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## The Condensed Lam Rim

# ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སྒྲིག་།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual we can spend some time in meditation. To do this we sit in a comfortable, relaxed posture. It is also important to have a clear and bright state of mind. Through that combination of a relaxed and comfortable physical posture and a clear and bright state of mind we can definitely derive some great benefit for ourself. By adopting a clear, bright state of mind we can utilise that to train the mind. The training that we adopt further enhances a clear and bright state of mind which contributes to a calm and peaceful state of mind. To achieve that requires some understanding and training of the mind itself.

To generate the initiative to engage in this sort of training of the mind one needs to think about the importance and benefits of adopting and maintaining a clear and bright state of mind. If we pay attention to the importance of adopting and maintaining such a state of mind we will come to notice that it is the very basis of our well-being in this life. To acquire and maintain this state of mind we need to do some investigation and gain some understanding of the nature of the mind itself.

The relevance of recognising the mind is that from this one will begin to see the relationship between our mind and our overall well-being, particularly in relation to mental happiness. We will begin to notice what happiness means. Some people have confided in me that they don't really understand and recognise what happiness is. We all wish for happiness and say that we want to be happy but what is it? What really is happiness? If you do not really understand what happiness means that shows that you don't realize that happiness is related to the mind. Happiness is a feeling which is developed within the state of our mind.

I used to wonder why people are not clear about what happiness means or why is it the case that happiness is not easily identified. When I thought about it I felt that maybe the confusion, doubt or lack of clarity about what constitutes happiness comes first of all from a misconception thinking 'if I acquire something valuable, whether it is a situation or material object, then that will make me really happy!' So they work hard to gain whatever it is they consider will make them happy. After having obtained it and they begin to notice that it hasn't really made them entirely happy, they begin to wonder, 'What is happiness? I had acquired what I believed would make me happy but I am still not really happy.' This is where I feel people start questioning and have doubts about what constitutes happiness.

I feel it will be of the great benefit for oneself if, rather than assuming that happiness relates to acquiring

something externally, one can recognise and understand that happiness is something that relates to inner state of mind. The appropriate way to identify what constitutes happiness would be to begin by identifying and understanding that both happiness and its opposite, unhappiness, are related to a state of mind. They come from within oneself rather than from outside.

If one were to examine the causes for happiness and suffering (or unhappiness), there may be external causes and conditions that contribute to the feeling of either happiness or unhappiness. But while these serve as the conditions for happiness or unhappiness, the actual feeling of happiness or unhappiness is experienced within one's mind. In other words, happiness and suffering is not outside of us but rather within one's own mind. That is the main point.

A logical reasoning for coming to the assumption that happiness is not outside of us but rather within us is to consider that if happiness did come from outside, related to material things, then the more material things we have the happier one would be. But that is clearly not the case. We have many examples of those who have a lot of material things but are not really happy. This is proof that happiness does not come from external material things. That is how we can reason that happiness is something which develops within us.

There are many westerners who really question the causes of happiness and begin to understand that happiness is something that does not relate just to external factors and means. Westerners who have travelled in the east, such as Nepal, have confided in me that they've seen people who worked in the fields and farms in Nepal. Sometimes these Nepalese would have to go away from their home to work at farms in faraway mountainous regions and they would camp out in small tents while harvesting the crops. Their conditions were very meagre, torn tents and very simple food. When westerners have gone trekking and seen these villagers it seems that they were very happy, especially in the evening after work when they gather round together, have a simple meal and sing. They seem to have a joyous life. In terms of external things they are very poor, but nevertheless they seem to be very joyful and happy. Westerners who have seen that confide in me that they wonder what makes them so happy, why they are so joyful.

Also during that time in the East others will come to beg for food. When they go out to beg for food they may not get much. Sometimes they get something from others and other times they don't. Regardless of whether they have gotten much or not they share whatever they have with others. They have just enough to eat for that evening and they are satisfied and seem happy and joyful. One of the factors that makes them joyful and happy is that, even though they are in externally difficult situations, living together and helping each other brings a certain kind of harmony and a joyous feeling amongst them. In that way they experience a sort of well-being and joyous feeling.

It is because happiness and joyous feelings are related to having a compassionate feeling towards others that's I regularly emphasise that it is important that family

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members develop a genuine concern and compassionate feeling towards each other. They will experience that sense of joy as they share whatever they have out of genuine concern for each other with a wish to help each other. That is based on genuine love and compassion for each other. This is why I regularly emphasise that when we are together with others it is important that we generate a genuine sense of concern and genuine sense of love and compassion. That will be a real source of joy and happiness in one's life.

I have many stories I could tell about the difficulties and the hardships that I have had to bear, particularly when I was doing my studies. I could even bring tears to your eyes (*Geshe-la chuckles*) if I related the hardships that I have gone through. The main point that I am emphasising here is the relationship between the extent to which we generate a kind attitude and genuine concern for others and how that contributes to a clear mind.

