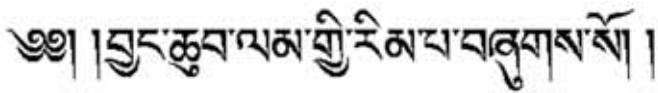

The Condensed Lam Rim



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual, since we are meditators, we can spend some time in meditation. Some of you are experienced meditators. However as reminder for beginners, to meditate, we firstly need to adopt a comfortable and relaxed posture. Then we need to set a positive motivation for the practice. Just as you the listeners need to have a good motivation, the presenter also needs to have a good motivation. If I encourage you to have a good motivation but fail to adopt a good motivation myself, my words would not be a truth.

I regularly stress the importance of motivation for our practice of meditation. I would also like to remind you that having a good, positive motivation is important in every aspect of our lives, particularly in relation to communication with others. If, prior to engaging in conversation with someone or having some sort of meeting, you set a good motivation such as inducing a sense of love and compassion in your heart and thinking about the well-being and benefit of others, even mundane aspects of life can turn out well. That motivation will help one's mind to be in a positive state so that the communication goes well and the results that follow will be fruitful. Otherwise, if we are not careful about our motivation, we might have a state of mind where we will be on edge and can be easily irritated if someone says the slightest wrong thing. If we are not careful about our motivation our mind can immediately become upset and angry and the communication will not go well. So, having a good motivation is very important.

In general we can say that a positive motivation is very important in every aspect of our lives, but it is particularly important for our spiritual practice. The teachings emphasise that establishing your motivation is essential prior to engaging in spiritual practice. One of the great Tibetan masters, Lama Tsong Khapa, emphasised this point. He drew on the Indian master Aryadeva's explanation in the *400 Verses*, where the text explains that the listener needs to have the qualities of wisdom or intelligence, an unbiased mind and interest in the subject. The listeners need to have those qualities in order to be good listeners or disciples of a teacher. Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned that if the listeners were to develop a good motivation prior to listening to a teacher's talk, it will enable them to see the good qualities of the teacher as well as their own good qualities. So these are essential points. When you go to a teaching with a good motivation you will be able to see the qualities of the teaching and the teacher, as well as the qualities of one's own mind. These are the important points about the need for a good motivation.

We can emphasise these three main points again. A listener needs to have the qualities of wisdom, an unbiased mind and interest. All of these are equally essential. Wisdom here relates to the wisdom that enables the listener to analyse what the teacher is saying and determine whether it is beneficial or not, whether it is useful or not. The listeners are encouraged to investigate and analyse what is being taught and to accept it if one finds it to be reasonable and, if it is not reasonable, not to accept it. That is an incredible, profound presentation of the Dharma. Encouraging listeners to have that wisdom suggests that the teachings should not be accepted blindly and the approach is not dogmatic, where a teaching has to be accepted whether you agree with it or not, whether it is reasonable or not. So, the freedom or choice is given to the listeners and that choice needs to be based on the intelligence and wisdom to clearly identify whether something is reasonable or not. This is a really an important point.

The next point, having an unbiased mind, is also really important. If one goes to listen to a talk with a biased mind you would, because of the biased mind, be more likely to agree with someone that you are fond of, even if what is said is not reasonable, because of the fact that you like them. Whereas you might not agree or accept what someone that you are not fond of, or don't like the look of, even if they are saying is reasonable. This is true in our normal life. When we listen to others with a biased mind, we do not distil what is being said to see if it is really useful for us or not. Whereas, with an unbiased mind, even if we are not too fond of the person, if they say something meaningful and useful we can accept what they are saying as reasonable and truthful. This shows how to derive the actual essence or the meaning rather than deciding by the surface.

The final point, which is having an interest in the subject, is also essential. Without having an interest one will not take heed of what is being explained.

