

MOTIVATION - THE THREE SCOPES

The Lam Rim, or the Graduated Path to Enlightenment, is in three main sections, or scopes. All beings seek happiness. These scopes reflect three levels of Buddhist aspiration or motivation based on how this happiness is perceived.

Beings of all these scopes realise that life is unsatisfactory and that we are continually born into unpleasant conditions through the cyclic process of birth and death, known as *samsara*. There are greater- and lesser-suffering realms in *samsara*. The motivation of the being of lower scope is to obtain rebirth in the three upper realms of *samsara*, where there would appear to be pleasure with little suffering.

The being of the middle scope understands that the nature of all *samsara* is suffering and that the comfort of the upper realms will eventually come to an end. Therefore, the motivation is to achieve freedom from *samsara* entirely and achieve the liberated state of *nirvana*.

The being of higher scope realises that the personal happiness of *nirvana* is not complete without considering the happiness of others, because it would still hold to some notion of an independently-existing 'self' - the root cause of all suffering. The being of higher scope seeks the liberation of all sentient beings as equally important. An individual immersed in the sea of *samsara* has little power to help others, but the perfect enlightened state of buddhahood is far more effective.

Thus buddhahood is sought, *for the benefit of all sentient beings*. This motivation unites wisdom and compassion to achieve the *bodhicitta* mind. The Lam Rim provides a method to develop this mind for the happiness of ourselves and others.

LAM RIM - THE PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

All undertakings require appropriate preparations. The Lam Rim preliminary practices are designed to prepare the mind before beginning a meditation session.

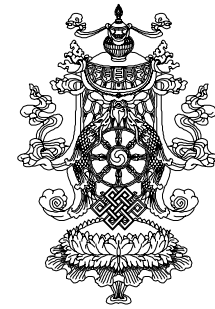
Firstly, we clean our room (helping cleanse our mind of defilements) and arrange symbols of the buddha's enlightened body, speech and mind (a focus for our practice). We make offerings reminding us of the value of what we seek to achieve. Adopting a comfortable sitting posture and developing a pure motivation, we request help in our practice from the 'merit field' - a representation of the good qualities of the fully-enlightened state. Following this is the seven-limbed puja (a seven-part chanted prayer: prostration, offering, confessing, rejoicing, requesting, entreating, dedication) and a mandala offering (a 'world' offering to benefit all sentient beings). After some further requests, we begin the actual practice - the Lam Rim meditations.

Recommended Reading

Lam Rim Bristol has both a library and a shop available for use. There are many books suitable for reading in connection with these evenings. The following books are particularly recommended for those interested in the Lam Rim:

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, *Pabongka Rinpoche*
The Essential Nectar, *Geshé Rabten*

"If you do not do at least one meditation session on impermanence in the morning, I think you will devote the whole day to this life".
Geshé Chaen Ngawa



LAM RIM BUDDHIST CENTRE SOUTH AFRICA

Spiritual Director
Ven. Geshe Damcho Yonten

THE BASICS OF BUDDHISM

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LAM RIM

1 Kite Street, corner 1st Street, Vrededorp, Johannesburg
Tel: (011) 837 9000 or (011) 473 2840

LAM RIM - THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

The Lam Rim is a series of meditations (fourteen in total) which are arranged in a logical progression - each meditation follows naturally from that which precedes it. The meditations on the path are divided into scopes starting with the basics and followed by the paths of the lower, intermediate, higher and highest scopes.

The basics of the path

1. GURU DEVOTION

We have learned from many teachers in the past. We have learned well from those for whom we had the most respect and constancy. This arose from a recognition of the teacher's good qualities - a recognition depending on our own attitude. A suitable teacher on a spiritual path is rare and precious. Should we be fortunate enough to find such a teacher, we will learn most rapidly if we follow the teacher's instructions well.

2. THE OPPORTUNE, FORTUNATE HUMAN REBIRTH

Being born human is very rare and very precious. It does not happen by accident. Not all humans are as fortunate as ourselves. We have an opportunity to follow a spiritual path and achieve liberation in this very lifetime. We are considered to have ten endowments: five are personal - human rebirth, birth in a peaceful land, having our faculties, not having committed serious crimes and having faith; five are related to others - a buddha has come, has given teachings, the teachings are followed and others have love in their hearts.

