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## 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 for a bit as usual. Sit in a good meditation posture. If, through the process a meditation, we can focus the mind single-pointedly on a virtuous object and overcome distraction and mental wandering, then that will make it possible for some happiness to arise in the mind.

We should recognise the importance of generating happiness through meditation. When someone reaches the age of 25, they will have tried out the path of the mental afflictions, and should have recognised by then that the happiness they seek on the basis of the mental afflictions is unsatisfactory. We must understand the importance of generating happiness from meditation on the basis of recognising the faults of the mental afflictions.

By lessening the afflictions in the mind and generating happiness through meditation, the external happiness we have accumulated will become a real cause for happiness. We know through experience that the more we increase our mental happiness, the happier our life will become and the less suffering we will experience. On the other hand, if we neglect our inner happiness, our external conditions will only increase our suffering.

If we look at the example of having a cup of tea, if we do this when our mind is upset, we will not be able to enjoy the tea and it will not provide any happiness. But if we sit down to have a cup of tea with a relaxed mind, we can enjoy the experience and the tea will also prove to be more healthy and satisfying. So we can clearly see the impact our state of mind has on our experience.

Now we will focus the mind internally and place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. The breathing should flow easily and feel light. Ideally we should not feel the airflow at the nostrils – that's how gentle the breathing should be, but it should come about naturally. We will focus for a few minutes on the coming and going of the breath. (*Pause for meditation*)

It's important to develop a pure, wholesome mind, because it is a true internal friend that will never desert us. We need to develop pure thought and discriminating wisdom, which will assist us in all situations and will provide happiness and support in our life.

### 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

### 4.2.2.1.2.1.2 Relying on the methods for achieving happiness in future lives

#### 4.2.2.1.2.1.2.1 Training on going for refuge

We came to the six practices common to taking refuge in the Three Jewels. First, we should always go for refuge repeatedly to Triple Gem on the basis of remembering the qualities and distinctions of all three.

We have already explained the qualities of the Buddha. Basically, they are that the Buddha has generated all qualities and purified all faults. He did this through the practice of the Dharma, so this shows the qualities of the Dharma. The Sangha are those who have generated the Dharma in their mind – this shows the qualities of the Sangha.

It is also important to know the distinction between the Buddha, as a Buddhist teacher, and other teachers, by being aware of the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

The next point is to always offer the first portion of whatever we eat or drink to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Reflecting on the kindness of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we offer the first portion of whatever we eat or drink to the Triple Gem. The kindness of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha lies in the fact that, through them, we can attain higher rebirth and liberation. For example, the Buddha taught that we can attain a higher rebirth through the practice of morality, and that through the truth of the path, we can attain liberation.

So, through the kindness of the Triple Gem, we can attain liberation and a higher status. Bearing this in mind, we offer the first portion of what we eat or drink. By making these offerings, we can accumulate, in a short time, a large amount of merit. As everybody has to eat and drink several times a day, there is plenty of opportunity to make these offerings; by making these offerings, we can accumulate a vast amount of merit in a very short time.

We make offerings to the merit field – to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, the Dharma, and so forth. These are referred to as the merit field because, in the same way that a field provides the basis for planting seeds, the merit field provides the basis on which we plant the seeds of liberation and enlightenment in our mind. When we make the offering, we first visualise the food as being free of any fault of colour, smell and taste, and as having a perfect taste, smell and colour, in the nature of uncontaminated nectar. This is then offered to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, generating uncontaminated bliss in their minds.

By doing this brief meditation for just a few minutes before we eat, we plant the seeds of liberation and enlightenment and of all goodness and happiness in our mind. We also bless the food with the syllables *Om ah hum* three times: at the first repetition, visualising that all faults of colour, taste and smell are purified; at the second repetition, that the food is transformed into uncontaminated nectar; and at the third repetition, that this uncontaminated nectar has become inexhaustible.

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The essence of this offering practice is to meditate that we have generated uncontaminated bliss in the buddhas' and bodhisattvas' minds, because that is the meaning of making an offering – to make the object of the offering happy, and to generate bliss in the object's mind. Also, before we eat food or drink water, we should motivate that we are doing it to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In this way, we follow the principle of meditating on bodhicitta, regardless of the action we engage in – whether it is walking, eating, drinking, sitting, or sleeping.

We can also meditate that we are offering the food and drink to the infinite number of sentient beings living within our body, praying that by this offering of food to them, we establish a dependent-arising that will enable us to teach them the Dharma in the future.

Further, when we get dressed, we can meditate that we are offering our clothes to the deity, if one is doing a deity practice, or that we are wearing the clothes to protect our body from heat or cold so that we can have a healthy body to practise Dharma. Similarly when we eat or drink, we can meditate that we eat or drink to have a healthy body to practise the Dharma. In this way, our actions of eating, drinking, wearing clothes and so forth become free from attachment.

