



---

In this way, as explained in the Buddhist teachings, we can understand that anyone who has contentment and less desire is indeed a more satisfied and happier person.

This assertion is not only a Buddhist explanation, but you can also find it in Christianity, and I am sure other religions will also explain it as a virtue and good quality.

From our investigations earlier, we reasoned that the disturbance, agitation and upheaval in our mind is related to strong anger and attachment. If we can adopt a practice where, even for a few moments, our mind is not influenced by these strong afflictions, such as anger, then it would definitely bring about a sense of tranquillity and calmness in our mind for that duration.

One of the best methods to protect the mind from the influence of intense afflictions such as anger, is meditation. It is with that understanding that we would see the significance and importance of learning the meditation technique.

In order to engage in the meditation practice, we adjust our physical posture to be relaxed and comfortable.

Likewise, try to adopt a mind which is free from negative influences; instead have an open, calm and clear mind.

Having mentioned that it would be important to adopt a relaxed, clear and bright state of mind, what we need to consider is why we wouldn't be in that state, and what is causing our mind to be unclear and restless? That is because the mind is disturbed. If the mind is not disturbed, then it would naturally be in a clear, bright and calm state. Then the question is—what is disturbing our mind? It is our obsession of following every single thought or object that comes to our mind, to completely let our mind go in every direction, and allowing our mind to be distracted. That is what causes the disturbance in our mind; we are obsessed with all these distractions. In order to overcome this situation, we need to make the commitment not to allow our mind to follow all of the distractions in whatever form they arise, either as thoughts, memories or objects that come to mind. We have to completely withdraw from all of the disturbing thoughts. How we do that is by basically making the decision right now, that for the next few minutes, I will not allow my mind to be carried away in every direction, following every disturbing, whimsical thought. In this technique, we discipline ourselves not to allow our mind to run off in every direction. That commitment in itself helps us to bring our attention and focus inward, which is the reverse of letting it go outward and following everything else that comes to mind. It will be hard for us to maintain an inward focus for too long, without something to anchor our mind, so it is at this point that we focus on the meditation object. The meditation object that we regularly adopt here is our own breath, but as mentioned previously if that is not suitable for you, then you may choose any neutral object on which to focus. The technique involves applying our full attention and focus on that object, so if it is the breath, then apply the full attention and focus on the breath itself. A significant point to keep in mind is that for the duration of the meditation, we need to be completely committed to doing this in order to experience the positive effect. It is actually the image of the breath on which we place our focus;

imagining that we see our breath coming in and going out naturally. We place our mind completely on the breath, which means that it is as if our mind is actually absorbed into the breath and becomes inseparable. When we are able to reach that stage, and really place our full attention and focus on the breath itself, naturally everything will subside—the agitation in our mind, the disturbance—and nothing will be able to disturb us at that moment. We will definitely experience that positive effect, but this will only occur if we make a genuine attempt to apply the technique to the fullest. Keeping that in mind, we will adopt this technique, for the next few minutes.

*[meditation]*

Just as we have attempted in our short session now, it would be really beneficial to adopt the meditation technique regularly. It need not be for a long duration, but to have a good but short session of meditation would be much more worthwhile, and then gradually we can increase it. In our regular daily life, if we can allocate even a few minutes for this practice of meditation, then through that familiarity, gradually we will begin to see the positive effect of it. If we take the gradual process, that is best.

If we can have a clear schedule for our day, then our day goes by very well. It will not be as if we are waiting for something to happen and finding it hard to kill time, because our day goes by quite quickly and comfortably.

Having a clear schedule in our daily life and a daily routine is very beneficial. It helps first of all to be clear in what we are doing, and what is happening next and so forth. The practical benefit is that the day will go by quite swiftly without too much disturbance, because things are quite clearly laid out. With that being a practical benefit in our everyday life with mundane activities, in fact when we apply that discipline even in our normal daily life, then when we attempt a spiritual practice, that same habit of having a schedule will then naturally also be applied in the spiritual practice. When we adopt the spiritual practice, these habits will make the spiritual practice also very fruitful.

However, we need to be careful not to be too anxious about what is happening next. While you are doing something, already thinking about the next job and so forth, will not be very helpful, because then we might start feeling anxious about that *[Geshe-la chuckling]*. So it is also important to pay attention to whatever task is at hand at that moment, and not to be too anxious about the next thing to follow.

