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# The Condensed Lam Rim

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga  
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We can practise some meditation as usual. Meditation is to acquaint and familiarise one's mind with a mental state that is free from disturbing thoughts that distract the mind towards external objects. If we think about it, that is something that we definitely need. A human being possesses many good qualities; great intelligence, compassion, good behaviour and so forth. Those qualities don't just arise, they have to be acquired with effort.

It is not useful to leave one's mind just running its own course and let it engage in meaningless activities. Even from a worldly point of view, one will not be successful in one's activities. One won't, for example, receive a good education if one doesn't utilise the mind in the proper way. If one lets the mind do whatever it wants and then just follows it one's university or school education won't work out well. Likewise, one's behaviour of body, speech and mind, which should be wholesome, one's development of wisdom and so forth only come about through utilising the power of the mind. One should try to utilise the power of the mind from a very young age and try to familiarise one's body, speech and mind with wholesome ways so that one can acquire the wisdom, wholesome behaviour and habits of others.

One should consider all those points very carefully. If one just leaves one's mind unattended and engaged in meaningless activities one will not develop new wisdom and one will not develop qualities. If one lets one's mind be distracted and engaged in meaningless ways it will cause one to waste a lot of time and it will cause one not to have success. That type of mind also causes unhappiness and disharmony and disputes within the family, between friends and so forth. I am trying to explain this from a point of view that everyone can relate to; from experiences that everybody knows.

We can now meditate for a few minutes. You should seat yourself in the proper meditation posture and collect the mind internally and not let it be distracted by disturbing thoughts to external objects. Then, after having completely focused the mind internally in this way, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath and let the mind be absorbed into the breathing. In this way you will, over time and through continual practice, learn how to abide calmly concentrated on the breathing for a more and more prolonged time. At the beginning it might just be a minute but it will expand to two minutes and three minutes. By seeing one's own progress in meditation one generates faith in the process and the practice of meditation. *Pause for meditation.*

Meditating in such a manner, again and again, is a very

good thing to do. By having a clearer mind one's quality of life is enhanced. One will be happier, one will be more joyful in engaging in the different activities that one wants to do. If one doesn't have this mental quality and just has external enjoyment, such as good food for example, it is very limited. Nice food doesn't taste all that good while the mind is unhappy. The benefit of the food for a stable and clear mind is also somewhat limited.

## 4.1. How to rely on the spiritual friend, the root of the path

### 4.1.2. A brief presentation of the way to strive

#### 4.1.2.1. Actual way of striving

##### 4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

##### The 6 preparatory practices: 5) Gathering merit and purifying negativities

We had reached the point of doing prostrations and we explained how to do the prostrations of body, speech and mind in unison. We then moved on to the explanation of physical prostration, mental prostration and verbal prostration individually. I think we covered the physical prostration by itself and now comes the verbal prostration.

In doing a verbal prostration one starts by emanating limitless bodies. Those limitless bodies have limitless heads with limitless tongues and each recites praises towards the objects of refuge; towards the Buddhas. That comprises the verbal prostration. One has been in cyclic existence since beginningless time and, as such, has had limitless past bodies. One can also emanate all those past bodies in human aspect and by visualising them reciting prayers and praises to the Buddhas one purifies the karma that has been accumulated within one's past lives. It is similar to the way one does the physical prostration. One visualises all one's past lives in human aspect and they all make the prostrations together with oneself. This is easier than the style of the King of Prayers method mentioned above.

There are two types of visualisations here. If it is done according to the style of the King of Prayers one emanates limitless bodies with limitless heads, limitless mouths and they all recite the prayers to the Buddhas. That is slightly more difficult to do. The easier way of doing it is by imagining that all one's past lives are in the human aspect and that they are reciting prayers and praises to the Buddhas.

