
The Condensed Lam Rim

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As usual we can meditate for a little while. Place your body in an upright position. Why do we practise meditation? We practise meditation in order to subdue our mind. Why is it important to subdue the mind? We can observe directly that if one doesn't have a subdued mind it is difficult to be peaceful and have happiness.

In order to subdue the mind one first of all needs a meditational object and then one needs to employ the methods of mindfulness and mental introspection in order to be able to meditate properly on that meditational object. Mindfulness is that part of the mind that keeps the meditational object very clear and vivid in the mind. Then there is another part of the mind that checks whether the rest of the mind the mind is abiding single-pointedly on the meditational object or not. That is called mental introspection.

To clarify this we can use an analogy of wealth, the vessel in which the wealth is contained and the guard that checks up whether someone is coming to steal it. The wealth is the meditational object that is contained within the container of mindfulness and mental introspection is the guard that checks whether thieves are coming to steal it or not.

Since it is important for everyone that their mind is not disturbed by the conceptualising thoughts meditation becomes important for everyone regardless of whether they accept the Dharma or not. Meditation is a good method for pacifying the mind, making the mind more clear, peaceful and happy. Through meditation one can increase the power of one's mindfulness and also increase the force of one's memory.

Meditation means to familiarise the mind with an object that pacifies the different delusions and mental afflictions are pacified. The more one familiarises one's mind with such an object the more the mental afflictions are pacified; the more the disturbing types of mind are pacified. Meditation is a tool for attaining inner happiness. Through meditation one also increases one's inner wisdom. Through increasing one's wisdom one's mind is less likely to be disturbed. If one doesn't have inner wisdom that can distinguish between right and wrong, that can distinguish the different delusions and understands karma, the mind is very easily agitated through external situations.

Meditation increases one's wisdom and makes the mind more stable and clear. The way one meditates on the meditational object with mindfulness and introspection can also be applied to other types of actions. All types of actions in which one engages should be actually held by

mindfulness and introspection. They also should be held by wisdom. If one engages in an action out of wisdom then one is likely to receive benefit from that action. But if one engages in an action just because something pops into the mind and one follows that thought it is very likely that it won't go well. It is very important that one combines all the activities in which one engages with wisdom, mindfulness and introspection. In such a way there is no opportunity for delusions and mental afflictions to interfere with one's activities.

It is very important that one bases one's actions on wisdom. If one bases one's actions on wisdom that understands the method for accomplishing one's aim it will be very easy for one to accomplish one's aims. However if one just engages in an action without knowing the method to accomplish one's aim then it is more difficult. You should try to base your actions as much as possible on wisdom. The development of inner wisdom is very important. One needs to have the wisdom that is able to distinguish between right and wrong, that is able to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful. Otherwise, if one doesn't possess that inner wisdom and mistakes something that is wrong for something that is right, for something that is beneficial, it has a harmful effect.

Put yourself into a good meditation posture, sit upright and bring the mind back home focusing it inwards and don't let the mind engage with external objects. Then, after having focused the mind internally 100%, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath because the mind needs to have a meditational object upon which it can focus. Then, after having fully withdrawn the mind towards the inside, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath and we can meditate on the coming and going of the breath for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation.*)

You should meditate regularly – not meditating sometimes and then not meditating for some time. You should have regularity within your meditation practice, always just meditating a little bit. By meditating just a little bit, but doing that on a regular basis, one's mind can improve. It is like that with all activities. If one takes it slowly, step-by-step and just does it according to one's ability and then increases the action according to one's increasing ability it becomes a natural process where the mind is also happy with what one is doing and is peaceful and spacious and relaxed. Sometimes we have the attitude that if something doesn't work immediately in the beginning we tend to throw in the towel and think, 'Oh, I'm not going to do that'. Meditation is like any other type of activity. Initially it will be difficult. However by starting out with small steps, just trying to meditate for short periods of time but doing that on a regular basis over time, it will become easier and one's focus will become more stable and clearer.

3.1.3. The actual way of listening to the teachings

On the past Wednesdays we talked about the way of listening to the Dharma. We were saying that the way of listening to the Dharma is by first freeing oneself from

the faults of being like the three types of faulty vessels and then by adopting the six recognitions. I want to say a few more things with regards to that.

Regardless of whether one is the person who is teaching the Dharma or whether one is the person who is listening to the Dharma if one makes a separation between one's own mental continuum and the Dharma then, no matter how much one listens or how much one talks about the Dharma, it will not have any significance. There won't be any point as long as one keeps one's mind and the Dharma separate.