So this particular wisdom, the wisdom of being able to analyse what is being presented as truthful or not, reasonable or not, is very important in our everyday life, such as times when others share their advice with us. If we adopt this intelligence and wisdom to analyse what they are saying we will not easily fall victim to being deceived by others. This particularly applies in relation to friends. If we don't utilise this intelligence or wisdom and just accept what friends say, it is easy to be deceived by them, even if they are our friends. If we don't use the intelligence to discern whether what they are saying is truthful or not, whether it is reasonable or not, whether it is useful for oneself or not, then it is easy to be deceived by what others say. If one uses that wisdom one will always be able to remain stable and not be easily deceived by other's suggestions or advice. This is really important, even in our everyday lives, as it effects the decisions that we make and the directions that we take in our lives.

The reason why having a positive motivation is stressed in the teachings is because, as the great Indian Master Shantideva said, the mind precedes everything that we do. What Shantideva was explaining is that whatever we

do is always preceded by the state of mind that has an intention of engaging in that act. Because the mind precedes whatever we do, whether our actions are positive or not is determined by the state of mind we have prior to engaging in that action. If the mind preceding an action is influenced by delusions such as strong attachments or anger, then the action that is carried out with that intention is most likely going to be a destructive action. Whatever we do will not be fruitful, rather it will be destructive. Therefore it is advised that we need to be very mindful prior to engaging in any activity; we need to be very careful and mindful of our intentions and our state of mind to ensure that it is free from strong attachment, desire, anger, pride and so forth.

Of course the advice that we find in the teachings is given in a spiritual context, or what we call Dharma practice. However the reason I emphasise this here is in relation to everyday life; we need to be mindful because we spend most of our time associating and dealing with others in the outside world. In our work environment, or wherever we are, we constantly engage with others in the activities that we do. It is important that we try to be very careful with our intention or motivation prior to engaging with others so that whatever we do becomes more fruitful and constructive. This is something important to remind ourselves of in our everyday life situations.

So, to begin the practice of meditation, let us readjust our physical posture so that it is comfortable and relaxed and also ensure that our mind is in a clear and positive state.

We can summarise the purpose and technique of meditation practice: how it is to be adopted and how it is effective. Firstly, we all appreciate a calm and settled mind. We can all relate to the positive effect of a clear and calm mind that is associated with a peaceful mind. That is something that we can all relate to and we can all see the benefit of a relaxed and peaceful mind. We might find, however, that our mind is usually the opposite of being in peaceful and calm state. It is usually quite agitated and disturbed. There are usually a lot of worries, anxiety, fears, frustration or stress in our mind.

So we need to try to understand how that comes about, and what is causing that. We may attribute the cause to external conditions and reasons but, in reality, the main cause for a distressed state of mind is allowing one's mind to be influenced by the delusions and distractions. Thus, because our mental distress is caused by our own state of mind, we have the potential and ability to set our mind in the correct way. We get disturbed and distressed, and we get anxious and worried, because we allow our mind to be influenced by the distractions. When we choose to adopt the practice of meditation we are making the choice to not allow our mind to be influenced by the distractions. This means for the purpose of meditation and acquainting ourselves with the ability to have a controlled mind, we initially need to make the commitment that, for the duration of our practice, we will not allow our mind to be influenced by the various distractions, thought patterns and so forth. Normally, it seems we let our mind go off in every direction at once and we don't pay any attention to this and just allow it to be completely influenced by the various distractions.

Here we take the initiative to bring our focus inwards and distance our mind from the distractions.

Having brought our attention and focus inwards, we then place our entire focus, the full capacity of our mind's focus, upon the breath. We do not allow the mind to be distracted by any other thoughts and distractions but keep the mind's focus and attention fully on the breath. So, for the next few minutes, we will adopt this practice where we keep our entire focus just on the breath and nothing else. (*Pause for meditation*)

It would be really useful and beneficial if we could adopt a meditation practice, just as we have attempted now, regularly in our daily life. One need not do this for a long duration of time. Something that is manageable, even a short time, would be useful.

The practical benefit of adopting regular meditation in our daily life is that as we engage in the practice of meditation we naturally experience a calmer, more settled and tranquil mind. When one experiences a genuinely calm mind it brings about tremendous benefit in one's immediate surroundings, such as with one's partner, relatives and those we are living with. They experience a benefit as a result of one's calm and peaceful mind. It naturally brings about an harmonious and peaceful feeling in one's immediate surroundings. Even animals experience the benefit of one's calm and peaceful mind. As we spend most of our time at work, our colleagues, friends and other work partners will also feel the positive benefit of one's calm mind. One's work will also become more effective.

