
The Condensed Graduated Path to Enlightenment

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We can meditate for a little while as usual. Please seat yourself in a proper meditation posture. The purpose of meditation is to generate positive states of mind and not to lose the positive states of the mind that one has. The mind can work in different ways. Different mental states can arise and these different mental states can induce either happiness or suffering. We can look within our mind in order to recognise which mental state, which way of thinking, induces happiness and which mental state, which way of thinking, induces suffering. We will recognise that the positive states, the positive ways of thinking, the pure ways of thinking, are the mental states that induce happiness. Meditation is to facilitate the generation of good mental states and to take care that one doesn't lose one's positive and good states of mind.

Positive mental states and positive ways of thinking make the mind peaceful. This benefits both oneself and others. When one's own mind is peaceful this has a calming and soothing effect on others. In this way one can recognise the benefit of identifying the good and positive ways of thinking and mental states, and then generating and facilitating them and taking care that they are not lost. The peaceful state of mind facilitates harmonious living together with others.

One needs to analyse one's situation and not only the way one's mind thinks and works but one also needs to look at the actions of one's body and one's speech. As long as one is alive one has to engage in physical actions with one's body and as long as one is alive one also will use one's speech and there is no chance to be separated from the activities of one's mind. One will always be joined with the activities of one's mind. Therefore it pays to analyse the actions of one's body, speech and mind and the way of acting with one's body, the way of talking and the way one's mind works and then to identify the positive and good directions of acting with one's body, speech and mind. Having identified them one then increases one's virtuous and positive mental habits.

This is a very important point to contemplate. If one can, in this way, act properly with body, speech and mind then others will come to recognise that and it will generate their liking for oneself. One wants to be liked by others and if, for example, one has a nice smile and looks friendly and peaceful that is more likely to generate liking for oneself in others than if one looks grumpy and uptight. By acting nicely with one's physical actions, talking nicely and having a good mind it becomes a

method to, translated literally, subdue others. I think in this case what it means is to attract others.

A very integral part of worldly life is to experience closeness to other human beings. The normal worldly way is that one tries to experience this closeness to others, not only physical closeness but also a mental type of closeness and connectedness. This will be greatly facilitated by one's own positive way of living and one's positive actions of body, speech and mind become a way of attracting friends and acquaintance and making others like one. Quite often people say, "Oh. Is there a certain mantra that I can recite in order to attract others? There isn't really any need to recite a mantra to attract others. One can attract others through one's positive actions.

One will be convinced of the validity of this through one's experience. If one doesn't have any experience in the dharma then it is difficult to gain conviction. If one is living closely with somebody else and there is not a good feeling, and maybe even a negative feeling, anger, aversion and so forth between these two people then, even though there is this physical proximity, it is not a happy experience. It becomes quite the reverse, an unpleasant experience. On the other hand, if both parties have a very positive and good wholesome mental attitude, then, through this proximity to each other, one can generate a very good and pure atmosphere and space in which one can live very well. This can be a very nice and special experience and one can confirm through one's own experience the impact that one's way of thinking has on one's life.

Since the actions of body and speech will always be preceded by mental action, it is very important that one has a peaceful mind. When one talks about inner peace in Buddhism it refers, strictly speaking, to the pacification of the mental afflictions. If all the mental afflictions within the mind have been completely pacified and have subsided that, technically speaking, is the actual peace that one is striving for. In the present context for us, however, even just to experience a subsiding of coarse disturbing thoughts can be regarded as mental peace and is a worthwhile aim.

First of all one has to sit in a proper meditation posture. As we always say you have to focus your mind inwards, direct the mind inwards without engaging external objects and then, upon having focussed the mind totally inwards, place it single-pointedly within the coming and going of the breath. We can meditate in that 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

4.1.2.1.2. What to do in the time between sessions

We were at the point of how to act during the post-meditation period and we had completed the first two points. We now come to the third point, which is **being aware of the appropriate quantities of food that one**

should eat.

