
The Condensed Lam Rim

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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We can meditate a little bit as usual. Seat yourself comfortably and relax. It is said that the beginning of meditation is the motivation. Once sitting in a good posture one needs to generate a good motivation.

In order to generate an aspiration to meditate in single-pointed concentration one needs to contemplate the benefits of single-pointed concentration. Without being aware of its benefits one will not generate the enthusiasm and aspiration to develop single-pointed concentration and one will not be able to overcome one's laziness. Even if one is able to overcome the initial laziness to meditate one will find it difficult to keep up one's meditation or, even if one can do that, one will find it difficult to complete one's meditation.

One benefit of single-pointed concentration is that the mind becomes pliant, serviceable and well-balanced. If one does not have single-pointed concentration the mind is not pliant and serviceable and the body is also not serviceable. If the mind is not balanced it causes both physical and mental disturbances. By meditating on single-pointed concentration one's mind becomes well-balanced. If one does not practise single-pointed concentration the mind is not in balance.

Most of the types of consciousness that are manifest in our continuum are coarse and have a close relationship with the coarse physical body. Therefore if our consciousness is disturbed it also disturbs the coarse physical body. As we know, if the mind is very uptight, very tense that affects the coarse physical body and is actually the cause for many different types of sicknesses. But if one meditates on single-pointed concentration so that the mind attains a state of equanimity and balance and becomes, what is referred to as pliant or serviceable, then this, in turn, makes the body pliant and serviceable.

Serviceable here means that one can do with the mind what one wants to do with it. For example, if one has a serviceable voice one can sing all kinds of notes very well. Other people are very good with their hands - they can use their hands to do anything they want to do. When we say that the mind becomes serviceable we mean that the mind becomes supple and we can then direct it wherever we want and it is under our control. When the mind becomes serviceable it also becomes well-balanced. This has a positive, balancing effect on the physical body and induces a state of physical pliancy.

The state of physical pliancy leads to the bliss of physical pliancy, and the bliss of physical pliancy induces the bliss of mental pliancy. In this way one goes through different

stages to the attainment of calm abiding. The attainment of the bliss of mental and physical pliancy are another benefit of single-pointed meditation, calm abiding meditation.

These are some benefits of single-pointed meditation that it is good to be aware of. Single-pointed meditation also acts as the antidote to the over-conceptualising mind. Very often one finds oneself in the situation where many, many different conceptual thoughts arise in the mind and one finds oneself engaged in a constant process of conceptualising and thinking, for example, about what is going to happen in the future. If instead one were to think about something pleasant it would, at least, make the mind happy. But quite often it seems to be the case that people think about unpleasant things and in this way put themselves into a state of anxiety. First conceptual thoughts arise in the mind, then one believes in their truth and then, by thinking about the unpleasant things that might happen, one puts oneself into a state of anxiety where one even breaks out into nervous sweats and so forth. This process can be counteracted by placing the mind single-pointedly on an internal meditation object. By keeping the mind single-pointedly on an internal meditation object these disturbing thought processes will subside.

Now we can focus the mind on the coming and going of the breath. First place the mind internally, without engaging external objects but focusing the mind internally and then place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. (*Pause for meditation*)

It is a good thing if you practice this type of meditation regularly. Lama Tsong Khapa said,

Abandon the negative mind, develop the virtuous mind, abandon the harmful thought, train in a concern for the welfare of others.

This is very profound advice by Lama Tsong Khapa. It is saying that, on the one hand, one should abandon negativities and, on the other hand, one should train in virtue. One should abandon the harmful mind and one should train the mind in concern for the welfare of others.

If we consider this verse carefully we will recognise that this verse expresses exactly what we need. On the one hand one needs to get rid of negativities. The negativities that one needs to give up are the ten non-virtuous actions. One needs to give up killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, adultery, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, idle gossip and so forth because these are all actions that cause unhappiness both to oneself and to others. On the other hand one needs to train the mind in virtue. Virtue is that which one should hold dear, practising the exact opposite of the ten non-virtuous actions. One should give up the harmful mind and one should cherish a concern for the welfare of others.

