
The Condensed Graduated Path to Enlightenment

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

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We can practise meditation as usual. Sit in a good meditation posture.

One thing we should consider is what we want out of meditation. Everyone wants to have a clear mind, everyone wants to have a stable mind and everyone wants to have a powerful mind. A mind that is clear, stable and powerful won't just come about by itself. One has to do something to attain such a mind. As we all want a mind that is clear, stable and powerful we have to consider what makes our mind unclear, unstable and weak. If you identify what affects your mind in such a way then you can meditate more effectively. Thoughts that occupy themselves with external objects are what makes the mind weak, by dispersing the power of the mind. Then, when the power of the mind is dispersed and distracted to a multiplicity of outer objects it also becomes unstable and unclear.

When one focuses the mind on one meditation object it concentrates the power of the mind onto that object and then one recognises the power of the mind. Because the mind is not distracted, but focused on that one object, it is stable and clear. In such a way we can understand the logic, the psychology, of meditation. Making the mind clear overcomes the lack of clarity of the mind. Making the mind stable remedies the instability of the mind. And making the mind powerful, by concentrating it on one point, counteracts the weak mind.

The reason that one chooses a singular meditation object is to concentrate the power of the mind and to not give delusions an opportunity to arise within the mind. If the mind is occupied with multiple objects then that creates an opportunity for different delusions to arise and disperses the power of the mind, and makes it unclear and unstable. The delusions that disturb the mind are again an internal power. In order to overcome this internal and internal potential of the delusions, one needs to apply an internal antidote. One cannot remedy the internal power of the delusions with an external antidote. When one feels internally unhappy and experiences internal problems then they have to be solved by applying an internal antidote that can remedy the potential of those disturbed minds and that cannot be achieved by applying some external power.

The process of meditation is quite often referred to as acquainting the mind with positive mental states. This means that after recognising a certain negative mental state one meditates on the opposite. If, for example, one experiences a lack of faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha one has to reverse that mental attitude of non-

faith and meditate on the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and then meditate on faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Likewise, if a harmful intent has arisen within one's mind one has to reverse that attitude of harmful intent and meditate on the opposite attitude - love and compassion. In such a way, by meditating on the individual antidotes, one can oppose the individual negative states of the mind. The reason for doing this is because these negative states of the mind are unsuitable and harmful mental states.

Similarly, if one has generated lots of attachment and desire by meditating on the attractive appearance of an object then that can also be counteracted by exchanging the attractive appearance of the object with an unattractive appearance. By meditating on the unattractive appearance of the object one counteracts the attachment and desire that arises in dependence upon this very strong attractive appearance. That's also an important point that is good to know. The harm of attachment, the sickness of attachment, is only cured in that way and the sickness of attachment is really the biggest problem.

Now bring the mind back home, concentrating it towards the inside, bringing it back from external objects and focusing the mind internally. Then, after having focused the mind internally 100%, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, and choose the coming and going of the breath as the object of single-pointed meditation. We can meditate in that manner for a short while. That is the how one has to meditate as a beginner. One meditates a short while, then one takes a rest, then one meditates again for a short while, then one takes a rest again and so on. In such a way the sessions naturally become longer over time. At the very beginning, as a beginner, it is not possible to meditate for long periods in one go. *Pause for meditation.*

Please generate a virtuous motivation of Bodhicitta thinking: 'I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings and, in order to accomplish that aim, I am now going to listen to this teaching'. It is very important to familiarise oneself with an altruistic motivation that holds the happiness of others more important than one's own happiness. One gives oneself lots of problems by always being more concerned with one's own happiness than with the happiness of others. Becoming more familiar with valuing the happiness of others will bring greater happiness to one's life.

There's a great difference between a person that values the happiness of others and a selfish person that values only their own happiness. We can observe within a society that a selfish person who values their happiness over the happiness of everyone else will, in the end, be the one who is excluded from society and left behind, while those that value the happiness of others will be well-liked and well regarded within the society. They are also the ones that bring a benefit to the society and make the society a happy place. This applies to all kinds of situations regardless of whether it is a whole big society or a smaller group of 3 or 4 people. Contemplating this point we will come to recognise the importance of

becoming less selfish and valuing the happiness of others.

