
was placed below, that can cause saliva to form in the mouth. Again too much saliva would be an obstruction in our meditation. So, placing the tip of the tongue on the roof of our mouth, or palate, will help to prevent the formation of saliva in the mouth.

The reason these seven features of our sitting posture for meditation are referred to as Buddha Vairochana's posture is because amongst the five buddha lineages, Buddha Vairochana is said to be the aspect of supreme concentration. Thus the posture of an enlightened being that has supreme concentration becomes the optimum posture for our meditation. Another way of explaining this is through the special instructions that have been passed down from the earlier masters, it is said that the significance of adopting the seven-point meditative posture of Buddha Vairochana is that it leaves a very strong imprint within us to become enlightened just as Buddha Vairochana did. So that is another great significance.

When one adds the regulation of the breath on top of these seven features, it then becomes eight points. However as mentioned previously, the instructions in the teachings advise one to adopt either the seven-point posture of Buddha Vairochana or whatever is suitable for you. When the teaching is presented in that way it shows how these instructions are not fixed and imposed on anyone who wants to meditate. The Buddha is not imposing on everyone that they have to sit in the seven-point posture. If the seven-point posture is not possible, then one may adopt a posture that is most comfortable for one. The practical aspect of giving this choice of a posture is that if the seven-point posture was imposed upon individuals who find it hard to sit crossing their legs or sitting in a fixed posture it might cause physical strain. When there is physical strain and unease that will cause distractions to the meditation itself. It will not be helpful to the meditation, it will not be conducive. While it is meant to be conducive for the meditation, if it is uncomfortable and one feels strain, then that will defeat the purpose. Therefore the main point here is to have a posture conducive to meditation.

Having mentioned that meditation is a technique to develop concentration, it would be useful if we were to define what concentration means and what it means to develop concentration. Concentration is defined as the ability to single-pointedly focus on any chosen object for a continuous period of time. Furthermore, the specific characteristic of concentration is said to be that while being single-pointedly focused on the chosen object for a continuous period of time one has the two main features—that of clarity, and intensity or sharpness in one's focus on the object.

Having introduced the two main aspects needed for concentration, which are clarity and sharpness, the instructions present two main obstacles for developing concentration, which are excitement and laxity. Excitement is the main obstacle to sharpness in one's focus whereas laxity prevents clarity in our focus. That is how each of these serves as specific obstacles to those main aspects.

The instructions also present two main aids for the development of concentration. These are mindfulness and introspection. If one ensures that one has these tools then one is assured one can develop concentration. Mindfulness is defined as a state of mind which, having identified the object to be focused on in one's meditation, constantly holds that in one's memory or one's mind at all times. That is the function of mindfulness. Introspection is a part of one's mind, or a mental factor, that keeps a constant vigilance during meditation and checks whether the mind is adequately focused on the object and mindful of the object or not. As soon as it notices that the mind is not settled or not focused it brings the focus back upon the object. That which allows one to do that investigation is called introspection. While these two are the main aids for developing concentration there are others as well.

As already discussed, the two main obstacles to successful meditation are excitement and laxity. The main condition for excitement to occur is said to be attachment. Therefore, as explained in the meditation instructions, attachment is one of the main causes for one to become excited during meditation. More generally, attachment is also one of the main obstructing factors to a more conducive spiritual life.

The meditation instructions say that the most appropriate meditative object for beginners would be an object that does not cause the delusions, or negative states of mind to arise. Someone who is advanced in their meditation and has self-control and discipline may use any object to focus on. But at our level, a beginners' level, it is best to choose either a neutral or a virtuous object that does not cause the delusions to arise in the mind.

The teachings present specific types of objects as an antidote for overcoming certain short-comings within one. It is said that using the breath as an object to focus on is most suitable for those having lots of distractions or lots of discursive thoughts. Focusing on the breath would allow the mind to settle down and thus quieten the mind from all the discursive thoughts.

For those experiencing strong attachments, focusing on the unattractive features of the object is said to be an appropriate focus to lessen the attachment. For intense anger, focusing on compassion is most appropriate. For those who may have pride, thinking about the different categories and aspects of phenomena is said to be helpful. And for those who have strong ignorance in their mind, it is appropriate to focus on the interdependent nature of reality or even better, the ultimate reality of all phenomena.