There is a relationship between genuine kindness and clarity in one's mind. When there is clarity in one's mind whatever one does becomes more meaningful. One accomplishes whatever one has set out to do in a more constructive, effective way. A clear, bright state of mind and kindness and genuine concern for others are mutually beneficial to each other. Those states of mind help and enhance each other. That is why it is that while we attempt to develop a clear and bright state of mind we must also remember that the main purpose is so that we can develop a genuine kind and considerate mind as well.

As mentioned previously, the reason we engage in the practice of meditation and training our mind is, initially, to develop a clear and bright state of mind. Within a clear bright state of mind one will also naturally develop a firm mind that is stable and strong. Then, we could ask, 'What can we do with a clear, bright state of mind that is stable and strong?' This is the state of mind that we need in order to accomplish what is most meaningful and most useful for us to generate overall well-being in one's life. We definitely need to have these states of mind.

So how does the meditation technique work? The technique itself involves placing our full attention and focus upon a particular object and maintaining our focus on that object. During the time when we attempt to place our attention on the meditation object we are definitely withdrawn from all forms of distractions, the meaningless affairs and activities that causes turmoil and trouble in one's life. If we wish to achieve a calm and peaceful mind it is essential that we also understand what it is that opposes a calm and peaceful state of mind. If one were to ask what causes turmoil in the mind the answer would be the various forms of distractions, meaningless and worldly affairs that we are constantly preoccupied with. To the extent that we allow ourselves to be influenced by negative states of mind and distractions, we will experience turmoil, anxiety, depression and so forth. When we apply the technique of bringing our full attention inwards and focus on the meditation object it releases us from that preoccupation with meaningless, worldly affairs, distractions and so forth. This is how the training of meditation helps our

mind to become calm and peaceful. The more we train in this technique the more naturally our mind comes to a point of feeling tranquil and calm.

Another benefit of engaging in this technique of meditation and focusing on an object is that the mind becomes clear and brighter. It also enhances the particular intelligence that is called 'analytical wisdom' within oneself. This is a particular wisdom that is able to distinguish what is appropriate and inappropriate within oneself. That ability to distinguish what is positive and negative within oneself is through analytical wisdom. So, we will be able to acquire or enhance that wisdom within oneself.

We will now actually adopt the meditation technique. To engage in the meditation technique we readjust our physical posture so that it is upright but comfortable and relaxed. Then we make a commitment to ourselves that for the next few minutes I will not allow my mind to be influenced by the distractions and I will intentionally withdraw my mind from all forms of distractions and all thoughts, whether they be positive or negative. One withdraws from all forms of distraction and brings one's focus inwards. Having brought one's focus inwards we then focus on the object of meditation. For us beginners the best object is said to be one's own breath. So we focus on our breath and try to maintain that focus for the next few minutes. We just focus one hundred percent on the breath itself. We will now spend the next few minutes in meditation in this way. (*Pause for meditation.*)

That will be sufficient for now. You could, of course, continue meditating when you get back home. When you get back home one's companion or partner might say, 'time to go to bed' while one is in deep meditation (*Geshe-la chuckling*)

In order to take the initiative and engage in a regular practice of meditation, it is important that we really understand the practical benefits of meditation. One the most positive effects of meditation is that it allows the mind to be steady and not prone to being easily swayed or influenced by disturbances. In this way the more we gain control over one's own state of mind, the more it will benefit one's life. If one's partner or the companion that one lives with gets upset for whatever reason and we can maintain some control over our composure and state of mind it will help our partner. The direct beneficiary of course is oneself. But if they are upset and we don't add to that and can maintain a sense of calmness within oneself, that also helps our partner or friend as well.

The normal worldly reaction, when one's friend or partner is upset and says something inappropriate, is to respond in a similar manner and say something that is equally inappropriate. When we retaliate in that way it does not contribute to the harmony and peaceful feeling between you two. It actually harms you. There is no real benefit in retaliating in that way. That is something that we need to consider and prevent ourselves from falling into.

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4.2.2.1.2. The actual way to take the essence  
4.2.2.1.2.3. The way to train the mind in the stages of the path of beings of the great scope  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2. The actual paths  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2. How to develop an awakening mind  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. The stages of training the awakening mind  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1. Training the mind in the pith instructions on the six causes and effect, which comes from the lineage traced to the great master Atisha.  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2. Extensive explanation  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1. Developing certainty in the stages  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1. Showing compassion to be the root of the Mahayana path  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.1. The importance of compassion in the beginning  
4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.1.1.1.2. It must precede all other Mahayana paths

We can now go to the subject matter from the text that we were covering. The outline 'Showing compassion to be the root of Mahayana path' is divided into three. The first sub-division is 'The importance of compassion in the beginning.' That is also subdivided into three reasons for the importance of compassion in the beginning. The first of these, which we covered in our last session, is 'Taking on the responsibility of liberating other sentient beings depends on compassion'. The second is 'Compassion must precede all other Mahayana paths.' This is the point we are on now.