Many people have confided in me that if they start their day with a few minutes of dedicated meditation practice, their work also turns out to be more effective. This is because, when the mind is calm and tranquil it is naturally more able to focus and if one is able to pay attention and focus better then, of course, one's work will naturally become more effective. Also the main cause of the work environment being enjoyable is having a calm mind.

If one makes an attempt to have a calm and peaceful mind there's less chance for one's mind to become distressed. We normally attribute others as the cause for us to feel hurt or disturbed but, in fact, it is really our state of mind. If we, from our own side, have taken the initiative to develop a calm and peaceful mind we will find that when we go out there seems to be less people disturbing us and less people who are critical of us. That is because we have our own protection in our mind. When we protect our mind, by making it calm and peaceful, it seems there are less people disturbing us. So why would we intentionally allow our mind to become disturbed when we have the ability to protect it? Why wouldn't we protect our mind so that it remains calm and happy?

We definitely need to understand how essential it is that we protect the good potential that comes with the sound intelligence that we have. As human beings we have a genuinely unique intelligence that can be utilised for very constructive things in our lives. His Holiness the Dalai Lama often talks about the good potential that we have as human beings. He mentioned that each and every human

being has that unique intelligence which has the ability to analyse and distinguish right from wrong. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has also often said that the very good and sound intelligence that humans have can also be misguided and misused. In that case it can cause a lot of destruction. Misusing the sound and good intelligence that humans have to cause much more damage and destruction than benefit is a pity.

Therefore, just as His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions, I also regularly encourage people to use their intelligence in every aspect of their lives. That means using the full potential and ability that we all have. We all have the ability to analyse whatever is presented to us and determine whether it is useful or not, whether it is truthful or not. This also goes for the advice of friends who, with good intentions, might share some advice that they feel maybe good for us. But if we follow someone's advice blindly and don't use our own intelligence to discern whether it is right for us or not, whether it is good for us or not, it is easy to be misguided and misled. I have particularly shared this advice with the younger generation, but even the older generation can pay attention to the need for analytical wisdom because there are instances where people in their late fifties can still be deceived by the younger generation. When even young ones can deceive people who are in their fifties, we really need to use intelligence and wisdom, whatever age we may be.

The wisdom that I am referring to here, analytical wisdom, is that which analyses whatever is presented to us to determine whether it is useful or not and then, based on that analysis, making the decision whether something should be adopted or discarded. It is much more constructive and useful if we adopt or discard something after making that analysis.

In terms of the unique intelligence that humans have, I personally am quite intrigued and amazed with just the fact that airplanes can fly. I find it mind boggling when I see a plane's cockpit with all the different gadgets and I try to comprehend how all that works. On the positive side, you can see how human intelligence is utilised to produce things that are quite incredible and marvellous. This brings great benefits in so many different fields—medicine, science and so forth. However, on the destructive side, it seems that intelligence can be used to understand very tiny matters such as atoms to produce weapons of mass destruction, like nuclear bombs that cause so much destruction and fear in the human race. Nuclear war is one of the great fears of the human race in this age. These weapons are also produced by the intelligence of human beings.

When we think about the positive side, it is remarkable and amazing how human intelligence can produce so many incredible things. Of course there are many things from a worldly perspective that are not yet understood by humans and there's still much to learn and understand. Yet what has been produced and the progress we can see is note worthy.

However the spiritual point of view is that we ultimately have the intelligence and potential to be able to bring about a genuinely calm and happy state of mind. That is

something that our intelligence can produce for us. The greatest benefit that we can get from our intelligence and wisdom is the ability to produce a calm and happy state of mind within us. Each and everyone of us carries that potential. Thus we have the ability to bring that about. Therefore we need to recognise and seize the opportunity of having this great intelligence and ability that can produce a genuinely happy and calm mind. We need to protect, by all means, whatever we have obtained so far and further enhance a happy and calm mind.

