
The Condensed Lam Rim

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 February 2007

It's been a few weeks since we were last together. I'm very glad that we can all meet once again, and I'd like to greet everyone, *tashi delek*.

The actual greeting *tashi delek* is not merely a form of saying 'hello', but the words have a deeper meaning in themselves. *Tashi* literally means auspiciousness; so the first word is to wish the other every type of auspiciousness. Then the word *delek* is made up of two syllables, *de* and *lek*. *De* means happiness and *lek* means best, thus wishing others 'the best or highest form of happiness'. The two words together also has a Dharma connotation to it. The first syllable *de*, is wishing the other person the happiness of 'high status', which is a higher rebirth as a human being or in the god realms. And then *lek* has the connotation of wishing others 'definite goodness', which means wishing the other person to obtain ultimate happiness, which is liberation or enlightenment.

Having mentioned that it is auspicious and good to be together again, we look into the actual purpose of why we have come together again. We are here mainly to seek the means of gaining some real inner peace and happiness, and to make life more meaningful. That is the purpose of why we have gathered here together. What we are attempting to do is to seek out the means of achieving peace and happiness through the teaching, discussing and meditating.

As with any activity that we wish to engage in, particularly a virtuous activity, it entirely depends on having a good attitude to begin with, or what we call the bodhicitta motivation. Motivation is a very important element in achieving our goal. This is true for any activity if the purpose is to bring about wellbeing in our life or to help others. Having good relationships, and then striving to achieve happiness in whatever endeavours we engage in, really seems to depend very much on the initial motivation that we develop in our mind before we engage in the activity. Therefore it is very important.

We witness around us and within ourselves that, when we engage in any activity, our entire outlook will be affected by our attitude. If we have a good attitude in our mind before we start any activity with others, for example, if the intention in our mind is a good one, then naturally when we speak, it will be pleasant. Our physical activity, our gestures and our manners will also be pleasant and nice, and we will naturally have a smile on our face. We know that when we engage with others, it will naturally be a pleasant experience. Our motivation is instrumental in providing us with a good mental

attitude to begin with, and when it is followed by good physical and verbal actions, then it really fulfils a good outcome for ourselves and others.

We can see that by developing a good attitude initially, then all our activities will have a good result. If the intention is to bring about a good relationship with others, then due to our good attitude and our pleasant speech and behaviour, others will naturally be inclined to be friendly towards us. If we wish to bring about harmony in a relationship and help reunite others, then due to our good motivation, others will be inclined to listen and follow. We can see that the good motivation or attitude that we develop initially is something very precious. We should regard it as an object that is priceless.

On the other hand, if we have a negative attitude that is imbued with negative feelings towards others - agitation, anger - then due to that negative state of mind, whatever activity we engage in will not have a good outcome. Because of the agitation one's mind will be constantly disturbed and restless, and because of that, others feel uncomfortable around us. If we try to work with others, even if we have an intention to benefit them, then due to the agitation in our mind and the negative state of mind we have within ourselves, this reflects our behaviour with others - they would not really want to be near us or trust us. The outcome will not be favourable. Rather than bringing harmony and unity with others, it actually brings more disturbance. Due to the negative attitude in our mind, rather than bringing people closer to you, it will distance them from you. And then we may wonder why others are not relating to you in a proper way. We may wonder why our relationships are breaking apart or why people are leaving us. We may initially feel that it is their fault, that they are not respecting us or they are not relating to us in a nice way, but when we really check up, we find that the real reason lies in our own attitude and our own state of mind, and because of that, these things happen. So it is very good to investigate and check into our mind and see how the outcome depends very much on the attitude we have.

We should investigate our own attitude by checking up and finding out what brings about a good result for ourselves and others, and what brings a negative result. When we look and investigate in this way, we will find out that it is really dependent on our attitude. When we understand that, we will have developed a very unique, precise wisdom of being able to differentiate between what is harmful and what is beneficial. The discriminating wisdom that we develop is really priceless. It is something which is really useful for us, and can really benefit us.

We learn that the wisdom which is able to differentiate what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded depends on our attitude. The things which are useful and beneficial for one and others are to be adopted, and that which is harmful to one and others is to be discarded. The ability to know what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, regardless of being religious, is something which everyone needs.

What we call wisdom of discriminating between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded in relation to our body, speech and mind is something which, even if we don't really think about benefiting others to a great extent right away, is essential even for one's own personal benefit.

In relation to oneself, for those of us who have not abandoned the eight worldly concerns, it is inevitable that we are affected by what others say and how others regard us. If, for example, others praise us, for example, saying that our speech is pleasant, that makes us feel happy. If others say that we have a kind mind, or if others say we behave well, that also makes us feel happy. In contrast, when others say that we don't have pleasant speech, or we don't speak well, then that affects us and we feel uncomfortable. Likewise, if others say that we don't behave well or we don't have a kind mind, even if it is true, then we would be still affected by that and feel uncomfortable. For those who have already abandoned or overcome the eight worldly concerns, what others say doesn't really affect them so much. But for those of us who are ordinary beings, who still have the eight worldly concerns, we need to try to work towards achieving that.