One should follow a middle way, neither eating too much nor eating too little, so it doesn't harm one's virtuous practice. One should eat according to what does not harm one's virtuous practice. On the one hand if one eats too little then, first of all, it will not alleviate the hunger pains that one is feeling, and it will weaken one's body, which then will make it more difficult for one to engage in dharma practice and virtuous practice. One should eat enough that it alleviates one's hunger pains and to keep a strong body. But if one goes to the other end of the scale and eats too much it is again harmful to one's virtuous practice. If one eats too much food one's body will feel heavy. Even though one is not carrying any burden one will feel as if one is carrying a burden around with oneself because of the heaviness of one's body. One's mind will then become heavy, and unclear. One's breathing also becomes very heavy if one eats too much food. One's breathing is not light any more but becomes very heavy and the mind also becomes heavy and unwieldy. The body becomes heavy and unwieldy and in this way one falls asleep easily. Eating too much actually facilitates the generation of mental afflictions and makes it more difficult to engage in virtuous practice. If one has eaten too much one will not feel like engaging in any virtuous practice.

Then also, one needs to eat food that agrees with one and that one can also digest well. Lama Tsong Khapa mentions this in the greater Lam Rim even though it is not mentioned here in this shorter version. It is important that the food that one eats agrees with one and with one's body; otherwise one will not have this experience of, on the one hand, alleviating the suffering of hunger and, on the other hand, generating the happiness of having received nourishment. If the food that one eats does not agree with one then one will not receive the benefit of eating the food. No feeling of happiness will be generated and no feeling of suffering will be alleviated. It is important that the food agrees with one.

Then the food that one eats should also be unafflicted or uncontaminated. One should eat uncontaminated food, which means, for example, it should not have been attained through any of the five wrong livelihoods. If one eats uncontaminated, unafflicted food then this food is conducive to subduing one's own mental afflictions and the experience of happiness. However, if the food is contaminated by the five wrong livelihoods it actually has the opposing effect of increasing one's afflictions and separating one from happiness.

If one experiences craving for one's food one should reflect on the faults of the food that one is eating. There are various ways in which to reflect on the faults of one's food. Lama Tsong Khapa, in his Great Exposition on the Stages of the Path, says we can just look at one of them from the point of cause. Even though, when the food is in front of us, it looks as if it has a nice colour, taste, smell and so forth, as soon as one has put the food into one's mouth and chewed on it once or twice it doesn't look appealing any more if one takes it out of one's mouth. In fact it has become an object of repulsion that is more

likely to generate nausea than the wish to eat it. Lama Tsong Khapa says as soon as one's saliva has touched food the food becomes actually nauseating and not attractive any more.

Even though this is the nature of one's food, the food that one eats has certain benefits. One benefit is that it facilitates the long abiding of one's body. But the mere long abiding of one's body is not really that significant from a dharma point of view. What is important is that by one's body abiding for a long time one has more opportunity to work with one's mind and transform one's mind. Hence, when one eats one's food it is good to have the motivation, "I am eating this food so that my body is healthy and I will live a long life so I have more time to transform my mind". The mental state with which one eats food should be, "I will eat this food so that I have a healthy and strong body and then I will put that body to use to practice the dharma well so that I can benefit sentient beings".

If one eats food that is actually offered to one then think, 'I will use the strength gained from the food to practice the dharma well in order to be able to benefit the benefactor in the future.' When one eats food one can meditate that one is making offerings to the multitude of beings within one's body thinking, "May this material offering that I now make to all those beings become the cause that in the future I will be able to give them the dharma". There are various ways in which one can meditate in order to make the act of eating a virtuous action. To sum it up, as Nagarjuna said in his Letter to a King, "One should recognise the right way of eating and eat untainted by the delusions."

If one eats too much food it is harmful. If one eats too little it is harmful. One needs to recognise the amount of food that is beneficial for one's dharma practice. If, similarly to medicine, we take too much of the medicine it is harmful. The desired beneficial effect does not come about. Also if we do not take enough medicine the desired beneficial effect does not come about. One needs to take just the right dosage of medicine in order to get the desired effect. Likewise with food one needs to take the right amount so that one is not too hungry and hunger pains are alleviated, but at the same time the body does not become tired and heavy.

They should not be eaten with attachment or anger. This refers, as we said before, to the motivation with which the food is eaten. Food should be eaten with a virtuous motivation having the intention to use the strength that is gained from eating the food for one's dharma practice to benefit others. There are various types of non-virtuous motivations with which one can eat one's food. If, for example, one eats one's food thinking, 'I will get a very nice complexion from this food' that would be eating the food with attachment. If one eats one's food in order to gain a very strong body, so that one is then able to overcome one's enemies, then that would constitute eating the food with anger. There are various types of harmful motivations that one should try to avoid.

