
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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We can meditate as usual. When the body elements are imbalanced it causes physical illness. Similarly, when the mind is disturbed and not relaxed it causes mental problems. When the elements are in disarray it causes physical problems. The mental imbalance also causes physical problems. It causes tightness of the body making it difficult for energy flow, causing breathing problems and so forth. It is very important to carefully consider the purpose of meditation. It is important to look after the body and the mind well. If the body is sick, one feels unwell. If one doesn't look after the mind one becomes mentally unwell and feels unhappy. One needs to recognise that there are mental states that are conducive to mental wellbeing and, from my point of view, the purpose of meditation is to cultivate these states.

As we have explained in the past, it is important to base one's meditation on a good motivation. One generates an altruistic motivation thinking, "I am going to engage in this meditation to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. I'm going to pacify and develop my mind for that purpose".

If one analyses one's mind one will see that different mental states bring about different feelings. Some mental states bring about feelings of happiness while others bring about feelings of suffering. In this way one can recognise the thoughts that need to be lessened and the thoughts that need to be increased.

To meditate first you recall the mind from external objects and place it in an internal space where the mind is totally focused internally without engaging external objects. Then, from within that space, you place the mind single pointedly, in a relaxed manner, on the coming and going of the breath. This is done in a non-dual manner where the mind actually becomes one with the breath, not looking at the breath but becoming one with the breath. Then you remain focused on the breathing in this way for a couple of minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

It is important to meditate regularly on a daily basis and over time, by repeatedly investigating one's mind, one will generate wisdom and insight. It is important that one follows the three steps of listening, contemplation and meditation, and that one doesn't keep these three separate. There are some people who listen and contemplate one topic and then choose something else for meditation. That is not the skilful way of doing it. One contemplates what one listens to, and then one meditates on what one has contemplated.

It is important that one meditates in a manner that enables one to get the full long-term benefit of meditation and not just superficial, temporary benefit. Sometimes one meditates with a short-term view and unfortunately one loses the deep, ultimate benefit of meditation. It is important that one doesn't just look at some temporary superficial benefits but

that one looks at the deep ultimate purpose of meditation and directs one's efforts towards these. If one compares the benefit of one year and the benefit of 100 years, then the benefit of 100 years clearly outweighs the benefit of one year. That is the model that one should follow.

One Kadampa Lama mentioned that one's mind should look very far into the future towards the aim of enlightenment and one's mind should be very wide and it should be very relaxed. The mind should be very wide, encompassing the meditations of the three kinds of beings and it should have just the right amount of relaxation and tension. It should not be too tense and it should also not be too relaxed. It should be adjusted just right, well tuned.

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 Relying on the methods for achieving happiness in future lives

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1 Training on going for refuge

Last time we talked about what to do to avoid lower rebirth after death. Since one has to die and after death one can only go up or down, and since it is very likely that one is going down, one needs to have a look at what can prevent one from going down. This is how we arrived at the chapter on refuge. Initially we talked about the causes for refuge and then the objects of refuge and then the reasons why the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha are suitable objects of refuge.

We talked about how the Buddha is the one that shows the dharma, which is the direct refuge. The dharma that is generated in the mind is the actual refuge that rescues one from suffering. Then we have the Sangha, which one takes as one's example. The Tibetan word for Buddha is Sang-gye, which expresses the two aspects of what makes somebody a Buddha. "Sang" means complete purification and "gye" mean having completely generated all qualities; having generated omniscient consciousness. If one is an enlightened being one possesses those two qualities of complete purification from obscurations and omniscient knowledge.

The dharma refuge is the truth of cessation and the truth of the path, and the Sangha refuge are the practitioners that have realized the truth of the path and the truth of cessation in their mental continuum. The way the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha function is similar to the doctor, the medicine and the nurse. The Buddha is similar to a doctor in that he identifies the sickness and prescribes the medicine. The dharma is akin to the medicine prescribed by the Buddha and one has to take it in accordance with the Buddha's instructions. It is the actual direct refuge that counteracts the afflictions and non-virtuous karmas in one's mind and rescues one from suffering. The Sangha is like a nurse supporting one during one's period of healing. The way one goes for refuge to the Sangha is by taking them as one's example.

The next point is the way of going for refuge. This comes in four points. The first is going for refuge by knowing the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The second is going for refuge by knowing the distinctions of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The third is going for refuge by accepting the triple gem as one's refuge and the fourth is going for refuge to them exclusively; not accepting any other worldly refuges.

