
The Condensed Lam Rim

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Today is our first class. I want to greet you all with a warm heart. I am very happy that we all meet here together again today. The Tibetan greeting 'tashi delek' contains a variety of meanings. 'Tashi' means good luck and good fortune and 'delek' means some high state of goodness and happiness and refers to liberation and enlightenment. Wishing another person 'tashi delek' is to wish them the perfection of all good things including liberation and enlightenment.

I assume that you had a nice Christmas and a happy new year. Regardless of whether or not you had a nice Christmas and regardless of whether or not you had a happy new year, both Christmas and the New Year have now irreversibly gone. Those experiences, those times, will not return again. Of course Christmas will come along every year and the New Year celebrations will come along every year, but the Christmas of 2003 and the New Year celebration of 2004 have irreversibly gone.

Regardless of what one's experiences were at that time it's important that one makes the mind happy again because the experience of the mind determines one's experience in life. When the mind is happy, one says, 'I am happy'. If the mind is unhappy one says, 'I am unhappy'. It's important that one tries to generate a happy mind. Occasions like Christmas and New Year come and go and when they have gone, they're gone, but the mind always stays with oneself. One is irrevocably linked with one's mind. One cannot be separated from one's mind. They cannot part to go their own ways. When the mind is happy, one says 'I'm happy', and if the mind is unhappy, then one says 'I am unhappy'. In such a way one can see that when one says, 'I'm happy' or 'I'm unhappy' it is always linked to one's mind.

It is very important that one generates a happy mind. That is what one should concentrate on; what should be one's focus. It's important to investigate the nature of the mind and to investigate which mental states bring forth which results. Which types of benefits do I gain by generating a positive and virtuous mind and which types of disadvantages do I receive from generating harmful and unsuitable mental states? By reflecting again and again upon those points - the benefits of generating a positive, wholesome mental state and the disadvantages of generating a harmful, unsuitable non-virtuous state of mind - one will, over time, develop a natural understanding of the importance of generating wholesome, positive mental states.

By reflecting again and again on the benefits and disadvantages of virtuous and non-virtuous mental states one will generate a natural and very clear

understanding of the importance of generating and developing those positive virtuous mental states and of lessening the harmful mental states. One will see that by familiarising and accustoming the mind to positive and virtuous mental states the mind will become more and more happy. But if one continues to make the mind familiar with non-virtuous harmful and unsuitable mental states, it will cause more and more harm. By lessening the harmful mental states and by increasing the positive and virtuous mental states, then, over some time, a few months or a few years, a person will become happy and peaceful.

At the present time our mind is mainly directed towards the outside; towards the external world. If one instead directs the mind towards the inside, and is able to completely focus one's mind internally, then one will experience the clear and stable nature of one's mind. By meditating in such a way the mind becomes very clear and very stable. Then by meditating in such a manner again and again one becomes more and more familiar with that mental state and one becomes very stable. As the mind becomes stable in this manner then the person also becomes stable and will not be easily distracted or diverted by external conditions. The mind will not be as easily affected by external conditions. Therefore it is very important that one trains one's mind in this manner. One needs to understand the importance of training the mind in this way - lessening the unsuitable mental states and increasing the positive and wholesome mental states - because the unwholesome, unsuitable mental states are the mental states that harm oneself and others. It is very important to understand this. We need to understand that we need to practise and meditate in such a manner.

Meditating means to familiarise the mind with virtuous mental states and to lessen the unsuitable mental states. That is the meaning of meditation. Meditating means 'familiarising' or 'acquainting', and the process of meditation is familiarising or acquainting the mind with virtuous, wholesome mental states. If, for example, one is able to meditate for one minute with a mind that is not disturbed by the conceptualising mind one experiences a particular type of joy and happiness that arises through that type of meditation. From there one can then increase that meditation further and further. Gaining this experience generates a strong faith in the Dharma. In this way one will develop one's internal wisdom and develop the internal refuge. One is then not dependant any more upon an external refuge. One develops the internal refuge.

So to meditate is very important and we can meditate for a little while. You can all seat yourself in the proper meditation posture, the Vairochana posture. Since you are all students there's no need for me to go over all the old things again and again. After having seated oneself in the proper physical posture it is important that one initially develops a good motivation for one's meditation practice. One should meditate for the purpose of subduing one's mind for the purpose of attaining inner happiness. One should also meditate for the purpose of attaining the state of complete enlightenment so that one is then able to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. By starting out in such a way and overcoming one's self-

cherishing, and by continuous practise one develops one's mind further and further, so that one's altruistic attitude becomes stronger and wider.

