
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can meditate for a little bit as usual. Sit in a comfortable and relaxed manner. As we usually say, it's good to have a motivation such as the thought: "I'm doing this to attain enlightenment for all sentient beings." On the basis of this good motivation, if we focus the mind on one object, it will become peaceful.

It's important that we focus the mind wholeheartedly on the meditation object. If the mind is disturbed, it helps if we focus it completely on the meditation object, because through that we will achieve a total internal focus and the mind will become peaceful and calm. If the mind is only focused half on the meditation object and half on external objects, the technique does not work.

So now we will focus the mind internally, single-pointedly placing it on the coming and going of the breath. Don't let the mind engage external objects, but focus it completely internally and, from within that space, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. (*Pause for meditation.*)

It's important that one meditates because having a peaceful mind is the supreme method for enjoying a good life. It is our own responsibility to have a peaceful and happy mind, so therefore it is important to meditate regularly. I myself regard it as very important to have a happy and clear mind, and maybe you think the same way.

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

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2. The Method for Happiness in the Next Life

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. The Entrance to the Dharma - Refuge

Recently, we talked about death and impermanence and what comes after death – the sufferings of the lower realms. Now, we have reached the method of how to avoid these sufferings. The first point here is refuge, which is the entrance to the Buddhist path.

This topic of refuge comes under four headings:

- the causes of refuge
- the objects of refuge
- the way of going for refuge and
- the advice that comes with going for refuge.

In some Lam Rim texts, there are five outlines. There is the fifth outline of the benefits of refuge, but here there

are only four because the benefits are contained in the advice on refuge.

1) The Cause for Refuge

First we need to have the causes for refuge that will induce us to take refuge. These are fear of the sufferings of the lower realms, and faith that the Triple Gem can rescue one from these sufferings. After having thought about death and impermanence, and that after death there are only two ways to go, up or down, one then contemplates how in this life, out of virtue and non-virtue, one primarily accumulates non-virtue, and how the non-virtue one accumulates is strong, while than the virtue one accumulates is usually weak and feeble. This leads one to the conclusion that one will take rebirth in the lower realms in the next life. By meditating in this way, we will generate some fear. This will cause us to look for a refuge, with lead us to the realisation that there is a perfect refuge – the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha – and that by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we can avoid taking rebirth in the lower realms. Because this method counteracts our non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind, it benefits not only our future life but this life as well.

On the basis on having fear of rebirth in the lower realms, we then look for rescue, through the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. By reflecting on how the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the power to rescue us from the lower realms, we will generate faith in them. When we say the refuge prayer verbally then that counts as verbal refuge. However, it is better if our verbal refuge is supported by some deeper thought about the causes of refuge, which are fear of the lower realms and faith in the objects of refuge.

2) Objects of Refuge.

By reflecting on the qualities of the objects of refuge we will gain faith in them. By reflecting on the qualities of the Buddha jewel – how the Buddha is endowed with all qualities and free from all faults – we will generate faith in the Buddha refuge, if we have wisdom. The Dharma refuge is the truth of the path and the truth of cessation, and the Sangha refuge comprises those who have attained the truth of the path and the truth of cessation.

Why are they suitable objects of refuge? There are four reasons, mainly associated with the qualities of the Buddha:

- being free from all fears
- being proficient in liberating others from their fears
- having equal, non-discriminating compassion for everybody,
- benefiting others, regardless of whether they have benefited one or not.

Only Buddha possesses these four qualities. Being free from all fears shows the quality of abandonment. Being proficient in liberating others from their fears shows the quality of realisation. Having equal compassion for everybody shows the quality of love. And benefiting

others, regardless of whether they have benefited him or not, shows the quality of enlightened activity.

If one is not free from all fears, one cannot free others from their fears. If one is not proficient in liberating others from their fears, one cannot help others. For example, if someone does not have arms, that person cannot rescue someone else from a burning house.

The Buddha has non-discriminating, equal compassion for everybody. He does not hold some close and some distant. Therefore, he does not just help some and not others; he helps everybody equally, regardless of whether they have benefited him or not. Most of us just help those who have benefited us, but Buddha helps everybody equally.

Since the Buddha is a valid refuge, the Dharma that the Buddha taught and the Hearer Sangha who follow the Dharma are regarded as a valid refuge. Therefore, as Asanga said, one should ascertain these qualities of the Buddha, because the stronger one's conviction in them, the stronger one's refuge will become. So, to receive the full effect of one's refuge, it needs to be completed with the two causes of taking refuge.

Question: When we take refuge in the Sangha, are we also taking refuge in the other sense of the meaning of Sangha – that of the ordained community?

Answer: Yes. In general, the actual Sangha refuge is the Arya beings, superior beings, which can be either ordained or lay, but one still goes for refuge also to the ordained community.

When one goes for refuge to the Sangha, one should think that even the simplest monk is the actual Sangha refuge. One goes for refuge to the nominal Sangha by thinking of them as the actual Sangha refuge. When one goes for refuge to the Sangha, one should think that all the ordained community, from the simplest monk onwards, are all the actual Sangha refuge, even though the actual Sangha refuge refers to the superior beings.

3) The **Way of Going for Refuge** to the Buddha is that one entrusts oneself completely to the Buddha, in the same way as a patient entrusts himself completely to the doctor.

Going for refuge to the Dharma is like a patient taking medicine in accordance with the instructions of the doctor: we follow the advice of the Buddha. To attain liberation, you have to follow this advice in the prescribe way; to be cured from sickness you have to follow the instructions of your doctor.

The way one goes for refuge to the Sangha jewel is by looking at them as the example, as people who have been cured by taking the medicine of the Buddha's teachings from the Buddha. By taking them as an example, we go to them for refuge.

We can say that the Buddha is the person who shows us refuge, the Dharma is the actual refuge, and the Sangha support us – similar to the situation of a doctor being the one who prescribes the medicine, the medicine being what we have to take to be cured of illness, and the nurse being the one who supports us during our convalescence.

If we do not take the medicine, we will not be cured of our disease. If we not practise the Dharma, we will not be cured of our problems. Therefore, we can say that the Dharma is the actual refuge, the Buddha is the one who prescribes the Dharma, and the Sangha are those who support us during our practice.

The actual Dharma refuge is the truth of cessation and the truth of the path, but these two goals are quite high. What is more accessible to us at the present time are the virtuous mental states that counteract the non-virtuous actions. The virtuous state of refraining from killing is be a Dharma refuge because it rescues us from the act of killing, the non-virtuous karma and subsequent rebirth in the lower realms. Refuge exists in one's mind, and in this case, refraining from killing would be the refuge that exists in one's mind. Refraining from killing is contained in the truth of the path; the non-experience of the suffering would be the truth of cessation.

As was explained 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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