
The Condensed Lam Rim

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We can do some meditation as usual. Sit comfortably and in a good position. Physical posture is important during meditation, particularly when we meditate for long periods of time. At the present time maybe it is not so important for us because we meditate only for short periods at a time but, when one actually meditates for longer periods of time it is very important that one has a good physical posture. Therefore it is good at the outset to have a good physical posture. So sit good and straight; sit straight up.

If the body is upright the psychic channels within the body are also straightened out and then the psychic energies that flow within those channels can flow freely. The better the energies can flow within the psychic channels the easier it is for one to concentrate and to meditate. If the energies can flow freely within the channels it also facilitates the generation of the bliss of pliancy. If the channels are not straight it can provide problems for one's meditation. Because our mind is associated very closely with those energies, if they can't flow freely it brings about problems for the mind. One talks about the obstacles relating to channels.

So sit in a good and relaxed physical posture. Then we also have to take care of the mind. We also have to change the mind. After having placed ourselves physically in a good posture it is important that we also change the mind by putting the mind into a relaxed and soft space. If we are physically relaxed but our mind is agitated it is not useful. So we need to put the mind into a relaxed and soft space. It is important that one pacifies unsuitable thoughts, otherwise one conceptual thought sets of a train of thought. It is important that one pacifies the unsuitable or conceptualising mind and that has to be done within the mind. Those types of minds arise independently of outer conditions and the work of pacifying unsuitable thoughts has to be done within the mind.

After having withdrawn the mind from those unsuitable thoughts and placed the focus of the mind internally then, from within that space, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, and take the coming and going of the breath as your meditational object. (*Pause for meditation*).

That's maybe enough.

3.1.3. The actual way of listening to the teachings

Last time we reached the outline of the actual way of listening to the Dharma and we said that one should listen to the Dharma by first of all being free from the

three faults of faulty vessels, and then by adopting the **six recognitions**. We have already dealt with the fault of being a vessel that is closed up and now we are talking about the second fault; the fault of being like a vessel that is polluted. Regarding the **first** fault. If the vessel is closed up on top then no matter how much food or drink we pour it will all flow down the side of the vessel. Likewise if we don't pay proper attention to the teachings then what is said will bypass us

Being like a polluted vessel

The **second** fault is being like a polluted vessel. If we have a vessel that is filthy and dirty inside then no matter how delicious and good the food and drink that we store in it is it will become unusable once it has been put into that dirty and filthy vessel. We cannot enjoy the food and will not use the food and drink that comes out of a filthy vessel. Likewise we will not be able to enjoy the result of the Lam Rim practice if our practise of listening is polluted by an unsuitable motivation. The pollution that is referred to here is the pollution of an unsuitable motivation. The result, the fruit that can be obtained through the practice of the Lam Rim is very vast and expansive, very great. But the greatness of the result actually depends upon the greatness of the motivation. If one doesn't have the proper motivation for one's Lam Rim practice then one will not be able to enjoy the full fruit of the Lam Rim practice. So it comes down to the motivation.

So what do we refer to as motivation that is stained? A stained motivation would be a motivation that is concerned with gain and fame in this life. If such a motivation, a motivation that concerns itself with the gain and fame of this life arises, then as an antidote one has to meditate on impermanence. The meditation on impermanence is a good antidote against such a stained motivation. The motivation that concerns itself with gain and fame of this life is also the basis of suffering. If we look at it very closely it causes us suffering in this life.