One needs to give up harmful actions because they constitute exactly what one does not want. One does not want negativity, what one wants is goodness. Even without having faith in the law of cause and effect it is a generally accepted that killing is not a good thing. It is a

universally recognised fact that even killing an enemy is not a good thing. There is definitely no religion that advocates killing. In general human morality and ethics killing is not regarded as a good thing and likewise stealing is not regarded as a good thing. If you think about this, will somebody who is known to be a thief be respected and trusted? No. Likewise, will somebody who is known as a killer be respected and trusted? No.

However a person who is always honest and is known not to steal and respects life is usually a person who is respected and trusted. Similarly, it is a universally accepted fact that sexual misconduct and adultery are not good things. Likewise lying, divisive speech, harsh words and idle gossip are all regarded as harmful and not something that one should aspire to. These are universal truths generally accepted by everybody, regardless of whether one accepts the law of cause and effect.

These different actions are universally regarded as harmful and negative. They are what makes a person untrustworthy or unsuitable. Engaging in unsuitable actions and unsuitable states of mind makes the person unsuitable and this is something that one should strive to avoid. One should, instead, try to be a good human being and a good person by engaging in the opposite actions.

As Lama Tsong Khapa also said, one should contemplate the meaning of what one has listened to, and then one should meditate on what one has contemplated. Initially one listens to Dharma teachings, because one likes what one hears, and it generates a certain faith and understanding in one's mind.

However, this faith and understanding is initially fragile and not very stable. Listening to the Dharma teachings generates a certain understanding that has to be deepened by contemplating the meaning of what one has heard. This will deepen one's understanding and one will generate a sharper and more penetrating wisdom.

Finally one has to meditate on the meaning that one understood through contemplation and generate the most profound and penetrating types of insight and wisdom. In this way the mind is subdued. In our case one can say that there is no lack of Dharma knowledge. What one lacks is practice. One does not put into practice what one knows.

The problem does not lie with a lack of knowledge but with a lack of practice. As the Buddha himself said at one time, 'If I teach the pure Dharma and the person listens there is no benefit if the person does not then translate what they have heard into practice.' No matter how proficient a doctor may be, if the patient does not listen to the advice of the doctor, and does not take the medicine in accordance with the instructions of the doctor, they will not be cured. That is not the fault of the doctor but the fault of the patient. Similarly if one does not put into practice the Dharma that one knows it is only one's own fault if one's mind does not improve.

Therefore it would be a good thing if you were to practice at home the meditation that we teach here regularly. As we said before, through meditation you can attain a balanced and happy mind and a balanced and pliable

body. One can attain both mental and physical happiness through this meditation and what more does what one need in one's life? If one physically feels well and experiences physical well-being and happiness the body is happy. If one mentally experiences happiness and bliss the mind is happy. What more does one need besides mental and physical bliss?

To attain these one needs to control and protect one's body and mind. One needs to look after one's body and mind. One protects and controls one's mind with mindfulness and introspection. One looks after one's body by avoiding food and drink that is harmful to one's physical health because if one is physically unwell one will not feel well. Similarly, if the mind is disturbed one will feel mentally disturbed and one will feel mentally unhappy. In order to have both physical and mental happiness one needs to look after and control one's body and mind.

It can be a very practical thing to actually address oneself, asking what one wants. One can say one's name and then ask oneself, "Do you want to have mental happiness, or not? Do you want to have a healthy body, physical happiness, or not?" If you want to have mental happiness then you need to do this, this and this. It can be a very effective method. Instead of talking to another person address oneself in such a manner and ask oneself this question. But you should not do it when other people are around. (*Laughter*). They might think that there is something wrong with you.

