
If certain memories from the past are helpful and conducive to one's wellbeing, then that should not be an issue. But dwelling on, and contemplating memories of mishaps in the past will cause more angst and anguish to the mind. There is no reason for one to go down the track of being obsessed with those kinds of memories and thoughts. The very fact that it is a memory means that the event took place in the past. However reliving memories makes them feel 'real' and relevant now. Apparently some people who become obsessed in this way will reach a point where they become despondent and think, 'I am hopeless and I cannot do anything', and have feelings of low self-esteem. It will hinder them from going forward and doing something constructive, because they are still stuck in their memories of what they have done in the past.

The notions that one is hopeless, not good for anything, extremely bad and so forth are just made up by the mind, and in fact are not the reality. This is explained in the Buddhist teachings. As mentioned earlier, even scientists are now taking great interest in the functioning of the mind and how many things that occur in the mind are not based on reality and are not true. It is quite remarkable that there were people in the past who took measures to check how the mind and the psyche work, and found that most of the things that are created by the mind are based on falsity. This is explained very clearly in Buddhist teachings on philosophy or psychology and scientists are now beginning to take an interest and look into that. The main point here is that holding on to certain things that occur in the mind that are not based on facts and reality cause us anguish and harm. This is something worthwhile for us to overcome by trying to understand this process and then letting it go.

To summarise the main point of what I have been trying to share, there are many individuals who experience the anguish of lingering memories of their past and this can obstruct them from moving forward and bring about a lack of self esteem and a heavy weight in their mind. That is not helpful in their life. Our tradition presents meditation as a unique technique that can help us to overcome these problems. The main point that I am trying to share with you is that the meditation technique that we learn and adopt here is something that, when we become more familiar and apply it in an appropriate way, will definitely help lift the weight from one's mind and make the mind become more optimistic, raise one's potential and self esteem.

I have mentioned scientific investigations, particularly those into the psyche and the mind. Others have explained to me, because I do not know much about psychology, that in the past there were a lot of in-depth studies in psychology of how the mind works and functions but there was a period of decline. But now, in more recent times, it has been taken up again and there are people who are really interested in 'what is the mind?' They are investigating this in a thorough way. If that is true, then that is a really positive move in the right direction. It means that there is again an initiative to take psychology to a higher level.

The reason I don't know too much about psychology is because it is written in English and, of course, I can't read in English. I don't have access to what psychology presents because it is not written in Tibetan. Some scientific terms and ideas are now being translated into Tibetan so there's some access but even with that, there is not much information available in Tibetan. Nowadays the major monasteries that have been re-established in India have introduced the study of science. When I went to India recently, at the end of last year, I was informed in the monastery that they have become quite good in their science studies as well.

Again to recap some of the main points mentioned earlier, a lot of things that appear to the mind are unhealthy for the mind and cause the feelings of being despondent, weighed down and low self esteem. In whatever aspect they may appear to us, we need to take a grip and acknowledge to ourselves that as soon as a faulty state of mind and memories appear it causes anguish and makes us feel low, helpless and hopeless. When that occurs, rather than giving in and letting it take over, we need to take a stance and have a dialogue with ourselves and say, 'Okay, I have recognised you as a faulty state of mind, you are the one who has caused me so many problems in the past. You have always made me feel weighed down and you have prevented me from moving forward and making good decisions. You are the one who is causing me all these problems. So, now I am not going to allow you take control over me any longer'.

The great Indian master Shantideva mentioned in his text, 'after having recognised what causes the troubles to ourselves and our own mind, we need to say to ourselves, "You are the real enemy and the one who is causing all my problems. You are the one who is continuously bringing me down and preventing me to be virtuous. Now that I have recognised you I am not going to allow you to dominate my mind and take control of me anymore".' It is in this way that we need to combat the appearances in our mind, whether they be thoughts, memories or emotions—in whatever form they may appear—that cause our mind to become weighed down and despondent. This is what we need to recognise as our real enemy and take measures to overcome.