As explained in our last session, it is important that we understand the context of what is being presented here. The subject here says that compassion is important and it precedes all the Mahayana paths. We defined the Mahayana path, or the great vehicle path, in our last session. 'Great vehicle' has a connotation that someone is taking upon himself or herself a great load, which is the responsibility to benefit all sentient beings. So the ability to take upon the responsibility to liberate and benefit all sentient beings is definitely based on compassion. It has to relate to compassion. What is being presented here is that the very practice of the Mahayana, or great vehicle, path is dependent on compassion.

We can understand this through a practical illustration in relation to ourself. We all have a sense of wishing to care for someone that we love or are closely associated with. That shows when someone that we are closely associated with is having a hard time and is suffering in any way. It is at that time, because of our genuine concern for them that we want to take the initiative to do something to relieve their suffering and pain. We may feel uncomfortable ourselves that they are suffering. On one hand it may seem that we get some negative consequences from their suffering because we feel discomfort, but it is not just discomfort that we feel. It is their suffering that generates the initiative to do something to relieve them from their pain.

It is important for us to be aware that even though one does feel discomfort as a consequence of feeling compassion for others, it is worthwhile. It is worthwhile to feel that discomfort when we can do something to relieve them of their pain. To begin with it is only with

someone for whom one has some concern that one feels discomfort in their suffering. When strangers or someone that one has no close kinship with is suffering we may not feel that much discomfort within oneself. That is because we don't have any real concern for the other. It is good for us to understand that. Some people question 'what is the point of feeling compassion for others if it just makes us feel uncomfortable and uneasy'? In response to that, one needs to understand that even though there is some discomfort, it serves the purpose to benefit and help others.

Another benefit of generating compassion for others is that one would be able to develop a strong, keen determination to do something to release others from the pain and suffering that they are experiencing. One can develop that determination by considering the fact that because of one's close association with the other and that they are distressed and suffering it is appropriate to do something to help them to relieve their suffering. When that determination is developed within oneself there is no hesitation to benefit. Even though there is some discomfort within oneself that becomes irrelevant and minor in relation to the strong determination that one develops to do something to benefit them.

When compassion is mentioned in the teachings it relates to 'great compassion', which is the compassion that goes beyond one's normal close relationships and associates. However, in understanding 'great compassion' it is good at our level that we relate it to how we feel about those in our everyday life.

When we consider the relevance and importance of compassion it may be practical to begin by relating to how compassion is relevant and important for one's own well-being. If we were to consider why compassion is important we can ask ourselves whether we need others to care for us in our life. Do we need others to care for us, nurture us and show their love towards us or not? When we consider it in relation to ourselves, the conclusion is that we definitely need friends and companions who are compassionate towards us and have a genuine concern for us. When one is feeling distressed, lost and miserable, it is very apparent that one needs good companions who can really be at our side and help lift us up.

When we can see how important it is for one's own wellbeing to have others showing compassion to us, we can see how it will be equally important for us to develop compassion that we can extend to others. By seeing first how this is related to one's own well-being we can then see how it contributes to the well-being of others as well.

The teaching says that one needs to consider how all the training and all the paths in the great vehicle path, Mahayana path, are preceded by compassion. The text quotes from the Buddha's own teaching called *The Teachings of Aksayamati Sutra* which states:

Furthermore, Venerable Shariputra, the great compassion of the bodhisattva is inexhaustible. Why? Because it is the prerequisite. Venerable Shariputra, just as the movement of the breath is a prerequisite for the life force of a human being, the great compassion of the bodhisattva is a prerequisite for correctly reaching the Mahayana.

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The quotation says that the great compassion of a bodhisattva is inexhaustible. That implies that it is something you cannot do without. It is essential. When the question is asked 'why', the Buddha answered that it is the prerequisite before any other teaching. In this illustration the importance of great compassion as a prerequisite for the Mahayana teaching is likened to the importance of the breath as a prerequisite for the life force of a human being. As explained with the quotation from the sutra, compassion is a prerequisite. This means that without having developed compassion there is no possible way to develop all the rest of the qualities that are prescribed in the Mahayana path. One must definitely rely upon developing compassion first in order to develop all the other qualities.

The third reason for the importance of compassion in the beginning is that, 'It is the instigator of the bodhisattva conduct.' In order to present the reason why compassion is the instigator of the bodhisattva's conduct the text quotes from another sutra called *The Foremost of Gaya* and this sutra states:

Manjushri, what is that motivates the bodhisattva's deeds? What is its object?

Manjushri said, "Devaputra, great compassion motivates the bodhisattva's deeds; its object is living beings".

We can conclude for the evening. Before we end the session it would be good to again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object of meditation will be the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra to be recited. As we hear the sound of the mantra being recited we try to keep our entire focus and attention on that sound of the mantra itself. We engage in complete focus on the sound of the mantra. Then, when the recitation ends, we place that focus on the residue of the sound and keep one's entire focus on that for a while. We try to keep our focus, not distracted by anything else. That will help to stabilise our focus and attention and this becomes a meaningful meditation.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed from tape by Su Lan Foo  
Edit 1 by John Burch  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
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