One needs to listen to the Dharma in order to understand the meaning of the Dharma and in order of mix one's mind with the Dharma. Here the text again gives an analogy. If one is wondering whether one has a dirty face or not one can clarify that doubt by looking in a mirror. After looking in the mirror, if one sees that one has a dirty face then, by being unhappy with that, one cleans oneself. Likewise one's own faulty behaviour is reflected in the mirror of the Dharma when one listens to the Dharma.

At such a time when one's own faulty behaviour is reflected in the mirror of the Dharma one starts to think, 'Oh, my mind has come to this, my behaviour has come to this'. Being sad with what one sees generates the determination to clean up one's act, to clear away the faults, and to generate all the qualities and in such a way one will start to train in the Dharma.

The text then gives a quote from the life-stories of the Buddha. Sudasa'i-bu said to the bodhisattva Dawa,

'Having seen the ugly form of my actions clearly in the mirror of the Dharma I became very sad. Now I will endeavour in the Dharma.'

In brief, the motivation with which one should listen to the teachings should be as follows: 'I have to attain enlightenment for the purpose of all sentient beings and in order to be able to become enlightened for the welfare of all sentient beings I have to train in the cause for that enlightenment. In order to be able to train in the cause for enlightenment I first have to listen to the Dharma and therefore I am now going to listen to the Dharma basing my listening to the Dharma on the motivation of the mind of enlightenment.'

Then, after having established this motivation one should think: 'I am going to listen to the Dharma with this motivation and by remembering and being mindful of the benefits of listening to the Dharma and then generating joy and enthusiasm I will free myself from the faults of the faulty vessels and adopt the six recognitions and then listen.'

3.2 The way of teaching the dharma

After having gone through the way one should listen to the Dharma then now comes the way the Dharma should be explained. Everyone gets told how to engage in his or her actions. The listeners are told how they have to listen to the Dharma and likewise the teacher is told how to teach the Dharma.

Here we have four major outlines. Firstly; contemplating the benefits of explaining the Dharma. Secondly; generating respect for the Buddha and the Dharma. Thirdly; how one should do it in thought and in action and fourthly to whom one should explain the Dharma and to whom one shouldn't.

3.2.1. Contemplating the benefits of teaching the dharma

From the Abhidharmakosha,

Generosity of dharma - correctly teaching The sutras etc. while not being afflicted.

One should practise the generosity of the Dharma without mental afflictions and delusions and correctly explain the Sutras in a pure manner. The significance of this verse is that the benefits of teaching the Dharma come about if one teaches the Dharma with a pure motivation. If one doesn't teach the Dharma with a pure motivation there is the danger that one will actually receive some fault.

It says in the self commentary that should one teach distorted Dharma or should one teach the Dharma with an afflicted mind for the purpose of receiving gain, praise or fame, then it will cause ones great merits to degenerate. What it is saying is that one needs to teach the Dharma with a pure motivation. We can leave it here for tonight. There is more to be said later when we come to the outline that deals with the thought and action of teaching the dharma.

So then do we have some questions?

Question: What to do that virtuous karma doesn't get degenerated.

If you dedicate merit that will help the merit not to be destroyed by anger. There is some dispute about whether merit that is dedicated can still be destroyed by anger or not but dedication is still the main tool. Lets not debate that. The dedication of merit is the cause for merit, the virtuous karmic potential, to become inexhaustible and to not get lost. That's why we do dedications after teachings.

In order to increase the merit that one already accumulated one should meditate on rejoicing in the merit that one created. Rejoicing in all the good things that one did and all the merit that one has created, the good karmas that one has created, increases the potency of those virtuous karmas. By rejoicing in the merit of both oneself and in the merit of others one will gain great benefits oneself. Rejoicing in one's own merit has very great benefits. Likewise rejoicing in the merits of others has vast benefits. So one can rejoice and then dedicate the merit that one created through the rejoicing in the merits of others.

Meditating on rejoicing will also help us to counteract jealousy. If we rejoice in another person's fortune and success, thinking, 'Oh, how great it is that that person has this fortune and the success,' then, at the time, you obviously are not jealous. But if we don't rejoice in the other person's fortune we are likely to become jealous. If we think, 'Oh, how good it is that this person has these

riches, this fortune' this positive attitude we also make our own mind happy. However if we don't have that attitude and are jealous then the other person's success becomes a cause for our suffering.

If we can't bear other people's fortune, the beauty of another person or the material wealth of another person or that they have a nice girlfriend or boyfriend and so forth, then it causes lots of disturbance in our own mind. If, for example, you have dressed up and go out and you don't possess that practice of rejoicing and you see other people who are dressed better it causes problems in the mind. It causes couples to quarrel and later the wife to give the husband a hard time for not doing better (laughter).

Question: When we rejoice in others merits and then dedicate the merits created by rejoicing for their enlightenment, do they actually become the cause for their enlightenment?

