This is something that one should absolutely not become accustomed to. Worry and mental unhappiness is not something that one should train oneself in and become accustomed to.

Recall the mind from external objects and focus it internally. Then, having placed it in this internal state, 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 in a non-dual manner. The mind acts as a mirror that reflects objects. When one meditates, rather than concentrating the mind on the actual object and directing one's attention to the actual object it is better to direct one's attention to the reflection of the object within one's mind. In this way the mind concentrates on the mind. It concentrates on itself and one can have this experience of non-duality. If one focuses the mind on the external object one cannot have this experience of non-duality. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

### 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

The meditation on death and impermanence consists of the three roots and the nine reasons and three decisions. We finished the first two roots and now we come to the third root. This is that, at the time of death, Dharma is the only thing that benefits one.

Possessions and wealth are of no benefit at the time of death. Having wealth and possessions does not prevent death. They will not make one live forever and prevent death, and are of no benefit at the time of death. Likewise, family and friends don't prevent death and are of no benefit at the time of death. It does not matter how much family and friends one has, one still has to die. At the time of death one has to leave them all behind.

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Having this body is also of no benefit at the time of death. Not only does it not prevent death, it is of no benefit at the time of death and one has to leave it behind.

At the time of death, neither possessions nor family and friends, nor one's body are of any benefit. Ordinarily, if one has to go somewhere one can always ask a friend to accompany one. At the time of death, even if one were to ask, it is simply impossible. This is where one has to go alone and one cannot take anything with one, not even one's body. The conclusion that one arrives at is that at the time of death the only thing that is really beneficial is the Dharma.

The purpose of this meditation is not to make one afraid and generate fear and despair. It should not cause you to throw everything away and to give up your job. The point is that one should give up the attachment towards possessions, towards friends and towards one's body. Instead of despairing and becoming very afraid, which is not the purpose of this meditation, one should recognise that there is something that one can do to prepare oneself for death and that the only thing that is beneficial at the time of death is the Dharma. One then makes the decision that one will only practise the Dharma. The only important thing is the Dharma. Nothing else is important in one's life.

So, one gives up the attachment towards possessions, towards friends and one's body. In this way one's mind will be unburdened and free at the time of death and one will not experience any suffering of separation. If one does not have attachment for possessions, friends and one's body one does not experience the suffering of separation. The mind can remain free and unburdened.

One needs to go over this meditation repeatedly in a gentle manner. One needs to slowly and gently familiarise oneself with the different points of this meditation over and over again and, through this process lessen attachment for these three objects. The objective here is to lessen the attachment that one has for possessions, family and friends and one's body. You can see that in order to prepare for death it is not necessary to be a Buddhist. If one can generate a mind that is free from attachment, a mind that can abide peacefully, free from anger and attachment then that mind is perfect preparation for death. If one can generate this type of mind then it is one's refuge.

One will not be rescued by external objects or external people. What actually rescues one is this virtuous mental state that is free of attachment and anger. It is not necessary to be a Buddhist to have such a mind. Everybody can recognise the necessity of abandoning harsh speech that is hurtful to others, or abandoning other harmful actions that are hurtful to others. Everybody can recognise this.

Don't misunderstand my point here. I'm not telling you that you have to enter a single lifestyle and give up all your possessions and neglect your body. That is not the point that is being made. It is good to have friends, one needs possessions of good quality and one needs a healthy body. What is harmful is attachment and craving.

For example, it is important that one has friends. There's nothing wrong with having friends. It is, however, a very common experience that one's friendship is often disturbed by attachment. One can recognise the harmful influence and harmful nature of attachment. On the other hand, love and compassion are very beneficial for a healthy and stable friendship or relationship. The problem is not having family and friends; the problem is attachment.

Similarly, the problem is not having possessions. There's nothing wrong with having possessions. One can use those possessions to make others happy. The more possessions one has the more power one has to make others happy. The problem arises from craving. Craving for possessions is the problem not the possessions themselves. The craving is what causes suffering and unhappiness and problems.

If one's meditation becomes an antidote against attachment then one can say that this meditation has been fruitful. The more attachment one has the more suffering one experiences. For example, if one is separated from a friend for whom one has a lot of attachment the suffering is very great and lasts for a long time and is very difficult to pacify. The less attachment one has for the other person the easier one can separate without any suffering. Just because one has separated from a person, has lost one friend, does not mean that there are not new friends on the horizon. Sometimes it seems as if one has completely lost any possibility for friendship but that is not true. The more attachment one has the greater suffering one experiences. Therefore, to lessen one's attachment through one's meditation will be a cause for happiness. The less attachment one has the lighter, happier and more unburdened the mind becomes. We can stop here. Do you have a question?

