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## Middling Stages of the Path to Enlightenment

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We will spend some time in meditation. For that purpose, we adopt a comfortable and relaxed posture. As explained regularly, meditation is a technique that familiarises one's mind with positive ways of thinking, or positive attitudes. That is really the primary purpose of meditation.

The implication of this is that positive ways of thinking or attitudes are opposed by negative ways of thinking or attitudes. Thus, the only way to ensure that one has a positive state of mind is to overcome wrong ways of thinking and negative attitudes in one's mind. So the techniques for familiarising one's mind with positive attitudes includes techniques to overcome negative states of mind as well.

On the positive side, we all naturally have positive thoughts and intentions such as love and compassion within us. If we were to further develop and increase our positive intentions it becomes the basis for us to have a more meaningful and happier life. It will also lead to those around us having a happier life as well. So that is something we need to pay attention to.

On a very practical level, adopting a positive mind or positive attitudes serves as means for us to acquire and be surrounded with good companions and friends. We all naturally long to have good companions or friends and if we were to ask, 'What is the best way for me to have good companions or friends?', the answer would be that it is through our attitudes and ways of thinking. Positive attitudes and ways of thinking are the basis for others to appreciate, and like one, and foster good relationships with others.

When I have a good rapport with someone in the younger generation I often ask, half in jest, 'If you want to have a good companion, what would you go for? Someone who is beautiful, but may not have the inner qualities of intelligence or a genuine concern for others and so forth, or someone who may be not as beautiful externally but has all those good qualities inside? So who would you choose?' Then, in jest, I would say that if I had to make a choice I would choose someone who has got positive inner qualities (*Geshe-la chuckling*).

So, on a practical note, when we consider how we want to conduct our life we shouldn't just be satisfied with someone who looks beautiful. We can't lead our whole life just looking at someone with beautiful face. The way we need to conduct our life is to mutually use one's inner qualities and intelligence and so forth to have a successful life. Right? So that is the most practical approach.

Coming back to the main point, what I am emphasising is that the kindness within us is something that we need to develop and we should not allow that quality to weaken or decrease. We should always protect that quality. The best of one's unfailing true friend is the kind attitude within us. So this is something that we should nourish.

The way to ensure that one maintains positive attitude such as kindness within one is by overcoming the opposing negative states of mind. We need to recognise what opposes positive attitudes within us, and intentionally apply techniques to overcome those negative attitudes. For example, someone can normally have a loving attitude towards others but that attitude will immediately disappear when anger arises. The moment anger rises within one's mind, that earlier loving attitude towards someone will not be present anymore. So this is how we need to see an opposing, negative state of mind such as anger hindering positive attitudes of kindness and the like within us.

We can validate the benefits of a positive attitude versus the harm of a negative attitude by checking within us. When we feel we have a loving attitude towards others, how does it affect us? How do we feel inside ourselves? In contrast, how do we feel inside when we start feeling anger towards others? This sort of investigation, an inner analysis of one's own state of mind, is worthwhile. This is called mind training and training our mind is very, very worthwhile. The very fact that we have a mind means that we can use it in so many different ways. We can also see this with animals—because they have a mind they can be taught. This happens with animals, not to mention us, humans.

When we look into it, the ability or the power of the mind is quite remarkable. We can see this in even a small, tiny insect such as an ant. For example, if we put out a sweet substance in area where there are no ants, then in a very short time ants start to appear, drawn to that sweet substance. I often think to myself, 'How do they know?' I don't think it is their eyesight. I don't think their eyes are seeing that the sweet substance from afar. Could it be the smell? So whether it is the smell, or whether they actually see it, they are able to detect that sweetness from a distance and are drawn to it. Whatever sense it may be it is definitely related to the mind, or what we call consciousness. They have become conscious of that sweet substance. That is the power of the mind. By virtue of having a mind they are able to use it in that way. It is good to relate to the great power of the mind by using examples like that.

When we see how the mind functions in even a small insect like an ant, and the capability that they have because of that mind, then we can see that, because of the virtue of having a mind of much greater potential, we can definitely achieve great things if we put our mind to it.

