
the room itself, seemed to become tranquil. This is the positive effect of meditation. Just as we can see the benefit even now, in this short session, we can try to apply the practice in everyday life. Actually, treating oneself to a few minutes of real calm and peacefulness is something we deserve in our everyday life! Why not? It would be good if we could take the initiative to meditate.

We might cover a passage from the text.

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

The subject we are covering from the text follows earlier explanations about going through the various techniques that serve as the basis for developing love and compassion in our heart. The love and compassion to be developed is an indiscriminate love and compassion that extends without bias towards all living beings. We covered some of the techniques from the text earlier, such as recognising all beings as having been as kind as one's mother: first we recognise that all beings have been one's mother, then we remember their kindness. Now we reach the point of generating the mind that wishes to repay that kindness.

The techniques presented here are very meticulously and thoroughly presented, based on reasoning to develop a sound, keen intention of mind. This mind is based on remembering the kindness of all beings, then wishing to repay that kindness and thus developing a sense of love and compassion towards all beings.

The text is actually instructing us how to take personal responsibility to benefit other sentient beings, not just as a mere wish, but by cultivating the actual sense of responsibility. As explained earlier, when we generate a positive motivation before our practice, we generate it on the basis of love and compassion, for example, generating the thought, 'How wonderful it would be if all beings were to be free from suffering. May they be free from suffering. How wonderful it would be if all beings were to abide in happiness. May they abide in happiness.' Based on that altruistic aspiration, we develop our mind further. As presented previously in the text, we relate it to all beings, taking on the responsibility [for their happiness] with the recognition that all beings have been as kind to one as one's own mother has in this life. Each and every being has been kind to one. That is recognising the kindness, remembering it, then wishing to repay that

kindness. When we take the initiative to repay that kindness based on love and compassion, that is when we actually take the responsibility upon ourselves.

The benefit and help that one contemplates giving to other living beings is beyond temporary, material benefit. Food, clothing and housing can, of course, benefit others. But it would only relieve temporary suffering and bring them temporary happiness. While there is great virtue and benefit in doing that, the ultimate benefit one can provide other beings would be leading them to a state of complete, ultimate happiness, a state completely free from all forms of suffering.

What is now presented here in the text is a way to take the initiative and develop that responsibility, using an example of a situation in relation to one's own mother in this life. It presents a hypothetical situation where one's mother may be destitute. What is being presented here is an analogy. The text reads:

In brief, your mother is crazed, unable to remain composed. She is blind, has no guide, and stumbles with every step as she approaches a frightful precipice. If she cannot place hope in her child, in whom would she place hope? If her child does not take the responsibility of freeing her from this terror, who should take the responsibility? Her child must set her free. Likewise, the madness of the afflictions disturbs the peace of mind of living beings, your mothers. Thus they are crazed because they have no control over their minds. They lack the eyes to see the paths to high status and definite goodness. They have no true teacher who is a guide for the blind. They stumble because their wrongdoing cripples them at each moment. When these mothers see the edge of the precipice of cyclic existence, in general, and miserable realms in particular, they naturally take hope in their children, and the children have a responsibility to get their mothers out of this situation. Therefore, with this in mind, repay your mother's kindness by definitely causing them to emerge from cyclic existence.

The text states, 'If your mother is crazed, unable to remain composed, she is blind, has no guide, and stumbles with every step as she approaches a frightful precipice.' If a mother were in such a state and if her child were nearby, naturally the mother would place all her hope in the child to help her. That would be a natural, spontaneous hope the mother would have in her child, to help and protect her.

As the text further reads, 'If she cannot place hope in her child, in whom would she place hope? If her child does not take the responsibility of freeing her from this terror, who should take the responsibility?' It then goes on, 'Her child must set her free. Likewise, the madness or the craziness of the afflictions disturbs the peace of mind of living beings, your mothers. Thus they are crazed because they have no control over their minds. They lack eyes to see the paths.' As the text presents here, the mind being crazed or in a state of madness relates to the mind being disturbed by the various afflictions or delusions. When the mind is strongly affected by the delusions, it is as if the mind is crazed. Because of being crazed, it is as if

these beings have no eyesight to see the correct path to follow. This is how the analogy is applied.

As has been presented in the teachings regularly here, whenever we are affected by any of the delusions, we momentarily lose control over our mind. We become completely dominated or influenced by the delusions. We can relate that to our own experience of when a strong negative emotion arises in our mind.

Then the text presents further, 'They lack the eyes to see the paths to high status and definite goodness.' The 'high status' referred to here is the path that leads to rebirth as a human or in the celestial god realms. Such a rebirth is considered a higher rebirth, a fortunate rebirth. But under the influence of the delusions, one loses that 'eyesight', the wisdom to accumulate the necessary conditions to obtain that rebirth.

Furthermore, the text explains, 'They have no true teacher who is a guide for the blind.' The 'true teacher' referred to here is a spiritual teacher. If someone were to be crazed by the delusions but had a spiritual guide to lead them out of that state, that would not be such a drastic situation. However the analogy here is of those beings who do not have a spiritual guide, who do not have someone to lead them out of that state, which is such a pitiful situation.

