
greater loss, because one would miss the opportunity to practice the Dharma. Therefore, one should try not to let one's mind be occupied with only the concerns of this life.

If we only work for the happinesses of this life while we have this precious human body, it is a great waste. For example, if we compare the happiness of one day and the happiness of a hundred days, the happiness of a hundred days is much greater than the happiness of one day. The happiness of one day is over quickly, so one would say that the person who is only concerned with the happiness of one day is not very skilful. If one could work for the happiness of a hundred days, that would be a greater purpose. It would have a greater meaning than being concerned with the happiness of one day, which is over very quickly.

Similarly, we should not be concerned only with the happinesses of this life, but should try to give our life some greater meaning and make use of this precious opportunity while we have this happy human rebirth. Otherwise, we spend most of our existence moving between the lower realms, so now while we have some breathing space, we should make the opportunity count.

So much for the ultimate purpose of the precious human life. With regard to the temporary purpose, we want to attain a higher rebirth, as a human or as a divine being, and the primary cause for that is the practice of morality. The practice of morality is the main cause for a higher rebirth as a human or as a divine being.

But just taking rebirth in our next life as a human being alone, for example, would not be enough. Being a destitute human being is not a particularly happy experience, so one needs to have enough wealth to practice, and the cause for that is the practice of generosity. So, the practice of morality and generosity are essential for having a happy rebirth in the next life and these two practices are something we can all do – we can practice morality and generosity.

But then we will also want to have good friends and acquaintances, a good circle of friends in the next life, and the cause for that is the practice of patience. The practice of patience is the main cause to have many friends and a good circle of acquaintances in the next life.

One will also want to be successful in one's work and will want to achieve one's aims, and the cause for that is the practice of enthusiasm. Then, it is important that despite having all this worldly fortune – being wealthy, having friends, being successful – the mind does not become overpowered by all this fortune. To prevent this, one needs the practice of mental stabilisation.

If one does not practice mental stabilisation, instead of our worldly success and happiness becoming the cause for happiness, it will generate mental afflictions and become the cause for mental disturbance. So, to ensure that the mind is not taken over by the mental afflictions one needs to practise mental stabilisation, and to completely liberate the mind from the mental afflictions we need to practice the perfection of wisdom.

Having a human rebirth, one has certain attributes, such as the ability and intelligence of a human being. One can practice many different things. One can practice morality and one has the mental capacity to generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment. The only thing one needs to do is to make the decision.

One needs to say to oneself: "Nobody is going to look after like my life. I have to look after my life myself. I have to achieve my aims myself." Regardless of whether they are temporary aims or ultimate aims, one has to achieve those aims oneself. One needs to say to oneself: "Now is the time to do that because I am a human being and I have the ability, the mental power, the mental capacity, the intelligence to engage in these practices, to practice morality, generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment and so forth".

Next time, we will come to the outline that deals with the rarity of the precious human body, because if the precious human body were not rare, it wouldn't matter whether one made use of the opportunity or not. But when one recognises that it doesn't come around very often, that it is quite rare, it becomes a different matter.

For tonight, we can have one or two good questions.

Question: How do you learn patience?

Answer: One has to train oneself in patience with regard to disruptive conditions.

Ordinarily, if one encounters suffering or other obstructive, harmful conditions, the mind becomes agitated. Here, what one has to do is to train the mind. If it becomes agitated, that is a sign that one does not have patience. We need to train the mind not to become disturbed and agitated when we encounter conditions such as suffering or harm.

For example, if a small child said to its mother: "It's your fault", the mother may not get angry at the child because the mother has practiced patience; her mind is not disturbed by the accusation of the small child. However, if the accusation came from the husband, her mind might get agitated and then there would be no practice of patience. That is the difference.

We should not confuse the practice of patience with not expressing our anger. If we are in a state where we are very angry but we physically prevent ourselves from hurting the other person, that is not regarded as patience. When anger is kept in the mind, it turns into resentment; this is called having resentment, not having patience.

