
that becomes the condition for the individual to experience so much turmoil and a troubled state of mind, because the more the delusions increase in the mind, to that extent the inner disturbance is increased.

Because the external conditions for the second individual become a means to increase the delusions, no matter how much they may get, it does not solve their problems, and in fact causes them more misery. Whereas if the first individual is deprived of external conditions, it doesn't matter, because they are not dependent on external conditions for their happiness. If they do have the external conditions, again no worries, because external conditions do not become a cause for the afflictions to arise and be strengthened the mind. They are able to utilise external conditions in the proper way, because it does not cause the delusions to arise or cause the mind to be disturbed.

To summarise, if we can adopt a lifestyle and methods where we do not let the delusions control us, then we are going to have a happier life. We all like to be in control, so the main thing is to be in control of our own mind, rather than allowing the mind to be controlled by the delusions. I find these points significant, however it is for you to investigate as to whether it is the same for you.

If it makes sense so far, that having a controlled mind, where we do not give control to the negative states of mind, then the question is how do we control our own mind? The answer here is the technique of meditation, which becomes significant, because it is a supreme method for us to train our mind, so we don't allow the mind to be influenced by the delusions.

The meditation that we are relating to here is a meditation which serves as a means to generate a genuine and profound inner wisdom. When the meditation serves that purpose, then it will help the mind. The wisdom to which we are referring is not something which comes about spontaneously within the self, but in stages. As prescribed in the teachings, the three main stages are:

1) The wisdom gained from **hearing**, such as hearing the instructions of meditation and the benefits of meditation. Once that instruction is heard, there may be some insight from merely hearing about the instructions, but it is not yet very firm and stable.

2) Having employed the method, then by **thinking**, which also involves investigating those methods you have heard about, you gain a further insight and therefore a further increase of wisdom.

3) Based on the understanding and wisdom gained from having heard and thought about the points, then the wisdom gained from putting into practise and **meditating** becomes very firm and stable, which becomes the means to protect the mind.

To summarise how the meditation technique works, first of all meditation can be understood as a method to release the self, or the mind from the negative states of mind. The mind is released from the influence of the delusions, by intentionally choosing a virtuous object, and familiarising the mind to focus on that object. This method may be adopted in a formal session of the meditation, where we sit down with crossed legs and

closed eyes etc. The real benefit and test of this meditation is seen outside of our formal meditation session, when we are out and about in our busy lives. Anyone who attempts to meditate, even for a few moments, will gain some significant positive results, even from a meagre attempt. How do we maintain that outside the meditation session in our everyday life experience? There are two main mental tools:

1) **Mindfulness** helps us to maintain the memory of the virtuous object. It also includes the understanding of the disadvantages of the ill effects of the negative state of mind of the delusions.

2) **Introspection** is a state of mind which specifically keeps our mind alert and serves like a guard, checking up whether our mind is getting excited and starting to wander off from the virtuous object. It notices if our mind starts to become a little excited or distracted, and then re-applies the mindfulness.

These tools help us not only during meditation session, but outside of meditation in our everyday life to help us maintain a more virtuous and controlled state of being. For beginners, it may be more essential for us to ensure that we are a little in control and in a composed state outside of our formal meditation, because most of us don't have much time for meditation, we are mostly busy out in the world. Therefore, trying to adopt this method to help us outside of the meditation session, in our everyday life, is very important.

To explain more about the positive effects of meditation during the formal meditation session, if the proper technique is adopted, we do experience positive effects of the mind becoming relaxed and calm. The reason why that occurs is because we are adopting a technique where we are not allowing the mind to be influenced by the delusions. When the manifest delusions such as full-blown anger, lust, strong attachment have subsided, we experience a release from that and therefore the mind feels calm and more gentle.

When we come out of the meditation session and regard the outside world again, we are faced with everyday challenges and our buttons are pushed. What happens is that anger and attachment will arise again, but the difference between someone who has adopted the meditation technique earnestly and continuously, and someone who has not adopted the meditation at all, is that in the one who has adopted the meditation technique, anger, attachments and other delusions may still arise, but there will be immediate recognition, 'I am a little bit angry here, I have to be careful. I should not allow my mind to be completely dominated'. That awareness in itself helps to reduce the intensity of the negative states of mind. Someone who has not adopted the meditation training at all might not even notice that they have become angry, until it becomes full-blown and some damage might already have been caused by then. Failing to acknowledge and recognise the delusions in itself becomes the reason why the delusions cause so much destruction. That is why I say there is definitely a difference between someone who adopts a meditation technique, and someone who either has never heard

about meditation, or doesn't make any attempt to adopt it at all.