Having explained a little of the benefits of the practice of meditation and how the technique can help our mind to become clearer and to take more control of ourselves, we can now adopt our usual meditation technique. We will use our own breath to focus on. However, to clarify, whilst the object we use here is our breath, whatever object we may use to focus on, we need to have a clear vivid image of that object in our mind, and it is the mental image of that object that we need to be focusing on. In order to have a clear, vivid image in our mind we first need to familiarise ourselves with our chosen object. If it is a physical object we need to look at it carefully and study its features, such as its shape and colour. Then when one closes one's eyes and brings one's focus inwards it is that image that we are meant to be focusing on. Likewise with the breath, we internalise a mental image of the breath and imagine seeing the breath coming in and going out and place our full attention and focus on that image of the breath. So, for the next few

minutes we need to withdraw our mind from all other thoughts, ideas and so forth and place a 100% focus on the breath. It is in this way we will adopt the meditation. *(Pause for meditation)*

That will be sufficient. Maybe some new people have some questions?

Question: I have recently moved into a new place where I am sharing the facilities with others. I find that people ask many questions and I have a tendency to speak a lot, so how can I best protect myself? Is it best not to answer their questions and engage in conversations?

Answer: Of course that is ultimately something that you need to check for yourself. You know the situation better. I don't know the people that you are speaking with or who may be asking you questions. What I shared before is the same thing that I would emphasise here, to use one's wisdom. One should be able to assess the situation oneself, 'If I say a certain amount, will that be helpful for the other and myself? If I say only a little will that be more beneficial for myself and others?' Using one's own intelligence and wisdom to assess the situation, one needs to try to decide for oneself.

Of course speech and talking is not, in itself, something necessarily bad. It can actually be useful too. Others who work in aged care have confided in me that while the main job is to clean up the resident's bed and their space, some of the elderly people will say, 'The room does not need too much cleaning, could you rather just sit down for a while and talk with me?' Some individuals, because they are feeling a bit lonely and have some worries in their mind, need someone to speak to. If you can spend some time and speak to them with a good intention, it can be helpful and useful for them. So it really depends on the situation. If one's speech contributes to others becoming agitated or if they say something that makes you feel agitated, then of course it's best that one does not speak much.

One thing that seems to be clear is that after having taken a few drinks the kind of speech and topics that arise are not really conducive and helpful.

So, as I said earlier, there is not one simple answer because how much and what to say all depends on the situation and circumstances.

I have also heard some people talk about the problems of living in the city and being constantly in a hyperactive state. They say that if they can take some time off and have a small break and go to the countryside it helps to quieten their mind and they feel calm because of the environment being quiet. It is not certain that that calmness and tranquillity will be maintained if they live in the country for a long period of time. That has to be tested and seen but, nevertheless, even temporarily there seems to be some benefit. However those who live in the countryside seem to like to come to the city when they have a vacation *(laughter)*. A change of environment can sometimes be conducive and helpful.

Ultimately it is up to one to really assess the situation and check for oneself. If one is sincere, one will be able to know the best thing to do.

Question: What would be a good way to be motivated to meditate, if one is not feeling stressful or facing any particular problem?

Answer: The best way to generate the motivation and eagerness to adopt meditation is, first of all, to have an interest in meditation. The way to generate an interest in meditation is to think about the benefits of meditation. What are the long-term benefits, not just the short-term benefits? What is the real objective of meditation and how it can benefit one's well being in the long run? The aspiration for anything we do is dependent on our interest. Our interest is dependent on knowing the advantages and benefits. For example, when we see someone with qualities that we admire we will develop an aspiration to become like them, 'Oh, it would be nice if we could become like them and have those qualities'. It is similar with the practice of meditation. If we can see the benefits of meditation it will inspire us and give us the interest to adopt meditation.

Generating an interest in meditation and being motivated to adopt meditation is really no different to other worldly concerns. An analogy from the worldly perspective can be your job. Developing an interest in doing a job arises by seeing the kind of results it will bring. When we see that the outcome and results are good and beneficial we will naturally take an interest in that activity. Similarly with meditation, if we have a broader view and a deeper understanding of the significance of meditation practice then the inspiration and motivation to adopt it will become stronger. Does that make sense?

On these Wednesday evenings we have regularly been sharing the benefits of meditation, bit by bit. There are many different angles and ways to see the benefit of meditation. One of the beneficial outcomes of meditation is the bliss that comes from the physical and mental pliancy obtained from meditation.

We can go through a brief summary of the benefits of the practice of meditation. Ultimately we will obtain the bliss that arises from pliancy but other benefits occur before we reach that state. As a result of adopting meditation and undertaking serious, regular practice the hesitation and unwillingness to meditate, which is a fault of our state of the mind, will start to fade away. The mind will become more serviceable and genuinely eager to meditate naturally and spontaneously. When the mind becomes more serviceable the body becomes very supple and one's aches and pain, will start to go away and it will become physically possible to sit for a long time without any difficulty. This is where the body becomes serviceable. As a result of the mind and body becoming serviceable then the winds, which on a gross level we might call the breath and air but on a subtle level is the energy in our body, also becomes serviceable and pervades our body. As a result of the subtle wind energy pervading one's body one will start experiencing natural bliss within the body and this then induces a blissful feeling in one's mind. Then, both physically and mentally, one begins to experience an unimaginable state of bliss.