To have real patience, the mind needs to be undisturbed but the harmful condition one is encountering. One way of meditating on patience is to try to understand the other person's mind. Here, it is important that first one understands one's own mind. By observing one's own mind, one comes to understand how easy it is for the mind to fall under the control of anger, how irrational a person becomes, and how one loses control when one becomes angry. By understanding one's own situation, one can better understand the situation of the other person when that other person is angry.

When one is accused or abused by another person who is angry, one does not get angry at the other person because one understands that the other person is not really the culprit. What is actually the culprit is the anger that has taken over the other person's mind. Being under the control of anger, the other person does not really have much choice in the matter at that moment.

So, if we were to get angry at all, we should direct our anger at the anger of the other person, not at the other person, who is under the control of their anger. For example, if there is a three-car pile-up, with the last car pushing the middle car into the first car, the driver of the first car should not get angry at the driver of the middle car because it was not that driver's fault. It was the driver in the car behind who caused the accident. So, one would be most upset with the driver in the last car because one knows the driver of the middle car did not cause the accident. Similarly, the other person being pushed by their anger does not really have much freedom or choice in the matter.

This is one way of meditating on patience – by generating an understanding of the other person's internal situation.

If the other person is frowning and saying unpleasant things, it is a sign that they are unhappy. For whatever reason, they experience unhappiness and that's why they are frowning and saying unpleasant, hurtful things. If the other person – one's friend or partner – had a happy mind, they wouldn't say such things and wouldn't have a black, frowning face, but would smile and be happy and say nice things.

As the great Bodhisattva Shantideva said, a person who is under the influence of the mental afflictions and delusions will even hurt themselves. Their mind is so disturbed that they really hurt themselves physically. So, even if one doesn't generate compassion for that person, at the very least we should see that they are really not the object of our anger.

To practice patience is important. It is important that one does not behave like a small child: as soon as the other person says something harsh or unpleasant, we immediately retaliate, like a small child. It's important that we don't do that, but show more maturity and wisdom and try to work with the other person, being friendly to them and putting them at ease and so forth.

Question: How could you balance being patient in this life, when we live in this impatient, aggressive world, when being patient you can be left behind?

Answer: I think what you have to consider is that when two parties are warring with each other in anger, will anybody come out the winner? Isn't it the case that both will receive loss?

If one were to compete with another person in anger and then have some success, it might not be all that bad to do this. But is that really the case? Isn't it more the case that one will receive loss? Isn't it more the case that if both parties get angry, they both end up with wounds on their heads because they start hitting at each other? When their anger has died down, they can put bandaids on each

other's wounds! But they will not really have received any benefit.

There is no benefit to be gained from two parties having a go at each other with anger. One can see where that ends up – for example, sometimes a bigger country gives a smaller country a hard time but there is not really any winner.

What we really need to do is to look at our own situation and our own mind. Patience is a practice that happens in our own mind. We need to take care that our own mind remains undisturbed. Initially we start the practice of patience with people who are close to us, our nearest and dearest, our family and friends, then slowly we widen out our practice of patience.

Initially it will be difficult as beginners – we are not yet at the level of a practitioner who can have patience with everybody. We need to start out small in our immediate environment then slowly widen out our practice.

The worldly view is that if we are verbally abused and we do not retaliate, we will receive a loss. This is the general worldly perception – we receive loss if we do not retaliate in kind. This is a view that one learns from when one is small.

However, the Dharma point of view it is different. One has to consider that if one were to retaliate in kind, one loses one's inner peace and happiness. For example, if we are verbally accused or abused by another person, if we let our mind be affected by what the other person says, we will lose our inner peace and happiness. We have the choice – do we want to preserve our inner peace and happiness or do we want to retaliate in kind? If we go on to retaliate in kind, it is very likely our mind will be overrun by anger and automatically we will lose our inner calmness, inner peace and happiness.

So, even though from a worldly perspective, one would say that the person who does not retaliate is stupid, actually if one makes a comparison, this person who practises patience is the truly courageous person, practising patience with the verbal harm and so forth that is given by the other person. A person who retaliates in kind is not a truly courageous person.

As before, turn the mind inwards, not engaging external objects, then place it on the name mantra of the Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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