Since one's mental and physical happiness are so important you should take great care to look after your mental and physical well-being, especially at this time of the year. I think Shantideva used two examples to illustrate how aware one should be, especially when one goes into a situation that encourages negative actions. He said, for example, that if somebody were to put a basket full of fruit on one's head, and then stand there with a sword ordering one to balance that fruit basket on one's head, saying "If even just one piece of fruit falls out I will kill you or cut off your arm", one would be very, very aware and take very, very great care that no fruit fell out of the fruit basket. What it means is that one should be equally careful not to let one's mind fall under the control of mental afflictions, not to let the mental afflictions and overtake one's mind. The danger that they pose to one's well-being is similar to being killed by the sword when a fruit falls out of the basket.

The other analogy that is used is the analogy of someone who has a deep, painful wound on one's shoulder. If that person is going to a very crowded place they will be very, very aware and be very, very careful not bump into anybody, and ensure that nobody bumps into them. They will be afraid of the great pain this will cause. One should be similarly careful and aware when one is going to places that induce and encourage negative and harmful actions. One should be aware of the dangers that will arise when one lets the mind fall under the control of the mental afflictions. One should be aware that when the mind is disturbed then the mind is not happy and one wants to preserve one's mental happiness.

This is generally the case for everybody, but especially the case in the time coming up where young people are going to parties and raves and so on, one should be very aware when one is going to these happenings not to let one's mind fall under the control of the mental afflictions. One should not let one's mind become disturbed, because that becomes counterproductive to one's mental happiness. When the mind gets carried away and becomes disturbed and crazy it does not induce a happy state of well-being.

One should be very careful drinking alcohol. My viewpoint for people who are still drinking alcohol is that drinking a little bit of alcohol is okay. If you have just a glass of wine it is good for your health. It can help you sleep well and make your body relaxed. But that's where it should stop. One should have enough awareness and mindfulness to stop there. I think there is that benefit. But with cigarettes I don't see the slightest tiniest, eeny, weeny benefit.

This advice is only for those who still drink alcohol. I know that many of you have actually stopped drinking alcohol and smoking altogether so I'm not telling you now to start drinking. *(Laughter)* If you don't listen carefully here you might say, "Oh, I stopped drinking and now the Geshe is telling me to start drinking". What I said now was only for those that do still drink. Those who have already stopped drinking alcohol and smoking should definitely not start to drink again.

I want to wish you well and thank you very much. I also want to thank all the people who work in Tara Institute very much. On January 18th Wednesday classes will start up again with Dr Alan Molloy who will teach the Vajrasattva meditation which is a purification method. We have just talked about purifying negativities. The purpose of the Vajrasattva meditation is the purification of negativities. Dr Alan is, as the name indicates, somebody who has worldly knowledge but on top of that he has also Dharma knowledge. So you will get both Dharma and worldly knowledge in the Wednesday class this January.

I want to wish you infinite Merry Christmases and infinite Happy New Years. There is not only one or two but infinite Merry Christmases and infinite Happy New Years, beyond count. In accordance with the name, Merry Christmas, which I suppose indicates a Happy Christmas, and Happy New Year, pass this time in a truly happy state. Avoid different disturbing actions that make one unhappy and avoid eating many different types of things that make you sick. Otherwise there is the danger that you will actually be very unhappy when you come back next year. That would be contrary to our purpose. You should try to be truly merry and happy by being actually happy in the truest sense of the word.

There might be those of you that don't have a lot of friends and worry about having to pass the time alone. There might also be those who have lots of company but then worry about their appearance, the appearance of their face and the way they are dressed and also compete in that way with others. I think you should let go of all

these different types of conceptions because they disturb the mind. Just be truly happy in yourself and pass the time in a wholesome, happy way. Don't eat, for example, while talking. If you talk, eat, talk, eat you are actually not aware of how much you eat. People have told me that when they do that, when they are finished they actually feel unwell because they lost track of how much they ate. The same goes for drinking. Even though initially one might have the motivation of just drinking one glass, as one chats one loses one's mindfulness and gets carried away, chatting, drinking, chatting, drinking. In this way one becomes completely drunk and cannot walk home by oneself. This is the result of losing one's mindfulness. This is very important to know.

I wish you 'Tashi Delek'. As was explained earlier, place the mind single-pointedly in an internal state and then place it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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