When I talk about qualities such as having good speech, having a kind mind, having good behaviour, and good mannerisms, those are the qualities most of us would instinctively relate to and say: "That is actually quite good. If I would have pleasant speech and a kind heart at all times and good behaviour, that is something which would be very nice. I would really like to have that". However the question which may arise in the mind is that it is very difficult - how can one achieve that, is it possible to have kind speech, a kind mind and good behaviour all the time, is that possible?

It is difficult; it is not easy to bring about such good qualities immediately within oneself. If we look into where the fault lies, why it is so difficult to achieve these qualities, we will find that it really comes down to not being able to subdue and control one's mind. That is the main fault. Until we are able to completely subdue the mind, such faults will inevitably arise.

Our speech and our physical actions, which include behaviours and mannerisms, really depend entirely on the state of our mind. Our physical actions and our verbal speech are entirely influenced by our mind. It is as though our body and speech are like the servants of the mind. Our body and speech do not control themselves. Even though we would like to speak pleasantly towards others, and we would like to behave well, if the mind is influenced or controlled by delusions, then the body and speech are controlled by that. If the mind is agitated and if we have anger in the mind, then naturally our speech will come out harshly. If there's anger or desire in the mind, then that will also influence our physical actions. If the mind is not subdued or controlled; naturally our speech and physical actions will be affected by that.

The technique or the method of overcoming that is by applying the antidotes for overcoming that root problem, which is anger, and trying to apply the antidotes for

overcoming the other delusions.

The technique to overcome delusions is basically meditation. There are different kinds of meditative antidotes. For example as an antidote to anger, we could focus on an object that doesn't make us angry. The moment that the mind is influenced by anger, the mind perpetuates that by focusing on the object of anger. As long as the mind is focused on the object of anger, then it just increases the anger in the mind. We must try to stop that immediately. If we take away our focus from the object of anger and put it on another object and just try to focus on that single-pointedly, then for that time we will notice that our anger has reduced.

This example applies to any other delusions that arise in the mind. For as long as the mind is focused on the object that leads to the delusion arising, then that particular delusion will become stronger. Divert the mind by bringing it away from that object and focus on a virtuous object. For as long as we focus on a virtuous object, that strong emotion will become reduced. By using this meditation technique we will eventually overcome the strong emotions and the influence of the delusions entirely. We can see how meditation becomes a tool for overcoming any kind of delusions that arise in the mind.

Having touched on the importance of motivation, I would like to emphasise again the importance of taking the opportunity in discussions, teachings and so forth, to remind ourselves to develop a good motivation. This good motivation will then empower us to generate clear wisdom and more intelligence, and we will begin to find out more things that we haven't previously discovered; more things can be understood due the power and the positive effect of our motivation. It is really important that we develop a good motivation. This is true from my own side, as well as from your side. From my side, I constantly try to develop a good motivation myself; likewise from your side it is extremely important to also develop a good motivation.

The most beneficial and the most effective meditation technique for us, especially as beginners, is to bring the mind inward and focus on a neutral object to calm down the mind, because the biggest obstacle for us beginners is the scattered mind, the mind which is constantly distracted by external objects. This distracted mind is the main obstacle for us initially, so we need to overcome that. The technique is to focus on an inner object such as our breath and focus on that, bringing our full attention on that chosen object, and trying to really bring the mind to a neutral state where we don't allow the mind to follow any kind of thoughts, positive or negative. We try to bring the mind into a neutral state by just focusing on that object single-pointedly.

If we engage in that for even a few moments, then during those few moments we will notice that the mind becomes very relaxed as a natural result of having the mind focused on the object single-pointedly. During that time the mind is not influenced by distractions or any thoughts; it naturally brings about a calmness and a soothing feeling within one's mind. For us beginners, that

ability of being able to focus on an object single-pointedly and concentrate on it, and not let our mind waver from that, is what we call the beginning of concentration. If we are able to bring our mind into that state, even for a few moments, that is the sign for us beginners that we have the ability and we have the power of concentration. Train gradually - if we can just do a little bit like that every day on a continuous basis, then that will bring about good results.

The object that we choose is normally the breath. The technique is to preferably breathe through our nostrils if possible, and not to breathe heavily - not too heavy and not too slow. Try to get in a rhythm where the breathing in and breathing out is equalised. It is not as though we breathe in deeply and then breathe out quickly, or vice versa. We should breathe in and then breathe out very naturally, at a comfortable pace. Try to find the natural rhythm of the breath and just focus on the natural inflow and outflow of the breath. *(pause for meditation)*

Question: As a beginner I find that the breath becomes a hindrance and a distraction, and it ends up as being the focal point of the meditation. Does that seem right?

That may be the fault of stressing one's focus too much. The teachings advise not to stress one's mind too tight. If one's focus becomes too tight or stressed, then that fault which you mentioned now arises. So the trick is to find the balance of not being too tight and too loose.

