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# *The Condensed Graduated Path to Enlightenment*

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29 September 2004

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We can meditate a little bit as usual. Before the start of the meditation session one generates a good motivation, which we have already done now. The motivation has already been generated, so you then seat yourself in a good posture.

The great bodhisattva Shantideva said that if one were to compare the damage that is done by the crazy mind and by a crazy elephant, the damage by a crazy mind far outweighs the damage that is done by a crazy elephant. If one just leaves the mind to its own devices and doesn't look after it, then it tends to become a type of crazy mind that is much more dangerous than a crazy elephant. Still using the same analogy of the crazy elephant, one should not despair thinking, "I will never be able to rein in my crazy elephant mind". If we look at the analogy, a human being is able to tame a crazy elephant, even though the human being is much weaker and smaller than the crazy elephant. By employing the appropriate methods one is definitely able to rein in and subdue one's mind.

One needs to contemplate the problems that arise if one doesn't look after one's mind and one just lets the mind take over, going to all different types of objects. This causes great harm to oneself, both from the point of view of this life as well as from the point of view of future lives. Even if you look at it very superficially, with a distracted mind one is not able to function very effectively. For example, if one is studying with a distracted mind one is not able to study very effectively. Likewise the distracted mind is one of the major obstacles preventing one from having success in the dharma practice. It makes the mind tired, and because the mind is so distracted one feels that one doesn't get anywhere, and one starts to become disheartened and so forth. Even from that more superficial point of view it becomes very important than one looks after one's mind, that one starts to see the significance of reining in the mind, and not letting it just go to any object that it feels attracted to. In a very coarse way we can look at it like that.

One should become concerned and start to look after one's mind, so isn't harmed by the crazy elephant mind. It is important that one starts to look after one's mind as well as one's body from a young age, and that one engages in a method to make the mind more stable, to make the mind clearer, and to generate a mind that is not immediately disturbed by small conditions. If the mind falls under the control of disturbing thoughts it becomes very agitated, unstable and distracted. A mind that is

very distracted is very powerless. If the power of the mind is dispersed because the mind is very distracted the mind becomes very weak. Why? Because one lets the mind be attracted by, and wander of to, external objects. One lets the mind fall under the control of mental wandering. What one needs to do is to take some self-responsibility, looking after one's body and looking after one's mind, and in this way accomplishing one's happiness. It is important to start at a young age so that disturbing habits are not generated very strongly.

One needs to make a decision of how to live one's life. One needs to decide what one wants to do in the middle part of life, the later part of life, and so forth. For example, when one is at the beginning of one's life one wants to prepare for the later part in life.

It is important that one looks after the two foundations of one's happiness, one's physical and mental health. Mental health is accomplished by generating a clear and stable mind that is not easily disturbed by small conditions. Such a mind acts as the basis for having success in one's study and learning process. Then the good education that one has, the knowledge that one acquired, acts as the condition for having a comfortable life. From that one can establish a good situation for oneself in life, so happiness will naturally flow from that. It's very important that one looks after these two foundations of happiness. On the one hand looking after one's body because if the body is disrupted by sickness it becomes very difficult to be effective in life and similarly, if the mind falls under the control of the disturbing thoughts its power is dispersed, it becomes agitated and so forth. One has to look after both one's physical as well as one's mental wellbeing.

One important point to consider is that the experience of happiness and suffering is always an internal personal experience that cannot be shared with others. Outer objects, material objects, can be shared with others. One can give one's possessions, or part of them, to others. One can fight with others about possessions, what belongs to whom, but that is not possible with the experience of happiness and suffering. The experience of happiness and suffering is a completely personal and individual experience that cannot be shared. For example, even though one's partner might be sad and one has love and compassion for one's partner, and even though one is happy oneself, one cannot take part of one's own happiness from one's own mind and insert it into the mind of the other person. Likewise one cannot take out the suffering part of the other person's mind and insert it into one's own mind. This is not possible. The experience of happiness and suffering is a completely personal individual experience and therefore it is important that one looks after one's physical and mental wellbeing oneself. One has to take responsibility for one's physical and mental wellbeing. Mental disturbance is sometimes caused by the conceptualising mind and physical sickness is sometimes caused by poor eating and drinking habits.

