

---

# The Condensed Lam Rim

༄༅། །བྱུང་ཚུབ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 November 2006

---

As usual, we will spend some time doing meditation. For that purpose, we will sit in an upright and comfortable position.

When we physically sit in a proper position, we also need to withdraw our mind from external distractions and the different types of delusions that arise in the mind. We bring the mind inwards and focus it on the chosen object. The object we are focusing on here is the breath. We keep our focus on the breath 100% and maintain that focus for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

That will be sufficient for now. We may have noticed during this short meditation that we definitely felt some benefit. The immediate benefit of meditation is that the mind becomes fresh and clear. This clarity contributes to the mind feeling light, happy and elevated. That is an immediate benefit we can all relate to. Having a clear and happy mind will contribute to the fulfilment of our normal activities. Whatever we engage in becomes much more meaningful. With a clear mind, you can fulfil whatever objective you have in life with more strength and energy. Thus having a clear mind also contributes to a long and healthy life.

When we see the immediate benefits of meditation, it will inspire us to engage in regular practice. This will naturally bring about long-term benefits. As beginners, although we may be unable to relate to the long-term benefits of meditation, if we put effort into our meditation on the basis of understanding the immediate benefits, the long term-benefits will come about naturally and slowly over time. That is why it is good for all of us to acknowledge and feel encouraged by the immediate benefits of meditation.

Understanding the immediate benefits of meditation can help us see how other religions have similar techniques for bringing about a happier, more peaceful mind. We can develop a genuine respect for other religions and understand the important contribution that they make to everyone's mental happiness. We will see that there is a need for religion, as it provides a means of gaining a deeper sense of contentment and happiness beyond material happiness and comfort. So, our immediate experience of meditation from a Buddhist perspective can also enhance our understanding of religion in general, which is very useful.

## 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

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

##### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.2. Thinking about the Law of Cause and Effect in detail

##### 4.2.2.1.2.1.1.2.1.2.2. The fully ripened qualities and their cause

We now come to the third subdivision of the earlier category within the topic of karma. Once one has reflected on the points of karma, one engages in virtue and turns away from non-virtue. This is the third subdivision of an earlier category of karma.

The categories of karma from the earlier topics are:

explaining karma in general, and

explaining the particular aspects of karma.

In the explanation of karma in general, we went over to the four characteristics of karma in general, which are:

karma is definite;

karma shows great increase;

one will not meet with the karma one has not created; and

once it has been created, its results will be definitely experienced – it will not dissipate.

Having explained these four characteristics, we went into the particular aspects of karma – the ten virtues, the effects of engaging in the ten virtues, and so forth, as well as their opposite, the ten non-virtues. Then we went into the details of the eight ripened qualities of good karmas that one creates to obtain a perfect human life.

Having gone over those in detail, we now come to the third subdivision – having contemplated these points on karma in general and more specifically, we must know how to practise what we have learned, which means engaging in virtue and abandoning non-virtue.

Engaging in the practice of the ten virtues means applying the ten virtues in our life to the best of our ability. On the other hand, we need to refrain from engaging in the ten non-virtues to the best of our ability.

The third subdivision is further subdivided into two: a general presentation, and the way to train by means of the four powers.

The general presentation is further subdivided. The first subdivision is the way to develop the mind of meditation, day and night. The lam rim teaching here quotes from *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* in which it says, "From non-virtue comes suffering. How can I truly be free of this? It is fitting that at all times day and night, I think only of this."

As the first part of this saying states, from non-virtue comes suffering. This explains the cause-and-effect sequence of karma as being definite. If we engage in the cause, which is non-virtue, the result will definitely be

---

---

suffering. As we don't wish to experience suffering, we must come to realise how suffering originates from non-virtue. The last part of this verse means that, by seeing how engaging in non-virtue causes us to suffer, it is necessary for us to contemplate how we can be free from suffering – not just contemplating this once, but contemplating it all the time, day and night.

An analogy for ridding oneself of non-virtue is that of accidentally swallowing poison. If we accidentally swallow poison, as soon as we realised we had done it, we would use any means within our power to get rid of the poison from our system, as we would be afraid of the consequences of serious illness, pain and even death. This is the analogy given in the teaching to show us how we should invest all our effort in getting rid of our non-virtues.

We can then contemplate whether or not we have non-virtues. To what extent do we have non-virtues? We can bring them more vividly to mind. We can go over the ten non-virtues and check up to see how many of them we have accumulated. If we can see that we have definitely accumulated any of the ten non-virtues, we would then try to overcome or purify them from our system.

A further quote from the text says,

The Buddha, has said that conviction is the root of all virtues. (We can also use the words belief or aspiration.)

Whatever activities we engage in, it is really the conviction we have in what we are doing that brings a good result. The conviction we generate is a basis for achieving whatever we need to achieve, and is the root of accumulating all virtue. And the basis of that conviction is contemplating and seeing the ripened effects of virtues. So one serves as a basis for the other to develop. The main point here the basis of all virtues is conviction or faith.

