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Having this ability to challenge difficulty makes a huge difference. If you lack this it is as though the difficulty is winning. In order to have more resilience and courage in difficult situations, it is important to have a clear mind. One of the benefits of meditation practice is to enhance this clear thinking. No matter what situation we face, if we see some hope and if there is some sort of knowledge, we can see a way out of that hardship. If we lack that clear thinking, hardships can completely overwhelm us, and it can be very difficult.

If our mind is disturbed and in bad shape, we feel very disturbed and it is very difficult for us to achieve anything or to do anything properly. For example, if someone who is very good with numbers, like a mathematician, is mentally disturbed or there is something bothering them they can easily make a mistake even with a simple calculation. It is important to understand the benefit of actually taking care of our mental wellbeing. Mental wellbeing, is not just about mental health. It is also about physical health. When we are feeling mentally disturbed or bothered it can make us shake physically and for no reason we lose our confidence and feel frightened and insecure.

Meditation is an effective way to stabilise our mind. It is really important because in order to develop clear thinking, we first of all need to stabilise and clear our mind of distractions. Through meditation practice we remove distracting thoughts and through this we rest our mind and feel some stillness within ourselves. Through inner stillness we can cultivate clear thinking and then we can see the benefits.

Meditation practice is also about disciplining and controlling our mind. In normal situations we are completely driven by our mind and our thoughts. If the thought that leads us is something very disturbing and negative and we follow it, then it will only lead us to more unpleasant or disturbing situations. When something disturbing arises someone with a good understanding of meditation practice can realise that it is possible to get rid of and overcome those thoughts. They can understand that you don't have to be enslaved by your own mind. Instead you can be the master of your own mind.

From this perspective, the suffering that we experience in life is very much related to our own mind; it is because of our way of thinking. Meditation is very much aimed at educating ourselves about the mind, its way of thinking and the skills to bring change within our mind. Thus, we can see that meditation is very useful for our life.

Lord Buddha himself said that when our mind is controlled there is happiness, but if our mind is not controlled, there is no happiness. If we reflect on what the Buddha has said and relate this to our everyday life experience, in terms of the relationship between our mind, our actions and our experience, we can clearly see the benefits of working on knowing and subduing our own mind

Now we will meditate. Make sure that you have the right sitting posture and, most importantly, ensure you feel comfortable in this sitting posture. There are certain postures which are not suitable, and which can prevent

good concentration during meditation practice. It is important we choose the right posture and feel comfortable and relaxed in that posture.

We also need to have an object of focus for our mind during meditation. Without an object to direct our mind to, it can easily wander off. The object we choose should not be a cause of mental afflictions or negative states of mind. For this meditation, the object of focus we choose is our own breath going in and out. This is good choice because it is something which doesn't require effort to understand or recognise. For the breath there is no colour and no heat. We simply inhale and exhale.

Focus the mind on the incoming and outgoing breath. Feel comfortable and relaxed. Make sure that you are empty of all disturbing thoughts or external distractions. Try to get rid of all thoughts, then slowly direct the mind to the incoming and outgoing breath. Be aware only of that incoming and outgoing breath.

*[Meditation]*

While continuing with the inner focus, we will now chant the Buddha's mantra. As we chant the mantra direct the focus of the mind to the sound of the mantra and keep your focus on the sound of the mantra that we chant.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

There is still time for maybe one or two questions. Today is a public holiday, but it's not public holiday for me.

*Question: Does it matter if cats or other animals are present while we meditate at home?*

If your cat or any animal comes sit next to you when you practise meditation it is a good sign. For the cat it is also very beneficial if you chant mantras, like the Tara mantra. They can hear the mantra and will feel the vibration of that mantra, so will be very beneficial for them.

The main reason why the animal comes very close to you and wants to be near you is the care and the love that you show to them. In that kind of atmosphere, in the love and care that you provide them, they will feel very safe, peaceful and happy. They want to sit next to you because they feel very comfortable and secure. The indication that the animal is showing their friendship is when they come close to you. It is the consequence or the benefit of the love that you extend to them. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that, like humans, animals acknowledge when someone shows love and compassion and they show their appreciation to the people who show love and compassion to them.

The words, 'love and compassion' are my favourite words. I always feel great delight when I hear people talk about their practice of love and compassion.

Do you have another question?

*Question: Some texts say that we should give to others what makes them happy. What if someone wants me to give them something like heroin, because they think that that is what will make them happy?*

We are supposed to be giving whatever we believe is in the best interest and is beneficial to other beings. If you believe it is something harmful, you should not give it to them.

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If whatever you give is beneficial, then it is the right thing. This question that you have asked is actually raised in some texts. What is important is your sincerity and genuine motivation for giving. That is what you have to focus on. If you genuinely want to benefit someone, you won't give something which you believe will not benefit them.

In the instance of someone who is a serious alcoholic, and you really want to help them, but the only the only way you could help that person is to give a little of what he wants, that action can be justified because in that kind of situation, you can't see any other way. It is your intention that is important.

The key thing is that we have to do something which will benefit other sentient beings. Lord Buddha said, 'If you do something which benefit others, that is equivalent of benefiting me. If you do something which harms others, then it is also the same as harming me'.

When we give to others something that is generally regarded as not very beneficial, it can end up as being very beneficial to a particular being.

There was one Tibetan who was sick, with a lot of problems with diarrhoea. He asked the people to give him an alcoholic drink. He said that if the diarrhoea was so critical, he was going to die anyway, they should just help him out and give him a drink. After they gave him the alcohol he recovered. So, in fact, this person knew that one of the causes of his diarrhoea was a lack of heat or something in his body and he knew alcohol could help. The people who gave him the alcohol didn't know the real cause, but they gave it with good intentions and to please him because he was desperate. In that situation it helped the person. Doctors also know that for some patients, heavy drugs can be very useful and giving them will help the patient to recover.

In the scriptures, there are objects which we are forbidden to give, like poisons, weapons and so forth. That is the general recommendation. However, there could be situations where certain poisons can be healing and therefore beneficial to the recipient. This situation is an exception to that rule.

Thank you

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