One engages in the practice of meditation to accomplish mental and physical wellbeing and mental and physical

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bliss. Similar to the analogy of taming the crazy elephant one needs to have something to which one can tie the mind. When one tames the crazy elephant one needs to have a pillar to which one can tie the crazy elephant with a rope. The meaning is that the pillar is the meditational object, to which we tie the mind with the rope of mindfulness. Mindfulness needs to be introduced to its meditational object and, after having been introduced to the meditational object, mindfulness can tie the mind to that meditational object. Should the mind wander away from the meditational object one returns the mind to the meditational object with the aid of mental introspection. In the analogy if the elephant does not listen to the elephant keeper, the keeper has a hook with which he brings the elephant back on track. The meaning of the hook is mental introspection. We use the hook of mental introspection to direct the distracted mind back to the object.

If the mind is distracted the power of the mind is dispersed. In order to be able to utilise the power of the mind we need to focus the mind on one object and learn to keep the mind on that one object. In this way we are able to focus the power of the mind. Now, once sitting in a good appropriate posture you firstly turn the mind inwards. Collect the mind internally, don't engage external objects but instead focus it inwards. Then, from within that space, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath in a very clear and vivid manner. It is good to take care that, on the one hand the mind is not too tight, and that on the other hand the mind is not too loose. One has to find balance between being too tight and being too loose. We can meditate in such a way for a few minutes. *(Pause for meditation)*

#### **4. How to guide with the actual instructions**

##### **4.1. The way of relying on the spiritual friend who is the root of the path**

###### **4.1.2. A brief presentation of the way to strive**

###### **4.1.2.1. The actual way of striving**

###### **4.1.2.1.1. How to strive during the meditation sessions**

###### **4.1.2.1.1.2 The main part**

We have moved onto the time of meditation. Basically we finished with what to do during the meditation session. We talked about what to do during the meditation session in general. And we talked about how to meditate specifically on reliance on the spiritual friend.

After having completed that, there are just some auxiliary points regarding the time of meditation. It says one should meditate in four sessions, which would be before dawn, in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. This model of meditating four sessions during the day is just an approximate model that doesn't need to be followed to the letter. You can, for example, just meditate for two sessions, one in the morning and one in the evening. If you are somebody who can meditate, whose meditation has become very stable, you can just break the day into two longer meditation sessions.

As a beginner it is very easy to fall under the control of mental sinking and mental excitement if the meditation

session is too long. Mental sinking refers to the lack of clarity and mental darkness that can arise in the mind even though the mind is stable and focused. Mental excitement refers to mental distraction or mental wandering towards objects of one's attachment. When the mind wanders off specifically to objects of one's attachment, that is referred to as mental excitement. As a beginner, if one has a long session it is very easy for the mind to fall under the control of mental sinking and mental excitement and since it is very difficult to meditate properly if the mind falls under the control of mental sinking and excitement it is recommended to have short sessions but of a greater number.

It is recommended that beginners have shorter sessions but of a greater number. The reason for that is, as we said, that it is very easy for the beginner's mind to fall under the control of mental sinking and mental excitement. If one has a long meditation session as a beginner it is very easy to get into the habit of the back and forth of mind wandering away from the object and one then bringing the mind back to the object. That's what one is doing throughout the whole long session. If the mind falls into that habit then that trait will stay with one later. One will become familiar with this back and forth, and the habit will become difficult to break. Therefore it is better to have shorter sessions and it is also very good to stop the session while one is feeling happy with one's meditation.

Psychologically it is skilful to stop at a good point during the meditation, as one will be happy to start meditating again later, because one has a good memory. If one forces oneself to sit there for long periods of time enduring great mental and physical suffering, there is a danger that sooner or later one will feel nauseous just looking at the meditation cushion. This recommendation to have short sessions of a greater number is for those whose mind is unstable. Once one's mind has become more stable one can, of course, have longer sessions. During the course of one's meditation practice one encounters physical and mental difficulties such as tiredness and so forth and there are different methods for dealing with those difficulties, which we will explain next time. Do you have questions?

