
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can practise some meditation as usual. Sit in a good comfortable meditation posture. Now we already know how to meditate, so there is no need to say much more!

One has to put into practice the Dharma knowledge that one has, then, through putting that Dharma knowledge into practice, one can see whether one is progressing or not. There is no point in thinking that one doesn't have enough Dharma knowledge, then striving for more and not putting it into practice.

We all wish to have a positive and wholesome good nature. However, a certain type of thought, when it arises, makes that difficult. When this type of thoughts arises, we have to take extra care because it's this type of thought that makes life difficult. When this type of thought arises, one has to take special care to look after one's mind.

We need to be careful about the small, immediate dangers. Ordinarily, we always focus on the greater, more remote dangers; however, it is the small, immediate dangers that give us harm. We can use the analogy of someone standing in front of a small dog that is barking and threatening to bite. If there is a big dog further away that is also barking, you would ordinarily dismiss the small dog because of its size and concentrate instead on the big dog. This, however, will give the small dog an opportunity to bite you!

We have to oppose through meditation the type of thinking that disturbs the mind. When we practise meditation, we gradually learn how to oppose those disturbing thoughts. We have to use meditation to counteract our afflictions – there is no point in meditating if the meditation doesn't counteract our afflictions.

For example, if we want to counteract attachment but actually keep the object of our attachment very deep in our mind while we meditate, our meditation to reduce our attachment will be ineffective. The attachment will arise more strongly, to the point where it will completely overwhelm one. So, we have to take care that the meditation we do actually does counteract our mental afflictions.

Otherwise, it is quite meaningless to say that one meditates if one is holding the objects of one's mental afflictions very deep in the mind. One might be able to attain some momentary mental peace when one sits down and meditates for a few minutes. However, when one arises from that meditation, the afflictions arise again very strongly. This is a common experience. So, we must take care that our meditation really counteracts the

mental afflictions, otherwise it won't be effective. By meditating continually, one will gradually be able to actually counteract the mental afflictions

We have to ask ourselves why it is that, even though the mind may be peaceful during meditation, when we arise from meditation, the mind becomes disturbed again. Why does this happen?

The mind has to be purified according to one's knowledge, through the power of listening and through the power of meditation. But that will not happen if one keeps these two separate from the afflicted states of the mind. If we merely listen, clear introspection won't arise within the mind, and if we merely meditate, the afflictions won't become less powerful. As long as one keeps one's Dharma practice and the afflicted mind separate, one's Dharma practice will not have an effect on the afflicted mind. Rather, one has to apply to the afflicted mind what one has learned through listening, and meditate on the meaning understood by listening. In such a way, the afflictions will be reduced. However, by just listening or just meditating, we cannot reduce the power of the afflicted nor can we generate clear introspection.

We can meditate for a few minutes now. Bring the mind back home, focusing it 100% within, letting go of external objects and of thoughts that distract the mind towards external objects.

When you totally withdraw the mind within, for a short time you may not be aware of external objects. But then, before long, external objects again appear to the mind. It seems that the mind can't stay without an object for very long. So, after having completely withdrawn the mind towards the inside, we place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath and take the coming and going of the breath as the meditation object. We can meditate in that manner for some minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Now I will wake you up from your deep meditative equipoise! It is important not to surprise they can get a fright, so it is good to be careful in that regard.

We said that by becoming aware of the benefits of listening, the desire to listen to Dharma teachings will arise within one's mind. We have already been through the benefits of listening.

3.1.2. Generating respect for the teachings and the teacher

Next comes the outline of treating the Dharma and the person teaching the Dharma respectfully. After having listened to the benefits of listening to the Dharma, the question may arise in our mind: 'How should we have to behave towards the Dharma and to those who teach the Dharma?'

The answer is that we listen to the Dharma teachings with faith and respect and we think of the person who is teaching the Dharma as being an actual Buddha. What the second means is that we take great care to prepare a throne and so forth. This tradition started with Shakyamuni Buddha and we follow the same tradition

with a Dharma teacher.

One has to listen to the Dharma with faith and respect. Generally, faith arises through seeing the qualities of the object, and respect arises through becoming aware of the kindness of the object. Normally, we might think that paying respect to another person means we have to put ourselves down. It is easy to misunderstand the meaning of respect. However, respect arises through awareness of the other person's kindness, and then generating admiration and liking for that person – that is respect. But it does not mean that one has to feel lowly or that one has to put oneself down.

For example, when one is aware of the kindness of one's parents, one generates a certain respect and liking for them. That is the nature of respect – liking someone after becoming aware of their kindness. And faith is generated through becoming aware of the qualities of the object or person.