The path of the lower scope

3. DEATH AND IMPERMANENCE

Our fortunate human rebirth is impermanent - it could end any minute. Meditating on this discourages wasting time on the ephemeral pleasures of this life and devoting time to future lives' benefit. We should meditate on three aspects of death: death is inevitable; its timing is uncertain; nothing but *dharma* practice can help us when we die. Familiarisation with death will make it easier to accept when it comes.

4. THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LOWER REALMS

Following death, we cannot be sure where we will be reborn. There are six realms of *samsara*, three of which are the lower realms: the hell realms; the hungry ghost realms; the animal realms. There is great suffering in these realms. We can check for ourselves the suffering of animals, but those of the hungry ghosts and hell beings are more unbearable. Whatever suffering we can imagine now, and more, can be experienced in these realms. This meditation will prompt us into action to avoid these realms.

5. THE PRACTICE OF TAKING REFUGE

The meditations on death and the lower realms leads to great concern. We need to know how to overcome such sufferings. We take refuge in the Triple Gem: *Buddha, Dharma, Sangha*. Through *dharma* practice we can purify our minds, generating compassion and wisdom, understanding the true nature of existence and cause and effect. With the aid of the spiritual community (*sangha*), we achieve buddhahood - our essential undefiled nature which no longer creates causes for suffering.

6. THE LAWS OF ACTIONS AND RESULTS

To bring about the cessation of suffering, we must understand its causes. *Karma* (cause and effect related to volition) can only be fully understood by buddhas. However, it has four characteristics: it is fixed - the effect of an action is of the same nature as its cause; it increases - the results are greater than the cause; effects cannot happen without corresponding causes; once causes are created, the effects will not disappear of their own accord.

The path of the middle scope

7. THE SUFFERINGS OF THE HAPPIER REALMS

Lest we think that there is anywhere of lasting satisfaction in *samsara*, we should meditate on the suffering of the three upper realms: gods, demi-gods and humans. We can check the human realm for ourselves. Those humans who enjoy many worldly pleasures all undergo great suffering when they are about to lose them. The gods live in luxury for a long time, but this also stops when their *karma* runs out. The demi-gods live in envy of the gods and are constantly fighting them and losing. By meditating on the sufferings of the happier realms we can develop renunciation - we will no longer look for lasting happiness anywhere in *samsara*.

8. THE PROCESS OF SAMSAARA, AND LIBERATION

What is the process by which *samsara* continues? There are twelve links to one life-cycle: ignorance, compositional factors, consciousness, name and form, the six senses, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, rebirth, aging and death. The relation between all these links is complex, but they need to be broken to achieve liberation. In particular, we must overcome our ignorant sense of 'self'. We must halt attachments as they arise before they become too strong.

The path of the higher scope

9. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BODHICITTA

All buddhists seek to avoid harming others and have compassion for those who suffer. *Mahayana* buddhists take

responsibility to liberate all beings from suffering. Enlightenment is sought as the most effective way to achieve this. This is *bodhicitta* motivation. *Bodhicitta* is the perfect union of compassion and wisdom. There are many trainings to generate *bodhicitta*, such as the Seven Point Cause and Effect Method and the Exchange of Self and Others.

10. THE SIX PERFECTIONS

Generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom. These are the six perfections. They are a code of personal behaviour which is primarily a means towards one's own enlightenment.

11. THE FOUR MEANS OF ATTRACTION

These are considered in association with the six perfections and are usually considered as attributes of a good teacher: giving of material requisites; pleasant speech; teaching the path; setting examples. These provide a basis for bringing the *dharma* to others and thus complement the six perfections.

12. MEDITATION ON QUIETUDE

The mind is usually full of untamed thoughts which obscure our perception of the way things really are. We seek to achieve a calm mind through various stages: fixing the mind on some object, disciplining the mind, becoming peaceful and pacified, and eventually reaching single-pointed concentration and absorption. The two main hindrances of agitation and mental fading must be overcome.

13. MEDITATION ON INSIGHT

With a clear mind, purged of spurious thought patterns, we can develop insight. We meditate on the nature of self and ascertain its non-existence as an independent entity. We meditate on the emptiness of phenomena - that nothing inherently exists by itself. The realisation of emptiness is the antidote to all our delusions.

The path of the highest scope

14. THE ADAMANTINE VEHICLE

This path involves special practices and initiations which should only be followed under the guidance of a qualified teacher.

The meditations are intended to transform the mind. Although strong effort is made in the actual session, vigilance must also be maintained in between sessions. The path is one of constant practice from moment to moment.