
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Seat yourself comfortably in the correct meditation posture. Then, similarly to sitting physically relaxed you need to put your mind into a relaxed space. If you want to think about something relaxing think that we are all human beings. This thought, that one is a human being, is something very important which one shouldn't lose. As one is a human being one has all the rights of a human being.

As a human being one has certain abilities and potentials, one of which is that one is able to make plans for the future. One has a certain intelligence that enables one to make plans for the future. In general, a human being is defined as someone who can explain something, but also one who can listen and understand what is explained. Generally that is the definition of a human being. As a human being one can understand explanations that are given. Of course the level of the explanation varies. There are easy topics and there are more difficult topics. But, in general, as a human being, one is distinguished by having the ability to understand when something is being explained. If we analyse the explanation we find we are also able to achieve the meaning that has been explained. One also has the ability to achieve that which has been explained. That's why, when one talks about a person or a being, one talks about somebody with potential. The Sanskrit word for 'being', *poroka* means 'endowed with potential'. When one talks about a person, one talks about someone who has potential.

As a human being one is characterised by intelligence. First of all, as a human being, one has consciousness and because one has consciousness one is endowed with potential. The question is then how does one use that potential. One has to use it in a positive and appropriate way. The human consciousness is distinguished from the consciousness of other beings by being more profound and being able to think about more subtle things, by having a certain type of wisdom. It is also a consciousness that possesses a goodness and a pureness. One has to put this potential to good use. One has to engage in useful and positive activities. The best way to make use of our human consciousness is by avoiding giving harm to others and benefiting others.

One needs to make use of one's consciousness by benefiting others. If one doesn't have that attitude and only follows one's self-cherishing the result is very great suffering and harm for others. The mind that is concerned with the welfare of others is a very precious and important mind through it both one's own and the benefit of others is accomplished. By accomplishing the

benefit of others one's own benefit is implicitly accomplished. Therefore the mind that is concerned with the welfare of others is very important and precious. It is a mind that can both clear away one's own suffering and problems as well as the suffering and problems of others.

Meditating in such a way, on an expansive attitude that is concerned with the welfare of others, and simultaneously being aware of one's own ability, of one's own potential, is very uplifting for one's mind. One will have the attitude, 'I can accomplish anything that I put my mind to with this good consciousness that I possess'. By reflecting in such a manner, becoming aware of one's potential and what one is really able to do, a certain thrill will be generated within one's mind. One will become a little excited about what one is able to do. Of course you then have to take care not to get too busy, too excited.

One will be thrilled when one discovers one's own potential. A certain urgency will then be generated within one's mind. One has to take care that it doesn't become too urgent as that's also not good. One is in the situation where one has a consciousness that can accomplish both the purposes of yourself as well as the purposes of others. But there are certain problems within the mind that prevent one from making fully use of one's mind. Different disturbing thoughts prevent the development of the mind. That is a situation that is very commonly shared. One is somehow under the control of those disturbing thoughts and finds oneself unable to fully utilise the potential of one's mind.

Disturbing thoughts prevent one from fully utilising the potential of one's mind. If one is able to attain some mental stability they prevent clarity. If one is able to attain some mental clarity they prevent stability. If one wants to make one's mind better they try to prevent that and so forth. As long as one doesn't pacify and purify these unsuitable mental states one will find it difficult to fully develop one's mind. In order to be able to fully utilise one's mind, to develop proper wisdom and so forth, one needs to pacify these unsuitable mental states.

That's where we arrive at the significance of meditation. As was said before seat yourself in the meditation posture. As was also explained before when seated in the meditation posture you also need to relax the mind and bring the mind back home, focusing it internally, withdrawing it from external objects and not letting it be distracted to external objects by disturbing thoughts but focusing it internally. Then, when you have focused your mind internally very gently in this manner, very gently remain in that non-conceptual space for some time. When you find the mind again tries to escape to external objects place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. It is placed on the coming and going of the breath not as if the mind is looking at the object, the breath, but as if the mind is actually entering the breathing. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

Please arise from your meditative equipoise.

I think that is a good way for you to meditate on a regular basis. Meditating for just very brief periods of time one

will, over time, attain a stable and clear focus on the breath. That will be beneficial for both one's worldly activities as well as one's Dharma activities because one can transfer that stability and clarity to other objects after having generated it with regards to the breath. The distracted mind hinders us both in practising the Dharma effectively as well as in our worldly activities. To gain a stable and clear mind is very useful.