There was once a Geshe Kamlungpa who was residing in the central region of Tibet, in the province of Penpo. He was asked by a Tibetan lay person for advice. The Tibetan lay person said, 'I'm very rich. I'm very well off. My situation is very good, but I'm lacking offspring. I don't have any children, no sons or daughters. Could you give me some advice?'. Then Geshe Kamlungpa. said to the Tibetan man, 'That you don't have any sons or daughters is your fortune. It's your good karma (*laughter*) If all the inhabitants of your region were to transform into your sons and daughters, what type of happiness would that give you? It would become the cause for your uninterrupted suffering' The Tibetan man then asked the Geshe why would that be so? To which Geshe Kamlungpa replied, 'Well, all the people, all the inhabitants of your region, are under the spell of continuous sickness and death. Should they all become your children, it would give you lots of grief and cause for tears'. That's really true. They would all die and become sick. For example, if all the citizens of Melbourne were to become our sons and daughters it would become the source, the cause, for uninterrupted suffering because

they are constantly experiencing sickness and death. That's how one has to look at it.

Motivation that is concerned with the attainment wealth and fame and so forth in the next life is also an unsuitable motivation. In order to counteract such a motivation one has to meditate on renunciation. One also shouldn't listen to the Dharma with the motivation of wanting to attain nirvana for one's own sake alone. The antidote against such a motivation is that one should meditate on bodhicitta. So, in brief, the motivation that is required for listening to the Lam Rim teachings is the motivation of bodhicitta; the mind of enlightenment. At the very least one should generate the effortful bodhicitta, generating with mental effort the thought that one has to attain enlightenment in order to be able to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings. However, thinking, 'I want to make all sentient beings happy and I want them to have the causes for happiness and I want to liberate all of them from suffering and the causes of suffering.' is also a sufficient motivation.

One should adopt a motivation that wishes all sentient beings to have happiness and the causes for happiness and that wishes all sentient beings to be free from suffering and the causes for suffering.

From the outset one should train one's mind in this type of motivation. This is the type of motivation that one should adopt for listening to the Lam Rim teachings and one shouldn't concern oneself with notions of receiving gain, fame and praise, thinking, 'By listening to these teachings on the Lam Rim I will be praised or I will get a good name' and so forth. These are not the motivations that one should adopt. One should adopt the motivation that aims for enlightenment.

So one shouldn't be like the closed vessel and one shouldn't be like the polluted vessel.

BEING LIKE A LEAKING VESSEL

Thirdly one shouldn't be like the leaking vessel. Even if the vessel is open and clean if there is a leak on the bottom of the vessel and we pour food and drink into the vessel then slowly, slowly the contents of the vessel will drip out. Likewise, we shouldn't be like a leaking vessel. One has to keep the understanding that one has generated by listening within one's mind with the tool of mindfulness. When we avoid the fault of being like the closed vessel and we listen to the Dharma teachings with our undivided, complete attention, with our total awareness and our mind is unpolluted by a tainted motivation, by a tainted motivation, we will receive some taste of the Dharma teaching within our mind. We will receive some Dharma knowledge, some taste of the Dharma teaching, within our mind. That then has to be kept in the mind with mindfulness.

One should listen to Dharma teachings in the manner that was explained by Shakyamuni Buddha to Subhuti. Shakyamuni Buddha told Subhuti, 'You should listen well, you should listen intensely and you should hold in your mind what you have listened to. If you listen in such a manner, with those three features, then I will teach.

Otherwise I don't feel like it' (*laughter*). One should listen to Dharma teachings following this threefold advice. The first advice, 'listen well', refers to the listening with an untainted motivation, with a pure motivation, avoiding the fault of being like a tainted impure vessel; a polluted vessel. The second advice, 'listen intensely', refers to the listening with one's complete undivided attention, avoiding the fault of being like a closed vessel. The third advice, 'keep in your mind what you have listened to', refers to holding within one's mind the Dharma that one has listened to with mindfulness; avoiding the fault of being like a vessel that leaks.

One has to relate the Buddha's teachings back to one's mind and put them into practice. One has to relate them to one's own practice. When Shakyamuni Buddha said to Subhuti, 'You should listen well', he meant Subhuti should listen with a good motivation, with a pure motivation. And when Shakyamuni Buddha told Subhuti to listen intensely, he meant to listen with one's complete, total, undivided attention. And when Shakyamuni Buddha told Subhuti that he should keep within his mind what he had listened to, he meant that Subhuti should keep within his mind the Dharma that he had listened to with mindfulness, not forgetting what he had listened to.

