

We cannot escape and run away from problems; they are going to present themselves in any case. There are many situations where problems arise, but it only becomes a real difficulty and a real problem when we are not able to bear and accept them. But when we develop a mind of acceptance and willingly endure hardships and face difficulties, then we can work out how to solve our problems. There is no way to overcome a problem if we are completely overwhelmed by it and not able to endure difficulties. But with endurance and acceptance, we can find a way to overcome difficulties.

Meditation can help us develop a mind of acceptance and endurance. Meditation familiarises the mind again and again with a positive object. The more we focus on a positive object, the more likely it is that our mind will be familiarised with that positive object. This means our mind is imbued with the positive qualities we are focussing on, such as kindness, love and compassion. These positive qualities become the main source of our happiness and well being. There is no better way for us to experience a true sense of joy and happiness than through developing genuine kindness, love and compassion. It really comes down to these qualities. The way to develop genuine kindness, love and compassion within our own mind or heart is by familiarising—there's no other way—our mind with positive qualities again and again and again. The more we familiarise ourselves with these positive qualities, the more likely they will become a natural state of our being.

Now having presented briefly the technique and the benefits of the practice of meditation, we can now adopt the appropriate physical posture for meditation and spend a few minutes in meditation. We can use our own breath to focus on during the meditation. The significance of focussing on our own breath is that, for the time we focus on our breath, we will be relieved from a lot of mental activity, i.e. an excited state of mind and a distracted mind. It will all naturally subside, and as a result of our very busy mind becoming more settled and focussed, we will experience a genuine calmness. In meditation, we need to take it to heart and do the practice sincerely so that we can get the positive effects and acquaint our mind with the technique, and develop the technique within ourselves.

For the purpose of our meditation now, it is best that we make a determination not to focus on anything else for the time being. Just let everything else be, and bring our full attention and focus just on our breath. For the next few minutes, based on the natural rhythm of our breathing, we just focus and be aware of our breath coming in and going out. So, this is how we will spend the next few minutes in a placement meditation. (*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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1. Training the mind to strive for the welfare of others

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.1. Establishing the basis for that mind to arise

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.1.2. Establishing the appealing aspect of all

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.1.2.3. Repaying their kindness

Following the earlier topic Recalling their Kindness, we now come to the next topic, which is Repaying their Kindness.

While we read the traditional explanation from the text here, we also need to try to understand how it relates to practical aspects in our everyday lives. To summarise, the main advice is presenting techniques on how to develop good behaviour towards others who have been kind to us. Even from a worldly point of view, when someone is kind to us, it is socially accepted behaviour to return that kindness with kindness. What is presented here is how to do that on a greater scale.

In order to be able to develop the intention of repaying kindness, we have to recognise their kindness and have the wish to repay that kindness. If you don't even remember the kindness that others have shown us, then there's no way for us to begin to consider repaying that kindness. As great masters such as Shantideva have mentioned, the way to repay the kindness of others is by first of all recalling the kindness others have shown to us. Then we can develop the initiative to repay that kindness. Furthermore, Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned in his text that if we harm someone who has been kind to us, then that is even worse than the behaviour of animals. So what Lama Tsong Khapa is pointing out is very poignant. As humans, we have more intelligence than animals, so our actions and deeds need to be better than animals. If we can't recognise and repay the kindness of someone who has been kind to us, then our behaviour is worse than the behaviour of animals. That is something we need to keep in mind.

Indeed, when we look into the animal realm, we can see that animals have a natural appreciation of those who have been kind to them. We can see so many examples of how animals remember and recognise people who have been kind to them. Even if someone has shown kindness to an animal a long time ago, animals seem to remember. They recognise the person and show great appreciation and a sense of joy and love towards the person who has been kind to them. The Dalai Lama has jokingly mentioned on occasions that when we relate this observation to mosquitoes, then it might be questionable! It is hard to receive appreciation from a mosquito because after they take your blood, they just fly away. They don't seem to have much appreciation for someone giving blood to them.

So leading back to the main point, even from a worldly or mundane perspective, someone who shows appreciation and is able to recognise and repay kindness of others with love is considered to be a good person, who behaves well. That is something we need to keep in mind.