If one wants to bless one's food one can do it by reciting

the mantra Om Ah Hum three times over one's food and meditating that, with the first recitation of the mantra all the impurities of the food such as taste, smell, colour and so forth are purified, with the second recitation the food is transformed into uncontaminated nectar that has the power to induce great bliss in one's mind and, with the third recitation of Om Ah Hum that uncontaminated nectar is made inexhaustible so its potency is inexhaustible. This was a short commentary on this third point of measuring the food intake and we can leave it here for tonight. You can have some questions if you like.

Question: Geshe-la, could you tell me how food like onion and garlic affect us in our meditation practice?

They don't harm your meditation practice. In certain tantric practices that place great emphasis on external purity those foods are not eaten. Of the four classes of tantra, the action tantra forbids the eating of these types of food because in this tantra great emphasis is placed on external purity and these types of food are regarded as possessing certain impurities such as the smell of garlic or onions or radish. All these types of food are not allowed to be eaten in kriya tantra but, in general, they can be eaten. It is a specific tantric training.

Question: Last time Geshe-la gave instructions on how to cut vegetables. Could he give us something on food preparation?

The way to cut the vegetables properly is so that you don't cut your fingers. You have to hold the vegetable properly and then cut it so that you don't cut yourself. That's the proper way of cutting. At the time of the Buddha monks and nuns used primarily to go out on begging rounds and ate the food that was given to them by villagers. Normally they wouldn't cook, only if they were in certain remote areas.

There is more advice by the Buddha on how to eat food such as, for example, eating quietly, not munching on one's food and having one's mouth closed while one eats. This maybe very similar to what would be regarded as good behaviour here. One doesn't just take a bite from the food or from the piece of cake. One cuts off a small piece on the plate and then takes it to one's mouth with the fork. It is also regarded here as being more polite, or better manners, if one cuts off a small piece and then takes that into the mouth with a fork instead of taking, for example, the whole apple and taking out a big bite or taking the whole piece of cake and taking a bite out of it. There are these ways of eating that the Buddha explained. You were probably hoping to get some tips on cooking but...

Question: With eating meat. Unless the whole world stops eating meat it's not going to make much difference if one person stops. Is it all about karma for the person?

Wouldn't we normally say that since the animal gets killed because there are people who will eat its flesh, those people will get negative karma. If you apply that logic to the animal, then you would have to say that the animal itself would create non-virtuous karma because one could also say if the animal was not there then the animal could not be killed. One would have to say, "Oh,

the animal gets killed because it is there. Therefore it creates non-virtuous karma." I think one has to make a distinction between the meat that is killed specifically for you, and the meat that the butcher will kill anyway. A butcher will primarily kill meat for profit. That is their aim. It is not as if the butcher kills the meat in order to supply us with meat. The butcher kills the animal not to supply us with meat but in order to make a profit. There is a slight distinction between, for example, going to a farm and telling the farmer, "I want to have some beef. Please kill that cow for me." Then he will kill that cow specifically for you. There is some doubt whether there is such a distinction. In general it is virtually impossible to eat food without indirectly harming sentient beings. Even as a vegetarian one indirectly harms sentient beings because many sentient beings were killed in order to produce the vegetable.

Question: What about the farmer who produces the cattle that are sold to be killed. Does it create bad karma when you raise cattle knowing they will be sold for meat?

This is the situation where the farmer sells the animals to the butcher. While it is, of course, not a good action it is not the specific karma of killing.

Question: Geshe-la, I have a friend who raises cattle to eat himself. Is he incurring the killing karma?

Translator: Is he killing them?

Questioner: No, raising them to eat but getting someone else to kill them.

Translator: But he is paying someone to kill them for him?

Questioner: Yes

He does incur the karma of killing. We will get to that point later in the karma section. In order to incur the karma you don't have to do the physical action yourself.

We can turn the mind inwards again and recite the mantra, which will purify lots of non-virtuous karma. It is very difficult to go through life not incurring non-virtuous karma until one is enlightened so it becomes very important to purify the non-virtuous karma. Even though we might engage in a strong purification practice and confession practice in the morning by the time noon has arrived it is quite possible that one has again created non-virtuous karma.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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