As soon as there is a challenging situation, or I notice that a negative state of mind seems to be arising, I immediately tell myself, 'Geshe Doga, be careful, you are starting to get an angry mind, you have to be careful'. [*Geshe-la says in English: Careful, I now say careful, Geshe Doga, careful, no need for anger. Anger is a rubbish mind, nobody needs anger, careful.*] That is something I do myself in my everyday life, and I find solace in that.

Having shared that previously, some people confided in me later that when they get into a challenging situation, and their negative mind starts to take over, they remember what I have shared, and they found it helpful too. To share another account of a young lady, who, having heard the teachings and has been trying to adopt meditation for about a year, has found it very helpful, and that she is calmer and more gentle during the meditation. After the meditation session in her everyday life, she notices that of course anger and other delusions still arise, but she is able to recognise the ill effects of anger more readily, which helps the mind not to be completely dominated by that. The point that I was relating in my teachings was something she experienced herself, and I felt that was very noteworthy.

When we adopt these methods, and gradually try to implement them in our life, then as a positive effect of meditation, we find that we are catching ourselves when we are getting angry, about to get angry or other delusions arise. Because we catch ourselves, it subsides, and does not become intense. What has happened is that we have not allowed anger to control us, and we have not given victory to anger or other delusions. We have maintained our own integrity and composure. To reap these benefits, we need to apply this practice in our everyday lives, but prior to adopting the practice it is significant that we think about the benefits of meditation as related this evening, and from other sources. Also think about the ill effects of not applying this technique, which means the ill effects of our mind being completely dominated and controlled by the delusions or afflictions. It is in this investigation that we will begin to notice, through our own analysis, the value of the meditation practice. Then the keen willingness, not because others have told us to do meditation, and have influenced us, but because of our own investigation and experience, we have seen the value of meditation.

With the negative states of mind, we need to take the initiative to address our own issues ourselves. If we leave it to others, and someone else points out faults, negative tendencies or behaviour, it will be very hard to accept, and we will get angry. If we can do it ourselves, then that is something which we can more readily accept. Transformation can occur when we accept and acknowledge our shortcomings, but also understand that we can progress and change our minds, attitudes etc. With that understanding as a summary of the benefits of meditation practice, we can adopt the meditation practice.

Some significant points that I am sharing again as a reminder, is that individually we may have a nagging

problem, that we have labelled a problem and we may hold on to this. This is a problem, because as soon as we think about it, it causes us distress and agony. We seem to be obsessed with it, and hold on to it. Some have confided in me that even after many, many years, when they recall a certain situation or incident with someone, it causes so much angst and anger in their mind. That is because they have not let go, and are still holding on to it. It seems quite astonishing that some seem to hold onto certain things which cause their own mind agony and is detrimental to their peaceful state of mind. If they could just let go of that, there would be no significant loss in their life, only benefit. It is very difficult to let go, so we need to address that individually ourselves, and look into ourselves to see what we might be holding onto. Our experiences, our state of mind and our emotions, are all very much related to the connection we make with the object. It is through this connection we make with the object by recalling it, remembering it, or seeing it or thinking about it, that causes certain emotions to arise in our mind. If we constantly think about a certain object which causes us agony, and hold the object in our mind, then that is not going to be helpful for us. I address this periodically because I find that there are individuals who really seem to hold on to certain issues or things and don't wish to let go, when in fact letting go of that would be contributing to a more peaceful state of mind. We need to do this investigation, and check out for ourselves what could be causing us distress within ourselves. When we find that, start to learn to let go.