It may seem that I am getting into your personal life, however I share this with you, because I consider you my friends, and it is natural to share and give tips to friends to make things go easier for them. So one thing which has become apparent to me, as others have confided to me, is being overly anxious about the next thing to follow. For example, when someone is at work, even before work ends, they start thinking about the task which has to be done at home, whether it is cooking or cleaning or whatever. Just thinking about that starts to make them feel very anxious and uncomfortable, even before their job at work is over. The very anticipation of all of that

---

starts making them feel anxious. What I share and advise is try not to think too much about it or just consider it as being a normal part of your life and routine. It doesn't help to be anxious and thinking that, soon after I finish all the work here, I have to go back home and I have to do this and that. When you start thinking about that, the anticipation of having to do that can cause you more anxiety and worry. Rather it is best if you take one thing at a time and consider it as part of your normal routine. When you cook, just try to enjoy your cooking, when you are cleaning, just try to enjoy your cleaning and be mindful of that. Then in that way, the task will be easier.

So if you start feeling anxious about the next thing to do and so forth, then you might end up going to see a masseur before you go back home, because you have already made yourself very tense. With a lot of tension, we all know that, when you start getting aches and pains in your back and neck, you have to spend extra money for a masseur!

Being overly anxious is not only a hindrance and disturbance in normal activities and mundane work and so forth, but also in our spiritual practice and studies. This is where I can share my experience—I have done a lot of studies, and it is definitely the case that even with our studies, if we are overly anxious and tense, then it can cause problems. It has to be done in a relaxed way, as mentioned earlier, having a good schedule, a bit of discipline, and trying to keep things within what is manageable. Keeping within our limits, within that time frame, will be able to see us through.

Again like other evenings, by the time I come to a point in the session where I feel we can read a bit from the text, when I look at the watch, most of the time has already gone [laughter]. However as I mention regularly, to take this practical approach about how the meditation practice is beneficial in our daily life, how it can help us—these are points that I personally take a lot of consideration in and try to put into practice myself. It is because of the practical benefit that I personally experience, I feel that it might help those of you who have a very hectic life and otherwise a very unsettled mind, and that maybe some practical approach might be of more immediate benefit to you. It is with that intention in my mind that I seem to go off at a tangent in explaining to you some of the benefits of the practice of meditation and so forth, so by the time I reach end of the session, the time is mostly used up with that. However, if that is relevant to you and significant for your life, then it has not been a waste of time.

The main point is to try to find ways to help appease an otherwise very busy mind, that is really hectic and going in every direction. As a practice, we apply the meditation technique as a way to anchor and centralise our thoughts and attention. We adopt specifically the technique of meditation here, but as I mentioned to you, anything which can help you to be a little bit more focused, can help us appease the mind and make it become more relaxed—even reading biographies of important people who have made a contribution.

I saw a documentary recently about a farmer and his five children. It showed how initially he was really struggling to make ends meet and having a lot of difficulties trying

to raise the children, working on the farm and experiencing a lot of hardship. With perseverance, the father tried to find other means to provide for the family and even took the initiative to do further studies. It was very inspiring to see that in spite of the immediate difficulties and problems, with perseverance, he endured those hardships and continued to find ways to provide for his family sufficiently. The documentary showed that he started to get a better education and have a better income later on and was able to provide for his family sufficiently and to help the whole family. This story was very inspirational and showed that when perseverance and endurance are applied, significant things can be achieved which otherwise in a bleak situation, everything seems difficult. That is a more mundane example, but on the spiritual side, it is exactly the same. It is traditional for spiritual seekers and spiritually minded people to read biographies of previous spiritual masters. When you relate to these biographies, you find that they have also gone through lots of difficulties and problems in the earlier part of their life, but again with endurance and perseverance, they were able to withstand all of those hardships and then accomplish great achievements. To take the founder of our own tradition, Buddha Shakyamuni himself as an example—from his biographies you can see that he left his comforts of life as a prince and went out and endured a lot of difficulties and hardships, like taking up many austere practices. He also did meditation under the Bodhi tree for six years, with a lot of difficulties, having a lot of hardship, then he achieved the supreme state of enlightenment. Now we can all reap the benefits of his hardships and difficulties, which was done through endurance and perseverance. It is significant to relate to these stories and for us to read to help inspire us not to be overwhelmed and distraught with our own difficulties and problems. Another point is that it is much easier for us to relate to a story in a biography: it can be interesting, we pay attention to it, so our mind will be more focused. That is much better than feeling depressed, sitting in a corner and doing nothing—it is better to use our time for activities like that, which is much more beneficial.

Are there any questions before we end this session?

*Student:* I have a sad question—I just heard that the daughter of a friend killed herself. Are there some prayers I can do? She was a good kid.