Shantideva's text goes on to explain how, having develop conviction in this cause and effect sequence, one exerts oneself in engaging in the practice of abandoning the causes for suffering, which are the non-virtues, and adopting the causes for achieving happiness, which are virtues. After understanding that virtue is the cause of happiness, we engage day and night in the practice of exerting oneself to accumulate the causes for happiness and to abandon the causes for suffering.

Developing the conviction in karma really means understanding how certain causes bring about a certain result. As explained earlier, the cause of various types of sufferings is engaging in the ten non-virtues. We need to understand that if we engage in any of the ten non-virtues, they will definitely bring about negative consequence for us. When we fully understand this, we will have generated conviction in the infallible nature of karma. Likewise if we engage in a virtue, it is definite that we will experience the result – happiness. So, the understanding in the infallibility of karma is what develops our conviction in karma.

Conviction also comes about through having faith in the Buddha and his teachings. When we see that the Buddha

himself is infallible, then we will see that the teachings of the Buddha are also infallible, and vice versa. So in that way one enhances the other to generate a strong faith which comes about from the conviction.

When we develop this conviction, we will naturally abide by the law of karma, and this will become a real source of our happiness and wellbeing. Our life really will begin to have much more meaning, as we will have the real tools within us to develop the causes for our happiness and to discard the causes of our suffering. We will begin to experience the good results of abiding by the law of karma in this very life, as well as in our future lives. We will also come to understand how the dharma definitely contributes to shaping us into a good person, a moral person, a well-behaved person.

The teaching explains the importance of contemplating karma again and again. It is extremely important that we continually reflect upon it to generate a strong conviction in our mind. We need to contemplate karma in depth over a long time because the subject is quite obscure and the workings of karma are very subtle. Karma is not something that we can understand right away.

Because karma is obscure and subtle, it is necessary for us to develop strong faith in the Buddha as a valid being. Because the Buddha is a valid being, we can rely on his teachings. Although the way karma works may not be obvious to us, if we generate faith in the Buddha, we can take into account the fact that the Buddha is much more farsighted being with an omniscient mind who can see the subtleties of karma. Thus our conviction in karma can be developed on the basis of having faith in Buddha's omniscient mind.

The subtleties of karma can be difficult for us to understand by thinking about how, for example, when one creates a positive karma in this life, the results will be experienced in the next life, such as being reborn in the divine god realms. This must be proven through logic, through proof of rebirth and future lives, and so forth. For our limited mind, these ideas are still obscure and quite subtle. So for now we can generate faith in the Buddha as being an omniscient and valid being.

To further encourage us to develop faith and conviction in the Buddha as a valid being, the teachings quote from the sutra called the 'King of Concentration Sutra', which says that: "Even if the moon and the stars were to fall from the sky, or the earth with its mountains and cities were to perish, or the realm of the sky were completely transformed, still you, the Buddha, would not speak a word of untruth". Of course, the idea of the moon and stars falling from the sky, or the earth with its mountains suddenly perishing without any obvious reasons, or the realm of the sky being completely transformed is not really considered possible. However, even if those events were to occur, the sutra assures us that the Buddha will never speak a word of untruth or never speak falsely.

There are further explanations about how the Buddha's teachings carry the truth. For example, the Buddha explains that by engaging in generosity, we will experience abundant wealth in future lifetimes. And if we

---

practise morality, we will obtain good rebirths in future lifetimes. These explanations are about how by, engaging in virtue, one will experience a good result.

On the contrary, as explained throughout the Buddha's teachings, if one engages in non-virtue, one will experience negative results. There is no contradiction in any of the Buddha's teachings that goes against these explanations. We can vouch for the Buddha's words as truth where it relates to our experience in this life and its relation to future lives through the exact mechanism of cause-and-effect.

Through these quotes from the sutra, one develops faith in the Buddha, and engages in the practice of adopting virtue and shunning non-virtue. In this way, one can please the buddhas, as we will be following the advice of the buddhas. If we do not follow this advice and do not abide by the law of karma, there is no way in which we can please the buddhas. Abiding by the law of karma really is essentially about engaging in virtue and shunning negativity in relation to oneself and others. Essentially this means not harming other sentient beings. As the Buddha explains in his teachings,

If you harm sentient beings, it is equivalent to harming me. If you benefit sentient beings, it is equivalent to benefiting me. This is the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

We can take the analogy of a mother and her child. A mother who has great concern and love for her child would be affected if anyone were to harm the child. If someone harmed her beloved child, the mother would feel as if she herself had been harmed. And if someone were to benefit or help the child, it would be equivalent to benefiting the mother. This is how the Buddha's love goes beyond the individual being towards all sentient beings. In this way, we can understand the extent of Buddha's compassion and love, so we can have faith in engaging in the practices prescribed by the Buddha.