One shouldn't listen to Dharma teachings with an attitude of thinking that one is superior to the Dharma teacher from a worldly point of view or from a Dharma point of view. This type of conceit – thinking that one is superior to the Dharma teacher either from a worldly point of view or from a Dharma point of view – closes one's mind to the possibility of generating qualities.

Even in ordinary terms, as long as we think that we are superior to another person and think they don't know anything, this closes our mind to perceiving the other person's qualities. So, we should not have a conceited attitude towards the Dharma or the Dharma teacher. We shouldn't have an attitude of not valuing them.

Those points we were talking about before –recognising the Dharma teacher as a Buddha – means that one should prepare a throne for the Dharma teacher in accordance with the tradition that started with Shakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, we prepare a throne for the Dharma teacher similar to a throne that we would prepare for the Buddha, and we also make offerings. For example, tonight you have made mandala offerings, so that fulfils that requirement. So, that is how paying respect to the Dharma and to the Dharma teacher is done. When we place a throne for the Dharma teacher, it is done out of respect for what the person teaches. One also has to make offerings in order to pay respect to the Dharma teacher and the teachings.

And one shouldn't listen to the Dharma teachings with conceit, thinking that one is superior to the Dharma teacher either from a worldly or from a Dharma point of view. And one shouldn't disregard them as well.

3.1.3. The actual way of listening to the teachings

Then we come to the actual way of listening to the teachings. One must listen to the Dharma teachings by eliminating the three faults of being like a 'faulty vessel' and by adopting the six recognitions.

Initially, we also we have to think about whether listening to the Dharma is beneficial for us or not. Listening to the Dharma is beneficial, regardless of whether one adopts the six recognitions and is free from

the three faults or not. But it makes a great difference if one can eliminate the three faults of being a faulty vessel, and if one can adopt the six recognitions. That will greatly increase the benefit one receives from listening to a Dharma teaching. It doesn't mean that if we don't have these conditions, we won't receive any benefit – but it makes a difference to how much benefit we receive.

The three faults of being like an unsuitable vessel are – being like a vessel that is closed; being like a vessel that is contaminated and filthy inside; and being like a vessel that has a leak on the bottom.

Regarding the first fault, no matter how delicious the food and drink we wish to place in a vessel, if the vessel is closed, we won't be able to put anything into it. That is the first analogy.

In the second analogy, if the vessel is contaminated and filthy inside, no matter how fine and delicious the food is to begin with, after it has been put into a dirty vessel, it won't taste nice and no one will want to consumer it

In the third analogy, no matter how fine the drink or food that we put into the vessel, one won't be able to consume it because it leaks out through the hole in the bottom.

The meaning of the first fault is that, even though a person may be physically present at the teachings, if their mind wanders off somewhere else and they don't pay attention to what is being said, they will be like the first type of vessel that is closed. If one doesn't listen to what is being said in the teachings, one's mind will not change – one becomes like the vessel that is closed. So one has to focus 100% on what is being said.

There are certain types of animals that a hunter can lure with attractive sounds. The animals may be so focused on the sound or the music that they will not even notice the hunter walking up to them and killing them. Similarly, our mind should be totally focused on the teachings. We must listen to the teachings wholeheartedly, with one's whole undivided attention. We should not just listen to the teaching with a part of our mind while another part of the mind does something else; also, we should not just listen to the teaching for a certain amount of time and then start thinking about something else. Rather, we should listen to a teaching with ones complete attention, from beginning to end.

The mind should be focused on the teachings 100%, and not distracted by external objects. If the mind is distracted by external objects, that will distract our practice of listening.

Even though one might abandon their first fault and listen to the teaching with an undivided attention, if one is like the dirty vessel, it means one is listening to the teaching with a wrong motivation. This wouldn't be so good either.

The attractiveness of food and drink has a great deal to do with its smell. If the food and drink doesn't smell nice, we won't be so inclined to consume it. If it has been poured into a dirty vessel and doesn't smell nice, we would not like to consume it. In Dharma terms, this analogy means we have to listen to the teaching with a

good motivation. A good motivation will decide the outcome of our Dharma practice, but we will talk about that more next time. Now we have some time for questions and answers.

Question: What is a wrong motivation?

Answer: I just said we would talk about this next time! An example is being focused on your reputation thinking: 'I'm going to listen to the teachings so that I can become learned in this life and refute other scholars'. That's a bad motivation.

There are people who listen to the Dharma with a motivation of wanting to acquire knowledge in order to be able to refute other scholars. Or they may be thinking: 'I can teach the Dharma and make myself famous, and receive lots of praise and respect'. This is also quite a bad motivation. But it happens because people's minds are strange sometimes.

Question: My mind is often afflicted by jealousy. How can I overcome this afflicted state of mind?

Answer: To overcome jealousy, you have to meditate on rejoicing – you have to rejoice, meditate on rejoicing in the qualities of the object of which you are jealous.