Having chosen the appropriate object to focus on, the manner in which one needs to focus on the object during meditation is by withdrawing attention from all other external objects or thoughts. There are good thoughts and negative thoughts, positive objects and negative objects, but temporarily, for the purpose of meditation to develop single-pointed focus, one withdraws from all other forms of objects and brings one's focus inward and places it upon the chosen object to develop that single-pointed concentration.

The object that we usually adopt in our meditation session here is the breath itself. As mentioned previously, focusing on the breath is said to be specifically useful for beginners because this naturally helps the mind to settle down and protects one's mind from discursive thoughts. Discursive thoughts arise in a very busy mind that is thinking of all sorts of different things. The breath is a very significant object to help settle the mind because, as an object, it is not really obscure. It is an easy object to focus on. It is something that is quite familiar to us and something that we recognise. While it is an object that we can identify with and recognise, in its very nature the breath has the specific features of being colourless and shapeless. Because it has no specific colour and no specific shape, it is said to be a very appropriate object to focus on. By its very entity it prevents excitement from arising in the mind. By having no colour or shape focusing on the breath itself prevents excitement or distractions to arise in the mind.

The higher teachings of the Buddha, such as the tantric teachings, say the breath is a very significant object to focus on because focusing on the breath helps the subtle energy, the wind energy, within our body to be conducive and to flow well and that then helps to further expand the meditation.

As explained in the tantric teachings, the specific significance of focusing on the breath is that it allows the wind to flow well within our body. That then, in turn, helps the mind to become settled, very sharp and clear. That is the cause of the unique relationship between the mind and the wind. It is explained that it is through the combination of the mind and the wind that we are able to engage with objects. The mind has the cognitive ability of seeing and recognising the object and the wind has the functional ability of the action.

The analogy used to illustrate the mind having the cognitive ability is that it is like the eyes. Someone who has eyes but does not have legs will be able to see but will not be able to go towards the place that they may have wish to go to, because of the lack of the legs. The legs are the analogy for the wind. The wind allows the ability to function. So the wind is like legs. While the legs have the ability to move somewhere, if someone has no eyes it would be hard to go to the destination they wish to go to. Thus the combination of having both eyes and legs will enable someone to move freely and perform any action.

As explained in the Buddhist teachings of the psychology of the mind, there are different cognitions within us: the eye sense, the ear sense, the nose sense, the tongue sense and body sense. To function, the senses within us are dependent on the wind. This relationship can also be experienced on a grosser level with our actual breath. As we all know, when the breath ceases the senses are unable to function within our body.

The function of our primary states of mind, such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body consciousness, depend on the wind. Particularly in our normal, every day functioning they rely on the gross wind. When the breath ceases then the consciousnesses would also not be able to function. However that explanation is based on the gross level of the consciousness and the gross senses. The

subtle mind can still be functioning within the person's physical body without the gross wind. The distinction between a gross mind and a subtle mind is something that is found in the Buddhist teachings. Science has not yet been able to prove that there is subtle mind. However they are still investigating it and searching for the possibility of a subtle mind.

An indication that there is a subtle mind can be quite obvious sometimes. The functioning of the subtle mind can be quite obvious when the gross level of the mind has completely ceased which, as mentioned previously, is when the breath ceases. As we all know, when the breath ceases that would be considered to be clinical death. Even after the gross level of mind and the physical breathing has ceased and the person is pronounced clinically dead, there have been many cases where the bodies of monks, especially meditators, have remained fresh for up to three weeks. There have been cases where without any external aids or chemicals what so ever, the body remained fresh naturally without decomposing for up to three weeks. The Buddhist explanation is that the subtle mind is still functioning in the body. Science has failed to give an explanation for this. Of course they are pronounced clinically dead but science doesn't seem to be able to find a reason why the body is not decomposing and is still quite fresh and even supple. Many scientists are really interested in investigating why that could be? How is it possible for the body to still remain fresh after death?

Having discussed the connection between wind and mind we can go back to the instructions for the breath. It is said that another point to keep in mind when focusing on the breath is that the breath has to be naturally regulated, which means that it is soundless and even. If the breath is not laboured or forceful then it is naturally free from sound. Uneven breathing means having long in-breaths and short out-breaths, or the reverse. So, one need to breathe in and out in a natural way.

