
recognise that it is their negative state of mind which is influencing them, the benefit for oneself is that we won't feel intense anger towards them. When we don't experience intense anger within ourselves, and as a result we experience a more tranquil, and thus, happier mind. These are really practical ways that will be helpful in everyday life, not only in a spiritual sense, or from the Dharma point of view, but even in a worldly context. So these are really significant points to consider in your life.

All of this is something that we can identify with and relate to. It is not obscure or beyond our understanding or capacity to implement. It is not a practice which takes a high level of knowledge or realisation and that is why I call it a practical approach.

In summary, what we can derive from all of this so far is that identifying the positive states of mind within ourselves is something to be further increased and nourished. And having identified the negative states of mind, we need to start to minimising and eventually discarding them.

The way to increase the positive states of mind within oneself is by familiarising ourselves with them. The more we familiarise ourselves with the positive state of mind, the more they will naturally increase and strengthen. The way to reduce and overcome the negative states of mind is by lessening the association with them, not allowing ourselves to harbour negative feelings and ill thoughts. Trying to lessen that familiarity with the negative states of mind will naturally reduce them. The best method to help one increase the positive states of mind and to decrease the negative states of mind is the meditation technique. This technique becomes an optimum way to do that.

The literal meaning of the Tibetan word for meditation, *gom* is to familiarise, which in this context means familiarising ourselves with the positive states of mind and de-familiarising ourselves with the negative states of mind.

Having explained in brief the purpose and the significance of the meditation practice, we can now adopt the meditation technique for a few minutes. To do that, let us again readjust our physical posture so that it is in a comfortable, upright and relaxed position. Most important is our state of mind, we need to temporarily distance ourselves, our attention from all other thoughts and objects. Completely letting go of all other distractions and bringing our focus within, we then place our attention and focus upon the chosen object for our meditation, which for our purpose now will be our own breath. In order to apply this meditation technique appropriately, we need to place our full attention and focus on the breath. (*Pause for mediation*)

That will be sufficient for now.

It would be really worthwhile to adopt the meditation technique as a means to calm down one's mind and be more peaceful.

To relate some other practical benefits of having a calm mind in one's everyday life, you will actually begin to enjoy things better. Let's take food, for example. You would enjoy a meal much more if you are in a really calm

state of mind. If you are agitated, with a mind in turmoil, whatever food is presented to you would not be as tasty; you won't really enjoy it that much. You might find this true from your own experience.

Joking aside, we would find that it is actually important to have a calm mind in relation to whatever activity we engage in. Even in our everyday work situation, if we are able to maintain a calm state of mind then we can appreciate whatever work we are doing and we find the time goes by more quickly. Work doesn't appear to be too tedious when you are in a calm state of mind. Whereas if the mind is already agitated and in turmoil, of course things seem to go wrong and then the work becomes really taxing. That's when you start hearing complaints about, "Oh, I don't like my work. It's too difficult. Maybe I should change my job" and so forth. Once we do find a job that we initially like and enjoy, then it is good to try to maintain that calm state of mind.

As we would all notice from the meditation technique, on a very basic level it is a method to develop one's focus and attention by choosing, familiarising and being able to focus single-pointedly on an appropriate object. That focus on an object that we have cultivated in our meditation practice can help us in our everyday life, because that familiarity is something we can carry through to other activities such as our work. We all know that when we have a focused mind in our work, we will be more effective in accomplishing whatever task is at hand. In contrast, when our mind is agitated and in turmoil, then that's when we find that we make mistakes.

I have shared this story previously about asking local farmers how long it would take to reach certain place on our escape route from Tibet. They didn't give us an exact time or say how long it would take, but just said, "Oh, you'll reach your destination quickly if you go slowly." That's been a really invaluable piece of advice that I find is true in everything I do in life. If we go about it slowly, we can accomplish it quickly.