The Buddha Dharma has been passed down for 2500 years. The Buddha taught the Buddha Dharma without any self-cherishing and with the motivation of wanting to benefit others. Because of that motivation he became enlightened. One should try to do likewise, which will leave the potential within one's mind to become enlightened, to attain the name of a buddha and the body of a buddha in the future. Since the purpose of meditation is to train one's mind, to focus one's mind, to think single-pointedly on the meditational object, one should try to do that now. One should try to focus one's mind single-pointedly internally and not let it be distracted by thoughts about the external world. Focus it single-pointedly towards the inside and don't be distracted by conceptual thoughts. Then, within that space, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath and meditate on the coming and going of the breath. The purpose of meditating on the coming and going of the breath is to pacify the conceptualising mind. Meditation on the coming and going of the breath is an antidote against the conceptualising mind. We can meditate in such a manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

It is very important to develop the virtuous, positive and wholesome mental states. If one doesn't develop these states and lets one's mind be controlled by unsuitable mental states one won't be happy, regardless of what kind of activity one is engaged in. Regardless of whether one is sitting or standing, talking, walking or sleeping, one will always be unhappy. If, on the other hand, one develops the wholesome, virtuous mental states they will generate happiness in the mind. One will experience that happiness and feel happy and comfortable whether sleeping or eating, sitting, walking, standing up. Regardless of whether one is with others or one is alone, one will feel always happy.

One will also be able to convey that happiness to others, to greet others with a friendly smile and a warm attitude and in this way there is a great benefit both for oneself and for others, and one experiences great happiness. If one develops the wholesome, virtuous mental states one will experience happiness regardless of whether one wants that happiness or not. Even if you say, 'I don't want to be happy', you will be happy. One has to take care of one's own happiness oneself. Others will always have a variety of opinions, but one has to develop the wisdom of what one should do and what one should stop doing and then act according to that wisdom. Develop these virtuous mental states, these positive and wholesome mental states and, in this way, one has created one's happiness. One's own happiness is one's own responsibility.

It is very important that one generates the motivation of wanting to benefit others. Sometimes people worry that they would not benefit if they gave up self-cherishing. But how can one lose out by giving up self-cherishing? By accomplishing the welfare of others one will be well-liked. If one is well-liked by others then one experiences happiness.

One has to live in society. If one lives in a society there are two options. Either one lives together harmoniously and has a happy experience or there is no harmony and one is not happy. By giving up self-cherishing one helps those that one sees are suffering, regardless of whether they are friend, enemy or stranger and goes about alleviating that person's suffering and if one sees that someone is lacking happiness one goes about making that person happy, regardless of whether they are a friend, enemy or stranger. By acting in this way, in a pure manner with a pure mental continuum, wherever one goes one will be well-received and well-liked. In this way one also gains happiness for oneself.

Sometimes there's a feeling that one is not well treated by society. There are societies where one doesn't feel very welcome when one goes there, one doesn't feel very happy and so forth. On the other hand, there are societies where people practise love and compassion and cherish others and one has a very different experience. Since one needs to live in a society it is very important that one generates a good heart, generates a wholesome mind, gives up self-cherishing and generates concern for the welfare of others.

I will start the Lam Rim next time. Perhaps you have some questions tonight? You should ask good questions (*laughter*). Last year you asked many good questions. Let's do it like that this year.

Question: If you go beyond the conceptual mind, what difference does it make if it is a positive or negative mind, because you are going beyond the conceptual?

When I'm talking about the pacification of the conceptual mind, I'm talking about the pacification of the negative concepts. Mental states like compassion and love are also conceptual states. By pacifying the unsuitable conceptual states, then love and compassion increase naturally. For example, the less harmful intent you have the more concern you have for the other person. But the more harmful intent you have the less concern you have for the other person. For example, if one feels some ill-will towards one's partner then the partner won't get a kiss (*laughter*). The action of giving a kiss comes out of affection for the other person and liking the other person. When there is ill-will it generates further conceptual thoughts and one doesn't act very affectionately towards the other person. By understanding the influence of our thoughts on our actions we can learn to take control of our actions. If one feels loving and affectionate towards the other person one will also feel inclined to give them a kiss. But if one feels ill-will or anger and the mind is generated by those types of conceptual thoughts then one doesn't feel like giving the other person a kiss. By recognising these different ways of thinking and the actions that they induce one can also learn to control one's actions.

As was explained in the beginning, focus the mind internally, and then, after having focused the mind internally and not letting it be distracted to the outside, place it single-pointedly on the name mantra of the Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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