*Geshe-la:* I acknowledge that it is a sad situation. In fact, exactly the same question was asked about two or three weeks ago—of what to do when someone takes their life. Of course for the deceased person, there is nothing more we can do now, except to do prayers and dedicate that for their wellbeing, which is a significant practice.

In relation to the question which was asked last time, that individual was saying that she belongs to a religious organisation, and so within that organisation, someone had committed suicide which was very disturbing and distressing for everyone. She was asking, what can we do? What is the best advice? My response was that every religion has their own tradition of doing prayers for the deceased as a way to help the deceased and those who are grieving. From the Buddhist point of view, it is

---

exactly the same—we recite certain mantras and prayers which are relevant and significant for this purpose. It can be done as a way to help.

When we decide to do some prayers, and set our mind in that direction as a way to benefit and help the deceased person, then it can help us to feel that we can make a contribution rather than feeling sad, overwhelmed and distraught, which will not help to better the situation in any way.

If we allow our mind to dwell on the feeling of hopelessness or being distraught and overwhelmed, keeping that mindset will not really help us or the other person in any way, so it is better that we try to overcome that, uplift ourselves and see what we can do.

Of course this is indeed a very sad situation. When it has already occurred, there is no way that we can prevent it, it has already happened, so we are left with no other solution than to offer our goodwill, prayers and wishing them well on their onward journey—that is the best we can do.

Of course it is hard to really understand the situation, what would have caused that, but basically in simple terms, that was their choice. Between life and moving on, they chose to move on and not to live—that is their personal choice that they made.

Since you consider yourself a Buddhist, then the best practice you can do for this situation would be reciting the Medicine Buddha mantra—that would be good, and it will help.

In whatever situation it may be, particularly in relation to this uncomfortable and distraught situation, we have to understand and use our common sense and reasoning to be aware that it will not be beneficial to be bogged down in a sad and overwhelmed state. Rather, we need to change and come out of that, and see it from a different point of view. We can see what we can contribute, and understand that feeling overwhelmed, sad and distraught will not help the situation—it will not help our own situation, the others or the survivors in any way. If we can come out of that rut of feeling weighed down, and come to a point where we think—it is unfortunate, but nevertheless I can do some prayers and dedicate the merits to them. It is said that if one has a connection with the other, it will definitely help the other, but most certainly it will help ourselves too, and it will help the surrounding people to be uplifted, and not bogged down.

*Student:* My heart goes out to the mother.

*Geshe-la:* For you to be of assistance to help ease the pain, you have enough understanding and knowledge to help to console the mother in very simple terms. Try not to explain things in a complicated way, but in a simple way, to help console her. You can share some comforting words, but most importantly offer your service—what can I do? Can I help you in any way? You can be reassuring in that way, then that will help her not to be too overwhelmed.

When we offer our service to others when others are feeling quite distraught and overwhelmed, even that offer of saying, how can I help you? I am here, let me know if I can be of any service. Those words will actually be really

comforting because at that moment, anyone who is in a distraught state might feel completely overwhelmed, and that they are alone with no one to help them, no one who is there for them. So offering those words, but also being willing to help them in any way we can, can definitely help uplift their mind as well.

So to offer help when someone is really in distress, the appreciation would be something which would be deeply felt, even if they are not able to express it immediately, it will definitely be felt inside.

It is something which will also be remembered for a long time. I relate to my own account when, as I have shared previously at a time in my early days, there was a time when I was really hungry, with no food, and someone gave me something small to eat—that I will never forget.

As I mention regularly, offering help when someone is in distress is genuine help. Normally when things are going quite well, if you mention that I can help you, I will be there for you—they are maybe nice words, but they don't really have much effect, if they are not really in need of help. To offer help when they are not really in need is not that significant, in contrast to offering help when someone is really in need, someone is really in distress. As I regularly share with you, it is good to ensure that we are surrounded by companions or friends upon whom we can rely, and who will help us when we are in distress. Likewise, for us to be able to be ready to help others, those we consider close companions or friends, to help them when they are in real need too.

Before we conclude the session for the evening let us again take the opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time as we adopt a comfortable, relaxed posture and a clear state of mind, the object we can focus on for our meditation will be the sound of the mantra to be recited which is the name mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni. As we recite and hear that sound, we place our full attention and focus on the sound itself. When the recitation subsides, rather than letting our mind immediately become distracted and dispersed in every direction, let us try to focus just on that residual nice sensation or feeling you might have after the recitation, and maintain our focus on that, which will suffice for the meditation.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo  
Edit 1 by Ingrid Leibbrandt  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version  
© Tara Institute*