
we can then find ways to switch our attention and focus from the object of anger to another object that does not cause anger to arise in our mind.

Likewise when jealousy arises; jealousy also is a state of mind that is destructive. Jealousy destroys our peace of mind and is harmful to others as well. We can overcome jealousy, and not to be dominated or influenced by it. For each negative state of mind, there is an opponent and antidote. Using our intelligence and wisdom, we can overcome negative tendencies within ourselves. Analytical meditation is to think about an issue logically, in this case about the disadvantages of a negative state of mind, such as anger and jealousy, and the advantages of not dwelling on them, and not allowing them to dominate our mind.

Analytical meditation is extremely important for beginners such as ourselves who are not yet advanced in high level focused meditation. These two meditation methods—analytical meditation and focussed meditation—can be done alternatively, spending a bit of time in focused meditation and then doing analytical meditation again. And then spending a little bit of time in focused meditation and then alternating with analytical meditation. We can analyse a situation to overcome negative states of mind such as anger. When anger arises and we start feeling agitated and angry because of some person, the more we think of that person, the more it causes us to feel angst and anger. It is difficult to reduce our anger and calm down when we are constantly thinking about that person. The immediate best method for us to overcome intense anger is to divert our attention and not focus on that person. We temporarily take our attention away and place it on something else, on a more positive object. As soon as we divert our attention away from that particular object or person, we will notice that our anger starts to subside. We will not feel such strong anger in our mind.

This also applies to attachment. When we have strong attachment or lustful desire towards someone, again when we divert our attention, then the grip of that strong emotion will start to loosen. This is a practical strategy until we gain the ultimate antidote for overcoming delusions, which is the understanding of ultimate reality, what is called the realisation of emptiness. Of course until we gain that realisation, it will not be possible for us to completely overcome negative emotions, such as anger, attachment, jealousy, and pride. However, even though we may not have gained and developed that ultimate antidote within ourselves yet, we can still work towards overcoming the strong and intense level of emotions that we experience when we are angry or attached to an object or person. As mentioned earlier, by diverting our attention and focus, we can definitely overcome those strong levels of negative emotions within ourselves. We have practical tools to help settle down our mind.

The crucial point to understand is how the technique diverts our attention from an object that causes us to experience negative emotions. We all know through our own experiences, that as soon as certain objects come to mind, we immediately feel angst and we are uncomfortable and disturbed in our mind. On the other hand, there are certain objects or situations that bring

warmth within us as soon as we see them. We feel joyful and peaceful. What we need to do is protect ourselves and our mind from focusing on the objects that cause us disturbance. We need to be responsible for our own well being. Therefore the main point here is, when we find ourselves thinking and dwelling on an object that causes us angst, then we need to divert our attention to change our attitudes and perspective, rather than holding on to and constantly dwelling on that situation. Changing our focus will release us from our angst and discomfort. Otherwise we will constantly fall victim to our own negative emotions of anger, jealousy and so forth.

We can fall into a downward spiral if we don't bring ourselves out of it. Here again, the main point is that the practice of meditation helps us to develop this ability to divert our attention and focus on a positive object, either a neutral object and more importantly a positive object. The more we become familiar with the process, the more we improve our training and our ability to meditate. We can now spend a few minutes in meditation. We sit in an upright, relaxed and comfortable physical posture.

Having found a comfortable position for ourselves, we need to also prepare ourselves mentally for the practice of meditation. Most importantly, we need to make a decision for the next few minutes to not allow our mind to be distracted with the normal disruptive thoughts of our everyday life, and particularly not to dwell on negative emotions. We need to completely distance ourselves from past memories and speculations of the future and totally bringing our focus inwards. When we deliberately do that, then we can distance ourselves from all types of disturbances. By withdrawing from our disturbing thoughts and distractions and bringing our focus within, the object we focus on will be our own breath. Based on the natural rhythm of our breathing, we fully focus on the breath itself. We need to apply some discipline and determination here, by having a disciplined mind and focusing on the breath.

