
incredibly positive effects; there is a lot to gain from these positive states of mind, and that is something that one begins to notice through one's experience.

So, in summary, further developing and increasing the positive states of mind is the real source of happiness in life.

Whilst acknowledging that the positive states of mind are something to be protected and further increased the question now is whether one is able to do that effectively on a regular basis or not? If one finds that it is bit of a struggle, that it is difficult to protect and increase the positive states of mind, then one needs to question whether there is an obstacle or an obstruction towards doing so? If there is an obstruction or obstacle, then it will be useful to identify that, because these obstacles can be a hindrance and obstruction to one's further development.

So, what I am presenting here is actually a way for you to reflect on and think about this point. That in itself can be like a form of meditation, where the mind becomes quite settled. So, it can be quite effective even as a practice to settle down one's mind.

When we take this investigation further, and consider what is the obstruction or obstacle, for our positive states of mind to emerge and to be prevalent, then that obstacle is what we call the 'afflictions'.

There are various afflictions, and these afflictions are the main cause for not being able to establish a positive mind. Through reflection, we can identify these afflictions as being an obstruction or obstacle. This point is not something that is not too obscure; rather it is something that we can recognise.

To give an example of how an affliction is an obstruction to using our positive states of mind and to bring happiness to others, we can use anger. Now when anger dominates one's mind, and one expresses anger towards others, does that contribute to others' happiness, or does that help one to be happy and joyful?, Does that help one's expression to be gentle and nice towards others? So, the answer should be quite clear because of our own experience. When anger is prevalent, and we act out of anger, it is not something really pleasant for others, or appreciated by others, not to mention the disturbance it causes our own state of mind.

Likewise, for other afflicted states of mind that can cause distress, for example jealousy. When one's attitude or one's expression is tainted with jealousy that is not something which is appreciated by others. And when it is tainted with competitiveness towards others, then that is also something that is not appreciated by others. If one's attitudes or gestures are tainted with ill-will or harmful intentions, that is also not appreciated by others, and likewise with pride and so forth.

Of course, if we don't pay particular attention, and we don't think about this, it may not be immediately obvious so therefore this requires specific, honest investigation within oneself as to how these afflicted states of mind are harmful to oneself and others.

These states of mind, which are called the afflicted states of mind, cause us to experience stress and unhappiness.

These main causes are within, one's jealousy, anger and so forth, reside nowhere else but within oneself.

And just as these afflicted states of mind cause turmoil within our minds, they also have negative consequences for our physical body. We can start to feel discomfort, and aches and pains within our body, and there are even times when they can cause obstruction to one's breathing. This is something that some of you may notice.

Therefore, if one can adopt a method or technique where one's mind is not swayed or dominated by these afflictions, but rather one is able to control one's own mind - instead of the mind being controlled by the afflictions, then that would be really a good thing to do.

So, the method by which we can train our mind so that we can gain control, so that one's mind is not swayed or influenced by the afflictions, is precisely the technique that we adopt here called meditation.

Meditation is a technique that involves choosing an appropriate object which does not cause afflictions to arise in one's mind. Therefore, when one makes the decision to place one's focus one hundred percent on the appropriate meditation object, then by the virtue of focusing on that, combined with the decision of not to allow one's mind to cause affliction to arise, the turmoil in the mind will naturally subside.

Because one is creating distance between the object that causes afflictions to arise, and one's mind, the mind actually becomes calmer and more settled.

When we practise this meditation appropriately and effectively, then it will naturally cause the mind to become calm and distanced from the earlier state of mind which is influenced by afflictions. It is as if our mind is like the hustle and bustle of a crowd. That very hyperactive sort of mind, with all the various different thoughts and attitudes that are fuelled by the afflictions, will start to subside and consequently one gets a genuine sense of relief.

And when this is maintained, and when we engage in this practice regularly, then gradually our mind becomes more and more stable, and our state of mind becomes more and more positive, and that is how we reap the benefits of meditation.

Of course, this may not come about right away. First, we need to contemplate and think about the purpose of meditation, and how it actually works, and the effectiveness of it. Then when we apply the meditation technique with that understanding, gradually we can gain the benefit.

So, as I have often shared with you, when the mind is disturbed with any particular afflictions arising within it, one of the immediate and best remedies is to create distance from the object that is causing the affliction to arise. Take anger as an example; when one is feeling anger towards an object, whatever that object it may be, perhaps another person, then the more we focus on that object it will fuel the anger even further to the point where anger becomes like a blazing fire within oneself. It can become intense like a blazing fire. By dwelling on the object, the more you think about the object that is the

cause of anger, it is only natural that it will fuel and increase anger.

Therefore, when one begins to notice anger arising in relation to an object, if one can immediately take note of that. In order to prevent anger from escalating, just change one's focus from the object. One could actually focus on anger itself, rather than the object that causes anger. Just think about anger, its very nature, what is anger? If I allow anger to escalate and continue to dwell in my mind, if I do not stop this mind of anger, what will the consequences and the disadvantages be?

By thinking in this way, because of the change of focus, and by contemplating the ill effects of anger itself, then naturally the mind of anger will subside. If we can really apply this in such situations, we will really see the benefit.

In fact, there are specific instructions in the teachings regarding the disturbing conceptions arising in the mind. Specifically, when one's mind is affected by disturbing conceptions, focussing on the disturbing conception itself is a method to enable those disturbing conceptions to subside.