The first point is going for refuge by knowing the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. One has to know the qualities of the Buddha, the qualities of the Dharma and the qualities of the Sangha. By knowing their qualities one generates faith in them and naturally goes for refuge. One has to investigate the qualities of the Buddha and by investigating the qualities of the Buddha, one will generate faith in the qualities of the Buddha and, on that basis, one goes for refuge. The qualities of the Buddha can be summed up in four points. They are the qualities of the enlightened body, the qualities of the enlightened speech, the qualities of the enlightened mind and the qualities of enlightened activity.

There is a distinction between qualities and enlightened activity. Qualities refer to the Buddha's ability to act simultaneously with an arising need or arising opportunity to benefit a sentient being. Enlightened activity is the action in which the Buddha engages because of having the ability of acting simultaneously with the arising opportunity to benefit sentient beings. The enlightened activity of the Buddha penetrates the student and works by one practising the teachings of the Buddha. For example, by pursuing the practice of accepting white virtuous actions and rejecting black non-virtuous actions one is pervaded by the Buddha's enlightened activity. The Buddha is one's indirect teacher while one's Lama is one's direct teacher. One's present day Dharma teacher is the direct teacher and the Buddha is the indirect Dharma teacher.

Do you have some questions? Otherwise we can continue with the qualities.

Question. Sometimes one has had teachers but they have died. Is it recommended that one also has a living teacher?

There are two cases. Some people need to have a living teacher while other practitioners don't. Practitioners following the hearer lineage need to have a living teacher. That is the way that that person works. They need to have an actual person there always. While practitioners that follow the self-liberators lineage, the solitary realiser lineage, are quite happy to just continue to practice without a teacher by meditating on the instructions that they have received before. There are different individual cases.

Question. What is the case in the Mahayana tradition?

It is the same for Mahayana practitioners. You get individual cases. Some Mahayana practitioners only rely on one or two teachers in their lifetime and they are very happy to just practice whatever they have learned from those one or two teachers. There are others who rely on many different teachers. It is an individual thing that depends on the person's preference. Some practitioners have the ability to rely on many teachers and for them it works out very well. Others are very happy with just having a few teachers. Generally it is recommended that one doesn't rely on many teachers if one does not have the ability to do so properly.

Question. Should you see each day as the first day of your life or the last day?

I don't think you should think that it's your last day. I'm not quite sure where your question is coming from. We don't have to think, "This is the last day of my life". But even if it were the last day of one's life one should spend that last day of one's life practising the dharma and in this way preparing for the next life. As Sakya Pandita said, it is like laying out the things that one will need the following morning, ready to

take. One practices the dharma even if it is one's last day so one can pick up one's dharma practice in the next life.

Even though there is not the need to think, "Oh, today is the last day of my life", if one is an actual practitioner of that meditation on death and impermanence that we talked about, one would approach one's day as if it is the last day of one's life. I don't know if your question came from that point of view or not. If one can practice thinking, "Oh, today is the last day of my life so I have to practice the dharma purely as a preparation for the next life", one's dharma practice comes along very well on that day. But I'm not sure whether that was the thrust of your question or not. As long as one has the notion, the underlying feeling, that one is going to be around for a long time one procrastinates one's dharma practice. Because that feeling doesn't go away by itself one ends up procrastinating one's dharma practice until one dies and never gets any dharma practice done. Then one goes to the next life with an empty hand and regrets. If one can make use of this time to meditate on the objects of refuge and faith and so forth one has given oneself some profit in this life.

Question. If we have more than one teacher, should they be of a similar lineage or of one lineage?

No, they are all Buddhists. Whether they are Kagyu or Gelug and so forth, they are all Buddhists. I don't discriminate in that way. Having that kind of discriminating attitude causes a great loss. What I always advise is that it is important to keep in mind the teachings that one has already received. If one goes to new teachers, teachers of new traditions, one shouldn't discard what one has learnt before. One builds on top of what one has already learned. It is important that one holds onto the teachings that one has already received. If one can do that then you can basically take teachings from any teacher in any tradition.

Question. Is that the only criteria to assess if you should have more than one teacher? Are there other qualities to assess to know if you are of a nature to have more than one teacher?

You have to be able to generate faith in the teacher because there is no use relying on a new teacher and then losing faith in that teacher. Lama Atisha observed Serlingpa very carefully before relying on Serlingpa. It is similar to what we were saying just before; by knowing the qualities of the Buddha one generates faith in the Buddha.

*Transcribed from tape by Lois Smith
Edit 1 by John Burch
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

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