
out first of all that there are objects that cause us to completely become obsessed, which will make us feel more unsettled and more troubled. However, there are other objects that will help our mind become settled and calmer and more peaceful. Meditation shows us how to make the right choices: by focusing on virtuous or positive objects that make us calm, and avoiding objects that cause us distress. As we adopt the meditation technique, we will gradually become more and more familiar with positive objects, and the mind will naturally become calmer and more settled. This is the point we need to understand.

Furthermore, meditation also increases our intelligence and wisdom. Wisdom is a deeper insight, a more profound intelligence that shows us how not to engage with objects that cause us distress. Meditation gives us the wisdom to understand which objects cause us to become more settled and calm. Meditation helps us to increase our discriminating wisdom, so we can make the right choices in which objects we engage. It is important that we understand the significance and purpose of any meditation technique before we make the attempt to practice meditation. Otherwise, if we just sit down and try to meditate without knowing the benefits and the outcome, or what we are trying to achieve, then we can't guide ourselves.

After hearing the theory of meditation, now we can actually adopt the meditation technique for a few minutes. So this is done as mentioned previously by adopting a comfortable physical posture and a focussed state of mind, where we withdraw our mind from all other distracting thoughts. Completely withdraw the mind and bring our focus and attention inwards and place it upon the breath. Place our full attention, with 100% focus, on the breath. Don't allow your mind to dwell on anything else. *[meditation]*

I assume that you have all been meditating very well.

If you wish to have a peaceful state of mind, then meditation is the most effective and efficient method.

Let us continue with 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

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

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.2. Cultivating compassion

4.2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1.1.2.2.6. The measure of having developed great compassion

We are up to the topic of developing and cultivating compassion. The main point is that once great

compassion is developed in our heart, then the moment we see a being that is suffering, we sincerely wish that they be free from that suffering. When that wish develops naturally and spontaneously within our mind then that is the benchmark of having developed compassion. And when we focus on all beings indiscriminately, then we have developed great compassion. This applies to love as well. When we experience love towards all beings equally, then we have developed great love.

The development of love and compassion is the core of the great vehicle of Buddha's teachings. We can see that this is essential in all instances in our life. There is no doubt that love and compassion are essential to our existence as a human race, for example the love and compassion between parents and child. If we look into the animal realm we can also see that the extent of love and care that the mother gives to her offspring, her young ones, is astounding. Without that love and compassion, the young ones would not be able to survive. This is an example of how essential love and compassion is to our survival in this world.

Those who have been coming regularly to the teachings would have heard many times over the explanations about how to develop love and compassion, and how crucial it is for our existence. For our further development we need to develop love and compassion. The importance of all of this has been emphasised and stressed many times and now we need to put love and compassion into practice. Indeed besides the explanations given here in the teachings, when we really think about it even from a practical point of view we can see that love and compassion is essential for our wellbeing in general, and in all aspects of life.

I also personally think that the Buddha's teaching is distilled into this essential point, that our happiness and survival are based on development of love and compassion. I feel that there is nothing more important than that.

The importance of compassion is emphasised in the teachings, particularly by the great Indian master Chandrakirti. He emphasised that compassion, particularly when practising on the great vehicle path, is the most essential element. Compassion is described as essential on three levels, in the beginning, in the middle and at the end. Just as without a seed there cannot be a sprout, we cannot get the fruit without the seed, likewise compassion is essential in the beginning to enter the great vehicle path. Without developing compassion, there is no way that we can develop the awakening mind, which is referred as bodhicitta. Without developing the awakening mind, we cannot enter the path of the great vehicle.

So again drawing on the analogy, if we want a fruit or a good harvest, this relies upon a seed, likewise all the results along the path of the great vehicle depend on developing compassion.

Furthermore, compassion is the most essential in the middle, meaning on the path to reaching the ultimate state of enlightenment. Without compassion, the beings who have entered the path, known as 'noble beings or bodhisattvas', will not be able to engage in the great deeds that benefit sentient beings, such as generosity and

so forth. Great deeds cannot be practised without compassion. Without compassion in our heart it is difficult to engage with and help sentient beings who are unruly, with unsubdued minds. If we have not developed sound patience, there is no way that we can continue benefiting them. To continue the analogy, after the seed has been planted and sprouted, if it is not continuously nourished with water, sun and fertilisers then the sprout will not be able to mature and be harvested. Conducive conditions such as water and fertiliser are most important in the middle of the growth of the sprout, likewise compassion is important on the middle of the path to enlightenment.

