
The Condensed Lam Rim

༄༅། །བྱུང་ཚུལ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

3 November 2004

We can meditate for a little while as usual. Sit yourself in a comfortable and relaxed manner, and generate a good motivation.

Then, on the basis of sitting in a good and appropriate meditation posture, you also need to focus the mind single-pointedly on the meditation object. Meditation means to repeatedly train the mind in single-pointed focus on a virtuous object.

One needs to identify within one's mind which mental states are conducive and necessary for one's mental happiness, and which mental states are unconducive, and better gotten rid of. Then, one can engage in the activity of self-improvement, generating and increasing the good and positive virtuous states of mind, and getting rid of the disturbing states of mind.

What do we define as that which has to be purified – the mental states that we need to get rid of? Normally, when we get rid of something, it's something that we feel we have no use for. There are certain mental states that fulfil that definition, and therefore they are that which is to be purified and to be gotten rid of.

Gradually, following a step-by-step procedure, one can generate improved, conducive mental states that support one's happiness and, on the other hand, get rid of the mental states that are unnecessary, that one doesn't need. In such a way, we follow the path of self-improvement. So when we meditate, the point is to train the mind in good mental states, mental states that are free from attachment, mental states that are free from anger.

The way this process works is that the good mental states – such as detachment, non-anger and non-ignorance – act as antidotes to the mental states that one wants to get rid of. This is the process of purification – purifying the mind of mental states that are unnecessary and that one doesn't want.

When we follow a process of meditation, it should be done on the basis of understanding which mental states need to be adopted and which need to be rejected, and then lessening or getting rid of those that need to be rejected by developing the good mental states, which can act then as an antidote to the mental states that need to be rejected.

It is necessary to go through this process of self-purification and self-improvement because as long as one is an ordinary individual, whether one is high or low, one

will always experience suffering. Those who are high will still experience mental suffering, and those who are low will experience different types of physical suffering such as hunger, thirst and sickness. In short, as long as one is an ordinary individual, one always will experience mental and physical suffering. There is never a time when one can say for sure: 'These sufferings I will not experience'.

Because we are in this situation, it becomes important for us to follow this path of self-improvement. As was mentioned before, if one only lets one's mind abide calmly and peacefully, that alone will not bring about a process of improvement. Rather, on the basis of having this calm and abiding mind, we bring about a process of improvement by increasing and generating good mental states and, on the other hand, getting rid of the disturbing and unnecessary mental states. We make the decision to not generate any new disturbing mental states, lessening and purifying those that we already have, and making the determination not to let them arise again but to increase our positive mental states further.

If one practises in this way, the process of self-improvement can happen, and one's meditation will bear some proper fruit.

If one understands this model of self-improvement, there is no need to ask the question: 'Geshe-la, why does my mind not improve even though I have been meditating for a number of years?'. The answer is that you have only meditated for the purpose of having an abiding mind; you have not really meditated for the purpose of increasing the good mental states and decreasing the bad mental states.

This is where the problem lies – with one's own lack of understanding of how self-improvement works, of how one can improve the mind properly; it is not a fault that lies with the Dharma. Quite often, there is the danger that a practitioner will generate a misconception with regard to the Dharma, thinking that is where the mistake lies, but actually the mistake lies with the meditator not having a proper understanding of how to meditate properly.

If one understands these important points, one will receive the benefit of one's practice. However, if one doesn't understand these significant points, although one may be a meditator, there is a danger that one's ignorance or anger will increase, and one will end up as an angry meditator!

Certain people have reported experiencing a lessening of wisdom through their meditation practice, saying that when they repeatedly focus the mind internally, they actually generate more mental darkness and their mind becomes less clear. They even tend to forget things that they understood before; apart from not generating new understanding and new wisdom, they forget what they already knew from before.

This is quite the opposite to how meditation should work. Meditation enables us to generate new wisdom, clarify the mind, make it sharper, more discerning, generate new insights – not making the mind a dull entity, but making it a very clear, sharp, discerning entity that can understand more about cause and effect and so forth.

As usual, first turn the mind inwards by stopping it engaging with external objects. After having focused the mind inwards, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that manner for a little while. (*Pause for meditation*)

By meditating properly, in the post-meditation period one will experience a heightened sense of discriminating awareness and wisdom – for example, a heightened awareness of the law of cause and effect – because the wisdom one has generated during meditation will be carried over into the post-meditation period, and one will be able to keep it in mind with one's mindfulness.

How to guide with the actual instructions

4.1. The way of relying on the spiritual friend who is the root of the path

4.1.2. A brief presentation of the way to strive

4.1.2.1. The actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.2. What to do in the time between meditation sessions

The yoga of sleep

Now we come to the fourth point regarding what to do during the post-meditation period. After having dealt with the point of understanding the right way of eating, we come to the fourth point, striving in the yoga of not sleeping, and at the time of sleeping, how to sleep properly.

As it says in *Letter to a Friend* by Nagarjuna, first, during the day, one should engage in virtuous practices, then at night, one should divide the night into three parts, engaging in virtuous practices in the earlier and later part of the night, and sleeping in the middle part of the night. In the middle part of the night, one should sleep with mindfulness.

