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## Heart Advice

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Translated by Sandup Tsering

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Now, everyone try to fully relax your body and mind. When we physically relax, we can observe the experience of the relaxation of our body. When we mentally relax, we can observe the experience of the relaxation of our mind. We can see how mental and physical resting complement each other. We can also understand the benefit and importance of having no mental or physical disturbances. Not only do we rest mentally and physically but in that rest we can learn about where true relaxation and happiness comes from. It comes from the harmonious relationship between the mind and the body.

Besides the mind and the body there is also something called 'I'. When we think of 'I', it is the subject. What this 'I' experiences is primarily related to our mind and our body. When we are physically and mentally at rest and nothing is causing us pain and suffering, we can be sure that this 'I' (the experience of the mind and body) is happy. When this 'I' complains, 'I feel unhappy' or 'I am disturbed and in pain', this too is related to the wellbeing of our mind and body. It is obvious that if our body is sick or in bad shape, it will have a detrimental effect on the 'I'. Likewise, our experience on a mental level has a direct impact on the 'I'. Even though what we are exploring here is simple, if we look into it we can gain true insight into what brings the experience of happiness and suffering to the 'I'. In other words, we can develop an understanding of, and knowledge about the causes for achieving happiness and eliminating suffering.

Essentially, if we look into our 'I' and examine what it likes and dislikes, what it desires and rejects, then we notice the 'I' has a natural tendency to desire happiness and avoid suffering. So, when 'I' is free of undesirable experiences, at that moment we notice it feels absolute peace and happiness.

People have different desires and wants and different things they don't want. Therefore, we can find some conflict in our relationships with others. Conflict arises when someone desires something we do not like. If we are not happy about it, then a conflict arises in our mind. However, if we say to ourselves, 'It is really wonderful that this person got what they wished for', then of course there will be no conflict in our mind.

As I said before, everybody has their own likes, dislikes and desires. Take, for example, a situation in which we are thinking about what someone else has got in life. If it is something agreeable, something that we really hate the other person to have, of course we cannot tolerate it and we will have some sort of conflict in our mind. However, if we look at the situation with true wisdom, then there is a way to change this hatred or disagreeable mental attitude into something more agreeable and more in accord with the wishes of the other person.

So, whenever we experience a conflicted view with respect to other people, for example when we feel hatred or animosity towards another person, rather than becoming overwhelmed by hatred, it is important to try and make some effort to calm the hatred down and find something to stabilise and relax our mind. Then, in other situations, we will be able to show respect to the other person. We must understand that just as we are a human being, the other person is also a human being. Through cultivating a different way of thinking, it is possible to overcome hatred and to develop more tolerance and respect towards others.

In many situations, our selfish mind or desire is really the main source of our problems. Sometimes, I notice two people in a car arguing over which direction they should be going. One says, 'We should go that way' while the other says, 'This way'. It can cause so much conflict and stress for the people concerned even though, in the end, they both get to the same destination. So, we are focusing on two things: relaxing or achieving happiness on both the physical (or bodily) level and the mental level. To achieve physical rest, i.e. to stop our body from undertaking too many activities (which is not that hard or difficult) we can easily find a moment to do this if we want to. Other people can even force us to rest. If a stronger person comes and holds us down and makes us sit in a cross-legged posture, then we wouldn't have a choice! What is difficult is calming down and resting our mind. If we check, a lot of the difficulties or problems we confront in life mainly result from our mind. This problem not only applies to ourselves. If we look at the entire spectrum of life, to people high up or those low down, we can notice that we all go through problems which are mainly related to the mind. When we look at the cause, in our case it is definitely not related to our external living conditions, like a shortage of food or drink or housing problems. It is more related to our mind. There are, of course, exceptions and we can be almost sure that some higher spiritual beings like His Holiness the Dalai Lama or the Pope do not have such problems or unhappiness on a mental level. On a mental level, they have found peace and calm which is why they are in a position to be able to extend benefit to others and help them alleviate the suffering in their lives. If we are caught in mental conflict and unhappiness, it is not possible to guide others to find peace.

We can also observe the influence and impact people have on each other. For example, parents who steadily enjoy a peaceful and happy life have a positive impact on their children. Cultivating a positive mental attitude within our mind is a very important cause for wellbeing in our life.

The positive effect of peace and happiness within our mind not only has an impact on us, it also has an impact on other people as well. Scientists have done a lot of research on the emotional and mental well-being of parents which shows that parents with a relaxed and happy mind have a positive impact on their children. Research shows that even at the stage when the mother is carrying a child in her womb, it has a long-term effect on the child. So, the positive effects of having happiness and peace within our mind will be for ourselves and others.

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If the problems we experience are derived from our mind, then what causes the problems? The cause is the 'mental afflictions' or 'delusions'. The indication of a delusion arising is when suddenly and for no apparent reason, we feel sad, unhappy or confused. Suddenly, we experience a clear indication or presence of the mental afflictions or delusions within us.

Now, we can talk about eliminating these mental afflictions or delusions permanently or temporarily. Eliminating or uprooting the mental afflictions or delusions is hard work for many people because it means we have to overcome all of the mental ignorance within our mind. As long as this ignorance in our mind is not dispelled, we cannot permanently uproot the mental afflictions or delusions. However, eliminating them temporarily is in our hands, if that is what we want. If it is in our hands, then what are the means to help us overcome these mental delusions and afflictions? The means is meditation practice and any tool which helps us to train our mind. The means are within us. We have to find the remedy within ourselves as the delusions are also within us.