When we see the capacities that even ants have, due to the fact that they have a consciousness or mind that is able to discern things, we can also see that as humans we have a much greater capacity to develop our intelligence or wisdom. It is basically the insight that we gain from our experience or from our analysis that will increase that wisdom and ultimately the positive states of mind. Thus,

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fostering or promoting kindness and positive states of mind within us is the most worthwhile thing we can do.

To summarise again, the main point is that we can recognise certain states of mind or attitudes that are beneficial, and others that are harmful and then, by the virtue of recognising that, we can take the initiative to adopt the positive states of mind and attitudes and overcome those negative states of mind that are harmful to us.

Returning to the example used earlier, when one develops a genuine love or concern for others it actually benefits us. We reap the positive benefits of that positive state of mind whereas the moment anger arises it harms us and we experience the ill-effects of that. So we need take the initiative to understand this. This is something that I have been emphasising regularly, as being very worthwhile.

We have the ability to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful to us. Even an ant is immediately able to recognise certain things as harmful to themselves and avoid them. Of course if they don't detect the danger then they may fall into mishap. However we can see that they avoid certain situations or certain circumstances that they know will harm them. Once we utilise the ability to further know and distinguish what is harmful and beneficial then of course, as humans, we will be able to adopt it. Thus an understanding or recognition is required.

We will now undertake some actual meditation practice. Please adopt a comfortable physical posture. The object that we will choose to focus on will be our own breath. To adopt this meditation technique appropriately, we need to intentionally make the commitment to ourselves that for the duration of our meditation we will not allow our mind to wander off and be distracted with the normal distractions that occur in our minds. Until we pay attention to this we might not notice it, but when we start thinking about how our mind functions, we will see that it goes off in every many different directions, and is constantly busy thinking about many different things. Often we may daydream about things that are not achievable by ourselves. We exert ourselves and actually make ourselves mentally and physically weary by thinking about so many things. Even physically we find there are times when we feel very heavy or weighed down. Even if we have not exerted ourselves physically, because our mind has been so busy it has that affect on our physical body too. So a very busy mind that goes off in every direction is something that does not bring about a good result for us. It makes us wearier, and then causes agitation and disturbances in the mind. Therefore, the commitment we need to make here is not to allow our mind to wander off after all the distractions, but instead bring our focus inwards. Having brought our focus inwards we then bring again to mind that it is the breath that I am going to place my full attention and focus on. Based on our natural breathing rhythm, we imagine seeing our breath coming in and going out, and place our entire focus and attention just on the breath itself for a few minutes. We will conduct the meditation in this way. *(Pause for meditation)*

4.2.2.1.2.3. The way to train the mind in the stages of the path of beings of the great scope

4.2.2.1.2.3.2. The actual paths

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2. How to develop an awakening mind

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. The stages of training the awakening mind

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1. Training the mind in the pith instructions on the six causes and effect, which comes from the lineage traced to the great master Atisha

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2. Extensive explanation

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2. The actual training in the stages

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.2. Training the mind to strive for enlightenment

Following on from where we left off in our last session reading from the text, we are at the point where it explains:

Once you have been inspired by the aforementioned process and have seen that you need enlightenment for the sake of others' welfare, you develop the wish to attain it.

We gave the explanation of this earlier but to just summarise the main points mentioned extensively in the text, in essence, the *aforementioned process* is that which includes the development of love and compassion. Love is the particular love of focusing on all other beings who lack happiness, and wishing them to be endowed with supreme happiness. That then generates that unceasing spontaneous wish for others to be endowed with all happiness and that is what is defined here as genuine love or great love towards others.

When one focuses on other sentient beings who are experiencing great suffering and generates the spontaneous, unbiased wish that all beings be free from all suffering and be endowed with the state of complete freedom from suffering, one has generated compassion towards other beings.

Then, based on that authentic love and compassion towards others, one further develops that love and compassion to the point where one is not satisfied with only wishing others to be happy and free from suffering, and one takes upon oneself the responsibility of leading all beings to the ultimate state of happiness, and being completely free from suffering. When one takes that responsibility on oneself to the extent of that one makes the affirmation, 'I will not rely on anyone else but do it solely by myself. I will not wait for someone else to all beings to happiness and free them from suffering, but rather I will take the initiative and the responsibility to make that happen myself.' one has generated superior intention.