When we hear the answers that Shakyamuni gives to the questions posed by Subhuti, we gain very strong faith because we can understand the practicality of the Buddha's teachings; their relevance.

The generation of the mind of enlightenment, bodhicitta, is the generation of the pure motivation. Sometimes we say we have to engage in an action out of a very virtuous state of mind. That very virtuous state of mind is the mind of bodhicitta. One has to generate a pure motivation for listening to the teaching and then one has to focus one's mind properly on the teaching, giving the teaching one's whole undivided attention, and then one has to remember the teaching that one has listened to and not forget it with the help of mindfulness. One has to continue being mindful of the teachings that one listened to, not forgetting them. In such a way one can develop qualities.

THE SIX RECOGNITIONS

The text then says that one has to adopt the **six recognitions**. The first recognition is the recognition of one as sick. The second is the recognition of the Dharma teacher as the doctor. The third is the recognition that what is being taught is the medicine. The fourth is the recognition that one will be cured from the sickness through the practise of the teachings. The fifth is the recognition of the teacher as a holy being and the sixth recognition is in regard to the Dharma; the wish for it to abide for a long time.

We will explain those six recognitions in greater depth the next time. For today we can now have some question and answers. So do you have some questions?

Question: My daughter would like to know what she should do now that she can't come for some weeks?

You can tell your daughter that it's alright if she can't come to class. What is important for her is not to lose her wholesome mental attitude, both regarding herself as well as regarding others. She should treat herself in a wholesome manner, having a wholesome attitude both to herself as well as to others, not to associate with poor company, study well and work well; those four things. Even though in class we quite often talk about aims that are still very far off, we have to practise; we have to apply the Dharma to our day-to-day life. By keeping a wholesome mind and not associating with the wrong types of friends, those that are wild and have bad destructive behaviour, by having a good job, by working well and by studying well, we do that. You can also tell her that Geshe-la said that she should listen well to her parents (*laughter*).

Formerly when I was at the Chenrezig Institute there was a small Sunday School class that was brought to me by Robina. At the side of my seat I had a big bowl with lots of sweets, to give one to each of the children - there were about 15-20 children. I gave them the same advice - if one wants to be a good child one should listen very well to one's parents and one should study well. They took that advice to heart. One boy, for example, told his parents, 'Geshe Doga said I should listen well to my parents' and he took it to heart. Give that message to your daughter (*laughter*).

Question; Geshe-la, how can I avoid worrying about things that are beyond my control like loosing my job if the company goes broke?

I can't give you a method for not losing your job (*Geshe-la laughs loudly*). But does your worry prevent you from losing your job? Is your worrying in any way beneficial with regards to not losing the job?

No, no that's not the question. The question was, if you worry, is that beneficial with regards to not losing the job? Is there any benefit if you worry that would make it more unlikely that you lose the job?

(Translator) You don't understand the question? Is it beneficial if you worry or not? That's what Geshe-la wants to know.

Since there's no benefit your worries are just a source of suffering and not of benefit. Worrying about losing the job doesn't have any benefit. It will not help you to keep your job and it only causes you more suffering. Instead of worrying about losing the job it is better if you have a calm, relaxed and happy mind and then look for a new job. As Shantideva says, worrying is not useful. In this case you can just look for a new job. There is no need for you to worry.

Worrying about it from the point of view of you being your own supporter also doesn't make sense. Being alone or not is really quite irrelevant as to whether your situation deteriorates or not. What determines whether your situation deteriorates or not are your merits. You can be single, you can be alone or you can be in a group. What actually determines whether one's situation deteriorates or not is one's own merits. We can observe that people's situations sometimes change very quickly.