Last time we talked about the setting out of offerings and we said we are setting out non-deceptive offerings. Non-deceptive means that these offerings should be non-deceptive from the point of view of the cause and so it is from the point of view of the motivation. From the point of view of the cause we were talking about how the offerings were obtained. From the point of view of motivation, one shouldn't have a motivation that is concerned with worldly success, fame, reputation and so forth. Instead motivation should be concerned with the attainment of happiness in future life, liberation and enlightenment.

The offerings that one sets out should also be nice offering, of nice colour, shape, taste and so forth. The setting out of the offerings and the making of the offerings should be done in a way that one will ensure that one receives the benefits of making the offerings. In order to receive the full benefit of making offerings one needs to do the offerings oneself. One needs to set them out oneself, one needs to make the offerings, perform the offering, oneself. For example, by tradition in the monastery all the monks make their own offerings. They perform their own offerings regardless of their age. If one orders someone else to make the offerings for one, one won't receive the benefit.

The same applies to the general practice of generosity. There's a difference between ordering others to give, for example giving others money in order to give it away, or actually giving it away oneself. In order to receive the full benefit one needs to give it away oneself. There was a king in India who built several welfare or charity centres all over the country and he used to go to those centres to give away donations and money with his own hand in order to receive the benefit of the offerings. One of the benefits of making offerings is that one will receive in the future the marks and signs of a fully enlightened being. If one just orders someone to make those offerings then that doesn't become the cause for one to receive the marks and signs of an enlightened being. In order to receive the marks and signs of an enlightened being one has to create the cause oneself. One has to make the offerings oneself in order to receive the benefit. Just as an aside, if one is giving away medicine that also should be done with a very pure motivation. It is said that the benefit of the medicine also depends upon the motivation with which the medicine is given. If one is in a position where one dispenses medicine, the benefit of the medicine will increase if one gives it away with a good motivation.

Engaging in the practice of making offerings is very important. Not making offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is a sign that one lacks faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. There are really a great variety of

offerings that one can perform. There's no lack of substances that one can offer. There are flowers, there is incense, and there is perfume, food and so forth. If possible one offers all of them. If one offers flowers, they should be of a nice colour, a nice fragrance. The incense should also have a nice fragrance. If one offers food such as fruits they should be nice, fresh fruits. They should be offered in a respectful way.

When one makes a water offering and the offering bowls are set out on the altar they shouldn't be too far apart from each other. But they also shouldn't touch each other. If they are too far apart from each other that causes one to become distant from one's teacher. If they are too close, then, one becomes of a dull faculty. There should be the space the size of a grain of rice in between. When one sets out the offering bowls they shouldn't be set out on the altar empty. One adds a little bit of water when they are set out on the altar.

There is also a certain system when the water is poured in. One has to be careful that it doesn't spill. First of all, when one pours the water one holds the vase, or whatever it is that one pours from, with both hands. When one, for example, makes the offerings, one pours the water with both hands and when it is offered, one offers it with both hands. First one pours in a little bit with a fine stream, then one can pour the water in more thickly and when one comes to the end one again lessens the flow to just a very fine stream. If, for example, you have a grain of barley, it is thick in the middle but it gets thin towards both ends. We pour in accordance to that system so we can avoid spillage. If one immediately pours a full stream it can splash. If one doesn't slow towards the end it tends to flow over. In order to avoid those two problems, which one should avoid when one fills in the water bowls, one starts out fine, then pours more thickly and then towards the end again one lessens the stream and it becomes more fine. One can apply the same system when one is pouring tea. When one is offering one does it from left to right and when one empties the offering bowls it is from right to left.

That is the procedure for offering and if possible, one should, of course, set out seven offering bowls. That's very good. But it doesn't have to be always seven. It can also be just one glass or so forth. There's no hard and fast rule. Certain yogis who live in the mountains in isolation and who don't have any possessions apart from their bowl will use that bowl for offering to the Buddhas. Then, when the time comes for them to eat they will take that bowl down and request permission from the Buddhas to be allowed to use that bowl for their own meal. They will use the bowl for their own meal and after that they will again use it for offering.