So one should have meditation sessions throughout the day and in the earlier and later part of the night, and in the post-meditation period one should not go to sleep. Then, in the middle part of the night, when one goes to sleep, one should not waste that time, but should try to purify the mind of the five obscurations. In such a way, we can even make the time of sleep useful.

In the post-meditation period, regardless of whether one is sitting down, standing up, walking about or lying down, one should not waste them meaninglessly, but one should use them to purify the mind of the five

obscurations.

The five obscurations are: 1) mental excitement and regret; 2) sleep and mental darkness or foginess; 3) harmful intent; 4) doubt; and 5) aspiration for objects of the desire realm. So in the post-meditation period, one should purify one's mind of those states. One should not let harmful intent or doubt arise in one's mind – for example, doubt about the law of cause and effect. One should not let one's mind fall under attachment to objects of the desire realm, and so forth.

By dividing the night into three parts, one should use the middle part for sleep, because during sleep, the elements of the body rejuvenate and regenerate, and this supports one's practice. It makes the mind fresher, enhances its flexibility, and so forth. If one doesn't sleep, one misses out on this process of rejuvenation and again it impedes one's Dharma practice. But sleeping refreshes body and mind, so one should use this middle part of the night for sleep making it conducive for one's Dharma practice.

What is the physical position that is recommended to sleep in during the middle part of the night? Actually, we have some time for questions, but if you don't have questions, we can continue with this present point.

(Question: What time does the middle part of the night fall in?)

Answer: If you divide the night into three parts, then take the middle part, what time do you think it would be?

Going to sleep before 12 o'clock, let's say around 11 o'clock, is very conducive because the sleep that one gets around this time – 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock – that is a very rejuvenating sleep.

If one goes to bed after 12, one doesn't really get the full benefit of sleeping, and also it becomes more difficult to get up early in the morning. One knows from experience that if one goes to bed at 1 o'clock or even later, it becomes very difficult to wake up early in the morning. And even then, after has slept in a bit, one doesn't feel as refreshed when one wakes up. Rather, one feels a bit heavy and tired.

So generally, it's good to go to bed around 11, before 11pm.

Also, it's good to look at when one needs to get up. For example, if one wants to get up at 3am for one's practice, like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one definitely needs to go to bed at 9 – at the latest at 9.30pm – otherwise one won't be able to get up at 3am. If one wants to get up at 4am, one needs to go to bed by 10pm. We must look at the time we need to get up – for example, if we are doing a retreat, we need to get up early, so we need to go to bed early.

It is good to exert some discipline about one's rhythm of going to sleep and getting up. In such a way, one doesn't lose time during the day, because if one sleeps in, one has less time left in the morning to do things, and quite often

one has to rush them or doesn't have enough time to do all the things that one wanted to do. Even if one is not a Dharma practitioner, it is a good idea to have a certain self-discipline with regard to when to go to sleep and when to get up.

(Question inaudible)

Answer: The reason for not sleeping in the post-meditation period is that one can continue to practise the Dharma.

For example, if you are part of Australia's workforce, if you sleep, you can't work. It's as simple as that. For Dharma practitioners, if you sleep, you don't practise the Dharma, so that's why you don't go to sleep in the post-meditation period

The instructions do provide the time to sleep in the middle part of the night; if you didn't sleep during that time, when would you sleep? It becomes difficult. So there is that time provided for sleep. If you sleep after lunch, automatically you sleep less at night. Then again, this disturbs one's rhythm.

Question: I do shiftwork at night for a few days a week, and thus it is difficult to have rhythm.

Answer: It does look like you have your own rhythm! *(Laughter)* Some people work until 10pm; they can't go to sleep before 10. After they've worked until 10, maybe they can go to bed only at 11. There's a time for meditation, and there's a time for work. When the time for work comes, one can't meditate, except for certain religions where they provide meditation time during the work period.

Question: In the Foundation of All Good Qualities it says, 'Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara, ...'. Where has one fallen from?

Answer: Here, 'falling' is a word that is used for birth. If it says you have fallen into the sea of samsara, what it means is you have taken rebirth in the sea of samsara.

These words refer to the generation of bodhicitta and compassion – remembering that other sentient beings have exactly the same sufferings as ourselves. This is a crucial point to meditate on. If one meditates on suffering in relation to oneself, it generates renunciation. If one meditates on suffering in relation to others, it generates compassion for them.

It looks like there are no more questions. Are there? Don't worry if you don't have any more questions. That's alright. I will give you a holiday for tonight. *(Laughter)* Otherwise, there might be a danger that you worry: 'Now I have to ask a question', and you become anxious thinking: 'Geshe-la will be unhappy if I don't ask a question'.

In Tuesday's class, I always ask questions after the teaching, and some people say it is very effective for

waking them up, because they start thinking: 'Geshe-la is going to ask some questions', so they become very apprehensive.

Remembering what was said before about self-improvement and increasing your love and compassion, which is very essential, turn the mind inwards and focus on the mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Gabrielle Thomson

Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**