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## The Condensed Lam Rim

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Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual we will spend a few minutes in meditation. It is important to sit in a comfortable, relaxed, but upright position.

The reason a comfortable position is emphasised is that if you are not physically uncomfortable, it will distract your mind. We all know quite well that if the cushion is too hard or if there is some pain in our leg, the mind immediately goes to that. When we are physically distracted in any way, our mind will be distracted. For example, if the body is in a dancing mode and starts to dance, naturally the mind will also be in a dancing mode!

Having found a comfortable position, the next step is to focus the mind on the particular object that we choose to meditate on. We need to focus our mind on a single object and try to maintain our focus so that we can distance ourselves from our normal distracted mind. If we check up on how our mind normally functions, we will find that it is influenced by the distractions or disturbing conceptual thoughts that continually arise.

As mentioned in an earlier teaching, when the mind is unstable and easily influenced by distractions, it is like cotton wool and the disturbing conceptions are like a breeze. The slightest breeze can blow cotton wool around because it lacks stability. Likewise, when our mind is easily influenced by conceptual thoughts, it will just follow those thoughts – one thought will lead to another thought, then to another conceptual thought. In this way, we find that our mind is constantly distracted by the worldly thoughts.

Now, if allowing our mind to be influenced by distractions were of some benefit to us – if it brought contentment and happiness to our mind – this would be worthwhile. However, when we look into how the mind functions, we notice that the more distractions we have, the more distressed, unhappy, restless and frustrated will be our state of mind.

So the advice initially given in meditation is to focus on a single object. Initially, when our mind is not trained to be focused and stable, trying to focus on different objects in our meditation would distract rather than stabilise the mind to become stable. An untrained, immature mind faced with too many objects will just become more distracted. If we were not to keep the mind focused on one object and just let it be, we would find that it would become completely distracted. So we need to exert some effort to focus the mind and maintain that focus, because it will not naturally do this by itself. If we let the mind behave naturally, it will just become completely distracted externally.

How can we keep the mind focused on a single object? The answer given in the teachings is that we need to use mindfulness. Mindfulness is a particular state of mind that maintains the mind's focus on a particular object that it has

chosen to focus on. The actual state of concentration is where the mind remains completely focused on the object.

So mindfulness is that part of the mind that checks up to see whether the mind is remaining focused or not. Once we actually stabilise our focus on the object, there is an inherent power within that mind to develop to a state where it maintains that focus constantly. For whatever duration one has chosen, the mind will remain focused on that object and nothing else. When one gains this ability to focus on the object and not allow the mind to be distracted by anything else, one will have attained concentration.

Concentration is an inherent quality or power within the mind. It cannot be developed externally, but is within the mind. It is just a matter of us becoming familiar with that ability that we naturally have, and strengthening it. Then we can become completely focused on the object.

When focusing on the object, it is important that we don't see the object as being separate from the mind. We need to train our mind to the point where the object becomes one with the mind. As long as we see the duality of the object as being separate from the mind, we will not have developed real concentration.

Even initially when we are training, we should train the mind to become one with the object. With our limited experience, we will begin to notice that as we internalise the object and focus on that inner mental image, it will be as if that mental image and the mind have become inseparable. When we become comfortable with this, we will notice that our concentration naturally becomes much more stable.

This is the main point being emphasised – for as long as you see the object to be focused on and the subject, the mind itself, as being completely separate, you will not develop real concentration. The main point is to see the inseparability of the object and the subject.

For example, let's say we took an actual external object, such as this clock here, as an object to focus on. For as long as we try to focus on the actual object, the clock, we would find it difficult to keep the mind concentrated on that external object. Whereas if we were to focus on the image we have of the clock in our mind, our mind would be more stable. First we look at the physical attributes of the actual clock, then we internalise and recall this image. It would be the mental image of the clock that we would focus on in meditation. As we familiarise ourselves with that mental image, we would notice the mind becoming more stable and the mental image of the clock becoming very firm and stable.

Actually, it would be good for us to experiment with this. Just look at a clock and see how long we can focus on it by looking at and trying to meditate on the external image. Then try to internalise the image of the clock and focus on the internal image. We would notice the difference.

When we say that we should not allow the mind to follow the distractions, here 'distractions' are to be understood primarily as the delusions such as anger and attachment which arise in the mind. Maintaining our focus on the meditation object naturally protects the mind from following habitual distractions such as anger and attachment. Just withdrawing our mind allows it to become naturally tranquil, calm and peaceful because it is not influenced by the delusions.