If we talk of temporarily overcoming a mental affliction which causes the suffering of anger, we know from experience that if we continuously think of the various causes of the anger – the objects or the conditions which gave rise to the anger – then we won't be able to overcome or stop it. However, even as a temporary measure we can divert our mind completely to a different object not related to the anger. If we can train our mind just to sit on that kind of object, then it will work to suppress the anger. So, as a remedy to overcoming anger, we can cultivate loving kindness and tolerance. These are qualities we generate within us. When we produce these inner qualities, they act as a remedy to overcome anger. There are people who are able, through meditation practice, to overcome certain problems related to their mind. Some people have found what they have achieved in meditation to be something which was previously unthinkable. So, people can derive quite an amazing benefit from meditation practice.

Of course, it is not sufficient simply to learn about the Dharma or about meditation practice. In order to experience the benefit of the Dharma and meditation we must put it into practice. As I said before, a lot of people here really appreciate the amount of benefit they have found after integrating meditation into their life. They have a high regard for meditation. These people have shared their own life experience and it shows how meditation practice has benefited them. Likewise, on a personal level, I can also tell you that we should all look at the difference spiritual practice and meditation has brought to our life. In my own case, since 1984 I have had a certain conviction in terms of the benefits I have gained from meditation practice. I have found the practice very effective in terms of being able to sustain a stable peace and happiness within myself. Likewise, for those of you who have been following the Dharma and practising meditation, it is good to make some sort of assessment of how your practice is going. What sort of difference has the practice made to your life? How were you before you started the practice and how are you now? By doing this,

we will find that the meditation practice we have been doing over a period of time has changed us into a much better person and that we have found a more stable direction in our life. So, when we think of this, it gives us more impetus; more motivation to continue with our practice.

We will do a few minutes of breathing meditation together. The important point to remember whenever we engage in meditation practice is that we must try to completely relax our body and proceed with the practice in a natural and gradual way. The duration of the practice is not important, even if it is as short as five minutes it is beneficial if, in that short moment, we really relax, calm our mind and fix it on the given object.

Here, the meditation object is breathing in and out. If the mind is overwhelmed by certain disturbing thoughts or afflictive emotions, we will notice that the moment we place the mind on our breath, all of these disturbing thoughts and mental afflictions will cease and our mind will be at peace and at rest. When we think of the conditions responsible for the disturbing and unwanted thoughts or emotions arising, one of those conditions is the objects or events related to those unwanted thoughts or emotions. If we have a certain thought which causes us to feel unhappy we can say that the thought is very much related to the mental delusions or mental afflictions. When a certain desirable object comes to our mind, we feel like it doesn't have the immediate effect of disturbance; rather it feels pleasurable. In fact, in Buddhist terms, the nature of that emotion, that feeling of pleasure, is called the *suffering of change*. So, understanding that, we should try to overcome the desire in our mind. We should try to disengage our mind from all objects which arouse certain disturbing thoughts or afflictive emotions and just bring the mind completely within. Then, having done that, just before our mind runs away after an external object again, we direct it onto the breath. It is said that our attention has to become almost inseparable from the breath itself. So, we will start now.

*[Meditation]*

We will chant the Buddha's mantra and direct our mental attention to the sound of the mantra. At the same time, when we stop chanting, make sure that you don't let your mind wander off towards any outer external objects. Keep within yourself.

*[Recitation of mantra]*

Does anyone have a question?

*[Audience 1: mainly inaudible]*

We have to acknowledge that first of all we are talking about a problem which was created or is associated with human beings. So, the solution has to be solved by a human! Likewise, if the problem is associated with the family, then it has to be solved by the family. If a problem in a relationship is associated with the two people involved, really the most important people responsible for solving the problem are the two people concerned. It is not solved by other people. If you are talking about a conflict in a relationship, it won't be resolved if both keep the cause of the problem within themselves and not give an inch or express the cause of the problem or conflict.

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It is important that, without any judgement, they first of all put all of the causes of the problem between the two people onto the table. Then they need to talk about and look at those causes and who is responsible. So, basically it is very important to open up communication. Normally, people immediately go to seek legal help and then spend thousands and thousands of dollars and in some cases the issue is not really resolved!

A family problem needs to be resolved by the family. It's a human problem and the problem is resolved by humans and no one else. All I am saying is that people are not very proactive in solving problems for themselves. Rather, people tend to go out first to seek help from others. Maybe it is still happening here but in our Tibetan society, the family members, relatives or parents from both sides get involved as well. A lot of the time it gets resolved without any big bills or spending!

So communication is the most important thing.

*[Audience 2: partly inaudible] It's very hard to know whether or not a relationship is going to be good for us from the beginning. How do you figure out that you've got the right connection with the person enough to continue?*

I normally say that you need to take time to get to know each other really well. That is important. At the beginning, a permanent relationship is not like the food in front of you such that when you are really hungry you go and eat! At the initial stage, you don't know each other's weakness, faults and strengths. That's why I advise that you need to be friends first and take the time to find out more.

The famous Indian master Aryadeva advised that when desire and attachment arises, it gives the experience of pleasure. In a sense, it brings the object of your desire and attachment closer together giving you both some sense of pleasure. Therefore, it is very difficult to see the other side of that attachment. It's not like anger which, at the moment it arises, we notice its destructiveness. Sometimes, when a relationship falls apart, some people, because of their hatred, are happier to give their money to the lawyer or to someone else completely unrelated rather than to their partner. Their decision is influenced by hatred.

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