It is explained that many benefits arise from the attitude that cherishes the happiness of others; that has the welfare of others in mind. So please generate the motivation of Bodhicitta thinking you have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and for that purpose form the motivation: 'I am going to listen to this teaching to attain that purpose. I am going to listen to this teaching and I am going to use this teaching in order to transform my mind making it more positive and good'.

2. Demonstrating the greatness of the teachings to generate respect for the instructions

Last time we started with the outline explaining the greatness of the Dharma. Here we are firstly saying that the greatness of the Dharma is explained through the **three characteristics and four greatnesses**.

The Dharma is this instruction, The Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment. Even though there are many texts composed by Atisha, the primary, perfectly complete one, is this text. Its subject is complete, being taught by having condensed into it all the important points of sutra and tantra; it is easy to practise because of mainly dealing with the way of how to subdue the mind and it is superior to other systems because of being adorned with the instructions of the two lamas proficient in the system of the two pioneers.

The **first of the three characteristics** is that these instructions contain the complete subjects of all the Sutra and Tantric teachings. The way the *Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment* contains the complete subjects of the Sutra and Tantric teachings is not in words, because this text, *Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment*, is actually quite brief. The way it contains the whole subject of the Sutra and Tantric teachings is that it was taught by having condensed all the important points of Sutra and Tantra into it. By containing the meaning of all the important points of the Sutra and Tantric teachings it contains the all the subjects of the canon of the Buddha's teachings.

How does that (the text) condense the meaning of the whole Buddha's canon? It does that by explaining the graduated path to enlightenment from the point of view of the path of the three types of beings, and the meaning of the Buddha's teachings is contained within the path of the three types of beings. So by summarising all of the Buddha's teachings within the paths of the three types of beings this text contains the subject of the whole canon of the Buddha's teachings.

The **second characteristic** of this text is that, from the point of view of the mind of the disciple, it is very accessible and set out very conveniently for practice. What one has to consider is that both the sufferings of Samsara and the happiness of liberation are generated by the mind. The different sufferings that one experiences while in Samsara are generated by the mind, and likewise the source of the happiness of liberation that one experiences when one attains Nirvana is also generated by the mind. Both the sufferings of Samsara and the happiness of liberation come from the mind. The supreme method of subduing the mind is the Lam Rim teachings. The Lam Rim teachings were composed with

the objective of making the teachings very accessible to the mind of the student. The Lam Rim teachings were composed with the objective of being very easily practised by the student, being very easily applied by students to their minds.

Of course all the teachings of the Buddha are taught from the point of view of assisting disciples to subdue their minds but if we look at other teachings we will find that it takes considerably more time and effort to understand how the teachings have to be applied to the mind. If we read a Lam Rim teaching all of that has already been done for us. All one has to do is read it and apply it to the mind. One doesn't have to think any more about how the different teachings fit together in order to practice them and so forth. All one has to do is one has to read it and then one can apply it straight away to one's mind. It's like, by analogy, a meal that's already totally prepared, so the only thing that is left to do is to eat it. One doesn't have to cook it; one doesn't have to put different ingredients together. All that is left to do is one has to eat it because all the other things have already been done for one.

It is incredibly important that one subdues the mind, makes the mind more peaceful and happy, and in order to do that one needs to rely on an internal method. Ordinarily our normal happiness, it is created by trying to accumulate a great variety and combination of conducive external conditions. It is actually a quite complicated and sometimes difficult and clumsy process of trying to accomplish this ordinary happiness.

In order to attain inner happiness all one needs to do is subdue the mind and the mind needs to be subdued by an internal method. Then, by subduing the mind, a certain inner happiness arises within the mind and one will be able to project happiness towards the outside and one will be able, from one's inside, to give happiness to others. One will be able to project that happiness towards others through having subdued one's own mind. To subdue one's own mind, to make one's mind more peaceful and happy, is incredibly significant and important for one's life.

