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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga  
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We can meditate a bit as usual. Sit upright in a good position. You also need to have a good motivation.

Everyone has positive mental states and the purpose of meditation is to ensure these positive mental states do not degenerate. So instead of letting the mind fall under the control of the disturbing thoughts of attachment and anger, it makes more sense to focus the mind on an internal object to prevent it from falling under the control of those disturbing thoughts.

When we meditate, it is important that we keep the purpose of meditation in mind. It is hard for us to see the benefit that meditation will bring about in our future life, because even though future lives exist, to our mind they are hidden phenomena. But we can observe the effect of meditation in this life, and this is what we should keep in mind when we meditate.

It is important for us to ensure that our love and compassion do not degenerate. If our love and compassion degenerate, thoughts of attachment, anger, jealousy or pride arise in their place, bringing many disturbances and problems. It is important to contemplate what brings happiness to the mind, establishing for ourselves what makes the mind really happy, and then not letting thoughts of love and compassion degenerate. We should contemplate this very carefully.

When the mind is disturbed it pays to check up on what is disturbing it. We need to investigate and identify the mental states that disturb the mind and then take care to counteract them and prevent them from arising again. If we do this analysis we will also come to recognise the importance of wholesome mental states to our happiness. Recognising the faults of the mental afflictions, we should generate a strong motivation not to let the mind fall under their control even for a moment.

After generating this strong motivation, we can meditate for a few minutes. Initially, collect your mind internally, focusing it one hundred percent on the inside. Then place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, letting the mind become one with the breathing. We can meditate in that way 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 in going for refuge

##### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.4. Advice on Going for Refuge

###### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.4.2. Common Advice on Going for Refuge

###### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.4.2.5. Going for refuge three times in the morning and three times in the evening on the basis of remembering the benefits of refuge.

There are **eight** benefits listed. We have already been through five of them, and now we are up to the sixth. The **first** benefit is that one becomes a Buddhist; the **second** is that one becomes the basis for all vows; the **third** is that one purifies non-virtuous karma; the **fourth** is that one accumulates vast amounts of merits; and the **fifth** is that one will not be reborn in the lower realms if one remembers the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha at the time of death.

The **sixth** benefit is that one will not be harmed by humans and non-humans. Last time we talked about not being harmed by humans; today we will talk about not being harmed by non-humans.

To illustrate this point I will recount one of the life stories of the Buddha. In a previous life the Buddha was the captain of a ship. One day, when it was carrying many traders on-board it encountered a huge storm, probably similar to the cyclone (Cyclone Larry) that has just occurred in Queensland. This storm pushed the ship into a remote area where it was attacked by a sea monster. Just as the sea monster was about to capsize the ship, all the traders – who belonged to different religions – took refuge in their individual refuge objects. Then the captain, who was an early incarnation of Shakyamuni Buddha, suggested to everyone that they take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha together, very strongly from the heart. The all did, and even though initially it was a little feeble, it subdued the sea-monster somewhat. Then they did it again, this time with more heart, which completely subdued the mind of the monster. It even took higher rebirth in the Realm of the Thirty-three Gods through the force of merely having heard the words of traders taking refuge. Also, all the traders were liberated from their fear.

The way this works can be related to the previous points – that refuge purifies non-virtuous karma and that refuge accumulates merit. It is important to keep in mind that going for refuge will liberate us from all fears.

The **seventh** benefit of going for refuge is that we will achieve all our wishes. Here you do not have to think about all the different worldly wishes. The important point is that from the point of view of the dharma we will achieve all our wishes by going for refuge. As Geshe Potawa remarked, you should not place your hopes in humans but rather place your hopes in the deity. Whether it is a dharma purpose or another purpose, it is better to place your hopes in the deity, taking refuge in the Buddha, Tara, Chenrezig or whichever deity one has faith in.