I feel it is okay to address this and that you would take it on board because there are no other real main worries in your life, such as being deprived of food, drink, clothing – everything is quite intact. Now if I were to address this to individuals who are experiencing great poverty or hunger and say 'You are holding onto a certain negative states of mind, you have to let go of that, and things will be solved for you', that is not going to remove their hunger and thirst. It would not be appropriate to mention to such individuals. I feel that none of you here are deprived of the basic necessities in life, that is not what is causing you problems. It is other issues that you might be holding on, that might cause the problem and agony, so it is worthwhile to address that, try to let go. That is another salient point.

The reason why a comfortable position for meditation is emphasised, is that if the physical body is not genuinely relaxed, and someone is feeling aches and pains or is uncomfortable physically, this will disturb the mind, and they will not be able to focus on the chosen meditation object. In relation to the physical posture, the advice which is given in our instructions in the teachings is to adopt either the *seven-point posture of Buddha Vairochana*, which has the seven significant points, or otherwise adopt a comfortable posture. The Buddha has given such incomparably kind advice, not restricting the meditation posture to be a certain way, but ultimately it has to be a relaxed comfortable posture, which does not cause agitation to arise.

This is very practical advice, for someone who starts to get knee pain by sitting cross-legged, to insist on this posture would be completely inappropriate, because their

mind would be completely focused on the pain. For this individual, it is much more appropriate for them to sit on a chair or in another comfortable position. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, when teaching about meditation, often says, 'If you have knee problems, sit on a chair, otherwise your whole attention and focus will just go to the pain in your knees'.

With the meditation practice itself, we need to choose an appropriate object on which to focus, either a virtuous object or a neutral object, meaning that it should definitely be an object which does not cause any agitation to the mind, or the delusions to arise. If we focus on an object which may cause any form of excitement to arise in the mind, then we will not be able to be focused. The mind will start to waiver and we will not be in a focused state of mind. One of the initial attempts that we are making in the meditation technique is to generate a focused mind, therefore an object needs to be chosen on which the mind can be placed. A vivid example is if we are trying to put something on a pointed top, it has to be correctly balanced. If it is a little bit on the right or left side, then it will just fall off. When it is perfectly balanced, it can remain very steadily on a point. In simple terms, that is what we are doing with our mind—placing it upon an object, with the right balance. Therefore the object that we choose, as a means for the mind to become settled, is our own breath—a simple object, with which we are familiar. While breathing naturally, we bring our entire focus and attention, having withdrawn from other distractions, and place it completely on the breath itself. For the next few minutes, we will adopt this technique, and focus just on the breath. (*Pause for meditation*)

It would be highly worthwhile to adopt the meditation technique in our everyday life, whenever possible. As we would have experienced just now, it gives us a sense of release from an otherwise very busy life. We are so busy with many things, physically and mentally—we need a break once in a while. At the very least, the meditation practice gives us a genuine break, and thus we derive that benefit.

Are there any questions?

Student: How do we practise equanimity in relation to our own children?

Geshe-la: While the word equanimity might be a simple word, in the Buddhist context, when we apply to the practice, it can refer to a specific state of mind. Within the traditional meditation practices, there are two particular points where developing equanimity has been described. One is in relation to the *seven-point cause and effect method* for developing the altruistic mind of bodhicitta. In that technique, the meditation on equanimity is a personal equanimity, so that our own mind is free from bias, equalising so there is neither anger or hatred towards some, nor attachment towards others—an equal view.

The object is threefold: **friends, enemies and strangers**. Generally we have an instinctive or natural response to emotions that we have in relation to these three objects:

- **attachment** to friends, relatives or close ones,
- **aversion** towards our enemies
- **indifference** to strangers

Equanimity here is not the mind of indifference. Indifference is a state of mind, where we don't care whatever they go through, so to free our mind from that sort of attitude, we generate an equal mind towards these three objects. The technique of developing equanimity is a way to correct our own attitude. Equanimity is also explained in the *four immeasurable* practice, immeasurable equanimity. The meditation is to wish other beings to be free from being close to some and distant to others.

