
The Condensed Graduated Path to Enlightenment

། བྱུང་ལྡན་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་པ་བརྒྱུག་སྟེ། །

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We can meditate a little as usual. Please seat yourself in a comfortable and proper meditation posture.

The aim of meditation is to have less mental afflictions in one's mind. The purpose of listening to Dharma teachings is to purify the mental continuum. Therefore a sign that one has some success in one's mediation is that one has less mental afflictions. The purpose of listening to the Dharma teachings is to purify the mind and to make the mind clear. In order for that to happen one has to extract from the teachings that one is listening to what has to be accepted and what should be rejected. This means one has to develop an understanding of what one has to practise and what one should reject; which kind of actions one should adopt and which type of actions one should reject. Following this understanding, rejecting the actions that one shouldn't do and adopting the actions prescribed by the Buddha, brings a positive result and then, automatically, the mental continuum will become clean and clear.

By engaging in the practice of listening one will automatically acquire new knowledge and, in this way, dispel part of one's mental darkness. Therefore it is said that listening is the supreme torch that dispels mental darkness. By listening to Dharma teachings one acquires new Dharma knowledge. That means that through meditation one generates insights that counteract the mental afflictions and, in this way, one attains less afflictions through the power of meditation. Since everybody desires to have less mental afflictions everybody has to engage in meditation. Through listening to the Dharma teachings one gains new Dharma knowledge and insight which dispels mental darkness.

One wants to achieve less afflictions through the power of meditation. The way this is done is that first one has to identify the mental affliction that is most prevalent in one's mind. Then one has to meditate on the specific antidote against this mental affliction and, in this way, one can counteract all the different mental afflictions. One has to contemplate the disadvantages that one experiences through the different afflictions. One has to contemplate the different problems and sufferings that are caused by the mental afflictions. For example, one's life is stressful and busy because of attachment. There's no other reason. We can observe directly the faults that arise from anger, there's no need to mention those faults.

So there is a need to overcome the mental afflictions.

Overcoming the mental afflictions is not going to happen without one's own effort. Even though the Buddha has all the realisations and all the Bodhisattvas have high realisations those realisations cannot transfer to our mental continuum. They cannot just pass it on to us. What they can do is give us the Dharma but one has to put that Dharma into practice oneself in the way it was explained. This principle always applies. One has to identify the mental affliction and then one has to apply the specific antidote to that affliction. In this way, by developing the wholesome and positive aspects of one's mind, one is able to overcome the harmful aspects within one's mind. This is a very logical and very comfortable approach that one can understand and is convenient to practise. By using this method and gaining some experience one will also gain confidence in one's path through one's experience.

One's Dharma practice happens within one's own mind and one doesn't need to look any further. One doesn't need to look anywhere outside or anywhere but within one's own mind. Through developing the positive mental states harmful mental states will automatically become less and less. Because the mind is a creature of habit it will adapt to what it is trained in. Through continual training the positive sides of one's mind will naturally become more and more forceful and arise more and more naturally and the harmful states of the mind will naturally become subdued. In this way the person is really subdued.

Sometimes one finds practitioners that like to pretend they are very subdued, even though their mind is filled with mental afflictions. In that case the person just deceives themselves and others and there's not really any benefit in that kind of behaviour.

If a person really and sincerely practises overcoming the mental afflictions, analysing the mental afflictions and comparing whether the way the mental affliction apprehends reality is actually concordant with reality, comparing whether what is perceived by the affliction is actually concordant with reality or whether there is a discrepancy between what actually exists and what the affliction tries to make one believe and in this way finds that there is a discrepancy between what appears to the affliction and actual reality, then one is able to take away the power of the affliction and has subdued the affliction.

In this way the mind becomes truly subdued and abides peacefully and calmly in an internal space.