On the contrary, when the mind is influenced by the

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delusions such as anger, how do we feel? As soon as an object of anger arises in the mind, such as someone we have had a disagreement with, what kind of feeling do we have in our mind when the anger arises? Is it a pleasant, comfortable, nice feeling? Or does it feel unpleasant? Likewise with other delusions such as competitiveness, does that bring a relaxed attitude in one's mind? Or does it bring anxiety and unease? The same for pride, attachment and the other delusions – when we recall instances when the mind was influenced by any of these delusions, what was a result in our mind? We can see clearly that it was an uncomfortable feeling that we experienced, not something that contributed to the peace and calmness of our mind.

We can verify this with our own experience, on a very practical level. This is why I emphasise the simplicity and practicality of meditation. The technique that I am presenting of focusing on one object such as the breath is a very simple and easy technique, and it is also extremely practical and useful in our daily life. This is something you can take with you and use in your daily life. It is not complicated.

Now we will take the time to focus on our breath, making the determination that for the next few minutes we will keep the mind focused 100% on the breath, not allowing it to be distracted by other conceptual thoughts or distractions that arise. When we begin to meditate, we may feel a natural tranquillity and calmness simply by withdrawing our mind and internalising our focus on the breath. It is good to spend just a few moments experiencing that calmness, just feeling the natural calm feeling of the settled mind.

If we just remain in that state for too long however, it would be easy for the mind to become distracted. So after that initial few moments, we bring the mind's focus on to the breath. As mentioned earlier, we do this by internalising the image of the breath and trying to make the mind one with the breath on which we are focusing. We will spend a few moments doing this.

*(Pause for meditation)*

Even after meditating for a few minutes, we will gain some benefit from having a relatively more relaxed and calm mind. If we can use this small benefit we have gained from a few minutes of meditation in our daily life, we can estimate how much more benefit we can get in the long run – how regular meditation can really contribute to a happy state of mind.

As we have said, real wealth is inner wealth, which is a happy mind. This real wealth is developed within ourselves; it is not something that we can gain from outside. Once we have this internal wealth, we can take it with us wherever we go. It can assist us wherever we are. This is really the supreme wealth, because as we know, anything can happen to external wealth – anything can destroy it. Internal wealth developed within one's own mind, on the other hand, is something we can carry with us for as long as we protect it. We can use it at any time. Rather than exhausting it, the more we cultivate that inner wealth, the more it increases. Therefore it is infallible, trustworthy and our real protector. Thus we can see that it is really worthwhile and beneficial to spend some time cultivating it.

Even if we had significant external wealth, which we normally consider as being important to our happiness, if our mind were unhappy and we had a lack of a sense of

well-being, external wealth could not help us in any way. We have all had that experience. I am talking from my own experience, I can vouch for that. If we are feeling a little bit unhappy or a bit sad, even if we have friends around us or other distractions such as TV, they don't seem to really cheer us up at that moment. Even if the surrounding environment is quite nice, that doesn't seem to really contribute to the mind's happiness. We may all have had that experience at certain times in our life, if we don't have a happy state of mind, even the best external conditions do not help.

#### **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. Developing the faith of conviction in karma and its effects**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1. Thinking about the Law of Cause and Effect in general**

###### **4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.1.2. Reflecting on the individual divisions**

In the text so far we have covered the general classifications of karma. Now we will go to some particular instances of karma.

Those who have been attending the earlier sessions would understand that if we were to summarise the main points of karma, having identified the 10 non-virtuous karmas and their opposite, the 10 virtuous karmas, we should then to the best of our ability adopt the virtues and discard the non-virtues, as it is the non-virtues that contribute to our unhappy state of mind as well as harming others, while virtue contributes to our well-being. The positive result of adopting the 10 virtues is to obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime. This is what we can achieve in the future.

Just experiencing a good rebirth should not be seen as an end to itself. If we can use that good rebirth to cultivate the means to achieve enlightenment, this would be the best use of the good results of virtue. A good rebirth in the next life as a human being or other higher rebirth is still not the ultimate good we can achieve. There are still obvious limitations with a human life. As we can experience ourselves in this lifetime, there are still limitations and a lot of suffering to be experienced. So if we can engage in methods to achieve the ultimate goodness that can be achieved, this would be the most worthwhile way to exert ourselves in accumulating virtue.

That ultimate goodness is, as explained in the teachings, the enlightened state of a Buddha. Buddha hood is a state where one obtains every possible attainment or virtue that can be attained. Any residual negativity is completely removed. It is the state of having completely removed all faults and attained all qualities. We can see from our own development how, from an initially unruly state of mind, we have improved in some way after having engaged in practice. With even this slight improvement, we can see that definitely the mind could develop further qualities – how from the unruly behaviour we used to have, we can definitely reach a state where we are a bit more well-behaved physically, verbally and mentally. This shows that we can definitely overcome our negative states of mind.