When that response was given, I found that it had a deeper meaning, because the message really was not to feel too rushed and too anxious in your mind about reaching your destination. If you are feeling too anxious or too rushed, then it would appear to be quite a long distance and you never seem to reach it. Whereas if you go slowly with a calm mind and attitude, then the time it takes will be irrelevant and you will seemingly reach the destination more quickly.

The reason why I share these practical approaches and benefits of the meditation practice in one's everyday life is to relate to those who might otherwise have a question or doubt in their mind, "Well, when I sit in an appropriate physical posture and have focused mind, there seems to be some benefit from the practice. But how could it be useful in my everyday life?" Thus, if you reflect on what I have said earlier, you might find that there is indeed a benefit of the mediation practice in all aspects of our lives.

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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2. The actual development of the mind that strives for others' welfare

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2.2. Cultivating compassion

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.1.2.2.5. How to meditate

In the remaining time we will cover a bit from the text, in which we have reached the topic of compassion. In our last session the sequence of how to meditate on compassion, and the vital point of meditating in that order was presented. We are now on the topic that is called the way or manner of how to meditate on compassion. As mentioned in the text, the order or sequence of how to meditate on compassion was to first focus on close ones such as relatives, then on people for whom one has feelings of indifference, such as strangers, and then on towards enemies. The great Indian master Kamalashila presented this order and said that a vital point is that it is much easier for one to develop compassion if we begin with those who are already endearing to us, then we can extend it to strangers and enemies. Some other Lam Rim texts indicate another sequence of how to develop compassion, in explaining that one first focuses on beings who are experiencing extreme suffering. So these are different approaches that both lead to the main point of how to develop compassion.

It is indeed true that, for example, when we look into the animal realm we find that there are certain animals that we can relate to as experiencing extreme fear and suffering. Seeing that pitiful state can naturally instill a strong wish for them to be free from that suffering; we develop a sense of compassion towards them.

So as the text itself here mentions, the way to meditate on and cultivate compassion is to consider how living beings, your mothers, experience general and specific sufferings after falling into cyclic existence. I explained these sufferings earlier.

In relation to the sequence presented here, we begin with someone who is close to us, such as a relative or someone dear to us. Initially we try to relate to their obvious level of suffering, the first of the three types of suffering, which is called **suffering of suffering** or **suffering of pain**. That is the obvious suffering that our dear ones are undergoing. So when we relate to that obvious level of suffering we can feel how unfortunate it is that they are experiencing it and how wonderful it would be if they could be free from that. That sense of wanting them to be free from the suffering of suffering or the suffering of pain is something that will spontaneously develop within our mind.

The more we generate that wish for them to be free from that level of suffering, the more we can relate to the second level of suffering; the **suffering of change**. The suffering of change is a level of suffering which is not obvious, it is much more subtle. However, when we understand what the suffering of change is and relate it to others, we will wish them to be free from that level of suffering as well.

The third level is **all-pervasive suffering** which is basically the contaminated existence of our aggregates; our physical body and mind in cyclic existence. For example, as mentioned previously, this conditioned body that we have is the basis to experience all the various types of suffering, such as birth, sickness and death. The entire spectrum of suffering is experienced because of being in a conditioned existence, which is the all-pervasive compounded suffering. In actuality every type of suffering is included in these three types of suffering. If we can genuinely relate to these three types of sufferings and wish others to be free from them, then there would be no beings in cyclic existence that we would not be able to focus upon, because any being within cyclic existence would be undergoing one or more these three sufferings.

As I have explained previously, despite the fact that the suffering of change and the all-compounded suffering have the name 'suffering', as an experience they are not related to the actual feeling of suffering. They are more subtle than that.

Just to relate a bit more on the suffering of change, the very term 'suffering of change' suggests that even on an experiential level we don't immediately experience it as suffering; initially it is actually a pleasurable experience. Of course, it is a contaminated pleasure. We first experience pleasure, but in that very next moment it starts to change, becoming a little unpleasant. The degrees of how that can be experienced might vary, however the very nature of all contaminated pleasures is that the initial experience of pleasure changes into discomfort and then into an actual experience of suffering.

