The Condensed Graduated Path to Enlightenment

७७। विद्युत्रायमान्त्रीः रेमायायतुर्वारार्शि।

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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We will meditate for a little bit as usual. Sit in a comfortable and relaxed posture. On the basis of sitting in a good posture, one needs to generate a good motivation for the meditation.

If we ask 'what is the purpose of meditation?', it is to stop the harmful actions of body, speech and mind. To be able to do that, we have to purify the mind of the unsuitable mental states that make it heavy, unwieldy and unworkable. When we purify the mind, it becomes flexible and serviceable, and we gain control over our body and speech, because the state of our mind determines our actions of body and speech. You should understand that the purpose of meditation is to stop harmful actions of body, speech and mind, and to do this effectively, you have to purify the mind.

It is important to be mindful of the benefits of meditation. Even in daily life we often can not accomplish our aim because of the disturbed mind. Then one becomes discouraged and give up. If one loses sight of the benefits of meditation, it is easy to become discouraged in one's practice because of the disturbed mind.

Being mindful of the benefits of meditation will inspire us to practice: one should regard a peaceful and calm mind as the foundation for a good and successful life because it is the foundation even for worldly success. With a calm and peaceful mind, one is able to have success in worldly activities. A distracted mind, however, continuously obstructs one's activities. Then, because one doesn't succeed, one feels discouraged and does not want to start any new endeavours. So, we should regard having a peaceful and calm mind as the foundation for success.

The basis of our actions should be the motivation of wanting to benefit others. By basing our life on the motivation of wanting to benefit others, even if we engage in worldly actions, because of that motivation, those actions become beneficial for others. In this way, one can carry the Dharma into worldly life. In our Dharma practice, we need to have a motivation of wanting to benefit others. With that motivation, we will have success in our Dharma practice; when we have success in our Dharma practice, we can carry that over into our worldly life. If we then feel that our Dharma practice has been of benefit, this will in turn inspire us to practise more Dharma. It is good to think about the interrelation between these two sides of our lives.

Practising the Dharma makes us more honest and upright, and by living our life in a more honest and upright way, we will feel more comfortable about ourselves and others will regard us as respectable and trustworthy. Later, when we look back at our life, we will be able to rejoice in the actions we engaged in. If we lead our life in such a way, others will feel greater confidence and trust in us, and this will make our life even happier. If we are liked and respected by others, it makes our own life happier and it also eliminates the worry 'I don't have a boyfriend' or 'I don't have a girlfriend'. That problem becomes eliminated!

So, by applying these Dharma methods in a skilful way, one can alleviate many problems.

Now we will meditate. First, sit in a comfortable and relaxed meditation posture and then turn the mind inwards. Stop engaging external objects. After having turned the mind inwards completely, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. By placing the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, one can, over time, pacify the disturbing thoughts and experience deeper clarity and happiness in the mind. (*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

4.1.2.2. The reason one needs to strive in two ways, eliminating misconceptions regarding the way of striving

Last time, we talked about the two types of meditation – analytical meditation and single-pointed meditation. We have already mentioned the topics we can apply analytical meditation to; now we can talk about single-pointed meditation.

Single-pointed meditation is just single-pointed engagement of one object without analysis. An important aspect of calm abiding meditation is that we do not engage in analytical meditation while engaging in calm abiding meditation. However, that does not mean we do not engage in analytical meditation before or after attaining calm abiding. Also, while we are training in calm abiding meditation, we do not change the size or colour of the object, but once we have attained calm abiding, we can place the mind on any object we like and it will be able to meditate single-pointedly on that object.

Some practitioners have different views about what the actual practice of calm abiding means. There are certain intellectuals who say that one only needs analytical meditation for practice, and there are certain yogis who say that one only needs single-pointed engagement meditation for practice. Both are wrong! The intellectuals need to attain calm abiding as well, and the yogis need to engage in analytical meditation as well, because they need to generate faith in the spiritual friend and so forth. Similarly, the view that 'analysis is only part of the listening and contemplation stages, but not part of the meditation stages' is wrong and mistaken.