From the various obvious examples and reasonings that we have looked at, we can acknowledge the incredible intelligence that humans have and how that intelligence can be utilised either to bring about benefit or great harm for humankind. These two directions that intelligence can take leads back to the main point that I emphasised earlier, which is the importance of a good motivation. It really goes back to that main point. As intelligence is a neutral entity, it depends on the motivation whether that intelligence is used to do something constructive or destructive.

Using the example of the invention of an airplane, of course it is hard for us to know exactly what the motivation of the inventor was, however it has proven to be useful for mankind. People are able to travel further and quicker, and the interaction between people around the world is much greater. This is one example of how when intelligence is used in a constructive way with a positive motivation, it can be beneficial to human kind.

If the motivation is tainted and influenced by negativities or delusions, then intelligence could be utilised to bring about great harm and can produce things that are destructive to human kind. Those scientists who are constantly looking into ways to bring about destruction on a bigger scale or to harm others in a greater way, are preoccupied in their minds with creating more destruction. As their motivation is tainted, they will always look into ways and means to produce more powerful weapons to cause the greatest destruction. This is how we can see it is related to motivation.

What I have heard, though I am not too sure if it's accurate, is that the Japanese themselves had the technology of the atom bomb, but that it was used against the Japanese. There is a saying and teaching that the very weapons that you create in order to defend yourself might actually turn around and harm you. If that is the case then this is an example of producing weapons with the intention to protect yourself but because it involves the wrong motivation of harming others, it can turn around and harm you.

With the recent mishaps in Japan there is a great danger of nuclear radiation leaking out. For what purpose that was produced I am not sure, but now it seems to have caused a lot of worry and fear. That fear seems to have reduced a bit now, but when it occurred last year there seemed to be a lot of fear. A lot of people in that area have nowhere to go. That's where they live, yet they are living with the constant fear that at any moment nuclear radiation could leak out and cause great damage.

Going back to the main point again, it is good for us to really ponder and try to understand that the outcome of

whatever we do, whether it has a positive outcome or not, depends very much on the motivation or the intention that we have. It is very much related to that and that is something good for us keep in mind.

I was intending to go into the text but not having too much time left, are there any questions?

Even though it may seem like we don't have much time to read from the text, the main point is whether we relate to the instructions from the teachings. Whether we have time to go through the text or not, the main purpose of these teachings is to discuss something that is useful for us in our everyday life. That is my main intention. Of course we have the text to refer to, but prior to going into the explanations of the text itself, my intention is to try to share something that will be useful and of benefit to you in your everyday life, in your work environment, study, with relatives, at home etc. That is my intention.

I know a couple called Cody and Regina. They used to come here but I think they are wandering about now. They have a small house in Mentone and they own a four-wheel drive vehicle that they use to go out and travel around the country whenever they have extra time. They have quite a few utensils and things they need for the trip and the car.

So they travel with the vehicle and often when they come back they relate to me their adventures and stories. They say that when it seems like it is a safe place they will sleep out in the open in their tent. When it seems like it is a bit unsure or dangerous, they will sleep in the car. If there's no danger they will swim in the river but if they feel there could be crocodiles they collect water in a bucket and take their shower outside. They go off for an adventure and travel around Australia in this way.

One time they were in the north of Australia and they were a few hours or so away from Darwin by plane. While they were in this remote area Regina would call her father periodically. On one occasion she wasn't able to connect with her father so she called her sister and was told that her father was very ill and had been taken to hospital. Regina wanted to go back to Melbourne urgently so she flew to Darwin and then took a plane from Darwin to Melbourne. So Cody had to drive the vehicle back to Melbourne alone.

Cody explained to me that normally Regina was with him and driving was much easier. Driving alone in a remote area he started to feel quite alone and anxious and started to be a little bit afraid of having to do the trip by himself. He told me that he sat down and prayed to Tara, did some Tara mantras and some meditation and then he thought, 'OK, I am not alone, Tara is going to help me'. With that thought in his mind he started to feel much more relaxed and calm and was able to make the long drive back by himself.

Before we conclude for the evening let us again spend a few more minutes in meditation. This time our object of our focus will be the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As we hear the sound of the mantra we try to keep our full attention and focus on the sound itself and, when the recitation subsides, we just try to

maintain our awareness and focus for a short while. In that way this becomes the actual meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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