One can relate the practice of the six perfections to the practice of the seven limbs. We are now going to explain how to relate the practice of the six perfections to the limb of prostration. One can then apply it to all the other limbs. Inspiring others through one's own practice of prostration to engage in prostration is the generosity of prostration. The morality of prostration, or the ethics of prostration, refers on one hand to doing the prostrations correctly; abandoning all the mistaken ways of doing prostrations. It can also relate to the Bodhisattva practice of abandoning cherishing by taking care that one doesn't

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do one's prostrations with a selfish motivation but a self-cherishing motivation. This is also the ethics of prostration. Bearing the difficulties of doing prostrations becomes the practice of patience of prostration. If one encounters difficulties while doing prostrations putting up with those difficulties is the practice of patience of prostrations. Doing the prostrations happily and joyfully is the enthusiasm of prostrations. Keeping one's mind unwaveringly on the object of prostration, on the prostration and on the virtuous mental state, becomes the practice of concentration of prostration. The wisdom of prostration can refer to understanding the empty nature of the person who is doing the prostration and of the object of prostration as well. It can also refer to the knowledge of doing the prostration properly. Doing prostrations counteracts pride. We say that Dharma practice counteracts delusions and prostrations counteract pride.

What are benefits of doing prostrations? It is explained that it is very good to do prostrations. One receives explanations on how to do prostrations one will want to know what are the actual benefits of doing prostrations? In the sutras it explains ten specific benefits, apart from many other benefits, of doing prostrations. One result of doing prostrations is a good body, a pure body, with a golden complexion. A person who is doing prostrations will become very pleasing to the eye, to the point that people start to cry because of their beauty. Another effect is that one will receive a very pleasing voice. One will become very relaxed and without fears. One will be well liked by humans and gods. One will become very charismatic and will be able to go fearlessly into the company of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, hearers and solitary realisers. One will become very wealthy. One will attain a higher rebirth. And one will go beyond sorrow, which means one will attain nirvana and become enlightened.

One should generate a virtuous motivation of bodhicitta before engaging in the practice of prostrations. We have already explained how to do the prostrations and that while engaging in the practice of prostration one shouldn't lose one's virtuous state of mind. Then, when one finishes the prostration one should dedicate the merits with bodhicitta.

We have gone through some of the benefits of doing prostrations. As we have mentioned before, one also receives the blessings of the Buddha's body, speech and mind through doing prostrations. Keeping all those benefits in mind one engages in prostration. If one can engage in one's virtuous practice with a single-pointedly focused mind, unwaveringly, then the practice becomes very powerful and very effective.

We can finish here for tonight. That also finishes the point of prostration, and next time we can do the point of offerings. If you have some questions we can have some time for questions.

*Question inaudible.*

The mental prostration is the faith that one has in the objects of prostration. By having faith in the objects of prostration that becomes the motivation to, for example,

verbally recite praises or prayers or mantras. If, in ordinary life, we respect a person then what we say to that person will naturally be very positive and our behaviour will be very good with regards to that person. Likewise, when we have respect for the objects of prostration and remember their qualities very well we will naturally feel inclined to recite their mantras and to do prostrations towards them.

*Question: What is the object of ones concentration during prostration?*

The object of one's single-pointed concentration is the object of prostration. If one prostrates to just Shakyamuni Buddha, one visualises Shakyamuni Buddha. You concentrate on the object of prostration, such as the Buddha, and you also remember the qualities of the Buddha, body, speech and mind, and focus on them single-pointedly.

*Question; Geshe-la, on the subject of the benefits of prostrations, how literally should we interpret some of tonight's teachings? For example, the one that mentions that if we do enough prostrations, people will burst into tears at the sight of our magnificence.*

Initially it is a little bit difficult to accept all of those benefits literally because they are a little bit beyond one's own experience. One might think, "Oh, I have already done many prostrations but I still haven't become more beautiful." That is only in the very short term. Those benefits are really explained from a very long term point of view, from a future result that one maybe can't quite yet comprehend. By doing prostrations slowly, slowly, over time and observing some benefits that arise from this one will also generate faith that maybe those other greater benefits mentioned are possible. People have, for example, been able to attain greater beauty by meditating on the Buddha or by meeting a Buddha. There are many examples but I didn't go into them.