From being very well off and having lots of outside support their situation completely changes when the merits dry up and that support dries up. Whether you are alone or not is completely irrelevant to your financial situation and therefore it shouldn't be a source of worry. We have to take responsibility for our own life. The Bodhisattvas take responsibility for all sentient beings. We, at least, should take responsibility for our life. You also don't know whether you will actually end up getting a better job. Even if you lose that job, you might actually end up getting a better job.

So to worry is quite unnecessary and useless. Many times previously I have told the story of two Geshes, Geshe Kalchen and Geshe 'Penba'. These two Geshes, Geshe Kalchen and Geshe 'Penba' were in a group that escaped from Tibet to India over the mountains. Geshe Kalchen, was the senior Geshe and had several students to look after. He was very worried about their provisions. He worried that their tsampa would run out and what would happen when that happened. He was constantly worrying about what would happen when they came to India, about not having anything to eat and so forth. But Geshe 'Penba', who actually was the junior Geshe below Geshe Kalchen, said to Geshe Kalchen, 'Oh, Geshe-la, don't worry. Where we are going there's food. In India there is food and we will get some of that food. Since there is food, we will be able to get some of it, and therefore don't worry'. That helped Geshe Kalchen. Then when the Geshe came to India he was given rice and dhal. Initially, but because he was not used to rice and dhal, it caused diarrhoea for the Geshe. Later he became accustomed to it and then dhal became very precious.

If it possible in such a situation to stay relaxed and get food, in a country like Australia one can definitely take care of one's own accommodation and of work. One can definitely find work and accommodation and so forth.

Question; Geshe-la could you talk a little bit about the four powers?

First there is the power of reliance. The power of reliance refers to going for refuge and the generation of bodhicitta.

Then comes the power of the thorough application of the antidote. The power of the antidote refers, in general, to any type of virtue. When we engage in a virtuous practice we think, 'I'm doing this virtuous practice for the purpose of purification'.

Then comes the power of repudiation. This means that we generate intense regret for the negativity that we have created. By reflecting upon how the negativity that we created is only a cause for suffering, will only cause us suffering, we generate intense regret for the negativity that we have created. Just by generating intense regret we will already purify non-virtuous karma.

Then comes the power of the promise; promising that one will not again engage in such an action in the future. The power of the promise is the decision not to do the action again in the future. Here you might get the doubt, 'If I engage in that action again in the future then my promise will become a lie'. But it's alright if you actually decide

not to do the action again. If you make at that time the actual decision not to do the action again then it isn't a lie.

It is also alright if you make that decision for a certain amount of time, such as for one hour or one day and so forth. In such a way, the negativity becomes purified. Then there's no need for you to go into the confession room over there so that the Lama can then sit on the other side of the grill and hear your confession. That becomes unnecessary.

Question: How can we get experience in Bodhicitta, some feeling?

By slowly, slowly familiarising the mind with concern for the welfare of sentient beings, with the attitude that concerns itself with the welfare of others. By slowly, slowly, again and again familiarising the mind with such an attitude one will get a deeper experience. When we recite the actual words of bodhicitta then it's alright if you think the same way as the words. It is also important to meditate on love and compassion. The meditations on love and compassion bring about concern for the welfare of others, wanting others to have happiness and the causes for happiness, wanting others to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

After having generated concern for the welfare of others, you then take upon yourself the responsibility to accomplish the welfare of others. Arising out of strong concern for the welfare of others you take on yourself the burden of accomplishing the welfare of others. Then when you actually check up whether you actually have the ability or not you find that at the present time one doesn't have the ability to accomplish the welfare of others. Then by looking where such an ability can be found one realises that only an enlightened being has this ability. Then one actually generates the thought of wanting to become an enlightened being in order to be able to perfectly accomplish the welfare of others.

As was said initially, focus the mind towards the inside, withdrawing it from conceptual thoughts that try to distract the mind towards external objects and focus the mind internally. Then place the mind 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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