Now, having explained the appropriate posture and the significance of each of those points and having explained the focal object for our purpose here, we use the breath as our object to focus on. Prior to engaging in the actual meditation practise there is another point to bear in mind. It is said that in order to ensure that the practise becomes a genuine spiritual practise rather than just a relaxation practice, it is essential to generate a positive motivation for the meditation practise.

We have discussed motivation in the past and we must generate the best that we can for our practice. The next point is to make a commitment to oneself to apply one's full attention and focus to the breath itself. After having withdrawn our attention from all other aspects of objects and thoughts and so forth we bring our focus inward and placing it, 100% on the breath. A 100% focus on the breath means that we don't intentionally allow our mind to focus on anything else, even for the short duration that we practise here. To ensure that we are 'giving it our best shot' we really put 100% attention and focus on the breath itself. So, for the next few minutes we will adopt this meditation technique. (*Pause for meditation*).

That should be sufficient for now. If there are questions we can address one or two questions.

Question: Geshe-la, what is your opinion about organ donation? The organs have to be harvested right after clinical death, and as explained in the teachings, it is important not to disturb the dying person's consciousness. So what are the consequences?

Answer: That question has been raised before and my answer was that if the organ donor has consented themselves prior to their death that they are willing to donate their organs, then there is no problem about that. The only problem that may arise is if someone else decided for them. If someone else decided that their organs should be donated then the question is whether it might be traumatic for them and their consciousness.

What I am sharing is, of course, my opinion. As I have said before, because the donor has made the decision to offer their organs to someone it is a great generous act. What I understand is that they can only consent to donate their organs when they are still in their conscious state of mind, which means that they could have only decided when they are conscious and know that what they were willing to do.

The doctor's role here, I feel, is a role of assisting to fulfil the donor's wish. So I personally feel that there is no harm on the doctor's side. It is not as if the doctor will be responsible for causing the person's consciousness to be traumatised. Rather I feel that the doctors are an assistant helping the person to fulfil their wishes. So I think it is a good deed from the doctor's side as well.

With regard to a particular individual person, I heard that the late Paul Kearney was willing to donate his organs. After his passing some of his organs were used to help quite a few people. Two or three people were directly helped by that. One of the individuals who was a recipient of the donated organs and tissues was actually able to see again. I think the kidney was also used. So the recipients showed great appreciation. This is how we can see the practical benefit for others. We can see that there is a practical benefit from the donation and that people were helped. This practical benefit is something that we always need to appreciate.

As I recall, Paul used to come here. Even though I didn't have too much personal interaction, I remember him as a very joyful, jovial, nice person. As I recall, Paul was not only a very jovial person but very considerate and kind as well. He would extend his help to others who were in need. As I remember, he went to Nepal and helped in one of the Buddhist centres in Pokhara, and the monastery in Kopan. He went there to help out and volunteered. So someone who was already considered a kind person in his everyday life has given consent at the end of his life to donate all his organs, and has committed a really great deed. It is a great deed when we consider the practical benefit that others had received and their appreciation.

The intention to help others, to be generous in this way or other ways, is something really remarkable. After one dies to donate one's organs and benefit others is indeed a noble deed. Of course trying to extend our help to those who are needy and to share during our life is also a very important good deed. I have heard that someone donated their kidney during their life. That is something really wonderful. I recall someone living in Wodonga, Wendy I

think her name is, who gave one of her kidneys to her sister who lives in Sydney. So it seems that when you have two organs it is possible to donate one.

Apparently even though there may be the wish to donate an organ, sometimes the recipient might not be compatible. For example in the monastery there was an incident where a monk wanted to donate an eye to another person who needed it but it was not compatible, so that individual could not use it. Another monk in Sera donated a kidney to a young girl living in another area.

As I regularly share, the intention to help and benefit others is a great intention, a great noble deed. In fact that becomes the very root, the very basis, of real true peaceful resolution. Whereas causing harm is the main cause for turmoil and conflict. So when we talk about peace in the world, or peace in the family or environment, peace comes from the genuine intention of helping and benefitting each other. That is what promotes real peace, whereas hurting others, especially causing hurt or blame, and causing other people's mind discomfort and to be afflicted is the real cause for conflict to arise.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, let us again spend a few moments in meditation. This time the object of our focus can be the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited. During the recitation we keep our entire focus and attention on the sound of the mantra. Then, when the recitation subsides, there will be a residue, a sensation of feeling in one's mind, which may seem like heaviness within our mind. We can maintain our focus on that for a few moments afterwards.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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