*Question: When Geshe-la talks about attachment to friends, does the same thing apply to relatives?*

We are talking about people that are close to one, that one feels close to, that one holds as near and dear. In a general way these people are our relatives. If one looks at the meaning of the word Shakyamuni Buddha is somebody who is close to us. Shakyamuni would also fill that description because he is close to all sentient beings.

For those we hold close in our mind we generally have attachment and for those we regard as enemies we have anger and for those that are neither, that we regard as strangers, we have neither attachment or anger but a state of equanimity or indifference. Shakyamuni Buddha has overcome this discriminating attitude with regards to friend, enemy and stranger. That's why one can say that Shakyamuni Buddha is close to everybody.

*Question: I want to ask for clarification of the refuge prayer. Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. I understand what the Buddha and Dharma are, but is the Sangha the community of Buddhists?*

The Buddha is the Buddha. The Dharma refers to the noble truth of cessation and the noble truth of the path. That is what is regarded as the Dharma refuge. The third and fourth noble truths, the truth of cessation and the

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truth of the path, are regarded as the Dharma. The Sangha refers to superior beings, beings that have attained the path of seeing and above.

The *Lam Rim*, even though not being by definition the actual Dharma refuge, still falls into the family of the Dharma refuge. By practising the *Lam Rim* we can attain the actual Dharma refuge. The actual Dharma refuge, the truth of cessation and the truth of the path, is two very high attainments that are at this moment quite far from us, quite high above us. But what we can practise is the *Lam Rim*.

The *Lam Rim* is something that we can read and practise and that is how one progresses along the path. As I always say, one has to progress along the path by lessening one's faults, slowly, slowly, bit by bit, one small fault after the next, and by increasing one's qualities bit by bit, one small step after the next. Instead of trying to generate huge and great realisations and great qualities all at once, which is unrealistic, one tries to generate and build up the small qualities that one is able to. Over time one progresses along the path by reading and meditating on the *Lam Rim*, by practising the *Lam Rim*. That is exactly how we practise.

*Question: You said earlier that only the Dharma can help you at the time of death. I was wondering if visualisation and meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha and the Sangha can help at the time of death and what is the point of these visualisations if they can't help?*

What benefits us at the time of death are the virtuous mental states that we can generate. So, for example, by practising morality and refraining from killing and so forth one generates a mental state of abstaining from harmful intent and killing and that is something that can benefit one at the time of death. It exists on one's mind or within one's mind. It is not some external object or state but it is a mental state, and that's how it benefits at the time of death. Another example would be having faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. At the time of death, meditating on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, generating faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, would be an example of inner refuge at that time.

If, at the time of death, one remembers the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha with faith one will definitely not be reborn in the next life in a lower state of existence. This will come about because of the internal state of faith into the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It did not come about because the Buddha stretched out a hand and prevented one from falling into the lower realms. It came about because of one's own practice, one's own mental state. One can say that on the Buddha the three jewels, the three refuges, are complete. The Buddha is both the Buddha jewel as well as the Sangha jewel, and in the Buddha's mind is the truth of the path and in the Buddha's continuum is the truth of cessation, which are the Dharma jewels. One can say that on the Buddha the three jewels are complete.

If the Buddha were to sit in front of one while one is dying, even though one won't take rebirth in the lower realm in the next life, the presence of the Buddha while

one is dying will not suffice, for example, to attain liberation. Just to have faith in the Buddha by itself will not suffice to attain liberation. One has to generate the path oneself in order to attain liberation. Even though the faith that one has at the time of death will prevent one from falling into a lower state of existence immediately in the subsequent life, that faith alone will not be enough to attain liberation. One has to progress along the path oneself, practise the path and generate the different mental states that lead to liberation.

If one dies while in the presence of the Buddha one won't take rebirth in a lower realms through the blessing of the Buddha's mind. The manifest afflictions in beings that are physically close to him, in his vicinity, subside. The blessing of the Buddha is so strong that it subdues the manifest afflictions of sentient beings that are in his vicinity. That's why one can say that if a person dies physically close to the Buddha, even if that person has no faith in the Buddha, they won't take rebirth in the lower realms in the immediately subsequent life. A person who actually has faith in the Buddha at the point of death will not, of course, take rebirth in the lower realms in the subsequent life.

As was said earlier, turn the mind inwards and place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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