
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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7 December 2005

We can meditate a bit as usual. Sit comfortably in a good posture. Then you need to reverse the mind from the mental afflictions, focus it single-pointedly on an internal object and keep it focused on that object.

It is important to investigate the difference between a mind under the control of the mental afflictions and focused on external objects, and a mind not under the control of the mental afflictions and focused internally. We should analyse our mind and observe the effect of these different mental states. When is the mind more pliable, workable and happier – when it is under the control of the mental afflictions and focused on external objects, or when it is focused on an internal object and not under the control of the mental afflictions? This is a very important point.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, ordinarily we feel pride toward those who are inferior, we compete with those who are equal, and we generate jealousy toward those who have a higher status. So, from the point of view of wealth, we will feel superior if we have more than those who have less money, we will feel competitive toward those with equal wealth, and we will feel jealous toward those who have a greater income and more money.

This is the ordinary way of thinking. We should ask ourselves, doesn't this way of thinking cause lots of problems and suffering in our lives? Wouldn't it be better to have a mind that is happy, satisfied and stable? If we have a mind that is not under the control of attachment and anger, but is satisfied, content and happy, isn't that a better mental state to have?

It is important to generate the wisdom that can see the difference between a mind that meditates and a mind that doesn't meditate, and the difference that this makes to one's life. It is also important that we cultivate positive mental states such as love and compassion, and that we particularly practise love and compassion toward our friends when they are facing a problem. By focusing the mind on an internal object and not letting it be overwhelmed by the afflictions, we can practise patience when the need arises – when a friend is angry for example, because at that time we can recognise that the other person is suffering because their mind is disturbed by anger, which always brings mental suffering. Then we will recognise that this is the time when we need to practise love and compassion with the other person, because this is when the other person is suffering.

Ordinarily we will profess our love and affection for the other person when there are no difficulties, but once

difficulties arise, we quickly lose our love and compassion for them. But when the other person has difficulties with finances, friends, health and so forth, that is when they need somebody; that is when we should practise love and compassion.

There's a difference between helping another person for your own end, or helping the other person out of consideration for their welfare. Ordinarily we help the other person because of our relationship with them, thinking: "I'm helping that person because she or he is my friend or my relative", but the focus is more on us than on the other person. This type of affection and help is usually unstable.

But if we help the other person because we recognise that they are experiencing difficulty, that type of help is more stable and will also be given when the other person actually needs help, for example, when their mind is disturbed or when their mind is overcome by afflictions.

We can also recognise this difference in relation to ourselves. We know when we are being helped by the other person only because it fits into their egotistical planning, or when we are being helped because the other person recognises that we need help and then gives it out of affection and concern for our welfare. At a time of difficulty, we can recognise whether the other person really has love and compassion for us, or whether it is more a type of love and compassion based on self-interest and attachment, but not true love and compassion.

Place the mind internally, stop engaging external objects, then place the mind vividly and single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Remain focused on the coming and going of the breath 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

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2 Relying on the methods for achieving happiness in future lives

4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1 Training on going for refuge

Of the six common practices we are discussing concerning taking refuge, we finished the *second* one last time and now come to the *third*. On the basis of meditating on great compassion, we induce others to go for refuge and to practise refuge as we do.

We need to induce those who are close to us, like us, to also practise refuge by making offerings, prostrations and so forth. In short, we induce them to take up virtuous practices gradually. When we have induced them to take up the method for peace and happiness, some peace and happiness will come about. For example, when we see people engaging in non-virtue, we generate compassion for them, and try to induce them to practise virtue. While we generate compassion for those experiencing suffering, we should generate greater compassion for those who are creating the cause of suffering by their negativity. When we see somebody creating negative karma, we generate

compassion for that person and try to induce them to a virtuous path, if possible.

The *fourth* point is to engage in any activity by taking heartfelt refuge and making offerings and praises to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Here the point is that we shouldn't rely on worldly refuge to accomplish our activities, whether they are Dharma activities or worldly ones. Some people think they will be more successful if they rely on worldly deities, but this shows a lack of faith. Relying on worldly deities because you think they will bring you more success than relying on the Buddha is the mistaken perception that the worldly deity is more powerful than the Buddha. To counteract this, we should always rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha when we engage in any activity.

The *fifth* point is to go for refuge three times in the morning and three times in the evening on the basis of remembering the benefits of refuge. The text lists the ten benefits of refuge here. In other texts, there is a separate outline for the ten benefits of refuge, but here it comes under this heading. The reason they come under this heading is because when we are told we should go for refuge three times in the morning and three times in the evening on the basis of remembering the benefits of refuge, the question will immediately arise in our mind: "What are those benefits?"

It is important to know these benefits from the depth of our mind and not just be able to list them. Also, by going for refuge three times in the morning and three times in the evening, we fulfil this precept of refuge. For those who practise it, that is why there are six sessions in six session guru yoga.

Do you have a question?

Question: Regarding anger within the family, I'm being accused of dividing the family by coming here. If I want to take time at the Dharma centre away from the family while they are watching TV, they say I am dividing the family. I don't know where I stand on this.

Answer: It often happens that some members of a family will say: "I want you to watch TV with me in the evening and I don't want you to go to the centre". In such a case, I always advise that it's important to not disrupt the harmony within the family. For the moment, instead of pushing it and telling the other members of the family that you are going to the Centre, it might be more skilful to appease them by watching TV with them.

One reason why I feel this is the better course of action is that the person's interest in the Dharma might not be very stable at the moment. Even though that person might get their way and go to the Centre, because of the possible disruption it may cause within the family, that person may blame the Dharma later on, when other further problems occur within the family. In their mind, the person may then lead it back to the incident when they continued to go to the centre over the objection of the rest of the family, and irrationally blame the Dharma for their troubles. This is because of not having a stable faith and interest in the Dharma yet.

Therefore, because one's Dharma mind is not yet very strong, it is better to take it slowly but steadily, and for the moment act more in harmony with the other members of the family.

Just because you don't go to the centre does not mean that you have to give up your Dharma practice. You can still have a relaxed and refined mind and practise having a good disposition and so forth. Over time, the rest of the family will appreciate that attitude, and they will come to recognise the value of the Dharma. Instead of asking you not to go, they will ask you to please let them go with you to the centre for the teaching!

Also, when people have a conflict because they have to go to classes or have work commitments, I advise them that it is better not to go to the Dharma class, but to do their other studies or to go to work. They feel very relieved because they realise that they can practise the Dharma and still do what they have to do. Because I can look at the benefit from a long-term perspective, I give them that advice.

As explained earlier, focus the mind internally and place it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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