Stressing oneself too much becomes a distraction; it becomes an obstacle for anything that we do. Even in a normal job, if we stress ourselves too much, then that can bring about agitation in the mind. Likewise with meditation if one stresses one's focus too much, then as you mentioned, it can become an obstacle and even agitation and anger can arise in the mind. So if one is finding it is hard to find a balance initially, then as soon as you notice that your mind is becoming distracted by focusing too much, then at that point maybe it is just good to relax for a while. Just relax, let go of the focus itself and relax the mind for a while.

Question: Could you please list the eight worldly concerns.

I think earlier it was covered earlier, however it comes in pairs, the first two is being pleased when there's good feelings and unhappy with unpleasant feelings.

The next two sets are being pleased when there are others who praise oneself, and being displeased when others don't praise one.

The next two are being pleased when one receives gifts, and displeased when one does not receive gifts. One notices that if others are getting gifts, one feels left out and feels uncomfortable, doesn't one?

Then the next two sets are being happy when hearing pleasant words or sounds, and unhappy when one hears unpleasant words or sounds.

Of course it is very difficult to overcome the eight worldly concerns, because it is something which we are so accustomed to and therefore they come about naturally. However, in order to combat the eight worldly concerns, one needs to train one's mind so that one can

come to a point where one is not too pleased with having pleasant sensations. And not be displeased when unpleasant sensations arise, to actually be happy about that.

On face value, from an ordinary perspective, that may sound impossible. One might think that someone who thinks, or even assumes, that it's possible, must be crazy. But from a religious or Dharma point of view, it has a lot of weight and meaning in it. The reason why we are normally pleased when pleasant things happen to us is due to our attachment to pleasant sensations. In order to overcome the attachment when we have sensual pleasures, we need to recognise that they're not real pleasures, they're just fleeting pleasures. As soon as one notices pleasant sensations arising, one should then try to combat that. Whereas on the other side, when unpleasant feelings or sensations are happening - any kind of pain, physical or mental, try to recognise that as being the consequences of previous negative actions, because there's nothing which comes about without a cause. The core of Buddhist teaching is based on cause and effect, so whatever we experience is an effect of previously created causes. In the case of experiencing something unpleasant, then the causes for that will have been negative causes or negative karmas that have been created in the past. As soon as we recognise an unpleasant sensation arising in us, physically or mentally, then we train our mind to feel joyful or happy that negative karmic consequences are ripening now. This then becomes a means for us to strengthen our faith in karma: "I'm experiencing this now due to the negative karmas I've created in the past. So it is not undeserved for me to experience this, because I am experiencing the result of my own negative karma in the past, and by experiencing this now, it is exhausting my negative karma, so therefore I willingly accept this negative consequence. I accept the pain that I'm experiencing so that it becomes a way to purify my negative karma."

In this way we can train our mind to see and develop that attitude. By training in this way one creates so much merit and purifies a lot of negative karma.

Question: How do you overcome a resistance to meditation?

When we actually look into where the resistance comes from, it could be mainly due to laziness. It is said that laziness is one of the obstacles to developing concentration in meditation. An antidote for overcoming laziness is to think about the benefits of meditation. In fact, if one feels a little bit of resistance or laziness to meditate, it is actually an indication that one has not really fully grasped the benefit of meditation yet; one doesn't have the full faith. Using a contemporary example from the worldly point of view, we can consider those who see a great benefit in doing some business. If they can see the outcome and have faith in that, then that person will spontaneously put all their effort into engaging in the business because they see a great profit coming their way. Likewise with meditation, if you can fully understand and grasp the benefit of meditation and concentration, then that understanding will then overcome the laziness.

Laziness is identified as being the first obstacle to meditation - it is one of the main obstacles to meditation. As long as we have a lazy attitude and a lazy mind, then that will then prevent us in even starting to meditate. But even after we have mustered enough strength in our mind to start meditation, we may still be unable to continue due to laziness. Even if we were able to continue for a while, but we were not able to complete our meditation session well, that again is due to laziness. Laziness is considered as a very notorious obstacle which harms us in the beginning, in the middle and at the end.

Laziness is an obstacle which can be identified even in our worldly existence, where there are people who don't like to look for a job or don't really like to work; that could be also a form of laziness. There's a particular type of laziness, what we call in Tibetan *nyum-ley* I think it translates as the wish to just sit back, do nothing and just relax. When one has the feeling of just wanting to sit back and relax, that is a particular type of laziness which prevents you from engaging in actual work. With meditation, that similar type of laziness comes up in the form of wanting to sleep a bit. When that sleepiness arises in the mind, that's a form of laziness where it obstructs the concentration and clarity of the mind.

The negative result of laziness is identified in the teachings as losing one's activity. In relation to work, if we are lazy and sleep in, then we might miss the train or get stuck in traffic and miss an hour of work, which means missing out on an hour's payment. This is how we lose on an activity that we normally wish to gain from. And so it is the same in meditation; of course we will not achieve the result of the activity of meditation if we fall into laziness.

Before we end the session for this evening, let us once again bring our mind inward and focus on the sound of the mantra to be recited.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

Transcribed from tape by Gabrielle Thomson

Edit 1 by Cynthia Karena

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**