All these different views are mistaken – thinking that one needs only analytical meditation for one's progress; thinking that one needs only single-pointed meditation for one's progress; and thinking that analytical meditation is only part of the listening and contemplation stages but not of the actual meditation stage.

Another mistaken view is saying that all conceptual thoughts obstruct the attainment of enlightenment because they apprehend characteristics. This idea arises because of not being able to discriminate between inaccurate, misleading thoughts and accurate thoughts.

Also, some practitioners are worried about engaging in a lot of analytical meditation before engaging in single-pointed meditation, because they are worried that engaging in a conceptual analytical process before engaging in single-pointed meditation will have a detrimental effect – it will carry over into the single-pointed meditation and disturb it. That is also an unnecessary worry.

Actually, the analytical meditation we engage in beforehand supports the single-pointed meditation that follows. When we engage in analytical meditation, it is not like going to the market with one's friends and engaging in all kinds of conversation. One engages in analytical meditation on the meaning of the Dharma, so it is something different.

Do you have a question for tonight? If you don't have a question, we can continue this important point.

Question: Is it true that you need to develop calm abiding meditation before you can go into an analytical mediation? If so, why?

Answer: What did we just talk about?! (Laughter)

You have to decide who you believe more – those people who say these things or Shantideva and Maitreya Buddha and all the other great practitioners we have quoted over the past Wednesdays, who all say that this is not necessary.

If somebody wants to engage in meditation without having engaged in the practice of listening, it would be like somebody without hands wanting to be a handyman or to climb a mountain. It's not possible. If you don't engage in the practice of listening, how can you meditate? It is contradictory to want to meditate without having first engaged in the practice of listening.

If one engages in single-pointed meditation without the practice of analytical meditation beforehand, without an understanding of the Dharma, one will not be able to generate proper calm abiding. One might be able to generate some calm states of the mind, but that will be all; otherwise it could even harm one's mind and make one more dull.

We have talked a lot about the reasons why one should engage in both analytical and single-pointed meditation. Somebody once said to me that when one meditates on the Lam Rim, the mind does not abide single-pointedly, but if the mind is not single-pointed, how can one meditate on the Lam Rim?

Question: When would be the point when one could start single-pointed meditation?

Of course you are allowed to engage in single-pointed meditation, but you need to be prepare your mind by meditating on topics like impermanence, the sufferings of cyclic existence, the sufferings of the lower realms and so forth. Without having meditated on these topics, it will be easy for the mind to fall under the control of mental excitement, and one will not be successful in one's meditation practice.

For example, one has to meditate on the impure aspect of the object repeatedly to overcome attachment to the object; then, when one actually sits down to meditate the mind will not be distracted by attachment but will very vividly abide on the object naturally.

By having a thorough understanding of the Buddha's teachings, one will be aware of the faults of not having calm abiding and of the benefits of having calm abiding, which will give one strength to carry through one's practice. Also, one will know the different faults of cyclic existence, which will generate renunciation, which will prevent ones mind from wandering off to an external object.

Next time, we can go into this point of why analytical meditation is so useful.

Question: What is the course or sequence we follow to attain calm abiding?

Answer: You attain calm abiding by abandoning the five faults with the eight antidotes. Through this process, one goes through the nine stages of calm abiding. The first stage is achieved when one is able to keep the mind focused on the object for the duration of the recitation of one mala of OM MANI PADME HUNG. One then goes through the next eight stages until, after the ninth stage, one attains calm abiding.

We will discuss this in more detail when we get to the Six Perfections. There is a chapter dedicated to this topic. One goes through the nine stages such as initial focus on the mind, patch-like focus and so forth.

As was said earlier, sit in a comfortable, relaxed meditation posture, then turn the mind inwards and place it on the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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