
The Condensed Lam Rim

༄༅། རྒྱུད་རྒྱུ་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བརྒྱུག་པ་ལོ།

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

9 February 2005

This is the first class in the new year and as we have come together for the first time in the new year I'm wondering if you are all well and, in reply, you can all nod affirmingly (*laughter*). I wish you tashi delek. The Tibetan words tashi delek contain a variety of meanings. 'Tashi' refers to virtue and 'delek' refers to the happiness of liberation and enlightenment. It is a very auspicious type of greeting. 'Delek' means a perfect happiness or a good happiness. So the happiness that it refers to is the happiness of liberation and enlightenment because that is the best type of happiness.

We always say before the meditation that it is important to generate a good motivation and the motivation that one should generate is a motivation that is a positive mental state that is concerned for the welfare of others. One should try not to meditate with a mind that is motivated by anger, attachment, jealousy, ignorance and so forth. One should try to withdraw one's mind from these states and generate a positive mental state that is concerned with the welfare of others. One needs to have a good motivation and one also needs to adopt a good physical posture.

We always talk about meditation and generating positive habits in the mind. The purpose of meditation is to enhance the potential and power of the mind and to make the mind clearer and cleaner. If we think about it, everybody needs and wants a powerful mind, a clear and clean mind, and from there arises the need for everybody to meditate. Everybody likes to have a powerful mind, and the more one has enhanced the potency of the mind, the power of the mind, the clearer and cleaner the mind becomes.

The mind is usually very distracted, and if the mind is very distracted it is difficult to engage in an activity in a concentrated way. It is difficult to engage in an activity properly because one cannot give one's full attention to that activity since the mind is being distracted by different disturbing thoughts. On the other hand, if the mind weren't disturbed by different disturbing thoughts it would abide naturally single-pointedly and one would be able devote one's full attention to any type of action or activity that one engaged in. That is one benefit of having enhanced the power of mind and being able to concentrate properly. Disturbing thoughts bring with them certain mental unhappiness. They bring with them a certain unhappiness within the mind and they overshadow and disturb the happiness that one is experiencing. That is another disadvantage of disturbing thoughts that one does not experience if the disturbing thoughts are subdued.

Everybody experiences the disadvantages and

shortcomings of having a distracted mind. Therefore one needs to engage in methods which can pacify the distracted mind and overcome disturbing thoughts. It is also a very common experience that it is not possible to generate single-pointed internal abiding of the mind through external causes and conditions. There are no external means that can cause this single-pointed internal abiding of the mind. This, again, leads to the necessity for meditation which is the method to attain this internal abiding.

By checking within your own life the problems that arise from having a distracted mind and from having disturbing thoughts you will, by yourself, come to the conclusion that they need to be overcome and arrive at the necessity for you to meditate. If one then meditates and the mind becomes relaxed and abides single-pointedly one can naturally experience the benefits of that. The mind is naturally happier. It is a happiness that one can then experience. In order to experience the happiness that arises from a relaxed and clear single-pointed mind one needs to engage in meditation. If one is able to meditate properly then meditation becomes a resting time for body and mind. If one engages in a strenuous physical activity and sits down and has a rest, it rejuvenates the body. Similarly, meditating has the same effect on body and mind.

Seat yourself in the correct physical posture, focus the mind internally and then, after having focused the mind internally and stopped engaging external objects, then place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in such a manner for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

One's needs to work on both the external and internal conditions in one's life. One needs to achieve good external conditions but one needs to achieve good internal conditions as well. One needs to apply methods through which one can train and refine one's inner being throughout one's lifetime. The more one is able to do this, the happier one's life will be.

One needs to develop the wisdom that can discriminate between right actions and wrong actions. One needs to know which actions one needs to adopt in order to be able to be able to have a happier life, and one needs to know which actions one needs to stop in order to have a happier life. It is here that the significance of practising love and compassion and generating a mental attitude that is concerned with the welfare of others arises. If one rejects these positive mental states and somehow, out of one's confusion, adopts actions that actually bring harm, if one actually adopts the actions that actually should be stopped and rejected, and one stops and rejects actions that should actually be adopted, this state of confusion brings on suffering. It brings on a suffering that cannot be lessened by external objects. Even though one has nice external objects, these external objects will not provide the happiness that one is seeking because the internal condition for the experience of happiness is lacking. That's why it is important that one develops the wisdom that can discriminate between right and wrong actions and one adopts mental states such as love and compassion and so forth.