As further explained, 'They stumble because their wrongdoing cripples them at each moment.' In other words, because they engage in wrong actions, it cripples them and thus they stumble.

The text then mentions: 'These mothers see the edge of the precipice of cyclic existence, in general, and miserable realms in particular.' The precipice here is analogous to cyclic existence.

As it next explains: 'They naturally, then, take hope in their children. And the children have their responsibility to get their mothers out of the situation. Therefore, with this mind repay your mother's kindness by definitely causing them to emerge from cyclic existence.'

The meaning behind the analogy presented in the text is that we need to take the initiative and take responsibility for helping other beings, who are like our mothers, because of the fact that we are in a better condition right now. We have met with a spiritual guide who has shown us the methods and ways to be free from the delusions and the negative states of mind and thus to be free oneself from suffering. We have the means. In comparison to other beings, who are completely deprived, we are much better off. Thus we need to take responsibility, because we have the ability to take on the responsibility to help other beings, that is because of the fact that we have met with a spiritual guide and have met with the Dharma.

In relation to the descriptions here of destitute beings who do not have the 'eyesight', this refers to the eyesight required to engage in the paths that to lead beings to high status. In comparison to those destitute beings, we have the sight to engage in the path leading to high status because, as mentioned previously, we have met a virtuous spiritual friend. The spiritual friend has shown us how to adopt practices – such as refraining from the

ten non-virtuous deeds and engaging in the ten virtuous deeds (avoiding killing, stealing and so forth) – that will be the cause for use to obtain high status. To what extent we actually practise, of course, depends on each individual. However, we are not deprived in terms of having been presented with the methods. We have been introduced to these practices and, furthermore, practices such as engaging in the six perfections of generosity, moral ethics (based on the practice of non-violence), patience, joyous effort, meditation or concentration, and wisdom. We have been presented with these practices by our spiritual guides and we have access to them.

Thus we have the complete means to engage in the practices and acquire the positive results. We need to contemplate how we are not deprived of these conditions, while other beings are completely deprived. They don't have any means of knowing how to free themselves from various sufferings; it is as if they are crazed, blind and so forth, as in the earlier analogy. So it falls upon those of us who have these good conditions to take the responsibility to help these others, to benefit them. This is how we need to contemplate and meditate on how it is most suitable, most appropriate for us to take the responsibility of helping to free other sentient beings from all suffering.

On a practical level, while developing the aspiration to benefit all sentient beings is a noble thought, we need to begin with those who around us, those close to us with whom we normally associate. It is to those beings that we try to extend genuine help and benefit in whatever way we can.

This reminds me of a noteworthy situation I witnessed in going to the sea baths. On some occasions in the past years, I saw this old woman coming with her son. She might have been in her eighties. For some reason I have not seen her coming this year, but last year and the year before I saw her coming with her son quite regularly. She was quite capable and sturdy. However, she needed some assistance, so the son would come with her and help her get into the baths, help her to walk, give her a drink. Every movement, every step, he would always be there to assist the mother and help her in a very joyous manner. It was not as if he was doing it as a chore or an obligation, but rather doing it gracefully. When I noticed that on many occasions, it moved my mind. I thought, 'This is really wonderful.' One time I actually complimented him, saying, 'What you are doing is really good. It is really wondrous.' I put my thumbs up for him, saying, 'This is really good.' [laughter] And he acknowledged that and appreciated that. There are many other incidents I have witnessed where people are being genuinely kind and nice, serving their aged mother in this way. These are really very remarkable. In having said that, I cannot claim that I have taken care of my own mother [Geshe-la laughs] because I left home when I was very young and never got the opportunity to return. I was separated from my mum at a very young age and never got that opportunity.

There are others who have made comments such as, 'I would make attempts to go and see my aged mother, but she doesn't seem to recognise me any more.' So that was a reason to indicate that there was not much point in

going to see her. But my response to that individual was, 'Do you recognise your mother?'. And he said, 'Well, yes, I do recognise my mother.' So then I said, 'That would be enough reason to go and care for your mother.' If it were me, I would not be able to leave my mother by herself, regardless of whether she was able to recognise me or not. I wouldn't be able to leave her by herself. One needs to really think about repaying the kindness, regardless of whether our mother recognises us or not. The responsibility falls upon us.

Thus the text is presenting techniques to train ourselves, to develop that courageous mind of benefitting others, regardless of how they react to us. From our own side, we need to take the initiative to really extend complete benefit to all beings. That is the training being presented here. We can relate to it as being very worthwhile, very appropriate, very good training, worthwhile for us to adopt in our practice.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us again take an opportunity for a few moments to engage in the practice of meditation. This time, the object of our focus is the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. When the mantra is recited, we try to maintain our complete focus on the sound we hear. When the sound subsides, just maintain your attention on the residual sound. Again, try to develop a state of mind where one is not focusing on any particular object; rather it is just as if a vacuity occurs in our mind, like an empty state of mind. We just maintain that joyous state of mind for a few moments. That will suffice for a good practice of meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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