At a certain point one will obtain mental quiescence, a state of mind that is naturally very calm and tranquil,

one's mind becomes very clear and sharp and one is able to focus on any chosen object for as long as one wishes. Thus, one will be willing to focus on virtuous and positive objects indefinitely. In other words, one will be able to maintain a positive state of mind for as long as one wishes. The optimum benefit of the practice of meditation occurs when one obtains mental quiescence, a tranquil state of mind that has the ability to focus on any object for as long as one wishes. The benefits do not stop there. Having obtained mental quiescence one obtains what is called clairvoyance, which is the ability to know other's mind and future events.

The consequences of obtaining 'mental quiescence' is that individuals who have obtained that state experience so much bliss within their body and mind that it is as if they have completely removed all of the negativities within themselves. They have actually not yet obtained the state of removing all negativities from the mind's core, but, because they don't experience the ill consequences of their delusions or afflictions, their mind is very tranquil and very peaceful. The experience is that of a genuinely peaceful state of mind.

Whenever we experience any kind of problems, the real troublemaker is the 'delusions' within our mind. When the 'delusions' or 'afflictions' are appeased and are not disturbing us anymore we will naturally be in a state without worries and genuinely happy.

As I mentioned yesterday when I was teaching, we always seem to give in to the delusions such as attachment or anger in our mind. We follow every command that attachment gives. When attachment arises we seem unable to question attachment's demands and seem to be a slave to our own attachments. We can also become a slave to our anger. That is what causes us so much turmoil. When we reach a state where we don't have to listen to our attachments anymore, where we are not under the control of attachment and anger, we have a free state of mind. The anguish and pain of being a slave to anger and attachment and so forth is not prevalent anymore.

I was trying to relate some of my thoughts to someone who came to offer lunch and spend some time with me. I often share my thoughts with those who bring lunch and spent some time talking with me. Not having a great command of the English language, I don't know how much I get across but nevertheless I try. Recently I mentioned the points that I am sharing now, how we are enslaved by attachment and anger and that this causes all the turmoil. I gave an example concerning a family of dad, mum and maybe two or three children. Initially they are a happy family enjoying harmonious, good relationships with each other. Then something may come up and one may start thinking, 'Oh, this is not a happy environment. Happiness is out there, perhaps someone else'. As soon as one starts to believe that, one has started listening to attachment. It is attachment that is telling us, 'the one who will make you happy is not in this group here, but someone out there'. The moment one believes that and follows attachment and leaves the family, that causes disharmony and a lot of trouble and problems in

what otherwise would have been a small, happy family. It is now completely destructive. This is an example.

If that individual, whoever he or she is, is beginning to be influenced by attachment telling them, 'Oh, the one who will make you happy is out there. It is someone else, not within your family here', were to take a stance and check their own state of mind and assess the situation and ask 'Is this true or not? Should I be following my attachment?' it may prevent a situation where you do go out and follow your attachment. If one takes the measures I have mentioned earlier, then through one's own proper assessment all the disharmony, all the trouble, may not occur within the family.

This is one example of how to use one's wisdom, a real inborn, analytical wisdom that is based on logic and reasoning, rather than following some fleeting thoughts or attachments. When one thoroughly investigates and finds something to be true based on logical reasons, then the wisdom and understanding that comes out of that investigation will assist and help one. So we can see wisdom is something really precious.

Some of the qualities that are needed to listen to the instructions and the Buddhist teachings are to have an interest to begin with and an unbiased mind. The qualities of having an interest, an unbiased mind and intelligence – those three are considered the most essential qualities for someone who wishes to adopt these instructions.

Before we end the session for the evening let us again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time we can use the sound of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra being recited as the object to focus on. As we hear the sound we place our full attention and entire focus on the sound. The consequence of focusing our mind on the sound and chanting it ourselves is that it will induce a calm or blissful feeling within our mind. Then, after the recitation subsides, we will focus on that pleasant feeling and sensation within our mind. We will spend a few minutes in this way.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed by Ai Chin Khor
Edit 1 by John Burch
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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