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## *The Condensed Lam Rim*

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We can meditate for a little while as usual. Sit in a good physical posture. Similarly to putting the body into a good posture we also need to work with the mind to put it into a good state. We should try to transform our mind in its very essence. What happens is that our Dharma practice is more at the surface of our mind but deep within the centre of our mind there are various types of mental afflictions such as self-grasping, self-cherishing and so forth that are very strongly entrenched and that arise very strongly again and again.

Our Dharma practice however is more on the surface of our mind, so what we should try to do is change our mind from within its very essence; to change our mind within its very depths. If one is able to do that then that is very good.

We have to see whether we are able to change those deeply entrenched attitudes or not. Whatever we call those negative types of mental states, whether they are called self-grasping or self-cherishing, they make our life very difficult. For example, no matter how much fortune one has within one's own life because of those mental attitudes one never feels satisfied and one never feels that one has enough. One always feels that one needs something more. Likewise, when one sees the fortune of others one can't rejoice in that but one feels jealous of their fortune. If we are not able to change our mind, really change our mind, then our situation is indeed very difficult.

Therefore it becomes very important that one trains one's mind in an altruistic attitude that is concerned with the welfare of others. Slowly, slowly training one's mind with concern for the welfare of others and training one's mind in love and compassion brings great benefits. We can also observe our own attitude towards other people that we know who are always concerned with the welfare of others; who are loving and compassionate. If something bad happens to them we feel great concern and loss and sorrow. However if something bad happens to someone who is very egotistical and selfish we don't feel very sorry for that person. So we can see from our own attitude how much we value and cherish love and compassion in others; how much we value an attitude that cherishes the welfare of others.

It is important that one slowly, slowly trains one's mind in concern for the welfare of others. However there are many disturbances in our life through being exposed to many different types of situations and experiences. Seeing different things the mind becomes very agitated. So many people say 'First I have to go to a quiet place

where I don't see anything and then meditate there in quiet'. That's perfectly understandable.

While slowly, slowly training the mind in concern for the welfare of others one should consider that other people also want happiness and don't want suffering exactly as oneself. Others don't want the slightest bit of suffering exactly as oneself doesn't want the slightest bit of suffering. Reflecting upon this again and again it will help us to generate concern for the welfare of others and to increase that concern.

In our life we encounter many people and through those encounters the mind becomes very easily disturbed. It is understandable if someone has the attitude, "I have first have to go to a place where I don't see anyone and then meditate quietly there'. There is, however, another way; by changing the way of the mind itself. Instead of trying to subdue the mind by changing the environment one tries to change the mind from within by changing the mental attitude of the mind. Ordinarily the mind is very easily distracted. Everyone sees one friend and immediately the mind becomes occupied with that person. Then, when the mind becomes bored with that person, one meets another person and the mind becomes occupied with that person. In such a way the mind is very easily disturbed and it is also perpetually disturbed. One can overcome this by reflecting upon the senselessness of having all these different types of encounters and that, in the end, they will not actually bring one the happiness that one is looking for. By reflecting upon the meaninglessness and senselessness of having these various types of encounters the mind can let then go and be more peaceful within itself.

It is important that one at least identifies the harmful and negative mental attitudes. Then one tries to slowly, slowly counteract them with the different meditations; with the different antidotes. So of course initially it is not possible to completely change one's mind. Initially one's meditation will not be able to completely counteract the negative mental attitudes. However by persevering and chipping away at the negative attitudes, piece by piece, slowly, slowly one will be able to overcome the negative mind as a whole. If we have a piece of rock and we chip away pieces from it then, over some time the rock will become less and less and finally it will be completely gone. Likewise, if we continuously slowly counteract, chip away at, the negative attitudes then the negative mind will become less and less.

It is important that one tries to counteract the negative mental attitudes slowly, slowly over time. If, from the very beginning, one immediately wants to attain great realisations and is very greedy in one's attitude towards progress and realisations that will probably cause one to actually lose one's meditation. One has to take years - very slowly, step by step, one step at a time. Through that one's meditation practice can progress. If one wants to immediately progress a lot and wants to meditate a lot and get lots of auspicious dreams and so forth from one's meditation there is the danger that one will not be able to sustain that type of enthusiasm over a long time and will give up one's practice. So it is better to take it slowly but

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surely, step by step, and in such a way one can progress.

On the basis of sitting in a good meditation posture bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards, not letting the mind engage external objects but focusing it internally instead. Then, from within that state after having focused the mind completely internally, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath and meditate for a few minutes on the coming and going of the breath *Pause for meditation.*

That's maybe enough.