One needs to consider the benefits of having a subdued mind and the disadvantages of having an unsubdued mind. Then, by recognising the benefits of one and the disadvantages of the other, one engages in the methods of subduing the mind. By subduing the mind one gains some experience of inner happiness and peace and through that one generates new insight. One generates the insight that happiness indeed doesn't come about through external means but that inner happiness has to be produced internally by subduing the mind. We need to develop this insight and wisdom. The mind is subdued by also applying one's wisdom and one's intelligence, one's discriminative faculties, in order to understand what makes one really happy and what doesn't make one happy.

The normal way of looking for happiness in the external world, by accumulating and arranging conducive external conditions, won't enable one to achieve a happy inner state, but by achieving a happy inner state one can enjoy much more the conducive external conditions that

one has, and one is not dependent upon those conducive external conditions for one's happiness. We can actually also observe in any type of religious practitioner that they usually experience a greater measure of inner happiness than people who don't practise any religion.

Then we go to the **third characteristic** of the text, that it possesses the two lineages of Maitreya Buddha and of Manjushri. The lineage of Manjushri was handed down to Atisha through the Indian pandit Rigpa'I Khujug¹ and the lineage of Maitreya was handed down to Atisha through his teacher Serlingpa. There was actually a Rigpa'I Khujug the younger and a Rigpa'I Khujug the Elder. Rigpa'I Khujug the younger however was a disciple of the great Chandrakirti and therefore before Atisha's time.

Because it possesses these characteristics the *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment* is superior to other great texts, such as the *Abhidharmakosa* and its commentaries or *The Ornament of Clear Realisation* and its commentaries. Why? Because those great texts, even though being very great, don't possess those three characteristics. The *Abhidharmakosa* and *The Ornament of Clear Realisation* don't possess the characteristic of completeness in subject because they don't include the Tantric teachings, while in the *Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment* the way of practising the Tantric teachings is also included. Likewise the Tantric teachings, even though they contain the complete path to enlightenment don't possess that characteristic because, without relying upon other instructions and just trying to practise relying on Tantric teachings alone one won't be able to practise Tantra. So the Tantric teachings by themselves also don't possess that characteristic. But this text is complete.

This text shows the complete stages of practice on the path to enlightenment and without relying upon other texts and just relying on this one text one can progress along the path to enlightenment while other texts don't possess that quality. We can stop here and have some time for questions and answers, provided you have some questions.

Question: How can I understand the real suffering of others?

If you want to really understand the suffering of others you have to meditate on the way they circle in cyclic existence. There are the adventitious sufferings they experience, the more obvious sufferings that they experience, that we can see just by observing the other person. But if you want to really understand the real depth of their suffering you have to meditate on the way they circle in cyclic existence. For example contemplating the meaning of one verse of the *Introduction to the Middle Way* by Chandrakirti, where Chandrakirti says:

*Initially starting grasping at self naming 'I'
Generating attachment for phenomena named 'mine'
Praise to whatever becomes compassion for migrators
Traversing without freedom like a bucket in a well.*

The root cause is the grasping at the self, then from the grasping at the self arises a grasping at 'mine', then

attachment to what one desires arises (attachment to the pleasurable) and then aversion to what one regards as unpleasurable, and through that one continues to take rebirth in cyclic existence, powerlessly, like a bucket being hoisted up and down in a well. Meditating on compassion in that way, reflecting upon the way sentient beings go round and round in cyclic existence, is a more difficult way of generating compassion, but it is also more effective because sometimes we look at the other person and there's not really any observable great suffering, so we then feel no need to generate compassion for them. But, by reflecting upon the way they go round in cyclic existence we really can understand their innermost, deepest problem. Because one is in exactly the same situation one is also powerlessly going round and round in the carousel of cyclic existence. Others are likewise also powerlessly propelled round and round in cyclic existence.

Even though people appear different and it looks like they live different types of lives and experience different types of situations, if you look at their situation more closely and if you look at the mind of the individuals more closely, one finds that they are all actually in a very similar situation. The rich experience problems the same as the poor do. Those who have friends experience problems and those who don't have friends experience problems. So if we look superficially we think that maybe one person is happier than the other because one has friends and the other one doesn't have friends and maybe, because of that, they are different from oneself but if one looks more closely we see that everyone experiences problems.