The word for Buddha in Tibetan is *san-gye*. 'San' literally

means clear away, so in this contexts, it means to have completely cleared and removed all negativities that exist in the mind. The syllable 'gye' means to fully develop or actualize, and here it means having completely actualised all the qualities in the mind. When the mind has reached its fullest potential – actualised all the qualities and completely removed the negativities – this is the state of enlightenment, Buddha hood.

The Sanskrit word, Buddha, means the awakened one – to be clear and awakened. The analogy is that, just as the lotus flower needs sunlight to bloom from a bud, and just as we would see daylight when we awoke from sleep, likewise the Buddha's mind is a mind that has awakened from the darkness of ignorance. Therefore the word Buddha, awakened one, here refers to the one awakened from the darkness of all ignorance – having overcome and completely abandoned all ignorance, there is no trace left in the mind. This illuminated and awakened mind is also an omniscient mind. This is the meaning of the word 'Buddha'.

We can see how the language itself is rich in providing meaning for just one word. The Tibetan word is an adaptation of the Sanskrit word. So the word 'Buddha' has so much meaning, including the analogy of someone awakened from sleep or a lotus opening up to the light of sun. The analogy of awakening from sleep is quite a good one for getting a glimpse into the Buddha's mind. When we are sleeping, it is as though we are engulfed in darkness. As soon as we open our eyes and see the morning light, that the darkness is immediately removed. Here, sleep is analogous to ignorance, and awakening from ignorance is being in a completely illuminated awakened state of knowing everything. This is the meaning of 'awakened'.

Maybe we can stop here for this evening. If anyone has questions...

*Question: It is common when people die for people to think that they are going to see their lost friend or family in heaven and I wonder if that is a projection of our own attachment and what Geshe-la thinks about that. I think in Sogyal Rinpoche's book (The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying) he mentions that in the bardo we see something that pertains to that.*

*Translator: So the question is what Geshe-la feels about actually seeing loved ones in heaven?*

*Student: What would be the Tibetan explanation of that phenomenon in the western mind or consciousness?*

*Answer: In terms of being able to see a loved one in the future, it is possible to meet them wherever it may be, whether there is heaven or anywhere. It's possible to meet them.*

In terms of your second question, particularly about what you read about the bardo, it is explained in the teachings that the bardo beings can see other similar bardo beings just as we would see someone here in this room. A being in that state can see similar beings quite vividly. Some people have developed a psychic 'eye' through which they say they have the ability to see bardo beings.

Buddha Shakyamuni's mother is said to have passed away seven days after the Buddha was born. The Buddha's mother is said to have been reborn in the Realm of the Thirty-three Gods. After having shown the aspect of attaining enlightenment, the Buddha is said to have gone to the Realm of the Thirty-three Gods to meet his mother and give teachings. There are actually a set of teachings that he gave

in the Realm of the Thirty-three Gods. To this day, there is an auspicious day in the Tibetan calendar known as La Bab Duchon, which means literally the descendance from the god realms, celebrating the time when the Buddha came back to this world again from the Realm of the Thirty-three Gods. This is an incident from the story of the Buddha's life, to show that we can meet our relatives in another life.

Glenn Mullen used to come to teach at one of the Kagyu centres in Australia. When he came the first time, he didn't meet me, I must have been away or something. The second time he came here he came to see me. He said the reason he wanted to meet me was: "As I am a student of Geshe Ngawang Dhargye and I have heard that you are also a student of Geshe Ngawang Dhargye, if I did not come to meet you, then Geshe Ngawang Dhargye would ask my why I hadn't gone to pay you visit?!"

What he said really left an impression on my mind because he was indicating that there is definitely what we call an emanation of the lama. Even though the lama (Geshe Ngawang Dhargye) had passed away, there are definitely emanations and there is definitely some sort of presence that can still remain. He was referring to that, also particularly to the fact that in the future, we can definitely meet our teachers again. When we say a lama is present, it is said to be a manifestation of the lama who normally resides in the pure lands.

There is a description in the teachings of the different aspects of the Buddha, of the guru, and that is what we call the 'samboghakaya' and 'nirmanakaya'. The samboghakaya or enjoyment body is said to be obscured to ordinary beings – we cannot see that aspect. Rather what we can see and relate to is the nirmanakaya, which is the physical manifestation of the guru or the Buddha. So it is extremely kind of the gurus to come in this very ordinary aspect, so that we can relate to them and see them.

It's good to reflect on these points. I am mentioning again the impression that Glenn Mullen left on my mind to show that I have actually received a number of important points from some westerners! It's quite intriguing when we think about how we can sometimes receive personal instructions in different kinds of ways thorough different people.

Once again we will sit in a comfortable and upright position, bring the mind inward and focus on the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. We will try to maintain and keep our focus on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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