
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. Seat yourself in a comfortable and relaxed posture. As we have explained previously, in order to have an effective meditation and to be able to utilise the power of the mind properly we focus the mind on one single object of meditation. We don't engage a multiplicity of objects but focus the mind on one object. The great bodhisattva Shantideva said that once the mind is distracted by disturbing thoughts it loses its power in a similar manner to the physical body losing its power when it is racked by disease.

The great bodhisattva Shantideva said that once the mind is distracted by the disturbing thoughts then it loses its power, similarly to the physical body losing its power when it is racked by disease. One has to develop wisdom that can see the difference that meditation makes to the mind. One needs to follow the three steps of listening, contemplation and meditation which deal with generating the different types of wisdom. It is imperative that one generates wisdom, and initially one does this by generating a new understanding of something that one didn't know before through listening; i.e. generating the wisdom arising from listening. After having done that, one moves onto contemplation, which makes that new understanding more stable and generates the wisdom of contemplation. That leads on to meditation and the wisdom arising from meditation. In this way the wisdom becomes a method.

As we have said many times before, turn the mind inwards, don't let it be distracted by external objects, don't engage external objects, focus the mind inwards and place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Generate a single-pointed focus, the mind abiding single-pointedly, and let the mind enter the object. (*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. How to strive during the post meditational period

Last time we completed the part that dealt with what to do during the meditation session and the next part deals with what to do during the post meditational period.

One's actions during the post-meditational period should be in accordance with the meditation that one engaged in during the meditation session, and should facilitate and increase that meditation. It doesn't make sense if one sat there for two hours doing a particular type of meditation and then, in the post-meditational period, one goes ahead and engages in counter-productive activities. I have met people who were very surprised when they heard that one is also supposed to train one's mindfulness in the post-meditational period. Even though they have meditated for six or seven years it was news to them that one doesn't just train one's mindfulness during the meditation session but also in the post-meditational period.

During the post-meditational period one engages in one's usual practices such as prostrations, circumambulations, daily prayers and so forth. Even though there are practices such as prostrations, circumambulations, daily prayers that one can do in the post-meditational period, the essential thing in the post-meditational period is not to forget the meditation object and the meditation that one engaged in during the meditation session. If one does that it is harmful and detrimental to the meditation practice in which one is engaging. That's why one should always rely on mindfulness and introspection in the post-meditational period with regard to the meditation and meditational object.

In the post-meditational period one can also read the holy dharma. This refers specifically to reading commentaries and teachings that relate to the practice in which one is engaged. One also builds up the accumulation of merit in various ways, which is the conducive condition for the generation of one's qualities and, in various ways, one purifies obscurations, which are hindering conditions that prevent the generation of qualities. Further, in various ways, one practices morality, the mind of restraint and self-discipline, which is the basis of all qualities.

One also trains in the fourfold accumulation of the causes that facilitate an easy generation of the path of calm abiding and special insight which is, first of all, restraining the doors of the senses and acting according to one's mental introspection. Then there is a measured intake of food, and striving in the yoga of sleeping appropriately. Actually one shouldn't go to sleep in the post-meditational period, but when the actual sleeping time comes, one should go to sleep in the appropriate manner.

Restraining the door of the six senses

The first point, restraining the doors of the sense powers, is very important. What we are restraining are the six senses. The objects we are restraining them from are the objects of the six senses. What we are doing the restraining with are mindfulness and introspection.

One is restraining the generation of attachment and anger, because attachment and anger are generated through the doors of the six senses, when they are wondering off to the objects of the six senses.

In brief the objects of the six doors of the six senses are

visible form, sound, smells, taste and tactile sensations and what we refer to as phenomena. We can explain how attachment and anger are generated in dependence on or through these six doors with an example of the door of the eye sense power. The eye sense power is present in the coarse physical container of the eyeball. If there is a meeting between visible form and the primary eye consciousness that is generated in dependence on the eye sense power we have the perception of that visible form. For example, if one looks at the clock there is a meeting between the visible object of the clock, the eye primary consciousness and the eye sense power. There is then the perception of the clock and, upon having the perception of the clock, one starts to think, "Oh that is a very nice clock" and one generates attachment for the clock. In this way attachment has been generated through the door of the eye sense power. We can transfer this model of how attachment is generated through a sense power to the other sense powers. If, upon the perception of the object, the thought is generated that it is not good, we generate anger. In this way anger is generated through the door of the senses.

We talk of *restraining* and *controlling* the six doors of the six senses. When we refer to *controlling* the six senses we refer to the control that is exerted *after* attachment has already been generated. It applies to the situation where attachment has been generated through one of the six doors and one then exerts control over one's six senses and doesn't act upon this desire.

Restraint refers to taking care that no attachment is generated *in the first place*. Even though the words restraint and control might be quite similar they are used here in two different contexts. Restraint, restraining the six doors, is used to prevent attachment being generated through the six doors in the first place. Control refers to controlling the six senses after attachment or another affliction has been generated, but one doesn't act upon this affliction through the six doors.