We can take an example of meeting someone that we really miss and long to be with. Initially there is great excitement and pleasure in meeting this person, however after a while maybe some confrontation or argument takes place and then it changes into suffering. In any case we can understand the ramifications of experiencing these sufferings, how unpleasant it is for beings to be in the conditioned state of suffering.

The more we contemplate and relate to others in that pitiful state, beginning from the obvious to the more subtle levels, the more we develop a sense of being unable to bear the suffering of others, to the point of bringing a little bit of unease within ourselves. Of course this unease might sound like it's actually another kind of suffering we're experiencing, but even though there might be a slight unease initially, it is said to bring one more courage, becoming a means for one to be able to relate to others. Actually, as a practice it is a very profound. Therefore, when we find it unbearable to witness others suffering then we start to develop compassion.

As mentioned earlier, when one is not familiar with the practice of developing compassion, it may initially sound as if we are unnecessarily bringing unease to our own mind because it makes us feel a little bit uncomfortable to focus on others' suffering. We may feel like it weighs us down, but when we take the right approach with the right understanding and the insight of how it is beneficial, then we will become more willing to develop that mind of compassion.

As explained in the teachings, when we develop the genuine sense of compassion, going beyond the initial unease we may experience, we actually start to develop a great and courageous mind. Because one is fully acknowledging the other's suffering, and because it becomes unbearable for one to see that, it will motivate one to do whatever possible to help alleviate the other's suffering. Initially while we are developing our mind to feel compassion for others, it also has a direct benefit for oneself in helping to alleviate suffering in one's own mind.

For example, as explained in the teachings, it is said that one of the most supreme ways to purify negativities in one's own mind is by generating compassion for others. Because the mind of compassion is so precious and powerful, it actually has the power to purify negativities. When negativities are purified within oneself, then that naturally means that we don't have to experience the consequences of our own negativities, which is suffering. Also, by reflecting on the suffering of others, one's own suffering becomes less significant. So the way that one develops compassion is by really focusing on the other's suffering. The more we focus on the suffering of others, the stronger our empathy towards them will be, and we will naturally feel a sense of their suffering as unbearable. This leads us to think, "How wonderful it would be for them to be free from the suffering". The next step is to ask, "How could I possibly help them to be free from that suffering?" That is how it is actually generated, we begin on meagre levels, then slowly, slowly increase and strengthen that mind.

A practical example that we may all be able to relate to would be a couple who have a child. Those parents would naturally have strong love for their child, so that whenever the child experiences any kind of discomfort, such as sickness, the parents themselves would feel great angst and wonder, "What could we do to alleviate that pain and suffering in our child?" It is unbearable for the parents themselves to see the child suffer with an illness. In due course when the child is free from that illness, the suffering the parents felt is also alleviated.

With this analogy we can also see that the suffering the parents would have felt due to the child being in discomfort, is one type of suffering. That type of suffering can be utilised as a means to alleviate a lot of suffering in others. For example, that unease in the parent's mind will motivate the parents to take every measure possible to ensure that the child is not experiencing suffering. As explained by the great master Shantideva in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, willingly enduring one suffering can help to alleviate a lot of suffering.

I feel that the points I have shared are practical ones, which can be useful in your life. So if you do find that is true, then try to take something and implement it in your everyday life. That is where we begin our practice.

In summary, the main points for you to try to implement in your life are recognising the positive states of mind within oneself and further strengthening and developing them. As well as recognising the negative states of mind and trying to decrease and overcome them. See that as the most important thing in your life, working towards that.

Before we end the session for the evening, let us again take this opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object of our focus can be the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's name mantra. As we hear the mantra, we withdraw our attention and focus from external and internal distractions and we place our full attention and focus on the sound. When the recitation subsides and we have generated a pleasurable feeling within in our mind, we just try to maintain and focus on that for a while. That can then suffice for our meditation.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version
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