If we understand the proper method and techniques of meditation, and also the effectiveness of meditation, and to take this to heart and actually apply it, it will definitely bring about positive effects in one's life; we will gradually become happier and more joyful. It is in this way that one gains benefit from the meditation practice.

So, having introduced the effectiveness and the benefits of the meditation practice, and if one is inclined to adopt the meditation practice, then one would want to know what does it require on the physical level, what does one need to do? How do we adopt our physical body in order to practice meditation? What kinds of states of mind are needed? How do we prepare ourselves mentally? These are reasonable questions to ask and to understand, because of course the reality is, that whatever activity we engage in requires both aspects of our being, our physical activity requiring physical actions, and our mental attitude, and the mind thinking about it.

With meditation, similarly there is a physical aspect, and we need to adopt ourselves in a certain physical aspect, as well as mentally. And then also one considers what are the conducive conditions for one's meditation practice, i.e. recognising the conducive conditions and understanding the obstructive conditions. So, all of this would be useful to understand.

So, the way that I present all of this is really in a practical way which is based on a reasonable sequence, and this can help you to really take an interest in meditation based on your understanding through reasoning and logic, rather than just accepting it. In fact, whatever activity you engaged in is most effective if it is based on sound reasoning and logic.

Now with the limited time that we have, we may not be able to cover all of these points, but perhaps I can just briefly go through the physical posture and then we can continue.

When I give the instructions about the physical posture, for those who can adopt it, then you can adopt that posture for your meditation.

So the point of the physical posture for meditation is to sit straight, and straight means that one is not leaning back, forward or sideways too much, but rather to have an erect straight posture.

The significance of having one's body straight for meditation practice is said to be in order allow the energy channels within our body to be straightened out. When the energy channels are straightened, then it allows the subtle wind energy to flow well within our body. Then will then have the positive effect of one's mind becoming more focussed in our meditation. Furthermore, a practical benefit of having a straight body is that it will help to prevent drowsiness and sleep from occurring.

Part of the physical instructions for those who are able is to sit in a full lotus or half lotus posture. There is a significance in adopting the full lotus or half lotus posture. Although there are more profound explanations from other tantric point of view, for now we will talk about the practical benefit. It is said to be that for those who undertake prolonged meditation, a comfortable position like that actually helps one to be stable for a longer period of time.

Then with the hands, the right hand is placed over the left and the thumbs touch together to form a triangle, and then it is placed four centimetres below our navel.

The significance of this hand gesture is, that by the thumbs touching together, and because of the endings of the channels in the thumbs, there is a particular consequence of inducing love and compassion within one's heart when one is doing meditation, by allowing heat energy to develop within oneself.

Then with the position of the head, one's head shouldn't be held up too high, but tilted slightly forward. Having one's head slightly tilted forward is said to help prevent excitement from arising during our meditation.

The instructions that are presented for the eyes are that one shouldn't have the eyes wide open because that can also cause excitement to occur during meditation, and also not to have them completely closed, as that can bring about laxity and also cause drowsiness. The right positioning is explained as to be for one to lower one's eyes in order to just see the tip of one's nose; that is this appropriate position for the eyes.

And with one's shoulders and arms, they shouldn't be brought out too far, but also not clenched tight.

Likewise, with one's jaw, the teeth and the lips should also be in a position where they are not completely closed and not clenched tight, but also not open, but rather resting in their natural state. If mouth or the jaw were completely closed, then that prevents the air flow within our body and within our mouth, and thus that can also cause complications in our meditation, and if the mouth is completely open, then that causes dryness in the mouth.

So, we position the tongue with the tip of the tongue touching the roof of one's mouth behind the front teeth,

and that helps, on the one hand to keep the mouth moist, and it also prevents too much saliva from forming which might cause one to start drooling; that wouldn't be appropriate in meditation.

At the end of these instructions it finally says that one should adopt the most comfortable position for one's meditation. This is a significant point because if the meditation posture was limited or restricted to only adopting a specific posture, then for some it might actually be an obstruction for focusing your mind, if you are not comfortable in that position. Therefore, it is mentioned to ultimately adopt a comfortable position.

Then next we come to identifying the meditational object, and describing what that meditational object needs to be. There are of course quite detailed explanations on that, but we can maybe leave it for next session. For now, the object that we regularly focus on for our purpose of meditation here, it is our own breath.

We use our own breath as the object to focus on, and to bring our full attention and focus on the breath we need to make a commitment to do so, to withdraw our focus from all distracting objects that our mind is normally distracted with. There are so many different thoughts and ideas and disturbing concepts because the mind is very scattered in that way, and we are not able to harness the full potential and power of our mind because it is all scattered.

So in order to harness the full potential and power and ability of our mind, we need to bring the mind itself to one point, to focusing on one appropriate object, and then we will be able to utilise the full potential of our mind. And so this also indicates the significance of the chosen object upon which one brings one's full attention and focus.

So, for the next few minutes we will focus on our breath.

(Meditation)

While maintaining your focus, we can now change the object of our focus to be placed upon the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is the name of Buddha Shakyamuni, and when the recitation subsides, just try to maintain that inner awareness or inner focus for a few moments, and that will suffice for our meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

That will be sufficient for now.

You have all paid very good attention so I really appreciate that; thank you very much.

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