Attachment can be generated immediately after the meeting of object, primary consciousness and sense power. This would be referred to as the attachment in relation to the apprehension of the characteristic. Here we have again two technical terms. There is the apprehension of characteristics and the 'generation of attachment through the apprehension of characteristics' and the 'generation of attachment through the power of fact'. This refers to two specific situations. 'Attachment through the apprehension of characteristics' refers to the attachment that is generated immediately subsequent to the perception of the object. When the object, the sense power and the primary consciousness meet and attachment is immediately generated, that attachment is generated through the apprehension of characteristics.

We also have the generation of attachment that occurs later, when one remembers an object that one perceived earlier. This attachment is referred to as the 'attachment that is generated through fact'. So we have the attachment that is generated immediately after the perception of the object and the attachment that is generated sometime later through remembrance of the

object.

This indicates that attachment does not have to be generated immediately upon the perception of the object. Attachment is generated through the apprehension of the characteristics, through the grasping at the pleasant characteristics of the object. Without this particular grasping at the pleasant characteristics of the object attachment will not be generated. Even though there is a perception of the object there is no need, no necessity, for attachment or anger to be generated.

Normally we might feel that that (the immediate generation of attachment) is the natural course of things, but that is not quite accurate.

It is very important that one practices these steps of initial restraint and subsequent control because if one lets attachment be generated in the mind and then acts upon the attachment, that just increases the potency of one's attachment and makes it more difficult to stop later. The earlier one overcomes attachment the easier it becomes to give up the attachment. If one just encourages attachment and indulges the attachment then it becomes very ingrained and difficult to give up.

That is, of course, very difficult at this stage. One has eyes and one has to go out and interact with different objects. All day long one sees objects and one generates likes and dislikes. As this is the case it becomes very important that one exerts subsequent control, i.e. self-discipline. Even though one meets with objects one tries not to have any attachment or aversion for the object or, at least, not to follow up on the attachment and aversion and in this way decreases one's mental afflictions.

The objects of the desires are very manifold. We talk about the objects of one's desires or the objects of the desire realm. On top of the list for men are women. What is most pleasurable to behold for the eyes of a man is the form of a woman. What is most pleasurable for the eyes of a woman is the form of a man. Apart from that we have sounds, smells and so forth. You can investigate which kind of sounds you prefer most to hear and so forth. There is a great variety of objects of desire.

So do you have some questions?

Question: Is it better for our practice to expose ourselves to things we have aversion to?

Yes that helps! Yes it helps. This comes immediately subsequent. Lama Tsong Khapa explains how one should meditate if, for example, one is attached to food that looks nice and has a nice smell and nice taste..

Question: I'm confused because its not just the "I" which becomes attached to something. Aren't we attached to becoming enlightened, aren't we attached to prayers and offerings? Is that attachment in that form?

No. I think if you like to become enlightened, that's not attachment. Just to like something doesn't mean that you are attached. For example, liking the Buddha and the dharma is regarded as faith. Liking one's parents is not regarded as faith. One tries to discern the difference between liking and faith. Liking for the Buddha or liking for the dharma is regarded as faith. It is a case that is both

faith as well as liking. In the case of one's parents it would be only regarded as liking, not as faith.

Question: I understand what you are saying, I still think there's a very fine line between attachment and attachment building up merit.

Yes there is a fine line. There is a type of faith that is generated upon seeing the qualities of the object but we also generate attachment by seeing the qualities of the object. The qualities that one sees and which generate attachment are usually contaminated qualities. They are qualities that don't actually exist. The qualities that we see and which then generate attachment are, at the very least, usually greatly exaggerated.

If we see the qualities of the Buddha there is no exaggeration. One sees exactly the qualities that the Buddha possesses and that generates faith in the Buddha. The qualities that are perceived by attachment are usually fictionalised qualities that are mental creations or imputations by one's own mind. They are not actually there on the object. Attachment is a distorted perception while faith is an accurate perception. If, for example, we generate attachment for the body of another person then the body of the other person appears wholly, completely attractive. We see it in a completely attractive light but that is quite unrealistic because the body is not 100% attractive. One can see there is a distortion there. The mind desperately tries to create this attractiveness in the object in a desperate attempt to generate this perception of happiness and pleasantness in the object.

Question: I'm not convinced. I still think the mind can cheat us into thinking you have faith.

Don't worry. You know your faith is not attachment. It is faith and that's a positive mind. This (doubt) is understandable because we haven't really identified the nature of attachment. If one is not clear about the distinction between desire and just merely wishing for something it becomes very easy to confuse any type of wishing state for desire. But you don't have to worry. Worry can also come up if we think, "Oh, we have to give up all of our attachments".

Question: Geshe-la, I'm wondering about curiosity. I can go into a bookshop and see a lot of books and want to take them home to read but I think its about wanting to find out about things and know and understand different things.

No. Having aspiration and having attachment is different. Just wanting to know different things and to understand different things is not attachment. I think what is needed is a little bit more understanding of mind and awareness and, in this case, the nature of attachment: what actually constitutes attachment. What are the objects of attachment? How does attachment apprehend its objects? What is the mode of perception of attachment? These are things that we have to identify clearly and that will answer all these questions.

Question: You mentioned six senses in the talk, what is the sixth one?

The sixth sense is the mental sense power.

We can turn the mind inwards again and place it single-

pointedly on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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