Question: Is it good to meditate on how to oppose a delusion before the delusion has actually arisen and during that meditation should one artificially create the delusion so as to learn how to oppose it?

Before you can subdue a negative state of the mind you have to identify it. That's what you have to do and, after having identified it, you can apply the antidote and subdue it.

It is very good to meditate in the morning to make the mind subdued and peaceful in order to prepare the mind for the day but there's no need to actually generate disturbing thoughts during the meditation. By meditating disturbing thoughts become pacified. Sometimes one can analyse, using introspection, how much they have become pacified but you wouldn't generate the disturbing thoughts during a meditation. In the morning when you meditate, if your mind is already in a positive, virtuous state, then you can just leave it in that state and meditate in that state. But if your mind is in a non-virtuous state then you have to apply the antidotes; such as whatever type of prayers you are doing.

If you wake up and your mind is naturally in a positive state of the mind then there's no need to apply a particular antidote. You can just meditate in that way. If the mind is already virtuous and positive then there's no need to change the mind. If it isn't then you have to apply the antidote and then meditate. But while you meditate there is no need to generate disturbing thoughts. If, for example, you try to counteract attachment by meditating

¹ In the transcript from the 21.5.03 Avadutipa was mistakenly named as the lineage lama. It is however Rigpa'I Khujug the Elder. Rigpa'I Khujug means 'One who melodiously proclaims knowledge'.

on impurity then the meditation on impurity should counteract it and the attachment should become less; it shouldn't make it more.

Question: How do you help ease a person's suffering when your presence causes their suffering? (laughter)

You have to stay away from that person (*lots of laughter*). There are three conditions that cause delusion to arise – proximity to the object, distorted belief and the seed of the delusion within the mind. The other person most likely hasn't yet been able to abandon delusions altogether from their mind, so they have the potential for that condition present within their mind. They probably also haven't been able to overcome the distorted belief, so the third condition, proximity to the object, would complete all the conditions for the delusion to arise. By staying away, you take away that condition. If the condition of distorted belief isn't present then the delusion doesn't arise. If, for example, that particular type of conceptual thought doesn't distort reality by making the object appear very attractive then desire doesn't arise. And if they also don't distort the reality of the object by making the object appear very undesirable and unattractive then aversion doesn't arise.

Question: How to generate forgiveness and how to I know that I have it?

You are able to recognise whether you still hold a grudge against the other person or not by checking up on whether you have still that sort of lingering harmful intent within your mind, the thought waiting for the right opportunity to come along to pay back the person. That's how you recognise whether you are still holding a grudge against the other person or not. Initially you have anger and then the anger transforms into more subtle and lingering resentment in your mind. You keep it in your mind, you start to hold a grudge against the other person and you are just waiting for the opportunity to pay the person back. If that is the case then that means you have resentment towards the other person and no forgiveness. The anger transforms into that resentment and it is just waiting for the right moment until you can repay the other person back in kind. That's how you recognise whether you still have the thought of resentment towards the other person or not.

Meditating on love for the other person counteracts that resentment towards the other person or holding a grudge against the other person because, in its nature, resentment is ill-will. Holding a grudge is in the nature of having ill-will against the other person. The initial anger is another aspect of ill-will, one wants to inflict harm on the object of one's anger in some way. Because one was not able to do that at the time of the anger, the anger is stored away and becomes resentment or a grudge that waits its time until the time comes when one can say the right words that will hurt the other person just in the right way, or until the time comes where one can do something that hurts the other person. That resentment or grudge is in the nature of ill-will; waiting its time until it can inflict some harm on the other person. Since it is in the nature of ill-will it is counteracted by love, wanting the other person to be happy. By meditating on love you can overcome that problem.

As was said at the beginning, focus the mind inwards bringing it back home from external objects and then, after having focused it inwards, place it single pointedly on the sound of Shakyamuni Buddha's name 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

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