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The **eighth** benefit is that we will quickly attain enlightenment. As we said earlier, if we take refuge, we will not take rebirth in the lower realms. If we die with refuge in our mind, we will not be reborn in an unfortunate, inopportune state where we can't practise the dharma. So we will again have an opportunity to practice the dharma in our next life. In this way, we will attain enlightenment quickly.

#### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.4.2.6. Not to give up our refuge even at the cost of our life, or to even joke about it**

The sixth point of the common advice regarding going for refuge is not to give up our refuge even at the cost of our life. We should not even joke about it. If we were to give up our refuge for objects that we will certainly be separated from sooner or later – such as our possessions, relatives, friends, or even our body – we will receive a long-term loss, because we will be reborn in the lower realms and for many lifetimes will experience much suffering and not have the opportunity to practise the path to liberation and enlightenment.

On the other hand if, in this life, we take upon ourselves temporary difficulties but do not give up our refuge, we will have a fortunate rebirth where we can again practise the dharma and attain enlightenment quickly. In Tibet for example, there are many people who will not give up their refuge despite being tortured. Many Tibetans have been tortured to force them into renouncing their refuge, which they never gave up; some have even died. While they faced hardship in this life, from the point of view of future lives they have profited, because they knew what was really important.

So even just verbally – and definitely not mentally – we should not renounce the three jewels or make jokes about them in order to please others. One older geshe in Tibet was beaten severely to force him to renounce his refuge. His student couldn't bear it and pleaded with the teacher, telling him at least to renounce his refuge verbally, saying: "Mentally, you don't need to renounce the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but at least verbally, it would not be so bad". But the teacher said: "No, you can't do it even verbally, because the future disadvantages would far outweigh the suffering I am experiencing now". That geshe knew what was important; he said that he couldn't even do it verbally.

It is good to keep the eight benefits in mind when we are doing our practice of refuge – going for refuge three times in the morning and three times in the evening on the basis of being mindful of the benefits of even just reciting the four-line refuge and bodhicitta prayer. If, for the purpose of this life, we mentally give up our refuge, then we will have lost it. However, if we take refuge in another teacher, or another dharma or another sangha, this will not cause us to lose our refuge. While it is against the precepts and advice that come with refuge, it will not cause us to lose our refuge. This is worth knowing.

Taking refuge not just verbally but from the depth of our mind will cause us to receive the eight benefits in full and will become the cause for our development and for our

qualities to increase. Qualities will be easy to generate, maintain and increase, and difficult to degenerate. Therefore it pays well to train well in the different types of advice on how to take refuge. Do you have a question?

*Question: If demons come in meditation, what can one do?*

*Translator: Inner demons or outer demons?*

*Student: No, just demons.*

*Answer: The time to go for refuge is before the meditation session. Before the meditation session, generate a strong positive motivation and go strongly for refuge. Then, as we said, good qualities will be easy to generate and will not degenerate quickly but will abide. You will also not be harmed by inner and outer obstructions nor by non-human beings.*

There is story regarding not being harmed by non-human beings. Once, a fully ordained monk was offered a roll of cloth. A thief saw this, and during the night came to the monk's temple to steal the cloth. The monk, who was very smart, became aware that the thief was outside. He said: "Reach into the tent and I'll place the roll of cloth in your hand". When the thief put his hand into the tent, the monk grabbed him by the wrist and beat his hand with a stick three times saying: "I take refuge into the Buddha, I take refuge into the Dharma, I take refuge into the Sangha". The thief's hand hurt badly. For the rest of the night, he sat under a bridge nursing his hand and repeating what the monk had said so that he would not forget it. At night, the bridge under which he sat was usually a highway for different types of non-human beings and spirits, but that night they could not traverse the bridge because the thief was sitting under it repeating the refuge prayer. The thief counted himself very lucky, saying: "Thank god the Buddhists have only three refuges! If there had been a fourth, I might have died!"  
*(Laughter)*

We can stop here for tonight. Next time we will talk about why dharma is the actual refuge. Please sit in an upright position, comfortably, and focus the mind on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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