In this way the mind becomes subdued through meditation. Meditation means to habituate the mind in positive mental patterns, to set up positive mental patterns, and to reinforce those mental patterns more and more. That is what meditation is. That's what one does in meditation. That's where the significance of meditation lies.

In general we say that each mental affliction has its particular antidote. The one that I always present on these evenings is the meditation on the coming and going of the breath, which is the specific antidote against the over-conceptualising mind. But by meditating on the

coming and going of the breath, by subduing the conceptualising mind, the over-conceptualising mind, the too-disturbed mind, with the meditation on the coming and going of the breath also implicitly acts as an antidote against attachment and anger. It also pacifies attachment and anger.

First of all seat yourself in a comfortable and appropriate meditation posture. There's no point in sitting in an uncomfortable posture. Even though we might just sit for a few minutes it's still important that you sit in a comfortable physical posture. Then, once sitting in a comfortable physical meditation posture, turn the mind inwards and, after having turned the mind completely inwards, place the mind on the coming and going of the breath. This placement of the mind on the coming and going of the breath should be very vivid in nature. The mind should be placed very precisely and vividly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate like that for a few minutes. *Pause for meditation.*

I think it would be very good for you if you were to meditate in this manner a little bit. Even though your lives are, of course, very busy I think it would be very beneficial if you would make a little bit of time for meditation. It is important that one develops these positive traits of the mind that help one to overcome the harmful aspects of the mind. We all know what happens when the mind goes under the control of its harmful aspects. It is very important that one reverses these types of mental attitudes and generates positive and wholesome mental states. Sometimes it can just help if you investigate the nature of the affliction in your mind. If, for example, anger arises in your mind it can be useful to investigate the nature of that anger. What is its nature? What is its object? How did it arise? What is its function? and so forth. Sometimes by just investigating the affliction in this way it subsides by itself. By investigating the affliction one, first of all, redirects the mind from engaging external objects to an internal object. One is focused internally and by just analysing the affliction it is possible to make the affliction subside.

If the mind is free from manifest afflictions one experiences a mental freedom where one feels that one can do whatever one wants to do. If the mind is under the control of the mental afflictions it becomes very restricted and very burdensome. The mind becomes very restricted, it becomes very heavy and unworkable, and there is always something wrong, there is never anything just right and so forth. If, upon having identified the mental afflictions, one's meditation becomes an antidote against the mental afflictions, that's a good thing. Meditation has to become the counter-positive to the mental affliction. It has to be able to counteract the mental affliction.

Last time we talked about the fifth limb, the limb of requesting the Buddhas to turn the wheel of Dharma; to teach. The purpose of that is to become aware that the Dharma is that which subdues the mind. That's what one needs.

For tonight, we can stop here and continue with the sixth limb next time. We can have some time for questions.

Question: Could you give an explanation about the sixteen Arhats?

That's difficult. On the one hand, His Holiness says we should regard the 16 Arhats as very important but, on the other hand, they are not very many scriptural explanations of the 16 Arhats. The 16 Arhats hold the Dharma in their hands and by relying on the 16 Arhats, by making requests and so forth to the 16 Arhats, one attains great benefit. It is regarded as very auspicious and conducive to one's Dharma practice. When Lama Zopa Rinpoche came here and saw the 16 Arhats, and saw that they were very well made with all the proper hand implements and so forth, he was extremely happy. It is actually quite a rare thing to have statues of the 16 Arhats and Lama Zopa Rinpoche told me that even if he were to fill the begging bowl with gold and give it to me that wouldn't be enough to repay my kindness. He regarded it as very auspicious.

On the left side of the altar there is a stack of texts, which are the collections of many great Indian pandits and sages. Then we have Lama Tsongkhapa and his two main disciples, who are highly regarded in the Gelugpa tradition in general and also in all of the Tibetan traditions. It is very difficult to find somebody who would equal Lama Tsongkhapa. In the middle there is Shakyamuni Buddha then, to the right of Shakyamuni Buddha, there is Tara and then one more Buddha, and on the very right there is a collection of the actual words of the Buddha. When one makes prostrations to the altar one accumulates a great amount of merit because of all the holy objects there. There is a great blessing there. If you want to know more about the 16 Arhats I will explain them to you next time. It might be too much for tonight, as there are 16 of them (*laughter*).