If you are jealous of the other person's wealth, meditate on how nice it is for the other person to have that wealth. If you are jealous of their qualities, rejoice in those qualities, and if you are jealous of their circle of friends, rejoice in them having those friends.

For example, if you are jealous of the other person's wealth, think that wealth is something that everyone needs and desires, and think how nice it is that this person actually has the wealth that everyone wants and desires, how nice it is that at least one person has that wealth. Rejoicing in the other person's fortune in this way reduces one's jealousy.

It completely depends on one's view, on how one looks at the other person's situation. One point of view generates suffering for oneself, while the other perspective generates happiness for oneself. If one looks at the other person's fortune from the point of view of rejoicing in their fortune, this generates happiness for oneself. It actually brings good fortune to oneself. However, if one looks at it the other way round, it only causes one to be unhappy.

If one can rejoice in other people's fortune, one can sleep well at night. But if your mind is racked by jealousy, you will be the one who will receive the loss and who will lose sleep.

Question: What is the best and most powerful practice to get rid of self-cherishing?

Answer: The best method for overcoming self-cherishing is bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment – but this may be a little bit difficult!

However, if one reflects on the benefits of cherishing others, of having other's welfare at heart, while also reflecting on the disadvantages of self-cherishing, then over time our self-cherishing will be reduced. Reflecting upon how each of us is only one person and how others

are a vastly greater number – in this way, one will slowly generate an attitude of having less self-cherishing and more concern for the welfare of others.

Self-cherishing is really the cherishing of oneself – one person – while others represent a vastly greater number. It makes quite a difference whether one has only one's own happiness at heart or the happiness of 'us' – if one thinks of terms of 'I' or in terms of 'we'.

For example, if one thinks in terms of 'we', already there are many more people included and many more people will receive benefit. Also, a person who has only their own welfare in mind will usually end up alone at the end, with few friends. A person who is less self-cherishing and who has others' welfare in mind usually has many friends. A person who cherishes others is usually well liked by others, and wherever they go, they will be well liked and have friends and so forth. But a self-cherishing person is not that well liked wherever they go, and they end up alone.

So, by looking at the benefits of cherishing others and the disadvantages of self-cherishing, over time one can reduce the self-cherishing and generate a stronger attitude of cherishing others.

Question: Geshe-la, what is the best way to deal with a situation where someone has stolen something from you?

Answer: If you apply an antidote to greed, that is very good. Also, think that wealth is deceptive and illusory. First, when we try to accumulate wealth, we are unable to do so. Then, when we are actually able to accumulate wealth, we find it difficult to hold on to. Later, the wealth disintegrates anyway. So, outer wealth doesn't hold any essence. Rather, one should think that the wealth of inner qualities is the real wealth that one should strive for.

You can reflect on the transient nature of wealth and of one's body. There is really no means for holding onto them – one will definitely lose them sooner or later.

From a certain point of view, it is even better that your wealth is stolen now, because at the time of death, you won't have anything to cling to. So, that's how the situation looks from a Dharma point of view.

Recently, someone told me a story about a man who had all his wealth into a big pillow. One of his friends asked the man why kept this big pillow around. The man said: 'When I die, you have to place that pillow under my head.' What's the point of that? It is completely pointless; you can't take it with you.

There are many strange stories to tell. Like another story I heard about someone putting all their wealth into their pyjamas! (*Laughter*) That is the suffering of trying to hold onto the wealth one has accumulated. In this case, the person even tried to hold onto their wealth while they were sleeping by putting it in their pyjamas.

Question: What about the other person – the one who is doing the stealing? I remember one time I was in a bakery and someone was cheating me. I realised it was a ridiculously small amount, so I wasn't going to report them to the manager or anything like that. But I said

something and they realised that I had recognised they were stealing. So, it was not so much for me, but for the other person.

Answer: [To clarify the point] Because he became ashamed...because he knew that you knew that you were being taken advantage of, so in the future he would avoid doing that...

Questioner: Doesn't that show there are two sides that we have to deal with?

Answer: As I mentioned some time ago, of course there is also the other side. If we take the thief into account, for example, we can pray that whatever they stole may be of benefit to them. Such prayers make it more beneficial for them. It is like the story I told the other day of a woman who got her purse stolen in Nepal – she made a very sincere prayer that it would be beneficial for the thief.

There was also a Tibetan who was robbed at gunpoint by Indian dacoits. They took everything apart from a 100-rupee note, which he found later. He said that the 100-rupee note was given to him by the Buddha, so he shouted everyone for tea! If you can completely let go of what was stolen from you, your mind will be happy. Whether one can be happy or not all depends on one's way of thinking.

As was said at the beginning, bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards, and then place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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