*Question; Earlier this evening you were talking about the initial stages of meditation when one focuses on the coming and going of the breath. You talked about the way that we become more pure and calm with time. I'm wondering when, in those brief moments when you do go close to achieving that in your early stages, are we to understand that you then just try to maintain that state or it is it more to proceed to trying to focus on some virtuous motivation that you'd like to achieve during the coming day. What is the recommended process after that?*

When you come to such a calm state you try to maintain it through the force of your mindfulness. Mindfulness is one of the main tools that prevents the mind from being distracted by disturbing thoughts. In general, if you have this calm, virtuous, focused state of mind you can direct that mind to any other virtuous object very easily. You already tried to generate a virtuous motivation before you set out to meditate. The first step one engages in before meditation is to try to generate a virtuous motivation. Then you engage in the process of meditating, pacifying the mind, focusing it on a single object, collecting it internally, not letting it be distracted by external objects and so forth.

*Question: Does all the money, fame and beauty of movies stars*

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*come from past karma?*

That is a result from having practised the Dharma in a past life, of having practised generosity, morality, patience and so forth. From generosity comes wealth and from patience comes beauty, and so forth. If it doesn't come as a result of karma and previous life where would it come from? If one practises generosity now then one generates the cause to be rich in the future. If one practises patience then one will become beautiful or handsome in the future. If one wants that, of course.

If one is not happy with one's appearance looking at it in this way then induces one to practise patience to become more beautiful in the future. People are unhappy sometimes with their appearance and if one is told that one is ugly it makes the mind unhappy. Instead of thinking that there is nothing that one can do about it, and perhaps being angry at others, one recognises that one's present appearance is one's own doing, through what one did in the past, and that through one's present day actions one can create the cause for improved appearance in the future.

If one relates everything to the law of cause and effect then, no matter which situation one is in, whether one is beautiful or not so beautiful, it will induce one to practise virtue. If one is beautiful then one wants to remain beautiful. One is naturally inclined to practise virtue to remain beautiful in the future and, if one is not so beautiful and one wants to be beautiful in the future then one becomes inclined to practise virtue. If one has a good understanding of the law of cause and effect then, no matter what situation one experiences, it won't disturb one's mind and will just induce one to create further virtuous karma.

If one has some experience in Dharma practice it will be easier for one to remain calm and collected and one will be not so easily distracted by different life experiences. One's mind will naturally remain focused on Dharma because one relates everything to the Dharma.

If one doesn't have a lot of experience in Dharma practice one's mind will constantly fluctuate and not be very stable, calm and peaceful. The different experiences and encounters that one has in one's daily life will constantly cause different conceptual thoughts to arise within one's mind. Those conceptual thoughts will then bounce one up and down like a yo-yo. If, for example, someone tells us that we have done very well and that we are a good person and so forth we become uplifted and of course we generate thoughts, "Oh, I'm very good", and "I have done very well". But if another person comes along and tells us, "What you did was wrong and actually you're not so good", a different train of conceptual thought starts and we become despondent and unhappy and depressed. In this way, because of the generation of those different conceptual thoughts in one's mind, one is very unstable and constantly going up and down. But if one has experienced the Dharma practice that won't happen and one will be more calm.

One needs to protect one's own mind. One needs to take responsibility for one's own mind and protect one's own

mind. One needs to take care that one has a peaceful state of mind that is not easily disturbed by the actions of others. To constantly control and change the actions of others is an impossible task and one can't leave it up to others to change one's own mind. So what one needs to do is that one needs to take responsibility for one's own mind and not constantly be dependent on what other people say and then generate the related mental state; feeling good when others tell one that one is good, and feeling bad when others tell one that one is bad. That is something that one should try to get rid of.

One should become more autonomous and self-sufficient. Otherwise, if one is reliant on what other people say and think and somebody comes along and says, "Oh, you've done wrong, you are a bad person", even if one actually hasn't done anything wrong one will generate a negative self-image, thinking "I'm a bad person, I've done something wrong" because one relies so much on what other people say and think about oneself. This is something where one should become more independent and protect one's mental happiness.

Bring the mind back home, focus it inwards and then concentrate it on the sound of Shakyamuni Buddha's name mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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