It would be difficult for one's own virtue to become the cause for another person's enlightenment. We will come to that point in the introduction to the Middle Way where it says that a person cannot experience the fruits of the virtue that were created by a different person. One has to create the causes oneself. Sometimes we talk about dedicating the merits of both self and others but, practically speaking, we cannot really dedicate the merits of others. The meaning that I give to the phrase; 'dedicating the merits of others,' is that we rejoice in the merits of others and then dedicate those merits that we created through rejoicing in the merits of others and this becomes the dedication of the merits of others.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that the practice of rejoicing is a very significant method of accumulating a great amount of merit and virtue in just a very brief amount of time and without a lot of effort. With very little effort and in a very short amount of time one can accumulate a very great amount of merit and virtue. For example, if the person in whose merit one is rejoicing is of equal realisation to oneself and one rejoices in their merits one can create exactly the same amount of merit as that person in a very short amount of time with little effort. If one is of a higher realisation than that person then one can even create more merit just by rejoicing in the action than the person created by doing the action. Rejoicing is a very important method through which one can accumulate a great amount of merit and virtue very easily in a short time.

The Buddha was repeatedly invited by different people for his noon meal and the Buddha regularly attended for the purpose of going out to teach. The Buddha didn't really need to eat any food but he accepted those invitations in order to have the opportunity to teach to the sponsors. One day a king invited him and there was also a beggar in the court of the king at that time. The beggar rejoiced very greatly that the king had invited the Buddha in order to offer lunch to the Buddha. The Buddha came and the king offered the food and after the food they dedicated their merit that arose from offering the food to the Buddha. After the dedication the beggar

also dedicated the merit that he created from rejoicing. After the meal the Buddha remarked to the king that even though the king was the one who had invited the Buddha and provided the food the beggar had actually created greater merits by his pure rejoicing. It probably was also the case that the beggar's realisations were a little bit higher than the king's.

Question: Geshe-la, I can think of certain instances where there would be certain ambiguity about dedication of merit. I had in mind euthanasia for a person who is totally devoid of quality of life and where their partner or friend assists them to die in order to have a cessation of their suffering. I could see the ambiguity in the merit of the cessation of the suffering because there is still the negativity of the actual performance of the act of euthanasia. His Holiness the Dalai Lama said it is not possible to make a blanket statement about euthanasia and that each case would have to be assessed individually.

In Canberra His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that one cannot decide because we don't know what suffering awaits that person after they die. It might look to us as if they are suffering a great deal in this life but that suffering might be comparatively very little in comparison to what awaits them in the next life. People sometimes primarily focus only on the suffering they see in this life and then generate compassion for that. But in both Buddhism and Christianity the human life is regarded as very precious and it is not regarded as something that one can just cut off. In both there is no allowance made for being allowed to kill for the purpose of the Dharma. Those people that propose euthanasia think they are being very compassionate but really they just focus on the suffering that they can see in this life.

Previously, when I was teaching in Chenresig Institute an older man came to the Institute. The reason he came to Chenresig Institute was that he had dreamt of Buddhist monks and through that was induced to come. When he came to Chenresig Institute he saw the Buddhist monks were, in actuality, just as he had seen them in his dream. So he then attended the Lam Rim teachings. Later he told me the worst thing that he had done was killing. I can't remember clearly; it was either a horse or a dog that belonged to a friend that had a broken leg and he had killed that animal. He said that this was the worst action that he had done in his life. He said that, on the other hand, he had worked all his life and given lots of taxes to the government and created thus lots of virtue. He had quite a good way of thinking.

Question: If someone has done a negative action that has affected us adversely how can we generate a positive view of the situation?

Firstly reflect that the other person was pushed into their action by their own mental afflictions, that they didn't have any freedom in their actions but were under the control of their own afflictions. That helps to keep a positive mind. Then reflect that they probably engaged in that harmful action because of some problem or suffering

of their own. Reflecting upon those things can help us to keep a positive mind.

By reflecting that the other person didn't actually have much freedom in the matter but was pushed to engage in the action through their own delusions and mental afflictions and that the fault actually lies not really with the other person but with their afflictions and delusions helps us to let go of the anger. Similarly, if you reflect on our own life we also have situations where we were pushed without freedom into a harmful action because of our delusions and mental afflictions.

Question: On that topic of revenge. Is it just a matter of our feelings are hurt, and we want to get back at someone? Is that all it is or do you think there is something else there too?

We engage in revenge out of the mental factor of resentment. First we get angry at the other person but then we store away that anger until a time when we can repay the person in kind. The anger becomes a lingering resentment that acts as the cause for engaging in some action as revenge.

As was explained at the beginning, focus the mind internally, stopping it from engaging with external objects but rather focusing it inwards, and then place the mind single-pointedly on the name mantra of the Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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