As mentioned in the Guru Puja, just as one does not wish for even the slightest of problems and the slightest of sufferings, just as one wishes to have the best possible happiness and just as one wishes to have even the most insignificant happiness, others feel exactly the same. Others also don't want to have even the slightest experience of suffering and they desire the best possible happiness. By generating an understanding of this verse one should meditate on rejoicing when one sees the fortunes and happiness of others. By being able to rejoice in another person's fortune and happiness and not being jealous one shows a true concern for the welfare of the other person and that will generate a mind of confidence and trust in the other person. They can see that one does not want to take away their happiness but actually wishes for them to be happy and free from suffering. In this way one fosters an atmosphere of trust and confidence in each other.

To generate concern for the welfare of others does not mean that one neglects oneself, or that one stops looking after oneself. When it says that it is really important to generate concern for the welfare of others one should try to train to be at least a little bit in being concerned for others and not only always focused only on oneself. What it is saying is that as long as one has a self-centred focus one will not be able to gain the happiness that one desires. The egotistical attitude is a block that prevents one from experiencing the happiness that one looking for. Generating a concern for the welfare of others, expanding one's mind somewhat to include the happiness of others, is actually a very good way of looking after oneself.

One needs to practise love, compassion, affection with each other. In this way one can establish a good relationship with others; a relationship that is based on mutual trust, love and affection. Another person -and when we talk about others this does not necessarily mean somebody completely unrelated to oneself, but includes those that one is in daily contact with, one's near and dear ones, one's family and friends and so forth - might not like to hear harsh words just as much as one doesn't like to hear harsh words oneself. If, for example, another person says something harsh or unfriendly to one it is good to keep in mind that if one were to reply in kind one would just inflict the same suffering on the other person because they also don't like to be treated in this way. By practising compassion for another person in such a moment, and treating the other person kindly and compassionately, one can diffuse the situation and also generate some trust and affection in the other person. By practising in accordance with this example one can establish a good relationship with others that is based on mutual confidence and love and affection. But being able to perfect this type of practice does not come about overnight. It takes some time to be able to practise in such a way.

Having a harmonious and friendly relationship with others provides a very special type of happiness. Sitting down with such a person for coffee or tea or having a meal or doing some other common activity generates a very special type of happiness. One of the conducive conditions necessary when one goes into retreat is to

have a friendly helper, a harmonious friend, somebody that is agreeable who supports one during one's retreat. In this way the retreat also becomes a happy experience. It is one of the conducive conditions for having a happy retreat. Likewise, in one's day to day life, having a good friend with whom one has a harmonious relationship provides the opportunity to experience this special type of happiness that arises out of such a harmonious relationship.

One does not need to have the feeling that one can only help others in a material way. Of course there are also those sentient beings that need to be helped in a material way because they have not enough to eat or to drink. However, that is quite rare in this country. The help that one can give to others doesn't necessarily have to be material. Material help is not as necessary here. It can be just having a friendly word for the other person, smiling at the other person, listening to the other person when they are in trouble, when they have some problems and then, when they are sad trying to make them happy again, to build them up mentally. These types of activities don't require any kind of great financial input from one's own side. There's no money or materials needed to help another person in this way. There are a great variety of ways one can support and help others without giving financial support.

We can leave questions and answers for tonight. We can start with that next week. Tonight I wish you a happy tashi delek and a happy Tibetan New Year. It is the Tibetan New Year and for many eastern people today is actually New Year. So after getting up in the morning, when one meets another person one has to say '*tashi delek*' which means good luck and perfect happiness. One may also wish the other person '*kam sang denpa sang*', which means, 'may you have a nice space'. Basically one wishes the other person to be in a nice space, and pure Dharma. And then one wishes the other person to engage in happy activities; to spend their time happily. If one can go through one's lives in such a way, not harming others, benefiting others, then one has taken the essence.

As was said at the beginning, turn the mind inwards and place it single-pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Gabrielle Thomson

Edit 1 by John Burch

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© Tara Institute