### 3.1.3. The actual way of listening to the teachings

**The recognition that careful practise of the Dharma is the cure for the mental afflictions.**

We have reached the outline that deals with how to listen to the teachings. Here we had the abandoning of the three faults and then adopting the six recognitions. Last time we dealt with the fourth recognition.

Similarly to a sick person having to actually take medicine in order to be cured, one has to put the teachings that one listens to into practise in order to be cured from the mental afflictions. If a sick person, after having recognised that he has a sickness asks the doctor for medicine but then doesn't take the medicine he won't be cured. Likewise, upon having recognised that we have the problem of the mental afflictions, if we just listen to teachings but don't put them into practise then we won't be cured of the sickness of the mental afflictions.

The Buddha said, 'I'm not able to take away your sufferings like pulling out a thorn. That I can't do. I can't wash away your negativities that are the cause for your sufferings like washing away dirt. That I also can't do. Likewise I cannot transfer my realisations to you. The only way that I can help you, and the only way that you can become free from your sufferings, is by practising what I teach. I tell you what you have to do and what you have to stop doing and then, if you follow that advice, you will be liberated.'

It is important that one puts into practise the teachings that one has listened to and that one knows. In order to be able to practise the Dharma one needs to know the Dharma. And in order to know the Dharma one needs to listen to the Dharma. Without listening to the Dharma one won't be able to acquire knowledge of the Dharma. So one listens to the Dharma teachings in order to acquire Dharma knowledge and one acquires Dharma knowledge in order to be able to practise the Dharma. The teachings that one has listened to are something very important that has to be put into practise.

One has to put the teachings that one has listened to into practise. One listens to teachings in order to acquire Dharma knowledge and the purpose of acquiring Dharma knowledge is to practise the Dharma. One has to implement one's Dharma knowledge according to one's own potential. If one doesn't practise according to one's own potential one's Dharma practice won't progress. If one listens and one acquires Dharma knowledge but doesn't put the Dharma into practice there is a danger that one will generate regret. One will become

disenchanted with one's Dharma practice because one doesn't put the knowledge one has into practice. Likewise, if one doesn't practise according to one's ability but tries to do too much, the same can also happen. In both cases one will become like a person who wants to taste the centre of the sugar cane but who actually just tastes the bark of the sugar cane. So you all should try to put the Dharma into practise as much as you can; trying to practise well.

### RECOGNISING THE BUDDHA AS A HOLY BEING

Now we come to the fifth recognition, which is the recognition of the Tathagatta, of the Buddha, as a holy being. By remembering the kindness of the Buddha who taught us the Dharma one generates respect and admiration for the Buddha. That's what it is.

The fifth recognition deals with recognising Shakyamuni Buddha, who started teaching the Dharma, as a holy being.

This is done by recognising that Shakyamuni Buddha initially practised the unmistaken path himself and that, by practising the unmistaken path himself and by developing what had to be developed and abandoning what had to be abandoned, he became a fully enlightened person and subsequently could teach the unmistaken path to others. After initially generating the unmistaken path within his mental continuum, and in this way becoming a faultless being, he could teach the unmistaken path to others. That's why Shakyamuni Buddha is regarded as a holy being.

In general, according to the Pramanavartika teachings, the definition of a holy being is someone who teaches unmistakenly the practises and abandonments of the four noble truths. Because Shakyamuni Buddha teaches unmistakenly the practises and abandonments of the four noble truths he is a holy being. By remembering that and generating admiration and respect one then generates that fifth recognition.

The Abhidharma point of view is that being holy is related to the practice of virtue. Someone who is only engaged in the practice of virtue and doesn't create any non-virtue becomes a holy being. That's what a holy being should be.

### ADAPTING THE WISH FOR THE DHARMA TO ABIDE FOR A LONG TIME

Then we come to the sixth recognition. The fifth recognition is the recollection of the kindness of Shakyamuni Buddha. The sixth recognition deals with repaying the kindness of Shakyamuni Buddha. Adopting the sixth recognition means generating the wish that the Dharma that one has listened to, this root of virtue, will abide for a long time. One has listened to Dharma teachings and one has received the benefit and then one generates the wish for those Dharma teachings to remain for a long time. By causing the Dharma teachings to remain for a long time one repays the kindness of Shakyamuni Buddha.