Just imagine how great it would be if this natural tendency to show kindness prevailed in a society where those who are better off, for example elders such as parents, and teachers were to show juniors genuine kindness and love and provide real help to them. And then the juniors, who receive that kindness, can develop appreciation and respect. When that prevails in society, then we can see how genuine, good and happy society would be. The elders show genuine love and kindness to the younger generation and the younger generation develop a natural respect and appreciation. That mutual connection can provide a genuine sense of goodwill between everyone. We can see the benefits if this

implemented throughout society. It would be highly beneficial if this system was adopted in a society.

I have heard from some older people who have confided in me that they feel a sense of joy when the younger generation come up to them and speak and spend some time with them; they feel a great sense of joy. If they feel a sense of joy and happiness from the younger generation talking to them and spending time with them, then they have to take the initiative to extend a genuine sense of kindness and concern also. That is how to naturally gain the friendship and companionship of the younger generation as well. I recall when I was in New Zealand, an older person was telling me how nice it was when many young people came up and talked and spent time with them. This shows how much acts of kindness are appreciated.

The significantly older generation, particularly those in their eighties and nineties, definitely have a great appreciation when the younger generation come up to talk and spend some time with them. We can see that it brings them a sense of joy. It is good for us to take the initiative to try to implement that within our own circle. We might have limited resources and time, but with those directly connected to us, such as our own parents, relatives, and the elders in the family, we can take the initiative to spend some genuine quality time with them, to go see them, especially with our own parents. Whether we consider them to be good parents or not, whether we consider them to be particularly nice to us or not, that's irrelevant. It is fitting for us to spend some time with them and try to help them. Their old age is a time when they are most in need of your time and help. For them, perhaps it is because there are not so many other companions and friends left of their generation. They have no other resort than to rely upon younger people to come up and spend some time with them. They don't have many other companions and friends.

Even though this may seem like a side-track, it's all related to the topic here. I am presenting a pathway for our own destiny as well as a way to cultivate genuine love and compassion. We need to consider when we are also in need of others' assistance and help as well. If we can cultivate a genuine sense of love and compassion now, spending time with older people and giving them some time, assisting them in whatever way we can, then naturally that will develop and create good conditions and causes for us to be also cared for in the future. We can see that there are some older people who are being cared for by very good carers and are in very good surroundings. These elders are very joyous, happy and jovial. There's a mutual companionship, even though there is an age gap between the generations. But as far as having a good relationship and good companionship, there's no age boundary. There's no hindrance. The main thing is to have a good sense of warmth and connectedness and that can be developed and experienced if we take the initiative ourselves now.

Leading back to the main point, we can take initiative to exhibit genuine kindness and spend quality time with older people. This begins by developing our own mind by acquainting it with the positive qualities of kindness, love and compassion. As we develop a genuine sense of concern and kindness based on love and compassion for others, then that becomes a natural quality of our own mind. We will then naturally be able to spend time and help others, whether they are older, equal in age and status, or whether they are the younger generation. In all cases, love and

compassion are the essential ingredients to create a genuine good connection with others, no matter what age. Someone whose mind is familiar with kindness, love and compassion will not go out of their way to try to create difficulties and problems for others; they will not go out of their way to fight or have conflict with others. There's no possibility of doing that. Why? Because they don't have a mind set like that. Their mind set is not one that wants to create violence, problems and difficulties for others. That is because their mind is imbued with kindness, love and compassion and a general consideration for others. In our society we need people like this. The more we have, the better it is for our society and community. If we take the initiative, our positive behaviour will definitely contribute to the well being of our community, our family and a wider society.

We can see the truth of this from our own experiences and relationships with people who we associate with on a daily basis. As long as we have a genuine sense of concern and love for our companions we don't have an intention of wanting to have a fight with them. The only occasions where conflicts, arguments and wishing to have an intention to fight with the other is when the sense of concern, love and compassion has weakened a bit, and instead of that, anger has taken over our mind. When anger dominates our mind, that is when the positive qualities of our mind weaken a bit, and that is when we are most likely and prone to having arguments, disagreements or conflicts with others. As I have shared from stories of my youth, this is true for me as well.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us again take the opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time, the object of focus will be the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. As we hear the sound of the recitation, we try to think with determination for the next few minutes, 'I will not allow my mind to be distracted'. With that determination, we keep our full attention and focus on the sound that we hear and as the recitation stops and the sound subsides, we just try to maintain our focus on the residue of the sound for a while.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed by Ai Chin Khor
Edit 1 by Cynthia Karena
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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