*Question: If we can't exchange happiness and sorrow for the benefit of someone else, why do we make offerings to the merit field in the hope they will help us?*

The purpose of making offerings to the merit field is to accumulate merits, which become the cause for one's happiness. We can use an analogy. If we give food or drink to somebody who is thirsty or hungry then that person will experience happiness by drinking and eating what we gave them. We didn't give them part of our happiness, but we gave them something to eat or drink, which made them happy. It is similar with the merit.

*Question: Is there any meditation you can suggest that would calm you down when flying? If you are anxious about flying is there a way to calm you down?*

To pacify the fear you might experience while flying, you have to make requests to overcome the anxiety you might

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feel. The anxiety that one might experience during flying, is generated by thinking about all the things that might happen. His Holiness asked me in Canada, "How was your flight and were you worried during your flight?" and I said, "Well, as long as I don't think about the things that might happen I am not worried".

One time I was flying, I don't remember exactly where but it might have been to India, and I got into a conversation in the waiting area with a girl that was also waiting for the flight. I probably remarked something about that being worried about going into the airplane and I said, "Flying is very dangerous" and she said, "Oh Geshe-La, don't worry, even just walking around is dangerous". Sometimes people die just walking around. Its very difficult to find an activity where one couldn't die.

Thinking in such a way you can alleviate your fears. Paratroopers who jump out of airplanes, for example, say that when they jump out the first time they almost faint. They are completely overcome by their fear, but as they get acquainted they can even do that with a calm mind. But, as you know, flying in a commercial airplane is not quite that bad. Maybe you should just have a flight with a small private airplane and that will help you to overcome the fear.

*Question: One can have a mind particularly deprived of neurons such as endorphins. People have disorders in which the amount of endorphins produced is less than for other people. Would you recommend they use drugs that increase the number of endorphins in their mind so that they can practice Buddhism with a calmer mind?*

*(Further elaboration requested by Geshe Doga) The happiness that the endorphins generate, is it physical happiness or mental happiness?*

*(Further elaboration) Its physical in the sense that cells are produced in the brain but they are causes of mental unhappiness.*

Through physical conditions mental happiness can be generated. That is possible. I'm not exactly familiar with the type of problem that you are referring to, what type of sickness it is and what the medicine accomplishes. In general, if the body is weak that has a detrimental effect on one's experiences of happiness. Having a strong body with good vitality facilitates one having a greater experience of happiness, but I am not exactly familiar with what you are referring to.

*Question: Going on from that question, in terms of major depression where your serotonin levels are supplemented, where medication is prescribed to increase those levels, is medication needed or is meditation sufficient to increase those levels?*

When the mind is down we have to lift the mind up again. We have to build it up and lift it up. Maybe through building up the levels of serotonin they are able to build up their mind somewhat. For example, if an alcoholic has absolutely nothing to drink he/she starts to shake and all other kinds of physical problems start to arise so that he/she cannot function. If such a person has a small drink in the morning it clears their mind and it

makes it possible for them to physically function. But it is, of course only a temporary solution. Ultimately I don't know.

*Question: At the Science Forum, one of the scientists suffered from manic depression and meditation, instead of taking all these drugs, did work to help him.*

That is possible. However that will only occur if one meditates properly. One needs to know very well how the mind works and how to meditate properly. If one meditates properly then one can get these benefits from meditation. If one is sad or depressed because of a certain situation, because of a certain object and so forth, just sitting down in meditation in the seven point posture and looking very calm is not going to be beneficial as long as one keeps the sad object in the depths of one's mind. If the object is an object of attachment and one tries to meditate in order to overcome one's sadness, one won't be able to overcome one's sadness as long as one holds onto that object of one's attachment in the depths of one's mind. Even though one might outwardly look as if one is meditating if, inwardly, one is holding onto the object of one's problem then it doesn't work.

As we said before, seat ourselves in the appropriate meditation posture and then focus the mind inwards and, after having focussed the mind inwards, place the mind on the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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*Edited Version*

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