Initially of course, as beginners, we can take a practical approach and commit ourselves to focus on the breath for maybe one minute. Then at best, maybe a further two minutes. Even if it is one minute that we are focusing on our breath, and nothing else but our own breath, then during that one minute of focusing on the breath, we will be released from the grip of negative thoughts and emotions. So, even for that brief time, we will have reaped a benefit of having being freed from the dominance and the control of negative emotions. In that one minute, we will have experienced the tranquillity and sense of serenity within ourselves, and that is a great outcome. The initial training of focusing even for one minute leads to a familiarity that can slowly be extended to two minutes, then perhaps three minutes and then four and five minutes. So it is in this way, gradually as we become more adapted to the meditation technique and we become more familiar with it, that our ability to lengthen that single-pointed focus will slowly and gradually expand. To that extent, we will be free from the dominance of delusions, which are the negative emotions and negative states of our mind. Our ability to lengthen our serenity and calmness in our mind will slowly, gradually increase, becoming more and more a part of

our life. And that is how the meditation technique will gradually transform our entire approach and perspective in life and our mental well being. (*meditation*).

Question: You mentioned strong emotions, but how do you overcome strong attachment to children.

Answer: Of course, talking from the contemporary or worldly perspective, what we call attachments to family, particularly to your own children is mixed a bit with love. His Holiness, The Dalai Lama, has also made the distinction with 'love'. There are two types of love. One love is mixed with a bit of attachment. However, because it is not just selfish attachment and has an element of love with concern for the other's well being, we can say that it is not entirely negative or bad.

A parent's love for their children is a perfect example of how attachment can have some element of benefit for others. Attachment has some element in it that can contribute to others' well being. But anger does not have that element. Out of anger, you cannot possibly benefit others, whereas out of attachment, there is some possibility to benefit others.

It is because of parents' attachment to their children that they nurture the child. The attachment of parents to their children is necessary and useful because that helps parents to look after the child well. Thus, you need not consider attachment to your own children as being entirely negative. Don't be too concerned about it, but instead acknowledge that there is some good and if used properly, it can be of benefit.

If the attachment is integrated with love, and when you extend that nurturing care to the child, the child will respond to that in an affectionate way. And because the child appreciates the parent's nurture and care, the child will naturally, out of appreciation, develop a strong bond with the parent. A strong bond between a parent and a child is, on a worldly level, one of the highest forms of happiness.

Nevertheless, the great Indian master, Aryadeva, mentioned something along the lines of how difficult it is for us to see the faults of attachment because attachment has an element of bringing people together. Also, there is pleasure that we experience in relation to attachment. So to see the faults of attachment immediately is hard. Whereas the faults of anger are more readily recognised, because the disruptive nature of anger is more evident and clearer when anger is expressed.

Question: If a happy mind is clear, what happens to a person who is suffering something such as Alzheimer's disease? Is that person happy?

Answer: I wonder if someone who has Alzheimer's is in a state of mind where there are no strong emotions, neither a negative disruptive emotion nor a positive one, but just in a state of limbo. Maybe it's not that bad personally for them? Maybe they are not experiencing great sadness or angst, but just in a state of limbo.

The main concern is for the carers who take care of the person with Alzheimer's. But the condition and state of mind of the person with Alzheimer's is something that we should not worry too much about. Even though there

is not much chance to develop, there may not be much mental disruptiveness either.

For those of us who have our memory, we often experience a lot of mental angst, hurt and pain. So I wonder if people who are experiencing Alzheimer's disease have that similar feeling of hurt and pain in their mind.

I heard one time about someone who had Alzheimer's. The wife was still around but the daughter had died. When the news of the daughter's death was brought to him, he was smiling and it didn't seem to affect him too much.