Compassion is also essential at the end of having engaged in the various practices of benefiting sentient beings in order to achieve enlightenment and become a Buddha. If compassion is not maintained, we will not achieve the final result of becoming enlightened and there will be no way that the buddhas can benefit sentient beings. The driving force to benefit sentient beings would be lacking, so sentient beings will not continue to be benefit from enlightened beings. However, contrary to that, enlightened beings are unceasingly and continuously benefiting beings spontaneously. It is this unsurpassed compassion that ensures the spontaneous continuity of enlightened beings benefiting sentient beings.

The analogy here, it is like a ripened harvest. After having planted the seed and nursing the shoot or the sprout, if the harvest does not mature then there is no point in planting and nursing the seed. The matured harvest as the end result is essential.

When a noble being, a bodhisattva, becomes enlightened, it is not as if they are perpetually in a blissful state oblivious to the sufferings of other sentient beings. When bodhisattvas become enlightened they are fully engaged, unceasingly and spontaneously, in continuously benefiting sentient beings. They don't remain in a blissful meditative state, contrary to what some may think.

To recap, compassion is important at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the path to enlightenment. It is due to the cultivation of love and compassion on the path that the buddhas become enlightened. Becoming enlightened means, that they are constantly performing great acts of compassion and wisdom to benefit sentient beings. This is all due to having developed love and compassion earlier, while they were training on the path. We need to understand that connection. Other practitioners such as the hearers and solitary realisers engage on the path with the sole aim of self-liberation, and when they reach that stage being liberated from suffering themselves. they remain in that blissful state of being free from suffering for many eons.

How we can take these explanations from the teachings on a practical level in our everyday life? What is being presented here is showing us how to conduct ourselves in order to benefit others, with the virtuous motivation of compassion. For example, some parents have the intention, even before having children, dedicate their life working and earning money to help their children succeed in life. Because of that intention at the beginning, when they finally do acquire sufficient wealth, then there

is no hesitation from their side to use it for their children. Whereas others just have the motivation to earn money for themselves, so they can have a good time and fulfil worldly desires.

The point here is our intentions. When we have the intention to benefit others, whether it is through acquiring wealth or knowledge, then it will happen as soon as we acquire that wealth or knowledge. This all depends on having the wish to benefit others from the very beginning. Having the right intentions is essential.

Furthermore, when parents have a genuinely good intention to help, for example, their children to grow up to be responsible people, then the children will have fondness and respect for their parents. The parents then reap the natural result of having that close connection, because the children will appreciate them and will not suffer the pangs of loneliness when they are grown up. Whereas the children of those who have not paid such good attention to their children's wellbeing and neglected their children when growing up, will naturally feel a little bit distant from their parents. And then when the parents are older, they will start to feel that sense of being abandoned or lonely, and not having a good relationship with their children. We can see that, with an intention of benefitting others, then, as an unintended consequence, we will benefit ourselves. It is not as if we would lose out, but rather that we get the benefit even though we may not intentionally be seeking that for ourselves. To summarise the main point again, when we generate a genuine wish to benefit others, this serves to benefit others as well as ourselves.

Before we end the session for the evening, let us again spend a few minutes in meditation. Again, we sit in an appropriate posture and bring our focus inwards. This time we place it upon the sound of the Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra.

We need to choose an object to focus on to help us bring our focus inwards. If we don't have an object to focus on, our mind will not be anchored and will not be settled. It will be all over the place again. This is why choosing a suitable object for meditation is most essential in the beginning.

In this meditation, the object will be the sound of the mantra. As we hear the sound of the mantra, put our full attention and focus on that. As the recitation subsides, just focus on the residual sound of the mantra. Be aware of the natural calm feeling and the sensation we experience and just remain focussed on that for a few moments.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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