Question: How to gain courage?

In order to increase your courage, great courage has to become your friend. You have to build up the mind and train the mind in courage. Otherwise the mind is a small mind that is weak. One has to build up the mind. Some people have a very small and fearful mind. One might even say it is like an inferiority complex where, even though the person is actually able to do the action or the activity there is a fear of engaging in the action. One holds oneself to be somehow not quite capable of engaging in the action even though the full potential is there. There is an internal doubt and internal fear that holds one back. One needs to overcome this. One needs to train one's mind in courage. One develops courage for the Dharma by contemplating how previous practitioners practised; how they were very courageous and how they devoted their life to Dharma practice without being concerned with food or drink and so forth and overcame many great difficulties. Reflecting on how they were able to practise inspires one to practise similarly or to remember that they were ordinary human beings just as oneself. The same principle applies if one wants to inspire oneself to have greater courage in worldly activities. There are enough worldly examples of people who have had great success that one can contemplate their actions and their life stories; how they were

successful in the face of adversity, how they overcame adversity and so forth. In this way one reminds oneself that they were human beings just as oneself.

Like anything else, courage also has to be acquired. It has to be learned and trained. There are certain types of person who have a certain type of fear that prevents them from doing an action that they actually could do. They have to train themselves to overcome that fear. For example, some students have difficulty talking to others about the Dharma. The problem isn't that they wouldn't have the knowledge. They have the knowledge but they have a fear of sitting in front of a group of people and starting to talk about the Dharma. Some are so afraid that they actually shake out of fear and nervousness when they have to sit down in front of a group. But they are not able to say no, because it was something that I asked them to do, so they do it. Through doing it they are able to become less and less fearful. Gradually they become more and more confident and, in this way, the fear goes away and they acquire more and more confidence. Through training one also gradually becomes more confident and brave.

Similarly, there are some people that are so fearful and so shy that they cannot properly interact with others. They find great difficulty just having a normal conversation with others. That can, again, be overcome. Slowly, slowly, by training with friends and relatives and people that one feels comfortable with this type of person can overcome their shyness and their fear of expressing themselves and having conversations. It can turn out very well and they can actually become very articulate.

Question: I am hoping to go to the Kopan course. Any advice?

Are you only hoping to do the Kopan course? I always tell everybody to go to Kopan; that is very beneficial to attend the Kopan course. I always say that. In these days there is some danger because of the political situation in Nepal. It's probably good to go straight from the airport to Kopan and not to make trips into Kathmandu. You can, of course, decide for yourself. My advice is to go from the airport straight to Kopan and then from Kopan straight back to the airport. If you feel that is sufficient for you, that is my advice. If you feel that is not sufficient for you and you decide to go down to Kathmandu on outings and so forth then that's on your own head (*laughter*). At Kopan you have to meditate on the Lam Rim.

In these days Nepal has become a very dangerous place. The founder of the Himalayan Yogic Buddhist Institute came here and she said it's quite dangerous and you can get held up at gunpoint and things like that. You just have to gather your courage and say, 'I'm going for the purpose of the Dharma. If I die, that's it and that's for the purpose of the Dharma'. To die for the Dharma is a very good thing to do (*laughter*). Until now one wasn't able to die for the Dharma. To give up one's life for a Dharma purpose is really something very worthwhile to do. Think about, for example, the Maoists in Nepal. They give up their life but it's not for the Dharma it's just for some worldly purpose. To give up one's life for the Dharma is

something very worthwhile. There have been many people in the past who have given up their life for the Dharma.

As was explained before, turn the mind inwards and place it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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