
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 meditate a little bit as usual. Please sit yourself in a good posture. Once sitting in a good meditation posture it is important that one places one's mind in an appropriate state; that one puts one's mind in a good space. Even if one is not able to do any of the more advanced meditations, if at least one is able to abide peacefully and calmly within the body while sitting in a good meditation posture, that is already very nice.

Ideally our mindfulness and introspection will continue to be active at a time of no meditation; in the post meditation period. At that time, mindfulness and introspection will still exert an influence over the mind, preventing the body, speech and mind engaging in harmful and non-virtuous actions and redirecting them to virtuous actions. If that is not possible, while sitting in the meditation posture the mind can, at least, abide peacefully and calmly in an internal space. That will give you a nice feeling within the mind.

In the course of one's life one engages in a great variety of actions. In the course of one day, 24 hours, one engages in a great variety of actions. Therefore it pays to be mindful of the type of actions one is engaging in and to direct one's efforts to engage in wholesome and beneficial actions and not engage into harmful and destructive actions; non-virtuous actions. From one point of view that will give one some satisfaction when one looks back at one's life and one looks at the positive things that one did. That will generate joy within one's mind. Because the mind is a creature of habit it is very important that one starts as early as possible to train one's mind in wholesome states and to train oneself to engage in wholesome actions. If one starts doing that from a young age onwards it will just get easier as one grows older and, as one looks back, one will have lots to rejoice about. Otherwise, if one engages in a lot of destructive actions then, when one looks back at one's life, one often generates regret about waste and different things.

It is very important that one engages into wholesome and positive actions in one's life. These wholesome and positive actions are both the cause for one's own happiness as well as the happiness of others. These types of actions generate admiration, love and affection in other people when they look at one. These types of action don't come about naturally for the majority of people. There are

certain exceptional cases where children are already very positive, virtuous and wholesome but, in general, it doesn't come easily or naturally. One has to make a concerted effort. One has to make a conscious effort to engage in wholesome actions of the body, in positive and wholesome actions of the speech, and to generate positive and wholesome mental states. In this way one's whole life becomes positive and wholesome. Positive and wholesome mental states in turn induce positive and wholesome speech and correct actions.

It is very important for one's life not to let one's mind fall under the control of distorted mental states that cause harmful actions of body, speech and mind. One's aim is to eliminate the distorted mental states and to establish valid states in one's mind. One wants to direct the mind towards to achieving a mental purity and validity. This comes about by engaging in this transformation of one's actions of body, speech and mind.

But now, let's first meditate for a few minutes. Meditation is about establishing positive and wholesome mental states and to do that one needs to redirect the focus of the mind from external objects to an internal object. First of all one needs to direct the mind inwards and then, after having turned the mind completely inwards, you place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that manner for a few minutes. (Pause for meditation)

I think it would be a very good idea for you to meditate on a regular basis. It is important not to let the mind fall under the control of the mental afflictions and it is good to generate some kind of renunciation with regards to the mental afflictions. As I always say, it can be good to forget about objects that only bring about suffering when one remembers them. There are certain types of objects that, when one remembers them, when the mind makes contact with the object, cause suffering. If one doesn't remember those objects that suffering doesn't arise. There is happiness to be obtained by forgetting about the object. That, of course, is very difficult if the mind is very habituated towards an object, going over it again and again within one's mind. The more the mind is accustomed to that then, of course, the more difficult it becomes for the mind to let the object go. But if one then can let go of that object and forget about the object then one has eliminated that suffering.

There are certain objects that generate liking and happiness in the mind when the mind makes contact with them. There are certain objects that cause suffering and dislike to arise when the mind makes contact with them. If, for example, while we remember something that is unpleasant or that causes suffering,, we can recognise that when we are actually able to let go of that object and start thinking about something else that is pleasant, then our experience immediately changes from an unhappy experience to a happy experience. Observing this provides some insight into the psychology of the mind.

As Shantideva said, one needs to know the psychology of the mind and make use of it in order to attain greater happiness. When one focuses on certain objects it causes suffering but, directing the mind to another object can generate happiness. This is a very useful thing to know. One has to generate insight into the way that the mind works and then make use of that insight to one's advantage. That becomes dharma practice. That's the way one has to practice the dharma.

A brief presentation of the way to strive

The actual way of striving

4.1.2.1.1 How to strive during the meditation session:

The 6 preparatory practices: 5) Gathering merit and purifying negativities

We can move onto *the seventh limb, the limb of dedication*. We have already discussed six limbs of the seven-limb practice. We have discussed prostrations, making offerings, confession, rejoicing, requesting the Buddhas to turn the wheel of dharma, and the request to the Buddhas not to pass into parinirvana but to remain in cyclic existence and to continue to teach the dharma. Now we have the seventh limb.