In the same way when we have food or drink we can offer that food or drink to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The way one can do this is that first of all one visualises in front of oneself the objects of refuge, all the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, if one can. Then one blesses the offering with the mantra OM AH HUM, which one recites three times. When we recite OM AH HUM the first time we visualise that the faults of colour, taste and

smell and so forth, of the offering substances are purified. If, for example, you offer food or tea there are certain impurities of taste, colour and smell and so forth and these are purified. With the second recitation of OM AH HUM you visualise that the offering substance is transformed into nectar. If, for example, you offer tea then the tea is transformed into nectar that has the power to bestow great bliss upon those that enjoy it. When someone drinks that tea a great bliss will be generated in their mind. The third recitation of OM AH HUM makes the nectar inexhaustible. By inexhaustible we don't have to visualise that the tea increases in volume. If you did you would have the problem that it overflows. It couldn't be contained in the cup and you might worry, 'Oh, if the tea becomes inexhaustible, how could it all stay in the cup?'. That's not the meaning. The meaning is that it doesn't become less no matter how many beings enjoy it. Otherwise you might get worried that if you offer the cup of nectar to many Buddhas and they all drink from it, 'How many Buddhas can drink from one cup of nectar?' It becomes inexhaustible with the third recitation of OM AH HUM.

Then you offer it to the merit field, to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. The more Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to whom one can offer it the more benefit one gets.

When you drink it yourself you can visualise that you are offering it to all the hundreds of thousands and millions of sentient beings that are residing within one's body and one is practising generosity towards them. One makes prayers that, 'May this practice of material generosity towards those sentient beings become the cause in the future for me to be able to practise the generosity of the Dharma towards those sentient beings and may I be able to guide them to enlightenment'. You can then eat the food or drink the tea in this manner.

We now arrive at the object of our offerings. That comes next time. Do you have a question?

Question ; I was speaking to a non-Buddhist friend about antidotes to negative states of mind and he asked about the antidote to sadness.

The antidote to a sad mind is to build the mind up again. If the mind is depressed and down then what you have to do is build it up again. You have to think about things that make the mind happy. Thinking about things that give joy to the mind and that make the mind happy: that are uplifting. Going to places that are spacious can also relax the mind and give it space. Try to divert the mind from what it is circling around. Thinking about something else also helps instead of letting the mind circle around the problem. If the cause is just ordinary sadness then this type of thing usually helps. If there's some other reason for the problem, like some harm, it might be more difficult.

To go swimming, for example, can help (*laughter*). Going swimming and, after having a relaxed swim, sitting down and having a relaxed cup of tea or a nice meal, are all things that can help that person. One can also prepare a nice meal for that person to put their mind at ease. There are different things that one can do in that way.

If, for example, the person thinks, 'Oh, I'm all alone. I don't have anybody to help me' there are different things that one can do to show that person that this it is not the case. We find that that people can quite often fall into self-pity, particularly when there is an attitude of, 'There's nobody that helps me. I'm hopeless. There's nothing that I can do and there's nobody that helps me'. Then they sit there, they cry and feel very sorry for themselves and very hopeless. Normally if I encounter someone like this I ask them, 'What do you want? You have a healthy body, you have a functioning mind, so what is there that you can't do for yourself?'.

Question ; When you are meditating and dedicating the meditation to all sentient beings, that seems a bit too general. Are there some good phrases to get you that feeling?

There are many dedication prayers. There is, for example, the little bit more extensive prayer that is called the King of Prayers. If you can do that, that is very good. If that's not possible there are two verses in the King of Prayers, which are praised as very good and special dedications.

Very roughly, it goes, 'Just as realised by the brave Manjushri, and be Kun-du-sang-po as well,

In order for me to follow all their trainings, I strongly dedicate all these virtues; I dedicate all my roots of virtue, with the dedication praised as best; by the all Conquerors of the three times; to the pure bodhisattva conduct;

The prayer, 'By these virtues may I quickly attain the state of the guru Buddha and lead all sentient beings to the same enlightened state' is also a very special prayer. There is also the prayer of the aspirational bodhicitta, 'May the precious bodhi mind not yet generated be generated, and may the bodhicitta that has been generated never decline but only increase for ever more and more'. You can find that verse and other one from the King of Prayers in the prayer book. I'm sure someone can point those out to you. These are very useful, virtuous dedication prayers.

You are now already quite relaxed physically so mentally bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards, turning it inwards and, after having focused the mind internally, place it on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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