Then, having developed that superior intention, one investigates whether one has the ability to do this and one sees that one does not, and that is only by achieving the state of enlightenment, by becoming a fully enlightened buddha, that one will achieve that capacity. Having recognised that, one develops the aspiration to achieve enlightenment, to become a buddha, so that one will have the full capacity to lead all sentient beings to the state of happiness and freedom from suffering. When one develops that keen aspiration to obtain enlightenment

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then what is called the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta, has been developed.

As the text further explains:

However, this is not enough. First increase your faith as much as possible by contemplating the good qualities of the Buddha's body, speech and mind and enlightened activities as previously explained in the section on going for refuge.

Having the wish to attain enlightenment is not sufficient because one needs to fully understand the qualities of that state of enlightenment. The way to do that is by first generating faith in the qualities of the Buddha. This encompasses the qualities of the Buddha's body, the Buddha's speech and the Buddha's mind and the activities that the Buddha engages in. The more we contemplate those qualities, the more the longing or the strong aspiration to achieve those qualities oneself will be instilled within one. We can give an ordinary example of this process. When we admire someone's talents or qualities we want to become like them. We first see their qualities and then we are inspired to become like them. It is similar here when we contemplate the qualities of the Buddha. As mentioned here, it is as though that faith is the basis for developing the desire from the depth of your heart to attain those good qualities.

The text further explains:

Then, as it is taught that faith is the basis of aspiration, develop the desire to attain those good qualities from the depths of your heart and induce a certainty that it is absolutely necessary to attain omniscience even for your own welfare.

Having generated that faith and aspiration to achieve those qualities one then develops the certainty within oneself that, 'I definitely need to achieve the state of omniscience of an enlightened being. I need to achieve omniscience not only to help others but for my own welfare. To fulfil my ultimate potential I definitely need to achieve that state.'

What is being described here is the need for one to develop that strong commitment and aspiration along with the certainty of achieving that ultimate state of enlightenment. What is being introduced here is one's own ultimate potential, which is the ability that one has to achieve that state of enlightenment. One is not relying on the Buddha, someone who is already enlightened, to achieve one's ultimate potential and to benefit other sentient beings. Rather, one is relying upon one's own state of future enlightenment. This is really the main point here. Achieving the state of enlightenment is the fulfilment of one's ultimate potential. However the aspiration to achieve that is for the purpose of benefiting others. So we could say that in order to help or benefit others one needs to fulfil one's own ultimate potential first.

Basically, if one is determined to free all other beings from all faults and lead them to the ultimate state of being endowed with all qualities and the unceasing state of genuine happiness, one needs to be free from all faults and have achieved all these qualities oneself first. Without having removed all faults and achieved all

qualities oneself, one could not possibly be able to lead others to state of being completely free from faults and endowed with all good qualities. So this is how we need to understand this in a practical way.

Another understanding that we gain from this is that what is being introduced is that there are already many enlightened beings present, and for each of us there will be another buddha in relation to each of us individually attaining enlightenment at some future time. That is what is basically being presented. If there were to be only one ultimate buddha, such as Buddha Shakyamuni, and no other buddhas were possible, then we cannot possibly consider reaching the ultimate state of enlightenment ourselves. But what is being introduced here is that all of us have that potential to achieve that state of enlightenment and become a buddha.

Another point that we learn from this presentation is that it is emphasising that it is possible for us to overcome our negativities or faults. This is something that we can begin to recognise for ourselves. We can see from our own experience that the negativities within us can definitely be reduced, and as they are reduced there can be a time when they are completely eradicated. When we think about the ill effects of anger and start to take a little bit more responsibility upon ourselves not to give in to anger, we can see that the intensity or the strong dominance of anger within us starts to weaken. That is a sign of the fault being reduced.

Now we come to the next heading in the text that is **Identifying the Actual Mind of Enlightenment**, which is the fruit of the training.