If there are any questions, Geshe-la says he can address that now.

*Question: Geshe-la, I understand that all composite phenomena are impermanent and come about through causes and conditions. What is your simple explanation for explaining permanence?*

*Answer:* In contrast to an impermanent phenomenon, a permanent phenomenon is a phenomenon that does not relate on causes and conditions and does not change. A permanent phenomenon does not depend on causes and conditions for existence and thus it does not change at all. This contrasts with an impermanent phenomenon, which depends on causes and conditions and is ever-changing and momentary.

*Question: So a permanent phenomenon is the beginning?*

*Answer:* An example of a permanent phenomenon would be a mere image in our mind, which does not have any function or existence and does not relate to reality in any way. For example, when we refer to a book, it is not just a mere image of a book in our mind, but there is actually an object we can relate to which has certain functions.

Whereas a permanent phenomenon would be an image that occurs in the mind that has no relationship whatsoever to an actual reality or object. Even an image arising from something that we have seen is itself said to be a permanent phenomenon, because that image has no function. There is no function or cause-and-effect sequence of the image we have of an object that we have seen. So the mere conceptual image of something is a permanent phenomenon.

In brief, the explanation of permanent and impermanent phenomena is in terms of whether or not a phenomenon has a changing nature. That which has a changing nature is impermanent and that which does not have momentary changes is a permanent phenomena.

*Question: Geshe-la, I understand that there are many different type of Buddhism, like Tibetan Buddhism, Thai Buddhism, etc. How should one because a tendency may arise that because one thinks that one type of Buddhism is better than another type of Buddhism. How should one stop oneself from thinking like that?*

*Answer:* A way to overcome that discrimination in one's mind is to understand that the very terms Thai Buddhist or Burmese Buddhist or Tibetan Buddhist are based on nationalities in which Buddhism has flourished. That in itself does not indicate that there is a difference. In reality, there is no difference between the Buddhist teachings that prevail in different countries. In essence, it is all Buddhism with the same messages.

The conceptual difference comes about because there are different nationalities practising Buddhism in their own countries. It would be similar to saying that there is a difference between Australian Christianity and English Christianity and American Christianity. We wouldn't say that, would we? For a Christian, all Christianity would be essentially the same, wherever it is practised. All Christians from different nations accept Jesus as being the messenger of God. Actually, Geshe-la is not sure whether Jesus is God or a messenger of God. He has asked others whether Jesus is considered a god or not, but no one seems to have a clear answer. Nevertheless, all Christians accept Jesus as the main focus of their beliefs.

Similarly, whether they come from Thailand or Korea or Japan or Tibet, all Buddhists have Buddha as their main guide or object of refuge.

*Question: A lot of wars are about religion, like Christianity or sects of Christianity such as the Evangelical sect, because people practise slightly different ways. Because some groups don't practise their religion the exactly the same way they are somehow seen as wrong – for example Mahayana practice compared with Theravada practice.*

*Answer:* We must understand that it is not the fault as the religion itself but of the followers as ordinary beings, acting out of their own ignorance and delusions. They create those divisions and after the divisions have been created, argument and so forth arise. So it is really the fault of the person or individuals who discriminate and try to prevent others from practising their own beliefs.

In terms of Buddhism, we have Mahayana and Theravada traditions. Mahayana has many followers

---

within different nations, particularly Korea, Japan, China and Tibet. In other nations the Theravadan tradition prevails, such as Thailand and Burma. It is simply a matter of fact that different traditions spread into different countries and that the people from that country practise that particular tradition.

It is important to understand that there is really no distinction; when you really look into it, the Mahayana practitioners base their practices on the Theravadan practices or tradition. So it is really the Theravadan practices or teachings that serve as the basis for the Mahayana teachings and practices. Without the basis of Theravadan teachings, the Mahayana teachings cannot be practised.

*Question: Geshe-la why is Buddhism considered a religion?*

*Answer:* It depends on how you define religion. If you define religion as a mere tradition that prevails in a certain area or country – where people follow the religion simply out of faith without much logical reasoning – then there are some who feel that Buddhism is not a religion, because it is based on logic, reasoning and so forth.

For example, I have heard that some American scholars have considered Buddhism as not really being a religion but more of a science, because it is based on logical reasoning and investigation. So there are some who consider Buddhism more as a science or philosophy. But that does not mean that it is not a religion. As we said, it depends on how you define the word. In Tibetan, the word *choe* means the dharma whether you equate it with religion or not. If someone claims that Buddhism is a logical and scientific measure of finding out things, that is not inconsistent with it being a dharma or religion. So perhaps because you have a scientific mind, you may want to ask that question – is Buddhism more like a science?

Before we end the session for this evening, we will again spend a few minutes in meditation. As before, we shall sit in an upright and comfortable position, bring our mind inward and focus on the sound of the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed from tape by Kim Looi  
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version  
© Tara Institute*