Otherwise, if we eat with the motivation of having a strong body to intimidate others, that would be eating with pride and attachment, while if we eat for the purpose of having a strong and healthy body to practise the Dharma, that would be a virtuous motivation, free from attachment or anger.

Another advantage of wearing clothes with that type of pure motivation is that we won't get upset if we haven't managed to look as nice as we'd imagined. If our prime motivation is to look smart and beautiful, quite often, after having dressed, we will become upset if we don't look quite the way we'd hoped, and this will generate unhappiness in our mind. This unhappiness will be avoided if we can wear our clothes with a pure motivation – then, we can go comfortably everywhere, even if we are not dressed perfectly.

So by adopting the right way of thinking and motivation, we can avoid much of the worry brought about by different situations. If we have the means, we should make nice offerings to the merit field. If we have the means, but keep the nicer things for ourselves and offer the inferior things to the merit field, it would be an impure offering. Of course, if we do not have the means, any type of offering will suffice, but if we have the means, we should make the offering as nice as possible.

We can stop here. Next time, there is an example to illustrate the importance of making use now of the opportunity to plant these seeds in one's mind through the practice of offering. Do you have some questions?

*Question: Can you give some advice on how not to get too upset when you are having problems with health? I'm having a lot of problems with pain at the moment.*

*Answer: Maybe it's good to meditate on giving and taking and to generate such great strength of mind that one is not overwhelmed by the pain.*

This is the way to go – meditating on giving and taking, and praying that you will experience even more pain, that the pain of all sentient beings will ripen upon you etc. In this way, you accumulate a great amount of merit. Who knows? Maybe the pain might even go away, and you might even be cured.

This makes sense when we look at the root of pain. You can meditate on how sentient beings are all experiencing pain because of not having abandoned true grasping, which is also the reason why you are experiencing that pain, and then you can meditate that you are taking on all the pain of all sentient beings.

We have already talked about the benefits of suffering. One benefit is that it instills a fear of non-virtue and a liking for virtue. Also, you generate compassion for others, because it teaches you about the suffering of others.

*Question: What is Geshe-la's view on the young Australian on death row in Singapore at present? A lot of public opinion says that's what happens if you go to a country where the law says that if you do drugs, you will lose your life. I'm looking for Geshe-la's view on this.*

*Answer: He received a loss because of his desires. It often happens that people follow their short-sighted desires and, because of that, they get into trouble and receive a loss. This is what happened to that boy.*

Also, he obviously had the karma to have that kind of experience. But having the karma alone is not enough; the karma can only ripen when the person creates the circumstances for it to ripen. In this case, both the circumstances and the karma came together.

*Question: Regarding the images of the Buddha, I believe they should not be drawn or coloured in by children. Is it OK if they draw Buddha before his enlightenment as Prince Siddhartha? And secondly if they draw someone in meditation, is it better if they don't draw someone in robes?*

*Answer: It is good to read children the life story of Siddhartha – that's something that they like. There are many situations in the life of the Buddha that they can relate to – situations with animals and so forth.*

They can also paint or draw non-religious objects, which may benefit their worldly life, as they can be taught to draw with a focused mind. They can learn to do things with mindfulness.

It's OK for them to draw meditating lay people – you, for example. You can read with them the different 'stations' in the Buddha's life and relate it to their own lives. You can explain to them how the Buddha's quality of life increased and how he became more famous and important. You can then relate it to their own lives, explaining to them that if they study and do well at school then, like the Buddha, they will have great success in their lives,

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You can also do things like painting two children, one on the left side and one on the right. You can explain that the child on one side is studying and doing well at school, and show in the drawing how that person's life will improve. You can then show how the life of the other child, who does not study and is naughty and so forth, does not improve and later in life, he or she will have no happiness and success and will not get what they want.

If the difference is made quite clear, when you ask the child, "Well, which path do you want to follow?", they will say, "I'll want to follow the wholesome path of study, because then I can get all the things I want." The painting can be made quite elaborate – on one side, the child when they grow up having everything they want, like nice houses, nice clothing and so forth, and on the other side drawing the grown-up person as living in a poor house or with no house, poor clothing and so forth. The child will naturally be drawn to the better way and will want to study also.

This will also make a good imprint in the child's mind to be more receptive to explanations from the parents to study well and so forth, because they will have a better understanding of the benefits.

*Question: I often find myself disturbed by all the deaths in the world at the moment, for example, in Pakistan and the tsunami... Other than dedicating the merits of body, speech and mind, and wholesome actions each day, is there a special prayer that we can use for dedication to these innocent people?*

*Answer: The Prayer of Pure Conduct – also referred to as The King of Prayers – and the tenth chapter of the Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life are very good to do. There is also a prayer by Lama Tsong Khapa for rebirth in the pure land of Tushita. That's also good to do. If you don't have those prayers, you can ask Venerable Carolyn and she will give them to you.*

Focus the mind internally 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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