The text explains:

The general definition of the mind of enlightenment follows the meaning of that given in the *Ornament of Clear Knowledge*: the development of the mind of enlightenment is the desire for perfect enlightenment for others' welfare.

So the mind of enlightenment is actually the desire for perfect enlightenment for others' welfare. What that encompasses is a mind where one unceasingly and spontaneously wishes for other beings to be free from suffering and to lead them to ultimate happiness and wishes to achieve enlightenment oneself for that purpose. When one reaches that point where one spontaneously, at all times, without effort, has this unceasing intention within oneself then that is the point where one has developed what is called the mind of enlightenment (some translations use awakening mind.)

Of course, this state of mind only reaches a state of becoming spontaneous based on the previous training of the mind. This training will be the six causes which precede developing this state of mind, if one is using the technique that is to recognise all beings as having been one's mother, remembering their kindness, then based on that wishing to repay their kindness, developing great love, followed by developing great compassion towards others. Then, as mentioned earlier, one develops that superior intention which is the superior intention of taking the responsibility of achieving that upon oneself. That intention is further developed and one reaches a state where one spontaneously and unceasingly has the

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wish to obtain enlightenment for the sake of liberating all beings from all sufferings and leading them to ultimate happiness. That is then the point where one has what is called the uncontrived mind of enlightenment.

The point when one develops that uncontrived, mind of enlightenment, the Sanskrit name being bodhicitta, is the point where one enters into the great vehicle path, obtains the name of a Conqueror's child or the Buddha's child, and becomes a noble being or bodhisattva.

Then, based on having that unceasing mind of enlightenment within oneself, which is a mind that aspires to achieve enlightenment for the sake of the welfare for all sentient beings, such a noble being pledges to engage in the practice of the six perfections. These will, of course, be presented later in text in more detail. So the mind is a mind aspiring to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings and the action that a bodhisattva, or noble being, engages in is the practice of the six perfections such as generosity and so forth.

Having identified and defined what the mind of enlightenment is, the text further presents two subdivisions.

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, follows the Arya of Stalks Sutra, and says that it is both aspirational and engaged.

Just as one distinguishes  
Between wishing to go and going.  
Similarly the learned should understand the division  
Of these two in accordance with the sequence.

So, the two divisions of the mind of enlightenment are the aspirational mind of enlightenment and the engaged mind of enlightenment.

We can clearly distinguish that there is a difference between the wish to go, and the actual action of going. For example, if one wishes to go to Melbourne that is a wish that one may have, but it is not the action yet. When one takes the action of going towards the city then that is the actual action of going. So this is how, as the text explains, we should understand the division between the two minds, according to the sequence.

This difference occurs within the noble beings themselves. When a noble being or bodhisattva is in meditative equipoise then, since they are single-pointedly meditating on emptiness, their mind would at that time be held by the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, but do not engage in any other activities. So that point would be an example of aspirational bodhicitta, but when that noble being comes out of meditation and is in the post meditative state and starts engaging in deeds such as practicing generosity, ethics, patience and so forth, that will be an example of an engaged mind of enlightenment.

The text explains further that there are different presentations by different masters of the distinction between these two minds:

Although there are many disagreements about what these two are, know that the aspiration is either 'May I become a buddha' or 'I will become a buddha' for the sake of all beings and that as long as you have not taken the [bodhisattva] vows it is the aspirational

mind of enlightenment that is present, whether or not you are training in the deeds of generosity, etc. Once you have taken the vows, the mind present is the engaged mind of enlightenment.

We can conclude here. I would like thank you all for paying such great attention. Having thanked you for paying such good attention, before we conclude this session I have to again ask you to pay attention, this time as we take the opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation. So we sit appropriately, bring our mind inwards and focus inwards.

This time we can use as the object of focus of our meditation the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. As we hear that recitation and the chant, we keep our full attention and focus on that, by not allowing our mind to waver and go off in other directions, and become distracted. Instead we keep our entire focus and attention on that sound and when the recitation subsides we maintain our focus on the residue of the positive feelings we got from that recitation. We just maintain that for a few moments.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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