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We have dealt with the outline of how one has to listen to Dharma teachings. One has to listen to the Dharma by abandoning the three faults of being like the three faulty vessels and by adopting the six recognitions. Subsequently to explaining how one has to listen to the Dharma the next outline deals with how the Dharma has to be taught. It is actually very nicely and clearly laid out. First it explains how one has to listen to the teachings but it doesn't just leave it there. It then explains to the teacher how they have to teach the Dharma. So everyone gets told how he or she has to do it.

Do you have some questions?

*Question: What are the benefits of just reading versus listening?*

In general, reading Dharma has great benefits. Particularly, when one reads the Dharma there's a certain mental attitude and certain ways to be adopted and if one does that then the reading of the Dharma becomes very beneficial. Generally the Dharma that one listens to from a Dharma teacher has greater potency than what one would get just by reading for oneself. Getting oral instructions from a teacher has a greater potency than getting the instructions by reading a Dharma book oneself. But, of course, reading the Dharma has a vast array of benefits.

One needs to listen to the Dharma, read the Dharma, contemplate the Dharma and meditate on the Dharma. Usually just having listened to the Dharma doesn't generate a very clear understanding. After having listened to Dharma teachings one needs to go back to those teachings and read them over and over in order to get a completely clear understanding.

In the Tibetan monastery the students first of all have to memorise the root text. If they have memorised the root text and they ask a teacher to teach them the teacher will be quite forthcoming. But if the students haven't memorised the root text the teachers won't feel very inclined to teach. In the Tibetan monastery students have to memorise a lot and they have to take memorising exams to see how well they have memorised the prayers and root texts. They also have to give debating exams.

There are special memorising periods and at those times certain designated monks will come around and see whether the students are actually memorising as they are supposed to or not. Sometimes the monastery disciplinarian himself will also have a look. The younger monks, the small monks, have to take an exam every evening of what they have memorised in the morning. This is quite difficult for them. They have to sit in front of the teacher and be examined as to whether they have memorised correctly or not. They are very frightened because they worry if they make a mistake they will get whacked [laughter].

*Question: Can you tell me a meditation I can tell to a girl that is about to undergo a painful operation?*

If it is a serious operation she will probably be under anaesthesia anyway. When she is under full anaesthesia she won't be able to meditate. When I had my operation I had the sedative and the anaesthetic intravenously. I

started out to visualise the merit field and then, all at once, I was gone [laughter]. Then as I came out of it, I initially started to hear my name and thought, 'Oh', and, all at once, I could understand my name clearly. Before I couldn't understand it clearly. Then I came out of the anaesthesia and saw that there were different people in the room talking about me.

Some people sometimes get beautiful visions during their operation, visions of rainbows and so forth, and they're not worried. They think, 'Oh, the operation is probably going well and I'm not going to die'. It's very interesting if one prepares oneself through meditation. If you meditate very well now, then maybe later, if our mind is trained very well, many interesting things can happen.

*Question: How to view auspicious dreams?*

You can just think, 'Oh yeah, that was good', but not become overexcited [laughter]. Sometimes one can receive external signs through one's meditation practice but there's the issue of keeping those signs to oneself, not to publicise them. There are a variety of dreams that indicate that one has purified a non-virtuous karma through one's Dharma practice. These can be dreams that one eats curd or drinks milk, that one meet monks and nuns, that one is at the top of a mountain and the sun and the moon are shining, that you cross water, such as swimming across an ocean. You may also have dreams that you overcome black dream beings, dream figures and so forth; that they flee from you and so forth. All these types of dreams indicate purification.

*Question: I have very violent dreams. Does that mean I have to practise the dharma more?*

There are also situations where we purify a negative karma by experiencing lots of sufferings in dreams and so forth. When you sleep you can lie on your right side with your head resting in your right hand and you visualise Shakyamuni Buddha over your crown (like sleeping at his feet), and rays of light emanating from Shakyamuni Buddha.

*Interjected question: I heard I could have my head on Shakyamuni's lap or touching his knee.*

You can think that you are sleeping at his feet so your head is touching his knee and that light rays emanate from Shakyamuni Buddha's heart in the ten directions, and invoke the blessings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions back in the form of light that absorbs into the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha. Those blessings then come down from Shakyamuni Buddha's heart in the form of light and they enter you and purify you and they form something like a tent over you. You then sleep within this tent of light rays. You visualise that you're sleeping under this tent of light that emanates from Shakyamuni Buddha's heart and that at the edge of the tent there is a wall of transcendental-wisdom fire and that you are surrounded by this wall of transcendental wisdom fire. You are then protected from the different types of harm and can sleep very well and will have good night's dreams.

As was explained at the beginning, stop the mind from

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engaging external objects and bring the mind back home,  
focusing it internally, and 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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