The main purpose of these practices of developing equanimity is because if we don't develop the mind of equanimity, it causes a lot of negative emotions to arise, such as strong attachment, anger, and a sense of indifference. These are the delusions, which cause a lot of trouble and unrest in our mind. A method to be free from that is in the practice of the *four immeasurables*, where each is presented in four stages, in relation to other beings:

1) Immeasurable compassion

Wishing other beings to be free from suffering

- a) How wonderful it would be if other beings were free from suffering
- b) May they be free from suffering.
- c) May I be able to free all beings from suffering
- d) Buddhas and gurus, please bless me so that I am able to do that

2) Immeasurable love

Wishing other beings to be endowed with happiness

- a) How wonderful it would be if others were endowed with happiness.
- b) May they experience happiness
- c) May I be able to ensure that they are endowed with happiness
- d) Buddhas and gurus, please bless me so that I am able to do that

3) Immeasurable joy

Wishing other beings are never separated from the ultimate sense of happiness which knows no sufferings

- a) How wonderful if they were never separated from the ultimate sense of happiness which knows no sufferings
- b) May they never be separated from the ultimate sense of happiness which knows no sufferings
- c) May I be able to ensure that they are never separated from the ultimate sense of happiness which knows no sufferings
- d) Buddhas and gurus, please bless me so that I am able to do that.

4) Immeasurable equanimity

Wishing other beings to have equanimity, being free from attachment to some and aversion to others

- a) How wonderful if all beings had equanimity, being free from attachment to some and aversion to others
- b) May they be endowed with equanimity
- c) May I be able to ensure that they are endowed with equanimity
- d) Buddhas and gurus, please bless me so that I am able to do that

This is the practice. If equanimity is not understood in its proper context then it may be misinterpreted as a sense of

indifference or not caring. With that misunderstanding, then it is reasonable to question how I can practise equanimity with my children, and does it mean that I don't really do much, and don't care for them. You need to be careful not to misinterpret that.

The main point in practising the *four immeasurables* is a means to increase a sense of love and compassion for others. For those who are deprived of happiness, when one wishes them to be happy, one is practising love. When others who are experiencing suffering, and we generate the strong wish for them to be free from suffering, then we are practising compassion.

When we wish all beings to be free from suffering:

a) 'How wonderful if they were free from suffering' is the **immeasurable wish**

b) 'May they be free from suffering' is the **immeasurable aspiration**

c) 'I will ensure that they will be free from suffering' is the **immeasurable special intention**, where we take the personal responsibility to free other beings from suffering, not leaving it for others to do that.

d) 'Buddhas and gurus, please bless me so that I am able to do that' is the **immeasurable supplication**. If we can encompass this in our practice of meditation, it becomes really profound, and a very good meditation.

This meditation practice is adopted to first of all generate a sense of love and compassion for others when one has not been generated strongly, then having developed the love and compassion for others, to further strengthen it, and increase it even more. Thank you for the question, which prompted me to explain the four immeasurables—even to hear that is very good, and can be very inspiring for us.

'May all beings be free from suffering' is something that no one could object to, and just the mere recitation instils a very virtuous state of mind. When that is further developed, 'May they be free from suffering', again these are very profound words, which instil a very positive and profound state of mind. 'I will take upon the responsibility to free all beings from sufferings', takes that further, developing the courageous mind. We need the help, so seeking help from the Buddhas and the gurus to be able to do so, is again a very positive state of mind. We can see that generating these thoughts and merely reciting the words and thinking about the meaning becomes a very profound practice.

These meditation practices become a personal means for us to generate a very good state of mind, where we are genuinely not only relaxed and calm, but in a very inspired state of mind. I encourage you to adopt this practice in the morning, when you wake up, and develop these two thoughts in the mind, which become a highly valuable resource for the rest of the day:

Today I will not intentionally harm any living being

From this day, I will do whatever I can to benefit and help other beings.

Making that commitment or resolve in the morning becomes a very good way to start the day, and have a

good state of mind, which I find very useful and helpful myself. If you are feeling a little bit on edge or agitated for whatever reason, just recall these thoughts and spend a few moments thinking about this again – it will definitely help the mind to subside. The more we familiarise with these thoughts, the more benefit we gain.

Before we end the session for the evening, let us again take the opportunity to spend a few minutes in meditation. This time the object of focus is the sound of the mantra to be recited, which is Buddha Shakyamuni's name. As we hear this recitation, we place our full attention and focus on the sound. When the recitation subsides, we focus on the residue and the nice calm feeling in our mind.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed by Kim Foon Looi
Edit 1 by Ingrid Leibbrandt
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*