The reasons why I wonder or have this assumption that people who have Alzheimer's may not have the feelings of sadness, hurt and pain in their mind is because their memory has failed. And because they don't have memory, then there is nothing much to cause them angst. For us, when we think about what causes us pain, it is often in relation to memories of unpleasant experiences. Someone confided in me that when they see the garden where they used to go to when they were in an intimate relationship, that garden has a very strong emotional affect on their mind. They are separated, but as soon as this person goes to the garden it brings so much pain in their mind. I was told that it brings up these memories of the past of being together in the park. It brings up so much sadness, and sharp pain, even to the point of "bubbling up and burning" in their mind. This pain is clearly related to their memory of the past. Even now, something can trigger the pain, such as seeing that garden again. Even thinking about that garden brings up so much pain in the heart. So this is clearly an example of how memories can bring up so much pain.

The most practical assistance for people who have Alzheimer's is the daily care of their basic needs. Of course for someone who cannot afford to give that kind of care to someone with Alzheimer's, either the parents or relatives, then that will be a difficult situation for them. If it can be afforded, then having that care is the best practical help, but do not worry too much about their state of mind.

It also seems that whatever appears to them in that moment, they take it as being completely real.

For example, someone I know, Alice, is ninety six years old. Her daughter tells me that apparently Alice is having a bit of dementia. There are times she calls her daughter 'mother', and sometimes 'sister'. It seems like in that moment whatever appears to her mind she is taking it as real.

Alice is joyful. In the past, she was very jovial and told a lot of jokes, and even now her mind seems to be okay and happy. We had tea together and some cakes. She seems to be quite at ease. But nevertheless, because of that condition, it seems that, she makes mistakes and does take things for real. Whatever crosses her mind, she takes that moment to be true or real.

Her daughter is incredibly good-natured, and the way she takes care of her mum is incredibly noteworthy. Anyone who can extend that sort of care for their parents is highly praiseworthy.

Alice's daughter has two children who have now grown up and have gone their own ways. Her daughter says she is staying in a flat and caring for her mum for the last fifteen years. It is only recently that her mum has now been sent to a nursing home, but prior to that, for fifteen years she had been caring for her mum.

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The teachings also describe parents taking care of the child as through the eyes of kindness, and holding them with love. This implies that children appreciate whole hearted nurturing and caring from the parents, and form a natural strong bond with the parent as well. This can be seen throughout the life. Many of you have experienced that unique, special bond. Now as I see the aged mother and the daughter when they are together, that unique bond is definitely shown between them. When they are together, the saying of 'looking through the eyes of kindness and holding the hands with love' is something that I see between them. It is a unique bond that we can see that comes through the connection.

This is another reminder of how the value of kindness and love between people, be it parents, companions or others, is an invaluable asset to have. That is good for us to remember in order that we can nourish ourselves.

Going back to the state of mind of an Alzheimer's person, I personally feel that they may be more in tune with their natural state of mind, which is a mind which is undefiled by negative emotions and negative thoughts, therefore a more peaceful and a calm state of mind. So those who experience Alzheimer's may be in a natural state of mind, which means there are not so many disturbances occurring. So we don't need to worry too much about them. Sometimes of course, people can form attachments, but if the object of attachment does not occur in the mind, then it should be peaceful, but some seems to think that it is unpleasant and don't like to think about that.

Another example is of someone I see who comes to the St. Kilda sea baths regularly. She is an older person and she has a carer who comes to look after her. The carer sits down and reads a book when the older person is occupied and all her needs are attended to. This carer shows a lot of affection to the older person, sometimes kissing the hands and sometimes kissing the cheeks. There seems to be a very good rapport between her and the older person. I found this carer to be very good-natured. She doesn't show any sign of being annoyed or display any unpleasant gestures towards the older person, but instead seems to show good gestures.

Before we conclude the session for the evening, we can again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object of our meditation is the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni mantra. As we sit in an appropriate posture, we place our full attention and focus on the mantra and when the recitation subsides, we maintain focus on it for a few moments.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA