

---

# Middling Stages of the Path to Enlightenment

འཕམ་ལམ་རིམ་འགྲིང་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

27 June 2018

---

## Is our education enough?

Make your sitting posture comfortable. We are here to train or to educate our mind; remember that is the main reason we are here. However, some of you might think, 'I have enough education and know enough about my mind'. Well, you may be right in saying this, but I challenge you to re-think about your education or knowledge in terms of its impact on your life experience particularly on your mind and feelings.

I do understand you may have been working very hard and trying your best in everything you do. But, you need to ask yourself, what sort of impact have your actions, or what you have learnt in life, had on your mind and emotions! Unfortunately, there are things that we learn and do that have detrimental effects on our mind, bringing mental disturbance, agitation, stress and restlessness. So, I am saying here that we don't need any thoughts and actions that will agitate and disturb our inner peace and happiness.

I am trying to show you different ways of thinking. We need to acknowledge that it is not always easy to maintain a calm and steady mind, and sometimes our mind becomes disturbed and agitated. However, when it is disturbed we need to consider whether there any ways to get rid of that? If there is one, then by applying that method we can pacify that disturbance within our mind.

However, if we don't apply that means of pacification, then we will never be able to overcome that problem. Sometimes the problem may subside due to other conditions, but it will come back if we have not remedied it. Whatever work or task we undertake, it is important that if we confront a problem we should focus on the solution rather than simply worrying about it. In this way the problem will not overwhelm or affect us too much. If there is no solution, then we should think 'What is the point of worrying about it', so that we can maintain inner peace and resilience.

To quote the renowned master Shantideva,

If you can solve your problem, then what is the need of worrying?

If you cannot solve it, then what is the use of worrying?

## Healing the troubled mind is the key to happiness

All I am saying here is that we need to make the best use of the unique faculty of intelligence that we all have as human beings. Therefore, knowledge relating to healing our troubled mind in the face of difficulty is something that we must possess.

The point is we need to recognise a disturbed state of mind and examine its causes. As we examine it, we will note that the kind of problem we experience at that moment is none other than self-projection of our mind. We experience the problem as the direct outcome of the outlook of our mind at that moment such as fantasising about something we do not possess or our inability to rest the mind inward. We need to understand how our mood swings and feelings fluctuate and our minds become agitated depending upon the different trains of thought or ways of thinking we possess.

Gaining such an understanding is indeed a key to our spiritual practice; we understand that 'this way of thinking makes me feel this way, whereas that way of thinking makes me feel that way etc.'. This makes us understand, 'I must change or transform my way of thinking or my mental attitude'. It would be beneficial for us to be able to change the mental attitude and outlook that brings us troubles and unhappiness. In fact, the moment we turn our attention inward to check on our mind and way of thinking, we will notice that our disturbed state of mind is diminished. As I mentioned earlier, we can recognise that quite often our problem is caused by a certain thought, and by getting rid of that thought we can bring an end to the problem. Otherwise we can't get rid of the problem.

## The main enemy for our peace and happiness lies within us

I am saying here that there are two main conditions that bring disturbed states of mind, namely internal conditions and external conditions. If we could eliminate the internal conditions, then it will be impossible for external conditions alone to disturb our mind. Whether or not your mind is able to remain in its natural state of luminous and clear awareness primarily depends upon internal conditions, not external conditions.

If there is nothing within us that disturbs or harms us then really there is not much that an external situation can do to affect or harm us. If we wish to find true peace and happiness then the only way to find it is through overcoming internal obstructions in the form of various mental afflictions. Without overcoming the internal obstructions to peace and happiness, we cannot access true peace and happiness.

That's why the kind Lord Buddha said that the mental afflictions within us are the main enemy. We need to recognise that inner enemy, challenge it and defeat it. We already know or that if we are filled with mental afflictions then we have no chance of experiencing peace and happiness. If we think about it, we can also understand that mental afflictions do not reflect the nature of the mind and they can be separated from the mind. External conditions may make some difference but the main enemy for our peace and happiness lies within us in the form of mental afflictions. The Lord Buddha, in his pursuit of the spiritual journey realised that the root cause of suffering lay within him, and that bringing an end to that was the state of liberation.

---

---

## Meditation is the means to counteract mental afflictions

Here I am suggesting that there is an education we all can acquire and apply as an effective resource to challenge and overcome disturbed, agitated and troublesome states of mind. Since we experience disturbed states of mind and we do not want them, we need to know how to manage and get rid of them. The question is, what brings about this disturbed state of mind? The main cause is mental afflictions. Another cause is the lack of steadiness or stability of our mind. For example some people are very vulnerable and hyper-sensitive so that they are easily affected by even minor causes, whereas other people are not as vulnerable and have a greater resilience, so that they aren't affected even by major events.

We must understand the situation as it is. To be honest, at the moment we don't have absolute peace and happiness that results from uprooting mental afflictions. Nevertheless, we can find temporary peace and happiness through overcoming immediate or manifested forms of mental afflictions, such as overcoming a very forceful afflicted state of mind. From the moment it arises we find ourselves deeply disturbed and hurt. The fact of matter is that if we don't let our mind go after the object that gives rise to afflicted states of mind then there is no cause for mental afflictions to arise within us. Due to the ceasing of manifested mental affliction, we can find temporary peace within our mind.

In fact, one of the features of meditation practice is to set our mind on a wholesome object, thereby freeing it from the dominance of an afflicted mind. As we meditate, our mind will gradually become familiar with resting on the wholesome object, and as a result all the disturbed states of mind will cease, and this in turn will enhance peace and happiness within us.

Each afflicted state of mind has its own object that serves as its cause - there is an object for anger and an object for attachment. There are times we don't have attachment or anger because our mind is not engaged with the respective object. Hence, as a remedy to counteract the problem of mental afflictions we engage in meditation. Even if the duration of the meditation is only a minute or two, if we fix our mind on the meditation object we will notice that our mind finds it very relaxing and healing. The benefits or effects of engaging in meditation also include bringing more clarity and stability within awareness, increasing memory, clear thinking and concentration. So we can see that meditation practice is an excellent tool for inner stability and strength.

Before we commence the breathing meditation, once again understand that the purpose of this meditation practice is to free ourselves from the power or the influence of the mental delusions. Therefore, as you engage in the meditation practice you have to say to yourself that at least for the duration of this meditation practice, you are not going to give any disturbing thoughts or the mental delusions a chance to control your mind. You are in charge of your mind and

yourself. With this motivation, as we begin the meditation, make sure that you feel comfortable and you feel the relaxation of your body. Then try to rest the mind inward by overcoming all of the distracting thoughts, and as much as possible try to discipline or direct the full attention of the mind onto the inhaling and exhaling of the breath. Make every effort to keep the mind on that. So we can begin the meditation now.

*[Meditation]*

We can begin with the chanting of Buddha's mantra and also continue the meditation by focusing on the sound of the mantra without being distracted by any other object.

*[Recitation of mantra]*

Thank you for coming.

It's good to try to do meditation every now and then. You can find this meditation practice very effective and very beneficial in terms of bringing peace and stability within your mind.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright*

*Edit 1 by Cynthia Karena*

*Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering*

*Edited Version*

*© Tara Institute*