One should look at it this way. After going through these first six limbs one has accumulated a great amount of merit which now needs to be dedicated. That's why the seventh limb is the dedication. As the Kadampa Geshe said, the initial and final action is very important. The initial action refers to the motivation and the final action refers to the dedication. The action at the beginning and the action at the end are very important. If, for example, one initiated one's action by meditating on bodhicitta, generating the thought of bodhicitta and wanting to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, engages in the action for that purpose and then after having done the action one can complete that with the dedication of seeking enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, one has achieved a complete action. It has been, from beginning to end, for the welfare of sentient beings. The end of the action accords with the beginning of the action. I think the King of Prayers says, 'All the merits that I accumulated from prostrating, making offerings, confessing, rejoicing, asking the Buddhas to remain and teach the dharma, all those merits, I humbly dedicate towards complete enlightenment for the welfare of sentient beings'. One adds "humbly" so as not to generate pride in the merits that one accumulated.

I will go into this in more detail next time. Just very briefly there are certain dedications that are regarded as very auspicious and as very good to do. One to dedicate the merits for the spreading and abiding of the Buddha-dharma, to dedicate the merits to be looked after by a virtuous Mahayana teacher, to dedicate the merits for the long life of one's virtuous Mahayana teachers, dedicate the merits for the happiness of sentient beings and to dedicate the merits saying, "May they become the cause that I may be able to become the holder of the sutra and

tantra teachings". So, for tonight, do you have some questions?

Question:. Geshe-la, is it possible to lose dedicated merits?

(Further details of the question requested before translating for Geshe Doga) Do you mean if you dedicate the merits for others you don't have them anymore? *(Questioner responds with explanation: No. You dedicated them for enlightenment but, somehow, through negative actions you've done, you lose the dedicated merits you have made.*

If the merits are dedicated for complete enlightenment then, according to the oral instruction lineage, they cannot be destroyed. But, according to the great philosophical treatises, it is possible that even those merits can be harmed by non-virtue. The idea is that if you dedicate the merits for complete enlightenment and the experience of complete enlightenment is inexhaustible the merits also become inexhaustible. One's own merits are like a drop and the merits of complete enlightenment are like the great ocean. If you put one drop into the ocean the drop remains for however long the ocean remains.

There is a story regarding two people who came from Dzongkar Choden Monastery to Lhasa. One of them had quite a lot of barley flour, the staple Tibetan tsampa, left in his bag, while the other one did not have barley tsampa but tsampa made out of peas. Because the skin of the peas fills up a good part of the bag there wasn't that much of the peas left. So the one who had less, the one with a little pea flour, suggested to the other, "Let's mix the pea flour and the barley flour and then we can share it and have it together". Anyway, without getting into the logical sequence of the story, they mixed the tsampa. Then, after some days, the one who had the barley flour said to his companion, "Oh, all your tsampa is used up now". But his companion said, "No, look in your bag. You know there is still my tsampa there because as long as the barley flour is not used up the pea flour will also still be there because they got both mixed together." That is an analogy for how one's own merits, if they are dedicated for complete enlightenment, will not be exhausted as long as complete enlightenment abides.

Even if you dedicate the merits from just offering a tiny morsel of food to an animal, if that little bit of merit is dedicated to complete enlightenment it will not be exhausted until one attains enlightenment oneself and then, of course, also not afterwards. If one doesn't dedicate merits for complete enlightenment they will ripen in a future life. The merits that one generates by generosity will, for example, ripen as wealth in a future life. But that will be it. The experience of wealth will be the only result that one gets from those merits and once they are used up, they are used up.

If the merits that became the cause for one's present human body, for one's present human life, had been

dedicated for complete enlightenment then one's experience of human rebirth would not cease. One would again and again attain a human rebirth until enlightenment. Because one might ask, "Oh, it might take quite a long time until I get enlightened. What benefit will I get from my merits until then?". But if they are dedicated for complete enlightenment then, until one becomes enlightened one has a continual experience of rebirth in the human realm or the god realm. That experience doesn't have to cease. For example, if one dedicates the merits that one creates in this life for complete enlightenment then they automatically become the cause for human rebirth in the next life. One of the conditions for a precious human rebirth is pure prayer. This is what pure prayer refers to. One dedicates the merits to complete enlightenment and in such a way, by directing one's merits to complete enlightenment, one automatically attains a higher rebirth in the next life. As the great Nagarjuna said, "One can direct one's merits through dedication in the same way as a horseman can direct the horse with the mouthpiece of the horse."

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This is very important because one doesn't become enlightened very quickly and it is unlikely that one will become enlightened in the next life. So, to make some provisions to have a good rebirth in the next life becomes very important. From the point of view of this life it is, of course, very good if one has a long life but having a long life or a short life is actually not all that important. Whether this life is long or short is not as important as what rebirth one has in the life that comes after this. It's a good idea to make some preparations for the next life.

Question: My question relates to the objective view of the transitory collection of the self. It is said that abiding and that it is a desire to grasp at the self. I am wondering if that specific quality of the afflicted view of the transitory collection of the self is a root delusion?

No, the transitory view is not attachment. I am not sure how that would work. Definitely not. Even though, the transitory view is impermanent. While it is present it is changing moment by moment. What do you have to say to that? The transitory view is a grasping that grasps at either the "I" or the mine that is contained within one's own continuum as inherently existent. It's called the view of the transitory collection because the transitory collection here refers to the five aggregates. The collection is the five aggregates and they are transitory because they are impermanent. Because this view is directed at the aggregates it is called the transitory view, or the view of the transitory collections. Maybe there was some misunderstanding.

As was explained at the beginning, bring the mind back home and place it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA